

wagon, we should remember that Nixon was brought to us as a result of the dump-Johnson movement. If McGovern wins, we can expect the frustrations caused by his inability to bring relief from the basic problems which plague this country to foster a dump-McGovern movement as well. Anybody-but-the- incumbent campaigns become a never-ending business which inhibit the development of positive strategies. It is important to begin building an independent movement for the long haul. The People's Party will not put Benjamin Spock in the White House in 1972. It will, however, continue to elect local candidates this year and have an increasing impact on the direction of the country in the years to come.

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4. RON RADOSH

THOSE OF US WHO SERIOUSLY DESIRE TO DEVELOP both a socialist consciousness and a movement that can effectively pose the necessity of a socialist transformation of the political-economic structure in the United States must not lose sight of our goals.

What the Left critics of Senator George McGovern's campaign argue is essentially correct. McGovern's much heralded "extreme" programs are rather weak and inconsequential; the very defense budget which produces vicious attacks from the Agnew-Connally forces is framed, as I. F. Stone has cogently noted, within the context of liberal Pentagonese thinking; his so-called "soak-the-rich" tax scheme is both limited and poorly thought out and McGovern himself will inevitably move to the right in order to broaden his base. Even Richard Goodwin has observed that "nothing proposed by any candidate approaches or hints at the fundamental alterations which are required" and he goes on to add that "benign extensions of the New Deal cannot meet our fundamental problems of structure and social ideology." (*Newsweek*, July 10, 1972, p. 26.)

All these criticisms, however, are basically irrelevant. The sad truth is that no meaningful radical or socialist movement now exists in this country. A vote for any of the minority sects running candidates is of necessity a wasted vote. So is sitting the election out with the rationalization that the only activity of importance is to build local movements

among the people. To say the latter is akin to arguing that there is no difference between four more years of Nixon and four of McGovern. But there clearly is. The real question is what these differences are.

THE RECENT DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION was obviously so different in its composition that to ignore its meaning and its effect on American politics is to consign oneself to oblivion. The regulars were shut out; the leading bosses including Mayor Daley were not allowed to sit as delegates and there was massive participation by women, blacks and young people, many of whom had never taken part in a convention before. Former "movement" activists gladly took part in the regular politics they formerly eschewed and they put McGovern in against the combined strength of the Democratic Party machines, the center and the labor union leadership.

If McGovern wages the same kind of campaign for the Presidency that he did for the nomination, via an effort to win by concentrating on massive registration of blacks and young voters, he will not be indebted to those who sought the nomination of the regulars and who privately hope he will be defeated. McGovern may very well move toward the center; he is already taking steps to mend his fences with the key figures in the regular Party machine. But he cannot step away from his major program—particularly his strong anti-war stand—and he cannot risk incurring the wrath of those who fought to get him the nomination because of his position.

This means that the McGovern campaign has a potential that can transcend its own limits. Much of the grass roots support for McGovern comes from those actively involved in social movements—women, blacks, young people especially. They will continue to be active in these movements long after a McGovern victory and they will increase their demands and pressures, especially when they expect support from a sympathetic administration. McGovern has succeeded, Christopher Lasch has aptly noted, "by appealing directly to the belief of many people that their officially constituted representatives are no longer responsive to their needs." (*New York Review of Books*, July 20, 1972, p. 19.)

RICHARD NIXON'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SPIRO AGNEW will once again be his running mate indicates the type of issue that will be raised in opposition to McGovern. It is a signal that he will wage a campaign geared to winning the Right. Many Democratic regulars share the conviction that McGovern is a Goldwater of the Left. They hope for a smashing Nixon victory so that they can pick up the pieces of the Democratic Party in time for 1976. In this context, as Lasch writes, the McGovern campaign could create a significant opening in American politics. It could "set in motion popular forces which cannot be appeased by his own pro-

grams." These reforms, however, would not be of a comprehensive anti-capitalist nature and they "would probably create as much dissatisfaction as they would allay."

Socialists must therefore not waste their time prattling about a "lesser evil" and must come to understand the possibilities inherent in a McGovern victory. First and foremost, as the Vietnamese understand clearly, only a McGovern Presidency affords us a chance to end the war on terms satisfactory to the Vietnamese people. Russia and China both seem quite satisfied to deal with Nixon; both are willing to undercut the struggle of the Vietnamese. Only a McGovern victory would allow a conclusion of the war on terms set by the anti-war movement, which itself could grow along with the campaign. (At the time of this writing, even the news of the bombing of dikes in Vietnam produces only apathy.)

