

LETTERS

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

BECAUSE OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE of the courageous strike by the members of the United Steelworkers Local 6500 in Sudbury, Ontario, against the giant International Nickel Company of Canada, which recently passed the 200-day mark, I feel that some erroneous reporting in Doug Smith's account (*ITT*, Mar. 28) should be corrected.

The morale and the solidarity of the 11,700 workers waging this tough battle have been remarkable. That spirit will survive unfounded innuendo. You do a disservice to their men and women, however, in wrongly implying that the International Union is providing something less than full support for their strike. Let me provide some facts that Mr. Smith, your "prairie bureau chief," correspondent, either failed to research or deliberately chose to ignore.

Last Friday, April 6, Local 6500 Financial Secretary Andy Evelyne deposited in the local union's bank account a check for \$349,200— an amount provided each week for strike relief from the Strike and Defense Fund of the international union. That check brought to \$9,428,400 the amount thus far provided from this fund to the INCO strikers. Strike relief from the USWA Strike and Defense Fund had begun immediately upon the conclusion of the three-week waiting period specified in its rules. It will be continued as long as the strike goes on.

Voluntary contributions to the strikers from the other USWA locals, both in Canada and the U.S., from other unions, and from other sources, such as the New Democratic Party, which made a donation, now total about \$500,000.

In addition, some \$85,000 and a lot of toys and clothing were collected as a result of a special Christmas appeal to individual Canadian members of the USWA from Stew Cooke, the union's District 6 director. The INCO strike has engendered great support from the Canadian labor movement, as your article accurately stated.

This strike has been a crucial test of working people and the unions in today's increasingly frequent and bitter encounters with powerful multinational conglomerates—corporations that scorn national labor law and/or operate overseas, pitting the well being of their North American workers against underpaid workers in far-off lands.

As this is written, the Local 6500 Bargaining Committee is in Toronto to meet with INCO officials in a session called by the Ontario Ministry of Labor. While hopeful that a just settlement can be reached soon, the USWA—at all of its levels—is prepared to continue assistance until an agreement is achieved by the INCO workers in Sudbury.

—Russell W. Gibbons
Director, Public Relations
United Steelworkers of America

POLITICAL BLINDNESS

I WAS SHOCKED AND DISTURBED BY your article regarding the National Lawyers Guild entitled "Left-wing lawyers rebuff Maoists" (*ITT*, Mar. 14). IN THESE TIMES describes itself as being an alternative to "sectarian politics." Yet, the above title you used is a perfect example of sectarianism.

A primary aspect of sectarianism is interpreting events to fit one's own political purposes and viewpoints. The Guild convention was not a fight against what you pejoratively described as "Maoists." The article fails to analyze the varied political content of the four-day Guild convention. For example, the convention unanimously voted to make anti-Weber work a priority, and raised Guild con-

sciousness about anti-sexism work to a new level.

Your predisposition to lump all parties together also causes another mistake in the article. The "Anti-Imperialist Caucus" is described as being formed jointly by the RCP and CPML. That is absolutely incorrect and shows a gross misunderstanding of the political dynamics of the convention and the Guild.

There are a few other errors, such as stating that a hundred members attended the convention, when there were approximately 1000. But most of those errors are oversights or typos and not a result of political blindness.

Your article shows that sectarian practices can be found in all political groups, not just the ones of the other side.

The Guild is not an umbrella organization of pre-party and party groups. As the rest of your piece points out, the Guild has played, and is continuing to play, an important role in the struggle for fundamental social change.

—Paul Harris
President, National Lawyers Guild

Editor's Note: We regret the typographical error that gave a figure of 100 delegates. It should have been 1,000.

It is not sectarian to interpret events to fit one's viewpoint. Every responsible publication does that. (In fact, our failing is in not being able to do that consistently.) Sectarianism is narrow-minded attachment to a sect, secular or religious, without regard to the views of the population at large.

THE NEW YORK TIMES AND US

THIS IS MY FIRST EDITORIAL FAN LETTER. We subscribe to, or pick up copies of just about every left publication we can lay our hands on out here in Milwaukee. Without a doubt, you are the best left informational publication to be found. Why? Because you publish the news, hard news, otherwise not to be found. *Seven Days* is a rehash of AP, UPI with a radical gold giltting added, a lit of camp rhetoric. *Mother Jones* is better but skims over. What we need are facts and more of them. The most in-depth news, hard news, to be found in the U.S.: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, IN THESE TIMES.

