

Letters

Is Marschall anti-NAM?

I HAVE READ MANY OF DAN MARSchall's labor columns, and have always respected his writing and his analysis. However, Marschall does not seem to be able to cover left conventions quite so well.

Like Marschall, I was at the recent NAM convention in Milwaukee. Unlike Marschall I came away from the convention with a good feeling about NAM as an organization. My impression of the convention was not nearly so dreary and bleak. Perhaps Marschall's report was influenced more by his personal feelings about NAM than by what he observed in Milwaukee. Marschall's introduction betrayed a certain ill will toward NAM, which led me to believe that the "many" Marschall referred to as having "low expectations" toward the convention may simply have been Marschall and a few of his friends. Certainly the people I talked to about the convention did not come away as depressed as he did, but rather, seemed to be revitalized.

—Bob Quartell
Chicago

Dan Marschall replies:

Like Bob Quartell, I also came away from the NAM convention with a "good feeling about NAM as an organization." Far from being "dreary and bleak," the convention was exciting. It indicated that NAM has made significant progress in the last year. In fact, two-thirds of the article—beyond the first four paragraphs discussing NAM's historic problems—describes convention debates, NAM's deepening involvement in labor work, and its range of other activities positively. As a NAM activist in several chapters for the past seven years, I certainly harbor no "ill will" towards the organization.

Bob Quartell's objections apparently stem from the fact that I discussed NAM's stagnation between 1975 and 1977. This perception has been common among left activists in and around NAM. Accurate news analysis should not downplay such weaknesses. I agree that it is not accurate to say that "many" NAM members did not think this malaise would change. "Many" probably would not agree that a malaise existed in the first place. Regardless, the convention showed that NAM is moving towards overcoming its deficiencies.

Public health

THERE ARE CERTAIN PREMISES in the debate on professional school admissions policies which both sides seem to accept, and which therefore need to be questioned.

First, why should test scores weigh so heavily in the admissions process? Can "ability" be precisely measured by any test? It seems to me that the use of more subjective criteria might yield doctors just as technically competent, but with a greater ability to communicate with patients, and a greater desire to promote health regardless of remuneration.

Second, it is taken for granted that the school should decide, within certain limits, what the admissions policy will be, yet the public will have to live with the results. Shouldn't we have a bit more say?

Third, why are there so few medical schools? More fundamentally, why is the knowledge and power of healing concentrated in so few minds?

The legal barrier against people's learning more about healing serves to transfer tremendous wealth to the medical industry, and also blocks desperately needed progress in preventive medicine. I believe that it would be more healthy for the medical profession to come down from its hegemonic position, share what it knows, and give free rein to a variety of healing alternatives that are currently discouraged or suppressed.

—Geoffrey Young
Cambridge, Mass.

Honesty and class struggle

I'D LIKE TO QUESTION THE PROPRIETY of your giving a full page spread reviewing a vulgar exploitation game (*Class Struggle*, *ITT*, Aug. 9) in view of the following:

1. The owner of the game has been advertising it for months in *IN THESE TIMES*;

2. You never (to my knowledge) reviewed any other game. If *ITT* plans further participation in this kind of shoddy rip-off, please cancel my sub. I thought you were honest.

—Marvin Mandell
Cuttyhunk, Mass.

Editor's Note: We thought so, too. The ads are our own—we sell the game to make money. The owner has not advertised yet.

Enlightenment's child

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR special section on "Christian Witness" (*ITT*, Aug. 2). I hope you will continue to report on the religious dimension of socialist struggle.

While the left's historical insensitivity to religious phenomena is understandable, it is not enough to treat the religious question in isolation. Charles Slap in his piece casually remarked, "Religion, like the flag, has been abandoned by the left." There is more than coincidence in the connection.

The failure to comprehend religion by the left is part of the general failure of Enlightenment rationality to comprehend the dimension of symbol, especially as it is rooted in and flows from popular culture. Antonio Gramsci and James Connolly before him were probably the first Marxists to begin to understand this. But for the most part in modern history, the socialist movement has been the radicalized child of the Enlightenment, sharing the same weakness in the area of symbol with its older sibling, liberalism. Except that by radicalizing the weakness, the socialist tradition has left itself even more vulnerable before a right wing only too willing to manipulate popular symbol.

