

EDITORIAL



THE GREAT WHITE PH.D.

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

At this writing the nomination of Barry Commoner as presidential candidate for the newly-hatched Citizens Party is not yet official, and it is my sad mission to report that his nomination may never become official. The Citizens Party, a splendid goulash of radicals and enthusiasts, has set out to be the pristinely democratic party of the land. Hence, its convention's nominee will not actually be certified until a majority of the party's members, now numbering some 3500 conscientious Americanos, has voted on his nomination. Unfortunately, the ballots are being sent by mail. Better it would be for Dr. Commoner's political career had the votes been sent via United Parcel Service or a privately-owned carrier pigeon service. Truth be known, our U.S. Postal Service, though safely insulated from the capitalists' clutches, is an exceedingly uncertain communications channel, and though it grows ever more expensive it also seems to grow ever less useful.

This phenomenon of ceaselessly rising governmental costs and steadily lowering governmental performance seems to be one of the invincible laws of modern collectivist government. One sees it at work everywhere, in Social Security, in federally-aided education, even in the military. It is a wonder that Dr. Commoner, a trained scientist and proud member of the intelligentsia, has yet to trip over it. Yet there seem to be many political realities that Dr. Commoner has failed to note.

For instance, Dr. Commoner apparently has failed to note that there is a considerable difference between the two most probable presidential candidates, for he complains of their sameness indignantly and darkly hints that it is all part of a conspiracy

against average Americans like himself. Of course the differences between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan are easily observable. Reagan stands pretty much for the foreign policy that has governed us since World War II. Jimmy is for McGovernism ineptly executed. Domestically Reagan is markedly less statist than Jimmy.

The Citizens Party is about as far to the left as the Birch Society is to the right, and to read its party platform is to read the howls of the *Nation*, the *Progressive*, and *Mother Jones* simultaneously. Which brings to mind another thing that Dr. Commoner seems to have missed. During this year's primaries the plain folk of the Republic have given the candidates of the Left short shrift and few votes.

The miseries of the Massachusetts Messiah are far more the product of his positions than the product of his

indiscretions on that infamous isle. When all he had against him was Chappaquiddick, Teddy was as popular as springtime and laughter. When he apprised the citizenry of his positions on the issues, the swoon set in. Beyond the borders of a few college campuses the Hon. Brown's campaign never could get the wind up. Parson Anderson is a winner only at Beverly Hills fundraisers.

Yet it is not just the American voter who has grown deaf to the sirens and unguents of the American Left. Our nation's professional demonstrators too seem to have lost their gung-ho spirit. Mid-April's "Big Business Day" dawned full of sunshine and balmy breezes, nonetheless very few demonstrators turned out to growl about corporate infamy. The thing flopped everywhere but on National Public Radio, where it was treated as a matter of very great moment. For that matter every enthusiasm of our bizarre Left is treated as a matter of moment on

NPR, and perhaps this is the source of Dr. Commoner's belief that, as he puts it, "We are undergoing a sea change in American politics."

Alas, the great white Ph.D. deludes himself here, just as he deludes himself when he claims he wants the average American to have a larger voice in government. Would Dr. Commoner really like to live under a government whose policies accurately reflected average American's views on busing, capital punishment, prayer in public schools and Proposition 13 fever?

The Left that Dr. Commoner espouses is most comfortable, not with the electorate, but with the mandarins in the judiciary and in the bureaucracy. Now, there is the dirty little secret. The forces of left-wing reform—that gallimaufry of environmentalists, consumerists, anti-nuclear activists, and personal liberationists—have worked their will, not with the American voters, but in spite of them. Their reforms, which have been extensive, have been implemented through America's least democratic institutions, the courts and the bureaucracy.

This, of course, is a burlesque of democracy, and inasmuch as these reforms for which the Citizens Party thumps so earnestly amount to moonshine the burlesque grows all the more lurid and ludicrous. In listening to Dr. Commoner and his colleagues' complaints about inflation, unemployment, the dislocations of modern life, the aggrieved environment, and so forth one is reminded that many of these problems are now actually being exacerbated by the foolishness that these popinjays have already inflicted on us through their control of the judiciary and the bureaucracy. They are at once the problem and the "solution."