I hate to lump you together with the capitalist press. But still, people read newspapers for one reason: to get the news. These three publications seem to have the most news.

—Olivia Edelman
Milwaukee

SEEING THE LIGHT

LEFTISM AND SOCIALISM ARE NOW reactionary forces. This is because they both favor government. (Some kind of government.) Instead of condemning all politicians, they condemn only some of them. Both favor voting, politics, running for office, etc., and these things are worldliness. They never solved any problems.

God is now governing the Earth and He has wiped out all crime. This is a sample of what He can do. He doesn't want governments getting in His way. They inevitably do.

God is also running all big industries. "Big business" is thus no longer a problem in America. Their executives tended to be worldly, so He took them over. America has always solidly wanted free enterprise, and to oppose it is the height of foolishness. There is nothing wrong in principle with free enterprise.

Russia abandoned free enterprise and didn't use capital, and it has held them back ever since. They need capital badly. They didn't trust the profit motive. But in free enterprise, in the free

market, the profit motive does no harm. I wrote about it in my letter to Irwin Knoll.

I have good will toward You and hope You will see the light.

—Don Bratton
Oxnard, Cal.

ABORTION DEBATE

THE RECENT LETTERS TO *ITT* CRITICIZING the abortion debate raise useful points. But I disagree strongly with their attack on *ITT* for printing this debate.

First, it is a major and careless exaggeration to claim that publication of this debate wrought "great political damage to the women's movement." Similarly, it reflects a wrongheaded view of the left press to propose that certain questions of major public controversy in society are out of bounds for airing in a socialist publication (and I would certainly argue this is true for any major issue of contemporary controversy—from abortion to the union shop). For our still tiny movement—widely feared in part because of public suspicions that socialists will not tolerate dissent—to censor contrary points of view is self-defeating. The principle embodied in free inquiry and free imagination applies here exactly: the way to refute spurious arguments and claims is to understand them and demonstrate their flaws (which requires their direct expression) not to fear and suppress them.

Second, the authors' unwillingness to see anti-abortionists' positions argued in "our publications" suggests a certain radical depersonalization of our opponents. However wrong they are, however outrageous their tactics at times (some of which—it is important to recall—are borrowed from the left), anti-abortionists are, after all, human beings. If an anti-feminist, anti-woman stance forms an important strand of motivation in the movement, so too, for many, does a desire to reverse this society's devaluation of human life. Such people are misused and misled, often by the right wing. But only by according their beliefs a measure of comprehensibility—while we also are firm and clear about our convictions—can we hope to build a democratic and humane movement. Similarly, only by understanding the contradictory nature of the traditions that generate the movement (most importantly, Catholicism), can we hope to reach those in the same traditions who can be won to support women's right of choice. In the civil rights movement, many whites sought—with encouragement from black comrades—to engage members of the Ku Klux Klan in dialogue, because we understood that poor whites were potential allies of blacks.

—Harry Boyte
Minneapolis, Minn.

ABORTION

IHAVE FOLLOWED THE ARGUMENTS around the issue of abortion in *ITT*. I agree with those who believe *ITT* should not, at this time, be a forum for the anti-abortion forces, whether they be "socialists" or not.

If we lived in a society where everyone had a guarantee of having adequate housing, food, medical care, education, and equal opportunity, then a woman raising a child alone would not have to worry about poverty. She would not have to worry about child care because there would be 24-hour parent-controlled, public supported child care centers. She would not have to be concerned about unequal employment opportunity, because she would be valued as a whole person whose unique abilities can be channeled in any direction. She could be anything she wants to be. Men, in that society, would be equally involved in child rearing and responsibility. Each might have part-time employment.

Under these circumstances, the decision as to whether or not to abort a pregnancy would be based much more on real choice, rather than moral stricture

or economic or psychological necessity. Motherhood (Parenthood) under these circumstances would be a different experience.

Even then, some women would not want children. They must also be allowed to choose. However, in such a society a priority might be given to creating a safe, 100 percent effective method of birth control for both men and women.

Now, however, we must fight for our right to terminate pregnancies. We must also fight for socialism as a society where abortion will diminish in proportion to the care that the society takes of everyone.

Thank you ever so much for the Albert Einstein piece (*ITT*, Mar. 21). It was absolutely inspiring to me!

—Jackie Christeve
Watsonville, Cal.

