

a U.S. corporate state. History is never an inevitable process. It provides opportunities, openings. It provides them for us now, if we can reach high enough, stretch ourselves far enough, leave behind old baggage and seek to build an American socialist movement. It will be broad, imperfect, radical, confused—as such movements invariably are. But if we face any single problem now it is our self-doubt, and the fact we underestimate where the American people are at, or our ability to communicate with them.

DAVID McREYNOLDS is *Secretary of the War Resisters League.*

4. Robert J. Alexander

IN THE WAKE OF THE VIETNAM WAR, the democratic left in the United States is in disarray. The most recent evidence is the withdrawal by Michael Harrington and his followers from the Socialist Party (newly rechristened Social Democrats, USA) to form the rival Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee.

The results of this splintering of the democratic Left have been felt in the last two presidential campaigns. In 1968, much of the Old Left and practically all of the New Left virtually abandoned the traditional coalition of labor, middle class liberals and minorities. They were more interested in “punishing” the Democratic Party than they were in keeping Richard Nixon and the reactionary elements around him from controlling the government. (In this connection, the death of Robert Kennedy was particularly tragic because he had a much more realistic and, at the same time, more idealistic attitude than those who sat out the 1968 election or voted for Nixon. He would have sought to have kept the traditional Left coalition intact.)

In 1972, those unhappy with the nomination of George McGovern also sought to “punish” the Democratic Party by sitting out the election or, as I suspect in some cases, by voting for Richard Nixon.

The blindness of this attitude is now clearly evident. The Watergate investigation demonstrates how close we were to the destruction of

the democratic system at the hands of the power hungry, amoral and authoritarian group headed by Nixon. The Senate hearings also serve to underscore the long-range problem of the excessive growth of executive power, a problem of which most of us were only dimly aware or even ignored because, in the past, executive power had been used to promote policies of which we approved.

The assinity of those who, in 1968 and 1972, took the position of "the worse the better," can best be demonstrated by the fact that the largest element in the traditional labor-liberal-minorities coalition—the organized workers—may be forever lost to that coalition. The danger of a new conservatism based on manual workers, who have within the last generation joined the middle class but do not yet feel secure in that position, is a real one. That danger was intensified by those who disparaged and denigrated the labor movement before, during and even after the McGovern campaign. Without organized labor as its backbone, it is difficult to see how a new democratic Left coalition capable of winning control of the White House can once more be forged.

THAT REBUILDING THIS COALITION IS INDISPENSABLE should be obvious to anyone who considers him or herself a socialist. The accumulation of problems facing this country grows larger each year that nothing is done to meet them and as such steps as had tentatively been taken are retreated from by the Nixon Administration. It is perhaps trite to recapitulate some of the major problems but doing so may help to underscore the need for rebuilding a political force which can make a serious effort—as the Johnson Administration did before it got bogged down in the Vietnam conflict—to come to grips with them.

There is the problem of the deterioration of the cities. Without a massive effort, which brings to bear not only vast financial resources but also the enthusiasm of our citizenry, the degeneration of our cities into further poverty, misery and violence cannot be avoided. An effort to deal with the decline of our cities needs decisive leadership from the federal government.

There is the problem of the unfinished civil rights revolution. Indications are that many of the gains made during the 1960s, particularly in the economic sphere, are being halted under the Nixon Administration. Certainly, the task of making Martin Luther King's dream a reality cannot be accomplished until there is an administration in Washington which shares that dream instead of repudiating it.

There is the problem of transportation. Our roads and highways continue to be clogged with cars while the Nixon Administration, in one of the small efforts to reverse this trend, places Amtrak in charge of a man who is opposed to the whole idea.

There is the problem of energy. Little is likely to be done to develop new sources of power and to find practical ways of reducing the increased demand for energy until there is an administration in the White House that is not the prisoner of those interests with everything to lose if the problem is solved.

There is, of course, the problem of the environment. Little evidence exists that the Nixon administration has any interest in moving beyond the modest beginnings made by the Johnson Administration.

There is the new problem of agricultural shortages. Perhaps for the first time in our history, we have a situation where the demand for farm products exceeds the supply. So-called price freezes, which merely intensify the shortages are no answer. Only a government committed to dealing with national problems with long-term planning is likely to find a solution.

Finally, there is the problem of the deteriorating international situation. The Nixon Administration has ruined the status of the U.S. dollar on the world money market. While flirting with China and Russia (not bad although it tends to produce excessive optimism), the Nixon Administration has proceeded in a way that has alienated virtually every other country—Japan, the countries of Western Europe, the countries of Latin America. A new labor-liberal-minorities administration is vital to reverse or at least mitigate these trends in the international sphere.

THIS LIST OF PROBLEMS IS NO CAUSE for a defeatist attitude. Rather, it is a challenge to the labor-liberal-minority forces to regroup and to elect a government in 1976 which can begin to cope. There are positive elements in the experience of the last five years which give reason for hope that regroupment may be possible.

The Vietnam conflict is over, at least so far as U.S. participation is concerned. Thus, the single most important element driving a wedge among the groups of the labor-liberal-minority coalition has been removed. Hopefully, we can all unite in opposition to any attempt by the Nixon Administration to bring about any further intervention in the conflict.

The disastrous results of the Nixon Administration's economic policies should serve to convince those members of organized labor who supported Nixon of the error of their ways. There is little reason to believe that during the remaining three years of the Nixon Administration it will be any more successful in its management of the economy than it has been for the last five.

The Watergate inquiry, if it does nothing else, should convince those who "punished" the Democrats in 1968 for nominating Humphrey and those who did the same in 1972 over the nomination of McGovern,

that they were dangerously wrong. The Nixon gang not only favors bad economic and social policies, is not only a tool of the most disreputable big business interests, but is a positive danger to the continuation of democratic government.

