

THE ALMANAC

by Derek Shearer

There is an old American political saying, "You can't beat somebody with nobody," which is being taken to heart by the left. A debate is beginning on what we want—what concrete vision we have of a good society and what programs and strategies are necessary to achieve that vision. This current revival of interest in domestic politics is being assisted by a number of new publications.

Working Papers for a New Society, possibly the most important new left publication to appear in a decade, is published by the Cambridge Policy Studies Institute—a radical think tank—and edited by John Case, Allen Graubard, Mary Jo Bane, Nancy Lyons, and Christopher Jencks. The first issue includes articles on the **commune movement**; **food co-ops**; **land and utilities** programs for Berkeley and Oakland political campaigns; and a report by **Staughton Lynd** on working with **steel workers** around health and safety issues. It will appear four times a year; subscriptions cost \$8 a year; \$15 for two years. (Write: Working Papers, 123 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, Ma. 02138, Tel (617) 547-4474.)

Michael Harrington, author of **The Other America**, which helped start the War on Poverty, and of a recent book, **Socialism**, has founded the **Newsletter of the Democratic Left**. It will appear ten times a year and carry articles "on the theory and practice of transforming the nation." Subscriptions cost \$5 a year; student rate \$2.50; sustaining subscription \$10. (Write: Newsletter of the Democratic Left, 125 W. 77th St., New York, N.Y. 10024.)

Coming out of **Atlanta** is a new journal, **Southern Exposure**, published quarterly by the Institute for Southern Studies. It will include exposés of southern corporations, reports on organizing in the south, and articles on programs and strategy for the region. Subscriptions cost \$8 a year. (Write:

Institute for Southern Studies, 88 Walton St., Atlanta, Ga. 30303.)

Working in the mountains of **West Virginia**, the Peoples Appalachian Research Collective (PARC) publishes the quarterly report **Peoples Appalachia**. The Winter 1972-73 issue deals in depth with the struggle for democracy within the **United Mine Workers**. The current issue, Spring 1973, explores **economic alternatives for the region**, including a proposal for a community-owned Appalachian TVA. Subscriptions cost \$5 a year; back issues \$1.25 each. (Write: PARC, Rt. 3, Box 355B, Morgantown, W. Va. 36505.)

Up north in **Vermont** a college economics teacher and former Washington Editor of RAMPARTS, Lee Webb, has compiled a packet of material on that state. The packet, which costs \$1, includes studies of colonialism and underdevelopment in Vermont, absentee ownership of utilities and the ski industry, and the swindling of the average Vermont taxpayer. (Write: Lee Webb, Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont 05667.)

In the **Midwest**, the Hyde Park chapter of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union has written a significant position paper titled **Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement**. Copies cost 50 cents each plus 15 cents postage. (Write: Chicago Women's Liberation Union, 852 W. Belmont, Chicago, Ill. 60657.) Some Chicago movement women have started **The Midwest Academy**, a school designed to offer instruction in **women's rights** and **community organizing**. This summer, classes will be offered on building new organizations for **working women**. (For details, write: Midwest Academy, 817 W. George St., Chicago, Ill. 60657.)

Two new paperback books provide a national perspective on political options for the left. In **The New Socialist Revolution** (Delta, \$2.95) **Michael Lerner**, a professor of philosophy at Trinity College, Connecticut, argues that the left must adopt a program of democratic socialism. Similar arguments are put forward by **Staughton Lynd** and **Gar Alperovitz** in their book **Strategy and Program** (Beacon Press, \$2.95). Alperovitz defines the society he wants as a "pluralist commonwealth"; Lynd argues that the left must be up-front with its politics, but

not sectarian.

For help in doing political work around economic issues in your community, check out the valuable handbook **Getting the Straight Dope: A handbook for Action-Research in the Community**. Compiled by students at the University of California at Davis, it is based on their own work in surrounding communities. Copies cost \$1.50. (Write: Isao Fujimoto, Dept. of Applied Behavioral Sciences, Univ. of Calif. at Davis, Davis, Calif. 95616.) Also helpful is the **North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) Research Methodology Guide**, which includes sections on corporations, the media, the military, and banks. Copies cost \$1.25 each. (Write: NACLA, P.O. Box 226, Berkeley, Calif. 94701 or NACLA, P.O. Box 57, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025.)

Two recent publications offer analysis of current economic trends which ultimately affect day-to-day organizing. **Kapitalistate** is a journal which deals with the increasing role of government in the economies of advanced capitalist countries, particularly the U.S. Subscriptions cost \$8 a year. (Write: Prof. James O'Connor, Dept. of Economics, San Jose State College, San Jose, Calif.) O'Connor is the author of the important forthcoming book **The Fiscal Crisis of the State** (Random House, 1973). **Jeremiad** is a monthly newsletter of economic affairs, written by economist Jerome Shuchter, who takes an independent left view of the American economy. Subscriptions are \$10 a year; a complete file of back issues is \$10. (Write: Jeremiad, P.O. Box 36496 Wilshire-La Brea, Los Angeles, Calif. 90036.)

