

Against the *Current*

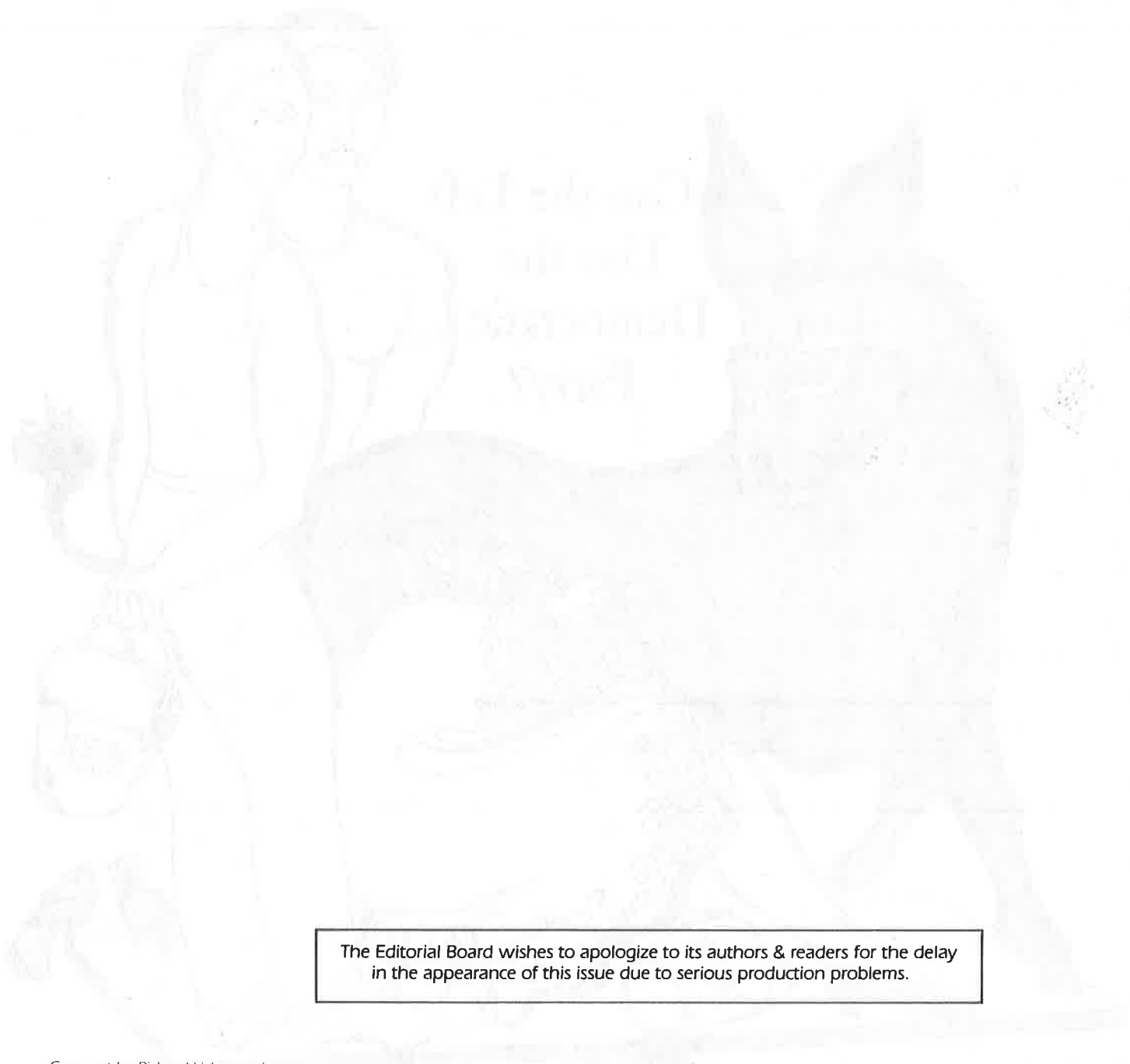
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SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

Can the Left
Use the
Democratic
Party?





The Editorial Board wishes to apologize to its authors & readers for the delay in the appearance of this issue due to serious production problems.

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Against the Current

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Can the Left Use the Democratic Party?

by Robert Brenner

In the days of the New Left of the late 1960s—of the student movement, the anti-imperialist movement, the Black movement—few radicals would have been caught dead inside the Democratic Party. In those days, it was strictly the politics of the streets. Power to the people definitely did not mean part of the way with RFK. The Democratic Party was recognized as firmly wedded to American imperialism as exemplified in the Vietnam War and, despite the Party's strong representation from the unions, as basically anti-working class, anti-poor, and anti-Black. Today, after more than ten years of left decline, it's a different world. People are saying that the left must finally grow up, if it is to avoid death at an early age. "We were ultra-left," say the ex-Maoists who have invaded the Washington and Jackson campaigns. "We have to get out of the sandbox, into the real world," say the former CPers who have joined DSA to work more effectively in the Democratic Party. What all this means, in twenty words or less, is that to be *practical* you have to relate to the Democratic Party. That's where the action is.

Now, it is quite possible that a majority of those leftists who have recently been converted to a position favoring work in the Democratic Party still remains convinced that the Democratic Party is a capitalist party, probably unreformable, and a very poor vehicle for the struggle for reforms, let alone socialist transformation. Indeed, many of them still consider themselves firmly anti-electoralist. They do not believe that the electoral struggle can provide a consistent means to win reforms in a society where power lies with the capitalists' control of the means of production and they are still at least formally committed to building militant mass movements for direct action as the best way to fight for social change. Nevertheless, in the view of these leftists, we have to be inside the Democratic Party because millions of working people see it as the only alternative. They argue that we can and must use the Democratic Party and particularly the election campaigns of "progressive," especially Black, candidates *for our own ends*: specifically, to build a strategic beachhead within the Democratic Party in order to aid the struggle going on outside. Their perspective is the subject of this article.

I. Organizing from Inside the Democratic Party

The main argument of this article is straightforward. Those leftists who intend to use the Democratic Party in general and the electoral struggle in particular for the goals of the left drastically underestimate the barriers to doing so. This is because they mistake the *meaning* of the electoral struggle to *both* the Party's leaders *and* its rank and file and fail to take into account the actual requirements of carrying out the electoral struggle seriously and effectively. First, hardly any of those who today are active in the Democratic Party, either leaders or rank and filers, have entered the Party as an extension of their work in mass movements or with the intention of carrying those movements forward. The fact is that the last decade or so has witnessed the disastrous decline of the workers, Black, Latino, and women's movements, so there is hardly a memory of a connection between the Democratic Party and the mass movements (to the extent that one ever existed). On the

contrary, the overwhelming mass of reform-minded people who are today involving themselves in the electoral struggle, both leaders and rank and file, are doing so simply because they believe that by electing candidates with good programs they actually can win effective reform legislation. Otherwise they would not be working seriously in the Democratic Party and its election campaigns. Secondly, both leaders and ranks, although for somewhat different reasons, view carrying on successful electoral politics, on the one hand, and militant mass organizing and/or left political propagandizing, on the other, as incompatible. The Democratic Party leaders of all types understand the electoral road quite *explicitly* as an *alternative* to mass struggle. For them, it is a way to carry on the fight for reforms in a way which avoids the enormous risks which go with militant mass organizing, especially the danger that their organizations, above all the trade unions, could be destroyed by capital and the state.

The fact remains that *not only the leaders but the rank and file* believe—and quite correctly—that the best way to win an election is not by attempting either mass struggle or the ideological transformation of the electorate. Rather, it is (within limits) by *reflecting the existing views* of the electorate, and getting people to the ballot box. For these reasons leftists who try to use the Democratic Party and its election campaigns to organize or politicize for the left will almost certainly be prevented from doing so—in part by the enormous activity requirements of the electoral struggle itself, but also by the active intervention of the people they are working with, leaders *and* rank and filers. As a result, while failing to forward the goals of the left, they will end up implicitly or explicitly *justifying electoralism*. For, whatever their actual opinions, they will have to speak and act *as if* they believe that running for office is a way to improve the condition of workers and oppressed people.

The Democratic Party Leadership

The Democratic Party is similar to European social democratic parties in that it draws its leading supporters and spokespeople, at least in part, from trade union officials, as well as from leaders of official organizations of Blacks, Latinos and women.* These leaders are under real pressure to win reforms: they have constituencies to maintain, which are the main potential forces for social change in this society. Nevertheless they are *not* anxious to move these constituencies into direct action for reform. On the contrary. To secure improvements for their members, while *avoiding* the enormous risks of mass struggle, is these leaders' transcending desire.

Take for example the trade union officials, who are at the core of the Democratic Party's electoral efforts. Unlike the workers they represent, trade union officials do not have to defend themselves on the job on a day-to-day basis against employers. Nor is their standard of living directly dependent on their ability to organize to fight back. Instead, the trade union officials find their

* The Democratic Party is, of course, different from European social democratic parties in that top capitalists and their representatives also figure prominently among its leaders.

material base, so to speak, in the trade union organizations themselves. So, for trade union officials, defending *themselves* means in the first instance defending the trade unions as *organizations*. But this is *not* always the same thing as defending their members' interests.

Above all, the officials understand that the trade union organizations, which are their life blood, could easily be destroyed in direct capital-labor confrontations, especially in periods of employer offensives such as this one. At the same time, when a union does enter into militant mass action against employers, the aroused rank and file may seek to replace its old, established leaders with new people, better equipped for the new phase of conflict. For these reasons, trade union officials seek studiously to avoid organizing direct action.

But because a trade union is supposed to protect its members, trade union officials must at least appear to do something for the rank and file. Here's where collective bargaining, institutionalized grievance machinery and, in particular, elections come in: all are excellent ways to press for improvements for the rank and file without the risks of directly confronting the capitalists. In organizing for elections, a trade union is not obliged to organize its membership in militant mass actions against capital or the state. Indeed, voting is in essence an individual act; no collective activity is required. Elections are also a form of struggle that even employers must allow as legitimate (so long as there's a "democratic" regime).

For all these reasons, electoral struggle is the perfect tactic for union officials. Dependence on electoral struggle has been a hallmark of European union officials and their social democratic parties since the beginning of this century. Dependence on the Democratic Party has been even more characteristic of American trade union officialdom. This has been so despite the fact that, especially in periods like this one, dependence on electoralism and abstention from direct action is almost certain to be self-undermining, not just for their constituencies, but, over time, for the leaders themselves. For it cannot but lead, in the medium run, to the weakening and erosion of their organizations. Nevertheless, all these leaders would rather accept the limitations, even the defeats which are prepared by a dependence upon electoralism, than run the potentially *mortal* risks of mass mobilization. It's a question of cutting one's losses, rather than risking the likelihood of destruction.

The whole history of the interrelationships between the official leaderships, the Democratic Party, and the struggle for reforms over the past half century illustrate these dynamics. Since the early nineteen-thirties, we have witnessed *two great cycles of reform and decline*, the first running from the early 30s to the early 50s, the second running from the early 60s to the present. In each of these cycles workers and oppressed people won major reforms by means of explosions of mass direct action against employers and the state—in workplaces, in communities, in the streets. Through these struggles, the working class and oppressed groups *imposed* reforms on hitherto do-nothing Democratic Party administrations, *from the outside*. In each cycle, the Democratic Party profited from the reforms, the mass movements, and the liberalization and radicalization of consciousness which went with them, radically increasing its electoral base. Nevertheless, in each cycle, the

movements were forced to develop almost entirely outside and largely against the established organizations on the basis of new leaderships, because the established, official leaderships opposed them. As the movements developed, small sections of the traditional leaderships did "go over." But as they did, they functioned almost entirely to domesticate these movements, specifically by turning them from mass direct action to dependence upon electoralism and the Democratic Party. In each cycle, as the movements declined—partly as a result of the officials' actions, partly for independent reasons—the leaderships succeeded in recuperating their bases for the Democratic Party and the working people and the oppressed groups were left to *depend* upon it. But despite its overwhelming electoral majorities, the Democratic Party failed to bring reforms after popular militancy had died down. In each cycle, the Democratic Party's abject failure to deliver the goods ultimately opened the way to a new period of revival for the Republican Party.

Franklin Roosevelt acceded to office in 1933 as a pragmatist and moderate, with no clear reform program. Shortly after his inauguration, a string of increasingly powerful workers' struggles shook the country, from Detroit auto plants to southern textile factories, to eastern coal mines, to midwestern steel mills. But Roosevelt stood by and did nothing, as the companies and local repressive forces crushed one strike after another. Meanwhile, the mediation boards set up under Roosevelt's National Recovery Act attempted in almost every case simply to get the workers back on the job for the employers, without at all dealing with the issues. But the strike wave continued, and in 1934 workers won astounding victories in three general strikes—in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco—all of which were characterized by the most massive and violent confrontations between the workers and authorities. During 1935–36, auto workers created the UAW and defeated General Motors in the great sitdown strikes. The Democratic Party benefited from this broad labor upsurge and the transformation of political consciousness which accompanied it, as was evidenced in the Party's unexpectedly decisive midterm electoral victory in November 1934. As a result of the radical change in the level of struggle and of political mood, Roosevelt suddenly changed course, and in 1935 he pushed through the hitherto neglected Wagner Act and Social Security Act.

The great mass workers movement of the 30s developed outside and in opposition to the old AFL officialdom. A small section of the old leadership, most prominently John L. Lewis, did break from the AFL, but they did so only *after* this movement had won decisive victories. Lewis played a role typical of officials who "convert." He made himself a hero by standing firmly beside the GM sitdowners in January 1937. But throughout the spring and summer of 1937, Lewis and his friends did everything they could to *break* the wave of sitdowns and wildcats that continued to shake the car industry. At the same time, Lewis led the United Steel Workers to disastrous defeat in the Little Steel strike under the banner of "Trust in Roosevelt."

Simultaneously, Lewis and Co. were attempting to reroute the CIO movement into electoral dependence on the Democratic Party. When the UAW voted not to endorse Roosevelt or the Democrats at its first convention in early 1936, Lewis intervened to get the decision

reversed. Then, as the movement began to decay, Lewis and the emergent CIO bureaucracy saw to it that the ranks' energies were channelled into the Democratic Party, through new Political Action Committees set up at the start of World War II. These PACs rose to great heights on the ruins of the mass strike movement, but over the course of the 1940s, *despite the Democrats' overwhelming legislative hegemony through much of the period*, no further reforms were won. In 1946 the Democrats lost their congressional majority, and in 1948 congress passed the vicious anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act, which in a single stroke wiped out much of what had been won in the 30s.

The Black movement during the 60s and 70s followed the pattern traced by the CIO in the 30s and 40s. It took the rise of a mass, militant Black movement, originating in the buses and cafeterias of the Deep South, to usher in a new period of reform. The emergent civil rights movement, and the even more explosive Black Power movement which arose in the urban ghettos, based themselves throughout the period on a strong commitment to direct action and confrontation with the white power structure.

John Kennedy, like Roosevelt, won election in 1960 as a rather middle-of-the-road Democrat and pragmatist, and his three years in office were marked by near-total failure to pass significant legislation. It was quite clearly the deepening radicalization of the civil rights movement, marked by its growing opposition to the Vietnam war, and above all the explosion of urban rebellions in Detroit, Watts, Harlem, Newark and elsewhere, which concentrated Lyndon Johnson's mind on his "Great Society." A suddenly reform-minded congress passed the civil rights acts and War on Poverty program from 1964-65. Once more an independent mass movement had forced the Democratic politicians' hands.

Like the CIO, the Black movement grew up almost entirely on the basis of new leadership and new organization. SNCC and CORE, not the NAACP or the Urban League, provided most of the dynamism that built the freedom struggles. When the NAACP refused to participate in the 1963 March on Washington unless it was entirely legal and peaceable, when it insisted that the Black movement support Johnson's war, and when it vehemently attacked Black Power, the split between the new movement and the old guard became unbridgeable. It was further exacerbated when the urban rebellions brought the Black Power struggle to the north from 1964.

Like the trade union officialdom in the 30s, the official Black leadership did what it could to turn the movement toward the Democratic Party. In 1964, for the first time ever, the NAACP officially endorsed the Democratic candidate, and organized a voter registration drive designed to capture the newly-unleashed energies of the Black struggle for Lyndon Johnson. Through the late 1960s, as the Black movement was essentially destroyed by state repression, the official leadership never ceased to insist that the only way forward was along the electoral road. During the 1970s, even as the condition of Black people deteriorated disastrously in the face of skyrocketing unemployment, collapsing inner cities and vanishing social service expenditures, the number of Black Democratic mayors dramatically increased. Today Jesse Jackson is breathing romantic

new life into the same impotent strategy. So, what goes for the trade union officials goes equally for the official Black leadership—and for pretty much the same reasons.

The Democratic Party benefited, during the sixties and seventies, from the Black movement, the student movement, the anti-war movement, and the small but significant rank-and-file workers' movement, as well as the trend toward political liberalization and radicalism which accompanied them. The mid-1970s, it is too soon forgotten, were the years of the Democrats' "veto-proof Congress." Unfortunately, these were also the years of decline for the movements that had provided the force and climate of opinion for the previous era's reforms. Thus, despite Democratic Party majorities, Congress failed to pass a single piece of important reform legislation under Carter—not even national health insurance or the toothless labor law reform bill, let alone a significant bill for full employment. Once again, by the end of the decade, disillusionment with the Democrats had led to support for the Republicans or simple abstentionism, and Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory, helped by one of the lowest turnouts in history.

The lessons of this sorry saga need hardly be drawn out in detail. From the viewpoint of all sections of its leadership, the Democratic Party functions specifically to *prevent* and to *detour* mass struggles, *not* to organize them. Those leftists who believe the established leadership will somehow allow them to make use of the Party to organize or propagandize are engaging in wishful thinking. To *impose* such a strategy on any section of the Democratic Party leadership would require the kind of power that can only be derived from successful mass organizing. Yet to carry on mass organizing *from within* the Democratic Party is impossible so long as the present leadership maintains itself.

The Democratic Party Rank and File

The bureaucratic leaderships are not, however, the only, or even the most important force inside the Democratic Party which opposes its use for militant mass organizing or left politicizing. In the continuing absence of major mass struggles, the Democratic Party ranks and prospective recruits are no more likely than the leadership to support such efforts. The most obvious, yet most important fact about reform-minded people who choose to work inside the Democratic Party or who are attracted to the campaigns of progressive candidates is that *they believe in using the electoral process* as a strategy for reform. If they felt, as do many leftists, that the electoral road, in itself, cannot generate the power required to win reforms, they would not expend the enormous energy required by electoral work. Because they are serious about the electoral road, they want to win; and because they want to win, they will have no truck with leftists' plans to use the Democratic Party campaigns for mass organizing or left propaganda because they rightly understand that this is counterproductive to their own aim of winning elections.

There is a strict logic to winning elections which is quite different from the logic of winning strikes or organizing successful mass militant actions of any sort. In strikes and analogous forms of protest which have the object of winning concrete gains from the owner or the government, it is not only the numbers of people

involved which counts, but *what they do*. In order to win, people have to *construct* a new and enormous power, for this is the only way they can *extract* the desired concessions. Therefore, they *have* to develop the most powerful solidarity; they *have* to take risks; they *must* make sacrifices; they *have* to be prepared for mass action on the largest scale, directly challenging the political and economic establishment; and they need to develop the ideas that explain and justify these actions, and make them effective. All this is necessary to win, because what is involved is a *direct test of power* with the employers and the state (and without such direct tests of power nothing can be won, especially in periods like this). For this reason, leftists have much to offer in strikes and analogous struggles: above all an understanding of what is required, both organizationally and ideologically, to build a successful mass movement and a willingness to do these things.

Winning an election is entirely different. Basically, it takes two things to win an election. You need to appeal somehow to 50% plus one of the voters. You need to get as many as possible of your potential supporters out to vote. Nothing else matters. You need money and bodies, and not much more.

It follows that, especially in view of the difficulty of changing people's consciousness, especially in the short period of an election campaign, the way to win is to *adapt* your program to the *existing consciousness* of the electorate. If you're on the right, you have to move left; if you're on the left, you have to move right: the battle is for votes in the middle. This logic will lead Ronald Reagan during the campaign to sound more dovish and less opposed to social spending. This logic led Jesse Jackson to cancel his original trip to Nicaragua at the start of the campaign, and led him to make further concessions to win more moderate supporters.

Naturally, there are limits beyond which candidates cannot go without turning off their core supporters; but these supporters are generally quite flexible. In the first place, where can they go? They are not going to support the opposition (the right). At the same time, and even more important in this context, the followers of the reform candidate almost always accept the necessity of moderating the program, for they too understand that this is what's required to win. Winning is *everything*, for *nothing* can happen unless the candidate gets office.

By the same logic, the reform-minded rank and file Democrats can have little or no sympathy for radicals who want to use the campaign "not only" to win, but to build organization and change consciousness. First, they understand that if the candidate were associated with radical ideas (as he/she would be if his/her followers were purveying left ideas in the campaign), it would be much more difficult to get the moderate vote. They understand that the same is true, only more so, for any sort of mass organizing for militant direct action, which is guaranteed to frighten off potential moderate supporters.

So, not just bureaucrat-heavyweights, but the party rank and filers as well, will curb leftists' attempts to use the Democratic Party for left organizing and propagandizing. In consequence, those who think they can work inside the Democratic Party, for example to propagate left ideas about Central America are dreaming. The fact

is that most CISPES organizers who support the idea of working in the Democratic Party already know this very well, and have made clear to their comrades that the only hope of "using the Democrats" is to hide CISPES's full program of victory to the FMLN and eschew militant action. No serious Democratic Party candidate is going to have anything to do with a policy which favors victory to the FMLN: that is one of CISPES's founding three points, but CISPES people who try to work in the Democratic Party will systematically ignore it. Moreover, if they demonstrate at the Democratic Party headquarters or convention, they will urge moderation on the demonstrators. They at least know the rules of the game they are playing. That game is *not* building the movement, but getting the right candidates with the right program elected.

The limits are even greater on mass organizing for direct action than for mere left propagandizing. The recently formed National Committee for Independent Political Action (NCIPA) is supporting Jesse Jackson. But it says its goal is to build a movement which unites working people, Blacks, Latinos, women and gays in order to oppose *both* of the capitalist parties. As NCIPA must be finding out, Jackson is *not running* to build a mass movement, let alone one outside and against the Democratic Party. Jackson is running to build his own prestige as Black leader and power broker, and to construct a powerful Black electoral bloc which can be used to leverage concessions from Democratic Party honchos. Jackson is, in short, a Democrat. The last thing he wants is to be closely associated with an organization which could stick him with the label of "militant" or leftist. Jackson's program, like the programs of innumerable liberals and left-liberals before him, has many excellent points. But so far as Jackson has anything to do with it, it will remain a paper program, for there is no way in the world he is going to allow his campaign to be used to organize *militant* tenant, labor or above all Black struggles.

In fact, the organizers of NCIPA act as if they already know this. They have already made it clear, for example, that although they intend to mount protests at both the Democratic and Republican conventions, they are not going to do anything which could come into conflict with those working for Jackson inside the Democratic convention. They intend, in other words, to cater their movement building and politicization activities to the needs of the Jackson candidacy. Indeed, because one of Jackson's overriding tasks in the period leading up to the convention will be to prove his loyalty to the Democratic Party, NCIPA's support for Jackson will require them to tone down any talk about independent political actions, supposedly their number one objective. NCIPA will have to decide what it is they really want.

II. The Campaigns of Progressive Democrats as Mass Movements with Left Politics

Leftists working in the campaigns of Democratic Party progressives, Jackson included, will end up doing what everyone else in these campaigns does, i.e. leg-work for the candidates—leafletting, canvassing, office work. Why should they be different from anyone else? This activity will inevitably divert the already terribly

diminished resources and energies of the left from the difficult tasks of building the movements and developing socialist organizations. But what is perhaps even worse, the activities of these leftists will inevitably work *counter* to the purposes of the left by actually eroding consciousness and organization, not least of all their own.

