

# THE COMMENTATOR

NYC No. 12

A Marxist Analysis of Issues and Events

NOV. 1976 - JAN. 1977

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## THE ELECTION & AFTER

As we enter the last stages of the campaign, the three major candidates seem to be Ford, Carter, and Apathy--not necessarily in that order. Even so, we cannot afford to allow this event to go by without analysis. If the left has been almost entirely unable to use this election to rouse and educate and organize working people, then at least we must try to figure out how this impotence can be avoided in the future.

No longer is Vietnam the burning issue it was four years ago what with the defeat of the U.S. in South East Asia. No longer are the eyes of the people turned toward another part of the world. In the last four years, the U.S. and the rest of the capitalist powers began sliding into what they all feared was the beginning of another Depression, with inflation first climbing up to the double digits, and then unemployment doing the same. Only the most massive increase in governmental debt in history, to the tune of some \$80 billion, under a balance-the-budget President, has brought the economy out of its nosedive - temporarily. There has been no recovery in many parts of the country, only a leveling off, and in some places not even that. The other ingredient of the "cure" has been a massive attack on labor and living standards generally, with big cutbacks in services and freezes or rollbacks of wages in many cities and areas.

It seems unlikely that things can go very much longer without an even more rapid decline, and an even more furious attack on working people. Long gone are the relatively prosperous 50's.



Gone too are the turbulent 60's, with the anti-war movement and third world movements and revolts in this country. What seems to be approaching us now is a direct economic and political attack on working people generally, and sooner or later this cannot help but drive working people to fight against these attacks and begin to waken from the relative lethargy that has afflicted them for several decades since WW II and before. For these decades the working class has remained in the hip pocket of the corrupt union bosses and the Democratic politicians. And indeed there was good reason. The union leaders did seem to be able to come up with wage increases fairly regularly, and the Democrats seemed to be able to come thru with a few reforms to patch up some of the rough spots--so why rock the boat? This certainly doesn't mean that working people have any great faith in the union bosses or the Democratic hacks--they certainly don't. But what alternative is there?--and besides - things are not all that bad, people would say.

### ....NEBULOSITY AND NOTHINGNESS

Which brings us up to the present. Once again the Democratic Party is casting itself in its traditional mold of the party of mild reform, the party which gives the poor and the working people the better break and so forth. Carter's rhetoric is as

safe and nebulous as can be, and he has committed himself to very little, if indeed anything at all. Nevertheless, he manages to convey the impression that he somehow intends to do something to protect the poor and working people against the attacks that have been mounted against them by the Ford administration and the Nixon administration before him.

As for Ford, he has gradually become a known entity, a Nixon with the rough edges removed, with a lobotomy even. Ford's sole appeal is his incumbency and blandness.

He very narrowly avoided being ousted by the more fanatical wing of reaction--Reagan and Co. Indeed, in some respects the Ford-Carter contest is already an anti-climax. It is less interesting than the Reagan-Ford contest was and is certainly rousing less passion.

He has so far managed to tip-toe along the edge of economic catastrophe, without yet falling off the precipice. For lack of anything better, he has the more or less automatic support of all the more conservative elements in the population. He has no hope of winning much support among the worse off section of the working class, or among Black and other third world people.

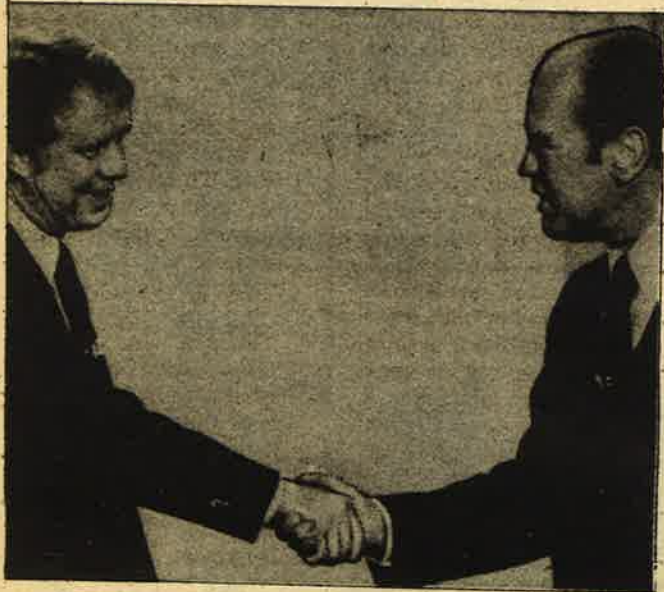
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**ELECTION CON'T**

