

IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

Carter plan energizes corporate power

After President Carter presented his energy program to the American people and Congress, the *New York Times* commented that on this issue Carter "has projected a vigor reminiscent of the trust-busting boldness of the first Roosevelt's 'new nationalism.'" And indeed he has, in more ways than one. For as the great satirist, Finley Peter Dunne, observed in 1902, Theodore Roosevelt was a master at the art of dissembling. Dunne's immortal character, Mr. Dooley, nailed Roosevelt to his own hypocrisy on the "Trusts" better than most historians then or since:

"The trusts," says he [TR] "are the hideous monsters of the men who have done so much to make our country great. On the one hand, I would stamp them under foot. On the other hand, not so fast."

Like Roosevelt battling the public's distrust of business, Carter has attacked the energy question with much drama and gravity. And like Roosevelt, whose verbal attacks on "bad" trusts ultimately strengthened the hand (and the purse) of the large corporations, so Carter's energy proposals will reinforce the oil and utilities companies in extending their grip on coal, gas nuclear and solar energy while perpetuating the pattern of dependence on the automobile and other major users of oil.

Carter's style in presenting his energy program is the tip-off to its pro-corporate intent.

The American people are skeptical about the existence of an energy crisis. They suspect that they have been manipulated by the oil and utilities companies into paying exorbitant prices for gas and oil, both of which are available in more than adequate quantities for immediate needs. Carter and his advisers know that an energy program could not gain public approval or have a chance in Congress unless it appeared to be fair to the consumer and tough on the oil companies.

►Sweetening the pill

Carter has sweetened his high-priced pill with promises of tax rebates to consumers and public scrutiny of corporate oil and gas profits. Like TR, he is cultivating an impression of big business hostility to his program while fortifying corporate power in the energy field.

As the *New York Times* reported in its page one story on April 25, the head of a big oil company, a spokesman for the coal industry (now owned largely by the oil companies) and a representative of privately owned utilities all attacked details of Carter's program on NBC's "Meet the Press." But they endorsed the overall program.

This, the *Times* reporter observed, "appeared to confirm that the energy industries have grasped what the political grapevine here has been saying—that the White House would welcome a broadside attack by big energy companies because it would tend to build support for the program in Congress and divert public attention from the fact that the essence of the Carter plan is higher energy prices."

The essence of Carter's plan is higher prices paid into the corporations. He hopes to make them palatable by appeals to conservation, combined with the promise of a tax on the higher prices and a rebate to lower income working people.

But while the Administration remains adamant on rising prices, it has already permitted high officials, including energy advisor James R. Schlesinger, to back-track on the rebate promise and to hint that the tax revenues will in part be channeled into corporate investment subsidies, which means rebates to the corporations themselves.

One can see the corporate lobbyists



waiting patiently to move in on Congress as it begins consideration of the package.

The working poor have few effective lobbyists. Nor can the unions compete with corporate lobbyists. The most likely prospect, then, is a final energy program that will contribute mightily to inflation and the hardships already facing the working people and the unemployed.

►Avoids the basics

Beyond that, and despite its superficial attractiveness to environmentalists and ecologists, Carter's program will not significantly reduce gasoline consumption, while rising industrial use of coal will add to air pollution. The program concentrates on the final stages of consumption and treats inadequately or ignores the social structure of energy production and use.

Forty years of economic policies putting the automobile industry's welfare above social well being have created a pattern of dependency on autos that cannot be reversed by higher gasoline prices. That pattern includes massive suburbanization, encouraged by financial policies that favored new construction of suburban single family homes and eroded inner city housing and employment facilities; the systematic destruction of urban and interurban mass transit systems; subsidization of the automobile companies through massive federally funded highway construction. Carter's program addresses none of these.

To reduce the use of the automobile on a significant scale it will be necessary to provide a safe, comfortable, and inexpensive alternative form of transportation, and eventually a change in the living patterns created in the post-World War II years. That will require massive funding and publicly owned and operated transit systems as a minimal starting point.

