

## BLAME THE VICTIM

I AM APPALLED TO READ THE NEWS stories coming from St. Thomas, where the Democratic Party royalty have gathered to analyze the party. Speaker after speaker blamed blacks, women and the minorities for the loss of the Democrats. We have a long history of similar reasoning in education circles in trying to explain why poor children often fail in schools. It is called "blaming the victim."

The party royalty, while feasting on their lobster, should indeed look at themselves. They directed, controlled and shaped the campaigns. And they lost. Their attempt at a Yuppie campaign failed among the Yuppies.

We on the democratic left worked for the defeat of Ronald Reagan in unprecedented numbers. In several cities we had virtually to organize our own campaigns because the inept, disorganized royalty were too busy at luncheons. In fact, along with labor, we saved the campaign from a much worse "drubbing."

They controlled the candidates, the campaigns, the money and they engineered the defeat. Now to blame it on the left, the national minorities, women and "others on the fringe," is a blatant distortion. This distortion must not be allowed to become the common wisdom. The Democratic Party is controlled by a combination of forces on the center-right. Our work, both inside and outside the party, must not allow these center-right forces to determine

the parameters of debate nor to characterize the discussion from their perspective.

—Duane Campbell  
Co-chair, Anti-Racism Committee  
Democratic Socialists of America  
Sacramento, Calif.

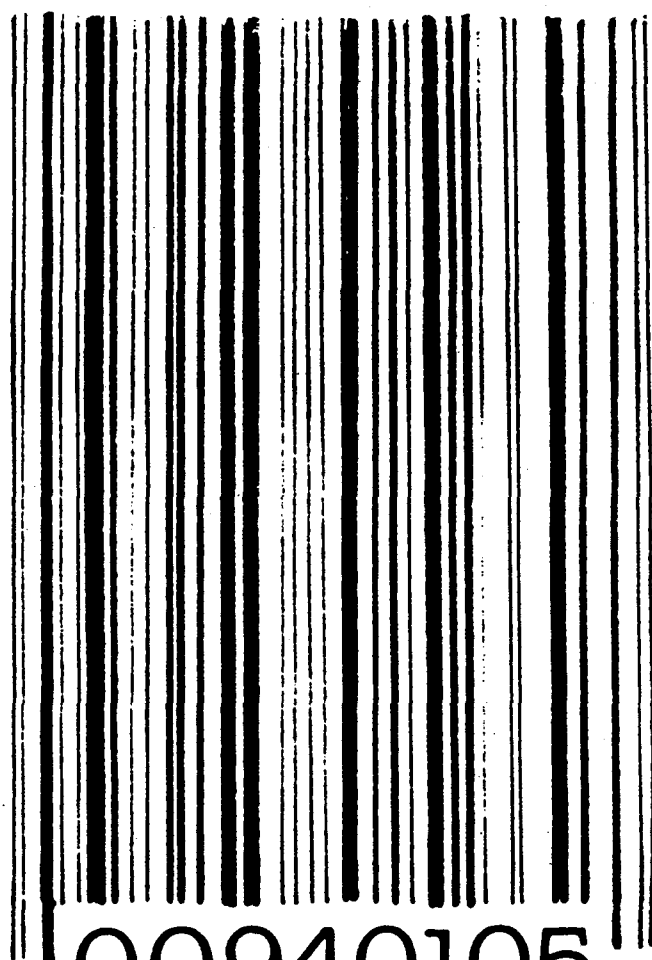
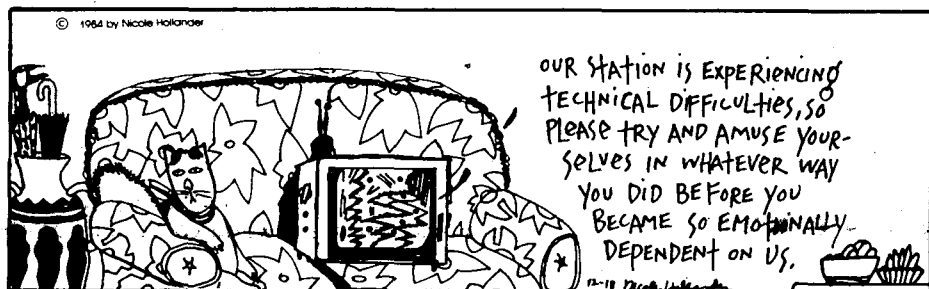
## KNIT ONE

I'D LIKE TO SEE ITT FORGET ABOUT the left's problems for several issues and focus on those of world capitalism. Reagan aside, the system as a whole is caught at its worst crisis in 50 years. Aspects of that crisis include a frightening arms buildup, a corporate assault on union contracts across the developed West, growing racial polarization in the U.S., a staggering Third World debt crisis, uncontrollable U.S. deficits, growing economic nationalism and protectionism pitting the U.S. against Europe and Japan and a burgeoning ecological crisis—hazardous wastes contaminating our future water supplies, acid rain affecting farms and forests, banned pesticides being sold to the Third World, etc.

