

## [Comment]

# In Defense of Paranoia

“Watergate is not merely a ‘scandal’ or an ‘accident,’ but a battleground of a national struggle for power.”

*The following is the first part of Carl Oglesby's reply to articles in the August and September issues of RAMPARTS, addressing themselves to articles that Oglesby had written in other publications. The first of these, by Steve Weissman, dealt with the Yankee-Cowboy interpretation of the American power structure, and of Watergate, a theory which Oglesby has had a major role in originating and articulating. The second dealt with the prospect of fascism and the response of the radical left. Oglesby's response and a rejoinder by the author, David Horowitz, will appear in a future issue of RAMPARTS. We would like to take this opportunity to note that it was not our intention to single Carl Oglesby out for attack; but the fact that he is an articulate and insightful theorizer on these subjects made the intellectual encounter natural and illuminating.*

Steve Weissman publishes his critique under the sign of Watergate, showing that he has heard the Yankee-Cowboy perspective offers an alternative interpretation of that, but apart from an I've-heard-it-all-a-thousand-times summary of Kirk Sale's *New York Review* piece, he never finds a place to say what he thinks the Yankee-Cowboy interpretation of Watergate actually is.

It is not simply that Nixon headed a regional coalition reflecting class relations in the productive economy. The theorists of the “emerging Republican majority” and “the Southern strategy” told us that. The Yankee-Cowboy theory helps make sense of current politics—not by put-

ting all the emphasis on high-level intrigue, either, which would only seem dissociated and thus lunatic, but rather by putting the evidence of conspiratorial activity in a class-economic and historical perspective.

For example, Nixon's power came no more from his own person than it came from nothing. The Y-C theory tries to derive that force historically and class-economically, then tries to show how the activity of the classes (in Hughes' example, that of Western entrepreneurial capitalism) leads to the formation of power elites at several magnitude levels, and how all levels of elite activity can come to employ conspiratorial modes.

This is an explicit effort to remove the false and expensive intellectual barrier now separating those whose method wants to see the principles and forces from those who want to see the *agents* and *actions*. We should not think we have to choose between the class system, the elite, the conspiracy or the lone madman. The point of this visualization of politics is not to say which of these *exists* and which *does not exist*, or which is *actual and present* and which is only *paranoid delusion*. It is rather to say: how the one arises from the other; how the smaller is merely a certain density of the larger; how they express each; other; how Liddy's face and Hunt's; face and Colson's face are all the faces of Nixon; how Nixon's face is that of: Lansky and Hughes and Rebozo and Abplanalp.

Weissman is also indifferent to the literary background on which the power-split thesis is raised. For ex-

ample, he nowhere notes the influence of William Appleman Williams or Harry Elmer Barnes, and thus ignores the relevance of historians, including Beard and Turner as well. D. F. Fleming's study of the Cold War is rich in its suggestions of the themes of power-struggle analysis (e.g., the role of Texas in the Roosevelt wartime cabinet). There is Carroll Quigley's synoptic assessment of the Cold War and its roots in internal U.S. politics, *Tragedy and Hope*: a giant work well known to the right wing if not the left because of its detailed insider's story of the formation of “the Round Table groups” at the instance of Cecil Rhodes in the first decade of our century and how the Round Table, a secret organization of high-powered Anglophiles, even today makes its opinions felt through a worldwide array of front organizations like the Council on Foreign Relations here and the Institute for Strategic Studies in England.

None of this is noted in Weissman's treatment. For him, the Y-C analysis is an intellectually dissociated metaphor built up from a few scattered symmetries. On the contrary, the sense of a deep rift in American consciousness, the sense that this rift is visible in our styles of national unity as well as our style of disunity, the sense that somewhere at the bottom of “the American mind” there is the curious “fact” of the long-term Wilderness Frontier on one pole and of the binding power of Atlantic civilization on the other—this is a general conception that appears in American studies before V. L. Parrington and Perry Miller and will go on beyond Alan Heimert. It is too bad the way “sophisticated economic determinists” are so characteristically unfamiliar with this stream of ideas.