Carter's rhetoric is much more appealing to working people, and third world people in particular. There is nothing new about this rhetoric. They have heard it many times before, only to see one Democratic politician after another turn around, once in office, and trample into the dirt every solemn pledge given to the voters before the election. So that while Carter's is by far the preferred rhetoric, it is highly questionable as to how much of it he will be able to cash in on at the polls.



As it is now, Mayor Beame, Gov. Carey, and Carter's Democratic cronies around the country, continue slashing away at wages, jobs and services, all the time with tears in their eyes, pleading for the working people to understand the fiscal necessities involved. And the union hacks, after a few shrill but phoney barks, meekly go along with the program hand in hand with their Democratic cronies, they too explaining the necessities to the workers. Just as Beame and Co. in the end do the bidding of Ford and Simon, so will Carter in the end do the bidding of magnates of high finance. He may do it apologetically a la Beame, but there is no reason in the world to think he will act differently. Every section of capital, in this economic crisis, seeks a way out at the expense of the working class.

Why can't there be a repeat of the Roosevelt phenomenon? There are several good reasons why it is unlikely in the extreme. First, Roosevelt himself was not a "new dealer" in the earliest few years. It was only after a few years of his first term that he embarked on the road of making concessions to working people and launched his campaign of mild reform and public works. He did so in the face of a militant labor movement, a labor movement which has yet to re-attain that same level of militancy. The policy he followed building up huge public debts is no longer a new one. It has been pursued by the Nixon and Ford administrations more than anyone else before, in spite of their rhetoric to the contrary. The

mountain of debt sitting atop the economy cannot be expanded indefinitely without bringing on a wild, runaway inflation at some point. Finally, the U.S. is no longer a young imperialist power as it still was in many respects in the Roosevelt era. The U.S. is a declining imperialist power, no longer able to make the concessions to its working classes that it was able to in years before. The Rooseveltian rhetoric is still with us, but the substance is gone; substantial concessions are no longer in the cards. The U.S. workers face an increasingly bitter struggle just to hang on to what they have.

In one sense Carter is a greater danger than Ford or even Reagan, in the sense that he delays the realization by the working class that it cannot depend upon anything but its own strength to defend itself. People may balk at such a statement pointing to the fact that Carter talks much less ominously than Ford (or Reagan) but that is the precise point. Such talk merely soothes people and diverts them from realizing clearly the only real alternative they have. The talk is completely unreliable, and will quickly melt into oblivion in the face of the economic realities faced by Carter's capitalist masters.

**PHOOEY ISN'T ENOUGH**

We can no longer delay turning to the theme--what's in all this for working people? There are some working people who say--phooey on the whole business, the whole thing is a waste of time--and these working people would receive considerable support in their attitude from a good part of the left here. There's another sector that says, well, look at Ford, I doubt Carter will do much either but what else is there?