Leftist campaign workers for Democratic Party progressives are put in a very conflicted position, psychologically and politically. Whatever their intentions, they must, by their actions and words, purvey the idea that electoralism is an effective strategy for winning reforms. As a consequence, it becomes very difficult for them to avoid ending up by explicitly justifying this activity, and this justification generally takes two interrelated forms. Leftists will say that, although they are not building "the movements" (the workers movement, the Black movement, the women's movement, etc.), *the election campaign of the progressive Democrat is itself a mass movement*. Or, they will say that although they cannot put forward an analysis of capitalism or the limits of reformism (electoralism), *propagating the reform program of the "progressive" candidate is itself putting out the ideas of the left*.

Now, there is no point in arguing about the meaning of the term "mass movement." The point here is that mass electoral campaigns systematically *differ* from mass movements involving direct action for specific concessions from the owners or the government (shop floor battles, rent strikes, etc.), because they do not have the same positive *effects* on building working people's power, organization, and consciousness. To win such struggles, people need to organize difficult and risky confrontations with the authorities. In consequence, as noted earlier, they need to understand and confront the law; they need to reach out for help to other sectors of the working class; they need to begin to understand the nature of the state and the logic of capitalism. To put it simply, because mass movements involving direct action and confrontation *can* have the effect actually of creating real power, they have the potential for creating lasting organization and transforming people's consciousness.

Precisely the opposite is true of the so-called mass movements which sometimes accompany the electoral campaigns of Democratic Party "progressives." For reasons already mentioned, these campaigns do not require standing up to anyone, let alone the boss or the state. Nor, do these campaigns generally result in the slightest growth in those organizations which do fight the day to day struggles on which people's livelihoods so much depend—unions, tenant unions, women's organizations, community organizations, etc. There is no need to change one's world view or life activities. In consequence, these campaigns bring no *actual* change in the organization, consciousness, or *real* power of the workers or oppressed groups.

Nonetheless, the overriding effect of these campaigns *must be* to foster the illusion that power is being created. This is because the indispensable premise for the progressive candidate's entire effort is the entirely false idea that if elected, they can actually deliver on their program—a near impossibility in this period of declining profits and employers offensive, *in the absence of powerful mass direct action*. Far from constituting a

mass movement, electoral campaigns by progressive Democrats convey the impression that these can substitute for mass movements. Indeed, if they failed to give this impression, few people would support them.

It follows that despite the contentions of their leftist supporters, when progressive Democrats put out seemingly far-reaching programs of progressive demands, they do not so much win people to the political ideas of the left, as further the illusion that these demands can be won by electing the candidate. Who could be opposed to better housing, decent schools, clean air, rebuilding the cities or the whole gamut of proposals which make up the program of the typical Democratic Party "progressive"?

Such demands go unfulfilled today not because people do not support them, but because they lack the power to *impose* them on capital. The problem today therefore is not that of "winning people over" to these good things, but to convince them that they themselves, through their own organization and action, can actually muster the power to fight for and win them. Those leftists who support progressive Democrats "because of their program," only contribute to the idea that there exists a shortcut—the progressive candidate can do it for them.

All this has been demonstrated in one after another so-called mass electoral movements led by "progressives," from the late 60s to the present. Harold Washington's campaign, the most recent case in point, was just one in a long line of such campaigns by Black politicians for big city mayoralty positions. Washington's campaign, perhaps more than many of these, took on some of the appearance of a mass movement because of the vicious racist attacks mouthed against him by the entire white political establishment, backed by much of Chicago's white electorate. Washington's campaign featured rallies, mass meetings and marches to a greater extent than many such campaigns. Nonetheless, today there is no greater self-organization than before in Chicago's Black community to carry on the necessary struggles for jobs, decent housing, and schools. Second, despite his nice-sounding program, Washington is not delivering the goods. In this, of course, he is no different from Hatcher in Gary, Young in Detroit, Young in Atlanta, or any of the other Black "progressives" who preceded him with mayoralty campaigns that seemed to constitute significant mass movements.

If we were, today, on the crest of a succession of mass struggles in which people had demonstrated to themselves that they could actually organize themselves and win victories over employers and the state, today's electoral campaigns by progressive Democrats might not be so dangerous. They might even have the potential of *ratifying* some of the gains the movement had won in the shops, the communities, the streets. But the overriding fact of political life today is that *all* of the mass movements have suffered an as yet continuing series of disastrous defeats. At best, people are still uncertain and lacking in confidence. As a result, the message which will inevitably be projected and *received* in the campaigns of progressive Democrats—whatever the hopes of the leftists who are participating—is that merely by electing the progressive candidate people can begin to get improvements in their situation *without having actually to rebuild the movements* ■

FOURTEEN DAYS

GENERAL STRIKE THAT SHOOK B.C.

BY KEVIN ANNETT*

Editor's Introduction

When it comes to learning how to fight Reagan's attacks on social welfare and wages, Americans can learn a lot from their co-workers abroad. Two such fightbacks in the past year alone point the road—two general strikes; one throughout Belgium, the other in Vancouver, Canada. The latter is analyzed below. The former was a strike by 800,000 workers, including, for the first time, both Flemish and French-speaking Walloon workers, which brought the government to its knees. The two strikes had not just a common source (resistance to state cuts in welfare and wages) but three other critical points in common: Both strikes were the result of mass mobilization *begun independently of the official union leaderships*. Both strikes were defeated when the union leaders *joined the strike they never wanted, and then betrayed it—a harsh word "betray"*, but in this case a painfully accurate one, as readers will see. Finally, both strikes were denied significant assistance by their respective Labor Parties.

* Kevin Annett is a Canadian who was involved in the strike.



"In general strikes, either unions get clobbered into submission and pay a heavy price, or the movement takes over the government. I didn't want either of those. If the thing had lasted three or four weeks, perhaps the government would have fallen. But we didn't want that, and there's no doubt that many of our people would have been hurt in the process."

—Art Kube, chairman of B.C. Federation of Labor & Operation Solidarity Chairperson, Feb. 1, 1984

On July 7, 1983, the Social Credit government of British Columbia introduced a budget into the provincial legislature which changed the face of Canadian politics. The budget swept away union rights among government employees, eliminated minimal labor standards, abolished the Human Rights Commission and rent controls and severely cut social services and education funding. More than yet another anti-labour package, the July budget was a direct attack on the basic institutions of the liberal welfare state.

The mass movement which responded to the budget has been equally unprecedented, even by raucous British Columbian standards. From July to mid-November, demonstrations of 60,000 people, sit-ins, mass pickets and the first groundswell of a General Strike shook the province. The Solidarity Coalition which headed this movement embraced trade unionists, women, churches, peace groups, native Indians, pensioners, the handicapped and human rights coalitions. Its combined membership totalled nearly one million people, and its power was shown in the streets. On November 1, this power culminated in the first phases of a general work stoppage by public sector workers designed to roll back all repressive legislation.

Two weeks later, the strike was ended by visibly nervous union officials. Solidarity collapsed at its strongest point, on the picketlines. Since then, we have been living in the shadow of a defeat.

Perhaps because of this, no serious analysis of the events of last year, and the limitations of the Solidarity movement has yet been produced. This article is an attempt at such an analysis. It is written for the activists of Solidarity so that we may more clearly plan future battles.

The Fiscal Crisis

The Social Credit budget is a consequence of the unstable and resource-export nature of the B.C. economy, its extreme susceptibility to world market fluctuations, and the effect of the 1981-1982 recession on that economy.

British Columbia has always been the epitome of the Canadian Fact: a resource hinterland controlled from abroad, with little secondary manufacturing and a soaring debt produced by massive borrowing. In this century, the predominate capitalist class has secured its power by cheaply exporting minerals, lumber and hydroelectricity to American and eastern Canadian monopolies. Their control of the key transport and resource sectors of the economy allowed these capitalists to develop direct trading links to Europe, the U.S. and Japan independently from the rest of Canada, a fact which gave the B.C. bourgeoisie both great autonomy and freedom of movement within Canadian capitalism, (as well as greater dependence on international economic conditions).¹ This independence is deeply reflected in politics and the class struggle in B.C.

The post-World War II period, with its economic boom and U.S. demand for resources, ushered in the age of multinational corporate control of B.C. For the first time, provincial governments played a direct role in creating

the infrastructure for this control; in return, nearly one-half of all state revenues were derived from resource taxation, particularly forestry.

To finance its expanded role as a direct subsidizer of the private sector, the B.C. government searched frantically in the 1950's for ways to increase its revenues. The strategy adopted by the Social Credit regimes which have held power in B.C. for all but three years since 1952 was to allow the lumber multinationals to absorb small independent loggers, consolidate mills and restrict competition in bidding for timber grants. The government created a narrowly-controlled market dominated by three corporations: MacMillan-Bloedel, Crown Zellerbach and B.C. Forest Products. In 1983, these firms controlled among themselves one-half of all tree farm licenses in B.C.² This monopoly meant more revenue, Social Credit reasoned.

In fact, the opposite happened. Weakened government control over the operations of the industry resulted in corporate manipulation of log prices and operating costs. The "Big Three" decreased their tax payments to the government and created an ongoing deficit in provincial budgets. For, thanks to the growing dependence of the latter upon resource export revenue, cyclical instability intensified throughout the province. Being dependent on the U.S. construction industry for much of its trade, lumber production rises and falls according to American interest rates and housing starts. Locked into this market by the small size of the Canadian market, the B.C. forest industry must nevertheless compete on unequal terms with larger, more stable American giants.

The net effect has been a progressive deterioration in the productivity of the B.C. wood industry and its related manufacturing. From 1980 to 1981, primary production declined by over 20%, and fell even further after the recession of the following year.³

The extreme dependency of B.C. resource firms on immediate export, and the absence of local manufacturing to process these resources, are at the heart of this decline throughout the wood industry. The consequences of the decline have been disastrous. B.C. unemployment jumped from 5.6% in 1981 to 16% in late 1982 as the recession closed U.S. markets. Annual wage increases fell from 12% to barely 3% in the same period, and for the first time since 1962 union membership in B.C. declined by 4.6%.⁴ In some areas, the strategic International Woodworkers of America (IWA) has had its membership cut by two-thirds.

Even worse for the Social Credit government, it found

its revenues shrinking at an even faster rate. Unable to blame its own pro-monopoly policies or the steadily-falling tax payments from resource multinationals for the deficit, the government had to find a scapegoat as well as cut spending in all "non-essential" areas. It had to convince the public that labour costs and the civil service were at the root of the financial crisis. Finally, it had to attack these services, and the whole concept of the liberal welfare state, as its "solution" to the crisis.

It was in this context that the budget of July 7, 1983 was introduced.

Attack and Response

The July budget appeared less than two months after a provincial election had given the Social Credit government an increased majority in the legislature. The government had run on a virulent anti-socialist fear campaign which claimed that "the NDP (New Democratic Party, Canada's Labor Party) will drive out investors from B.C." Times being hard, the fear campaign worked. Although its majority had risen by only 1% of the popular vote, the government responded to its victory in typically arrogant fashion. It unleashed a new budget on the grounds that "the people of B.C. have voted for restraint."

The twenty-six bills contained in the budget abolished the Human Rights Commission, tenant protection and rent controls. It sacked one-quarter of the provincial civil service without regard to seniority, and eradicated whole sections of the negotiated contract between the government and the B.C. Government Employees Union (BCGEU). It allowed any public employer to fire any employee without cause. And it rewrote the Employment Standards Act, freeing any employer to disregard provincial minimal labor standards (overtime, sick or maternity leave, holidays) if an alternative set of standards was agreed to by his employees!

On a broader front, the budget severely cut funds for universities, social services and hospitals. Even special programs for the blind and disabled were gutted. Yet private schools, highways and ski resorts received rich increases.

The response was a deep and genuine outrage from a wide number of British Columbians. At first it was an eclectic and unorganized response including some who had voted Social Credit. The NDP too vowed to fight the budget—in the legislature. But the anti-budget movement seemed to have no single voice.

This changed quickly, and as a result of movement from below. A week after the budget was introduced, the Lower Mainland Solidarity Coalition (LMSC) was formed. Its energy came from many union and left activists in Vancouver, but its initiator was the Communist Party. The LMSC immediately called for province-wide, coordinated action against the budget, and began organizing a mass demonstration.

At this point, the labour bureaucracy and their NDP backers realized they were being outflanked on the left and knew they had to act. On July 15, the B.C. Federation of Labour created Operation Solidarity, which embraced all Federation unions, about 85% of organized workers in B.C. Operation Solidarity had instant credibility and money, but it was an all-labour body dominated by trade union attitudes. Operation Solidarity (the union component) soon affiliated to the *Solidar-*

ity Coalition which united all those fighting the government. Most of the organization and money for the Coalition came from the trade unions, even though the latter had merely followed the initiative of others.

This first period of anger and local organizing culminated on July 27 in a mass demonstration in Vancouver of 50,000 people. The movement was still a Vancouver-based phenomenon controlled by the LMSC. Operation Solidarity had not yet taken over the movement, and prominent Communist activists—like George Hewison of the Fishermens' Union—were major speakers at the demonstration.

The July 27 action was not a ritualized protest. People were fighting mad. A mood of resistance and desire for results filled the massive crowd; this writer personally distributed 2000 copies of a socialist leaflet in under a half hour as marchers literally snatched them from my hands. People were looking for some long-term direction, recognizing instinctively the limits of simply marching.

The outpaced union leaders of Operation Solidarity exploited this mood to regain control of the movement. Shortly after the march, Art Kube, B.C. Federation of Labour president and chief guru of Operation Solidarity, announced that local Solidarity committees would be formed across B.C. to organize *province-wide* actions. He even hinted at a "general job action" against the budget. By feigning boldness, Kube captured the leadership of the movement at this critical moment.

The budding grassroots activities of Solidarity were headed off by Kube's move. Local committees which had been formed in July were suddenly under direct Operation Solidarity control. The momentum shifted increasingly away from the LMSC to Art Kube and the labour negotiations among forest and government workers, which now became the focus of the movement. These negotiations, and the general desire for province-wide action and organization, strengthened Kube's position at the expense of the Communist Party and its LMSC stronghold. Hewison and other Party activists faded from sight. The struggle between the Government Employees Union and its employer increasingly dominated the movement, while the issues of tenants' rights, cuts in services, etc., were allowed to drop into the background.

At the centre of this struggle was the government's plan to unilaterally fire 1600 employees on October 31, an issue which soon became *the* issue of the Solidarity Coalition. Non-labour leaders of the Coalition acquiesced to Kube and the union brass out of the feeling that "labour has all the muscle," therefore it should be making all the decisions. Unfortunately, the essential focus of the movement which held it together—the need to oppose *all* the Social Credit legislation—was becoming lost in the shuffle.

This did not halt the movement; far from it. As Kube continued to issue threats backed up with no strategy, local activists began taking direct action. In early August, Women Against the Budget held a soup-line protest on the front lawn of the home of Welfare Minister Grace McCarthy, who was responsible for the deep cuts in welfare payments. Three hundred people turned out and halted traffic in the affluent neighborhood. The Solidarity Coalition leadership immediately disavowed any support for the action. The first public breach in *Solida-*

clarity had occurred.

Throughout this period, the NDP played no role whatsoever in the Solidarity movement, although local Coalitions were filled with NDP members. The party confined its presence to the legislature, where it delayed and filibustered the bills as long as possible. Flaunting parliamentary procedure, the government invoked closure—the arbitrary suspension of all debate—twenty times in the space of a few weeks in October, although closure had been used only once before in B.C. history. This draconian behaviour culminated on October 6 when NDP leader Dave Barrett was physically dragged from the legislature and barred from it after refusing to abide by a closure ruling.



General Strike

By October, events were reaching a climax. A second demonstration in September had swelled to 65,000 people, and contained many more union banners. The NDP parliamentary opposition had achieved nothing. Labour negotiations had broken down, and the pulp industry threatened a mass lockout. By October 9, 150,000 B.C. workers were preparing to strike: teachers, hospital and government employees. Finally, the last great demonstration occurred in downtown Vancouver on October 15 as 70,000 people marched past the Social Credit convention and filled the streets with their numbers and cries.

"I've never seen such power" one trade unionist told me later. "It was fantastic. But what do we do now?"

This dilemma confronted Solidarity starkly as the October 31 strike deadline approached. On that day, Operation Solidarity had vowed immediate job action if the 1600 government workers were fired. But what of the other legislation? An uneasiness developed among many non-labour Solidarity activists about the extent of the union officialdom's "solidarity" on the other bills.

Would the unions sell out on the human rights or cut-backs legislation if their own concerns were satisfied, especially since Kube had publically stated, "It is not the job of the labour movement to negotiate social issues?"⁵

To make matters worse, the Solidarity leadership kept giving mixed signals to the rest of the movement. Two days after the October 15 mass protest, Father Jim Roberts, a Coalition leader, called for moderation. "After all, Bennett is our premier, he's my premier, he's no enemy."⁶ Roberts also stated that the majority of Solidarity supporters opposed the recent sit-in at government offices organized by Communist party unionists, and the front-lawn protest by Women Against the Budget. The remark was a well-aimed slap at the two main opposition forces within Solidarity Coalition.

Exploiting this division, the government took a conciliatory tone, recessing the legislature for two weeks and announcing that it would move back the date of the 1600 firings and reconsider a bill allowing arbitrary firing. But the momentum was irreversible by this time. On October 23, the B.C. Federation of Labour adopted a final plan for an escalating General Strike.

Under this plan, government employees would strike on November 1, joined by teachers on November 8, civic and transport workers on November 14, and thereafter the remaining public sector workforce. A General Strike embracing the whole public sector would thus exist by mid-November. The private sector unions, including the strategic wood and pulp unions, were left out of the strike altogether.

This was no accident. The lack of sympathy and awareness concerning the Solidarity struggle was noticeable among private sector unionists who did not feel threatened by the Social Credit legislation.

Woodworker union officials did nothing to educate their membership about the anti-labour nature of the Social Credit legislation. It was thus one of the ironic tragedies of the Solidarity phenomenon that the decision to halt the *public sector* strike on November 13 was made by Woodworker president Jack Munro, one of the most conservative and least supportive union officials in B.C.

But as November approached, the movement was confident. Armed with an 87% strike vote, a thousand BCGEU picketlines were preparing to unleash their power if last minute negotiations failed. When they did fail, the entire provincial civil service walked off the job at midnight, November 1. The critical moment had come.

* * *

The Strike

"There's too much at stake to back down. It's not about wages or a contract, but basic rights."

These sentiments of a BCGEU picket captain in Port Moody ran high among the 35,000 strikers who appeared across B.C. Their commitment to preserve threatened social services for the public filled strikers with a great unity.

The first reaction to the walkout was an injunction banning picketing at all provincial courts. Strikers responded good-naturedly. After all, there were 3000 other government offices to picket. The next attack followed soon after. On November 3, Education Minister

Jack Heinrich ordered local schoolboards to discipline any teachers who joined the strike on November 8. Most schoolboards began applying for injunctions against school picketing.

Never having held a province-wide strike, and worried about the effect on their pupils, B.C. teachers were not as resolved as other government workers to strike, voting only 59% to do so. But on November 8, the majority of them walked off the job, swelling the Solidarity pickets by another 28,000. Over 90% of B.C. schools were closed.

The escalation of the struggle in the second week of November was the critical moment for Solidarity. The struggle had reached an apex, and the government's intransigence prompted labour leaders into an apparently fighting stance. "If it's war they want, they'll get a total war" declared Art Kube on November 9. Under headlines like "Solidarity Perpetrating Terrorism" the media began calling for blood. The NDP's response was to demand a return to work and "impartial mediation." The province seemed poised for a mass confrontation.

On the picketlines, confidence was high, and became euphoric after the November 10 announcement by Kube that *private sector* strikes would begin in a few days. Community groups began joining picketers, and mothers marched alongside teachers at local schools. But in rural communities, reaction was rearing its head. The same day as Kube's announcement, a pro-government demonstration of 1,300 unemployed, students and independent truckers marched through Fort St. John and publically volunteered to take any strikers' jobs.

On November 11, the tide suddenly turned. Four top union officials, including Munro of the IWA, held a secret meeting with the government to settle the strike. The officials would end the strike if the government agreed to five points, including: "closer consultation" before enacting its legislation; restoring a critical section of the master contract between the province and the government employees union; and withdrawing a bill which would have allowed any public employee to be fired without regard to seniority or any other contract provision ("just cause," etc.). Even worse, the meeting was called without the knowledge or approval of the rest of Solidarity Coalition. The union officialdom simply decided privately that the strike had to end.

On November 13, the strike was called off ninety minutes before 22,000 civic and transport workers were scheduled to join the pickets. The agreement won a few concessions for the public sector unions (above). But none of the other bills were withdrawn or amended. Of Operation Solidarity's Five "non-negotiable" points, only one was achieved. The nightmare feared by many had come true: the union brass had sold out the whole Solidarity movement for a few crumbs.

Epilogue

Since the aftermath of shock and betrayal, the remnants of Solidarity have been fighting rearguard actions. Local, isolated struggles have continued: among students, who have occupied government offices and demonstrated over education cuts, and among busdrivers and hydroelectric workers faced with contract battles. But little remains of the mass, confident movement of November.

The union officials responsible for the sell-out continue to tell us that nothing more could have been won from the government. But that provides no comfort to those of us, the majority, who won nothing. The bitterness and division between trade unionists, women, the left and human rights activists are tenfold greater today than before Solidarity.

Many individuals are looking towards a "revived NDP" as the answer to this division. Yet the very men who sold out our movement continue to control the NDP. More important, it is clear that the NDP is undergoing a severe crisis as its effectiveness as a political vehicle for the trade union bureaucracy is increasingly in doubt.

As the recession deepens, and pure and simple trade union action loses its impact, the importance of an electoral machine and access to power grows in the eyes of the labour bureaucracy. Yet the NDP has failed to provide that access, having been out of power in B.C. since 1975. On a national level, the NDP is barely alive, holding about 12% of the seats in Parliament after fifty years of existence. In short, the political options for the union officialdom are shrinking at a time when they are most needed.

This fact helps to explain the behaviour of Operation Solidarity and its quick capitulation to the government. Denied an effective party machine, the labour officialdom must seek other, more direct ways of pursuing its goal of integrating and harmonizing the interests of labour and capital: primarily, by open co-optation into the machinery of the state. To facilitate this, strikes and mass protest must be curtailed. In the absence of revived NDP fortunes at the polls, the trade union bureaucracy sees no alternative to direct co-optation.

Such a course will spell disaster for the NDP, which depends so much on union finances and organizing. But for the rank and file of the Solidarity movement, who must live with the consequences of a betrayed struggle, this is not the main issue. Before any electoral panacea, we must find ways of rebuilding our power where it was most strongly felt: in the community and at work.

We lost Round One, but many of us learned some important lessons. We won't give up decision-making to full-time officials so easily next time. We won't let them destroy our solidarity. For in that unity lies not only effectiveness, but the seeds of the new society. ■

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Students against the Budget

Footnotes

1. See Resnick, Phillip, "The Political Economy of B.C.: A Marxist Perspective," in *Essays in B.C. Political Economy*, ed. Paul Knox and Phillip Resnick, p. 7. News Star Books, Vancouver, 1974.
2. *Ministry of Forests Annual Report, 1981-1982*, p. 56, Government of British Columbia, Victoria.
3. *Canadian Forestry Statistics* (1981), Statistics Canada, pp. 18-19. Dept. of Supply and Services, Ottawa.
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5. *Vancouver Sun*, September 12, 1983.
6. *Vancouver Province*, October 17, 1983.

Jesse Jackson and the Black Movement



This article is adapted from a talk presented by Anthony Thigpenn* at an *Against the Current* Forum in Los Angeles, and written up by members of the ATC Editorial Board on the West Coast.