What I and others are trying to bring out of that literary tradition to the reading of current political contexts—the reading of Marxism itself—is a firmer grasp of the pervasiveness with which we Americans have been divided in fundamental respects, and not simply by class, race, and sex differences. Stages in the economic development of U.S. capital correspond to stages in the Westward movement of the Frontier Wilderness and the genocide of the savage, and take on the legal and moral spirit of Frontier develop-

by Carl Oglesby

ment. The development is of course not only the development of the Savage(s) Wilderness, it is at the same time the development of the consciousness of the American forces of genocide development. Images of the Frontier and of the Atlantic define the span of that consciousness and reflect its internal structure.

Weissman would rather try to assimilate the patterns of this continental development to the largely a-historical Marxism which knows only the criterion of the "corporate interlock" and which he flatters himself in puffing as "sophisticated." All he can get out of this "sophistication" is a so-called "normal competition" model, and that is so far from being able to illuminate the conflicts personified, say, in Nixon and Kennedy, or in the relationship over the decades between David Rockefeller of the East and Hughes of the West, or the climax of Watergate, that Weissman is forced almost to deny such conflicts exist.

#### [GETTING DOWN TO CASES]

Weissman's method is to admit basic examples, then to deny that what the examples exemplify actually exists, hence that they are not examples after all. At last he says that something else "more interesting [than a national power struggle] was really happening" in the surge of antiwar vibrations from the Eastern reaches of upper finance capital in the late 1960s, namely, "normal competition," a model which he doesn't even bother explaining, much less demonstrating on the evidence. How does Weissman explain the self-evident regionalism of American ideology?

Claiming that the Yankee-Cowboy "split in the ruling class is a mirage," Weissman nevertheless notes, but does not stop to explain some other way, a number of cases that I and others regard as forming part of the evidence for the hypothesis that there is such a split, and speculation that it is the ultimate source of Watergate. Among other things, Weissman mentions:

- The Nixon coalition of political forces represented by Rebozo, Connally, Smith, the Haldeman-Ehrlichman guard, etc.: i.e., the Bahamas, Miami Beach, Dallas, Houston, Orange County—the "sunbelt" which

Weissman assures us has "never banded together to battle Wall Street" or "to dictate national policy." But then what did Nixon's "southern strategy" mean, if there are no significant regional discontinuities in U.S. politics? And how could the discontinuities exist if they had no basis in historical economy?

- An ideological polar coalition around Kennedy (of New England). Does the transverse tilt of the internal axis of the Cold War seem to Weissman nothing but mere contingency? Might the Kennedys as well come from South Dakota?

- The Common Cause-Business International, Inc., syndrome. Why does Weissman think so great a preponderance of doves and UN-style progressives circulates in northeastern waters? What do the southwesterly instincts of the hawk mean historically, politically, and economically to Weissman?

- Weissman also mentions the interplay between Texas and Massachusetts in the commotions around the lawyers of Watergate, such as Cox, Richardson, St. Clair, Bailey, Alch, Jaworski, Spector, and Wright. Weissman might also have mentioned the staffing of Nixon's Federal Energy Office and the sometimes ferocious push-pull of the politics of regional energy allocations. Why did Goldwater the politician say of New York that it might as well be sawed off and allowed to drift out to sea? In the tough part of the energy crisis, why did Texas and Louisiana bumperstickers say—to New England—"Let 'em freeze!"? Why were my South Carolina cousins so uplifted by the deaths of the Kennedys and King?

- The Wall Street Peace Rally of October 1969. Granted, it was timorous beyond shame, yet it happened when it did not have to happen, and the task then becomes explaining it.

- The anti-Johnson, anti-Nixon activities of political agents long associated with the Rockefeller-CFR elite, such as Clark Clifford, George Ball, Averell Harriman, and Cyrus Vance. Does Weissman think the policy inclinations of the CFR have no class logic? Do they not follow the needs of the big banks and the giant multiconcerns of the North Atlantic? Or if they merely follow the needs of a politically homogeneous ruling class engaged only in "normal competition,"

then why do so many big businessmen, *a fortiori* big businessmen of the West, despise the CFR and denounce Nelson Rockefeller as a Communist dupe?

