

Letters

An exercise in futility

FAIL TO SEE THE RATIONALE of banning the Nazis and the Klan while letting the rest of the reactionaries go. The "right-to-lifers," the Stop ERA people, the anti-busing people, Anita Bryant and her ilk, and the people who want prayer in school, as well as the rightwing evangelicals, are no less dangerous and no less lawless than the Nazis and the Klan.

But the government is not about to ban these groups. The "right-to-lifers" are, in fact, the government's pets. Like Albert Berger, I, too, am a socialist, a Jew, and a civil libertarian. I agree with him that we should rely on our own strength to protect ourselves. To rely on a capitalist government to protect one by banning rightwing groups is right in line with the strategy of relying on liberal capitalist politicians to give one one's rights.

I am not about to rely on the government to protect me from anti-semitism, unless I am an actual victim of crime, when I have seen that same government beat anti-war demonstrators and striking workers in the streets while bowing and scraping to "right-to-lifers" and anti-busing people.

When the Klu Kluxers and Nazis rape people, kill people, beat up people, vandalize things, and commit other crimes I think they should be locked up for it. But to ban two or three rightwing groups while letting the rest go seems to me an exercise in futility.

—Karen Moshewitz
Indianapolis

"Germanization"?

I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR COV-erage, of the right-wing reaction to terrorist tactics in West Germany with great interest. But I am disturbed by your acceptance of the term "Germanization" as if it were an explanation (*ITT*, Jan. 25) without much discussion of what classes, factions, etc., are behind the repression and hysteria that has taken hold in West Germany and who profits from it.

The rhetoric being put out by the Springer newspapers and others can be called right-wing reaction, or fascist

propaganda. Using the term "Germanization" leads to the absurdity of calling similar political developments in Europe the "Germanization" of Italy and France. Are Horst Mahler or Heinrich Boll German but not "Germanized"? Or the Red Army Faction, for that matter. Are similar anti-left and oppressive tactics in the U.S. proof that we too have fallen prey to the insidious "Germanization"?

Making "German" equivalent with suppression and right-wing reaction creates confusion and accepts the psychology of polarization that can't help but see any position that is pro-civil liberties as being anti-German.

Let's not be taken in by the tempting illusion that abusing power is the exclusive tendency of any one nationality.

—Tom Bradersen

How peasants paint

HOW SAD THAT ALL THAT EN-thusiasm about China before Mao's death is gone. The article about communal art in China (*ITT*, Feb. 8) praises a particular cultural accomplishment, yet there is the doubt and the negativism, "...do other brigade members pull carts twice as heavy while some...paint?" It would be better if the author would come out and say it, that he's not convinced that the way Chinese peasants paint is any better than here in the USA for individuals. The writer would learn more from life if he would put out his social theories boldly. I would respect him for it. As it is, I wouldn't put him in a position where he would have to decide anything.

People have trouble with the concept of socialism (or maybe they're really snakes with forked tongues). The whole point is, the commune people willingly decide to do extra work so that some can paint. It's done by voting, by democracy. Or is the concept of democracy too unacceptable?

—Bob Barron
Cupertino, Calif.

Blue Collar

OCCASIONALLY HOLLYWOOD makes a movie about working people that is distinguished because it does not paint them as simps, wimps or cowboys. For all its faults, *Blue Collar* is such a film. That is why I was disappointed to see the treatment it received (*ITT*, Feb. 22).

Blue Collar is a significant American cultural happening for several reasons.

First, it treats the lives of production workers seriously. Second, it treats the problem of race relations among workers seriously—with neither the mushy liberalism of the usual Stanley Kramer-esque fare nor the phony militancy of the black exploitation genre. Third, it is distinguished by splendid and subtle performances by Harvey Keitel and Richard Pryor—performers whose talents have not been adequately tapped in previous movie efforts. Fourth, it puts all this within the context of three workers' relationships to their union, the government and their families. Fifth, it shows a significant development in the talents of writer/director Paul Schrader, whose nihilistic visions and cynicism are now taking more directed and politically significant forms.

Blue Collar is not great. The first half wanders aimlessly. There are serious limits to the film's political vision. But like it or not, agree with it or not, *Blue Collar* is significant because it has a political vision.