The last several years have been very difficult ones for the US working class in general and the Black people in particular. It's no secret that the economic crisis has undermined economic and social gains won during the boom period of the 60s. Attempting to make up for sharply reduced profits, all sections of the capitalist class, with the help of the state, are on the warpath and are in no mood to compromise. Especially in conditions like this, it can't be emphasized enough that what is *indispensable* to turn the tide is the reconstruction of the sort of militant mass movements we had in the 60s and, before that, in the 30s. This is the *necessary condition* for beginning to rebuild our organizations, our power, our political consciousness.

It's no news of course that as the employers' offensive has increased, the movements have decayed across the board. Given the weakness of the movements, it's perhaps not too surprising that the left has yet to develop any successful strategy for fighting back. After all, you can't suck a movement out of your thumb. But what is depressing is that, in response to these difficult conditions, so much of the left is *moving to the right*. People seem to think they can somehow "get the ear" or otherwise influence the powers that be and, *through them*, get what we need! There seems to be a mad scramble going on to "become legitimate" and "court" the liberal

wing of the establishment. This mainly means the Democratic Party. And today what it signifies above all is work in the Jesse Jackson campaign. This discussion is about the Jackson candidacy, what it means for the Black movement and for the left.

The Decline of the Black Movement

It's been fifteen years already since the great Black upheavals of the 60s, since the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement. Both these movements were overwhelmingly supported by working class and poor Blacks and both were sparked by militant mass direct action strategies. In the civil rights struggles of the early 60s, literally tens of thousands of people directly confronted the authorities in illegal sitdowns, freedom walks, etc.; *whole communities*, especially in the south, organized themselves to resist. In the urban risings of the north between 1964 and 1967, perhaps hundreds of thousands of working class and poor Blacks actively participated in the struggle. Moreover, both of these movements (which of course were closely tied to one another) gave rise to new and radical political organizations: first SNCC and CORE, then the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. As a result of their militant direct action tactics and their political independence, these movements won a significant series of reforms, and they did so *in the absence of any significant Black electoral political effort*. Finally, although the Black movements of the 60s did not generate what could be called a coherent working class leadership, they did succeed in loosening the

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political stranglehold over the Black community long exercised by organizations rather explicitly representing the Black middle class—the NAACP, the Urban League and the like. These organizations argued, at the time, for toning down the direct action and putting a primary focus on legislative, electoral and lobbying activities—using the official channels. But at least through most of the 60s, they saw their political position within the Black community drastically eroded.

Unfortunately, the Black movement of the 60s was never able to consolidate itself, organizationally or politically. As has become ever more evident, the FBI as well as other federal and local law enforcement agencies systematically infiltrated and disrupted the movement from the very start. By the end of the 60s, such campaigns as COINTELPRO, supported by local police forces, were literally wiping out Black militant leaders and destroying organizations like the Black Panther Party. From these attacks, the movement never recovered, and from that time onwards, it's been all downhill, with the collapse or disappearance of just about every militant organization built in the period and failure to build any new ones in their place.

Even so, it must be pointed out that the militant Black organizations which arose and were crushed at the end of the 60s and early 70s had not yet found a way to confront the most difficult, yet the most central question we face: that of race and class—specifically, how to develop a strategy which can address the problems of Black workers and poor. This is really the problem of building an alliance between Black and white workers, in which there can be real unity in struggle against the employers and yet full recognition of the special oppression of Black workers, as exemplified in the support by white workers of Black demands and the Blacks' need for autonomous organization within the movement. To deal with that question would take us far beyond the scope of this article. The point here is that although the Black movement of the 60s did win very important gains—big advances in civil rights, like the right to vote and the ability to hold office; certain inroads into higher education; the desegregation of public facilities; the partial integration of the labor force—it accomplished little with respect to mass Black unemployment, to the decay of housing and services in the Black community, and to the whole run of other problems facing urban and ghetto Blacks. At the height of the boom at the end of the 60s, some had hopes that sheer economic growth would wipe out these problems. But with the onset of the economic crisis, such illusions were shattered. The poverty programs, the education grants, the affirmative action programs dried up. But even more important, as the economy contracted, it was once again, "last hired, first fired" for Blacks. To make matters worse, those industries where Blacks had made their biggest gains were hardest hit. During the 50s and 60s, Black workers had taken a substantial number of jobs in basic industry (especially in auto and steel) and in the public sector, but during the 70s, these were precisely the sectors struck by deindustrialization and the fiscal crisis. By the end of the 70s, Blacks were pretty much where they'd always been—at the bottom of the heap, with the conditions worsening and the economic gap between Black and white workers again increasing. Today, poor and working-class Blacks might legitimately wonder

what difference the Black movements had really made.

The Black Middle Class: Economic Consolidation and Political Hegemony

The major beneficiaries of the Black movements of the 60s, even as these movements declined, was the Black middle class—the professionals, the small businessmen, the politicians. They were the ones who staffed the new poverty programs. They were the main gainers from the expansion of supervisory positions in state and local government. They and their children were the ones who assumed the places provided by affirmative action in the universities and the professions. Naturally, they, too, were hurt by the economic crisis. But the fact is that the income gap between the Black middle class and the Black working class grew sharply throughout the 70s.

Equally important, while the Black middle class was consolidating its economic condition with the help of some of the political advances won in the 60s, it was also reconsolidating its political domination over the Black community. This was manifested above all in the fact that as Blacks turned away from militant mass action, the middle class's preferred strategy became totally hegemonic in the Black movement. The primary aspect of this strategy was of course *electoralism*: getting Black officials elected to office. But it also involved building ties between Black organizations and the big corporations, so as to get corporate assistance for the economic development of the Black community—development in which the local Black businessmen and professionals could play a profitable, if definitely subordinate, role. Sometimes Black organizations, on their own, took the lead in establishing these alliances, as with the NAACP's agreement with Exxon or PUSH's agreements with Coca-Cola and other companies (to which we shall return). But these alliances could, of course, best be consolidated when Blacks held the leading urban offices.

Black mayors now govern four of the six largest cities in the nation—Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit, and a total of twenty with populations over 100,000. In 1973, there were only 48 Black mayors across the country; today there are 229! Moreover, the Black mayors have, nearly universally, pursued the same strategy—a growing alliance with the corporations which may benefit the Black middle class, but which does little for the Black masses. What this means in general is that the Black mayors see to it that their local governments grant tax cuts, raise sales taxes (regressive), and give subsidies of various sorts to corporations (tax breaks, cheap loans, etc.) in order to create the conditions so that the corporations will invest. Thus, Black mayors like Maynard Jackson, Coleman Young, and Kenneth Gibson have for some time now been making corporate investment the keystone of their urban development strategies. Now, Andrew Young, too, is emphasizing seeking private capital for his city's economy and recently pushed through a 1% sales tax increase as a token of his intentions. The hope, of course, is that if business invests, there will be economic growth and that the benefits will "trickle down" to the Black masses. Unfortunately, there is no lack of

statistical data demonstrating that no Black mayor has succeeded in *even slightly* slowing the radical decline in the conditions of Black workers and poor in his city. Still, the Black middle class does benefit from this approach. The professionals get supervisory and managerial jobs and small businessmen get sub-contracts from the giant corporations.

The more farsighted of the new Black Democratic politicians do not make great claims for their strategy. They point out that they are highly constrained in what they can do by the cutoff of federal funds and the erosion of the urban tax base due to the flight of capital and the crisis. And surely they have a point. For without the sort of mass struggles which can *compel* concessions from the government and corporations at both the national and the local levels, the cities *will* be hostage to the corporations and their requirements for profits. Meanwhile, the Black mayors can, "in good conscience," adopt the words, though not the actions, of the 60s Black movements. Above all, they depict the current voter registration drives and the push to elect Black Democrats like themselves as the extension of the Civil Rights movement. As James Madison of the NAACP put it at the time of the 1981 meeting of the so-called "Black Leadership Family," attended by over 1000 professionals, politicians and government officials: "The militancy of the old days is passé. We've got to develop *technical* militants out of those middle class affluent Blacks who have received training, acquired good education, and worked themselves into the mainstream of economic life."

The Jesse Jackson Campaign

It should be obvious that Jesse Jackson's campaign for the Democratic Party presidential nomination represents the culmination of the electoralist strategy which the Black bourgeoisie has been implementing for more than a decade. Jackson's own political operations in the past have expressed, in a rather pure form, the ideals of Black advancement through Black capitalism and individual self-help. Jackson's current campaign is *explicitly* aimed at building and consolidating a Black political bloc which can leverage concessions from the Democratic Party—a strategy which can do nothing for the Black masses. Jackson's organization is designed entirely for getting out the vote and not in any way to build an independent organization of any sort, let alone to increase the strength of the existing grass roots movements. Finally, Jackson's ideas, while naturally popular among the masses of Black people, only obscure the central political question for the Black movement and working class movement as a whole, the question of *class*.

Operation PUSH

Jesse Jackson's rise to prominence in the 70s depended on his Chicago-based Operation PUSH. By and large, PUSH's strategy has been economically focussed: it tries to pressure the corporations into concessions that benefit Black business and in that way Black employment.

PUSH's widely publicized boycott of Coca-Cola in the summer of 1981 exemplifies the organization's general approach. PUSH realized that Blacks make up a disproportionate part of the soft drink market. Blacks as 11%

of the population make 17% of the soft drink purchases; Blacks consume 163 bottles of soft drinks per capita compared to 120 per capita for whites; Blacks buy no fewer than 300 million cans of soft drinks annually. Nevertheless, not one of the 550 Coca-Cola local bottlers or the 4000 Coca-Cola wholesalers was Black. Moreover, Coke had deposited no more than \$254,000 in Black banks. Given their contribution to Coke's profits, Blacks, in PUSH's opinion, deserved a bigger share of the returns. PUSH sought to negotiate concessions from Coca-Cola but when Coke refused to discuss the question, PUSH organized a successful boycott.

As a result of the boycott, PUSH did win something of a victory, at least in its own terms. Coca-Cola did agree to increase the number of Black distributors. Coke also consented to put up \$1.8 million in venture capital for Black businessmen, to double the amount of advertising it gave to Black advertising agencies, and to quadruple its deposits in Black banks. PUSH also got Coke to agree to hire the grand total of 100 Black manual workers—some indication of PUSH's priorities and its capacities.

Jackson's politics were further exemplified in his scarcely veiled anti-unionism. Indeed, Jackson attacked the recent Chicago teachers' strike, carried out by the majority-Black teachers union. Meanwhile, Jackson has continued to push for free enterprise zones in the center cities—i.e. the suspension of minimum wage laws, the loosening of labor legislation and the cutting of taxes in the ghettos in order to stimulate corporate investment.

Organizing the Campaign

Some leftists who support the Jackson campaign argue that although Jackson's past politics are not particularly inspiring, his struggle for the Democratic Party nomination goes way beyond Jackson the preacher and politician and in fact represents a new movement with a new politics. Whatever Jackson's own motives, they say, he is "objectively" building a "Rainbow Coalition" which represents the revival of the civil rights movement and has the potential of unifying the popular movements of the working class, women, gays, and Latinos, as well as of Blacks. The question is posed, therefore: Is Jesse Jackson actually the objective instrument and symbol of a new movement?

First of all, it cannot be overemphasized that Jackson is *consciously* carrying out a very explicit strategy which does go beyond the person Jesse Jackson, but which represents not a revived mass movement, but a continuing drive by Black politicians and the Black middle class for greater influence in the Democratic Party and US political life in general. The idea is simple, and has been spelled out over and over again by supporters and critics alike. Jackson aims to get the millions of unregistered Blacks signed up for the Democratic Party. By using that newly-created electoral base to win support for his candidacy in the primaries, Jackson then hopes to demonstrate his usefulness (and the usefulness of the bloc of Black politicians more generally) to the Democratic Party and in that way to increase Black influence within the Party. Jackson and the Black politicians will deliver the vote, if the Democratic Party will grant them concessions. It is the same strategy which had been followed for many decades by organized labor,

but which has failed to win a single pro-union bill for forty years.

Now the critical point for the left and those interested in reviving a movement is that in order to carry out this strategy effectively, Jackson needs in no way to build the movement or even to construct much of an organization of his own. The "be all and end all" is to get Blacks registered and out to vote in the primaries for Jackson. Leftists should not therefore be surprised to discover that Jackson's organization, to the extent it exists, is entirely top-down. There are clear cut electoral tasks that have to be assigned and accomplished. There is no need to get that feedback and input, or to encourage that mass self-activity, which you would need were you building a real mass movement. To publicize his campaign, Jackson does, of course, hold massive demonstrations and marches, makes hundreds of speeches in the community and the churches. But he builds little independent organization, even of his own.

In Los Angeles, in the early months of the campaign, 200 or more people attended, week after week, meetings held for Jackson in the Black community in South Central L.A. But soon the official Jackson organization, dominated by mainstream Democratic Party professionals, took control of the campaign. Campaign headquarters were moved from the Black community to a more affluent section of town. The weekly mass meetings were eliminated entirely. Community people were forbidden to initiate their own grass roots organizations for Jackson without the official sanction of campaign headquarters. One result was that grass roots people were prevented from determining the composition and direction of the campaign. In addition, the campaign failed to build any kind of street apparatus for involving grass roots people.

On the contrary the campaign in L.A. was topheavy with 85-90% of the funds going to support the exorbitant salaries of the staff dominated by Democratic Party hacks. During the early months of the campaign there were numerous spontaneous small meetings and house parties to raise funds for Jackson. But when the Jackson campaign staff took over, they ordered that no fundraisers be organized that would raise less than \$2000.

It follows that Jackson is doing little organizationally to strengthen existing grassroots organizations in the Black community, let alone unions, women's organizations, or gay organizations. He needs *their* energy, in the short run. But for his campaign to spend time and energy to build *them* would be a waste of resources. On the other hand, the (generally rather weak) local "Rainbow Coalitions" are devoted entirely to getting out the vote for Jackson and practically nothing else. This is the inexorable logic of the electoralist strategy. Since most resources go to getting out the vote and pushing the candidate, it's hardly surprising that little lasting, let alone independent of the campaign, comes out of it.

Reviving the Civil Rights Movement?

The Jackson campaign, like most of the Black mayoralty campaigns in recent years, *does* see itself as reviving the civil rights movement. But, needless to say, the two "movements" could not be more different.

First, and above all, in the original civil rights movement, masses of people took to the streets to confront the white power structure. In the process, they were con-

stantly *compelled* to strengthen their solidarity, to take risks for one another, and to develop their understanding of the struggle and the broader society. This was the only way they could build the power they needed. In contrast, the Jesse Jackson campaign is building no organized collective struggle, let alone carrying out confrontations with the authorities. What is required is, in general, the perfectly legal, perfectly individual and non-collective process of registering to vote.

Secondly, the civil rights movement of the 60s had, as its *goal*, the achievement of political and social liberties, among them the right to vote. But it explicitly rejected electoralism—depending on electing people to office to legislate your program—as a *means*. The Civil Rights movement was practically obsessive in its dependence on mass direct action. When they sought to use the ballot box, it was, in general, to *assert the right to vote*, not to win an election. This can best be seen in what was, perhaps, the civil rights movement's most dramatic "electoral action," the struggle of the Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 in Mississippi. There, against the violent resistance of the white power structure, organizers from SNCC, CORE and other groups first tried to *compel* the authorities to allow Blacks to register. When they failed to do this, in the face of a reign of repression, they turned to organizing an autonomous campaign to sign up Black voters for their own unofficial Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), in order to challenge the official Democratic Party organization which was, of course, firmly segregationist and reactionary. As will be remembered, Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Party refused to seat the MFDP at the Democratic Party convention, despite the fact that the official Mississippi Democratic Party rejected most of Johnson's program and generally favored the rightwing Republican Barry Goldwater. Even so, at the time of the convention and after, the official Black leadership called for compromise and a turn of the movement from "protest to politics," in Bayard Rustin's famous phrase. But the civil rights leadership of CORE and SNCC rejected electoralism. As Meier and Rudwick, the historians of CORE, summed up the position of CORE and SNCC at that point: "Social change could come only through an independent movement that would remain a threat to the power structure." In contrast, the Jackson campaign is simply getting people to register Democrat.

Third, and finally, even when the civil rights movement of the 60s did involve itself in electoral work, it almost always was to *consolidate the gains of the movement*, never as an alternative to it. In contrast, one of the most important facts about the recent string of electoral campaigns by Black politicians and about Jackson's campaign itself, is that they are occurring in the context of a long-term decline and decay of the Black movement and, in no way represent an independent Black movement. Their worst sin, so to speak, is that they try to *substitute* electoral victories for mass organizing and try to present electoralism as a practical alternative.

Leveraging the Democratic Party?

Precisely because he is *not* building a movement with the capacity to exercise power *outside* the Democratic Party let alone *outside* the ballot booth, Jesse Jackson will be able to extract very little from the Democratic

Party, even if his campaign is successful in its own terms—i.e., attracts a lot of votes and wins a significant number of convention delegates. This is because there is really very little Jackson can threaten to *do*, if the Democratic Party doesn't give him what he wants. Above all, there is no way Jackson can threaten to break from the Party and go off on his own. This is not only because he has in no way prepared his followers for this. It is also because one of his principal attractions has been his ability to project what seems to be a *practical* strategy to win gains for the Black masses—that is, the strategy of building a bloc of Black voters to leverage the Democratic Party. Had he sought to build an electoral movement which claimed independence from the Democratic Party, his campaign probably would not have gotten off the ground; for it would have lacked the support of the Black bourgeoisie and perhaps the Black masses. Of course, Jackson can threaten and his allies among the Black politicians can threaten that if they are not granted what they want, they will refuse to mobilize the Black vote against Reagan. But this is an empty threat, for as the Democratic Party regulars realize the Black leadership and the Black masses want to defeat Reagan perhaps more than anyone. To refrain from doing so would appear to them to be cutting off their nose to spite their face. This has, of course, been the classic quandary of the official labor leadership for decades.

An Independent Campaign After the Convention?

In view of the actual character of Jackson's campaigns, left hopes for using Jackson's effort in the primaries as the base for launching an independent campaign after the convention are utopian to say the least. Again, it's not just that the Jackson campaign has in no way prepared its followers to do this; *it's very doubtful that it could have*. As every American knows, splinter parties have no hope whatsoever of offering practical gains, unless they are extremely large—larger, that is, than any which have appeared on the scene in at least a half-century. The *premise* for a *practical* third party campaign would be the radical and massive transformation of the national consciousness, dependent upon huge historical changes, not the least of which would include the rise of some sort of mass movement greater than any we have seen, at least since before the 1930s. In the absence of such a transformation, any third party effort will, of necessity, be confined primarily to propaganda objectives, and can expect to have no significant *practical* effect. In contrast, the whole attraction of the Jackson campaign is its pretension of being practical, of winning improvements in the people's condition, of offering a quick fix. Were that pretension dropped, it would lose almost all of its support.

Some leftists have argued that we should not support Jackson while he is in the Democratic Party, but that we should call on him to lead a third party campaign independent of the Democrats. But these leftists are missing the point. For when they call on Jackson to bolt the Democratic Party they give the impression that, despite the almost total absence of powerful mass movements over many years, the political conditions exist for a serious third party electoral effort (as opposed to a mere

propaganda campaign). They therefore unintentionally foster the illusion that an electoral struggle today could lead to significant reforms and make up for the difficult task of rebuilding the mass movements.

A "Black Social Democracy" Within the Democratic Party?

Because there is no independent movement, Jackson's strategy can promise only the most minimal gains, even to the Black bourgeoisie. For without the ability to threaten to leave the Democratic Party, Jackson will be able, at best, to induce the Democrats to include in their platform certain left-sounding progressive demands—for full employment, affirmative action, etc. The Democratic Party has, on numerous occasions in the past, adopted quite similar positions, but it hasn't made a stitch of difference unless mass movements have emerged to "keep the party honest." In fact it is more than likely that the Democrats *will* grant concessions to Jackson to make him, and them, look good. Then in the general election, they will likely reap the benefits of Jackson's campaign to register Blacks. For what choice will those Blacks have but to vote against Reagan?

Of course, the critical underlying fact is that *even if it wished to do so*, the Democratic Party is simply incapable of improving the conditions of the Black working people and poor. Suppose the Democratic Party actually *did* adopt the sort of left-liberal, progressive social program which Jackson advocates—as it did for several decades—it would be absurd to believe that they could deliver the goods. As we've seen for more than a decade, in this period of deepening economic crisis and employers' offensive, Democratic Party majorities are incapable of granting even the most minimal reform even when they "want to," because they are incapable of imposing in the slightest way upon the profitability of capital.

Now, in several recent articles, Manning Marable had made the argument that Black officials actually represent a sort of "social democracy" within the Democratic Party (see *Changes* Feb '84 and *Southern Exposure* March '84). What he means by this rather vague assertion is that the Black politicians, almost across the board, advocate social programs and give voice to ideas which are far to the left of those of the white political mainstream. This is, of course, true so far as it goes, for there can be no doubt that the political *sentiments* of the Black community are far to the left of the average of the population as a whole. Nevertheless, it is highly misleading to draw the implied conclusion, as does Marable, that were the Black politicians actually to hold power it would lead to significant reforms. This flies in the face of the obvious fact that what Manning Marable sees as Black social democracy has been "in power" in quite a few cities for a decade, but has done little for the Black masses. Witness all the cities with Black mayors. But even more to the point, social democracy has been *in power* in quite a few *nations* around the world throughout the late 70s and early 80s, but has brought only unemployment and austerity to its own working classes. Once again, what's at stake is not only the ineffectiveness of the electoral road, but much worse, the idea that the electoral road can substitute for the long and difficult process of rebuilding the movement ■

CISPES and the Anti-Intervention Movement

by Michael Wunsch*

The building of a strong anti-intervention movement in the US is of the greatest importance to opponents of US foreign policy. CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) has emerged as the leading organization in the movement against US intervention in Central America. As with any movement in the US today, it has a great many tactical and strategic issues to face if it is to continue to increase its effectiveness. The following is an analysis of several of these issues as they were addressed at the recent leadership meeting of CISPES attended by the author.

The meeting of CISPES national coordinators in Washington, D.C. on January 28-30 came at a critical moment for the anti-intervention movement, and marked an important step forward. It was the first national gathering of CISPES since its founding meetings which had as broad a representation from the ranks. Roughly sixty people, composed of members of the National Administrative Committee and of regional and subregional coordinators, attended and voted on resolutions which had been presented to local groups for discussion prior to the conference. The major issues before the conference were 1) CISPES's goals and strategies for 1984; 2) developing a more democratic and responsive structure for CISPES nationally; and 3) developing alliances with key sectors, such as the Black community, the labor movement and students.

The continuing US escalation in Central America has posed difficult problems for the revolutionary movements there as well as for the support movement in the United States. This was acutely felt by the conference participants. The discussions at the conference took place in an atmosphere of real urgency, which was only accentuated by a perception of the relative weakness of the anti-intervention movement.

The CISPES conference gave its main attention to preparing a response to the deepening US involvement in Central America and the increased likelihood of direct confrontations between US personnel and revolutionary forces in the region. To this end, the conference made a number of important decisions.

The first of these was to adopt a more regional perspective on the conflict in El Salvador. CISPES is now calling for an "end to all forms of US intervention in El Salvador and all of Central America and the Caribbean." In addition, it has committed itself to work towards forming a national coordinating body with the Guatemalan and Nicaraguan support networks (such bodies

have already come into existence in many areas of the country). This is a critical step forward, for it recognizes that because the problem of intervention in Central America is systematic, and not something peculiar to El Salvador, it is necessary to unify the struggles against US imperialism both here and in Central America.

Secondly, the conference decided to prioritize two key campaigns in the coming year. The first priority was to "prepare and initiate immediate, strong responses to step-by-step escalations of US intervention in Central America. Respond strongly to escalations of aggressions against Nicaragua." This would be accomplished through a combination of street demonstrations, educational activities and pressure on Congress. The second priority, a new one for CISPES, is to "make opposition to intervention in Central America a central issue in the 1984 elections. Contribute to the defeat of Reagan on the basis of his Central America policy."