SEPARATING THE ISSUES

A NUMBER OF ISSUES ARE BEING smooched together in the recent debate on *ITT*'s abortion debate. One is the way *ITT* treats feminist issues generally. Here I see the ill thought-out choice of a respondent to Elizabeth Moore of a piece with the sensationalist, hand-wringing treatment of the Rideout case and the wife beating issue, as well as the lack of discussion of feminism in articles about the Democratic party.

A second topic is how Moore should have been answered, an important issue if you think there are *ITT* readers who are against abortion for poor women. But I must confess I barely read the Mulhauser piece. I'm not interested in reading positions I assume to be close to my own.

Which brings me to a third issue: whether the Moore argument should have been printed at all. Here I strongly disagree with my comrades from California, CARASA and elsewhere. Every day I encounter students who are passionately anti-gay rights, anti-abortion and anti-welfare. The more I know about the arguments of the right, the better able I am to address the racism that underlies these beliefs of theirs. I thought about the Moore arguments because I encounter them, and the debate helped me to think about them more clearly. A socialist newspaper, it seems to me, should give you the information you need to do the political tasks you have in hand.

—Kate Ellis
New York

ISLAMIC GROUPS

ITOTALLY ENJOYED YOUR ARTICLE "Islam is Growing as a Third Force in Modern Politics" (*ITT*, Feb. 28). I would be interested in hearing discussion about Al-Islam in the U.S.

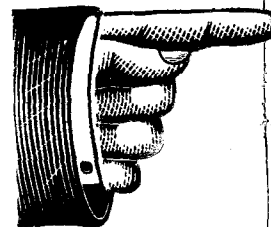
There are several Islamic groups in this country that have mass appeal to third world people. As examples, attention should be given to the World Community of Al-Islam in the West (formerly the Nation of Islam) headed by Wallace D. Muhammad; the Ansar Allah Community, in Brooklyn, New York; the Five Percenters, and other "orthodox" movements.

I would like to hear some discussion from *ITT* not only covering these groups as political forces or their influence on politics, but also how the socialist movement views these groups and the type of relationship that might develop between these forces.

In the name of free discussion.

—Aaliyah Shabazz
Daytona Beach, Fl.

**MORE
LETTERS
ON NEXT
PAGE**



LETTERS

A PLEASURABLE STEP

YOUR EXISTENCE IS ONE OF THE MOST vital elements in the community of leftists, union folks, organizers and progressive people in this country. You keep us all in touch with each other, as well as the world. I also appreciate the good looks of the paper—you have outstanding graphic designers, as well as writers and editors. It's with pleasure that I am becoming an *ITT* sustainer.

I realize you have limited space and I hope that as you grow in subscribers you can increase your length, for I think there's a real need for more cultural news coverage. The arts not only reflect the hopes, passions and bitterness of our society but serve to educate, to bring us together politically and culturally. You do a fine job on arts reporting but I'd like to see more.

—Mary Forrest
University City, Mo.

IS THE LEFT RIGHT?

MUCH OF WHAT JOHN JUDIS SAYS IN "Is the left always right?" (*ITT*, Mar. 7) is central and correct. It's strange that socialists, who believe theoretically in the bankruptcy of liberalism, cannot see its actual bankruptcy when it smacks them in the face. Thus they are driven to join the bankrupts and invent hypotheses of "swings to the right," cabals, conspiracies, and all manner of things that go bump in the night to explain the current behavior of the electorate.

It's even more unfortunate, as Judis points out, that people whose ostensible faith is in the masses cannot perceive that the people understand best that liberalism has run its course. A few numbers may illustrate Judis' argument: In the five states of Minnesota, Iowa, Colorado, New Hampshire and Maine, where conservative Republican challengers defeated incumbent, liberal, Democratic senators this last election, the Republican candidates received 55,664 fewer votes than Republican candidates received for those seats in 1972. The outcome of those elections was determined by the almost one million people who voted for liberal candidates in 1972 but who no longer are willing to do so. These people represent a leadership vacuum of enormous proportions that could be filled over time by the right wing or, with a great deal of hard work, by socialists offering relevant programs and proposals. It will not be filled by socialists offering dull rehashes of liberal vapidities.

