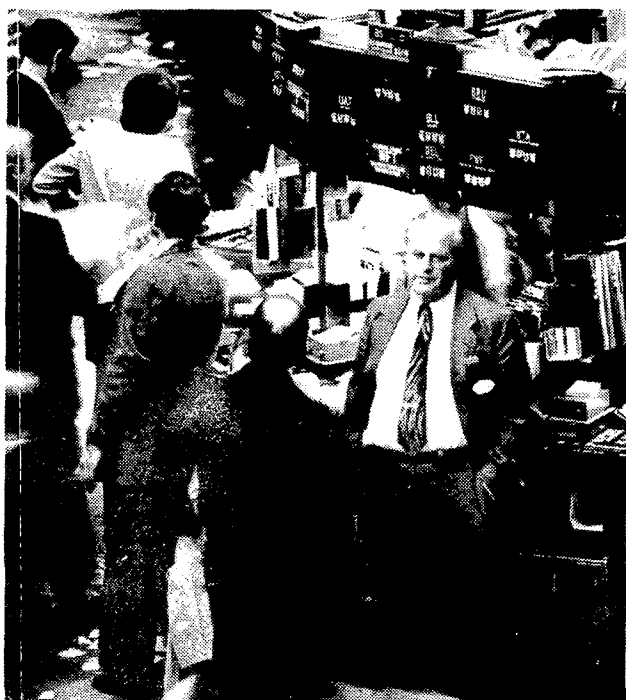


THE INSIDE STORY



Steve Kagan

The New York Stock Exchange.

A starting place for the politics of the '80s

By David Moberg

Big business is big news these days. Ford Motor Company is on trial for homicide in the deliberate construction of the fire-bomb Pinto. Hooker Chemical and others stand accused of conscious poisoning of whole communities with their waste products.

But the biggest news is not that corporate misdeeds are finally getting public exposure. Rather, corporate America is increasingly on the offensive, actively fighting unionization of workers with a big bag of dirty tricks, attempting to turn back progress on occupational safety and health, reaping gluttonous oil profits, urging massive social welfare budget cuts in order to make possible the breaks for business and the rich, and even creating their own "public interest" advocacy groups and an "energy awareness" squadron of pro-nuclear partisans.

Not only on Milton Friedman's new TV series but also throughout the news media, government, universities and, of course, the corporate world, there is a massive consciousness-raising (or lowering) campaign underway. As usual, Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury* captured the tone with John Connally's executive T-group: It's all right to be rich. You can do anything you want.

All this has worried Michael Jacobson for several years. As director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, he was the initiator in the years 1975-77 of the Food Days, modeled on the original Earth Day, later to be followed by Sun Day. He saw the "Day" format as a way of involving new people in an issue, but he says, "I was upset that Earth Day was so totally superficial. With Food Day we tried to take people from nutrition and hunger down to the causes."

Now he wants to start with the cause of the problems—excessive, abusive corporate power—rather than any of the various symptoms. Hence the birth of "Big Business Day," scheduled for April 17 throughout the country.

Big Business Day is shaping up as the latest in an encouraging series of coalitions of labor unions, citizen action groups and public interest organizations, the most successful of which has been the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition. It plans to "put big business on the defensive" for industrial pollution of the environment and workplace, corporate crimes (price-fixing, bribes, undermining public health and safety), unemployment, exploitation of other countries, misleading corporate advertising and propaganda, union-busting, monopoly

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pricing and autocratic subversion of democracy.

Sponsors of Big Business Day include Ralph Nader, John Kenneth Galbraith, UAW president Doug Fraser, United Food and Commercial Workers president William Wynn, Coalition of Public Employees leader James Farmer, Robert Georgine (head of the AFL-CIO building trades department), Machinist president William Winpisinger, AFSCME president Jerry Wurf, Barry Commoner, Cesar Chavez, Julian Bond, Michael Harrington, David Brower of Friends of the Earth, Ira Arlook of the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, Midwest Academy director Heather Booth, Americans for Democratic Action president Patsy Mink, Rep. John Conyers, Consumer Federation of America president Kathleen O'Reilly—and others from religious, senior citizen, and women's groups.

Difficulties.