Difficulties Ahead

Yet, it will prove easier to specify what campaigns are needed than to actually carry them out. Even as intervention has escalated the US anti-intervention movement has experienced stagnation. Evidence the admittedly inadequate response to the US invasion of Grenada in October 1983. No doubt the tragic developments inside the Grenadian regime itself were, in part, responsible for the disappointing showing. But it would be a serious mistake to ignore the tell-tale signs of the weakness of the movement. The increasing difficulties of mobilizing mass support for the anti-intervention movement, at a time when ever greater forces are required to respond effectively to the accelerating US build up are beginning to take a toll within CISPES. On a personal level this is reflected by activist burn-out and the solidification in many committees of a core of "cadre" with the non-core membership experiencing rapid turnover.

Furthermore, on a political level, there has been a heightening of political tensions which have been built in to the organization and the movement from its inception. The movement against US intervention in Central America has not developed as did the struggle against the Vietnam war. A mass *sentiment* against intervention does indeed exist (on a pacifist, isolationist basis), but *not* as a movement. There are several reasons for this, 1) the general retreat of liberal spokespeople in the face of the right-wing political offensive within the US, 2) the absence of massive, direct involvement of US troops in the region, the consequent lack of US 'bodies' (corpses), and 3) the movement to the right within the left itself which has led the left (as we shall see below) to

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look for quick-fix answers for building the movement and defeating the Right.

As the leftist core of CISPES has seen the movement's relative weakness continuing, they have had essentially two responses. Many have simply dug in for the long haul, and have continued to carry out their activities as before, maintaining their commitment to project a broad anti-imperialist politics and to build mass pressure on the US government. Others, however, are frustrated at the weakness of the movement and are anxious to offer "real" support to the Central American revolution. They have sought new solutions and have made various attempts to appeal to existing sentiment and to use the powers-that-be to provide leverage to get a better US policy in the region. This difference began to manifest itself at the recent conference.

In the past CISPES had, quite correctly, intervened in elections by confronting candidates when they came to town, picketing their meetings and raising questions from the floor. This practice will be continued. In addition, CISPES now plans to participate in demonstrations at the Republican and Democratic national conventions. These decisions are in accord with CISPES's well established approach of relying on mass action and maintaining the movement's independence from both capitalist parties. So far so good.

CISPES and the Elections

On the other hand, a new departure was decided and entered upon, however hesitantly. The conference agreed that work around the elections would follow a two-tiered tactic: not only attempting to pressure the political establishment through mass mobilizations, picket lines, rallies and demonstrations, but also trying to influence the Democratic Party *from within* by getting delegates to raise the issue of Central America from the convention floor. It was resolved that "Although it will be difficult to achieve, a floor fight at the convention in favor of a non-intervention plank would be a powerful propaganda tool. To do this we need to target a few (3-5) states in order to get their delegates committed to raising the issue on the convention floor."

At the same time, the conference emphatically voted down the proposal of the Mid-Atlantic Region that CISPES initiate a nationwide Dump Reagan Campaign. It was decided however, that CISPES would 1) "Support local committees' decisions to work on congressional candidates' re-election where they support our non-intervention position and where it could make a difference (i.e. Dellums faces a major challenge this year)," 2) "Support local committees' decisions to participate in the Rainbow Coalition/Jackson Campaign activities," 3) "On a national level, the Relations Task Force should delegate someone to work with the Rainbow Coalition/Jackson Campaign, just as we do (with) the November 12 Coalition and the Central America Peace Campaign," and 4) "CISPES committees who get involved in voter registration drives should combine them with local Central America ballot initiatives, referenda or pledge campaign work." There were however, cautionary resolutions passed to prevent CISPES from going overboard: "We are on record as opposing national endorsement of the Jackson Campaign" and we will "Maintain our independent work and carefully guard against submerging those aspects of the program which cannot be

incorporated into our work in the Rainbow Coalition/Jackson Campaign."

These resolutions are to a certain extent contradictory. Few Democratic Party candidates or delegates at the convention would feel comfortable working with CISPES lobbyists if CISPES is simultaneously applying mass pressure outside the convention. Yet these resolutions reflect an effective compromise between the widely varying political viewpoints contained within CISPES. These run the gamut from Mondale supporters to Jackson supporters, from supporters of left-wing candidates to those who wish to remain clear of the electoral process entirely. The resolutions recognize that CISPES has no means of forcing local organizations to implement national decisions and therefore any national position on the election, given the political diversity within CISPES, would not only not be carried out but would undermine the unity of CISPES. Nevertheless, as the elections draw closer and the pressures on the Democratic campaign grow more intense we can expect those within CISPES who favor Jackson and the Democratic Party as such to apply increasing pressure on CISPES to adopt their position. The issue is far from decided. (And indeed, the issue was raised again in CISPES when, at the April meeting of the National Administrative Committee, the Mid-Atlantic region proposed CISPES become involved in voter registration drives and the Northwest region proposed we participate in Dump Reagan Coalitions. The NAC, to its credit, voted to stick with the decisions of the January National Coordinators Meeting despite their ambiguity.)

CISPES and the Democratic Party

The conference showed that a majority of CISPES now supports the idea of attempting to use the Democratic Party, and especially sections within it, to organize struggle, to influence public opinion, and perhaps even to affect policy.

Those at the conference in favor of working within the Rainbow Coalition argued that such work was necessary if CISPES was to build alliances with other sectors, particularly the Black community. Yet the opportunity to establish these alliances has not materialized. According to Suzanne Ross, CISPES National Relations Coordinator and the person directly responsible for maintaining contact with the Jackson campaign "Many CISPES committees have found it difficult to establish a way of relating to the Rainbow Coalition/Jackson Campaign because in most places a formal coalition does not exist. Mainly, where committees have become involved it's been by relating to the campaign structure." (*El Salvador Alert!*, April 1984.)

Those who support Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition know that Jackson will not be the Democratic candidate in November. They must also realize by now that he will, in the end, support the Democratic nominee. But they hope he, and the forces behind him, will push Hart or Mondale to the left, and make the Democratic Party take a more genuine non-interventionist stand. Is this a realistic hope?

The Democratic Party is a coalition of interest groups, including people with whom we want to build a strong, broad-based anti-intervention coalition. Yet the progressives within the party have continually proven unable to stop the Democratic Party from drawing the US into

imperialist conflicts such as Vietnam, Santo Domingo, the Bay of Pigs, and, repeatedly, Central America. (None of us dare forget that Democrat Lyndon Johnson ran as a peace candidate in 1964—as did Democrat Woodrow Wilson in 1916, and Roosevelt in 1940.) While it is true that the Democratic Party contains many different interest groups, it is also true that historically the corporate interests have held dominance. This will continue to remain the case as long as the Democratic Party accepts the sanctity of private property and the “need” of corporations to make a “decent” profit. Given this perspective we can expect the corporate interests within the Democratic Party to push their candidate (whoever that may be) to continue US policy within the region (with perhaps a few superficial changes to make it more palatable to the American public).

No one within the anti-intervention movement believes that Hart or Mondale will ever wish the FMLN or the Nicaraguan revolution well. But, many argue that a Democrat will at least be a little less vicious than Reagan, and a little slower to send US troops in—and that this could make a real difference for these revolutions.

What this fails to consider is how much slower *we* might be in this situation. If a Democrat were elected as a “peace candidate,” most of the public awareness which is now the most important check on Reagan’s ability to act would dissipate, lulled to sleep by the candidate’s pre-election statements against intervention. It would require a great deal of effort on our part to keep the issue alive. If, in addition, sections of the movement trusted the new President’s peaceful intentions and went lightly on him, “giving him a chance” for the first few months, a real disaster could result—a period of time in which the US military could escalate significantly without the pressure of US public opinion.

Our independence as a movement from any Democratic candidate is an essential step in preventing such an outcome.

For CISPES to drop its reliance on mass action and independent, anti-imperialist politics would not only be self-destructive in the long run, but would even prove counter-productive to influencing the Democratic Party. If there is any chance of making mainstream politicians support non-intervention in all its forms, it can only come as a result of a great deal of mass pressure (evidence—the Vietnam antiwar movement).

Yet the whole logic of working within the Democratic Party to influence it and move it to the left *leads* in two directions. First, downplaying direct action and mass mobilization. For only if CISPES accepts this retreat can it become palatable to the real power centers of the Democratic Party (which tend to be relatively conservative). Secondly, the movement will find itself under pressure to downplay its support of the “terrorist” FMLN and adapt, as we shall see, to *liberal* “solutions” to the crisis in Central America. An alliance between the movement and the “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party (as distinct from the necessary and proper *coalition around particular actions*—see below) will thus entail high costs. (A similar alliance between the US labor movement and the progressive wing of the Democratic Party contributed to the unions, especially the CIO, giving up much of their militancy, democracy and independence.)

A False Dilemma

The supporters of an orientation to the “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party point to what they believe is a dilemma facing all left movements. It is a familiar “dilemma”: Do we maintain our current support for mass action and vocally express our support for the FMLN, thereby condemning ourselves in the current objective situation to be a relatively small solidarity movement? Or do we tone down our public face to become more palatable to the liberals, Democrats, etc. and thereby broaden our base of support.

But to pose the question this way is misleading. It is a false dilemma. We *can* broaden our base of support *without* succumbing to pressures to tone down our strategy and politics. This involves basing our tactics and strategies on four perceptions, some of which CISPES already supports in principle and action: 1) While it is incumbent on us to build a mass movement we must realize the limitations imposed on us by the objective situation. The collapse of traditional liberalism, the shift to the right within the left itself, the isolation of the left, the lack of direct involvement by US troops and the consequent lack of “bodies,” as well as the sheer scope of ruling class attacks on the American people and the perceived helplessness in the face of the attacks—all these inhibit the development of a mass anti-intervention movement today. It is only when one or more of these conditions change that we will be able to turn the anti-interventionist *sentiment* in this country into a *movement*. Thus, any belief that a turn toward the progressive wing of the DP will provide us with the “road to the masses” which has so far evaded us is an illusion. Indeed, to the extent that a larger movement is possible in 1984 it will come about only via the pressure and influence of mass action and an awareness that the Democratic Party cannot be relied upon to stop intervention, i.e., that there is no alternative to action “on the streets.” 2) While a mass movement is not likely today, the effort to build one must continue. As US intervention escalates our efforts should prove more fruitful. But, given the present political consciousness of the American people, such a movement will only be built around the demand US OUT of Central America (and not “Victory to FMLN”). CISPES is well aware of this and has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to form coalitions around this demand with any and all who will do so.

At the same time, however, CISPES believes, rightly, that agreeing to common action with liberals, labor leaders, clergy around the slogan US OUT does not mean that CISPES must surrender its own views—that CISPES should cease its active support of and education for an FMLN victory. Far from it. We *can* pursue a dual strategy—engage in joint action around US OUT, *and* propagandize for our own solutions, tactics and strategies within the ranks of the anti-interventionist mass movement and among the important newly emerging anti-imperialist *elements*. In short, it is necessary and possible, in practice, to keep the anti-imperialist wing of the movement independent of the Democratic Party without passing *either* into sectarian isolation from those who are not for an FMLN victory, *or* toning down our politics to accommodate them. It is perfectly proper and possible to insist upon our right to defend and express our own views within the coalition. That is why

it was necessary for the CISPES "national coordinators" meeting to vote, "To expand and systematize our educational efforts around the FMLN-FDR and other revolutionary forces of the region, in order to increase the base of support for them in the US," and "to insure that material aid not become a consistent and regular part of CISPES program. . . ."

3) But this balanced, dual strategy (*both* unity and political autonomy) is not an easy one to implement. Indeed, CISPES has not always been fully cognizant of the very real difficulties of pursuing such a strategy.

For example, CISPES, in an effort to ally with liberal Democrats, labor leaders and clergy, has tried to make the FMLN more palatable to liberal opinion. To do so, it has raised the demand that the US negotiate with the FMLN, the slogan liberals prefer (and which MOBE (Mobilization for Survival) has *refused* to adopt). (In all fairness to CISPES, the FMLN has pressured CISPES to take this position.) Of course, the FMLN has every right to a "negotiations" tactic if it has no alternative, or if negotiations appear to be a viable strategy for isolating its opponents. But that does not mean the movement *within the US* should call on the US to negotiate! A demand by CISPES that the US negotiate is inconsistent with the demand US OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA. (In the Vietnam days this inconsistency was recognized and the movement did not *call for* the US to negotiate but for us to get the hell out.) The demand to negotiate is also easily cooptable. Indeed it *has* been by the pro-imperialist liberal wing of the Democratic Party and the capitalist Contadora states. For them, negotiate means to negotiate from a position of US strength. For them, the aim of negotiations is to save capitalism in Central America. Agreement to negotiate thus commits them to nothing. (Indeed Reagan himself, as did Nixon in Vietnam, could make use of the proposal. He already has, by sending his envoy Stone to meet with the FMLN.) The exigencies of the struggle in El Salvador may lead the FMLN to withdraw its support for negotiations (for example, if victory is within their grasp and the US proposes negotiations as a last ditch effort to save capitalism in El Salvador). If that were to happen, and the movement in the US had been built around the demand for negotiations, the movement here would be severely disoriented at a critical time.

Thus, while it may be correct for the FMLN to call for negotiations with the center-right in El Salvador it can well prove disastrous for the *US movement* to call for US-FMLN negotiations.

Another example. CISPES has correctly sought to build an alliance with the left-wing of the union movement in this country on a US OUT platform. But, "using" the prestige of the union officials to open doors does not, and should not, mean that CISPES (as it often has) should engage in a *de facto* surrender of any efforts to organize independently in the unions and workplaces. This independence of CISPES is necessitated by the fact that even the progressive labor leaders have been unwilling to raise the issue of Central America outside of (at best) poorly attended union meetings. It has shown an even more patent unwillingness to organize the ranks to oppose US intervention in the streets or the workplace.

Making the Connections

4) CISPES at the national coordinators meeting voted

to "politically link the war in Central America to domestic issues such as unemployment and budget cuts." Of course CISPES *cannot and does not* insist that others in the US OUT coalition adopt the same strategy. But it is a sound strategy for CISPES and the left. The logic behind this strategy is: a) that the issue of Central America will become much more concrete to people if it is tied to issues that they deal with in their day-to-day lives; b) that other progressive organizations would be much more willing to work with us around Central America if we showed an interest in working with them around *their* issues; and c) that our movement will be much stronger if people understand the interconnectedness of the issues around which they fight. The importance of implementing and carrying through on this perspective can not be overemphasized. People in the US are caught up on the problems of day-to-day life. CISPES must draw the connections between events in Central America and cutbacks at home.

Those at the conference in favor of working in the Rainbow Coalition argued that such work was necessary if CISPES was to build alliances with other sectors, particularly the Black community. But no enduring trust will be built in an election campaign a few months long. It is only by persistently and skilfully linking domestic issues to our work around Central America, and by supporting those struggling around these issues, that we can, in the long run, build the basis for a real alliance.

Most working-class people in this country have a basic distrust of big business, which politicians rarely appeal to. We need to turn that distrust into distrust of corporate-inspired intervention in Central America. Working people in this country are hurting from Reagan's social spending cutbacks. They have to be reminded that every dollar spent on intervention is a dollar taken from health care, from education, from transit, from food stamps. Finally, US foreign policy is designed to stimulate the export of capital to low-wage, politically repressed regions. US imperialism is making the world safe for run-away shops and creating the conditions for both austerity and unemployment at home. Military expenditures are not only being used to keep the world safe for US capitalism. These expenditures are cutting into resources available for social services and welfare. In these and in many other less obvious ways, US policy undercuts the interests of US workers and the poor. CISPES rightly draws out these connections in order to help involve these key sectors of American society in the anti-intervention movement.

Despite the mistakes that we in CISPES have made in the past and the dangers that confront us in the future, the fact remains that CISPES is potentially a powerful organization. We have progressed from a weak, divided and loosely organized information network into an organization capable of carrying out coordinated actions on a national scale.

If we persist in CISPES's two-tiered strategy (educate and propagandize in support of an FMLN victory, and at the same time, engage in common action with liberals, etc. around "non-interventional slogans like "US out of Central America), we can build a movement of great significance to the Central American revolution; a movement capable of radically altering the political climate in the United States■



Interview with *City Life* on Mel King Campaign

City Life, a socialist organization doing tenants and other forms of organizing in Boston, participated actively in the Mel King campaign. Mel King is a Black progressive State Representative who ran for mayor in a non-partisan election last fall and was defeated. We have included *City Life's* statement on electoral politics at the end of the interview.

ATC: Before the Mel King candidacy in Boston, what was your position on electoralism in general and the Democratic Party in particular?

Steve (City Life): We don't believe that you can build a revolutionary movement through electoral politics or

any real activist movement through electoral politics. Before the Mel King campaign, we weren't involved in any electoral political work.

ATC: Why did you decide to support King then?

Steve: The reason why we decided to support Mel King

Against the Current

at first was that even though we didn't believe that electoral politics would make any real change, the people who were supporting Mel King included most of the progressive community and most of the progressive organizations on the left. We felt that we had to work in solidarity with those people.

Wayne (City Life): Also King was not a traditional candidate. We felt it wasn't the same thing as supporting Jesse Jackson or other mainstream politicians. I'd say in particular he was raising issues around housing and affirmative action. Also more access to city government decentralization. The situation in Boston before the campaign was that Mayor White had been in office for 16 years and had run a machine of the same type as Daley's in Chicago. Everything that happened in the city was controlled by Mayor White and he knew everything that was going on. So the question of breaking that machine apart was a very important thing.

Steve: At first we didn't really believe that Mel King could pull off an alliance among groups that otherwise have not been able to work together. We had meetings with him beforehand. Frankly, we underestimated the amount of support from organized groups on the left. Not only the left, but also just everyday people mostly rallying around his anti-racism. His anti-racism pulled people together from all parts of the city. In a very good coalition. I think it was his anti-racism which was one of the big reasons why we eventually decided to join and do some work for the campaign.

ATC: Were there other goals that you thought you might accomplish, I mean goals relating to City Life and the organizing that City Life was planning to do in housing? Or was it basically that you thought that the King campaign was a good thing in itself and you were just going to throw yourself into it in coalition with the other groups?

Steve: We made a study of electoral politics and developed a firm position about *not* doing electoral work. Then, the reason we got into this campaign, to be perfectly honest, was that there began to be this undeniable movement going on and it was taking root in the Black community and it was clear that something was happening here. In fact, we didn't originally consciously decide to do x amount of work. We just became part of the campaign. People were being solicited in all different ways. Then as a group we began to develop an analysis as to how we should participate. As the campaign went along, we decided which way to work. We tried to figure out what particular strengths City Life had, e.g., housing organizing experience, and how that could help the campaign.

Wayne: We decided to endorse Mel King a lot because of his background in the city and how much he had been direct-action oriented. I mean he was really different. He had been arrested and he had been consistent on housing for many, many years. Our original decision was that individuals could work in the campaign, if it didn't draw a lot of energy from their City Life commitments. What happened was that a lot of people began working on the campaign as precinct captains and ward coordinators. So we started to check into why people were feeling that it was important. People felt that a lot of conversations they were having with people around race was good and that the campaign was raising these issues in the papers in a way that they hadn't been

raised. The last time people talked about race as an issue like this was around busing. It was just too good a movement to stay out of it.

ATC: When you talk about a movement, what do you mean by it?

Wayne: I don't think the Mel King campaign has built an organization so much as it coalesced what was already there. It was like a barometer of all the work that had gone on in the previous ten years. The vote was a pretty clear indication of progressive feeling in the city, and that was important to know. You know, we had never known that there were 70,000 people who would vote for somebody who said they admired Fidel Castro and would vote for him over Ronald Reagan. It was really interesting to test the waters sort of and that's an important thing the King campaign did.

Steve: Around July or August sentiment started to change and the consensus of the feeling in the Black community in particular was that there was a possibility that something could happen. People were becoming part of the Rainbow Coalition and there was a feeling about wearing the Rainbow Coalition button which was reminiscent of the peace sign or something like that in the Vietnam era. I think that there was a feeling that there was an opening for people to talk things out and to have this progressive campaign.

ATC: What kind of politics were you able to talk? When you went into the campaign, were there any ideas that you wanted to get across? Your own socialist ideas? Or a program of some other sort? Did you think you were in fact going to be able to do this? What kind of ideas did you actually raise?

Steve: We had never done this work before and I think people in City Life felt that you could bring across socialist ideas in the campaign. And people found that that was not true. Mel King fielded 2,000 people to work during the runoff. But there were only 150-200 people at the founding of the Rainbow organization. I think the campaign was a viable thing, but I don't know how much it really raised people's consciousness in other than a general way. Just to know that not everybody out there is a racist, which is sometimes hard to tell in Boston.

Wayne: We weren't successful in raising the politics of City Life, but we didn't enter the campaign feeling that we could recruit to City Life, or that the campaign would make City Life itself much stronger.

ATC: You didn't think you would strengthen City Life at all?

Steve: The campaign wasn't raising the issue of socialism, but it was raising a lot of the mass issues that people were concerned with. It also provided an opportunity to canvass in the neighborhood, to talk to people about politics. City Life also felt that it was a way for us to work with other organizers and other organizations and meet people and to work in alliance with other groups. I would say that in summing up at the end of the process, people in City Life felt that, as far as working with other people and being part of the alliance, the campaign was good and we in City Life did make a lot of contacts with people and worked with organizations that we hadn't worked with before. As far as pushing issues beyond their pretty lowest common denominator level, we didn't feel that we did that.

Wayne: I think that when we first started, we didn't

really have high expectations. We didn't really expect to get across City Life politics that much at all. As it turned out, the Mel King organization didn't really care. We thought there would be this tension between us and them around the issue of socialism. But Mel King's organization ended up distributing our paper *Community News* in the whole JP neighborhood because we had written an endorsement of his campaign. The *Labor Page*, our rank and file bulletin, was also very popular when it wrote its endorsement of Mel King. They basically gave us a free hand. When we went to them, we said we think we can do this and this but we will basically follow your leadership. They said fine why don't you guys be the tenant coordinators. So we ended up in that role but we hadn't really expected it. On the other hand, the people who did the canvassing said that beyond just meeting people and beyond discussing the issue of racism which is still a very important issue in this city, there wasn't very much political discussion.

ATC: Why do you think there wasn't much political discussion?

Steve: It's a lot because of the form. Throughout the campaign there was a constant pressure to canvass as many people as possible, to register as many people as possible, to vote, to do all of these tasks. So it isn't the type of situation where you could go out on the block and talk to two people in the afternoon and have a really good conversation with them and feel good about it. The pressure was to get things done.

ATC: What were some of the activities that City Life people did? Was it mainly going around door-to-door trying to get people out to vote for Mel King?

Wayne: We ended up doing a fair amount of work in say the last month, a little before that. Before the primary election, individuals had taken on a lot of responsibility in the neighborhood organizations—as precinct captains, as ward captains, doing a lot of work at the Mel King office. When we formally decided to use the City Life organization in the campaign, we worked wherever they needed us, but we tried to concentrate on what we were best suited to do, particularly tenant stuff. We organized 60 people to distribute a leaflet on housing in the various communities, especially among people we had done organizing work with. A lot of those people that we did outreach to we had known before, too.

ATC: You said the pressures of getting the job done, the task orientation of the campaign, people wanting basically to get out the vote, made it very difficult to spend a lot of time on political discussion, on raising politics. Is that correct?

Steve: Everyday issues within the framework of reform it was perfectly easy to talk about, like whether you should fire the police commissioner, or say the question of rent control. We didn't believe it, so we couldn't argue you should vote for Mel King to further the possibilities of socialism. In our newspaper we did write an endorsement, that included the questions of the relationship between the Mel King campaign, building the movement, and building socialism. But in my experience, the conversations about trying to get people to vote for Mel King did not lead to talk about socialism.

ATC: Did you have discussions about the kind of struggles City Life is involved in, say tenants' work? Were you able to talk to people about getting involved in what City Life is doing with tenants? Could you talk about the

kind of actions that City Life had taken in order to win some of the battles, like rent strikes or other sorts of demonstrations you had carried out in order to further the cause of tenants in Jamaica Plain?

