

ston Seagull momentum. Heading into the big plenary session one could sense some generational chickens coming home to roost. If the *Nation* writers' congress had any significance, this was probably it. A number of yesteryear's Kids had failed to establish themselves as writers or grab a slice of the liberal socio-cultural pie while the getting was good. Sad to say, their causes were no longer in vogue. America had sampled them, swallowed as much as it could digest, and moved on.

The plenary session quickly degenerated into a predictable piece of McGovernite theatre. Early on a delegate pleaded with the congress to get its act together—"There are

people outside this room who are going to laugh at us!" Five hours later—as the delegates geared up to pass a resolution urging the U.S. Congress to provide guns and money to South African revolutionaries—a man in the balcony began dimming the lights in hopes that everyone would go home. As he did, a cameraman screamed an obscenity and cried, "Hey, that's censorship!" The congress did, however, manage to approve the idea of a union and agree to meet the next morning to tidy up.

Monday morning, The New School. More of the same egalitarian participatorian goo. A band of hard-

core faithful shouted back and forth in an attempt to elect an executive committee before the New School took its auditorium back. As the thing petered out I found myself standing next to Alexander Cockburn, ideologue-in-chief at the *Village Voice*. Cockburn glanced at my *American Spectator* name tag and remarked, "This must be a pretty glitzy assignment for you." He went on to reflect that the way the South African resolution was worded, he couldn't even travel there to denounce the place. Someone please add the *Village Voice* to the oppressed list.

Tuesday afternoon, at the corner of Broadway and West 110th Street.

Stepping out of my apartment I spotted Jimmy Breslin in the street. Spruced up in a suit, puffing a fine cigar, studying a script of some kind, Breslin looked like a true prince of the city. When asked about the American Writers Congress, he pulled out the cigar and gazed off into the distance. "Well, I'm not against unions, but I don't think it will work. . . . See, writing a book is such an individual thing. . . . It starts with a guy sitting down at a typewriter on one end and ends with a guy sitting down to read it on the other. . . . Of course, writing is a lonely business, and I can see how some people might want a crowd around. . . . But I don't think it will work." Enough. Give the last word to Breslin. □

SPECIAL

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Galbraith Unhooked

I read Sidney Hook on John Kenneth Galbraith (*The American Spectator*, October 1981), and it is as if Bella Abzug were writing about Jackie O. Hook is not altogether wrong, and I can easily imagine Bella Abzug saying things about Jackie Onassis that would be largely correct: for example, that Jackie is not a feminist. There would be nothing wrong with that, unless Mrs. A. would go on to say that this is where the former Mrs. K.'s consciousness is wanting, that this is where she is naive and innocent, and that this is the most significant thing about her. Now this is exactly what Professor Hook, who is a philosopher who knows very little about human nature, does. He writes that when it comes to Communism Galbraith is an innocent, and that this is the *most significant* element in his memoirs. Hook cannot comprehend that Galbraith's politics have very little to do with innocence or ignorance. In reality, Galbraith is as innocent about Communism as, say, Woody Allen is about publicity. He is a master opportunist, his political preferences having sprung from that condition, not the reverse.

It is true that Galbraith writes, on occasion, odd and silly things about Communism and capitalism; but what is far more telling is his account of certain leftist intellectual bureaucrats and of his relationships with them. In *The Age of Uncertainty*, he reminisces about them with much affection. Here are some of them:

Gregory Silvermaster, Lauchlin Currie, Isador Lubin, Oscar Lange. Galbraith writes that in California he "looked up especially" to Silvermaster who "later moved on to Washington and was much celebrated by Whittaker Chambers as a leader of the Communist underground in that city." Well, Silvermaster was not merely celebrated as such; so he was. A few years later it was Lauchlin Currie who offered Galbraith an important position in the Washington bureaucracy. Galbraith describes him as an admirably principled Keynesian. Yet Currie was either a Communist or a crypto-Communist, who was very influential in the White House: He was instrumental there in destroying the case for the so-called *modus vivendi* proposal which in late November 1941 had been prepared by the State Department in answer to the last-ditch Japanese compromise proposal which may have avoided, or at least postponed, the Japanese decision to go to war with the United States; thereafter Currie disappeared in South America. Isador Lubin, whom Galbraith calls affectionately "Lube" ("my lifelong friend . . . I have always felt grateful to him"), was another influential person in Washington during the war. He was a key figure in influencing Roosevelt against the Polish government in London and in pushing the case for the pro-Soviet Poles of Moscow and elsewhere, for which he should have earned the gratitude of Molotov and Stalin—who, to be sure, would have

acknowledged their obligation to "Lube" less handsomely than Galbraith, or not at all. Oscar Lange was another Pole who "had moved to the United States to escape the primitive prewar fascism of his homeland." Well, the primitive prewar fascists of Poland were the first nation in Europe to stand up and fight against the then overwhelming power of Hitler's Germany; add to this the fact

that Lange, an intellectual opportunist of the cosmopolitan-Marxist variety, later did his best—and a very bad best it was—for the cause of a Sovietized government of Poland. Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White, too, flit across Galbraith's pages; about the latter Galbraith simply writes that White was "a highly effective Assistant Secretary of the

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BOOK REVIEWS

It is tempting to call Betty Friedan, whose 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, launched the contemporary women's movement, the Kermansky of her revolution. She is, after all, decently appalled by what the Bolsheviks of latter-day feminism have done to her idea of equality between the sexes. There is a difference, though. Unlike Lenin's predecessor, she is likely to see her version of the revolutionary doctrine prevail.