If there is a counter-theme within the socialist tradition, it is with the metaphor of art. The poetry of Pablo Neruda, for example, is filled with symbolic imagery from three key areas—national identity, fruitful sexuality, and religious traditions. It is to popular artists, then, rooted in their imagination within popular culture, that we may look for a socialist outlook that can transcend the sterility of Enlightenment culture and reach both forward and backward to what the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has called a "second naivete."

—Joe Holland
Washington, D.C.

Charting unknown waters

I APPRECIATE YOUR PAPER BECAUSE it provides stories and viewpoints not found in other papers. Yet I find myself disagreeing with you often, and sometimes disappointed with the narrowness of your vision and perspective.

Most disconcerting is your differentiation between the public and private sector and simplistic calls for expansion of the former at the expense of the latter.

We are charting unknown waters. To say that what people need is more education, better health care, improved

housing only addresses our most superficial needs as human beings. Our needs transcend the physical and will not be "solved" by our owning the means of production.

I question how much greater the individual's control over his/her life would be in a state-dominated society. I think we need to regain our power through new smaller institutions, such as cooperatives. When our physical and spiritual needs are met by organizations/people that we know and control in more than a symbolic sense then we might begin to see the transformation towards a more meaningful life. Multinational corporations are part of the problem, but more central is patriarchy, bureaucracy, and an over-reliance on nationality.

—Mark Friedman
Terants Harbor, Me

A good teacher?

ENCLOSED IS A CONTRIBUTION to help you out. I am on a limited income and I wish I could give more. Your newspaper is necessary, vital and informative. As a welfare mother I find myself leaning more to leftist activities and to socialism in particular. What I appreciate about *IN THESE TIMES* is that you don't assume that *everyone* knows Marx's theories and explain attitudes without being patronizing. We are all learning; it's best with a good teacher. Thank you.

—Geneva Clark
Oakland, Calif.

We deserve another slap

BEGINNING WITH CHARLES Slap's contradictory clichés about religion, your special section on "The Left Hand of God" (*ITT*, Aug. 2) is irritating to find in a socialist periodical. Repeating exaggerations—even for 2000 years—does not make them true. Generalizing from exceptions produces sophisms.

As a former evangelical christian, I have been interested to discover how knowledgeable Marx and Engels were concerning religious scriptures, and also how frequently one comes across formerly religious people in movement efforts. Of course, within the movement one also finds active members of religious groups.

However, the vast majority of church, synagogue, mosque and temple-going individuals care mostly for themselves. Those who crave true social improvements for all cannot depend upon those who repeatedly ask "How long oh Lord?"

Instead, they seek self-motivated people who really care about others, who have courageously stopped looking for some outside force to solve problems, who have done their homework to avoid repeating the errors of the past.

Anne Braden of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, while speaking before a Nashville Methodist congregation in March 1977, had the imagination and courage to observe, "I fail to see how one can apply Christian principles to the world of today *unless* one has some understanding of a Marxist analysis."

There is a lot of similar dialogue going on around the country, but your special section only touched on it. You deserve a lambasting from your readers.

—Gordon A. Chapman
Washington, D.C.

The opiate of the people

AS A SOCIALIST ATHEIST FEMINIST I must respond to both your section on Christian "Marxism," and Michael Stone's letter concerning the so-called "right to life" movement. Martin Luther King and Caesar Chavez were leaders and in the forefront of progressive movements not because of their religion but in spite of it. Religion is the dead reactionary handmaiden of the dead reactionary capitalist system. It dictates good habits, family size, it censors cinema, theater, television, even education, it dictates life values and life styles,

religion is politics, and always the most authoritarian and reactionary politics.

Zionism, the so-called "right to life" movement, and opposition to gay rights are based on the insanity of biblical precepts, as well as on other lies and half-truths. Michael Stone states that the "right to life" movement is not intrinsically reactionary and that progressive forces have been present in the movement. The "right to life" movement is not only intrinsically reactionary but also totalitarian. It is inherently anti-woman. It is also anti-Semitic as well.

