

# FLOTSAM & JETSAM

SAM SMITH

ANYONE who says he doesn't condone violence is either a liar or a saint. Nearly all Americans condone violence at some point; our disagreement is over time, place and weapons. Attacks on violence lead inexorably to hypocrisy: the President criticizes disorder and snuggles up to student-bashing trade unionists; the liberal decries the use of military might in Vietnam and encourages it in the Middle East; the radical berates the violence of the system and counters it with his own; a grand jury in Ohio finds one form of violence indictable, another not.

The suppression of violence is the nation's prime business of the moment, but since we differ sharply as to the types of violence that most need suppressing and since there is a growing common disposition to use maximum force to end whatever violence we find distasteful, we achieve precisely the opposite of our articulated goal. Over and over, we seek an end to aggression through some alternative form of violence: capital punishment discourages murder, war brings peace, bombings are but a prelude to a humanistic revolution, the repression of civil liberties secures democracy. None of this is so, of course, but the more we speak of the threat of violence the more we are driven to it.

Neither right nor left is well equipped to justify violence by its results. Two years of Nixonian aggressiveness have not made the streets "safe." Counter-violence has spread from the urban ghetto to the most secure corners of white America. And the violent radical's vision of confrontation followed by repression and then revolution, seems increasingly likely to stop at the second step.

That this presumptuous theory may produce counter-revolutionary results is made all the more probable by the reaction of liberals who, when faced with a choice between anarchism and repression, veer towards the latter. The liberal has deep doubts about this political virility that comes out in times of stress. He begins



to wonder whether some of the awful things conservatives say about him might not be true. Could he be a latent appeaser? A closet commie? The next thing one knows, he's voting for legislation to send troops into Indochina, putting dissenters to the rack and generally behaving in pathetic parody of the reactionary. That's how some of the McCarthyite legislation of the '50s got passed; that's how the unconstitutional crime legislation of this year was approved; that's one reason why it's taken us so long to get out of Vietnam. Put a liberal up against the wall and he recants at the click of the safety. It's happening all over America this campaign, as liberal candidates trade in Roosevelt and Jefferson for Scammon and Wattenburg. The frightened liberal is a dangerous man: witness Hubert Humphrey or Pierre Trudeau. They will sell democracy for security.

Since the middle has joined the violent left and right in the trap of escalating violence in the name of ending violence, it is difficult to see how the spiral can be broken. Certainly, the currently popular sport of pompously decrying violence is not going to change things much. It will probably be as successful as the National Safety Council's holiday preachments. The people who listen aren't the people who bomb buildings or drive recklessly on Labor Day. There is a repulsive streak in the American character that encourages affirmation by negatives. You reach the zenith of freedom through anti-communism, heaven by abstinence, harmony through anti-defamation, and tranquility through anti-violence. This creates employment for an excruciatingly boring pack of ministers, politicians, teachers and journalists, but it doesn't do much for the quality of life.

The cult of violence thrives of fear, frustration and rage. Since we live in a time when paranoia might better be described as a major voting bloc rather than an illness, our environment is particularly ripe for aggression. But its present endemic nature can also be ascribed to the absence of alternatives, the lack of a movement that is stronger, better and wiser than that of anarchism or repression and which, coincidentally, is also non-violent.

It is small wonder that Bobby Seale has wide appeal when placed along side Hubert Humphrey. Who has more to tell America? The Weathermen or Richard Nixon? If it has to be a choice between bastards, why not opt for the ones that are right at least thirty per cent of the time?

But we don't have to have such an unbalanced race. There could be other alternatives. And those of us who are not anarchists or potential recruits for the secret police had better start finding them.

One way of doing so would be to build a political coalition on the left. The refusal of much of the left to engage in pragmatic politics is extreme myopia. The right has never made this

error and as a result of the John Birch Society and the Klan have made themselves felt from the street to Congress. One can affect government without politics (usually in a highly random and erratic fashion), but one cannot govern without politics. The anti-political mysticism of the New Left is just tripe passing for theory.

The para-nationalization of passenger train service and the changing attitudes towards socialized medicine are but two indications America, even as it bitterly tries to retain the old myths, is ready for a major political and economic change. We can either seize the time to begin building a new political or economic order, or the monopolists, the statists and the military will seize it for themselves.

This will require more work than Dr. Spock and his followers seem ready to expend. His "New Party" platform of ending the war, racism and poverty seems hollow when placed against the demands of planning a new future for the nation. The earnest efforts of young reformers on behalf of peace candidates, while commendable in itself, is but the barest beginning of what must be done.

We need to sit down and plan a new and more just economic and political structure for the country that will revive democracy, decentralize power, provide for human needs and replace capitalistic greed with a cooperative ethos. Our proper goal was perhaps best encapsulated years ago when Populist Henry Lloyd spoke of the need for a "cooperative commonwealth."

In all the protest and the fray of the past decade, this has yet to be done. We have absorbed ourselves with the present and, not surprisingly, the future continues to elude us. We isolate ourselves into cliques and peer groups, ideologically pure but politically impotent, and power, not surprisingly, continues to pass us by.

It is one of the most extraordinary aspects of the current situation that no significant third party on the left has developed. And efforts to build non-party coalitions, say, along the lines of a radical Americans for Democratic Action, have been meagre at best. We continue to get our thing together and, when we look up from our work, we find we are pretty much alone.

If we are to build such a new party or coalition, it must be for more than college students and Panthers. It needs constituents more than enemies, organizing more than rhetoric, and issues more than nemises. The elitist snobbery of the left must be overcome and replaced with atmosphere that welcomes participation rather than screens it.

