

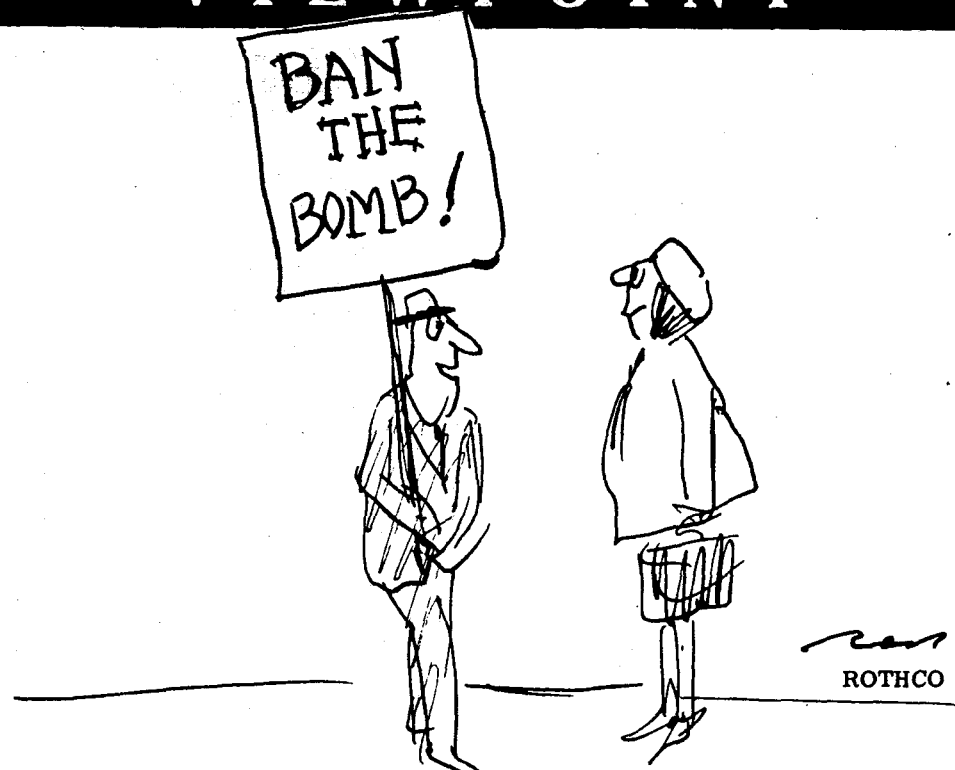
By Jonathan Feldman

A GROWING RECOGNITION THAT THE Cold War has ended with the intermediate-range nuclear missile force accord (INF) has created a growing predicament for the peace movement. Anti-nuclear canvassers are finding that selling peace through fear of nuclear war is ineffective. President Reagan has seized the peace offensive from the Washington peace lobby, and foundations have responded to the renewed detente by turning their attention to domestic issues. Taken together, these developments contributed to the demise of the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy and numerous staff layoffs at other national peace organizations.

But while the movement falters, the arms race continues unabated. Already the political and military significance of the INF reductions are being negated by increases in other more lethal nuclear weapons and increases in unprecedentedly lethal non-nuclear weapons. This reversal occurred in part as a consequence of the peace movement's historic and continued limited focus on single-issue, short-term measures. This has narrowed campaigns to focus on stopping a particular weapons system or, at best, to stop nuclear testing. Invariably, the Pentagon can develop weapons systems faster than the peace movement can organize to stop them.

The movement has avoided a comprehensive approach in the hope of building a grass-roots base around simple, identifiable single issues. In the style of many community organizers, the movement has been looking for victories that inspire confidence. But Reagan and Bush have beaten the movement at this game, successfully peddling INF as the fruits of peace through strength. Reagan has also used the Strategic Defense Initiative to alleviate the same fear of nuclear destruction that advanced the nuclear freeze as a movement. The movement's response to Reagan's offensive has been to engage in its own form of wishful thinking. Some see INF as their own handiwork, rather than the logical outcome of U.S. and Soviet economies devastated by debt, deficits and military waste.