While supporting a McGovern victory, socialists must be careful to avoid repetition of the so-called "popular front" policy of the 1930's and 40's which made the Communist Party a left-wing appendage of the New Deal and did so much to destroy the possibility of developing an independent radical movement. Yippie leaders Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who during 1968 told Americans that to vote was to sell out, are now uncritically beating the drums for McGovern. Their political stance reveals the lack of political education so typical of many in the "Movement."

Socialists must also firmly oppose the tactics advocated by Michael Harrington and the Socialist Party. They argue that the unions and their leadership are an American force for social democracy; that even George Meany is a socialist. This misbegotten belief leads Harrington to play the old discredited game of coalition politics and hence to support of Muskie and, if necessary, even Jackson (before the McGovern nomination) on the ground that one must be where the people are; and the "people," i.e., the union leaders, are not behind the "radical" McGovern.

ON THE ISSUES OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS it has become increasingly clear that the Nixon program is simply to whittle down the Constitution in the name of law and order. It is unthinkable for those on the Left to say that there is no difference between the two candidates when the Nixon administration is curbing freedom of the press, prosecuting Daniel Ellsberg, introducing more "no knock" measures, all in the name of law. McGovern, on the other hand, has said that he will offer a position in his administration to Ramsey Clark who was defense lawyer in the Harrisburg trial. Unless we persist in the idiocy of "the worse, the better" and "after fascism, us," we must acknowledge that the potential for radicalism will grow with a less repressive Executive branch.

But perhaps the main point is that, in all likelihood, a radical and socialist movement cannot develop in the United States until the country

goes through a few years with a President who can stretch the system to its very limits. Even with his most advanced program in operation, which is quite dubious, it should quickly become apparent that even a McGovern does not intend to preside over the destruction of the Empire at home—not to speak of the Open Door empire abroad. It is at that point, when the need for radical solutions is being pressed by a developing social movement, that the chance to create an alternative political force will really exist.

A McGovern victory is therefore something that every socialist and radical should hope for. We face the necessity of operating politically through what Rudi Dutschke has termed “the long march through the existing institutions.” In political terms, as Herbert Marcuse has so pointedly warned, it means that “the time of the wholesale rejection of the ‘liberals’ has passed—or has not yet come.” Once we understand that the Left today functions in our nation in a period of counterrevolution, then even support of a lesser evil may make sense. But fortunately, within the context of American politics in 1972, McGovern is clearly a greater good.

McGovern’s candidacy, including his theme of “come home, America,” affords us the opportunity to raise the spectre of a society that does not depend upon creating a good life at home by imperial expansion abroad. But those of us who are committed to changing a system that prevents us from coming home to a human condition must, as a prerequisite, work for a McGovern victory. If we do not, we will only be saying to our brothers and sisters that American radicals and socialists are not serious about politics and that we continually live in a utopian void of sectarian battles and squabbles. When they look at Richard Nixon in the White House, they will also think of us.

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5. NOAM CHOMSKY

I'LL VOTE FOR MCGOVERN, and would urge others to do likewise. Furthermore, I think that activism prior to the election should be designed in such a way as to contribute to the likelihood of a McGovern victory, or at least a respectable showing. A vote in a presidential election is rarely an important matter, but this year is different. The survival of Vietnam is at stake. It is probable that McGovern would terminate the American intervention *in the context of significant peace movement activity*. On the other hand, a Nixon victory will clear the way for renewed efforts to beat the Vietnamese into submission, in accordance with the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine. If the margin of Nixon's victory is great, Nixon and Kissinger may well calculate that they are free to use all means available to achieve their war aims, with consequences that need not be spelled out in detail. For this reason alone, the election is of extraordinary significance.

Apart from this overriding concern, Nixon's radical authoritarianism will continue to chip away at civil liberties and embitter the lives of the poor. On the other hand, I think it unlikely that the main lines of domestic or international policy will vary markedly, no matter who is elected. While the Vietnam war, at this point, is a rather marginal concern for the owners and managers of American society, and can be liquidated as a failed venture without serious cost, it is doubtful that other elements of the McGovern program could be implemented. Specifically, it is doubtful that government-induced production of waste (the military and space budgets) can be substantially reduced. Such alternative techniques of economic management and stimulation of the economy as have been devised threaten the power and profits of the privileged and are therefore virtually excluded from the domain of public policy (recall the Kennedy tax reform). Furthermore, the advantages of a conservative coalition of great powers in the interest of "international stability"—i.e., stemming radical nationalism or moves towards economic independence—are manifest and will probably guide policy independently of the outcome of the election. If there were a substantial popular movement committed to equality and justice and human rights, the prospects might be different; "leaders" would soon appear to ride the crest of the wave while attempting to isolate and eliminate more radical elements, whose demands seriously threaten existing privilege. But such a movement does not at present exist in any organized form.

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