Carter did not say a word about mass transit as an alternative. He did not

because as the Chief Executive of the corporate state he predicates everything on the investment and profit priorities of the great corporations, of which the auto and oil corporations are among the most powerful. To propose substantial alternative forms of transportation would threaten both the immediate interests of these corporate groups and would raise the question of public ownership and control, since private development of mass transit is no longer profitable.

►Political control of the market

An unavoidable aspect of the Carter plan—which has led many in small business, and a few of the more ideological or less favored in big business to cry "Socialism"—is its admission that the "free market" yields neither economic efficiency nor socially desired results. Carter, and for the most part the large corporation executives have conceded that major problems like energy can be solved only through political control of the market. The question now becomes what kind of political control, for what purposes, and in whose interest.

Carter's answer is clear: in the interest of centralized corporate power and at the expense—both in living standards and in popular initiative—of the nation's working people, which is to say, of the public welfare and democratic values.

Socialists, then are faced with the challenge of developing an alternative to Carter's plans that will accord with the interests of the general public, with practical standards of economic and social efficiency, and with principles of democratic as against corporate planning.

The most obvious starting place is the public ownership and development of oil, gas and coal production, with the revenues from these sources going to the public development of renewable energy alternatives, whether solar, wind, geothermal,

or nuclear. Such a public system should be established by and accountable to the city councils, state legislatures, and Congress.

Integral to this system should be the comprehensive development of public mass transit, such as already in effect in Europe (though not adequate there either). Urban and interurban mass transit could provide both alternative means of transportation and hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of jobs in construction, maintenance, and service.

New city systems could be locally controlled and developed with additional federal funding transferred from the military budget at no new cost to taxpayers, but to much greater social utility.

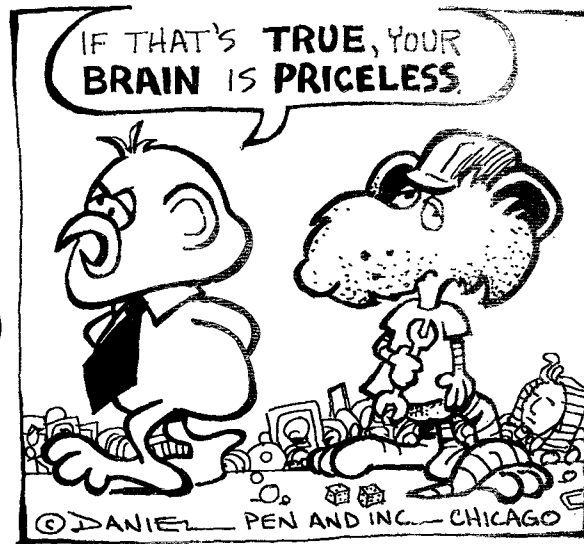
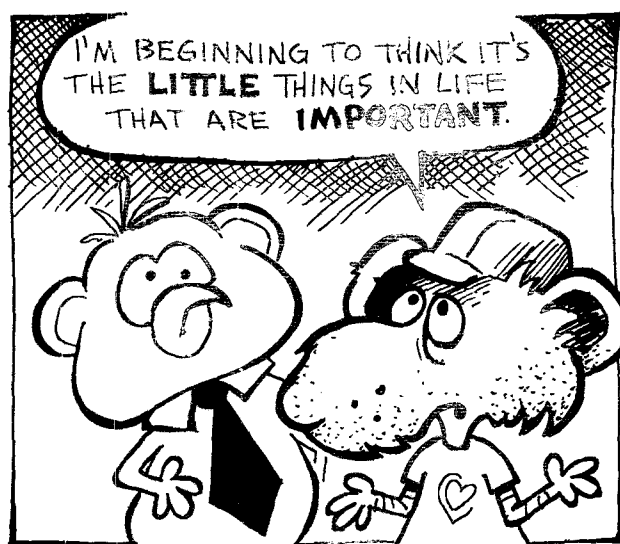
Interurban systems could be developed within an expanded and democratized version of AMTRAK, in which the roadbeds, as well as the rolling stock should be publicly owned and maintained.

Socialists can and should begin developing plans along the lines of an integrated energy-transportation system, and begin organizing for them on national, state and local levels.