The left wing of the peace movement has offered its own response to the post-INF muddle. Some groups have called for coalitions around military cuts and an expansion in domestic social programs. However, having made this important link, the left also has been silent about concrete proposals for disarmament, planning for peace without depression and reducing the power of the national security apparatus. Instead, some left academics have argued that the military economy is the inevitable by-product of the capitalist system. They believe that the benefits of the war economy to transnationals and elite military planners make serious military cuts impossible and full-scale conversion to civilian production. But, their alternative "anti-capitalist" approach has never had an operational component. The critics have never addressed the direct employment needs of workers confronted by military layoffs. Nor have they addressed the opportunities for environmental, community and labor coalitions, planning and investment that could occur during conversion to civilian production.



"ISN'T IT A BEAUTY? I PICKED IT UP AT A THRIFT SHOP. IT'S EARLY FIFTIES!"

Peace movement decline requires new approach

Political bankruptcy: The peace movement is now devoid of any coherent discussion of the political targets for reduction of the military economy. The movement is not even clear about what legislative proposals would serve its expressed support for comprehensive arms reductions. Instead, large-scale coalition efforts promote a vague discussion of common needs and mutual concerns. The lowest common denominator has been advanced rather than a careful assessment of where to project resources and concentrate efforts. Coalitions built around national demonstrations have often led to dilution of a coherent peace perspective or critique of the warmaking institutions. Instead, the needs of particular groups are addressed in an ad hoc fashion.

Having agreed upon common needs and a commitment to put the resources of the

Reagan's initiatives undercut traditional anti-nuke lobby.

military economy at the disposal of pressing civilian investments, which way do we turn? To answer this question we must address the reality of the military economy and the institutional actors that lie behind intervention, nuclear proliferation and war production. More than 20 million U.S. citizens are dependent on the military for their livelihood. They belong to families that serve in the armed forces or work in the military-industrial complex. The political result of this dependency has been to block substantial military reductions. First, the Pentagon has orchestrated a series of campaigns against military cuts. Laid-off employees have been organized as constituencies on behalf of increased or stable military budgets. Second, increased military dependency among military-serving firms (measured by defense contracts as a proportion of total sales), trade unions (measured by dues-paying workers in military industry as a proportion of total members) and regions (measured by industrial shipments going to the Defense Department as a ratio of total shipments) across the country has increased the barriers to arms reductions. In addition, the TV networks are increasingly captives of the leading military-industrial firms. For example, General Electric owns NBC.

Possible solutions: There is an alternative to vague appeals for defense cuts and reactive protests that offer no alternative plans of action. Twenty-six years ago policy-makers at the highest levels of the U.S. government were actively engaged in the formulation of such plans for general and complete disarmament. They focused on the need for mutually verifiable, phased weapons reductions and the strengthening of international institutions for conflict resolution. In 1961 John J. McCloy, President Kennedy's special adviser on disarmament, and Valerian Zorin, special ambassador of the Soviet Union, reached accord on the "Joint Statement of Agreed Principles for Disarmament" negotiations. These discussions led to the development of an "Outline of Basic Provisions on General and Complete Disarmament," presented by the U.S. government to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva in 1962. Today, a revised version of such comprehensive proposals has been drafted by Marcus Raskin, co-founder of the Institute for Policy Studies. It is a 15-year program of phased reductions and strengthened institutions and procedures for resolving international conflict without resorting to war. This treaty program offers a concrete focal point for both political discussion and organized action in Congress.

Complementing the Raskin disarmament proposals are legislative plans for

economic conversion. By readying military-serving firms, bases and laboratories for civilian production, conversion planning provides options for workers and their families who have been conscripted and employed in service to the military. A model conversion bill drafted by Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) now has 59 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. The Defense Economic Adjustment Act provides funds for local planning, retraining of military laborers and engineers, income maintenance during a conversion and the creation of joint labor-management alternative-use committees that oversee conversion at each facility receiving military contracts.