The media create media events. *Blue Collar* will not be one. That is why it is so irksome to find a socialist newspaper failing to develop and promote interest and discussion in this movie. P. Hertel either didn't have the space or the interest in developing the important questions that *Blue Collar* raises.

—Lois Morgenthal
Chicago

Mustangs

IT WAS GOOD TO READ IN YOUR Letters section that one socialist at least has concern and compassion for our voiceless fellow creatures, co-tenants with us of Planet Earth. I am referring to Harry R. Siegel's letter about the mercilessly massacred wild mustangs, only recently given a measure of protection. My long quarrel with 90 percent of the left is that the plight of animals v. that of their own species ranks near zero in their scale of concern.

—Sybil Sticht
Walnut Creek, Calif.

The 'others' did it

I CAN'T AGREE WITH HARRY Boyte (*ITT*, Feb. 15) that the fate of the Populist Movement in the '90s indicated "the decline of freedom in America." I do give the farmers credit for heroic efforts to develop cooperatives and to make an impact in politics, but they also showed "excessive democracy" in that they allowed collective enthusi-

asm in romantic individualism to substitute for advance preparation, and they put a lot of collective energy into assuring themselves that "others" were to blame.

I'm sure they made plenty of contractual and paranoid statements in their extremity, but we should be generous to them for the innovations and consciousness raising they provided their fellow Americans.

—W.J. Mechem
La Grange, Ill.

They don't need reserves

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN CAN be certain of three things: work, unemployment and death... but not always in that order!

Your editorial on full employment (*ITT*, Feb. 1) was very good but I do not believe the reserve army of the unemployed is an important factor except as a scare tactic employers use by letting us know we can be replaced. In a computerized capitalist economy millions of able-bodied and willing-to-work people become superfluous. A shorter work week is the solution but capitalism will not allow it.

—Art Liebrez
Annandale, VA

An egregious example

I'VE READ AND ENJOYED *ITT* for months but I must say that you've got the lousiest movie review section I've seen in any publication. I mean what the hell, who wants to go see a movie when a reviewer gives the whole story away. Who wants the surprise stolen from them?

David Szonyi's review of *The Boys in Company C* is an egregious example. He tells us exactly, or nearly exactly, how the movie ends. The task of the reviewer should be critical analysis, not a blow-by-blow account. Why don't you study some of the reviews in the *New Yorker* or bring in some of the excellent movie reviewers from *Cineaste*.

—Walt Hudson
Evanston, Ill.

Editor's Note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

DIALOG

Newark: Don't blame victims

Your article on Mayor Kenneth Gibson and the rebuilding of Newark (*ITT*, Feb. 1) fell far short of what I expect from your fine paper. Reading the article, one would believe that white middle class households are to blame for Newark's decline while Newark's projected revival is simply an unexpected irony of the energy crisis. Most of the analysis turns on the question of racial dynamics—blaming "racial phobias" and referring to the "demographic trauma" that hit the city. Gibson sums up with "I think that Newark was given a bad name because of its racial makeup."

This analysis differs little from that of Big Business. Anthony Downs, president of Real Estate Research Corporation and chief urban adviser to Nixon, Ford and Carter, also tells us that neighborhoods decline because of "household

decisions." "The real force behind neighborhood change," Downs claims, "is the impact of people moving in, moving out, deciding to stay or deciding to look elsewhere for housing."

This is just another way of blaming the victim. No blame is assigned to those whose decisions have a real impact on the life of the city and its occupants—Newark's industrialists, bankers and the real estate industry.

Newark's industrial base has been eroded by industries that moved out to cheap labor areas. The loss of jobs and property tax revenue created a city that could no longer support its citizens. Banks redlined neighborhoods years ago. Blockbusting has been rampant; landlords milk buildings to abandonment and whole neighborhoods are leveled by interstate highway construction and urban renewal clearance. Much of Newark's population has been uprooted by these forces. They are poor, mostly black, and the economy has no use for them. Meanwhile Newark's remaining citizens are subjected to the highest property tax burden in the country. Those who could flee Newark did.

It's true, as T.D. Allman says, that Gibson is likened to caretaker of a graveyard. He presides over a city that can no longer provide a living for a large segment of its population. And his only hope to revive Newark's economy is by attracting private capital. Those who

control the purse strings of private investment are aware of Newark's strategic economic and geographical location—but capital investment dictates the terms, not the mayor. Their message is clear. Rid the city of its dependent, unemployed and black population and private capital will reshape the city as a commerce, finance and transportation center. Years ago the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey took over the Port of Newark. This bustling, productive port now pays a piddling amount to the city in lieu of property taxes. These are the investment terms for which Gibson can hope.