Having said that, it may seem like quibbling to suggest that Judis is outrageously sanguine in his appraisal of initiatives, referenda and conventions. What makes Judis believe that the election of delegates to a constitutional convention and their deliberations therein would be substantially different from the current deliberations of Congress? I expect that they would be roughly the same, with the same mediocre results and slightly fuzzy chipping away at constitutional freedoms. Nothing drastic, but a perceptible deterioration. My estimate has to do with how the business of politics is currently carried on in the U.S., and how the deliberations of elective bodies are currently conducted and influenced. Without change in the forces and dynamics of American politics, why look for changes in the outcome?

Initiatives and referenda, with which I have had some experience, are another matter. These days, they are usually not a sign of health or hope in the body politic, but the last defense of a besieged population whose government is totally in the hands of the corporations. Sometimes they work. They hold the enemy and perhaps impact on the balance of power. But corporations can use them too.

Initiatives and referenda ought not to be endorsed as a political principle. On the level of principle, plebiscitary dem-

ocracy in the industrial age is the manipulation of people, pure and simple, as the careers of scoundrels from Louis Napoleon to Anita Bryant demonstrate. Plebiscitary democracy is a device for forcing political decisions in the absence of mediation by discussion, exploration, consideration and compromise, self-discovery or community.

Support for direct-democracy type mechanisms is part of the whole miasma of nostalgic populism cloying up the political dialogue these days, as folks try to resurrect magical measures from a mythical New England past—self-sufficiency, town meetings, public spiritedness, etc.—instead of confronting the political economy of late capitalism.

Let us build a socialist movement in America, offering real critiques of our current dilemmas and real programs and candidates to respond to them. That way nostalgia and voter apathy may be transformed into building the future.

—David Looman
Washington, D.C.

TUT, TUT

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE EXCEPTION TO some of the comments made in Alan Wallach's petulant article about the King Tut show (*ITT*, Mar. 21). Wallach talks about the "enormous theft of Chinese art" by U.S. museums, and in general seems to equate museums and archeology with the imperialist looting of weaker nations. Yet why no mention of the August 1966 fire when government-sponsored Red Guards in Peking totally destroyed China's Central Institute of Arts, containing thousands of priceless artifacts from China's ancient history? Why no mention of "democratic" Kampuchea's crass destruction of ancient and revered sculptures in the Po Veal temple museum, or in the White Elephant temple? Or Lenin's rape of centuries' worth of icons, art, and historic churches? Or the later burning of the Kiev-Pechersk monastery, with its thousand-year-old archives, by the MKUD?

Since many of the revolutionary regimes Wallach evidently supports are committed to the razing of an old order so as to build a new society, it is truly fortunate that Western museums have been able to safeguard such a wide variety of artifacts from so many different cultures. I feel the cultural heritage of mankind is a birthright to all citizens of the planet; and the museums and traditions which help preserve this world heritage should be praised, not condemned.

I am also surprised there was no mention of the fact that the considerable revenues from the King Tut show did not accrue to Egypt's Department of Antiquities, as was assumed by the public, but went into that nation's general revenues, a good portion of which is spent on American and French arms.

—Matthew Bennett
Nashville, Tenn.

SCIENCE AND THE PEOPLE

MANY THANKS FOR THE SEVERAL pieces on Einstein (*ITT*, Mar. 21). As a scientist and a socialist, I find it refreshing to see progressive coverage and recognition of the importance of understanding the impact of science on our culture as well as our political and economic institutions.

Einstein's statement on socialism suggests many points of departure for a strategy designed to revolutionize science along with the rest of society. He directly challenges the traditional separation between scientists and the lay public, from both ends. Given the immense interface between science and society, it is essential that scientists begin to politicize themselves, to "express views on the subject of socialism" and other subjects which affect them as much as anyone, and to work toward demystifying the language and process of science. It is equally essential that non-scientists seek to understand science and come to terms with its impact on their lives and its political character.

Einstein clearly understood, even before many of our current technological crises had arisen, the limitations of technological solutions to social and economic ills, warning us "not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems."

Finally, Einstein recognized the integral (but not inevitable) role science has played in capitalist development. It follows that revolutionary changes in society at large must include, and will to a significant degree rest upon revolutionary changes in the process and practice of science. Given this, a progressive analysis of science can and should play a vital role in our struggle for social change.

—Richard Denison
New Haven, Conn.