Where can such a flawed economic system be headed, except down the tubes? It seems one useful task that the left press could do for the next four years would be to explain that to the American people, while putting people in contact with organizing projects that are trying to tackle capitalism's many problems. By patiently knitting together a radical perspective on the system's basic bankruptcy with the accumulated wisdom of a dozen reformist movements trying to solve micro-level prob-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



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## LETTERS

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

lems, we might eventually lay the basis for a strong anti-capitalist movement in this country.

Until then, let's leave off moaning about the "crisis in socialism." It's depressing and it doesn't help anybody do anything to solve the alleged crisis.

—Andy Feeney  
Washington, D.C.

## BIG GOVERNMENT

IT IS INTERESTING THAT IN SO MANY comments on the status of our two major political parties the Democrats are cited for being a collection of special interests that do not rise at the presidential level to a national consensus. This was precisely the observation of Sen. Eugene McCarthy in '68 and '72 when he was running for the White House and anticipated by 15 years the current criticism. But the Republicans too are equally burdened with a collection of disparate special interests. When the history of our era is written it will be seen, I think, that the Democrats gained a record for incompetence in foreign military adventures under Kennedy, Johnson and Carter that they could not live down for many presidential elections, just as Herbert Hoover did for the Republicans on domestic issues. These Democratic presidents providently got us into such adventures in which they were whipped. It is this reputation, and not the "special interest" label, that is at the heart of the Democratic slide from favor at the White House level.

What is likely to lose the White House for the Republicans in '88 and beyond is their devotion to big U.S. military government with the consequent temptation to launch similar military misadventures abroad. In '68, Nixon and Sen. McCarthy advocated some foreign retrenchment as a drawing card for a national consensus. Wisely, I think, the electorate does not want the federal government to be any bigger either domestically or internationally than is

necessary. Whichever party can make that issue its own will be winning the White House.

—Robert L. Kealy  
Milwaukee, Wisc.

## ON THE ONE HAND...

AS A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST I BELIEVE everyone has civil rights, including the unborn child. Abortion, however, is a multi-faced issue and there shouldn't be a law forbidding it.

Women should be given a real choice. If a woman can't afford to eat the right foods for a healthy birth, what is the point? Poor pregnant women should be given financial aid and follow-up treatment after the birth. If she decides to bring a baby into the world that child should find the world worth coming into.

I am disgusted by the right's seizure of this issue, when the very same fringe is diametrically opposed to any kind of aid to poor pregnant mothers and children.

The left should take this issue of abortion as theirs in the name of civil rights for all.

—Edward Brinson  
Mobile, Ala.

## CORRECTIONS

"Butter beats guns in LA" (ITT, Dec. 5) failed to note that the main organizer behind the successful Proposition X amendment in Los Angeles was Jobs with Peace, a national campaign to change federal priorities from military to domestic spending.

In Salim Muwakkil's centrespread on the death of Benjy Wilson (ITT, Dec. 12), the sentence "A more recent study conducted by Atlanta's Center for Disease Control found that black men between the ages of 20 to 24 had a one-in-three chance of being a victim of homicide," should have read "...black men who die between the ages of 20 to 24 have a one-in-three chance of being victims of homicide."

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## LIFE IN THE U.S.

By Dave Davis and Tim Peek

CLAIRTON, PA

**P**ASTOR D. DOUGLAS ROTH HAS been barricaded inside the Trinity Lutheran Church for nine days. As the sheriff pulls up nobody can tell if this time he will arrest "the preacher of the unemployed." Roth has disobeyed a court order to vacate his pulpit, but has removed the chains from the church door. Now he says the sheriff is welcome to arrest him—but he will not leave his pulpit. For Allegheny County Sheriff Eugene Coon, this is too much. "I'm not going to arrest a minister at the altar," Coon says. But Roth's defiance has attracted too much national and international attention, so the sheriff moves in.

Coon and two tough-faced female deputies go to the sanctuary, where Roth stands at the communion rail with several union members. "Please step down? I don't intend to make a martyr of you," Coon implores.

"No," Roth replies. "My position is at the altar." With that, the two deputies handcuff Roth and lead him away.

Winding along Pennsylvania Highway 885, the sheriff's motorcade passes through the steel mill towns of the Monongahela River Valley, once the backbone of American heavy industry. Thirty years ago a quarter of a million workers produced nearly 27 million tons of steel a year. The plants operated 24 hours a day. You couldn't see the sun at noon and the sky glowed red at night. People who lived in these towns followed the American dream; they bought bungalow homes, raised families, erected legion halls, schools, churches and bars and fought for their country in three wars.