Paul R. Porter, an industrialist and author of *The Recovery of American Cities* spells out the scenario for us. He has proposed "that obsolete inner-city districts should be transformed into neighborhoods attractive enough to compete with suburbs, especially for people who work in the central district and nearby places. The poor should be 'helped' to relocate outside the inner city and should be assisted to find suitable housing and nearby work opportunities." The claim is that the poor and underemployed would be closer to industrial employment in outer areas.

Newark's story is part of a nationwide phenomenon particularly affecting the major cities of the north. As industries move to the south or abroad, our cities are being reshaped into centers of corporate and financial

activity. The captains of finance and industry along with their allies in all levels of government provide us with optimistic slogans of urban revival such as Detroit's Renaissance City, Chicago's "21 Plan," St. Louis' "Team 4 Plan" and D.C.'s "Year 2000 Plan." These are nothing more than elaborate plans for using limited federal funds to expand new corporate growth centers, to revive local tax bases and to upgrade neighborhoods for middle and upper income families. But there is no plan for the poor and a majority of the working class.

Once we understand the game plan, the crucial question remains. Can organized community resistance dictate its own terms or will the corporations and banks continue to have their way?

The future is unpredictable. In San Francisco the occupants of the International Hotel, now evicted after a nine-year struggle, continue to fight for their housing and their community. Initially the people's movements will be defensive. Stalemate is often possible. Occasionally offensive actions may succeed.

The scenario provides the foundation for community organizing in the '70s and '80s and the base upon which a national movement is emerging.

—Patrick Morrissey
Shelterforce
East Orange, N.J.

PERSPECTIVES

□ FOR A NEW AMERICA □

Is economic democracy a California dandelion?

By Sidney Lens

In California, where panaceas bloom like dandelions, some of the old New Leftists around Tom Hayden have conceived a doctrine called Economic Democracy. As explained by Derek Shearer, one of its fathers, it is "an eclectic and typically American approach," borrowing from Franklin Roosevelt, Upton Sinclair, John Blair, Ben Seligman, Bertram Gross, among others. Its goal, as the name implies, is a "democratic economy," built through alternative institutions such as food coops, and worker-owned stores and production units, thereby fashioning a "democratic culture within or alongside the dominant business culture." Its strategy is based on running "leftwing" candidates for local and state offices, and creating city and statewide organizations "around economic issues."

This is undoubtedly an attractive substitute for socialism to many people because as Shearer points out "socialism has a bad name in America." It connotes "government dictatorship" in Russia, China, Eastern Europe, and "bureaucracy and the welfare state" in England, Sweden and other countries. We have to get away from that label, he implies, not only by using softer language—e.g., economic

democracy—but adopting programs less harsh than traditional leftist planks such as a planned economy, social ownership of the banks, oil companies, basic industries.

As Hayden puts it, the radicalism of the 1960s must be replaced by the "common sense" of the 1970s.

I wonder.

No sensible humanist—or socialist—objects to adopting an "American approach" or the creation of alternative institutions. The more the merrier, in fact, for they indicate that ever larger groups of Americans are disassociating themselves from the shibboleths of the present system. But to make this the political goal for this generation is not an advance toward a better world but a cop-out. It deflects us from our real problems and from real solutions, into by-ways that are sterile and counter-productive.

Shearer speaks as if he has discovered something new. But in fact the underclasses have always forged alternative institutions. The first unionists, as far back as the 1790s, established producers cooperatives as a technique for winning strikes—by underselling their bosses. In the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s Robert Owen, Albert Brisbane, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Horace Greeley and many of our great writers and thinkers built alternative com-

munities such as New Harmony, Brook Farm and a host of "phalanxes"; and religious radicals formed dozens of settlements on the principle of share and share alike. Frances (Fanny) Wright established a community in Neshoba of white radicals and slaves (whom she bought from their masters), as an alternative means for ending slavery. Producers and consumers cooperatives also flourished for a while in the middle of the 19th century.