Steve: Let me put this in a context. There were two stages in the campaign that were very distinct. The former Mayor, Kevin White, was under a lot of pressure from the feds. There was a possibility of his being indicted, or people around him being indicted, and he basically resigned from office. This left the whole city government which had been really tightly run by a machine up for grabs. In the first stage, up to the primary, the early frontrunner was what we call a downtown candidate, someone who was going to follow in White's footsteps, which is basically to develop the downtown at the expense of the neighborhoods. Mel King and the present mayor Ray Flynn were also running. So in that stage, it was really easy to talk about housing and the differences between the other candidates and Mel King.

ATC: Could you say what those differences are?

Wayne: Well, on rent control, Mel King's version of rent control was much stronger since it included a rent rollback. In fact some of the candidates didn't believe in rent control at all. There was also the question of linkage. Linking money from developments downtown with money to be used in the neighborhood to rehabilitate housing. In other words they would tax developers, on every square foot which was newly developed, and put the tax money into a fund to be used to rehabilitate neighborhood housing. There was also a struggle here about a Boston Jobs for Boston residents—fifty percent of the jobs in any city development would go to Boston residents, 25 percent to minorities, and 10 percent to women. That was also Mel King's position.

Steve: In any case, in the first stage, before the primary, these were the sort of reforms that you could talk about. But, then, Mel King and Ray Flynn won the primaries. The downtown candidates were defeated. The majority of people in this town clearly disapproved of the policies of Mayor White and, to some extent, they linked the deterioration of the neighborhoods and the development of the downtown. But in the second part of the campaign the newspapers covered the campaign by saying that King and Flynn believe the same thing. Then they proceeded to attack Mel King. So the issue became racism. Even though there were differences between them, neither candidate at first was exploiting the differences. Even Mel King was saying he was going to run a positive campaign, he was going to create community in the city. The other guy, Ray Flynn, was saying the same thing. He was going to create community in the city. So until the last couple of weeks of the campaign, the differences between them were not very clear and a lot of the focus was racism. The question of racism became a very important thing. In fact, the fight between Ray Flynn and Mel King had important implications for the strategy of the left. Some of the left supported Ray Flynn, who was anti-abortion, who was anti-bussing, and who is a populist who did develop some credentials in the housing movement. Some people supported him and I would call that opportunism. Some members of Democratic Socialists of America worked on his campaign very heavily and are in positions of power right now in Flynn's administration. The

other part of the left supported Mel King. Here was a Black man who held most of the positions of socialists, who spoke out about gay rights, who spoke out about women's issues, who spoke out about housing issues, about racism. That became a very important thing.

ATC: Let's back up here a bit.

Steve: What I'm saying is that looking at the context it puts some of the questions you asked about the politics of City Life and the politics of the campaign in a different light. There was a lot of energy generated in the campaign. A lot of people in this city had hoped for change. I would say participation in the campaign to some minor extent furthered the illusion that you could change things through elections. Even though I don't think that's what the campaign was about, I do think that our participation did that to some extent. But I would also say that a lot of the energy that was built in the campaign really helped move our organization forward. There were a lot of people in the city who were willing to support progressive politics. There was a lot of validation of a lot of the work that we had done over the years.

ATC: I'm not actually sure I understand what you are saying. Correct me if I'm wrong. You said that there was not a great deal of consciousness changing that went on in the campaign. As Wayne said, the campaign was an expression of the already existing groups and ideas. Then you said that it wasn't easy for City Life to do anything but essentially go along with that. Finally, it doesn't seem as if the outcome of the campaign was to create any further forms of mass organization.

Wayne: That's not true. There is a mass organization that formed out of the campaign, the Rainbow organization. We haven't taken a big role in it mostly because we are back doing our work in the neighborhoods. But there is an attempt to build an organization. They endorsed Jesse Jackson and have been doing stuff for Jesse Jackson. It's much smaller than the effort that was going on during Mel King's campaign.

ATC: But what I'm trying to get at is this question of your calling the campaign a movement. I wonder if that's really accurate. It involved a great number of people and aroused a lot of hope and excitement and activity. But when one talks about a movement, you tend to think of the kind of movements City Life is involved in. These involve some sort of direct action and conflict with authority; they sort of force people to fight. As a result of people fighting, the left does end up being able to raise ideas and organizations do tend to come out of them. There's a different sort of dynamic. What it sounds like you are talking about with regard to the Rainbow Coalition is a continuation of the electoral work that was going on and not much more. Is that true or not true?

Steve: Well, that's true. Maybe if you mean movement the way you define movement then, maybe, the campaign wouldn't be a movement. But I guess what I'm trying to say is that, in the course of the campaign, there have been a lot of progressive people in this city doing a lot of work over a long period.

ATC: But why is that such a positive thing? In one way it's a positive. As Wayne said, you have in Boston a lot of organizers doing a lot of different sorts of organizing and they did coalesce around Mel King. But what did it do for them?

Wayne: First of all we know that it can be done. It was done in an electoral format at this time, around a personality, around Mel King. There were always doubts in our mind if Mel King didn't participate in anything afterwards whether the movement would go on. But we have now worked with different people whom we had not worked with before. Hopefully, now we can raise an issue, or another group can raise an issue, which we can work on collectively. The key to being powerful, of having an influence, is not only your direct local organizing, but how well you can build alliances with people to do other types of things. Maybe you can get a police civilian review board as a reform. That would not be bad. Maybe we could get a real strong rent control law. That would not be bad. It remains to be seen whether that's going to come out of it. But for the short-term commitment that it was, it was definitely worth it for the organization to put that much effort into it.

ATC: Could you describe what you think City Life itself got out of the participation in the campaign?

Wayne: There hasn't been a mass movement in this city in a long time. It was nice to feel a part of a mass movement. When we did our evaluation of work in the campaign, everybody said, "I felt good about participating in this. I felt buoyed up. I have more energy to carry on the local work that I was doing." That's a clear gain. Before the campaign, people had been sort of dragged down from burnout and working real hard doing building organizing and things like that.

ATC: Do you think that, when City Life people get back to organizing the buildings and the other kinds of things that City Life does on a day-to-day basis, they will get an increase in their strength as a result of this campaign? Will any of the direct action movements' local struggles that coalesced around Mel King now be helped as a result of the King campaign?

Steve: First of all let me put this in a context. There was a feeling in the city. There was a Black man saying he thought that Castro was better than Reagan, talking about gay rights, talking about women's rights, talking about housing and land for people who need it. King made a challenge, and he got 30 percent of the vote in the primary. That's 70,000 people.

It means that there is a sizeable base of people within the Black community and a number of people in the white community who support progressive politics and are willing to unite with Black leadership. Because Mel King did so well in the primary he forced the whole terrain of the campaign in the final analysis to the left. As a result, the other candidate Ray Flynn made a lot of promises and is in fact now trying to build a coalition that would include a lot of the forces that Mel King mobilized. What it has meant for our movement is that there is now an opening to push the issues that we have been fighting for much harder. For instance, before the campaign one of our fights was to get all the city buildings and surplus buildings that were closed because of the tax cuts, the tax rebellion, to be made into low income public housing, schools and other public buildings. But we were stalemated. However, this became an issue in the campaign. People now have more expectations that there will be low income public housing because this was promised in the campaign. Of course it's already clear that the Flynn administration doesn't intend to fulfill this promise.

ATC: What do you think will be the result of that? Do you believe in this idea of having social democratic or populist types run so that when they are elected, people can see that they won't follow through and that exposes them?

Steve: No! No way!

ATC: What do you think is positive in having a populist like Ray Flynn run on such a campaign program, and then Welch?

Steve: I'm not saying that we advocate that. I'm just saying the material facts are that we are in negotiations with the city over these closed-down buildings. The only way we got into these negotiations is because of the strength of the movement. The housing movement is a force to be reckoned with, and we happen to be one of the forces in the housing movement.

ATC: Was that different before the King campaign?

Steve: Before the King campaign the strength of the housing movement wasn't underestimated. All we are trying to say is that, as Wayne says, the campaign was a barometer of how strong the movement was and how deeply rooted in people's consciousness were a lot of ideas that numbers of people had been organizing around over the last 10 years.

ATC: It was a barometer, but did it build the movement?

Steve: No.

ATC: So you say it did not build the movement. The campaign was a sign-post of what you had accomplished, but it didn't itself build the movement.

Steve: No, it did not build the movement. There is in fact an organization that still exists, the Rainbow Coalition, that is working in the electoral arena. But the Mel King campaign more showed how much the movement had developed, and also its weaknesses. Our analysis is that that is in fact what generally happens. It's not that you elect social democrats so you can exploit the contradictions that come up through electoral policies. The reality is, we believe, you build a movement and the social democrats try to exploit the movement and co-opt it.

ATC: I find this a little bit paradoxical. You say very clearly there was no movement built as a result of the campaign. You said no issues that weren't already raised got raised. The campaign did give an idea of what had already been built. But do you need to spend all that time and energy in order to be able to make that measurement?

Steve: This is where I think you missed the point. Suppose you are fighting for a police review board. You have worked for years on it but you haven't gotten very far. Then the leader of the police review board movement runs a campaign for mayor on the issue of having a police review board and a million people in the city vote for it. After the campaign when you go to push that issue, you are in a different place than you were before. We didn't organize the campaign. We participated because we felt that it was showing the strength that we had developed in the past and, by showing that strength, it would help us in the future.

Wayne: Also, the point is not that the new issues weren't raised. There had not been the kind of city-wide debate that took place in the campaign, on issues of housing for example, since as long as White's been in office. We had put out a socialist platform on housing. But it wasn't like, you know, four people sitting on evening TV news and having this fight about whether there should

be rent rollbacks. That furthered debate on the issues, it made the issues a lot more city-wide.

ATC: Have you felt that since the campaign there has been a difference in your ability to carry through on some of these struggles, that there is more receptivity in people?

Wayne: I don't think that we have to explain, any longer, that there is a housing crisis. That is now an accepted thing. We don't have to explain to people about why condos are bad. A lot of stuff now is just assumed.

ATC: So you think there was a good deal of education on the question of housing.

Wayne: And also on race. Ray Flynn was saying that racism wasn't really an issue. He never admitted that there was racism. He said that the only real issue was class. He talked about the working class and how he came from the working class and all of this. He was into this real reductionist thing where everything was economics. King, on the other hand, was raising the issue of *race and class*. So that was a really interesting debate to have go on in the public every day. It was interesting to read the *Globe* for a change. And I think it did have an effect on people. We went into West Roxbury and somebody said "I'm not voting for Mel King. We are not ready for socialism yet." Some people obviously were getting something out of it. But it never got capitalized on afterwards. It's the same thing with a lot of elections. Nothing gets built on them.

ATC: That's a problem. Nothing gets built. One could say, cynically, that before Mel King's campaign there was a certain movement, and a certain amount of understanding on, say tenants' struggles. Then with Mel King running for mayor on a pro tenant platform, everybody got to know about the issue. But one could say cynically that what the election showed was that people would be willing to support a pro-tenant platform if it could be achieved through the electoral arena but that there is a big gap between what you have to do in an electoral campaign and what you have to do to actually carry out struggle.

Steve: The dichotomy doesn't feel right to me. For instance the IRA runs people for parliament. They don't run people for parliament because they think that by getting people elected to parliament, Northern Ireland will be liberated. The IRA ran people for parliament because it shows that people support the IRA and they should continue on and struggle.

Wayne: We didn't expect much from the Mel King organization afterwards. But we are going to be doing direct action, and we can use the heightened awareness around those issues which we didn't have before. We are back doing the public buildings, and I think that there is a much broader base of people to draw from now. And they have a much higher expectation that the Mayor should and can do something. And that's going to help us win our confrontation with the new mayor.

ATC: So you do think that the election represented the movements and that, as a result, it helped the movements in the post-election period. It will make things easier in the post-election period.

Wayne: For those who take advantage of it. I think that if you are locked into an electoral strategy, you only see the next election and you basically move from one election to another election. But that's not at all what we are doing. It was important for us to work on the campaign

at that time. But now we are back to doing our direct action work and urging everybody else to do so. We have a very different approach on Jesse Jackson. We do not participate at all in the Jesse Jackson campaign. But what the Mel King campaign did after King lost the election *was* to go into the Jackson campaign. The people who ran the Mel King effort immediately moved into supporting Jesse Jackson.

ATC: Suppose City Life had not participated in the King campaign at all. Would you be in any different position than you are today?

Steve: Yeah, we would.

ATC: How would it be different?

Steve: We would be outside the movement. People would see us as sectarian. People look to City Life for help. People in the Mel King campaign used parts of our socialist housing program in developing their issue papers. People looked to us.

ATC: But what did you tell them when you worked in Mel King's campaign? Presumably you didn't tell them, "we are just in this because we want to look like we are part of the movement even though we don't believe in what you're doing."

Steve: I don't feel that's true. In other words we talked with Mel King. We talked with people. We know Mel King. It's not like this was a strange guy.

ATC: But you were just saying this isn't building the movement itself and that—even though the machine is broken and education is higher—that unless people are doing what you are doing nothing is going to change. Could you, in the Mel King campaign, tell people that was your premise?

Wayne: We have always been up front that we think where power lies is in direct action, in grassroots organizing around issues that affect people's lives.

Steve: We said that in our endorsement. Let me put it this way. The left in this country is very weak and there is the contradiction between the theoretical position of the left in developing socialism and where the state of the movement is. And we chose to participate in the movement and move it to the next step. And to us that meant working with people and also putting out our policy.

ATC: But you just said you couldn't put out your politics in the campaign.

Wayne: When we came in, we said we wanted to help out the campaign and we said we didn't want to do it in a sectarian way so we would not insist on, say, putting out our politics. But people did not object to our doing that. As I said, they distributed the paper. We went in and they said, "Organize this stuff for us. You guys have the experience, here take this."

Steve: City Life still exists in an organized form. We have connections with some of those people who worked on the campaign. People feel closer to us for having worked with us.

ATC: So one positive thing that City Life did get out of the campaign is you are now closer to the community people whom you are working with. Is that correct?

Steve: Yeah, and a lot of other community organizers.

ATC: So you were able, in a broad way, to build the City Life periphery.

Wayne: There are people who are into electoral work who said that we've got to do that stuff, and we did. They've gone on to the Jesse Jackson campaign, but

that will be over soon. And now we're saying to them, come and support us on this issue. And they're doing it.

ATC: Who are some of the people who are going to support you?

Steve: The Rainbow Coalition.

ATC: And they'll help you on the tenants' struggles?

Wayne: And they're not going to come out and do door knocking with us. But they'll show up at a hearing when we need to have public presence.

ATC: Did you recruit anybody as a result of participating in the movement?

Steve: No.

ATC: Did you bring people around City Life in any way as a result?

Steve: Yes. A lot of people, for a long time, have seen City Life as doing its own thing and as sectarian, you know. We don't deal with this and we don't deal with that. I think the difference now is that, particularly in Jamaica Plain, we've got lots more support because we were willing to struggle with people toward this goal and to participate alongside them, while trying to raise what political issues we thought were important. That's now being reciprocated. The mayor is coming to Jamaica Plain for a neighborhood meeting, and the local Rainbow Coalition is supporting us, and we plan to raise the issues of housing.

ATC: That's what I was getting at. What you seem to be saying is that you didn't expect to be able to affect very much by participating in the Mel King campaign. You didn't really expect that the Mel King campaign would change that much, and certainly you didn't expect your own participation in the campaign would change the political situation much. But even though you didn't believe in electoralism, you felt you had to participate because people around you demanded it. They thought one thing about the King campaign and you thought another. They had electoral illusions; you didn't. That's why you participated, despite the fact that you didn't think what would come out of it was what they thought would come out of it.

Wayne: Right.

Steve: Even so, I would say that a lot of people who participated in the campaign, particularly leftists, did not have electoral illusions in the campaign. Then there were people who did it solely because they wanted to build electoral strategy. But I would say that a lot of people participated in the campaign for the reasons that we did and I think a lot of people learned both that it's good to work together and that there was a real limit to the politics that could come out.

Wayne: There is an assumption that it's either all one thing or all another, that participating is either completely worthless or it built the movement. But I think there's a whole range of degrees. Also, you make tactical decisions, and these vary. You know, we chose not to participate in the Jackson campaign, but we did for Mel King. We made a clear tactical decision that in Boston, at this time, the movement would gain by doing this campaign. There are some other things. People really had to look, for example, at the city governments, see how the city governments work and think about how would you want a municipal government. City Life has never thought about that before, and I think that that was valuable. People learned about how to set up ward committees, how to do precincts, those types of things

are important. We got a broader view of the neighborhoods, neighborhoods that we had not really gone into before. You know, we met a lot of undocumented people. There were things like that which made it more worthwhile to do this one time.

Steve: It got all of our people out, out in the neighborhoods canvassing. One thing that's carried over is that we have really picked up our canvassing. In running our campaigns recently, we've talked to more people around the buildings. We've gotten thousands of signatures. We've had lots more conversations. We've gotten more letters of support from other organizations.

ATC: Do you think that if King had won the election he could have put in parts of his program?

Steve: No.

Wayne: Flynn has tried to put through a much watered-down program and is running into stiff opposition. I think that King would have had a choice, you know, and it's hard to say which way Mel King would have gone. I think that Mel King would have decided to fight. It might have been a Cleveland situation, where King would have refused to back down, and so there would have been a confrontation. The question would have been, can this electoral coalition become more of a direct action type of a movement? Because that's what it would take to win half or a quarter of the stuff that King had proposed.

ATC: So you think the only way to have won any significant part of King's program would have been through direct action?

Wayne: Yes, we were prepared for direct action. We were not going to enter into the administration if King had won. Also, we would have held him to his promises, just like we're holding Ray Flynn to his promises.

Steve: We don't think that King's program could have been put into operation if he had won. We talked to him about that.

ATC: Well, there's another difference from a movement, right? I mean that an electoral victory out of an electoral movement, if you will, doesn't give us the same kind of potential for victory as, let's say, a struggle in the community or a strike.

Steve: Well, first of all, Mel King isn't a Democrat. He's an independent. Secondly, he has a really long history of struggle, of organizing direct action. If he had followed in the footsteps of his past politics, if he won he would have made attempts to mobilize people to support those policies.

ATC: Direct action—is that what you're talking about? Help you guys organize for example, or help a strike go on.

Steve: When Mel King was a state rep., he tried to push through legislation to legitimize tenant unions and stuff like that. I mean his attitude is to build direct action. That's what he's done. He's been an organizer and he's supported, you know, all sorts of direct actions.

Wayne: His argument with us was that direct action isn't enough, that you have to have this sort of broad cross-class "progressive" movement. He argued that not everybody's going to do direct action, so you have to have a place in your movement for people who, you know, can get money or whatever. There has to be a lot of roles for people to get into.

ATC: But do you really buy that?

Wayne: Do I buy what?

ATC: That you've got to have electoralism because there are a lot of people who don't do direct action?

Wayne: No, we didn't. I mean we disagreed with King on that.

ATC: What would you say to the following? Does it apply to the Boston situation? One could say that, over the period of the last decade or so, there's been a decline in the mass movements. That includes the Black movement, and not just the Black movement, but also the working-class movement, even the women's movement. One could say that the resurgence today of electoral activity is a substitute for those movements and is essentially draining resources, and is also giving the illusion that you can substitute electoralism for that movement. Do you think there's any danger that electoralism or an electoral campaign takes resources away from the movements, or creates illusions and, therefore, opens the way to substituting for a movement?

Steve: Electoralism does drain resources and we would definitely make a distinction between supporting this particular campaign and supporting electoralism as a strategy. It clearly does drain resources. It's really unclear to me how many illusions it fosters. In some areas there have been Black mayors elected. I don't think any of them have the politics that Mel King did, but it's clear that electing these Black mayors hasn't significantly changed the power structure or the social relations in the city. And I do agree that it's a substitute. It's definitely a substitute and it's a definite show of the conservatism in America. It's clear that a lot of left people who worked on the campaign believed in that electoralism.

ATC: Do you think it's a problem that when City Life, which is a bastion of anti-electoralism, goes into a campaign like this it sort of feeds the view of large parts of the Left that electoralism can work?

Steve: I actually think the opposite. I think that the end result is that more people know of City Life's work, and know that City Life is still organizing—still organizing direct action. In practice the election is passed, but we still exist and we're still working. We're still doing the confrontational work that we were doing and, since people cannot wait around four years to work on the mayor election, I think that some people will turn to us. At least at this point people are supporting our work.

ATC: To try to sum up a little bit. You think that it's not the case that King's campaign brought more people into your movement directly. It's not the case that the King campaign allowed for the expression of more advanced ideas. It's not the case, therefore, that there was a bigger radical movement before than after. But the campaign opened things up by virtue of the education that it did and the ideas that it got around. It put in the air ideas that you can now exploit.

Wayne: Right. But I wouldn't say that it didn't raise any political consciousness. I would say it didn't raise the issue of socialism. There's a real difference. It raised the issue of racism in a way that City Life supports. Also housing—King questioned whether profitability was an end in itself.

ATC: Now you're referring to King's program?

Wayne: Yes.

ATC: You're saying that it did advance ideas because it put forth this program. But isn't it your view that this program is just a paper program? So King put forward

some of the ideas that City Life was putting forward, adopted part of City Life's program in his housing program. But he gave the impression, if I'm not mistaken, that these ideas, this program, could be implemented through electing Mel King.

Steve: Yes, it's true, and I think that by supporting the campaign we furthered that illusion.

Wayne: Let me give you an example, all right? There's been no public acknowledgement that Black people can't go certain places in the city of Boston. There's a denial in the media, etc. that Black people could get killed in certain neighborhoods. Mel King raised that, confronted that issue, made the other candidates con-

front that issue and wouldn't compromise on it. That's important.

ATC: I see that point.

Steve: Let me put it another way. City Life made a tactical decision that, at this point, it was more important to raise general education on mass issues and it was more important to develop and help build the relationships between progressive organizations in the movement and be part of an alliance with those organizations than it was to confront the issue of electoralism. That for us was a tactical decision. And we feel that it was a good decision based on the 70,000 votes Mel King got and the anti-racism he stood for. ■

CITY LIFE SUMMARY ON ELECTORAL POLITICS—SPRING 1983

(slightly abridged)

1) *Power in capitalist society does not flow from political office. Rather, who gets elected to political office and what policies they enact are reflections of who holds power—economic, political, military and ideological—in the society as a whole.*

2) *Working class power is developed mainly through organization and action. This includes cultural (arts, lifestyle, community-building) and ideological (newspapers, leaflets, rapping with people, slogans, study groups, etc.) activities as well as political/economic struggles (strikes, housing struggles, taking control of land, housing, factories), and organization-building and the internal work involved in that.*

3) *Changes in laws and government policies that benefit the working class usually FOLLOW the exertion of working class power through militancy and direct action. Example: Rent Control in Cambridge was not passed in spite of months of lobbying and petitioning. But after a rash of eviction blockings, it was adopted.*

4) *We are not opposed to legislative reformism and the election of more progressive public officials. If victories won through organization and action are then consolidated by being made into law, this is a good thing and is one of our goals because it can help open up space for further organizing and action. Example: passage of rent and eviction controls made tenant organizing easier.*

The other side of this is that laws like this can sometimes co-opt and hold back struggles. For example, along with recognition of workers' rights to organize have come restrictions on what unions are supposed to do and not do. How laws are applied and whether the co-optive or the progressive aspect prevails, depends on how strong our movement is.