To counter business propaganda that big government and big labor are the sources of all evil, Big Business Day will encourage a wide variety of local and national activities focusing on the dangers of corporate power. It won't be easy, organizers believe, because unlike the previous "Days" there isn't as concrete a focus. Also, many potential allies—including some environmentalists, religious organizations and even prominent black groups—might agree with Big Business Day critiques of American society without believing that corporate power is the central cause (or without wanting to jeopardize relationships they may have with big corporate donors).

In addition to teach-ins, debates, and demonstrations, such as symbolic "bread lines" at banks that redline communities, Big Business Day will name a "Terrible Ten" list of corporate malefactors (such as J.P. Stevens, Hooker, Johns Manville or the Lykes Corporation). There will also be a Constitutional Convention in Washington during which "stakeholders"—that is, everybody who has a stake in what corporations do—will debate resolutions on what they would do if they directed the corporations and "to demonstrate how corporations could operate in a profitable manner and be a bit more humanistic," according to organizer Charlie Garlow.

The centerpiece of the Convention will be a "Corporate Democracy Act" designed to reform the operation of the 300 biggest corporations so that top managers will be legally more accountable for their actions, more information will be publicly disclosed, communities would have defenses against plant closings and all employees would have protection against arbitrary punishment. It would be a "Landrum-Griffin Act for our largest corporations," advocates say, alluding to the 1959 law aimed in part at insuring union democracy.

New federal chartering of corporations is needed, the drafters of the act argue, because big companies are, as Edmund Burke once said, simply states disguised as merchants and these private states are undemocratically governed. But the democracy the act prescribes is mild: more independent directors with greater resources to question the managers (who are described as the real holders of power), assignment of "responsibility for representing a particular social concern" to nine of the outside directors and various mechanisms to increase shareholder power (such as cumulative voting, which increases the chances of minority blocs being represented on the board of directors). The act was written so that it has at least enough political plausibility and potential good benefits to ruffle the feathers of corporate lobbyists, but it is a pale version of democracy to inspire much popular agitation.

Organizers don't simply want to criticize Big Business, they say. They want to offer alternatives—going into business for yourself, coops, unionization, worker

self-management, alternative technology, small business, "free enterprise in the true sense," as various organizers and the publicity materials indicate.

What's missing?

You may notice that one alternative to corporate domination, socialism, isn't on the list. Although some of the supporters are socialists and see their reforms as heading toward socialism, Big Business Day organizers clearly are chary of having the event identified as socialist.

Big Business Day is not anti-capitalist; it is anti-corporate. As the introduction to the Corporate Democracy Act argues, "The issue is autocracy vs. democracy. Not regulation vs. freedom or capitalism vs. socialism." What Big Business Day seeks is "corporate accountability"—and a little more free space for small business and various cooperative projects.

Many socialists will feel that it doesn't go far enough. But it does take important first steps. There are lots of activists even within the "progressive" spectrum of American politics who don't understand much about the power, goals and past or present misdeeds of the major corporations. One environmental sponsor said he was "embarrassed and shocked at the environmental groups that don't see big business as a problem."

Some of the participants may disagree—on nuclear power, on the relative evil of bigness in itself, or on the comparative merits of reforming the corporations or starting alternatives. But Big Business Day will once again bring together a broad range of public action groups with central sections of the labor movement (and not just the usual small list of the most progressive unions) to point the finger of blame for America's problems at corporate power. That's not a bad place to begin the '80s.

For more details, contact Big Business Day, 1346 Connecticut Ave. N.W. Room 411, Washington, D.C. 20036. Their telephone number is 202/861-0456

Meany's passing

George Meany, for 24 years president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, died on Jan. 10 at age 85, shortly after turning over the gavel to Lane Kirkland. In both his strengths and his limitations, he reflected much of the character of the American labor movement—more concerned with organizational stability than with social transformations, slow to join in on many important social and political issues but in due time a frequently solid force on behalf of progressive legislation, a tough critic of business but even more obsessed with fighting communism. (*In These Times*, Nov. 14, 1979).

Perhaps it was simple modesty, but in his impromptu comments at his last AFL-CIO convention, Meany made it seem that his main accomplishment, unifying the labor movement, was more a coincidence of the deaths of AFL and CIO rival chiefs than the result of his miracle-working. Meany's penchant for protecting the interests of these labor leaders he held together helped to alienate many union members from the labor movement, just as his hawkish support of the war in Vietnam lost the labor movement support from young people, the emerging left of the '60s and many liberals who would otherwise have been solid allies.