The making of such a coalition is the most important task we have. And if we set ourselves to it, one of the beneficial by-products will be a reduction in the national paranoia and violence, for once again we shall have a future worth facing.

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## The case for Channing Phillips

BRUCE TERRIS

IN the last issue, we ran a couple of articles critical of Channing Phillips, one of the contenders in the DC House Delegate race. The following letter from Bruce Terris, chairman of the DC Democratic Central Committee, is in reply.

YOUR recent article on the race for delegate to Congress was critical of Channing Phillips' leadership of the Democratic Central Committee and laudatory of mine. While I appreciate the compliment, this analysis is simply wrong.

Everything that both I and the Central Committee have done since our election in the 1968 primary has been pursuant to Channing Phillips' leadership and direction. All the lobbying we have done has come after thorough consultation with him. I can remember no major activity of the Central Committee in which he has not been involved.

It is true that I have frequently been the spokesman for the Central Committee. That is my responsibility as party chairman. Channing, as national committeeman, is the national representative of the District Democratic Party. In that capacity, he is a member of the O'Hara Commission which is charged with reforming the Democratic National Convention and he is similarly working on the executive committee of the Democratic National Committee for broad party reform. He has spoken at 64 college campuses and numerous other meetings all over the country about colonialism in the District, and urban problems and solutions more generally. He has campaigned for black and other liberal candidates from coast to coast. Despite this national leadership, he has personally led the fight here in the District whenever an issue was important.

If anybody doubts that Channing is tough enough and courageous enough to speak for the District, it is worthwhile to consider his record.

- He publicly opposed the Vietnam War in 1964. How many other candidates or citizens had that much courage and foresight that early?

- He invited peace groups into his church despite protests from many of his parishioners.

- He lobbied in Congress against the DC crime bill before David Eaton and the other leaders had said anything about it.

- He was a plaintiff in the suit which blocked construction of the Three Sisters Bridge. Walter Fauntroy, to give an example, was unwilling to be a plaintiff.

- He was the leader of the Coalition of Conscience, a coalition of 40 civil rights, church, and civic groups, when in 1966 it was struggling for home rule.

- He headed the Citizens Committee for Action on Public Education which led the fight to get Carl Hansen removed as superintendent of schools.

- He has publicly fought with the Federal Housing Administration to get housing for low and moderate income families in the District.

- He went with several other community leaders to the White House during the summer of 1967 to seek to have Chief Layton removed because of the failure of the police department to improve police-community relations.

I could go on. My point is that Channing Phillips has repeatedly stood up on the issues both forcefully and intelligently. But he is not a man who indulges in rhetoric for its own sake.

While I believe that Channing Phillips has spoken out strongly and courageously, I do not think that this alone qualifies him as the best man for delegate. The overriding issue for the District of Columbia must be full self-government. Only by ending Congressional domination can we end freeway blackmail and repressive crime legislation. Only by electing our own government can we choose to spend scarce city funds on education and health services and housing and preventing juvenile delinquency rather than on welfare investigators and more and more policemen.

We know that we cannot get self-government just through the efforts of District citizens. We do not have the power alone. We can only be successful if we build a national campaign to impress on the entire country the need to end colonialism in the Nation's Capitol. We must make the deprivation of liberty in Washington a national civil rights issue just as the deprivation of the right to vote of Southern blacks was a national civil rights issue a few years ago.

I believe that such a national campaign can be successful. Most Americans do not know about the lack of self-government in the District of Columbia. Those who do know don't care much one way or another. But polls suggest that most Americans even in conservative areas favor home rule and full Congressional representation. We must build on this latent and weak support to start a national campaign to pressure Congress to act.

Channing Phillips is, in my opinion, the right man to lead such a national campaign. Among all the existing and potential candidates, only he has a national reputation. He has the ability to run a large, complicated organization as he has demonstrated in the housing field. And he has the articulateness and persuasiveness to move all kinds of people to action.

The Democratic Central Committee which was elected with Channing Phillips has had the opportunity to watch him for a period of over two years. It is a tribute to his political leadership that 23 of the 28 members of this broadly representative group are supporting his candidacy. These 23 believe that he has demonstrated the strong and able political leadership which this city so badly needs in Congress.

THE Gazette welcomes letters and articles on the DC delegate race. Keep them less than 1000 words in length and send to DC Gazette, 109 8th St. NE, Washington DC 20002

## ART | ANDREA O. COHEN Alma Thomas

IT is a brave new world Alma Thomas celebrates in her most recent exhibit, now on display at the Franz Bader gallery through November 7. There is an invigorating sense of youthful anticipation in these two series of paintings, one of which pays tribute to nature and the other to the space program.

Miss Thomas is 76 years old. During the last year alone she has participated in over 25 exhibits, including "12 Afro-American Artists," which was shown first at the Lee Nordless gallery in New York and has been travelling throughout the country under the auspices of the NAACP.

Born in Columbia, Georgia, Alma Thomas

and her family came to Washington in 1907 and settled in the house she still lives in at 1530 Fifteenth St., N. W. There is much gratitude in her reminiscences about her parents, who were teachers at Tuskegee, and especially about her mother who, she says, "didn't let us fall down for one minute." "But in the South," she comments, "it was the hardest thing to find a white person who'd want to 'Miss' you. You were a girl as long as you were young, and you were 'Auntie' when you got old. And, my mother said 'that would never happen to you all.' " Miss Thomas chortles as she recalls that as the family got to Alexandria before crossing the

(Please turn to page 13)