5) a) *As revolutionaries, our goal is to develop our own power and legality in contrast to that of the capitalist's government. The goal of our movement is not to do things we want that are now illegal (such as refusing to pay rent) and get them made legal and thus take over the bourgeois state bit by bit. While we do want the bourgeois state to be forced to legalize the things we do, this is not our main goal. For example, we want to get to the point where workers' organizations decide that all households in a certain district shall start paying a 50% reduction in their utility bills, whether the companies like it or not, as was done in Turin, Italy for a brief period in the 1960s.*

b) *But we believe legislation reforms and electoral victories can only be as strong as the movements which are behind them. For example, suppose we elected a majority of socialists on the school committee; there would need to be an organized movement of parents and teachers prepared to struggle to keep the schools going when the mayor and bankers try to weaken and de-fund them.*

6) *It is up to us in the working class movement to make the connections between peoples' struggles in different areas. We need to make these connections in terms of theory and program, but especially we need to make organizational ties and*

connect each other's struggles in practice. Examples: Connections between the working conditions of hospital workers and the health needs of community residents.

7) *We need to always keep a watchful eye for these dangers when (if) we are involved in the electoral politics:*

a) *Electoral politics can reinforce the illusion that bourgeois democracy can be made really democratic and representative of "the people." This is the basis of ACORN'S strategy, and seems to be the assumption behind a lot of electoral work, such as the Boston People's Organization. We have very little experience in this area and didn't get concrete on how to avoid this pitfall.*

b) *Electoral politics tends to ignore and "homogenize" cultural differences, which has the effect of suppressing the very cultures that contain the strongest seeds of resistance to bourgeois "Americanism," especially cultures of gay people and people of color. Recent immigrants and "illegals" are further excluded from the political process.*

Along with this, it tends to diminish the importance of groups that already have the least access to political power. If you want to win a campaign, it's easier to do it by putting more resources into neighborhoods where people tend to vote and have money to contribute to the campaign. This is what the Boston Tenants Campaign Organ. did when they decided to focus on Allston/Brighton and not Roxbury.

c) *Even when this is not the intention, electoral campaigns tend to become ends in themselves and to drain a tremendous amount of resources, energy and money.*

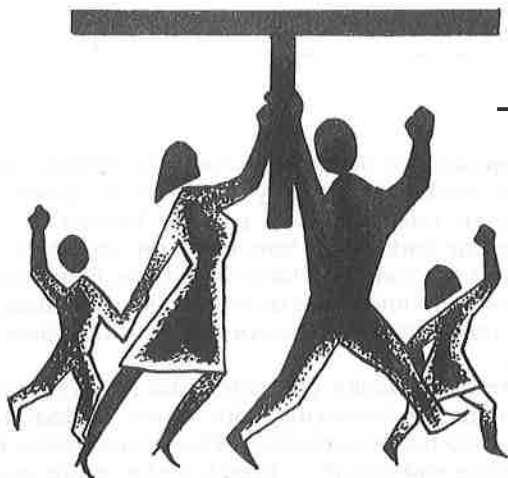
8) *Possible benefits participation in electoral politics brings such to City Life:*

a) *Our participation may increase the chances of electoral and legislative victories that boost morale, win limited material benefits for working class people and, most important, make movement-building easier.*

b) *Depending on how they are run, some electoral campaigns, even those with little chance of success, can be vehicles for raising consciousness around important issues and putting out anti-capitalist ideas.*

c) *By supporting certain campaigns, even though our expectations about what can be won through them may be much lower than the expectations of those who initiate them, puts ourselves in contact and in solidarity with a broader movement of people in Boston with whom we share many goals. This also puts us in a better position to influence people about our ideas of the need for socialism and the importance of direct organizing for the working-class power.*

9) *At least at this stage, electoral politics should not be a major component of City Life's work. Our reading of the working class movement, organization and program does not say it's so developed as to warrant electoral activity. We can do more, as an organization, to promote the goals we share in common with Mel King, for instance, by concentrating on direct organizing around the issues that are the focus of his campaign, such as displacement. This should be re-evaluated when conditions significantly change*



THE STRATEGIC CRISIS OF GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZING

by Steve Burghardt

Every grass roots organizer has been through the scenario: 1,000,000 people show up for the June anti-nuclear rally in New York, the largest march in U.S. history; three months later, on-going organizational activity is at a snail's pace. Smaller, but no less important, campaigns go through similar processes: a clear issue, tremendous activist mobilization that builds momentum for the event, serious political commitment by large numbers of people, but almost all of it ending without any growth in sustained grass roots organizing in communities to carry forward the work. The 80's, it's been said often enough, are hard times.

There is little question that community organizing, especially radical community organizing, is in crisis. While we still discuss "the movement" (be it the tenants' movement, the women's movement, the labor movement, or whatever) the above campaign scenarios have made clear that there is little sustained, on-going movement activity that generates the necessary dynamics and, most importantly, changes in consciousness that are the hallmarks of successful organizing life. These problems have resulted in demoralization and in activists' burn out. If we are to successfully mobilize movements in the 1980's and 90's, a reassessment of the fundamental assumptions of community organizing seems essential.

Description of the Problem

The crisis in organizing falls descriptively into four related areas. *First, there is the inability of single-issue focused activists to maintain membership enthusiasm, momentum, and political interest around their particular issue.* Unlike the 1930's and 40's, most community organizers today work on a specific single issue in hopes of galvanizing maximum support. As the struggle ensued and support grew, the argument goes, other "political connections" beyond the immediate issue would develop, thus deepening membership consciousness and broadening the political stakes in the future.

This conception has suffered serious reversals over the last ten years. As Eleanor Bader, a leader in Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA) put it, "Most activists today work with one issue for a few years, get tired of it, move on to another, and eventually cover a wide range of political topics quite well. But few *membership organizations* have come out of all that energy and commitment." Bader's description is tellingly accurate: most radical or even progressive community organizations, have in fact become mainly *subscriber organizations*.

Second, the economic base of most progressive organizations is not just limited, but is drying up: One of the small but not unimportant trends of community organizing from the early 1970's on was the establishment of non-bureaucratic, seemingly au-

tonomous community organizations. But lacking a strong enough membership for financial autonomy they had to seek grants from the "progressive" foundations.

However, the economic crisis, complete with the rightward drift had very adverse effects on the limited autonomy of such organizations. Many of the best were forced to disband as their funding sources became increasingly antagonistic to their goals. Other organizers now find an enormous part of their entire working hours consumed by making new funding "connections." The active relationship of "organizer to community" has been replaced by the "administrator to funding agent"—hardly the context in which to carry out meaningful political discussion and change.

Third, there has been little ability to develop meaningful links between community members and public sector workers. As community struggles developed throughout the 1970's, it became clear to community activists and many rank and file workers inside large municipal and state agencies that both groups needed to work together. Indeed, as cuts in human services occurred, community-public worker coalitions sprang up to fight the cuts, sometimes with moderate success (e.g., People's Firehouse in Brooklyn, N.Y., Metropolitan Hospital in Manhattan). But the links between community and service worker still remain weak. Indeed, it is the failure to breach the still dominant antagonism between these two groups (who should be natural allies), which made it possible for Ed Koch in New York and countless other city mayors to break public workers strikes. There is still no long-standing tradition and little present-day experience in developing the common interests of public sector workers and community people for better working conditions and more responsive services. The daily exposure both have had across the unemployment line, in schools, welfare centers, and hospital corridors has negated whatever common cause might exist. The ensuing alliances have been limited to one-time operations with little or no staying power.

These three problems increasingly result in a "new" direction—the replacement of grass roots-based community activism by Democratic Party electoral politics. Championed by such well-known and respected activists as Heather Booth and Gail Cincotta, electoral-

ism is viewed by them as a "maturing of grass roots politics." For example, in a recent *NY Times* article Booth mentioned her fascination with the parallels between the New Right and progressive organizing "citizen groups."¹ She quotes Richard Viguerie, one of the New Right leaders, as saying that when the ideological right suffered a crushing defeat in 1964 its leaders retreated into grass roots organizing and finally re-emerged in 1980 under President Reagan. "We are now making that (same) shift," says Booth, "but we are doing it faster than they did." Thus, grass roots style organizing by such groups as ACORN, PIRG, and others takes place—shanty towns are erected, street theatre is held, etc.—*but the object and outcome are simply voter registration, not community mobilization.*

Activists like Booth have thus discarded one of the basic radical assumptions about change. Radicals always believed that meaningful legislative change could only come about when sufficient independent power was generated "in the streets" so to speak. That power was the necessary precondition for Civil Rights Legislation or the pro-labor acts of the 1930s. Only in this way can we break the institutional barriers to reform—courts that favor property, legislation that favors capital, institutional procedures that discriminate against Blacks, Latins, and women. Today, however, the community activists enter the Democratic Party politics at a time when working class mobilization is at its lowest, not its greatest. As a result, the prospects for this "new" electoral strategy are not promising. Finally, there are no dominant figures inside the Democratic Party who do not accept the economic and social crisis of the 1980's in terms defined by the major sectors of capital. It would seem as if the parallels between the New Right and grass roots activists were very limited at best.

Reasons for the Collapse of Grass Roots Organizing

This electoralist shift has occurred (in good part in desperation) because of two underlying shifts in the nature of community over the last forty years. First, *the basic organizing assumptions about how to work in a community have been based on an industrial community model that no longer exists in most parts of the nation.* Second, *there has been continued confusion by activists about the results of the social wage gains of the past and the ability of the welfare state to both accommodate and control such gains.*

Outdated assumptions about community. Most grass roots organizations have applied ideas and tactics developed by organizers from the 1930's and 40's such as Saul Alinsky.² Alinsky's model of a "People's Organization" is the exemplar of what most grass roots organizations strive for: autonomous membership organizations, comprised of a broad cross section of labor leaders, trade unionists, housekeepers, small shopowners and youth, all living in the community to be mobilized. These autonomous organizations, such as Alinsky's famous Back of the Yards (stockyards) community in Chicago, also had clear and direct targets to attack—an imperious, elitist department store, a totally disengaged city government, etc.³ In short, in those days a relatively cohesive working class "Us" organization would always be facing a distant and hostile ruling class "Them" institution.

For example, the needed cohesion for Alinsky was rooted in a community already united around a similar employer, the infamous meat packing houses of Chicago.⁴ Similar work places have the same working conditions, and the same working conditions help create similar trade unionism and trade union consciousness that was transmitted into every home in the Back of the Yards.

Furthermore, Alinsky was able to build his People's Organizations by recruiting both union leaders and members into his organization. This was possible because leaders and members lived together in the same community. The lack of any social or personal distance between the two meant that a leader's joining carried widespread membership approval. When one joined, many others did so, too. Needless to say, such a scenario between leaders and members doesn't exist today.⁵ Of course racism and sexism still existed, but having 70% of your workforce employed by the same industry and being part of the same trade union in no small way helps unify a community's approach toward strategy and tactics.

Today the situation is radically changed. The entire geographic and industrial mix of urban working class communities consists of workers in a wide range of industries as well as service-related jobs in insurance, banking, commodities and public sector work.⁶ In addition there has been a substantial increase in welfare recipients. (While the U.S. population between 1960 and 1970 increased 13%, the welfare population increased 94%, much of it concentrated in the larger, older, central cities (11.5 million recipients in the 10 largest cities).⁷

What happened to the Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago was typical of many cities. When all of these economic and social shifts are noted, the image of that industrially based community complete with common workplace experience and similar trade union consciousness evaporates into a far more diversified and amorphous grouping of workers.

The common objective conditions that increased the use of common ideas and tactics in the 30's and 40's no longer exist.

Paralleling the changed industrial make-up is the decline in the general level of self-sufficiency within the community that could once allow small merchants, storeowners, and independent professionals to join together in solidarity against "the common enemy." At the turn of the century, people were still dependent on each other for provision, either through their own gardening or in small markets whose "managers" were next door neighbors, family, and friends bound to the community in which they lived and worked.⁸ That such people actively helped in massive trade union and anti-corporate struggles at the turn of the century⁹ or in the building of powerful "people's organizations" in the 1930's and 40's is therefore not surprising. They had every material and personal reason to do so. Today, not only have the traditional "Mom and Pop" stores—complete with their easy credit, on-going child care and "information and referral services"—dried up. They have been replaced by national or regional supermarkets, service chains, and franchises whose interests in the community are a cut-and-dried financial arrangement. The only likely community members who do work there are either women or youth em-

ployed in the lowest-level clerical and service functions.

That the social cohesion of communities has decreased due to the economic advances of capitalism over the last 50 years is not meant to suggest that all of these communities are worse off than they were 80 years ago. You only need to look at the brutal and impoverished conditions photographed by Jacob Riis to know that that is not the case. People are materially better off than they were at the turn of the century, or even forty years ago, for that matter. *But the above statistics make clear that the common industrial base and commercial self-sufficiency of that period which helped focus the approach, style, and meaning of most grass roots organizing strategies no longer exist.*

Community and Personal Life: from Extended Supports to Exhausted Singles

Nowhere are these transformations more evident than in changes in personal life. Some of these changes are all to the good: the hard fought for and significant rights won by women to control their bodies and their lives and the increased support for and openness of lesbian and gay life styles are but two of the many positive social shifts that have occurred in the past 20 years. But grass roots organizing has always depended on the *consistent availability* of people as its main resource. And many of the social transformations have diminished that availability tremendously.

A few startling statistics begin to suggest the problem.¹⁰ One out of every two marriages today ends in divorce. There has been an increase of 60% in the number of single-parent families. Only 11% conform to the classical "traditional" breadwinner-housewife-two-children model, with the vast majority of families with children having both parents working. Behind these shifts lie more than the capitalist drive for a more mobile workforce; there are also a lot of tired and more distracted people with juggled schedules who no longer can attend many weekly meetings. In the communities of the past, extended family and kin networks, coupled with relatively quick transportation to and from work, left people with more *accessibility and time* to attend meetings, work on subcommittees, and plan campaigns. The effect of geographic and economic dispersal is compounded by the dramatic increase in single parent families. To cite a specific example, with family and kin groups smaller and more dispersed, the amount of effort spent in negotiating children's school times, after-school hours with friends, and meal preparation—let alone if any crises should occur—has increased tremendously in the last 30 years. The result is that women (and those men committed to genuine co-parenting) now find themselves forced to negotiate a matrix of organizational and personal support networks. Other events must therefore be scheduled well in advance and in as close a proximity to one's home as possible, thus diminishing one's effectiveness politically. As most grass roots organizations still either lack the resources or the commitment to provide quality childcare, the drop-off in consistent organizing activity becomes inevitable.

The Advance of the Social Wage ...and Bureaucratic Control into Communities

The second fundamental problem relates to the rise of the welfare state and activists' response to it. The above economic and social dislocations were not replaced by some dark and mysterious void. The combined forces of working class struggle to improve living and working conditions, advancing technology, and state efforts to coopt and minimize levels of reform led to the establishment of a welfare state vast enough in scope to touch almost every area of community life—welfare, unemployment benefits, etc.¹¹ Functions once provided in the family are now in part the domain of the state. Working people everywhere saw they had a right to not only wages from their labor but social wages from their places as productive members in the community. The struggles from the 1930's through the 60's made it clear that the state had to provide for needs that individual communities could no longer support.¹²

Of course, the social wage victories won by workers, came to be obscured through the individualized and bureaucratic organizations created to administer them. Community after community fought for and won the right of poor mothers to receive assistance; the state and its social welfare leaders presented those rights in the dull and alienating colors of grey, lifeless welfare centers. Workers won unemployment benefits, but they collected them only by waiting in endless lines. The social wage advanced—and so did the onslaught of state-controlled bureaucratic routine onto the fabric of community life. For as Patricia Morgan analyzed, the state over the last 50 years has been forced to grant working class demands around unemployment, health care, etc., but has then used its power to defuse the political character of those demands¹³ by individualizing, professionalizing, and bureaucratizing them.

Individualization cuts up organically connected issues into single fragments which are harder to tackle—environmental issues, for example, would include such individual issues as "pollution" (The E.P.A.), health and safety (OSHA); anti-nuclear (NRC and DOD). Each can be and is broken down further within these departments for even more individualized and bureaucratized responses. Finally, professionalization substitutes hierarchically stratified control by specialists over what are originally collective concerns—health care run only by doctors, social services only by social workers, etc.

This fragmenting mode of intervention by the state has had obvious consequences for organizing. First, it helps explain why there are far more "single-issue" organizations today than there were 40 years ago. Groups feel they need the individual focus in order to affect those state structures. Second, it helps explain some of the antagonism between state workers and community people. The professionalized strata's search for career advancement creates divided loyalties—between duty toward "social wage earner" and to the bureaucratic elites at the top of these institutions. Most choose bureaucratic advancement over fighting for the advancement of the social wage.¹⁴ (We will re-

turn to this issue later.) Finally, some community activists have even come to belittle the social wage advances that have occurred and instead have focused on outright assaults on the bureaucratized form which obscures the advances. This, too, has heightened antagonism between potential allies. Furthermore, as sight of the social wage victories was lost, the willingness of activists to make the concrete and politically vital connections between single issues was diminished, leaving such political tasks to only a modest propaganda level (usually the back pages of newsletters).

In short, many community organizers functioned, ideologically and organizationally, as if they hoped the social welfare state would go away. Rather than seeing that the economic and social character of their communities now would need these services in broader form, they functioned with a single-issue, antagonistic focus that undercut their effectiveness. Rather than launching broader, concrete social wage and anti-bureaucratic campaigns that joined state worker and community member in direct alliance, many of their strategies actually reinforced the professionalized and bureaucratized interests of the state. They did this by channeling their anti-bureaucratic antagonism at the lower-level line staff (many of whom live in the communities), while simultaneously seeking allies of equivalent "expertise" inside the top professionalized strata of the bureaucracies themselves. (This has long been the approach of some welfare rights organizations.) Understandably, few long-term alliances among community members and workers who would most benefit from anti-bureaucratic, social wage campaigns have been built through such an approach. Racial and sexual divisions have hardly improved either.

As long as the economy continued to expand, the tensions within this approach could be ignored. The incremental improvements common to single-issue politics was consistent enough to legitimate the professionalized strata's roles as leaders—small advances in benefit levels, etc. did occur in almost all areas of the social welfare state. More systemic problems were either trivialized or ignored. Not unlike the collective bargaining agreements negotiated by an increasingly distant and bureaucratized trade union leadership in the private sector, "social wage gains" in benefits improved living standards while decreasing people's control over their communities. While Alinsky's People's Organizations could lead a "community strike" against a clear private or public target, today's community organization needed experts to travel the corridors of community boards, regulatory agencies, legislative bodies, etc. if they were to successfully negotiate anything.

Today's economic crisis has now destroyed the "incremental social wage contract" of the past 40 years (just as it has done so in the collective bargaining agreements in the industrial private sector). There are now very few increases in social services; the emphasis is on a substantial contraction of those previously hard-won gains. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic form and the control it offers the state remain, continuing to antagonize and alienate increasingly impoverished communities.

Many activists, having been the staunch critics of the bureaucratic social welfare state, see this contraction occurring and suddenly have become its strongest

supporters. Using the same strategic approach as before, they simply reverse the emphasis: ignoring the state controlled bureaucratic form, they defend the social wage advances of the past (still in single-issue form) in an uncritical manner. Such a posture continues to provide the right with one of its most powerful political arguments—"to get rid of wasteful bureaucracies." However self-serving the right's motivation, their anti-bureaucratic stance continues to strike a positive chord in every U.S. community. With left and progressive activists having so little to offer as concrete alternatives (other than a presumed continuance of "more of the same"), the crises of community organization, social wage advance, and radical reform continue.

Towards Solutions: Some Beginning Proposals and Directions

There is no way to ignore the fundamental economic and social shifts that have transformed so many American communities. Given those shifts, any strategic solutions to the problems of community organizing in the 1980's must do the following: (a) concretely join community members and public sector workers in direct, supportive, mutual alliance; (b) work towards the re-establishment of the kind of autonomous, independent organizations capable of long-term, consistent pressure on the state; (c) decrease the implicitly bureaucratic, single-issue focus of many organizing efforts; (d) find realistic ways to build the multi-racial, sexually equal, working class movements which are the only organs powerful enough to transform today's present national economic and social agenda.

Community-Public Sector Unity:

Public worker-community member alliances can only begin to be built through involvement in and a reexamination of public sector trade unionism, for trade unions provide the working class with potentially great power and clout. In general public sector unions have done little to diminish antagonism between communities and workers. Part of this problem flows from the strategic model on which public sector unionism is based. Developed from the private industrial model, which necessarily flows from the directly antagonistic relationship between employer and worker, public sector unionism has rarely considered the more complex relationship between its members, the state, and the public they serve. While rhetorically linking wages and working conditions to better services, its basic approach has been to increase the cost of social wage benefits (often through regressive property or sales taxes) and/or to withdraw (temporarily) the social wage itself (through *economic strikes alone*).

In an expansive economy which allowed everyone's real income to improve, this approach made limited tactical sense. But no more. What limited understanding and tolerance most community people had for public sector trade unionism was lost in the economic contraction and ensuing ideological lashing directed at "slothful, inefficient, and overpaid civil servants."

This powerful rightwing attack and the history of public sector trade unionism suggest that we need a much different approach from the past. As Paul John-

stone noted in a trenchant examination of a small, successful public workers' strike in San Francisco, the only way public employees today can expect to win is if their strikes are political, that is, the workers and community members understand that not *only* are higher wages and better services necessary, but the quality of those services depends on who controls those services.¹⁵ Just as community organizers must learn to connect their needs to be a broad level of social wages buried inside bureaucracies, so must workers inside those bureaucracies connect their economic wage demands to the political needs of the communities they serve—needs that include less state control over all parts of their lives.

Some of this has begun to happen as state workers, including newer members of the professionalized strata, realize that there is no possibility of personal advance by individually negotiating career choices upward in the bureaucracy. With lines frozen throughout city, state, and federal agencies and with job losses through attrition mounting across the public sector, more and more people have begun to recognize how important strong trade unions *and* community support must be if their job needs are to be met. *To do this successfully requires that union and community join in an effort to expand the wage itself*—e.g., let people ride the subways and buses for free, qualify for welfare immediately, receive health coverage easily. (See below for two important current examples of this method in practice.) With the help of radical planners and economists it would be easy to work out a "progressive tax—benefit payment schedule" (based on an end to real estate development tax abatement programs, revenue shifts from defense, etc.) which could subsidize these social wage gains at a low cost to community members. In the process, the right's charges of "irresponsibility" would instead be politicized. The ensuing shift in focus is *from "selfish worker" to a "controlling, bureaucratic state"*—one made far more defensive by its action against the community.

This shift in focus organically links community member and public sector worker in a relationship that before has only existed on paper. Furthermore, *these social welfare organizations are in fact among the few community-based institutions that bring together different races, sexes, and occupations in any kind of meaningful way.* The economic and social dislocations of the last 50 years have increased racial segregation and personal atomization, but just walk into any welfare center, neighborhood school, or hospital. You'll find, especially at the lower ranks disregarded by activists in the past, *the very people who continue to live in the communities in which they work.* The social composition of these work places embodies most of the characteristics every community organization wishes it has as its membership.

Furthermore, by focusing on these places as vital community links for activity (trade union and otherwise), we will find places that have the space and location to provide for the childcare needed by women, single parents, and others who cannot afford either the childcare or the strain of unending individualized childcare. By working to use these organizations as places for important community meetings, union chapter sessions, and so on, another natural resource is found that helps link previously disparate people.

Alinsky Resurrected: 1983

Today, the outlines of this approach are emerging in parts of the industrial Midwest, and in San Francisco. Faced with plant closings, huge rates of unemployment, and escalating personal and family needs, and lacking any clear interest or involvement from either trade union leadership or social welfare institutions, people are setting up Unemployed Councils to serve a wide-ranging and potentially politically explosive set of interests.

For example, in Youngstown, unemployed workers and community members began working together around steel plant closings.¹⁶ But their work soon spread from direct economic interests (the only issues the USW leadership would consider) to broader concerns: the feeding of unemployed workers' families; the stoppage of mortgage foreclosures; the maintenance of emergency health care facilities. The push of economic necessity and the pull towards broader community involvement around social needs are forcing these Unemployed Councils to undertake everything from turkey raffles at high school football games to drives for food and clothing (once called "home relief") to demands inside the steel workers union for extending unemployed workers' union membership (still called "union democracy"). The interaction between what were once the distant "bread and butter issues" of trade unionism and the community organizers' work around social wage issues has drawn closer in the process. It is no accident that some of the unemployed steelworkers—presumably the most desperate and willing-to-work members in the industry—were in the forefront of the fight to reject USW's President McBride's capitulation to the steel companies. They see that there is little to be gained from more concessions, as closings continue and communities dry up.

