

because he had ideas which were not those of most of the people around him.

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## Robert S. Browne

1. THE LARGE SWING to HHH at the last minute illustrated that the base for a radical movement was smaller than many had perhaps anticipated.

2. Somewhat to the right but not overwhelmingly so. (If you consider the Democrats as the center.)

3. Radical forces seem much too small to be meaningful. The alienated young are a force, but not very organizable I fear.

4. This is a promising line to take. At the same time, other radicals should work outside the Democratic Party, and as time goes on one should constantly reevaluate the situation. The danger, of course, is that people acquire vested interests in whichever framework they are operating within.

5. I do not place much hope in the working classes as a prime mover. Intellectuals and youth are the main possibilities, plus blacks in their own way.

6. Parallel.

7. I advocate separatism as the tactic which seems best to fit the present situation. I prefer not to prejudge hypothetical situations at this time.

8. Rather broad-based and engaging in electoral activity.

9. Not really. The American situation is too different for any of these experiences to serve as an overall model, although there are useful bits and pieces to be gleaned from them.

10. In general, yes. But the question is not easily answered in a vacuum.

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# Stanley Aronowitz

THE RADICALS IN AMERICA WERE ESSENTIALLY IRRELEVANT to the course and the outcome of the 1968 elections. This situation flowed from the several tendencies pervasive on the left with respect to the whole question of electoral activity. On one side, a significant group of radicals (particularly those who have consciously separated themselves from the traditional Marxist parties) have veered toward a neo-anarchist view of politics. According to this "new left" doctrine, all institutions of class power are inherently oppressive. From this premise, they conclude that participation, even from an opposition posture, in bourgeois elections feeds into the system of domination and acts to coopt radicals. The only politically valid act during an electoral period is to encourage abstention and protest against the reification of popular will expressed by the futile gesture of voting. The mask of democratic representative government cannot be torn away and revolutionary consciousness heightened by engaging the system on its own terms.

The boycott activities of SDS and other new radical groupings reflected an almost classic sectarian ahistorical tendency in the radical movement. It assumes a moral rather than an analytic posture in relation to the development of bourgeois society. It objectifies its own revolutionary zeal as a guide to action, instead of making a sober estimate of the relationship of political forces. It is highly elitist in theory as well as practice insofar as it believes that its vanguard actions can transcend the understanding of masses of Americans who still believe that legitimate choices are being offered by the electoral system, that is, that their vote actually matters. What the boycotters failed to understand was that the process of unveiling the "lie" of genuine participation cannot be undertaken simply by breaking with the system. More radicals were made when Congress expelled the Socialist representatives for their opposition to the first world war or by the act of defiance represented by Debs' candidacy for president from prison in 1920, than by all the symbolic and rhetorical acts of protest against the system as such.

The question that the abstainers failed to ask was: is it possible to radicalize large numbers of Americans through this tactic or should the left have participated in the process, clearly exposing its shortcomings all the way and indicating to the voters that extra-parliamentary forms of struggle are primary for the achievement of social change. Not to have used the elections as a serious opportunity for political education was a reflection of the immaturity of large sections of radical students and activists, the fragmentation of the left expressed through a variety