In the area of immediate struggles, the **Highway Action Coalition** (Room 731, 1346 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036), acts as a communications center for the anti-highway forces and publishes an informative free newsletter, the **Concrete Opposition**. And the Nader-affiliated **Tax Reform Research Group** publishes a monthly newsletter, **People and Taxes**, filled with information on tax organizing and tax loopholes. Subscriptions cost \$4 for individuals; \$6 for institutions and businesses. (Write: People & Taxes, P.O. Box 14198, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, D.C. 20044.) ■

News of political work, including publications, films, slide shows, etc., should be addressed to Derek Shearer, Ramparts magazine, 2054 University Ave., Berkeley, California 94704.

Reggae:

THE STEADY ROCK OF BLACK JAMAICA

by Andrew Kopkind

The bleached white tourists at the Holiday Inn Reef Club, the Banana Boat and the Jamaica Hilton still request "Day-O" and gasp with the joy of recognition when a crooner starts "I Left a Little Girl in Kingston Town." And at the \$12-a-head beach parties the Jamaica Tourist Board throws for the swinging set, short-haired frat boys still shove their giggling girlfriends under the limbo stick in time to the latest 1957 Belafonte hits. In the same vein but on the other hand, heavy American freaks under the palms at Negril keep the natives at bay with blasts of strong *ganja* and hard rock from hidden hi-fi's. But the time-encapsulated world of winter-week visitors to the Caribbean sands is particularly absurd in Jamaica this year, because an entirely new style of popular culture—soon to be mass-marketed in North America—is growing in native groves alongside the stands of tourists. The new form (new to us up North) is called reggae: at bottom a percussive beat and a melodic line of music, but by extension a social and artistic movement that expresses the special Jamaican mood of suffering, blackness and heavenly peace.

Reggae sounds have been drifting into the U.S. off and on for several years, and the music is well-known in Britain with its large West Indian communities. Desmond Dekker's "The Israelites" was a kinky hit of sorts; Paul Simon's "Mother and Child Reunion" presented Jamaican reggae overlaid with L.A. kitsch; and Johnny Nash made it biggest last year with a reggae single, "I Can See Clearly Now." But the industry called all that "novelty." Now, the Anglo-American music mo-

guls are hyping reggae into a commercial craze, and their rock stars are flying off to Kingston to record personal versions. The Rolling Stones have already been and gone (Mick Jagger hired a reggae band to play at his wedding); Cat Stevens came soon thereafter; the Jefferson Airplane went down to check it out; Roberta Flack is reported en route. J. Geils recorded a reggae number safely in white America, while Paul McCartney did it in England. Jimmy Cliff, the first Jamaican multi-media reggae star (Johnny Nash comes from Texas), has been signed by Warner Brothers Records for an upcoming album, and his Jamaican-made film, "The Harder They Come," is seeking provincial bookings after its *succès d'estime* in New York.

"We took the *ts-ts-ts*—the syncopation—out of jazz," Cliff explained, by way of a definition and a history of reggae, when we talked not long ago in a Warner Brothers office in New York. "The guitar rhythm is out of calypso, the percussion part of it is Latin and West African. The drumming is like the reverse of rock, it's rock turned over: rock drumming is off the beat, reggae drumming is right on the beat—and the bass goes in between." However obscure that exegesis may be, the sound is obvious after the first hearing. It is danceable and whistleable like the best old rhythm & blues before rock ran it into the ground.

In its purely musical form, reggae

(also called rock steady) is an outgrowth of ska, a Jamaican style popular in the early '60s. For years before that, Jamaicans had fed on American R&B records; when the rock-and-roll boom slowed R&B exports, Jamaicans began going it alone. Ska put a West Indian flavor into black North American music. Later—in the mid-'60s—reggae developed as a Caribbean counterpart of soul, with more than a few echoes of fundamentalist church gospel singing and African chants. You can hear a kind of unself-conscious reggae flowing from any church in Jamaica every Sunday: as you can hear pre-commercial soul in any rural black church in America.

But the content of reggae music—lyrically and melodically—is strikingly different from most North American black pop music today, even though the forms have resulted from the cross-pollination of all the same Afro-American strains. Reggae lyrics are rarely macho and violent in the manner of Shaft or Super Fly; rather, they say something about the pain of the world and the hope for a sunnier future—sentiments that sound naive and perhaps primitive to cool Americans, but replicate exactly the visual tones of Jamaican shantytown poverty against the agonizing beauty of the Caribbean sea-sky.

"Sixty percent of reggae is the frustration of oppressed people," Jimmy Cliff said with the calm and kindly



Andrew Kopkind is a free-lance journalist living in Boston.