Behind Carter's verbal mask of old moral pieties stand the centralized control and paternalistic domination of modern corporate power. Real popular self-reliance, democratic determination, and decentralized control and initiative, serving the general welfare, can best be attained through a publicly owned, federally structured economy run by the people at their places of work and through their elected legislative branches.

An integrated energy-transportation system is one of the better places for the American people to start transforming old pieties into new verities that only socialism can make real. In the process, they may recognize the face of Rockefeller, DuPont and the other latter-day Robber Barons behind Carter's smiling Rooseveltian mask.

THE FACTORY WITH RATSUS AND JABBERWOK



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Letters

Hite reports on her reviews

Editor:

Thank you so much for Torie Osborn's beautiful review of my book. I was delighted to receive it, and have showed it to many people.

In These Times' review was the very first—out of over a hundred reviews—to mention the political/social aspects of the analysis.

I would like to clarify a point in your review. I disagree with the analysis that biology originally determined the female condition; and just so, I do not feel that technology and population growth have created the conditions for the liberation of women from biological dictates. I do not believe that men are in power because they are physically stronger, or because women are dependent during pregnancy. The earliest families we know of have no "fathers"; in fact, the word was not even known in the earliest Indo-Europeans. The earliest families consisted of the mothers, the aunts, the sisters and brothers and uncles and children - more like some of the primate families we know.

It seems clear that there were societies earlier than patriarchal societies, although to call them "matriarchal" seems a mistake. Perhaps they were neither, but something entirely different. Civilization as complex as our own, at least philosophically, goes back at least 40,000 years, according to some recent research. I believe the society we know, with its patriarchal/hierarchical (capitalistic?) structure is an historical phenomenon that needs to be further researched and analyzed and set into a proper historical framework.

It seems clear to me that women's second-class status did not grow out of our biology, but rather the needs of a patriarchal society—i.e., you can't have inheritance through men without men owning a vessel (woman) through which to bear children. Thus monogamous intercourse was institutionalized by the Hebrew tribes returning from the Babylonian exile c. 3000 years ago.

In other words, patriarchy is a limited, historical phenomenon, and not a biological phenomenon.

—Shere Hite
New York

Is Walton a scab?

Editor:

What happened to Bill Walton's "advocacy of causes... even on the basketball court" (*ITT*, April 27) when he and his Portland Blazer teammates ignored the NBA umpires' picketline?

—H. Boal
Winnetka, Ill.

Driven or fled?

Editor:

Recently you have received a number of letters concerning whether or not the Palestinian refugees fled or were driven out of their homes by the Zionists in 1948. The research of Maxime Rodinson, Don Peretz and others reveals that the reality was a combination of both phenomena. The more important question concerns the right of these refugees to return to their homes. The Israeli policy was clearly stated by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion on July 16, 1948, "No Arab refugees should be admitted back."

A more humane and just approach was suggested by Eric Fromm: "It is often said that the Arabs fled, that they left the country voluntarily, and that they therefore bear the responsibility for losing their property and their land. But in general international law, the principle holds true that no citizen loses his property or his right to citizenship; and the citizenship right is defacto, a right in which the Arabs in Israel have much more legitimacy than the Jews. Just because the Arabs fled? Since when is that punishable by confiscation of property and by being barred from returning to the land on which a people's forefathers have lived for generations."

Needless to say it is now impossible to restore the particular homes and property in Israel to the Palestinian refugees. But a just settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute should grant the Palestinian refugees the right of repatriation and compensation as well as the creation of an autonomous Palestinian state alongside of Israel.

—Simon Rosenblum
Johnson City, N.Y.

More on rape

Editor:

Joshua Dressler's column about the Inez Garcia case (*ITT*, Apr. 6) made good sense, but I must object to his last statement: "The rapist is not shot down in the street by the woman, but instead is forced to go to trial where the entire society can express its revulsion for, and condemnation of, his action." Dressler has obviously never been to a rape trial. I am the director of a rape crisis center and have had occasion to attend numerous trials. Never once have I seen the rapist condemned or revulsion expressed. In fact, it is the victim who feels this way. Several victims wonder afterwards why they ever decided to have anything to do with the criminal justice system. I do not blame them. I am not sure I would report a rape to the police and I certainly would never have the illusion that the trial would serve the purpose Dressler suggests.