To the "right to lifers" the lives of women maimed or killed by illegal abortions are less important than the "right to life" of the fetus. The "right to life" movement is part and parcel of the Catholic Church's quest for power in the U.S.

—Karen Moshewitz
Indianapolis, Ind.

Religion and the left

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR consideration of the church and social justice (*ITT*, Aug. 2).

Those of us who are both Christian and socialist are often very lonely. The church, still a staunch defender of capitalism and its works, wants nothing to do with us because we are socialists. (I recently returned Rev. Jerry Falwell's questionnaire in *TV Guide* with all the "wrong" answers.)

Likewise, most left groups are suspicious of us because we are Christians who believe that human beings are more than flesh and blood. We are immediately classed with Billy Graham and Anita Bryant as "reactionaries." Living in a rural area like mine only intensifies the problem.

IN THESE TIMES has become the first general-circulation publication on the left to take seriously the view that a person may be both Biblical and socialist. Congratulations and thank you.

—George Derringer
The Hutchinson Leader
Hutchinson, Minn.

Toward rationality

I COULD HARDLY BELIEVE MY eyes as I read Charles S. Slap's article in your Aug. 2 issue. Yes, we must recognize the subversive aspect of religion, and not just pass over it, as Slap passes over the unending history of crimes committed in the name of God. And, yes, also we must recognize that much of the left is left struggling "without a rootedness in the ultimate sources of life." The point, however, is not to cry out for a return to some hypothesized "pure religion" which will allow us to measure all things. We ourselves are the only measure we have.

Rather than turn backwards to ancient modes of "thought," we must struggle forward to a new synthesis of human knowledge, to a new understanding that unites 2500 years of philosophy and science.

Only in the continuous and critical application of reason can we be true to and make the most of our heritage. Faith may for a moment lead us down the right path. But faith itself contains a great danger—for faith is precisely the relinquishing of *human* freedom and *human* responsibility in the name of something "higher." And for man there can be no such thing; which point, for me, when form was reduced to content, was brought home by the Gospels themselves.

—Robby Bick
Seattle, Wash.

Editor's note: Please keep letters under 250 words. Otherwise we must make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, please type and double-space letter, or at least write clearly and with wide margins. Letters must be signed, with a return address. We will withhold your name or use a pseudonym if you wish, but we will not print unsigned letters or those without addresses.

From the Grassroots Toward a united black strategy

The chief failure of black leadership since the '60s has been the inability to unite around a common strategy. Some black leaders like Jesse Jackson of Operation P.U.S.H. emphasize "self-help" programs and a possible coalition with Republicans. The NAACP recently endorsed the energy-policy ideas of the major oil corporations in a feeble attempt to construct a black-oriented energy strategy. Some blacks accept without reservation the Carter administration's initiatives in economic planning and cutbacks in social service programs; still others cling to the illusions of the past decade. Seldom, if ever, do black intellectuals and activists propose basic tenets or a policy statement from which *all* energies may be channeled.

During the Great Depression, W.E.B. DuBois attempted to create such a general program. DuBois was probably the greatest black writer, intellectual and activist in American history. A founder of the NAACP, for 24 years he edited the *Crisis*. His major works, including *Souls of Black Folk*, *Black Reconstruction* and *Darkwater*, are among the most influential writings in Afro-American literature.

Corresponding extensively with young black educators and political activists, DuBois drafted what he called "A Basic American Negro Creed," a statement of basic principles from which all black economic, educational and cultural planning could be directed. DuBois attempted to publish the "Creed" under the topic, "The Negro and the New Deal," published by the American Association for Adult Education. DuBois' views were considered "too controversial" by both the white and Negro

educators; the "Creed" went unpublished for several years. Finally, in his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn*, published in 1940 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, DuBois finally expressed his ideas for black solidarity. Once again, almost four decades later, the need for a "Basic American Negro Creed" has become even more urgent. We print a shortened version of the "Creed" below, to stimulate discussion and to motivate black people toward the rewriting of such a "Creed":

Basic American Negro Creed.