Moreover, my guess is that the Goody-Goodies of the Citizens Party are about to grow more concerned; that is to say, they are about to grow violent again and to send their



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students out to fight their good fights for them. Not only was "Big Business Day" a flop, but, when Earth Day 1980 was celebrated on April 22 only the *Wall Street Journal* seemed to care. When the morally upright of the American Left cannot get their own way quietly, they usually commence the demonstrations, the threats, and the lamentations that democracy is

being thwarted. **They bust up the joint and then repine that any politician resistant to their threats is endangering the Republic.**

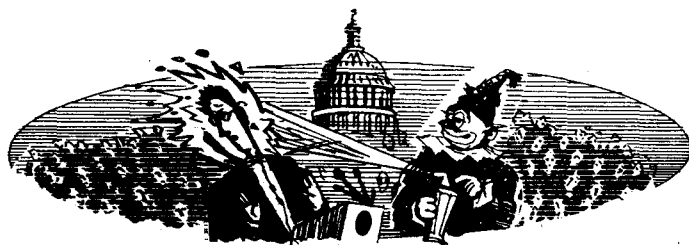
Much of the misery of the last 15 years can be laid to these nuisances. They and their burning causes are rendering America ungovernable, undemocratic, and absurd to those who watch us from afar. **The fact that the**

average American sees the inhabitants of the Citizens Party as increasingly absurd is reassuring but not reassuring enough. The members of the most pristinely democratic party of all have a long record of disdaining the views of the American majority.

Nonetheless, I am glad Dr. Com-moner is running, and I have a plan to enliven the proceedings. I urge the

officers of the Fortune 500 to have their corporations donate to his campaign. One look at the fellow tells you he is too piggish to turn down their loot, and I should very much relish the day when it was revealed that he was in the pay of the Giant Corporations. Captains of industry show some spunk. The time for dirty tricks is now. □

C A P I T O L I D E A S



CITIZEN NADER'S LOADED DAIS

by Tom Bethell

As I sat in the resplendent Cannon Caucus Room (the size of an aircraft hanger, with glistening chandeliers, gilded moldings, bright television lights) awaiting the commencement of Ralph Nader's "Big Business Day" ceremonies, I found myself thinking about that preeminent Keynesian inversion of truth—one of the most influential falsehoods of the twentieth century—to the effect that "demand creates supply." Children, old-age pensioners, college students, hospital patients, welfare recipients, and numerous government employees contribute solely to the demand side of economic life, and to that list could be added Naderites, I concluded as I observed Nader's willing minions filing into the room. What, after all, do they produce? They demand rather than supply, and that no doubt is why they champion the interests of "consumers," a category that serves merely to demarcate the productive.

Does demand create supply, then? How comforting it must be to Naderites, welfare recipients, et al., to believe that by depositing their checks at the bank they thereby keep the wheels of industry turning! And further, that by demanding cost-of-living increases they will simply

summon forth even greater efforts on the part of the productive . . .

Hush, here to interrupt my reveries comes Ralph Nader himself, tall, angular, and blue-suited, accompanied by his tousle-headed deputy, Mark Green. They carry files and stand together in frowning conversation while the still-photographers and television cameras give them their focused attention. So earnestly do they converse, with such an evident lack of awareness of the pressing paparazzi, that they almost succeed in convincing me that they are oblivious of the media's atten-

tion. They nod and then frown, transferring file folders from one hand to the other (click-click-click, whirrr . . .). I'll swear Nader has a sun tan today. Has he perhaps been living it up in the Caribbean? No such luck, I'm afraid.

Presently, the ruler of what the *Wall Street Journal* has described as a "vast conglomerate" with "interlocking directorships" strode off and I had a brief word with Mark Green, who is as charmingly boyish as ever. I barely had time to ask him why he so disapproved of voluntary transactions between consenting adults, capital-

ism in a nutshell, and he barely had time to reply that in his view capitalism entailed a lot of "coerced consumption," citing chemical dumping at Love Canal to prove his point, before the Rev. David Burgess, one-time CIO organizer, began to deliver the invocation:

"... condemn those who sell the righteous for silver . . . textile workers slowly dying of brown lung . . . chemical workers slowly poisoned by waste . . . struggle for equity . . . never-ending struggle for justice," Amen. We all sit down, as tardy Nader-lovers with labels on lapels continue to arrive. "Hello, My Name Is Marcia." "Hello, My Name Is Rachel." "Hello, My Name Is Sister Antonelle." Most wear longish skirts with side slits, some wear well-cut riding jackets with ties, giving a mannish look. But the nuns, still stuck in the late 1960s, wear short habits, almost to the knee. What, I wonder, are they doing here, auditing this anti-business conclave? Could anyone in the world prevail on them to return to their nunnery and say the rosary? Perhaps only someone whose kingdom was not of this world could do that.

We then listened to a speech by someone called Bob Peterson (wearing a three-piece business suit, with red spotted tie), who was pleased to inform us that big business had "declared war on the workers,"



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