A second example is that reported by Johnstone in his analysis of a strike by public housing workers and tenants. It was the on-going solidarity, communication, and friendship between the two groups that both politicized the housing workers' strike and made them strong enough to win important gains involving tenants as well. Each sub-group's own victory depended on the other's; workers could not get gains without tenants' support, and vice-versa. By working together closely, the various strata of workers (both skilled and unskilled, employee and tenant) could not be bought off and divided.

This kind of relationship needs to be developed at every public sector work place, in every community in the U.S., in part by working to transform the strategic direction of public sector trade unionism, in part by emphasizing the kind of "worker-member" relationship Johnstone saw in San Francisco. Through this process the kind of trade unions and other independent working class organizations we need can begin to be built. Such working class organizations, because they link trade union and community concerns directly to the forms of state intervention that interlace and bureaucratically divide all communities, make it possible for organizers to repoliticize their work as well.

Can the onslaught of these devastating economic and social conditions be resisted successfully? That depends in part on whether there will be clear politi-

cized intervention by organizers and activists as well, working in their workplaces, unions, and community groups to deepen the political debate and expand the programmatic objectives. Organizers can't stay outside these workplaces or live far from their communities and expect to influence the direction of working class activity. The process going on in the Midwest is only a more intensified and starker version of the lacerating deindustrialization and social wage contraction occurring across the United States in community after community.

Some community activists have seen how effective organizers can be in bringing together workers and community members. City Life, a political collective of socialists and feminists in Boston, has been working for years to join community and trade union interests. It has members in a number of public and private sector workplaces and trade unions who also carry on sustained anti-gentrification, pro-social wage work throughout their community. Working in a politicized, openly socialist, and non-dogmatic way with other working class people, they have been helping to develop the kind of politicized, working class organizational stance necessary to withstand ruling class advances against their community. Their newspaper attempts to deepen the political discussion around community trade union work through an on-going analysis of present events and their political history, rarely avoiding the kind of political debate necessary to sharpen people's awareness of how these seemingly different topics in fact complement each other. As they have gained legitimacy and visibility in a number of workplaces, trade union locals, and community organizations by their sustained work and political involvement, such debates are listened to with serious respect, thus increasing the likelihood that future actions will have a deeper political character.

Developing and maintaining a highly politicized approach through an involvement in public sector trade union and community social wage issues have never been easy, and it won't become easier overnight. The slow, detailed process of daily activity in workplaces, at trade union halls and in small-scale community events is hardly a form of glory. The lure of Democratic Party activism can in part be explained by the far easier avenues it appears to present to dedicated activists longing for victory.

However such victories carry a significant price.

FOOTNOTES

¹ *New York Times*, "Activists Taking New Political Roles," Sunday, Oct. 31, 1982, p. 36.

² Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: Houghton-Mifflin, 1949).

³ *Ibid.*, Chapter Two.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁵ Solidarity Day in Sept. 1981 was the most impressive example of this approach—little or no work was expected of rank and file membership on the issues of the day, other than voting. No program of action that could involve them more directly was even suggested.

⁶ *N.Y. Times* "Famous Convention Center Closes in Chicago as Industry Shifts," March 22, 1983, p. 17.

⁷ William Tabb, *The Long Default* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1982), p. 80. An important political economic analysis of the city crisis.

⁸ See Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

Chiefly, that the nature of electoral activity, the forms of participation, and the ensuing consciousness that develops among electoral activists never lend themselves to developing self-determination, i.e., to active mobilization of the ranks *without which substantial change is impossible*.

Electoral work looks to *leaders* to make changes; few changes in consciousness or types of on-going membership activity are wanted or required, except at campaign time. On the other hand, the previously described coalition work does speak directly to self-activity and goes beyond electoralist notions of participation, leadership and change. The effectiveness of the CIO, the civil rights movement, and Polish Solidarity rested on this primarily non-electoral strategy, and direct action oriented ranks.

The electoral activism suggested by social democrats today—and countless progressives in the past—has never been a part of such change precisely because it rejects genuine independent membership activity. Thus, DSA members have championed labor and civil rights roles in many electoral campaigns—but their electoralism also leads them to justify an AFL-CIO sponsored "jobs bill" that will actually decrease the net number of jobs at home and abroad—the so-called "domestic content" bill.

The crisis of community organization will not abate if organizers fail to recognize that there are no longer any short-cuts to the building of powerful, autonomous working class organizations in every community. The economic and social nature of their communities has so changed that the involvement of the state in their maintenance is inevitable. As the state must seek to represent the interests of capitalism, that can only mean increased bureaucratization, social division and diminished social wages unless sufficient sources of sustained power, creativity and mobilization are organized to thwart such efforts. Democratic Party electoral activism and single-issue politics, because they implicitly accept the institutional order, the capitalists' need for retrenchment and the bureaucratic demands for individualization, cannot stop these assaults. Instead, community activists can begin creating genuine politically rooted alternatives by viewing public sector workplaces as necessary community institutions that can be transformed into non-bureaucratic agencies which serve as community bases for politicized rank and file movement activity ■

⁹ David Montgomery, *Workers Control in America* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society* (NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977).

¹⁰ Alvin Schorr and Phyllis Moen, "Women and Family Policy," *Social Policy*, March/April, 1979.

¹¹ Braverman, *op. cit.*

¹² James O'Connor, *Fiscal Crises of the State* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

¹³ Patricia Morgan, "From Battered Wives to Program Client: The State's Shaping of Social Problems," *Kapitalstate*, Vol. 9, 1981, pp. 17-41.

¹⁴ Paul Johnstone, "Public Sector Unionism," *Crisis in the Public Sector*, URPE Editorial Collective (NY: Monthly Review Press, 1982), pp. 203-220; see the entire book as well for a serious examination of the human service workers' role within the state.

¹⁵ Johnstone, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, "Cold Steel," *Village Voice*, March 3, 1983, p. 1.



HAROLD WASHINGTON: **THE HOPES**

OF THE LEFT—**THE REALITIES** ONE YEAR LATER

by Dan LaBotz*

“ . . . enlightened, good and honest people by entering the ranks of the government give it a moral authority which but for them it would not possess. If the government were made up entirely of that coarse element—the violators, self-seekers, and flatterers—who form its core, it could not continue to exist. The fact that honest and enlightened people are found who participate in the affairs of government gives government whatever it possesses of moral prestige. . . . Another evil of such activity is that in order to secure opportunities to carry on their work, these highly enlightened and honest people have to begin to compromise, and so, little by little, come to consider that for a good end, one may swerve somewhat from truth in word and deed. . . . enlightened and honest people. . . fall at last into a position of complete dependence on government. They receive rewards and salaries from it, and, continuing to imagine they are forwarding liberal ideas, they become the humble servants and supporters of the very order against which they set out to fight.”

—Leo Tolstoy's "Letter to the Liberals"

Black Chicagoans voted for Harold Washington for Mayor last year for reasons that are clear enough. A vote for Washington was a vote against the racist machine and mentality that had dominated the city for decades. Blacks voted against racism in the police department, in housing, in education, and in health care. Washington received virtually all black votes, those votes cast for Black pride, Black power, and Black opportunity.

More than half of the Hispanics also voted for Washington because it was a vote against the machine which had stifled Chicago's large Mexican and Puerto Rican communities.

White liberals voted for Washington as the way to get reform and an end to corruption. (Washington got almost no votes from the white working class.)

Among the most active supporters of Washington were members, former members and supporters of a variety of socialist and communist groups. Virtually every socialist from the Communist Party to the Democratic Socialists of America and all of the smaller split-off groups devoted most of their time and energy for several months to Harold Washington's campaign for Mayor.

These socialist groups had their own reasons for supporting Washington which both intersected and diverged from the motivations of Washington's other supporters; and while there were differences of emphasis among the socialist groups, they also shared much in common. The socialist left supported Washington's campaign and his electoral victory for four main reasons:

1. Above all to strike a blow against racism by

supporting a Black political movement.

2. To build a multi-races in the city and county, progressive forces.
3. To change the political climate in Chicago and create an atmosphere more conducive to struggle.
4. To realign the Democratic Party, defeating the old Daley machine and advancing the progressive forces in the city and country.

Despite the role of the old machine elements, led by Councilman Vyrdolyak (which did all it could to sabotage the Mayor—for more on this see below), the left believed that by achieving these goals, in full or even in part, the balance of forces in the city could be changed, and some forward motion would be made toward the left's own final goal of a mass movement for socialism. The question arises one year later, to what extent have these goals been achieved by the campaign and has the balance of forces been changed such that there is some forward motion, however small, toward the left's goals?

A Blow Against Racism

There are a number of ways to measure the impact of the Harold Washington election on Chicago's historic problem of racism and white supremacy. One index is appointments of minorities to government positions. Presumably more Blacks and Hispanics in government will mean better conditions for those minorities in areas like education, housing, employment, and so on.

With Washington's election, Black appointments to City Hall offices and Department heads have increased dramatically, as one would expect. But while appointments to positions in the Mayor's office and of city department heads have increased, the percentage of minorities employed by the city has actually fallen off

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Against the Current

slightly as a result of the firing of 1,350 employees by Washington during his first year in office and the reduction of the city workforce by another 1,650 workers, for a total reduction in the city workforce of 3,000 workers. Ironically, those firings and lay-offs fell more heavily on minority workers.

Statistics on the racial composition of Chicago's government and workforce tell only a small part of the story. More important than the numbers are the positions to which Blacks and Hispanics have been appointed, and the people who have been appointed. Without a doubt the most important choice of a department head made by Washington was his selection on August 23, 1983 of Fred Rice, a career police officer since 1955, to become the superintendent of the Chicago Police Department. Chicago's minority communities hope his selection will mean an end to the racism and brutality of the police department.

It is still too early to see what impact a Black police chief will have on police brutality. It can be said, however, that Rice and Washington have not created the independent civilian police review board which is the long-standing liberal demand. Charges of police brutality are still heard by the OPS, Office of Professional Standards, an internal oversight committee believed by community groups to protect brutal cops.

The other most important appointment, and one that turned out to be an immediate disaster, was Washington's choice of Renault Robinson to head the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). The Chicago Housing Authority has 46,704 apartments, a total population of 141,282 tenants, and its racial composition is 85 percent Black, 13 percent white, and 2 percent Hispanic.

The choice of Robinson originally seemed like a good idea since he had a record as a civil rights activist. He had been the leader of the Afro-American Patrolmen's League, and as a member of the CHA Board he was an advocate of tenants' rights. However, his administration has been a catastrophe.

One of Robinson's first acts was to fire 261 skilled tradesmen who maintained the water, plumbing, electrical and heating systems of the buildings. The result was that during the winter thousands of families had no heat, no hot water and broken pipes resulting in flooding. Many were driven out of the apartments by the flooding and freezing and had to seek shelter elsewhere.

Nor was Robinson responsive to the residents. Like other CHA Chairmen before him he refused to see any independent tenants' groups and would only meet with the Local Advisory Council (LAC) representatives. Some see the LAC reps as politically controlled by CHA management. One group, the CHA Tenants Organization, threatened a rent strike over the deteriorating conditions in the buildings last winter. The threatened rent strike never took place, apparently because it was merely a tactic by a local politician to pressure Washington into appointing her to fill a vacancy on the City Council.

The Robinson appointment has been costly. Robinson's salary is \$60,000, and even as the tenants were fighting the freezing winter without heat or hot water, he bought himself a \$14,000 Oldsmobile with CHA funds. Because Robinson proved to be so incompetent, someone had to be found who could actually run the

show. Mayor Washington got Robinson and the CHA Board to agree to two things: (1) hire Erwin France, a black machine politician who had run the Model Cities program for Mayor Daley. His salary as CHA Director is \$65,000 for 16 weeks (or \$195,000 per year pro rated); (2) to award a management contract for \$60,000 to the Palmer-France Company of which Erwin France is a partner. And in addition to those expenses Robinson had to rehire the 261 skilled tradesmen and give them back wages under an agreement with the craft unions.

While Rice and Robinson were the Mayor's two most important political appointments in the last year, he has also named dozens of others to a variety of positions. The pattern has changed from the days of Mayor Daley. Daley and his successors Byrne and Bilandic had a recipe for board appointments: add equal parts of white corporate executives, building trades or Teamster union bureaucrats, political cronies, and a sprinkling of token Blacks, Hispanics or females.

Washington's selections are somewhat different. The white corporate executives are still there but now there are black businessmen among them. There are still union officials but they tend to come from the more liberal industrial unions or public employees unions rather than crafts or Teamsters, and there are usually a few liberal social activists, Blacks, Hispanics and women.

If Washington's appointments are different, it is because they reflect the political and social group which is the basis of the Washington phenomenon: a rising Black middle class. For the victories of the civil rights and Black Power movements greatly expanded the number of Black managers and administrators, government bureaucrats and politicians, labor union officials, and, to a much lesser degree, entrepreneurs.

How substantial these differences are can be judged by Washington's appointments to two important boards: the Economic Development Task Force and the Chicago 1992 World's Fair Authority. Not surprisingly since economic development for Mayor Washington means capitalist development, the selections for the Economic Development Task Force read like a Who's Who of Chicago business and industry, white and Black and Hispanic. Among others it includes: Archie Boe, pres. of Sears Roebuck & Co.; James Dutt, chairman, Beatrice Foods; John Perkins, pres., Continental Illinois Bank; Black businessman John H. Johnson, pres. of Johnson Publishing Co.; and two Hispanic businessmen, Angelo Velasquez, pres. A&R Janitorial Services and Arturo Velasquez, pres. of Azteca Corn Products. But it also includes Johnnie Jackson, pres. of the Coalition of Labor Union Women in Chicago, and Mario Aranda, executive director of the Latino Institute.

The World's Fair Authority is a very important body since its decisions will affect property values and racial housing patterns and industrial and commercial development along the near southside lakefront where the Fair is planned to be located. The Authority was appointed jointly by Washington and Illinois Republican Gov. James Thompson, each appointing 12 members and both agreeing on a choice for chairman.

Again the authority appointments read like the social register of the city's most wealthy and powerful. Washington's appointments included Thomas G.

Ayers, retired President of Commonwealth Edison Co., for the Authority chairman and Barry Sullivan, chairman of the board of First National Bank of Chicago. He also appointed Black realtor Demsey Travis, president of Sibert Mortgage Corp. And there are also the representatives of the Black and Hispanic community: again Mario Aranda of the Latino Institute and Rev. George Riddick, v.p. of Operation PUSH. The voice for women on the Authority is a local feminist activist who is also director of public affairs for Playboy Enterprises Rebecca Sive-Tomashefsky.

There are several things that can be said about Mayor Washington's appointments to the various boards. First, it is, of course, politics as usual to appoint both business figures and community leaders to public bodies. If the Mayor appoints more Blacks and Hispanics than previous administrations, it is simply smart liberal politics in the 1980s, and a practice that has been typical in other cities for years.

Second, while Blacks and Hispanics play a more prominent role on these various boards, they are predominantly middle class Blacks—businessmen, professionals, and a few preachers. To the extent that there is any working class representation, it takes the form of union bureaucrats. Jacqueline Vaughn, Chicago Teachers Union vice president, for example, was appointed to the RTA Board shortly after the Chicago Teachers Union accepted a sell-out contract from the Chicago School Board—it almost looked like a pay-off.

While Black and Hispanic businessmen may now be on the inside track for city business, like their Irish, Bohemian and Polish counterparts before them, it's hard to argue that this is any great advance for the majority of the Black and Hispanic communities which are made up of working class and poor people. Middle class minority representatives in government may cry out against some of the more flagrant abuses of power because as members of racial minorities they too can be the victims of discrimination, but they are hardly likely to be in the vanguard of the fight for social progress, or help people organize to fight back.

Third, one can view the appointment of liberal white, Black and Hispanics on to influential boards as either a victory for the progressive movement or the cooptation of the opposition, but I think that all the evidence points to the latter. After all, with few exceptions those appointed to the boards don't hold the positions as the representatives of any important social movements, they are simply on those boards as individuals. The exceptions are the labor union officials, Gale Cincotta of National Peoples Action and Rev. George Riddick of PUSH, and Rev. Al Sampson, and even in their cases, they are all people who have accepted the limits of the system and usually play by the established rules of the game.

None of the appointees has used their positions to speak to the people or to mobilize any section of the population, nor are they likely to do so. In most cases the liberals and minority members are flattered by their selection to the board, the appointment has cemented their loyalty to the mayor and they are not likely to fight city hall. In fact, if the city has witnessed a surprisingly rapid demobilization following the Washington election, it is in part due to these sorts of appointments. The system has been strengthened and the movement weakened proportionally.

Socialists would be hard-put to show how the integration of Black and Hispanic middle class liberals into the various advisory committees and boards dominated by corporate figures and labor union bureaucrats advances the socialist movement, or for that matter the movement of Black and Hispanic workers and the poor.

Life in the Big City

But the Mayor's appointments are, as we said at the beginning, only one index of whether or not his administration has struck a blow against racism. A far more important question than how many Blacks have been selected for government or advisory board, is, what are the actual conditions of Blacks and how have they improved.

It would be unfair and unrealistic to expect the Mayor to dramatically improve conditions for Blacks and Hispanics within one short year, especially when his forces have a minority on the City Council of 21 Aldermen vs. Ald. Edward Vyrdolyak's 29. Even with a majority, though, there is a question of what Harold Washington could have done or, with his politics, would be willing to do to deal with some of the city's social problems.

To list just a few of the most serious social problems:

- 800,000 Chicagoans are so poor they risk chronic undernourishment.
- An additional 400,000 Chicagoans live at or near the poverty level.
- Black infant mortality in Chicago is between 2 and 3 times that of white infants.
- Chicago has an estimated 25,000 homeless, while shelters for those with no place to live have only 1,000 beds.
- Some 40,000 Chicagoans could have their gas shut off in April of 1984 for failure to pay their gas bills according to Peoples Gas Co.
- 70% of all Hispanic students never complete high school.

The Mayor is acting on some of these problems. The city is putting up \$450,000 as part of a \$1.6 million program partially financed by the state of Illinois and private charity to create 275 more beds for the homeless. That will be a total then of about 1,275 beds for the 25,000 with no place to spend the night.

The Mayor is also expanding programs to give prenatal care to the poor and pregnant. And one of the Mayor's first acts upon taking office was the opening of two new clinics for infants and mothers, and pregnant women.

For most of these problems, however, the Mayor has no particular program, has taken no special action, and has provided no solution or even leadership, even though these are some of the most striking manifestations of racism, and even though these problems can be solved largely through jobs and income. Yet the Mayor did not even take advantage of opportunities which arose to help make a fight for jobs. To take just one example, since Mayor Washington came to power the U.S. Steel Corp. closed its Southworks plant on the city's southeast side—a plant which a few years ago employed 5–7,000 workers. The company had asked the union for concessions in exchange for building a new plant. The union made concessions—but then the company decided not to build the rail mill anyway and

in fact to close the whole plant.

The company's decision was attacked by virtually every important sector of Chicago society—the union, Catholic Cardinal Bernardin, both major newspapers, and community organizations. But Mayor Washington had nothing to say or do about the matter, though many of the workers there were his Hispanic and Black constituents. Washington neither could nor would do anything about the racism of an economic system which victimizes Blacks and Hispanics in numbers all out of proportion to their percentage of the society. And Southworks is, of course, just one example among hundreds of closures in the Chicago area.

Of course no other Democratic, or for that matter Republican, mayor or other politicians have a program to deal with that economic crisis which so often expresses itself with results which are racist, putting disproportionate numbers of Blacks and Hispanics on unemployment benefits and then on the welfare rolls.

The election of the Mayor, the appointment of a Black police chief, Fred Rice, and a Black head for the Chicago Housing Authority, Renault Robinson, and many other Black officials are important changes given Chicago's long racist history. Yet the importance is more form than substance; while a few Black politicians assume office and a section of the Black middle class becomes more influential and eventually wealthier, the situation of the majority of Blacks is stagnating or even deteriorating.

Perhaps one of the reasons Washington has failed to act on these issues (presuming that he would with his politics) is that some of the other aspirations of the left have also gone unfilled—there has been no real coalition, there has been no improvement in the political climate which is conducive to struggle. But then Washington has not in any way encouraged such a movement.

The Coalition

One of the goals of the socialist left in the Washington campaign was the creation of a multi-racial coalition of movement and political forces which could move Chicago politics to the left.

It's understandable that many on the left would have hopes of a new coalition. The Washington campaign represented a groundswell from below, a surge of Blacks and to a lesser extent Hispanics, who registered to vote against racism and all of its manifestations in Chicago city government. Even if this sentiment and activity remained completely channeled in electoral politics—as it did—it nonetheless was a significant political development. The Washington victory has changed forever the shape of Chicago politics. A Black man has become Mayor and that alone means a tremendous change in Black self confidence and pride. Nevertheless, even if we define "coalition" narrowly as an *electoral* coalition—not one in action, in a movement—the "coalition" claim was unjustified, even at the time of the election. While over 100,000 new voters had been registered, almost all of them were Black. While Washington won something like half the Hispanic vote, he only got about 10–15 percent of the white vote, and that only from Lake Shore liberals *with next to no votes from the white working class*. This is hardly the coalition which socialists and the left were looking for.

But even that electoral coalition broke down once Washington was elected, and it retreated into the usual wheeling-dealing syndrome. In the numerous elections which followed (congressional, alderman and others), it was once again each for himself with little semblance of any cohesive new coalition. What political power Washington does have now he wields not because of the power of coalition, but because of political deals. The first deal was with Alderman Wilson Frost and other Black machine politicians. This was both an indication of the strength of Washington's reform movement and its weakness. For the Black Power sentiment which pulled the regular Democratic Blacks into his caucus did not by any means reform them; they remained the same corrupt ward heelers they had always been. Next Washington made a deal with George Dunne who had run the Cook County machine happily for Daley, Bilandic and Byrne. A political realist, Dunne understood the rise of the Black voter and allied himself with the winning team. It is these deals, not the supposed new grand coalition of social forces, which have given the Washington administration whatever effectiveness it has had.

A Climate More Conducive

One of the most fervent hopes of the socialists who worked in the Washington campaign was that the campaign and his election would create a new political climate in the city, one more conducive to social movements and to struggle. It was hoped that the break up of the old machine, the creation of a multi-racial coalition, and the blows struck against racism would open up political space, and that encouraged by political victory unions, tenant groups, community organizations, civil rights and feminist groups, gays and lesbians would mobilize and fight for their specific demands.

It has not happened.

First, because there was no movement to begin with. The Washington campaign, though the rallies were huge, the enthusiasm boundless, the rhetoric inspiring, was still simply a political campaign. It was not accompanied by any social movement. There were no demonstrations (or demands) by CHA tenants for improvements in their conditions; there were no protests by Black neighborhoods over the deterioration of their communities; there were no strikes by workers demanding higher wages, better benefits and working conditions. Everything stayed well within the bounds of traditional politics—though a most remarkably boisterous and rowdy brand of politics. Everyone's hopes were in Harold Washington—no one had any hopes in or expectations in themselves.

Second, once elected, Washington began to demobilize even that traditional political organization which existed (as I have argued elsewhere, *Changes*, October, 1983). When he supported United Food and Commercial Workers International Vice President Charles Hayes against Black nationalist journalist Lu Palmer in the race for his old Congressional seat, Washington divided, demoralized and demobilized his own supporters. Palmer was the choice of the Black community; Hayes the choice of the Mayor. The people didn't want to have to choose between Palmer and Washington, so many of them simply stayed away from the polls. Only 35% of those registered voted—compared

to 80% in the mayoral election in the same district—and Hayes won with 45.2 percent of the vote, while Palmer got 32.3 percent.