Finally, whatever setbacks there have been in the struggle for civil rights during the last five years, blacks have continued to make progress in the political arena. Thus, the black element in the labor-liberal-minorities coalition should be a considerably stronger force, not only in seeking benefits for its own members but in helping the coalition to achieve national victory.

There is not likely to be very much room for doubt about the principal items which such a revitalized coalition will want to accomplish once it again comes to power. The major need right now is for the rebuilding of a broad movement which can support a government willing to make a general attack on the principal problems facing this country, although elements within this movement may continue from time to time to fight over details of its program or its application.

The first necessity is the reestablishment of the broad alliance of organized labor, middle class liberals and minority groups to regain control of the United States government. This means that the various elements of the shattered pre-1965 coalition must again learn to live with one another, compromise, and settle for something less than everything each group in the coalition may want, in order that the general program can be put into operation.

WITHIN A RENEWED LABOR-LIBERAL-MINORITIES COALITION there is a role to be played, certainly, by a socialist movement. That socialists could head such a coalition in the proximate future is, to put it mildly, unlikely. However, they should be able to serve as a kind of conscience for the coalition, a seedbed of new ideas and a group which foresees new problems before they reach a critical stage.

The building of such a socialist movement will probably be harder than the rebuilding of the progressive coalition. The problem has been with us at least since the late 1930's. Those who deem themselves socialists tend to be more dogmatic, self-righteous, and sure that they are absolutely right, than are labor leaders, or the ordinary run of politicians. In the perpetual conflict between what is right and what is expedient, socialists tend to be much further along the spectrum toward what is right than does the average working politician. Also, because the socialists constitute a much smaller group than the broader coalition, they find it much harder to keep within the ranks of a single organization groups whose concepts of strategy and tactics are sharply divergent.

Nevertheless, during the next few years there should be one positive

aspect which has been lacking during the last decade. It does not seem likely that there will exist any issue as fundamentally divisive as the Vietnam War to keep the democratic socialists so widely split as has been the case since 1965.

There are, it seems to me, certain prerequisites for the rebuilding of such a democratic socialist movement. Its leaders must eschew efforts to work with totalitarian elements of all sorts and descriptions. Its leaders must cease trying to flirt with racists and xenophobes of whatever color. Its leaders must give up the "all or nothing" attitude which has so often been one of their failings. This means that they must be more tolerant of those in their ranks who are critical of one or another group in the broader coalition than they have often been in the past.

Personally, I am optimistic, for the reasons which I have already indicated, about the reconstitution of the broad labor-liberal-minority coalition. However, I must profess myself pessimistic about the possibility of building a democratic Socialist movement which can have a voice of consequence within this coalition. My pessimism stems from past history, and most particularly from recent history. Most of all, it stems from the apparent inability of the Socialist Party to maintain unity within its own ranks, even after what had been the major bone of contention within the organization, the Vietnam War, had largely become a thing of the past. If they couldn't stay together, a more heterogeneous group is not very likely to be able to do so.

I suspect that for quite some time to come, as has been true in the past, there will continue to exist a variety of groups which to a greater or lesser degree consider themselves democratic Socialists. They will continue to have somewhat different constituencies. They will continue to quarrel with one another. Most of them, perhaps, will be within the reconstituted progressive coalition; other will choose to criticize it from outside. But the possibility of forming anything approaching a mass democratic Socialist movement, with different currents living more or less peaceably within the same organization framework, I suspect will remain a will of the wisp for many years to come.

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER, *who has written widely about Latin American affairs, is Professor of Economics at Rutgers University.*

5. Chuck Avery

SEVERAL YEARS AGO the mass media discovered the anti-war movement when a million people demonstrated their anger and frustration over the fact that despite a change in administrations the slaughter in Viet Nam continued unabated. It was quite perceptive of the media to notice the million or so folks out marching, but it never bothered to examine where we all came from.

To the non-involved it must have seemed that there was a mass, organized anti-war movement. That just wasn't the case. What had happened was that the frustration level concerning the war rose so high in the late sixties that people didn't care who was doing the organizing work of mobilizing the mass marches. Many of the same people who had no use for any group left of Ed Muskie contributed large amounts of money to the Socialist Workers Party and Communist Party front groups to pay for millions of pieces of literature.

Those who commented in public that National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) was an SWP front, or that People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ) was—underneath all the confusion—a CP front were accused of red baiting. I'm sure that readers of *New Politics* are sufficiently familiar with these organizations and there is no need to document these old left parties' manipulations of their anti-war "coalitions." The result of their dishonesty was that thousands of non-aligned activists felt ripped-off and they dropped out of their active roles in the anti-war movement.

Many times it seemed that NPAC and PCPJ were behaving as two adversaries who were more interested in one-upping each other than in building a non-sectarian movement. Apart from the party cadres hardly anyone sustained a role in the mobilizing effort for long. When the CP (seeing the coming Washington-Moscow detente?) withdrew its massive energies and contributions from PCPJ, the lack of independent direction caused that coalition to grind to a dismal halt. Presently the only organization on the left with the discipline and muscle to coordinate a mass demonstration is the SWP's NPAC. But, by now, virtually everyone refuses to work with them, or even to pass out literature at their rallies.

Apart from the internecine infighting among the movement's organizations we also have to recognize two other major reasons why the 1969-71 anti-war actions never spawned a lasting organization. First, the Army was still drafting in large numbers. Many young Americans, their families and friends turned out for the anti-war demonstrations hoping to head off their own possible involvement in the fighting. The other major rallying point was that footloose youth culture freaks saw