

# PERSPECTIVES

## □ FOR A NEW AMERICA □

**T**HIS IS ONE IN AN IRREGULAR SERIES OF ARTICLES THAT WILL PRESENT the political perspectives of various activists, members of socialist and non-socialist left organizations, and other political thinkers. The first piece was an argument that socialists should be active within the Democratic party as socialists, by G. William Domhoff, author of *Who Rules America* and *Fat Cats and Democrats* (ITT, Jan. 18). Derek Shearer is on the steering committee of the National Conference on Alternative State and Local Public Policy, and a West Coast editor of *Working Papers for a New Society*.

If, like Thomas Jefferson, the editors of *IN THESE TIMES* or the leadership of most left groups were compelled to enumerate their grievances, it would not be difficult. What's wrong with America is obvious to any sensitive person who reads the newspapers, watches TV or lives in a big city. American social problems have been amply documented by Nader's raiders, Congressional hearings, muckrakers and revisionist academics.

It is much harder to say what you are for—and to do so in language and with examples that can be understood by the majority of Americans.

ITT's editors, members of the New American Movement and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, as well as other left groups, think the word "socialism" is an answer to the question. Being a politician more than anything else, I think they are out of touch with political reality. While the use of the word socialism might have some positive (though contested) meaning to a minuscule percentage of the population, to most Americans it has a negative connotation. It signifies, at worst, government dictatorship and lack of freedom—Russia, China, Eastern Europe; and, at best, it means bureaucracy and the welfare state—England, Sweden, etc.

Socialism has a bad name in America, and no amount of political education or wishful thinking on the part of the left is going to change that in our lifetimes.

Using the word socialism is not only a hindrance to engaging in politics—community and union organizing, as well as

electoral. It also frequently blocks creative answers to the question of what we are for.

The words Economic Democracy are an adequate and effective replacement. I admit to bias in the matter. I coined (or rather revived) the phrase during the Hayden campaign in 1976. The concept and the program we put forward developed out of years of study and work as a consultant to the Exploratory Project on Economic Alternatives, as an advisor for Jerry Brown's administration in California, as a teacher in political economy at the Cambridge-Goddard Graduate School, and as an editor of *Working Papers for a New Society*.

Using an eclectic and typically American approach, I borrowed ideas from Franklin Roosevelt's 1944 speech to Congress calling for an Economic Bill of Rights, from a host of New Deal economists, from Upton Sinclair's EPIC movement, from the coop movement, and from the movement for workers ownership and control in Western Europe. My intellectual mentors included such economists as John Blair, former staff director for the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly subcommittee and author of *Economic Concentration* and *The Roots of Inflation*; Gen Seligman, who wrote *Economics of Dissent*, and Bertram Gross, drafter of the Employment Act of 1946, initiator of the original version of the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment bill and author of *Whose Great Society?*

During the Hayden campaign, we received favorable response to the concept of economic democracy from a wide var-

ety of audiences—working class, middle class, blacks, chicanos, students, women. The same thing happened in Ruth Yannatta's campaign for the state assembly.

Of course, a phrase has no political meaning if not backed up by a transitional political program that can be described in detail, and be carried out by left activists at all levels of government and institutions of society. During the 1976 elections we put together a special issue of *Working Papers* titled "Left with the Democrats?" which included articles on energy, full employment, economic planning, and what a new New Deal might look like. The Institute for Policy Studies, a leftwing think tank in Washington, D.C., has just completed a set of alternative national policy papers, written at the request of Rep. Ron Dellums, John Conyers, and others. The Exploratory Project on Economic Alternatives has published studies on national food policy, environmental protection, coops, citizen access to government, full employment, and capital and community development.

Programs for city and state governments have been developed and published by the National Conference on Alternative State and Local Public Policy.

We have a vision of a democratic economy, and we have more than enough program expressed in bills and administrative form. The strategy that is emerging for realizing the vision and winning the program has three major components:

• **Electoral**—Leftwing candidates have won city council seats, state legislative races, and county supervisor posts, as well as other spots. The left has developed the skills to win elections, and we are developing public spokespeople who hold public office. Most of these people operate within the Democratic party.