EVERYONE GAINS

IT TOOK COURAGE FOR *ITT* TO support the Carter peace initiative in the Middle East, when knee-jerk radicals are probably going to oppose it. Certainly there are dangers ahead. Not only with regard to Israel's opposition to Palestinian self-determination, but also with the strengthened U.S. presence in the area. But under the circumstances, the peace treaty is a step forward, for it moves a no-win stalemate off dead-center.

For all its rhetoric, the PLO cannot win its homeland through terrorism or force of arms. And the conservative Arab governments, when push comes to shove, would rather have an Israel they can make militant speeches against, than a radical Palestine state that might threaten their own reactionary rule.

It is important that the peace process be internationalized with Soviet support. In the long run, everyone gains from a neutralized Mideast. A singular American presence can only breed anti-imperialist agitation.

Even more important, the PLO must clarify its position. Does the PLO still demand a democratic, secular Palestine? Or, as events in Iran suggest, does it now favor an Islamic revolution that, in this context, means religious war?

The distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism has always been a tenuous one, but principled and necessary. An Islamic PLO, opposing Israel on religious grounds, blurs this distinction and its position becomes reactionary and anti-Judaic. Israeli objections to dealing with the PLO must then be given greater consideration.

Still, Palestinian self-determination is the key to peace. Carter has broken with the American Jewish establishment and its hard-line Zionist position, and this took some political courage. The American left must support this initiative and encourage U.S. pressure on Israel to recognize Palestinian rights.

—Marty Jeter
Brattleboro, Vt.

MORE, PLEASE

I HAVE THOROUGHLY ENJOYED *ITT* from the beginning. I read it from cover to cover. For the first time in my life I read the "sports page," which, in conventional publications is simply amplified PR/commercialism.

The most moving articles have been in a category I call "roots of American socialism." The articles typically reveal socialist origins or beliefs in classic American (most often capitalist) symbols.

An example of this is *ITT*'s republication of Albert Einstein's essay on socialism, or more accurately, on "the essence of the crisis of our time...the relationship of the individual to society." Another equally potent essay was the recent exposure of the populist origins of the *Wizard of Oz*.

Emerging religions and cultures dominate prior religions and cultures by assimilating, stealing and reinterpreting old myths and celebrations to serve the new society. Consequently, soldiers of a revolution become guardians of insurance policies, Woody Guthrie's populist hymn

"This Land Is Your Land" sells airline tickets, and "blessed are the poor" becomes irrationalization for oppression.

Your articles make each remembrance of Einstein, each replay of *Oz* on TV, reminders of not only facts, but of beliefs and feelings that motivate me on a day to day basis.

"Seeing is with the heart"—I believe I read that in *The Little Prince*. Not only do I need facts, I need nourishment for my "heart." An American socialism, or an American democratized economy, needs to rediscover and create symbols with roots in our national history. More, please.

—Bob Fitch
Weed, Cal.

SELF-RIGHTEOUS AND SECTARIAN?

FOR REASONS I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND, David McReynolds and Kendrick Kissell want to resurrect the dreary history of the 1968-72 Socialist Party. Their letters (*ITT*, Mar. 21, 28) both attacked the integrity of those who did not belong to their caucus in general, and the political honesty of Mike Harrington in particular.

McReynolds says Harrington never participated in the anti-war movement: He never saw Harrington in jail. Had Dave charged that those who failed to follow him and the War Resisters League in civil disobedience and active resistance lacked his moral courage or followed the wrong course in opposing the war, I would concede part of his case. But to argue that his activity was the only anti-war activity dismisses hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Americans who opposed the war in Vietnam. The McCarthy, Kennedy and McGovern campaigns, participation in the 1969 Moratorium and the early 1970s Mobilizations, the 1970 student strike, public advocacy for an end to the war and constituted vital anti-war work, in which Harrington and others in the SP participated. To dismiss this is self-righteous and sectarian.

As for Kissell's and McReynolds' contention that the Coalition Caucus of the SP was not anti-war, I speak as the sole staff person in the brief history of that ill-fated group. Within the SP, we advanced a consistent position for unilateral withdrawal; we were attacked within the SP and in some trade union and intellectual circles for "objectively pro-Communist" politics and for our work with the Trotskyist-dominated Mobilizations.

It never occurred to me and to a few dozen contemporaries in the SP and its youth section, the YPSL, not to be anti-war. We rang doorbells for Al Lowenstein, Robert Drinan, Ab Mikva, Phil Hoff and Joe Duffey. We identified with the anti-war politics of Norman Thomas and, yes, of Mike Harrington. When sectarian anti-Communist politics led the YPSL and SP majorities to oppose McGovern in 1972, it was too much for us.