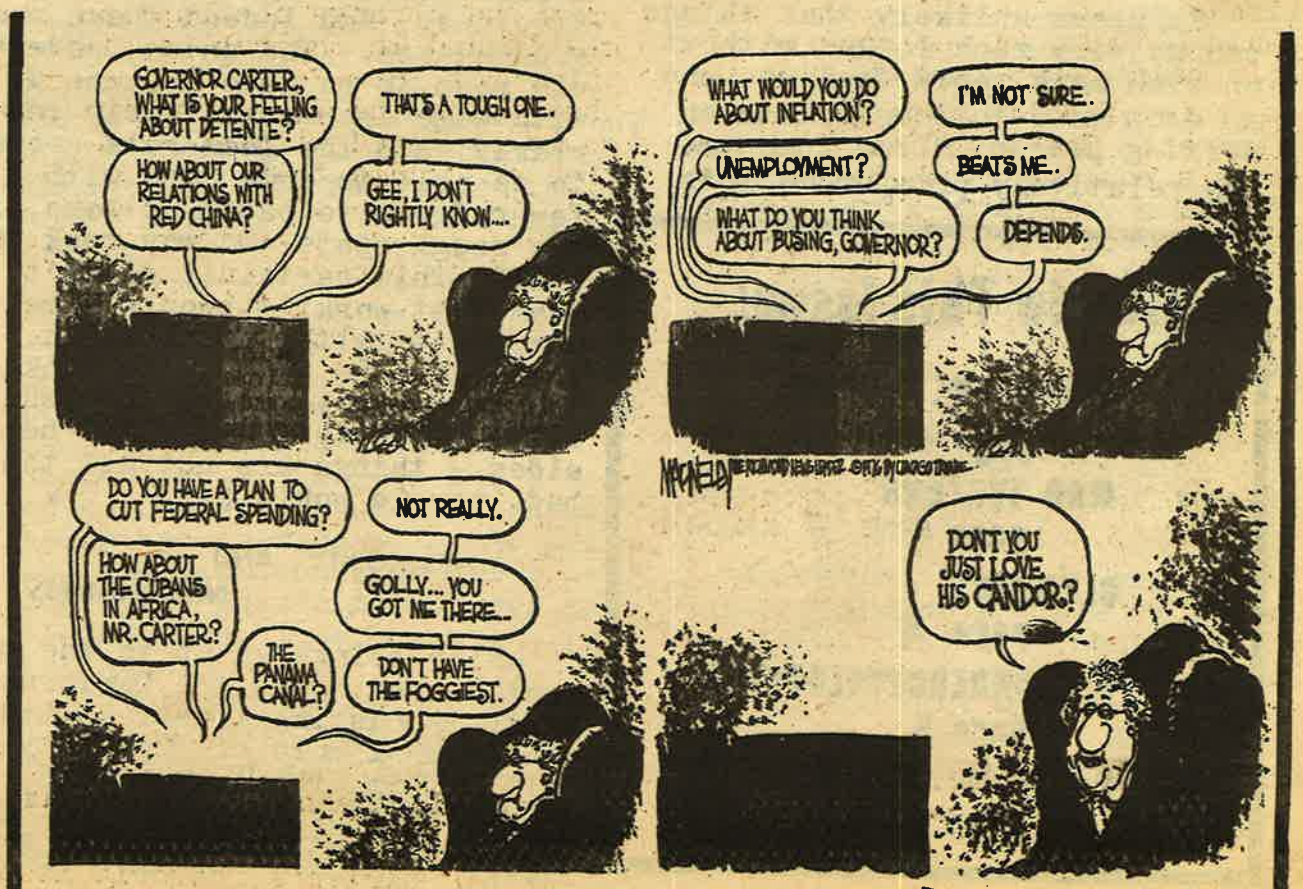
There is a great deal in common between these two views

really. They both grow out of political impotence and apathy. On the one hand, there is really little faith in the Democratic politicians, and yet on the other hand the working class here does not even picture itself as a class in any very clear terms, as for example do most of the European working classes, not to mention workers in the rest of the world. The working class here is only just beginning to waken from its decades long sleep which was induced by imperialist prosperity (a prosperity which is now vanishing). So the alternative to political indifferentism--or--what comes out to the same thing, heaving a sigh and pulling down the Democratic lever--is not readily available to the U.S. working class.

What is that alternative? That the working class begin to break away from the two party system, from the two parties of big business and begin to form its own party, a working class party, begin to run its own candidates and do all kinds of other work in support of the working class as well. What is needed is a party which takes as its basic platform and premise the fact that there are different classes in this society, that the interests of working people, the working class, and the capitalists are opposed, that the working class needs a party not of one or another sector of the rich and wealthy, but a party of its own with which to fight against the capitalists.