- Texas money and the New York Central, the Murchisons of Dallas and Investors Overseas Diversified, Hughes and Rockefeller and the fight over TWA: naming these and surely knowing of others, Weissman still argues that there is no significant regional characteristic of business competition and says that we do not know how to name the Cowboys. I answer that he names a good many of them himself.

Indeed, when it comes to naming things in detail, had Weissman surveyed the power-split literature more carefully, he might have found references to a shadowy, pseudonymous tome going around among power-split and conspiracy researchers called *Nomenclature of an Assassination Cabal*, which names names at a length of some two-hundred pages and claims, incidentally, that the SMERSH-like organization that is being protected by all the cover stories is one "Permindex." I am far from ready to say Permindex did what *Nomenclature* says it did, but Weissman could not be further wrong when he says that the Y-C analysis is not trying with some success to be concrete and specific. That is the whole point of it, this theory, that is all it is—an effort at moving (if I may call it this) "dialectical thought" away from massive reifications of current Marxism ("proletariat," "iron laws of history," "sophisticated economic determinism," etc.) in the direction of specific people and groups and concrete acts. That is the reason for saying "Yankee" (or if you prefer, the *multinational bourgeoisie*) and "Cowboy" (or the *national-domestic bourgeoisie*) instead of "big capitalist" and "new capitalist" and letting it go at that.

#### [A REAL STRUGGLE]

Weissman accuses me and other power-split theorists of being Yankee-symp. By quoting almost out of context, he makes it almost appear that I wanted the antiwar movement to support Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1968, and that the Business International meeting with  
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*The Southwest:*

# America's New Appalachia

An energy colony is being constructed in the Southwest, a new Appalachia stretching across the Colorado Plateau to the Mexican border. While Appalachia was colonized by the steel companies looking for a dependable supply of coking coal, the Southwest is being invaded by mining companies and utilities, eager to exploit the vast reserves of low-sulfur "steam" coal for regional power plants. And although the word "colony" is rarely used by the regional developers, what is happening to the area is an open secret. The Four Corners Regional Commission describes the process in antiseptic but candid prose:

"Minerals and fuels have traditionally been an important resource to the Regional economy, and it appears that these resources will be of continued significance during the 1970's. However, this industry is heavily capital intensive, and the Region is dependent on outside supplies of capital for the mining of these primary goods. The re-

sult is relatively fewer jobs per dollar invested, and income leakages (in the form of profits and dividends) out of the Region. The problem is exacerbated by few manufacturing linkages in the Region for processing and producing finished products from primary minerals and fuels."

The commission report for 1972 concludes, "The Four Corners Region, in many respects, resembles a number of less developed countries in other parts of the world."

The Regional Commission lists the contributing factors in the colonization process, all the while hoping that planning and government incentives to industry can alter the process it describes: a lack of transportation facilities, education facilities, and programs for manpower training; a lack of housing, water systems, sewer systems, and health facilities; a cycle of poverty in the midst of vast resources.

The nation's energy companies have flocked west for a number of fundamental economic reasons. Most

of these reasons center on the profitability of strip mining.

Over half the 225 billion tons of western coal is recoverable by strip mining. In the vast reserves of the Southwest, the coal lies in beds up to 100 feet thick just below the surface. Compared to the deep mines and contour strip operations of Appalachia, the cost to mine owners is unbelievably low. Some operators can strip 100 tons per man-day of labor, more than eight times the rate in eastern shaft mines. The owners avoid the high cost of implementing the 1969 Coal Mine Health and Safety Act. Because many of them employ heavy-equipment Operating Engineers or non-union workers, they also avoid the jurisdiction of the United Mine Workers. That in turn skirts the 80 cents a ton royalty currently paid by mining companies to the UMW welfare and pension fund.

As a result, the cost per ton of coal strip mined in the West averages \$3-\$5, compared to \$9-\$14 in eastern deep



Photographs by Alan Copeland

by Thomas Brom