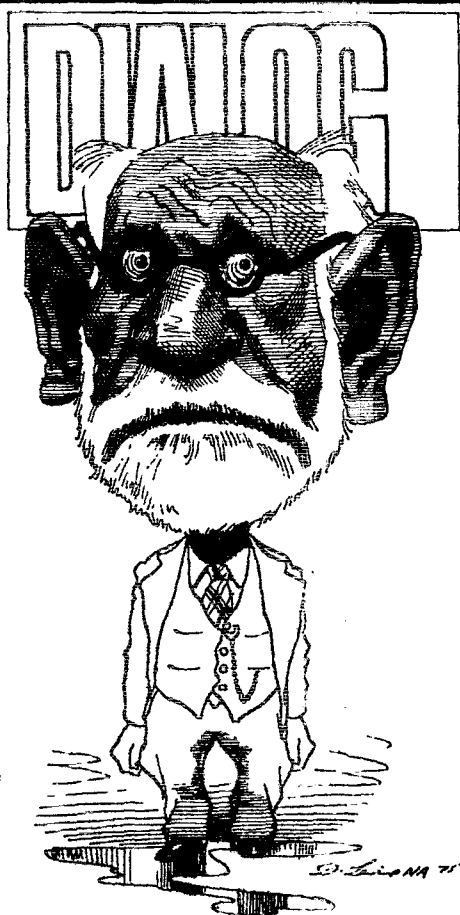
• **Organizational**—City and statewide organizations are being built around economic issues. They include such organizations as Arkansas' ACORN, Mass Fair Share in Massachusetts, the Campaign for Economic Democracy in California, and the Ohio Public Interest Campaign. Some

of the groups run candidates. Others limit themselves to lobbying for specific legislation. They have differing strategies, given the states they're in, but all are concentrating on economic issues from an anti-corporate perspective. Schools such as the Midwest Academy in Chicago run courses and workshops in organizing skills for these state and local organizations.

• **Institutional**—Alongside the electoral and the organizing networks there is a growing network of alternative institutions that embody the principles of economic democracy. These include food coops, worker-owned stores and production units, alternative newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses, public interest research groups, and alternative technology consulting groups and demonstration projects. This institutional network is vital. It is being linked together and strengthened by the New School for Democratic Management in San Francisco, and by resource providing legislation such as the National Consumer Coop Bank bill, which has already passed the House and is now in the Senate, and which provides \$18 million in technical assistance to be administered by ACTION, headed by Sam Brown.

These alternative institutions provide working examples of economic democracy in action; they are training grounds for people in the skills of running economic enterprises more democratically. And, perhaps most important, they sustain the electoral and organizing efforts by creating a democratic culture within or alongside the dominant business culture.

The movement for economic democracy is, and should be, decentralized and pluralist, with a focus on winning state and local elections, not national ones, on building state and local political organizations, not a third party or a national left organization; and on founding and running democratic enterprises, schools, and publications. Only once such a base is built will we be in a position to run a candidate for the presidency with any hope of winning or in any other way challenge for national power. ■



## Don't blame it on Sigmund

Patrick Owens' review of Richard Rosen's book, *Psychobabble* (ITT, Jan. 18), is confusing. While he praises Rosen for explaining how various analytical schools substitute jargon for

clear speech, Owens condemns Rosen for regarding Freud with respect. This cavalier dismissal of Freud follows Owens' misinterpretation of what Rosen says about therapy faddists.

According to Owens, Rosen claims that psychobabblers "are incapable of emotions less synthetic than their language." Owens says, "As for emotions, the very act of describing them distorts and stereotypes them." He adds that Rosen's strongest point is that the spread of psychobabble indicates "the collapse of personal integrity" on the part of its users. The logic of Owens' review is that those who delve into psychobabble are fools who ought to know that emotions are ineffable, and that their failure to appreciate this reveals their stupidity. From there Owens proceeds to finger Sigmund Freud as the prime culprit responsible for what is wrong with modern psychological thought.

Actually, Rosen does not consider the cause or effect of psychobabble to be incurable idiocy. (I should note here that Richard Rosen is a close friend.) If stupidity were the true explanation for psychobabble, it, along with everything else, would be easy to understand. But the reasons for the rise of pop psychology cults and their corruption of language are complex, involving far more than witlessness. Rosen borrows from Russell Jacoby (author of *Social Amnesia*), who borrowed from Herbert Marcuse, in explicating some of the social roots of the phenomenon. Rosen writes, "As social conditions degenerate, a tender but cruel optimism suffocates skepticism. Confusion is not

clarified, merely given the name 'reality'."