In view of the low level of class consciousness at the present time, it would be ridiculous to think of such a party having any kind of advanced platform, never mind revolutionary platform. What is needed is a party that takes the first steps in the direction of separating the working class from the Democrats as well as various middle class parties of the right and left, convincing the working class to rely on

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# TSETUNG



Chairman Mao with friends from Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1959.

spreading and deepening of the world communist movement, not one, but many, many great leaders of the working class movement will come forward in many parts of the globe. This will be in large part thanks to the efforts of Mao Tsetung and the other great Marxists.

We've been lucky to have lived in the era of Mao Tsetung. We must not forget that Mao, up to his last breath was looking ahead, to the truly unprecedented battles and struggles yet to come. It is in this direction that we too must look.

Chairman Mao on May 20, 1970, issued the solemn statement "People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and All Their Running Dogs!"



confidence that Mao did, and still does. The communist movement is spreading to every nook and cranny of the globe. The breadth of the movement is already giving some indication of this. As soon as working people in whatever country do begin waking up and becoming class conscious it is to Mao Tsetung's ideas and to Mao Tsetung's China that they turn for inspiration and hope in the future, for the strength to carry on the struggle in their own countries. And it is with these workers, no matter how small a minority they might be in some countries, that lies the future, a little closer or a little more distant, of every country.

## GENIUS AND THE MASSES

Mao Tsetung's greatness is a product not only, or even primarily, of his genius. Rather, Mao was created, was a product of the Chinese Revolution. History presented the Chinese and Mao with a long series of historical tasks to solve. Mao Tsetung and the Chinese people were tempered in many struggles against imperialism, against revisionism, against the capitalist roaders within the Chinese Communist Party. Without these struggles there could be no Mao Tsetung. Without the great masses of people who waged these struggles, there could be no Mao Tsetung. Mao's greatness is but a reflection of the greatness of the common people, of ordinary men and women, of their enormous potential, initiative and creativeness. Mao's greatness consisted in knowing how to unleash that potential. Look at China's accomplishments! Individual genius could not account for even one millionth of one percent of these accomplishments. But great talents devoted to mobilizing and leading working people has resulted in untold miracles.

The capitalists - the bourgeoisie - have ceased producing great heroes. For the last hundred years or more the really great thinkers and leaders have been those that have placed their talents in the service of the proletariat-the working people. Mao Tsetung ranks with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as one of these great leaders and thinkers. The proletariat is still a young and vigorous class. It will produce many more great leaders and thinkers -- in ever increasing numbers. Perhaps in the future no single leader will enjoy the authority, love, and respect bestowed upon Mao Tsetung and the earlier leaders. But if that is so, it will only be because through the

## U.S. - AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY ?

There was an interesting article in the N.Y. Times not too long ago entitled "Foreign Industries Expanding in The U.S.". Why, according to the article, are foreign industries investing in the U.S.? The first reason is that U.S. labor is growing relatively cheaper!

"For example as of mid-1975 average hourly compensation in the United States including fringe benefits stood at \$6.22, compared with \$6.19 in West Germany. Five years earlier, the United States was at \$4.20, while West Germany paid \$2.32."

What this means is that some of the lower-wage and non-union states, primarily in the South, provide attractive opportunities not only for U.S. capital but for foreign capital as well. The capitalists owe their thanks to the government, President Ford, and Nixon before him for driving down the living standards of the U.S. working class so as to make the "investment climate" more attractive!

Another reason mentioned in the same article for this development is that:

"This country gives good management more of a chance than in West Germany," says Herbert Hergeth, President of Hergeth KG, a textile machinery company with one plant in South Carolina. "The right of the worker to interfere in Germany makes it nearly impossible for good management to handle a company. According to law the worker can decide who gets the job, who gets fired; they can even look at financial statements and even tell us what

machine to buy."