A. As American Negroes, we believe in unity of racial effort, so far as this is necessary for self-defense and self-expression, leading ultimately to the goal of a united humanity and the abolition of all racial distinctions.

B. We repudiate all artificial and hate-engendering deification of race separation as such; but just as sternly, we repudiate an enervating philosophy of Negro escape into an artificially privileged white race which has long sought to enslave, exploit and tyrannize over all mankind.

C. We believe that the Talented Tenth among American Negroes, fitted by education and character to think and do, should find primary employment in determining by study and measurement the present field and demand for racial action and the method by which the masses may be guided along this path.

D. We believe that the problems which now call for such racial planning are Employment, Education and Health; these three: but the greatest of these is Employment.

E. We believe that the labor force and

intelligence of 12 million people is more than sufficient to supply their own wants and make their advancement secure. Therefore, we believe that, if carefully and intelligently planned, a co-operative Negro industrial system in America can be established in the midst of and in conjunction with the national industrial organization.

F. We believe that Negro workers should join the labor union movement. We believe that Workers' Councils organized by Negroes for interracial understanding should strive to fight race prejudice in the working class.

G. We believe in socialism: that is, common ownership and control of the means of production and equality of income.

H. We believe that we can abolish poverty by reason and the intelligent use of the ballot. We do not believe in war as a necessary defense of culture; nor in violence as the only path to economic revolution.

I. We conceive this matter of work and equality of adequate income as not the end of our effort, but the beginning of the rise of the Negro race in this land and the world over, in power, learning and accomplishment.

J. We believe in the use of our vote for equalizing wealth through taxation, for vesting the ultimate power of the state in the hands of the workers; and as an integral part of the working class, we demand our proportionate share in administration and public expenditure.

K. This is and is designed to be a program of racial effort and this narrowed goal is forced upon us today by the unyielding determination of the mass of the white race to enslave, exploit and in-

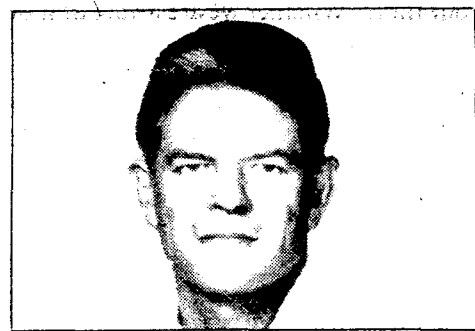
sult Negroes; but to this vision of work, organization and service, we welcome all men of all colors so long as their subscription to this basic creed is sincere and is proven by their deeds.

* * * * *

In several respects, the "Basic American Negro Creed" by DuBois no longer fits today's economic or cultural realities. In 1940, less than two-thirds of all black people were literate; educated blacks thought of themselves as a kind of "Talented Tenth." DuBois' suggestion that intellectual blacks "should find primary employment in determining by study...the present field and demand for racial action" is profoundly elitist. Points H. and J. emphasize the importance of the ballot, written at a time when fewer than one in ten black adults were allowed to vote. In the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other Civil Rights legislation, we have discovered that ballot box power is significantly less important than economic power.

However, DuBois' "Basic American Negro Creed" is an ambitious, clearly-conceived statement of principles which retains much of its freshness and vitality. The need for black-controlled and operated cooperatives, for both consumers and producers, is greater today than in 1940. Full employment, adequate health care and the principle of racial pride are just as important for us now as they were in DuBois' era.

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Staughton Lynd

Labor and the Law The steward vs. the union

The Dave Newman case, reported by *ITT* July 12, and on which Newman himself commented in a letter (*ITT*, Aug. 2), presents a fascinating and fundamental legal issue: To whom is a shop steward responsible?

There have thus far been three court decisions.

In the first decision, District Court Judge Knapp began by rehearsing the facts. He observed that Newman was one of the job stewards in Local 1101 of the Communication Workers of America, which represents 11,000 communications workers in Manhattan and the Bronx. Although Local 1101's bylaws provide that job stewards may be either appointed or elected, since 1972 all job stewards have been elected. The CWA Stewards Manual highlights the role of the steward both in interpreting union policy to the membership and in passing on the workers' feelings to local union officers and staff representatives.