Rosen does not regard even eager cult devotees as fools but often as victims of their own confusion, fears and cult promoters. He does not pin derogatory labels on them, as Owens implies.

Psychobabble is a symptom of the narcissistic 1970s, a reaction to the tumultuous '60s. It reflects disillusionment and frustration with both the Establishment and social movements. The cults that propagate psychobabble all claim to have the answer. Typically they suggest that accepting your present condition is a state of grace.

Tom Wolfe terms the 1970s the "Me Decade," a time of self-absorption. Wolfe's designation is now the common descriptive name stuck on the '70s. The term has merit, but Wolfe's perspective is generally overlooked. For all his style, Wolfe is simply a neo-conservative whose principal impulse is disdain. His insights are extraordinarily superficial and coy. Among other things, he believes that the working class is not working class; American society, he asserts, has withered into a mutant classless society. Pop psychology cults are therefore merely another spasm of an enormous but aimless middle class.

Other writing on pop cults is not more enlightening. *Powers of Mind* by George "Adam Smith" Goodman, a former member of the *New York Times* editorial board, for example, is just passable entertainment.

Rosen's *Psychobabble* is the first serious book on the subject accessible to a popular audience. It ought to be of wide interest, especially to those trying to

figure a way out of the present impasse.

Owens, though, mostly ignored and sometimes distorted Rosen's. Although Owens believes emotions can't be described, anyone who has read a reasonably good novel can claim otherwise. And Owens' remarks about Freud are hardly worth mentioning. Some of Freud's ideas now seem creaky, Victorian and quaint, but he cannot be waved away as a worthless quack. When many thinkers and psychoanalysts themselves are making useful and intelligent criticisms of Freudian psychology, categorically disparaging comments aren't constructive. Rosen, incidentally, doesn't recommend Freudian analysis as a necessary alternative to the current fads, as Owens insists. Rather, Rosen discusses its use of language.

There should be a debate within the left on pop cults and psychobabble. Unfortunately, Owens obscured the issue.

—Sidney Blumenthal  
ITT Boston correspondent

Solution to last week's puzzle:

I	S	R	E	D	T	U	B	B	A	L	
A	N	I	T	A	E	R	A		A	G	A
N	O	C	O	M	M	E	N	T	L	E	T
S	T	E	I	N	E	M	T	H	I	N	K
R	A	P	E	D	B	O	N	N	I	E	
E	R	O	S	G	U	T	G	O	R	G	E
P	A	L	A	U	S		Y	O	U	O	L
B	O	W	L	S	T	E	N	E	A	S	E
U	S	E	R	A	N	Y	O	R	A		
P	A	Y	L	O	V	A	C	A	R	B	W
S	L	E	D	S	M	I	M	K	E	L	B
R	O	E	L	I	S	E	L	M	A		
T	F	R	L	E	X	T	R	E	A	T	

# ACLU

Continued from page 4.

ship believe the ACLU should take that case."

"If free speech means anything," Ennis said, "it means *any* free speech. We believe everyone has the right to express an opinion."

Mississippi chapter president Johnson said he'd have no qualms if the national office decided to defend the Klan. "I feel the national office could legitimately determine that First Amendment rights were primary. I personally would have no real problems with that decision."

Ennis says that the ACLU's firm support of the Klan's rights will ultimately attract support for his organization rather

than lose it. "In the long run it will not hurt us but help us," he said, "for the public will realize that the ACLU is a principled organization" that will not be compromised.

Up to now this has not been the case. The ACLU's legal support for the Klan has triggered vehement criticism, a severe drop in financial contributions and mass resignations—3,000 in the past five months.

In a Christmas letter mailed to Klan supporters, Klan national director David Duke credits his organization for much of the ACLU's decline in support. Citing the ACLU's legal defense of the Klan's organizing of white marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and elsewhere, Duke boasts that the Klan has "caused the basically anti-white ACLU to lose 40 percent of their support," and chalks this up as one of the Klan's major accomplishments of 1977. ■

(© Liberation News Service)

## Jesse Jackson & GOP

Continued from page 6.