None of this endured; none of it brought leftists a broad constituency; none of it seriously challenged the status quo. And the chances that Hayden's "economic democracy" will lead us to the promised land—ultimately—is even smaller. It has two obvious and glaring defects: first, it addresses itself to lesser problems rather than the central ones; second, it delays and avoids confrontation with the national power structures that are responsible for today's problems.

What are those problems?

First and foremost is the nuclear arms race and the foreign policy of imperial aggrandizement on which it is based. When I last saw Hayden in Washington some time ago he showed me a quite good document on the arms race. But this is not made central to his political platform, for the same reasons that Shearer eschews the word "socialism" namely that Americans by and large favor the arms race (we need it, they say, to hold the Russians at bay and to gain jobs), and because most of the "reform" Democrats whom Hayden's movement is wooing feel it is politically costly to attack militarism.

Second is a national security state operating in secret, which defines "security" as military power and sets the national priorities so that spending for more armaments is considered essential, but spending for human needs is considered peripheral. It is idle, in my opinion, to talk about full employment, for instance, unless there is a simultaneous campaign to dismantle the national security state. And no amount of food coops, etc., can undertake that task; it requires a movement or political party that directly confronts the military-industrial complex at its source. It is not a matter of first building a political constituency (of left-wing Democrats, primarily), and then attacking the national security state. It is a matter of building a political constituency by attacking the national security state.

Third, the disarray of the American economy can no longer be considered episodic or temporary. The structure of the Pax Americana, based on freer international trade and acceptance of the dollar as the international medium of exchange, is collapsing rapidly. We confront astronomical foreign debts by the non-oil producing, less-developed countries (more than \$200 billion), which can backfire on our own U.S. (and world) banking system, causing untold industrial shutdowns. We also face angry allies who are being depleted because the dollar is no longer convertible to gold and is falling

rapidly in value. Like it or not we are at the beginning of a trade and monetary war such as the one which shook the 1930s and blended into World War II.

Moreover, the two welfare states which were developed under the New Deal and vastly expanded after the war—the welfare state for the poor (unemployment compensation, social security, welfare), which was intended to undercut thoughts of revolution, and the welfare state for the rich, the 100-odd billions given the upper classes annually through tax breaks and direct subsidies which was intended to keep the private enterprise system from bankruptcy—both welfare states have promoted deficits and debts which threaten the whole structure with ruination. Thus, what America needs is much more than economic democracy: it needs a planned economy to prevent continued dissipation of our resources and to allocate wealth and income equitably; it needs to establish social control over the conglomerates and transnationals—in most cases through social ownership.

Admittedly, these are massive projects and the American public is certainly not ready for them at this moment. But deep and enduring sickness requires deep and enduring remedies; it is not amenable to little patchworks. True, the word "socialism" is in disrepute. But the concept "economic democracy" is a next-to-useless bandaid. It is, in effect, pie in the sky, for if we win what Hayden and Shearer want us to win, we will have pretty much what we have now, with minor modifications.

Shearer calls on us to "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." We must learn to crawl, presumably, before we learn to walk. Only after such preliminaries, Shearer says, can we put forth a Presidential candidate and "challenge for national power." But assuming all this is possible, we would still have to give those we are seeking to convert a vision of what we are working toward. Otherwise why should they vote for us instead of, say, Birch Bayh? That vision should include—I repeat—an end to the arms race, a dismantling of the national security state, a planned economy, social ownership and/or control.

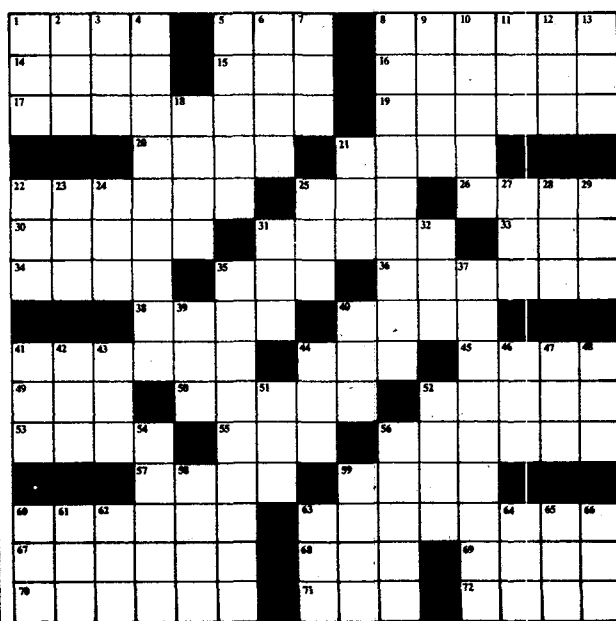
But to win a constituency on a vision no broader than "jobs" or "alternative institutions" means having to run for the Presidency on the same program—an updated New Deal, an updated Keynesianism. It will not be possible suddenly to escalate the rhetoric and politics to the kind of basic changes needed to save us—and the world—from holocaust and economic disintegration.