I don't have any answers: shooting the guy down is not a good solution, besides it is unrealistic. On the other hand, trials are unsatisfactory, at least under this system of justice.

—Roxanne Park
Seattle, Wa.

The answer to cancer

Editor:

Salvador Luria's article "Cancer and Circulatory Diseases are Diseases of Development" (*ITT*, Apr. 13) omits a few basic facts. 80% of cancers are environmentally caused and thus preventable. Cancer-producing substances are by-products of our industrial processes. Stress has been shown to be the most important risk factor in circulatory disease. Social stress is an integral part of the way our working and living conditions are organized. For example, unemployment, oppressive bureaucracies, deteriorating and overcrowded conditions in cities, and job dissatisfaction being stressful, cause biological responses leading not only to circulatory disease, but other diseases as well.

It is misleading to explain cancer and circulatory diseases solely in terms of developmental biology. This explanation focuses attention on factors outside of human control and thus contributes to our sense of powerlessness. Technology can be used to reduce environmental cancer substances. We can change our society to reduce stress. Health and medical information must expose the social basis of disease. This information opens up ways we all can work for healthy social change.

—Jim Schlosser
Syracuse, N.Y.

The new storm troopers?

Editor:

On Friday morning, April 18, I was selling *The Militant* in front of Eberhards supermarket located in the Eastown area of Grand Rapids, Michigan. A car full of people circled around the corner, they then parked across the street and a man got out of the car. He walked over and said he was an organizer of the U.S. Labor party. He was selling their newspaper *New Solidarity*. He started hassling me, kept asking me my name, where our meetings were held, how often we met and how many there were of us. I answered none of his questions. He then crossed the street to his car.

I turned my back towards them and went on selling *The Militant*. A few minutes later I was surrounded by five people. They grabbed at my papers, yelled at me to give them my name and tried to push me into the busy street. I told them to move out of my way. The organizer yelled that "when Rockefeller tells us to move we say fuck you, now you tell us to move and we are not going to say fuck you—we are going to knock you down right here on this street and rape you sister." He grabbed my jacket, I told him if he laid a hand on me he would be on the sidewalk looking up at me. He just looked at me and then walked across the street to his car. Two Labor Party women came from the back of the building and started selling their paper. People had been watching them harass me and would not buy the paper. A young Black man came out of the

supermarket. He saw what they were doing to me, walked over, took my arm and led me out of their circle. He offered to stay with me until my ride picked me up. I thanked him and told him I would be all right. He then went back into the store to tell people not to buy the Labor Party paper.

—Jody R.
Grand Rapids, Mi.

A gift she enjoys

Editor:

In answer to your letter asking for contributions. Am sorry that I can't help you. If I could, I sure would. My grandson, who lives in Amherst, Mass. gave me *In These Times* as a Christmas gift. I am 89 years old, live on a small S.S. pension.

I like your paper. We need it. When my subscription runs out, we will see if I am still able to read. Reading is my favorite pastime.

—Anna Dizard
Duluth

Beyond him

Editor:

The Dialog on Eurocommunism between Leland Neuberg and Diana Johnstone (*ITT*, Mar. 23) was both frank and provocative.

While on the whole I agree with Johnstone's opinion that "nobody knows how at this point... to make a socialist revolution," it still seems to me that the Eurocommunists are way out in right field. An excellent example of this is seen in their contrived explanation of the Soviet Union's drift back to capitalism as merely results of "bureaucratic deformations," inheritance from the Tsarist past, and "personal despotism of Stalin."

Besides, on the important questions of capitalist division between mental and manual labor, its goal of both an expansionist and a debt economy, the issue of workers' control of the workplace beyond just formal nationalizations, and a host of other critical problems under monopoly capitalism, the Eurocommunist parties offer no innovative visions. How they can continue calling themselves Communists is beyond me.

—Danny Li
Honolulu

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