Meany's long tenure in office assures him a solid spot in the history books, but it will be more for presiding over a movement that had become consolidated and slowed down than for boldly advancing workers' interests.

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IN THESE TIMES

Carter rekindles Cold War

By John Judis

JIMMY CARTER TOOK OFFICE IN January 1977 with a foreign policy designed to avoid the mistakes of his predecessors. "For too many years," Carter told a Notre Dame audience on May 22, 1977, "we have been willing to adopt the flawed principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our values for theirs."

Carter pledged his administration to pursuing detente, disarmament, and human rights; he promised not to subordinate "trilateral" relations with Japan, Canada, and Western Europe or "North-South" relations to the less developed countries to the "East-West" rivalry with the Soviet Union. "Being confident of our future," Carter said, "we are free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear."

Carter pledged a reduction in defense spending and American arms sales; he expressed skepticism about the MX missile; he promised that there would be no future Vietnam during his administration.

A review of Carter actions from June 1977, when Sec. of Defense Harold Brown committed the U.S. at a NATO meeting to an annual three percent increase in its defense budget, to October 1979, when Carter cancelled a Soviet computer order to protest the presence of its brigade in Cuba and authorized up to \$245 million in arms sales to Morocco's King Hassan, shows a steady erosion of the original policies and framework.

Defense spending was increased, arms sales have risen annually, aid has been extended to anti-communist despots, the MX missile was given the go-ahead, a plan to station missiles in Europe was rammed through NATO in spite of Soviet offers to negotiate, and relations with China were pursued not simply to further trade and communication, but to isolate the Soviet Union.

The seizure of the American hostages in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has accelerated this erosion. In December, Carter announced projected defense increases of five percent for the next five years. The defense budget would include funds for a rapid deployment force capable of spot-interventions in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere. Carter committed himself to building up a naval presence in the Indian Ocean, which he had earlier pledged to "demilitarize." He authorized production of the F-15, a fighter plane designed solely for export. He proposed \$400 million in aid to Pakistan's General Zia. He instructed Secretary Brown to propose "complementary actions" to the Chinese against the Soviet Union, and he agreed to sell the Chinese a computer with military applications. He asked American allies to participate not only in a grain embargo against the Soviet Union, but to cancel their exports and call in their loans. And he abandoned SALT II and other arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski and the romantics.

Carter's original foreign policy was derived from two sources: the Eastern academics along with disillusioned former State Department officials clustered around the journal *Foreign Policy*, and the facile Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Executive Director of the Trilateral Commission. Both Brzezinski and the *Foreign Policy* group, later dubbed the "romantics" by their critics, accepted the traditional goals of American foreign policy—the creation of a healthy world terrain for American capitalism—



'I THINK I'D RATHER STAY UP HERE AND PLANT THE TOMATOES, ANYWAY!'

but they differed with the strategy of both the old Cold Warriors and Henry Kissinger.

The *Foreign Policy* group, which included future State Dept. appointees Richard Holbrooke, Paul Warnke, Richard Moose, and Leslie Gelb, argued against making East-West relations the centerpiece of American foreign policy; they saw the Soviet Union as a decaying society with a conservative and cautious leadership who could be brought into increasingly cooperative relations with the U.S.; they argued that even Soviet-backed Third World nations, if permitted to do so by a tolerant American foreign policy, would eventually gravitate to an American-led capitalism because of the latter's economic and moral superiority.

Brzezinski, who had been a Vietnam hawk and opponent of detente, came in the '70s to share the *Foreign Policy* group's criticisms of Kissinger's *realpolitik* and his Cold War obsession with East-West relations. But Brzezinski supported Kissinger's strategy of linking SALT negotiations to Soviet "good behavior," and he supported Kissinger and Nixon's use of the "China card" against the Soviet Union.

In his first six months in office, Carter leaned toward the trilateral, North-South, human rights side of the Brzezinski-*Foreign Policy* views, but political problems at home and what seemed to be setbacks overseas caused Carter to alter his policies.