Blacks have voted overwhelmingly Democratic in state and local elections since the time of Roosevelt's New Deal. In all likelihood they will continue to do so, despite Jackson's rhetoric and appeals, which ignore some basic political realities.

First, the Republican party is essentially a conservative, rightwing party, with a small, ineffective so-called moderate wing typified by Jacob Javits of New York and Charles Percy of Illinois. No matter how many "moderate/centrist" glamor boys—like Illinois' Gov. James Thompson—they trot out, the Grand Old Party will still be the party of the right, special interests, entrenched opposition to reform, white suburban fears of blacks, and strong opposition to almost any federal initiative for any purpose except favors and concessions to the middle and upper classes.

There is no way that *any number* of black voters is going to dislodge the rightwing from its power in the GOP. Conservative voters are the GOP's bedrock; their aims and interests are simply incompatible with those of black and poor peo-

ple. If blacks in overwhelming numbers shifted to the GOP (which isn't going to happen), the conservatives would simply shift out of the GOP into a new party with Ronald Reagan at the helm.

Jackson's attempt to formulate a "republican strategy" to give black voters more leverage is in line with a long, but up to now, futile attempt to find a way in which black voters and black elected officials can maximize their political strength.

Up to now blacks have shunned forming a third party, and pressed their demands for power within the Democratic party. Some relatively minor concessions have been wrested from the Democrats, but nothing commensurate with the overwhelming black loyalty to the party. The Democratic leaders, up to now, have calculated correctly that blacks, with nowhere else to go but the Republicans, would threaten revolt at the polls but on election day would always return to the fold.

In all likelihood Jesse Jackson was chosen by the Republican National Committee to speak out in its behalf because of Jackson's new popularity with whites,

especially conservatives and suburbanites. Whatever else he may or may not be saying, whites *think* they hear Jackson saying to blacks the same thing whites have been saying for generations: Stop complaining, demonstrating and marching, cast down your buckets, and use your personal initiative to bootstrap your way out of poverty. It's the American way; it's the only way.

Jackson has said some things fairly close to this, and many other things. To be the hustler supreme, it's easy to tailor your remarks to fit the audience.

Although all the evidence isn't in yet, it's reasonable to assume that Jackson is

getting something from the Republicans. He wouldn't become their advocate otherwise.

Jackson's star is riding high. The darling of the white media, mostly because of PUSH for Excellence, Jackson is carefully but effectively being thrust into the spotlight as the ranking—to some the only—black leader who can speak for blacks nationally and internationally.

That role is perfect for him and for white Republicans also. After all, it's a lot easier to deal with one leader and "spokesman" than many. ■

Francis Ward is a reporter in Chicago and a member of the Kuumba Workshop.

## Taiwan political arrests

Continued from page 11.

pei area. Before the recent arrests, Tsai Hung Ch'iao-wo and her son had "been openly raising the mysterious disappearance of their campaign workers and have been demanding that the government protect human rights of their campaign workers in accordance with the constitution," stated one of the letters received from Taiwan in the U.S. It added that the government and the newspapers had ignored her protests.

### A pattern of intimidation.

It is widely suspected that the arrests marked a continuation of a pattern of intimidation. One of the letters received in the U.S. noted that "the latest arrests represent not any 'smashing of a communist spy ring,' but an open attempt to intimidate those—especially students—involved in the election campaign."

Citing its own unnamed high-level sources, the letter went on to note that the three publicly charged with sending the threats to foreign investors in Taiwan did not even know each other until July or August, and therefore could not possibly have been involved as a group in sending the warnings back in January.

In addition, the letters from Taiwan stated, the purpose of the arrests also was "to cow the rising student movement" and to reassure foreign capitalists that they can continue to make "profits with cheap Taiwan labor."

In the U.S., Taiwanese human rights activists fear that the arrests of little-known students is a testing of the waters by the government there to see what kind of outcry there might be from Taiwan citizens and from abroad to the arrest of more prominent persons, particularly literary figures, whom the government views as dangerous.

Helen Sun, professor of Chinese literature at the State University of New York, Albany, and herself a major Taiwanese novelist and short story writer, told IN THESE TIMES that the Taiwan regime seems on the verge of a severe crackdown

on Taiwanese writers whose works appeal especially to peasants, factory workers and soldiers. She cited as particularly being in danger the noted writers C.M. Huang, T. Wang, T.C. Yu, and Y.C. Chen. Chen was just released last year after seven years in prison.