Three cheers for that. Or, at least, three cheers for moderation and sanity as opposed to utopian frenzy.

The good news is that the American housewife who told all the other American housewives that a professional career can be more gratifying than a perfectly polished kitchen floor is having second thoughts about the way some of her disciples have construed this blameless notion. To be specific, she doesn't think a self-respecting woman has to hate men or be a lesbian or mold her career style on male patterns or pass up motherhood for the rat race. She discerns frustration in women who have taken such routes to fulfillment.

Friedan has even developed reservations about the way the movement she created has dealt with the cherished "constitutional right" to abortion. She feels that being "for abortion" somehow obscures "the life-enhancing value for women and families of the choice to have children." She is vaguely repelled by the "abortion chic" she read about in the *Village Voice*; it seems there are women who, to flaunt their fertility, deliberately become pregnant and then have abortions.

Betty Friedan's discovery, revealed in her new book, *The Second Stage*, is that women still want love—in most cases, heterosexual love. Moreover, they want babies and they value the family as an emotional center for their lives. Maybe it shouldn't take extraordinary powers to see this, or heroism to talk about it. However, the new Friedan thesis has roused excitement everywhere and cries of betrayal among many of the old ERA stalwarts and veterans of the fight to "desexigrate" newspaper help-wanted ads.

Still, this is not the full extent of

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the revisionism. Noting survey data that show women in favor of ad hoc child-care arrangements—in the family if possible—the woman who once believed in a government solution for every problem, public or private, no longer thinks massive, federally funded day-care programs are the answer to the working mother's need for someone to look after the kids.

What's more, this Friedan will actually sit still for a bit of the volunteerism the National Organization for Women denounced as exploitation ten years ago. She reproaches her old colleagues for allowing the Enemy to take over the whole area of traditional feminine concern, leaving the women's movement often as disappointed in its successes as in its failures.

Boldly stating these heresies, Friedan goes on to posit a second stage for the cause. Women must transcend the "feminist mystique" that succeeded the old worship of clean

sheets and homemade cookies. Away with the superwoman who knows how to get hers but hasn't come to terms with her own desire for something more in tune with the universals of humanity than mere feminist battle trophies.

So far, so good. Betty Friedan has always been a more wholesome person than the Simone de Beauvoirs, Marilyn Frenches, and Adrienne Riches who are forever shaking their fists at the sky because they can't stand the ambivalences and tensions the human condition imposes on both sexes. One senses that she knows a bit about love between men and women and between parents and children.

Unhappily, it's not enough to save her from folly and mischief when she tries to think about society. She is a pushover for tendentious psychologizing and for the theory that whatever goes wrong in the world can be

traced to the obscene lusts of capitalist corporations. She is also a dirty fighter, more inclined to dismiss opposing arguments as lies and propaganda than to refute them.

Thus, when confronting some of the differences between men and women that have proved problematical for West Point in its coed phase, her strategy is to trash masculinity. With many a twinkling sneer at "the warrior mentality," "boy-soldier oppressors," and "the undeniable self-hate, weakness and sense of powerlessness machismo hides in men," she calls for a military ambience where "men are allowed to take off their own masks and be sensitive, and yearning and vulnerable."

Lest the thought of being defended by an army of sensitive, yearning, and vulnerable soldiers should dismay anybody, she reminds her readers that the Vietnamese were no taller than most women and they beat us, didn't they? Besides, the next war, if machismo should force us into one, will be all technology anyway, won't it? The real problem, as Friedan sees it, is devising appropriate assignment policies and child-care arrangements for the two-career military family. Analysts of American defense capabilities should note that this social analyst was invited to West Point to help the military establishment modernize its thinking.

Getting at the larger issues, Betty Friedan elaborates an earlier theme. Readers of *The Feminine Mystique* will remember that the reason post-World War II women got trapped in those little suburban houses with all the washing machines and cars and lawn mowers was that profit-crazed advertisers made them think that's what they wanted.

Well, it's still going on. Instead of designing group dwellings that will minimize housework for the job-holding mother and offer social solace to the lonely divorcee, architects pander to the corporations that continue to push individual homes so they can sell more equipment.

Of course, Friedan herself has tried group living with "an extended family of choice" and found it "almost as much work as an individual household." The difficulty, she says, "was not so much physical labor, although there were continual battles as we worked out by trial and error the sharing of the chores and