That is why the Hayden-Shearer panacea is a cop-out, not an answer. I can understand that after years of tilting windmills they want to enjoy some success—or what is called success. Too many people who have tried that route, however—Bayard Rustin, for instance—have found they have had to moderate and moderate their position ever further toward the mainstream, until in the end they have become indistinguishable from other establishment politicians. I hope this doesn't happen to Tom Hayden or Derek Shearer and others on the left who are designing similar scenarios.

Sidney Lens is a veteran journalist. His latest book is *The Day Before Doomsday* for Doubleday.

Heroes

By David Mermelstein



Across:

- 1 Oriental name
- 5 Possesses
- 8 FIRST NAME OF MAN HONORED IN CHINA!
- 14 AGING REVOLUTIONARY
- 15 AGING CHAMP
- 16 Lone assassin?
- 17 MARTYRED BLACK LEADER
- 19 Condition
- 20 Dutch painter
- 21 Thirst quencher
- 22 Furniture items
- 25 Total
- 26 Furry animal
- 30 Hurts
- 31 FIRST NAME OF SUFFRAGIST
- 33 College in Iowa
- 34 Needle case
- 35 Nixonian button
- 36 Rodeo activity
- 38 Sign gas
- 40 Common French infinitive

- 41 Tull or Pugh
- 44 PART OF DECEASED CHINESE LEADER'S NAME
- 45 Japanese naval station
- 49 Gold in Cordoba
- 50 Snake
- 52 REVOLUTIONARY LEADER
- 53 Part of a hat
- 55 Cousin of Wed.
- 56 A privilege
- 57 Cereals
- 59 Swedish court star
- 60 Throbbing
- 63 PROFOUND REVOLUTIONARY ESTEEMED BY 8, 14, 44, 52 Across & 4, 22, 63 Down
- 67 PACIFIST LEADER
- 68 Irish org.
- 69 Mine, in Nice
- 70 Come up
- 71 Torme or Ott
- 72 Unless: Lat.

Down:

- 1 Climate: Abbr.
- 2 Mine, in Rome
- 3 Cousin of Pac.
- 4 DECEASED REVOLUTIONARY LEADER
- 5 Corridors
- 6 Charity
- 7 "_____ of one, half-..."
- 8 HERO OF 52 ACROSS
- 9 Bone in Greek
- 10 Horde
- 11 Dine
- 12 Prefix meaning more than
- 13 Leaders: Abbr.
- 18 Paddles
- 21 Word in Inge title
- 22 MARTYRED REVOLUTIONARY
- 23 Kind of trick
- 24 Irish exclamation
- 25 "_____ in the morning..."
- 27 Where on *parle francais*
- 28 *Oui's* alternative
- 29 Beer vat
- 31 Evangelist's concern
- 32 Conjunction
- 35 WATERGATE SLEUTHS?
- 37 EXTINCT BEING OR SECTARIAN HERO?
- 39 Feminist objective
- 40 Kind of snuff
- 41 Patient sufferer
- 42 "To _____ is human..."
- 43 Familiar Fr. pronoun
- 44 Permit
- 46 Caucasian language
- 47 No longer working: Abbr.
- 48 Eng. cathedral city
- 51 _____ Kapital
- 52 Roll up
- 54 Shapes
- 56 Lesson
- 58 U.S. tennis player
- 59 Expose
- 60 Eastern title
- 61 Golfing goal
- 62 Prefix for one
- 63 REVOLUTIONARY LEADER
- 64 Pierre's friend
- 65 Varangians
- 66 Found on some faces



No movement for the transformation of American society can hope to succeed without a strong element of patriotism. The Left needs a rationale for social change that flows naturally out of our unique American history, experience and revolutionary-democratic-humanist traditions.

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