In addition to the Weiss bill, economic alternatives are needed for the millions of armed forces personnel who face unemployment as they are demobilized after comprehensive disarmament. One proposal that seeks to provide alternatives for communities forced into the armed forces by economic conscription is a "future corps" bill in the Massachusetts legislature. Such proposals need to be supplemented by national legislation that would provide educational and employment opportunities for the millions now serving in the nation's armed forces.

For the anti-intervention movement there are alternatives to ad hoc protests and calls for cutting arms sales to repressive states. The disarmament of the warfare state requires a national movement to develop legal constraints on the use of force, budgetary reductions of institutions of covert action and a popular awareness of the dangers to domestic liberties of a warfare state. Formal proposals in this direction include cutting the CIA's budget in half and Rep. John Conyers' (D-MI) Official Accountability Act of 1987, which calls for legal sanctions against national security bureaucrats who violate any statute, executive order, or international agreement to which the U.S. is a party.

Legislative proposals do not substitute for grass-roots organizing and efforts to construct meaningful political coalitions. Yet, the political program advanced here defines the core of a solution to the political, economic and socially destructive consequences of militarism. Without conversion and economic alternatives for persons in the armed forces, disarmament efforts will be checkmated by communities locked into the military economy. Without a comprehensive disarmament treaty, conversion plans will be overshadowed by claims that arms cuts mean weakness before other nations' conventional and nuclear arsenals. Without comprehensive conversion and disarmament planning, the proposals advanced by some for new "alternative security arrangements" will lend themselves to a conventional arms buildup. Ad hoc protests against particular interventions leave in place the institutional actors who direct these interventions. In contrast, a comprehensive peace program provides a focal point for efforts to reduce military spending and redirect our resources to pressing needs for housing, mass transit, infrastructure and social investment.

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Two-party system: myopic double vision

Iconoclastic philosopher Ivan Illich has pointed out that the basic function of education in today's societies is to make people feel stupid, hence to cow them into lifelong submission. The perversion of democracy known as the two-party system works in the same way, making people feel useless and hence chilling them into indifference.

All the official pretensions have to be turned on their head to make any sense of what is now creaking toward climax on November 8.

Political moralists lament that maybe less than 50 percent of the eligible electorate will bother to vote this time around. (Reagan, remember, in his famous "landslide" over Carter, won with 28 percent of the vote.) But in fact guardians of the status quo are horror-stricken if any constructive effort is made to register more voters, crucial if the country's political geography is to be changed in any serious way. Such guardians include Michael Dukakis, who has consistently turned back efforts to make registration easier in his own state, and whose campaign blocked money going to Jackson-inspired registration drives that might have threatened the power of the traditional political-economic machines.

Education? Even if Illich is right, a good deal of public schooling is now so terrible that kids barely have a chance to feel stupid, being lodged in the cruder categories, despised and ignored. Guardians of the status quo favor a semiliterate, marginalized reserve army of the unemployed. They see no urban crisis, having held their political conventions this year in Atlanta and New Orleans without bothering to notice the

A good deal of public schooling is now so terrible that kids barely have a chance to feel stupid, being lodged in cruder categories, despised and ignored.

central features of both cities—a vast central black ghetto, proof of the enduring malignant vitality of the Kerner Commission's judgments over 20 years ago on the structural racism and inequalities in American society.

No more than Bush, blathering on about his thousand points of light, does Dukakis recognize the existence of an urban crisis or of an underclass rotting in the catacombs of what is touted as the longest uninterrupted business expansion in American history. Dukakis' vision of education, aside from sentimental fantasies of studious immigrant Greeks on the make, is essentially functionalist-corporate, kin to the Fortune 500 chieftain who earlier this year summed up his humanist vision of education with the complaint that just as his company would not accept a 50 percent recall rate on its products, so too was a 50 percent recall rate on defectively educated kids unacceptable. Dukakis has little use for quality public education.