The most important cause was the worsening spiral of Soviet-American relations, which was partly the result of Brzezinski's provocations, partly the result of Soviet and Cuban actions, and partly the result of the new importance both countries attached to the Mideast and its oil supplies.

Carter was angered by the use of Cuban troops in Ethiopia and Angola, allegedly in training the Zaire rebels. Carter officials also suspected Soviet instigation of South Yemen's attacks on North Yemen. And they came to see the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan not merely as the attempt to shore up a potentially rebellious border state, but as an initial intrusion into the Persian Gulf.

Undoubtedly, some of these Soviet actions were inspired by Brzezinski's China Card, American proxy-successes in the Sudan, Somalia, and Zaire, the isolation of the Soviet Union from the Mideast peace process, and the plan for Euromissiles. But they were nevertheless seen as evidence against the *Foreign Policy* group's optimism about Soviet intentions and detente and as confirming the darker side of Brzezinski's own views.

The success of liberation movements

in Nicaragua and Iran also shook Carter's convictions. These movements were partly aided by the administration's human rights rhetoric and by its insistence on non-intervention, but they brought to power regimes ostensibly hostile to the U.S. The Shah's fall and the seizure of the hostages seemed finally to invalidate the State Department romantics.

Finally, the romantics' view not only didn't seem to fit events, it also had difficulty competing with the hard-line views for popular sympathy. The Vietnam War had shattered both the hopes and fears on which American foreign

policy was based. As memories of the atrocities committed by the U.S. in Vietnam faded, Republicans and conservative Democrats were able to win popular support with rehashed Cold War rhetoric.

With his own popularity sagging, Carter tried to steal some of the hardliners' thunder by moving closer to their views and adopting their policies. Invariably, as occurred in the flap over the Soviet brigade in Cuba, Carter's narrowly political actions ended up worsening American-Soviet relations and created,

Continued on page 6.

UNITED NATIONS

Decisive U.N. vote on Afghan crisis

By Michael Shuster

UNITED NATIONS

THE U.N. IS USUALLY VERY PREDICTABLE. It is easy to tell ahead of time who will support most resolutions that the General Assembly considers—and who will condemn them. No one here doubted that the resolution condemning the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the recent Emergency Special Session of the assembly would pass. What was surprising was the point spread: 104 in favor, 18 opposed, with 18 abstentions. It was an overwhelming and stunning defeat for the Soviet Union, a victory of sorts for the U.S., which has been most vocally critical of Moscow, and—just as important, some observers here believe—a victory for the nonaligned nations movement as well.

From the beginning on Jan. 10 of the four-day debate—the Emergency Session was convened three days after the Soviet Union vetoed a similar resolution in the Security Council—it was clear that all the nations of the West and most in the Third World weren't buying the Soviet explanation of its Afghan intervention.

Soviet ambassador Oleg Proyanovsky had argued before both the Security Council and the Assembly that Soviet troops had been invited into Afghanistan by the government in Kabul—the same government that several days later was overthrown. Proyanovsky charged that the U.N. had no business dealing with the Afghan crisis, and he charged that "Washington and Peking were interfering in the internal affairs," of another nation.

That charge was too much for some western delegates. U.S. ambassador Donald McHenry called it "sheer hypocrisy" and British ambassador Anthony Parsons labelled it "breath-taking."

"Which would appear more to fit the category of interference in Afghan internal affairs," queried Parsons, "the incursion into that country of five Soviet divisions or the chorus of protest from the world community at that action?"

The parade of condemnations.

Indeed, as nation after nation took the rostrum to condemn the Soviet actions, Parsons was proved right. And not all those on the list of speakers were nations that have traditionally been counted as pro-western.

Outside of the nations of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union only received support for its actions from nine nonaligned nations: Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, Granada, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen and of course Afghanistan itself. Among those that condemned the Soviets were Tanzania, Iraq and Jamaica. Nicaragua, Algeria, Congo and Syria—all generally considered to be close to Moscow—were among the abstentions. Ironically, Iran voted against the Soviets despite Proyanovsky's veto a day earlier of U.S.-sponsored economic sanctions against Iran.

Several Third World nations were notable for their independent stance. Nigeria was the country that most attempted to straddle East and West. "No country has assisted the Third World more than the

Continued on page 12.