A friend since those days recently remarked that he and I had an immunization against the politics of nostalgia. It's true. We also have reason to be proud of the limited, imperfect but honorable role we played in the anti-war movement.

And we have reason to be proud of the role we have played in helping to launch DSOC, which among its many other virtues orients to the politics of the present and the future and shuns the once fashionable parlor games about who was more pure when.

—Jack Clark
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Editor's Note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may 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.

By Michael Harrington

On the eve of the 1980s, capitalism is in greater trouble than at any time since the Depression. As a consequence, American socialism could be more relevant than it has been in a generation.

Our history is in the process of turning a corner. The fundamental assumptions of New Deal liberalism, the "public philosophy" of this country since the '30s, no longer apply in a stagflationist U.S. It was thought that a judiciously controlled and gentle inflation could close the gap between an unplanned productive system, which periodically and necessarily outstripped its market, and a maldistributed system of wealth that was itself both a precondition and result of the production system. That strategy worked, though with enormous imperfections, between 1945 and 1969. It doesn't work any more.

So the long run is now, and immediate solutions require structural change. In this setting there are enormous possibilities for socialists, including even a qualitative change in our position in society. It is also true, but not so obvious, that we face difficult, frustrating complexities and great dangers. In what follows, I will insist upon problems as well as opportunities in the conviction that we need nothing less than an intelligent and informed militancy.

First, if we do not have "the" answer to the present crisis—there is no "the" answer—we have a clearer sense of its systemic causes and the radical changes needed to overcome them than anyone else. As long as private corporations dominate the investment process, so long will democratically elected governments—including liberal governments—defer to the priorities of the boardroom rather than to people. That means that measures to cope with that structural gap at the center of the system will be pro-corporate and, as a result, anti-social.

Washington socializes private costs and failures (Amtrak) and will privatize social innovation (the subsidized energy alternatives that will be turned over to the oil multinationals who created the crisis in the first place). It permits huge companies to administer prices while laying off workers, supports agribusiness and insurance companies to the detriment of farm production, food consumption and health. It only recently lowered the tax rate on incomes of more than \$200,000 so as to provide those worthies with "risk" capital that, more likely than not, will be invested speculatively, in land or rare stamps, rather than in the productivity it is supposed to finance. The critical thing is that these outrages are the coherent, inevitable and necessary products of a corporate-dominated economy and politics.

Moreover, we have a host of politically possible proposals that begin to deal with the system of injustice: price (but not wage) controls on oligopolies; the elimination of all tax benefits for runaway corporations; full employment planning, including the expansion of a productive public sector, funded by the social sources of capital—retained profits, pension funds, insurance monies—now totally under private control; national health; the transfer of money from inflationary and life threatening military uses to social investments; the federalization of welfare

funding; a publicly owned oil and gas corporation; and so on.

And yet, the existence of the crisis, and of a relevant socialist program to understand it and resolve it, does not guarantee success. The Socialist Party of the U.S. gained members when the Great Depression broke out—and then declined precipitously in the midst of the greatest capitalist collapse in history. Its ideas were often infinitely richer and much more right than those of the reformers who triumphed during those years. That means that the socialist ability to intervene in the present situation will in considerable measure depend upon how we make all the myriad interconnections, both programmatic and political, between our broad analysis and the specifics—the often unruly, sloppy specifics—of the society.

The issue of the balanced budget is a case in point. It arises out of justified popular resentment at high taxes and stagflation. The people accurately sense what we can document: that ordinary citizens pay a disproportionate share of taxes used to forward corporate priorities. But, in part because of the absence of a mass socialist movement, that left perception

has been given a rightwing focus: people have reacted against social programs rather than the reactionary way in which they are financed. That dangerous misunderstanding is, in turn, at the bottom of the demand for balancing the budget. The people attack the pittance given to social need and ignore the billions devoted to corporate purpose. Dissatisfaction with New Deal liberalism leads them back to Herbert Hoover economics, not forward to socialist-tending solutions.

That happens, not simply because the argument is dominated by the right, but also because almost everyone deals with symptoms rather than causes.