Now the dream is dying, if not already dead. As the cars top the hill that divides downtown Pittsburgh from the Mon Valley, Roth sees the glittering chrome and glass towers of U.S. Steel, PPG Industries and the Mellon National Corp., homes to another American dream.

### Changing dreams.

The struggle between two dreams, one rusting and burned out, the other distantly shimmering, put Roth in jail.

"The Valley has been devastated with long-term unemployment. Many people have literally been thrown into the street," Roth says. "They're losing their homes, their cars, their marriages and their lives because of the massive corporate evil against them. When you see that day after day over a long time and you have to deal with someone on your doorstep, you come to say somebody's got to do something about this."

The struggle that motivates Roth is the struggle between the captains of industry and its footsoldiers. As the area's corporate leadership charts a new course away from heavy industry, the rank and file have taken heavy casualties.

"They put me in jail because we've exposed the corporate evil that has destroyed so many people's lives—that's what it really comes down to," Roth says.

Roth is a member of the Denominational Ministry Strategy (DMS), a collection of some 30 ministers of all faiths in the Pittsburgh area who have resolved to fight for their unemployed parisheners. They have allied themselves with the Network to Save the Mon-Ohio Valley, a loose-knit group of militant labor unionists.

These groups are working to get back some of the 100,000 jobs lost in the early '80s. They say that corporate Pittsburgh's vision of the future doesn't include them. Roth and the others feel compelled by scripture to change that vision.

DMS was started in 1980 as a ministry program of the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the Lutheran Church in America. The synod wanted ministries responsive to the needs of the

area residents. So they hired Charles Honeywell from the Industrial Areas Foundation, a community organizing training center set up by the late Saul Alinsky. But now the synod leadership thinks things have gotten out of hand.

It's kind of ironic, Honeywell laughs, that the bishop who hired him is now trying to fire him. "They said they trained me to handle all situations. I didn't realize one would be them."

Honeywell and the DMS ministers started counseling youths, visiting old folks and helping patch up broken marriages. But after a while they realized that unemployment was the disease behind the symptoms they were treating.

"Two-and-a-half years ago we anticipated that unemployment would be a major problem for our parishes," says DMS leader James Von Dreele, an Episcopalian minister in Homestead. "So we started doing our priestly work, taking food and clothing to these people. Then we realized it was a structural problem, so we started to ask, 'Who's in charge here?' and found it was the banks and U.S. Steel.... A major decision has been made to destroy heavy industry, and development plans for the area don't include the working families. We say, 'Fine, that's great. Go high-tech. But somewhere, somehow, take care of these people.'"

The U.S. Steel Clairton works used to be the world's biggest producer of coke for steel mills. Now the ovens are mostly idle and employment at the plant is down by 80 percent. A shrinking tax base means the city can't meet its payroll, can't borrow and has drastically cut back services.

Clairton's central business district is all but deserted. Clumps of men gather in the remaining coffee shops and play video games. "For Sale" plays at the local theaters.

"Christ came to people and he, of course, comforted, healed," Roth says. "But then he was also very challenging. He took on the scribes, the pharisees and the moneychangers in the temple, and on down the line. If you're going to present Christ, you better do it in his fullness—not just what pleases the power structure."

### Taking on Mellon.

This view puts DMS and its allies in direct conflict with the powers that be in the Pittsburgh area. The group charges Mellon National Corp., U.S. Steel, Dravo Shipbuilding Corp. and the Lutheran-owned Passavant Health Center with ignoring the plight of the area's unemployed and trying to bust the unions. They allege that a "corporate evil empire" rules the five-county area against the interests of the people.

Mellon National Corp. is the largest bank in Pennsylvania and the 12th largest bank holding company in the U.S., with assets of \$28 billion. It has lent a great deal of money to local industries, but recently has been foreclosing on these loans as the economy has gone sour. Mellon, through interlocking directorates with other heavyweights like U.S. Steel, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and the Cleveland Federal Reserve Board, is the area's most powerful entity.

This power is what the DMS ministers challenge. They maintain the region's woes are not the result of fate, but of a decision by those in charge to kill local heavy industry.

### The ministers' view.

John Gropp, pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Duquesne, is picking up a food basket at a local community college to deliver to a family in his congregation, which has been hit hard by the depression in steel.

Like the other DMS ministers, Gropp has a specific idea of what is wrong in the Mon Valley. He says the area's only re-

# Pittsburgh pastor rallies victims of hi-tech visions

maintaining natural resource—its workforce is being deliberately destroyed. "First they stole the timber, then they took the coal to make the steel and now they are taking the money, exporting the area's resources to develop competing industries," he says.