None of these writers has any connection with the People's Republic of China, she said, but their works are nonetheless regarded as a threat by the regime because of their portrayal of class differences within the Taiwan society. The regime "does not want people in Taiwan to know that side of life," she said.

There are apparently ample reasons for Sun's fears. After American Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's trip to China last summer, the Taiwan government hastily scheduled a "Second Forum on Art and Literature," to which politicians, party ideologues and "friendly" writers were invited. The forum concluded with a number of strongly-worded resolutions that emphasized that Taiwanese art and literature must be coordinated with the national policy of anti-communism, and that works depicting realism and class struggle were to be condemned. Worker/peasant/soldier literature, said an August article in the government-controlled *The United Daily* "has its special historical background and political motivation" in the teachings of Mao Tse-tung and, therefore, should not be tolerated.

Recently, the Kuomintang proposed the reestablishment of a "Central Literary Directive Committee" under the Kuomintang Central Committee, with the apparent purpose of cracking down on literature. Sun and others fear that this signals the coming of a program of arrests of certain writers in the near future unless they heed the warnings contained in the recent arrests. In warning the writers by arresting non-writers, said one Chicago-based activist, the government is following an ancient Chinese proverb: "Kill a chicken to warn a monkey." ■ John Hanrahan is a veteran Washington journalist and coauthor of *Lost Frontier: The Marketing of Alaska*.

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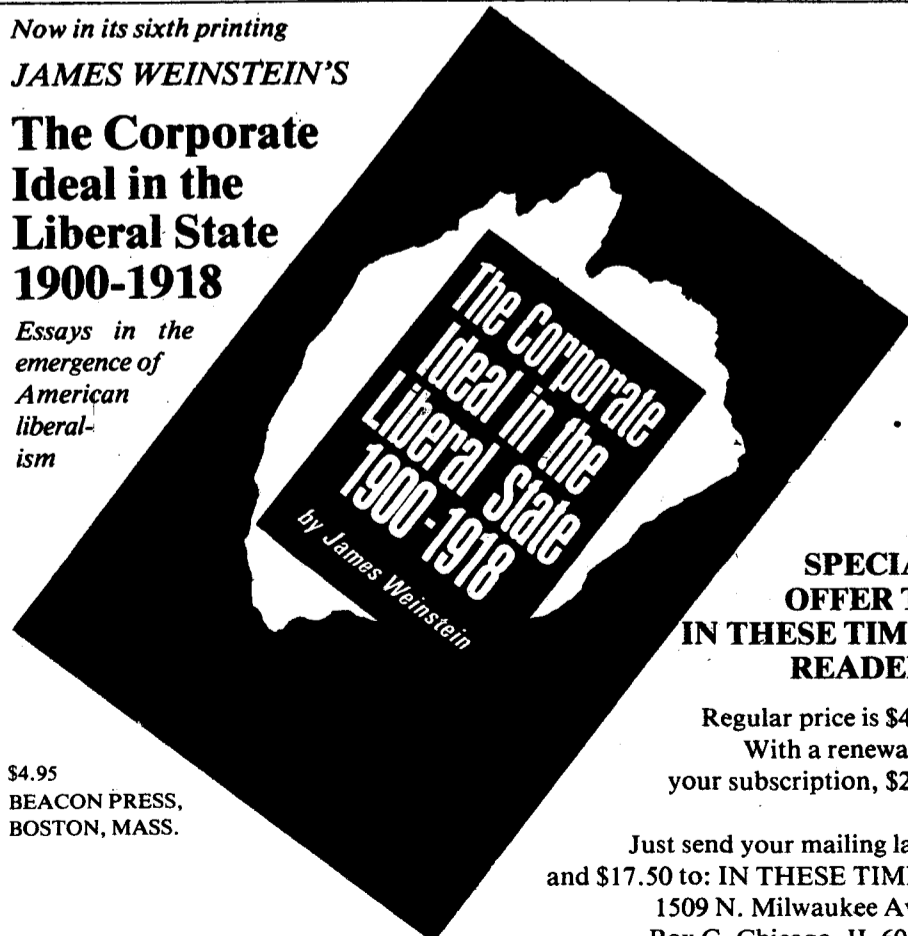
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