'Business climate is the most important thing', says Ives Trelu, executive Vice-President of Michelin. 'Here, at the state level, all agencies are pro-business. They want to attract industry and evidently give the laws the same interpretation.' South Carolina, like many other southern states, has a right-to-work law and with the rapid expansion of the union-garnered benefits (German workers get six weeks paid vacation at 150% pay plus many holidays), this is considered very desirable by Michelin and other foreign companies."

There you have it! The heyday of U.S. imperialism is already gone by, and from now on working people are going face a desperate struggle against the efforts of the capitalists to drive down our wages to even lower levels and attack our rights. Class struggle and class consciousness are back on the order of the day for American workers! □



In Pennsylvania: VW's will be built in this ex-Chrysler plant by late 1977 if plans jell.

## ELECTION CON'T

its own strength in doing battle with the rich and their government and politicians. This does not mean that it can or should avoid taking stands on a wide range of issues affecting the working class. A party, for example, that does not come out foreshore in opposition to all forms of discrimination against third world people and women has no chance whatsoever of building class consciousness among U.S. workers. It would also be a mistake to think that such a party can emerge overnight on a national scale. It will first have to get its feet wet running in local elections, and only later begin to make use of the forum that national elections provide.

People might say, isn't it a little late to begin talking about a third party now? True, for this election of course, it's way too late. And to that extent, we are severely limited in the ways in which we can make any kind of positive use of this election. But what can be done is to use this election to raise the idea and the necessity for such a third party--a working class party. Preparations can be made in the coming period to see that we are in a position to make use of the capitalist elections against the capitalists, to use them not to befog, benumb and pacify the working class, but to rouse it to class consciousness and militancy in defense of its interests and the poor and exploited of our country - the overwhelming majority.

## ELECTIONS AREN'T THE CURE

We by no means are suggesting that things can be radically changed via the elections--Chile and Hitler Germany show how shallow the capitalist commitment to elections and bourgeois democracy is. But as long as they exist, they can be used by the working class to organize itself and rally its forces. Nor are we suggesting that a broad labor party is the ultimate instrument of liberation of the working class here either. We are well acquainted with the fate of the British Labor party and other such labor parties. And yet they did play an enormous role in educating and organizing the working class there at a certain stage in their development, and even today, the European working class is far in advance of the U.S. working class in class consciousness and militancy. Nor are we suggesting that such a party can in any way be a substitute for a much smaller revolutionary (Communist) organization. But what we must look for and develop is an elementary form for developing and instilling the beginnings of class consciousness in the U.S. working class. □

## Editors' note:

The above article reflects the views of a majority in our group. A minority, however, thinks that Carter should be given critical support and are not convinced of the timeliness of the labor party idea.

## WHO WE ARE

The Commentator is put out by a Marxist-Leninist collective in the New York area.

In the Commentator we try to analyze current events in the country and the world from a Marxist point of view. We attach special importance to tackling political and social issues on people's minds, as well as economic issues.

In particular, we feel that under Nixon the danger of fascism became very real in this country. We also feel that the danger has not lessened. Fascism will not come to this country in the same form it did in Germany or Italy. It decks itself out in the red, white and blue, goes under the slogan of "law and order" and uses Black people as its chief scapegoat.

We attach special importance to exposing and educating people to this danger, in order to help build a united struggle against it. However, we believe that of all the forces that can be united to oppose the fascist danger, it is the working class which must lead.

While we believe that the main struggle of the American people right now is against encroaching fascism, the fundamental problems of our society, such as inflation, unemployment, war, racism and poverty can only be solved by the establishment of a socialist government, one which gives the ownership and control of the means of production to the majority of the people, protecting their interests rather than those of a small group of exploiters.

To achieve the above goals, we believe the working class needs a genuine Communist party, based on Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao Tse-Tung.

We want to make contact with progressive minded people, working people especially (but not only), who find the ideas in our paper interesting and useful. Also we want to make contact with other revolutionary groups and individuals. We want to make the Commentator as useful and interesting as possible and would appreciate your criticisms and comments.