As Kim Moody points out in his pamphlet *The Truth About Dukakis and the Democrats*

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn



in Post-Reagan America community colleges in Massachusetts serving working-class areas have been starved. Middlesex Community College, for example, the second largest community college in the state with 13,000 students, has been sharing space with a veterans hospital. The president of the college says, "It's ludicrous. We've been in a temporary facility for 18 years. Dukakis has consistently tried to underfund the University of Massachusetts....His record on primary and secondary education is similarly bad."

Rebecca Thatcher and Beatrix Hoffman write in *The Guardian*, "In a major battle with pro-education state legislators in 1985, Dukakis gutted an education reform bill that would have increased teachers' salaries, mandated early-childhood programs and limited class sizes. This year, in a rush to close a politically embarrassing state budget deficit, Dukakis proposed to cut state funding to local primary and secondary schools by half. All but 13 of 40 communities dependent on state aid would be cut off."

Vision? Jesse Jackson distinguished himself from the other candidates by talking to people, particularly those he designated as "damaged" and "dispossessed" in his 1988 convention speech. Bush and Dukakis talk to voter profiles drawn for them by the handlers who sterilize their products against contagion. This is an election in which both candidates have never stopped talking about "jobs" while simultaneously finding it impossible to mention the difficult word "union". (Dukakis did accept the endorsement of the AFL-CIO, but kept well clear of anything smacking of union activity.) Nor has either attacked with any energy the fact that the minimum wage has not risen from \$3.35 in the entire life of the Reagan administration, or that fewer than one-third of American workers who have lost their jobs get unemployment benefits. By October 2, 10 weeks after the Democratic convention, Dukakis had addressed political rallies in black neighborhoods precisely twice. This well-considered insult to traditional black support for the Democratic ticket is presumably what Dukakis means by those "tough decisions" he keeps saying he'll make.

A Clear Choice

On the Middle East, of course, the difference between the two candidates became manifest as their speeches to B'nai B'rith showed. Bush said, "Peace will be achieved through direct negotiations by the parties," whereas Dukakis has opted for the terser, "Peace must come through direct negotiations." Bush said, "As for the PLO, I will insist that it accept U.N. Resolution 242, recognize Israel's existence, abandon terrorism and change its covenant calling for Israel's destruction," a position from which Dukakis clearly separated himself with the view that, "There can never be a role in negotiations for the PLO unless it renounces terrorism in word and deed, unless it accepts U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 and unless it clearly and explicitly renounces its own covenant." Whereas Bush pledged, "I am proud that we are working with Israel today on...an anti-tactical ballistic missile," Dukakis opted for the wider promise that, "We are doing all we can to protect Israel from the growing threat of tactical ballistic missiles." In fact, a difference or two can be discerned. In *The Wall Street Journal* Gerald Seib and Barbara Rosenwicz noted that Dukakis says the U.S. should recognize Israeli sovereignty over a united Jerusalem, which Bush, as per U.S. policy, does not. Bush says an independent Palestinian state should be ruled out forever, but Dukakis does not repudiate a statehood option.

And in case you're asking, on paper Dukakis is better on contra aid, South Africa and a whole number of other issues. If elected he probably would not nominate Dan Quayle to the Supreme Court, though the only serving Supreme Court justice placed there by a Democratic president—Byron White by John F. Kennedy—has turned out to be mostly bad. Under Dukakis the National Labor Relations Board might be better, as might the EPA and the Interior Department. It's hard to tell even in these latter cases: environmental regulation was probably best under Nixon and Ford. None of this obliterates the fact that Dukakis has fought a miserable, cowardly, stupid campaign.

Ken Silverstein assisted in the preparation of this column.

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