Socialists understand how a reciprocally interacting system of unplanned production and maldistributed wealth gives rise to problems that are normally met in a reactionary way. But, to put it mildly, we have not reached the people with that complex fact. That is one reason why the constitutional convention movement is dominated by rightists who, if they succeed in electing delegates on the basis of their reactionary nostrum, will then be able to enshrine sexism and racism in the Constitution.

In short, the old liberalism is dead, or dying, but its progressive successor is not in place, or even in the wings. It is, I think, a fantasy to believe that, after several generations of spectacular socialist failure, the next step in America leads to spectacular socialist success. The mass constituencies for social change are liberal, if by that word you understand a commitment to positive gains *within* the system, reforms that modify, but do not completely transform, the basis of corporate power.

Our transitional program must point beyond those limitations to the necessity of a new society with a totally different basis and address the immediate concerns of people who only vaguely perceive that necessity. Under these conditions, to insist upon all or nothing is to guarantee an outcome with which American socialists are much too familiar: nothing. Our radicalism will be proved by our ability to go with the people where they are and work with them for the most left variant of what is possible.

THE ROAD TO 1980

Ted Kennedy challenge could create climate for socialism to grow



John Judis

Clearly Carter must be challenged. I am hopeful about his efforts in the Middle East and see him as better than most on the campaign for nuclear and conventional disarmament (which is highly qualified praise). But his domestic stewardship is a disaster. He is following the Nixon program of 1969-71 under circumstances even less propitious than in those years and with results that are already far worse. His failure to develop a strategy to combat stagflation on the left of center is a major reason for the development of powerful and frightening fantasies on the right. He must be replaced.

"Waiting for Teddy," as I pointed out at the DSOC Convention in Houston, is a profound weakness of liberalism today and something we must combat—even though I, speaking for myself, think a Kennedy candidacy is the very best immediate possibility. DSOC, however, is not going to "wait for Teddy." We are going to work with Democratic Agenda to build a major meeting of the Democratic left on Nov. 17-18 to define a program in search of a President and a Congress. For if Kennedy announced—or any other serious alternative to Carter appeared on the left (Jerry Brown is an alternative on the right)—the democratic left must have a very specific program to keep that candidate, or President, from moving charismatically to the comfortable, empty Center.

Do I then think, as the IN THESE TIMES editorial implied (Mar. 7), that it is the job of socialists "to help elect a 'better' executive of the Corporate State"? Of course not. Putting the question that way predetermines the answer. But let me rephrase the issue: Is it the job of socialists to support a more liberal and humane candidate who is the focus of both the illusions and the socialist-tending hopes of a mass movement? Does it make a difference to neighborhoods, city councils and state houses whether the reactionary right or the liberals are in power? Are the basic determinants of the life of localities, workers, women, minorities, etc., established by national economic policy?

The Socialist Party in the '30s counterposed its excellent long-run proposals to the immediate, imperative and inadequate demands of the actual mass movement. If we repeat that error, we will repeat its failures too. The critical point, I think, is to focus on the possibilities for movement-building in 1980 and to realize that they are intimately related to the fate of liberal politics. An effective national challenge to Carter by mainstream liberalism is the best possible environment for building a militant socialist movement. If one focuses upon the candidacy and forgets the movement, that is to fall into the merest opportunism; if one tries to build the movement and forget about the candidacy, that is the way to irrelevance.

In short, we are back on the tightrope which history has rigged for American socialism to walk. But there are hopeful signs. There are new coalitions—Progressive Alliance, Citizens Labor Energy Coalition, COIN, and others—which we in DSOC hail, not the least because we pioneered the perspective of bringing together labor and the issue constituencies in Democracy '76 and the Democratic Agenda. The existence of these forces points to an imperative for 1980: Whatever strategy we adopt, we must adopt it together. And that means accepting some difficult limitations. Worker's organizations, to take one example, are rooted in the realities of daily life in a way that differentiates them from ideological organizations built around issues and programs. I insist upon this point, not because I am unenthusiastic about the new coalitions, but because I think that they will be the rallying point for the left for the next historic period.

History will not end in November 1980 and it is quite possible that many of our immediate hopes will be disappointed. Yet, if we function as the militant left wing of mass coalitions, if we relate our visions of the far future and our radical programs for the immediate future to where people are, we can, in this new crisis of the capitalist system, build a serious socialist movement in the mainstream. That, in the midst of all these ambiguities, is a straightforward program for struggle.

Conference on **ECONOMIC PLANNING: LEFT ALTERNATIVES**

May 4-6, New York University

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