"We understand economics enough to know that people are being sacrificed to profits," Gropp says. Everybody believes it's just economic development, but, as a priest, how am I supposed to believe that people ought to be sacrificed?"

For Gropp and the others, it is not enough merely to take care of the immediate needs of congregants. They feel compelled to change the structure of what they see as an unjust system. "We see a need to go beyond the traditional priestly ministry of the church and undertake a prophetic ministry," Gropp says.

Gropp takes the food to Crawford Estates, a housing project overlooking U.S. Steel's mammoth Duquesne Works. "There are 680 units here and every one

**Roth is motivated by the struggle between the "captains of industry" and its "footsoldiers." As corporate leaders chart a new course, the rank and file have taken heavy casualties.**

of them is in the same shape," he says as he unloads the brightly wrapped boxes.

Bill F. meets Gropp at the door. Big and not too old, two years without a job have turned Bill into a nervous, whipped man. "Bill used to be solid," Gropp said afterward. "But it just sort of eats at you."

Bill, his wife and their two kids have been scraping by on whatever they can since the mill closed. It has barely been enough. The refrigerator holds half a carton of milk. So the food is welcome. But the charity is galling.

"I was going to school under the retraining program, learning how to work on computers," Bill says. "But it was a joke. The guy running it said I'd never get a job." So Bill waits, applies for work along with the rest of the unemployed and hopes.

### Pittsburgh vision.

Like many other cities, Pittsburgh sees its future as a corporate and technological center. This vision emphasizes quality of life and an "upscale" image in which smokey skies and rough-talking unionists become a liability.

"Pittsburgh was once a real blue-collar, working town," says Mellon economist Katherine Hadden. "In the future it will be more like a normal city, a Mellon Bank white-collar center."

"Pittsburgh used to be the kind of place where you had to change your shirt

twice a day, it was so polluted. No more. It's a lot better since steel went down," she says.

Pittsburgh's leaders are betting on the service sector to save the local economy. Basic manufacturing has consistently declined, but employment in non-manufacturing sectors has recently gone up.

David Roderick, chairman of U.S. Steel, says his operation has run a \$600 million deficit in the last four years and that total steel production is down about 45 percent since 1980.

So the big decisions have already been made in the glass-walled office towers downtown. A recent Mellon Bank report forecast that the area's population would drop 6 percent to 2,139,000 in 1990, down from 2,264,000 in 1980.

The report projects that from 1983 to 1990, 24,700 new jobs will open in private services, 16,300 in trade, 6,400 in mining and construction, 3,700 in primary metals and 2,200 in manufacturing. There will be 179,900 fewer jobs in heavy industry in 1990 than in 1957—a peak steel production year. Of these, 88,100 disappeared from 1979 to 1983.

"We're not going to leave the Mon Valley behind," says W. Lee Hoskins, senior vice president and chief economist for PNC Financial Corp., one of the area's larger banks. "But there are going to be some reallocations. That leaves out the human factor, which is important because it will affect the outcome.... The question is what to do about this change that has left a lot of people out."

The problem with this new economy is that service sector jobs are often inappropriate for someone like Bill F. He probably won't find a place in the new Pittsburgh, says Hadden. "Someone 45 years old is never going to get into high tech. Fifty thousand people are not going to get re-employed." Even if they do get the jobs, how much good is \$3.35 an hour for an ex-steel worker who used to make \$8 an hour plus overtime, Von Dreele asks.

This is the heart of the conflict—there is no place for 100,000 unemployed mill hunkies in the "new" Pittsburgh. "The day of the unskilled laborer with a fifth-grade education is gone," says John Joseph, a retired Clairton works foreman. "These people have to adapt. Animals must adapt or die."

In his more candid moments even Pittsburgh's mayor, Richard Caliguiri, will admit there are people who won't share in the city's renaissance. "I'd rather have fewer people with high incomes than more people with relatively lower earning and spending power," he told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1980.

But to attract the upscale young professionals that everybody wants so badly, Pittsburgh will have to change its smoke-stack image.

So now the slogan is, "Pittsburgh, the City with a Smile," and big, bright billboards are plastered throughout the Valley. "It's like they want to deny we ever existed," says one mill worker.

DMS and Network, out to abort this new image, do not run a typical community organizing campaign. But their numbers are small and they have not made many friends.

A recent editorial by the Greensburg *Tribune-Review* said, "Charles Honeywell, a camp follower of Marxist Sol Lenowitz (sic), has infected some Lutheran pastors in this region with an ideological disease. The Rev. John Gropp of Du-