Newman was elected job steward in 1973 and removed from that position the same year. Prior to his removal, Newman worked with and spoke on behalf of a committee of 60-70 members that published leaflets concerning upcoming contract negotiations. After his removal Newman ran for reelection and won, but the union refused to certify him. In 1975, Newman ran again for steward, won, and this time was certified. He contributed a column to a newsletter critical of the union leadership. At a meeting prior to 1977 contract negotiations, Newman spoke from the floor in support of certain resolutions that the union president opposed. He was thereupon again removed from his position as steward.

Judge Knapp's legal discussion began

by noting that a steward is not an "officer" for purposes of the Landrum-Griffin Act. Accordingly the Court viewed the facts solely from the standpoint of Title I of the Act, the so-called "bill of rights," without considering Title IV, which regulates the election of officers.

The Court found that the union had disciplined Newman solely for exercising a right to free speech, which the Act protects. It found further that Newman's removal "chilled" the speech rights of other stewards. In a footnote Judge Knapp remarked:

"We reject as absurd the defendants' general contention that a steward must believe in and cannot criticize Union policies in order to be able to explain them, and thus that any shop unsympathetic with Union policies may elect only stewards opposing the view which the voters hold."

On appeal, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals reversed. The appellate court endorsed what Judge Knapp had termed "absurd." Its opinion declared: "Unless the management of a union, like that of any other going enterprise, could command a reasonable degree of loyalty and support from its representatives, it could not effectively function very long." The appellate court set aside the preliminary injunction issued by Judge Knapp, and remanded the case to the District Court with instructions that the Court reassess the facts. The test to be applied was the following:

"The inquiry in each case...must be to determine whether a member's opposition to the union's program or policies may be reasonably viewed as precluding him from acting effectively as its representative, and whether this removal from his

official position would tend to prevent him or others from exercising their rights as members under Title I...."

In an opinion just issued, Judge Knapp again reviewed the facts in the light of the test mandated by the Court of Appeals—and came to the same conclusion as before!

The testimony, according to the Judge, "established that Newman's views did not preclude him from performing his duties and effectively acting as a representative of the Local." Newman's handling of grievances was concededly exemplary. Further, in regard to Newman's duty to transmit union policy to the members, "Plaintiffs produced several witnesses, whom we find to be credible, who testified that Newman had fairly explained to them the leadership's position and had supported Local fund-raising and petition drives despite his belief that these activities were not in the members' best interests."

The Court then considered the appellate court's additional requirement that Newman show the purpose of his removal to have been "to inhibit or stifle his exercise of free speech rights as a union member." The removal had this purpose, the Court found. On balance, the Court held that since Newman's criticism of the leadership's bargaining stance preceded the union's firm adoption of a policy, Newman should be reinstated even under the test imposed by the Court of Appeals. (Readers will note the Court's adoption of what in other contexts is termed "democratic centralism.")

This new decision will now again be appealed.

The Newman case is important because the role of the shop steward is critical to

a democratic labor movement. In the better unions, full-time business agents or staff are former stewards who work closely with their successors and leave the final decisions about grievances to those most intimately involved. They function as teachers and advisers, not as dictators. Even in the better unions, however, tension is likely to develop between those who have left the workplace to work full-time for the union, and the stewards and ordinary members still in the shop. The rank and file must rely on the steward to keep the full-time functionaries sensitive to their needs.

In the more bureaucratic or corrupt unions, the steward's role is enlarged. He or she then takes on the tasks that full-timers ought to perform. In such a situation the tendency is for the official union to act as an intermittent policeman on behalf of labor peace, while a network of shopfloor contacts built around the stewards becomes the real union. Thus, in one such situation with which I am familiar, two stewards were discharged for seeking to represent a fellow worker. The business agents discouraged the stewards from trying to get their jobs back and actually testified against them at a National Labor Relations Board hearing. Meantime, one of the discharged stewards has become the shop's *de facto* business agent, coordinating the defense of members subject to discipline and otherwise providing the representation which the official union does not give.

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