While Palmer's Black nationalist philosophy has many serious weaknesses, including an orientation toward Black capitalism and a measure of anti-semitism, Palmer was more of an activist, and at least marginally more likely to set in motion the forces that the election had summoned up. Hayes on the other hand was a liberal trade union bureaucrat whose politics are identical to Washington's. The Mayor quite naturally chose the boring liberal over the Black nationalist militant. So the Palmer-Hayes race, the Mayor's support for Hayes, and the latter's victory put a pall upon the Black Power movement.

Washington vs. Labor

The Mayor's first actions upon assuming office also put a damper on things. Immediately upon election he called for "austerity," proceeded to fire 1,350 workers—a firing which, as we have shown, fell hardest upon minority workers—and reduced the city work force by another 2,650. He also instituted a hiring freeze. All of these actions, of course, tend to create insecurity among the city's work force and inhibit movement, much less militancy.

He did make good on his promise to call for collective bargaining elections for city workers (a promise made and reneged on by Jane Byrne), but only after two weakening ploys. First his Corporation Council James Montgomery tried and failed to weaken the state collective bargaining bill making its way through the legislature by taking away the unions' right to strike.

Second, Washington's lawyers have constructed the bargaining units so as to radically weaken the power of the workers. In the best craft, nonindustrial union tradition, he created five bargaining units cut *horizontally* across the various departments. This divides workers in the same workplace from their fellows, makes it harder for workers in any one unit to work together or act together, and reinforces the hierarchical division of labor. All this works in the interest of management.

Nonetheless, the organization of public employees will be important even if it happens "from above," i.e., as relatively passive recipients of unionism, rather than actors in the process. (The union campaigns were conducted via direct mailing and advertising rather than confrontation and class conflict.) Still, unionization does weaken the patronage system.

Washington Asks Labor Concessions

Since his election the mayor has repeatedly demanded (under the not so idle threat of job losses) that workers "make concessions." Three instances will suffice.

(1) In January, 1984 the Mayor went to a meeting of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 241 whose members are Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus drivers (mostly Black and Hispanic). He told them they must approve deferment of payment of \$26 million dollars into their pension fund, threatening that if they did not there would be 1,500 layoffs, a reduction in bus routes, and a further decline in the city's economy which would result in even more layoffs. His threat worked

and the union voted to defer the pension payments.

(2) Before his election, Washington visited a Westinghouse plant on the southwest side of Chicago and promised the largely Black work force to support their fight to keep open the plant which the corporation was planning to close. The city had a real cudgel to beat the company in the form of franchises which the company wanted for cable TV. But Washington has not lifted the club since his election.

(3) Last October, the majority-Black teachers union endured a three-week strike. Many of its members were among the Mayor's most enthusiastic supporters. But the Mayor gave aid and comfort to their enemies. (see ATC, Winter '84). When the teachers struck several Black community groups, including PUSH, sought a back to work injunction in the courts; the Black newspaper, *The Chicago Defender* insinuated that Vyrdolyak, the Mayor's enemy, was behind the strike. Mayor Washington, who might have used his moral authority to stop these attacks on the union, never lifted a finger for the striking teachers. In fact, he loaned the school board his labor attorney, Richard Laner, who helped bring about the final settlement—a defeat for the union which settled for a raise of only 2.7% and no other gains. In sum, far from encouraging unions to fight, Washington's policies have served to discourage them.

And Community Struggles?

As on the labor scene, the fact is that there simply is no evidence to indicate that Washington's election has in any way created a climate more conducive to the organizing of movements and struggle against the establishment. What evidence there is points in the other direction. From the beginning people put their hopes in Washington rather than in themselves; *electoral politics seemed like an alternative to struggle*. (Indeed, Washington's election even had a negative effect. His appointments of a good number of community spokespersons has coopted them into the Democratic Party and made them in some cases dependent upon it.

But What About Vyrdolyak?

The argument is made that Washington can't do anything because he has only 21 of the 50 city aldermen on his side and that therefore he is powerless. It is a specious argument, because the office of Mayor and his tremendous authority in the Black community could be used if he wished to build a movement that would overwhelm his opponents. The problem is, as Washington knows, that if he helped to build a movement it might take on a life of its own and overwhelm him as well. So he does nothing to further movement at any level except the level of electoral politics.

The hopes and aspirations not only of the left but of Blacks as well have now gone into Rev. Jesse Jackson's campaign for president, and that has helped to take the pressure off Washington. People are still afraid to fight for what they want, they still have hopes in electoral politics, and now they are investing those hopes and dreams in Jackson's campaign, though they will probably all be disappointed hopes when Jackson turns over his delegates to Mondale at the national convention as it seems he will.

The Realignment of the Democratic Party

The one hope of the left which seems to have been realized in the Washington election is a blow to the old Daley machine from which it will probably never recover. The alliance of bankers, realtors and corporations with the union bureaucrats of the building trades and the Teamsters, and with the ethnic politicians of the Irish, Bohemian, Polish, and Jewish voters has been broken by the rising political consciousness and activity of Blacks.

But while the old machine has been broken, a new one is being built in its place. The same bankers and realtors and corporations are there—but now joined by Black corporations like Johnson Publishing and Johnson Products. The crusty old pork choppers of the craft unions, virtually all white men, are being pushed aside and their places taken by the college-educated social democratic bureaucrats of the public employees unions like AFSCME and the teachers union, many of whom are Black and female. The old white ethnic politicians have lost some of their power, and the new Black and Hispanic politicians are elbowing their way into the corridors of political power at City Hall. The system of political patronage is crumbling and the Democratic Party is losing its grip on the 40,000 city, county, and state jobs it once controlled. But the public employee unions hope to control those workers and voters for the new more liberal and Black-led Democratic Party.

Yet, while Washington's victory shook the machine to its foundations, it has also aroused tremendous expectations in the Black community, as well as fears in the white ethnic communities. Simultaneously however, this new machine is faced with the need to impose austerity on the working class in the big cities, to weaken the power of the unions, to reduce public services, to cut back on welfare, food stamps, and medical benefits. The old ethnic machines could not discipline the new Black and Hispanic populations, and to get them to accept the new discipline the Mayor would have to be one of their own. So the party was realigned, but the results are not what the left wanted or expected.

Finally, precisely because no real coalition has been created, there are constant changes in the relations between various social and political groups. The future of all of these forces depends on a number of factors: above all the economy, for another recession as deep as the last will tend to give a social content to what have been narrowly electoral developments; but also politics, particularly the role of Jesse Jackson in the Democratic Party, for many of the Black community's hopes have been passed from Washington to Jackson. The political process in Chicago is more open than it has been in 35 years, and creates openings for those who want to move beyond an electoral reform movement.

New Left Links to Activists?

Some of the socialist groups had other hopes from the Washington campaign and victory as well. They wanted to establish working relationships with Black and Hispanic activists, or with activists from the labor or feminist movements and they saw the Washington campaign as a way of building a network of activists. Some did build such ties, but many of those ties dissolved in the aftermath of the elections.

Others hoped to recruit to their particular socialist or communist group, particularly to recruit Black members and they felt that their participation in the election would help to establish their credentials on the issue of race. Perhaps, though it is far from certain, some small numbers of Blacks were recruited to the Communist Party and to some of the smaller socialist groups. But in reality, if one was a Washington supporter, the campaign ward organization was a lot more hospitable group than the local Marxist-Leninist cell. The truth is that the wildly enthusiastic Harold Washington rallies were a lot more attractive than the slatternly south Loop socialist offices cluttered with mimeograph machines and decorated with pictures of Stalin or Enver Hoza. And why bother to read Stalin *On the National Question* or some turgid text on dialectical materialism only to convince oneself that socialists should support Washington when all of one's progressive friends were supporting Washington anyway? No Black worker needed it, no white workers would be convinced by it, and only socialists seemed to enjoy it.

Some socialist groups hoped to carry out an independent socialist agitation within the campaign, but those hopes were soon forgotten. Door knocking in the precincts left little time for socialist agitation, and the few socialist leaflets were buried under an avalanche of Washington literature. That odd socialist newspaper or leaflet which found its way to the church rally was left on the floor, the dusty imprint of a tennis shoe superimposed over the long article on the crisis of capitalism, glanced at by the janitor and chucked into the trash can with crumpled coffee cups.

The truth is that none of the socialists' hopes have been realized by the Washington campaign. And actually there is some question in my mind as to how many of those hopes were genuine, and how many were the result of a cynicism about the possibility of mass movement which had grown up in the left as a result of the defeats of the 1970s.

The socialists' various attempts at building socialist or communist parties had failed. The labor movement after the promise of the early 1970s when reform movements and wildcat strikes abounded, suffered one defeat after another, in many cases without even a fight. The civil rights and women's movements of the 60s and 70s were in some cases repressed and in others coopted into the political establishment. And I think that many leftists turned toward Washington's campaign because they were tired of waiting for the expected working class upsurge. They wanted some political motion, and the Washington campaign provided it, even if it was within very narrow parameters.

The socialists who had led labor struggles and community movements, used their organizing skills for Washington.

From my point of view it's unfortunate, for as Leo Tolstoy wrote almost 100 years ago in his "Letter to the Liberals," the honest and enlightened people when they enter government, "give it a moral authority which but for them it would not possess." Some of the socialists who entered the Washington campaign have I am afraid, as Tolstoy wrote, begun to "swerve somewhat from truth in word and deed" and in the end "fall at last into a position of complete dependence upon government ■

ZIONISM IN THE AGE OF THE DICTATORS

by Mike Wunsch*

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the conduct of the Israeli army have helped create a readership more open to probing the realities of Zionism. This book by Lenni Brenner** will serve such readers very well indeed. It presents a devastating overview of the Zionist movement's policies toward the Fascist movement, running from Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922 to the end of the Second World War. Zionist historians touch on the subject, but always like the proverbial blind men and the elephants, they do not dare attempt to tell the whole story, for it is disgraceful by any standards.

Relations with Mussolini are somewhat better known than those with Hitler and so need not be dwelt on at length. At first Mussolini distrusted the Zionists, whom he saw as little more than a British catspaw in Palestine. However, by 1926, *Il Duce* concluded that it was time for Italy to get a piece of the action, and he offered to help Zionists build up their economy. An Italian agent was sent to Palestine and reported back that the "Revisionists" (the ideological tendency to which Shamir and Begin belonged) were Fascism's best friends among the Jews there. The Revisionists did not simply see the Italians as a tactical ally. They had embraced much of the Fascist ideology. Although their leader, Vladimir Jabotinsky, insisted that he was not a Fascist, in fact he accepted much of the Fascist ideology. He proclaimed himself a strikebreaker, supporting the outlawing of strikes, believed in the corporate state, and held an openly racist attitude to the Arabs.

But it was not just the fascist Revisionists who were anxious to deal with the Fascists. The mainstream Zionists of the German Zionist Federation and World Zionist Organization (WZO) even sought an "understanding" with the new Nazi regime. The German Zionists had never been part of the struggle to keep Hitler from power and, by June 1933, they sent the Nazis a secret letter:

"We, too, are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group . . . Zionism hopes to be able to win the collaboration even of a government fundamentally hostile to Jews." Later that same year the Nazis and the WZO worked out a trade agreement, the *Ha'avara* or Transfer, whereby Jews leaving for Palestine had to give up less of their wealth than emigrants heading for any other country. Soon the WZO was selling Nazi goods all over the Levant and shipping oranges to Europe in Nazi boats, making a mockery of the attempts of most of the world's Jews to boycott the Nazis. Sixty percent of all Zionism's capital investments in Palestine in the 30's came into the country via the Transfer. (See Brenner, pp. 57-78 for documentation of this sad chapter.)

Inevitably attempts at collaboration went beyond economics. In 1937, while thousands of left-wing Jews, including 400 Communists from Palestine, were fighting against Franco and his Nazi "Condor Legion," the Labor (socialist) Zionist militia, the *Haganah*, sent an

agent to Berlin with an offer to spy for the SS in return for even more liberal terms regarding the release of German Jewish wealth for prospective Zionist emigres. None other than Eichmann himself was invited to Palestine as the Haganah's guest and Feival Polkes, the Haganah's agent, told him that "Jewish nationalist circles were very pleased with the radical German policy, since the strength of the Jewish population in Palestine would be so far increased thereby that in the foreseeable future the Jews could reckon upon numerical superiority over the Arabs."* But, although the Nazis were willing to use the Zionists for their purposes, their fundamental racism prevented them from entering into any kind of serious alliance with any Jewish grouping, and Eichmann didn't take up the Haganah's offer.

But perhaps the Zionists were willing to enter into a pact with the devil out of a desperate desire to see Palestine turn into a refuge for Hitler's victims? To the contrary. Thousands of German Jews could not get into Palestine for lack of immigration certificates. True, it was the British who set the quota number for Jewish immigrants, but *it was the WZO* who then decided *which* Jews would then come into the country, and in the years 1933-35, they turned down two-thirds of all the German Jews who applied for immigration certificates. The Zionist leaders worked under what Berl Katznelson, the editor of the Labor Zionist *Davar*, called "the cruel criteria of Zionism": most German Jews were too old to bear children in Palestine; they didn't have trades that were useful for building the Zionist colony; they didn't speak Hebrew and they weren't Zionists. Rather than take *them* in, the WZO brought in over 6,000 young trained Zionists from the US, Britain and other safe places.

But didn't the WZO try to find a place for these elderly Jews elsewhere? Astonishingly, no. For at the same time, the Zionist leadership emphatically *opposed* any attempt to find alternative refuges for the fleeing Jews (as Supreme Court Justice Goldberg's commission discovered). In 1938, Rabbi Stephen Wise, leader of the American Jewish Congress, wrote a (then) secret letter to a congressman who wanted to change the American immigration laws: "It may interest you to know that some weeks ago the representatives of all the leading Jewish organizations met in conference . . . It was the consensus of opinion that such bills . . . in the light of the inspired propaganda directed against the Jewish people . . . would be injurious . . . it was decided that no Jewish organization would, at this time, sponsor

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***Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*, Lawrence Hill & Co., Westport, CT., \$9.75 pb.

*The complete text of these discussions are available (in German) in John Mendelsohn (ed.) *The Holocaust*, vol. 5.

a bill which would in any way alter the immigration laws."

From Worse to Worst

Attempts to collaborate with the arch-enemy of the Jews continued right into WW2. The most despicable example was that of the Stern Gang's bizarre effort to ally itself to the Third Reich. What gives this its sinister contemporary aspect is that Shamir, Begin's successor as Prime Minister, was one of the leaders of these pro-Nazi-alliance Jews.

The Spanish civil war led Mussolini to turn to an alliance with Hitler. This meant that he had to break with the Zionists, as Hitler had no interest in allying himself with anyone who was friendly with any Jews. Jabotinsky now reverted back to a pro-British orientation and supported London in the subsequent World War. But a wing of his movement had become so fanatically committed to Fascism during the days of the Italian patronage that they broke with him and, in late 1940, sent an agent to Vichy-run Beirut to contact the Nazis. Their proposal was found after the war in the German files (see below). If the Nazis would allow them to give military training to the Jews they had already walled up in Poland's ghettos, then "Cooperation between the new Germany and a renewed volkish-national Hebraium would be possible and the establishment of the historical Jewish state on a national and totalitarian basis, and bound by a treaty with the German Reich, would be in the interest of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East."

Finally, although the author is emphatic in his support for the Palestinian cause, it is important to emphasize that *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* is not a mere anti-Zionist propaganda tract. While the book's focus is on Zionism's role during the totalitarian epoch, no one is spared. The Social Democratic and Communist Parties are condemned for their failure to unite in time against Hitler, and a chapter deals with the role of the *Mufti*, who is denounced, not only for his wartime collaboration with the Nazis, but also for the fact that he began taking Mussolini's gold as far back as 1934, in total disregard for the Fascist use of poison gas against the Libyans in 1931.

Fundamental Features of the Proposal of the National Military Organization in Palestine (Irgun Zvai Leumi) Concerning the Solution of the Jewish Question in Europe and the Participation of the NMO in the War on the Side of Germany.*

[Original German text found in:

David Yisraeli, *The Palestine Problem in German Politics, 1889-1945*, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel, 1974, pp. 315-17.]

"It is often stated in the speeches and utterances of

the leading statesmen of National Socialist Germany that a New Order in Europe requires as a prerequisite the radical solution of the Jewish question through evacuation ('Jew-free Europe').

"The evacuation of the Jewish masses from Europe is a precondition for solving the Jewish question; but this can only be made possible and complete through the settlement of these masses in the home of the Jewish people, Palestine, and through the establishment of a Jewish state in its historical boundaries.

"The solving in this manner of the Jewish problem and thus the bringing about with it the liberation of the Jewish people once and for all, is the objective of the political activity and the years long struggle of the Jewish freedom movement, the National Military Organization (*Irgun Zvai Leumi*) in Palestine.

"The NMO, which is well-acquainted with the goodwill of the German Reich government and its authorities towards Zionist activity inside Germany and towards Zionist emigration plans, is of the opinion that:

"1—Common interests could exist between the establishment of a new order in Europe in conformity with the German concept, and the true national aspirations of the Jewish people as they are embodied by the NMO.

"2—Cooperation between the new Germany and renewed folkish-national Hebraium would be possible and

"3—The establishment of the historical Jewish state on a national and totalitarian basis, and bound by a treaty with the German Reich, would be in the interest of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East.

"Proceeding from these considerations, the NMO in Palestine, under the condition the above-mentioned national aspirations of the Israeli freedom movement are recognized on the side of the German Reich, offers to actively take part in the war on Germany's side.

"This offer by the NMO, covering activity in the military, political and information fields, in Palestine and, according to our determined preparations, outside Palestine, would be connected to the military training and organizing of Jewish manpower in Europe, under the leadership and command of the NMO. These military units would take part in the fight to conquer Palestine, should such a front be decided upon.

"The indirect participation of the Israeli freedom movement in the New Order in Europe, already in preparatory stage, would be linked with a positive-radical solution of the European Jewish problem in conformity with the above-mentioned national aspirations of the Jewish people. This would extraordinarily strengthen the moral basis of the New Order in the eyes of all humanity.

"The cooperation of the Israeli freedom movement would also be along the lines of one of the last speeches of the German Reich Chancellor, in which Hitler emphasized that he would utilize every combination and coalition in order to isolate and defeat England." ■

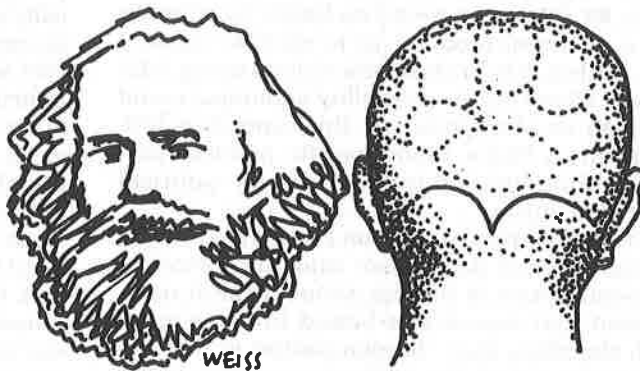
*The document was written in late 1940, when Avraham Stern still called his movement the 'real' *Irgun*, from which they had split earlier in the year. Later, the Sternists took the name *Loha-*

met Herut Yisraeli (Lehi for short), or Fighters for the Freedom of Israel. They were, however, universally known by the name the British gave them: the Stern Gang.

A MARXIST

APPROACH TO ETHICS

by Karsten J. Struhl*



Review: Milton Fisk, *Ethics and Society: A Marxist Interpretation of Value* (New York University Press, 1980)

Revolutionaries tend to regard words like "morality" and "ethics" with suspicion and not without reason. Morality is often invoked to repress (as in most talk about sexual morality) or to justify existing power relations. Yet, morality can have a more progressive side, as when equality is condemned as unjust or appeals are made to the universal "rights of man." But these appeals are generally abstract and can easily serve to conceal deep divisions of opinion and interests among people who make and respond to them (who is the "man" that has these rights and just what are they anyway?). Is a genuine revolutionary morality possible or is morality just "bourgeois bullshit"? Can morality be given a rational basis? Can it be grounded in a historical materialist perspective? Does the end justify any means? These are important questions for revolutionaries to consider if only because of the hold that moral notions have on all of us.

The writings of Marx and Engels have produced an ambivalent legacy toward morality. On the one hand, morality is condemned as ideology, as a form of false consciousness. Thus, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels write, "law, morality, and religion are to the proletariat so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk as many bourgeois interests." In the *German Ideology* they proclaim, "communists preach no morality at all." Many other passages could be quoted to make the same point—that morality is simply an attempt to legitimize class domination and that revolutionary socialists appeal to it at their peril.

On the other hand, the language that Marx and Engels use burns with a sense of moral indignation. Capitalism is described as "exploitative," "inhuman," "dehumanizing," and as "a form of servitude." The capitalist class is said to contain not just "a particular wrong but wrong in general" (Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction). In the same work Marx asserts that criticism ultimately rests on "the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved,

abandoned, contemptible being." In these and many other such passages Marx's critique of capitalism appears to rest not only on scientific analysis but also on an ethical commitment.

The most sustained treatment of ethics in their writings appears in the *Anti-Dühring*. Here, Engels defends the class basis of morality claiming not merely that morality has its origin in class interests but, more important, that the very meaning of moral terms like "equality" and "freedom" take on a different meaning depending upon which class uses them. Moral values are not eternal, absolute standards (truths) but historical weapons in the class struggle. Yet, here again, Engels seems to be ambivalent; for while the proletariat morality does not have "absolute validity," it is nonetheless the one which "represents the future," a communist future which will bring forth a "really human morality."

The ambiguity over the status of the morality haunts contemporary Marxist thought with some insisting that all ethical discourse (and not just bourgeois ethics) is a function of class antagonism and will be obsolete in communist society;¹ while others argue that "the ethics of the proletariat is a higher ethics than is that of the bourgeoisie."²

Milton Fisk, Professor of Philosophy at Indiana Uni-

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versity, Marxist and socialist activist, develops an original and useful approach to these issues in his book *Ethics and Society*. Fisk takes as his task to develop a coherent ethical theory on a historical materialist ground. In doing so, he would undercut the contemporary debate, for the issues would no longer be whether to defend a universal morality or to eschew morality altogether. Rather, it is to show how a class based ethical relativism allows for the possibility of rational moral judgments. As we shall soon see, this concern is intimately related to Fisk's more specific political purpose—to critique individualism and its political counterpart, liberalism.

Fisk's defense of ethical relativism is grounded on two assumptions: ethical naturalism and the historical materialist conception of human nature. Ethical naturalism insists that morality is bound to the natural world and, therefore, that "human nature is the ultimate basis for the origin, the authority, and the validity of ethical principles" (p. 21). Historical materialism challenges the idea that there is a universal, transhistorical human nature in any interesting sense and gives us instead the concept of the social and historical nature of the human being; it gives us the concept of "the social person" whose nature is formed by and within specific groups (class, race, sex, etc.). The validity of ethical principles, then, is relative to the specific group (or groups) to which the social person belongs.

The idea of human nature as essentially social is in direct opposition to the individualist conception of human nature. Individualism, as Fisk understands it, maintains the notion of a core person which remains independent of the group. While certain aspects of the individual's behavior and way of thinking may be effected by the social context, this "core" remains unconditioned, as it is universal and transhistorical. On the historical materialist point of view, however, there is no such core, no such transhistorical core of human nature.

That the nature of the person is social does not, however, mean that the person is entirely the result of social forces. There are, according to Fisk, certain basic needs which are universal. These "survival needs"—for food, sex, human support, and deliberation—manifest themselves differently depending on the social context. Thus, these needs provide the backdrop for selfishness, aggressiveness, and cruelty in one set of social circumstances but also for unselfishness, cooperation, and kindness in another kind of social circumstance. The point is that, in themselves, these needs are neither selfish nor unselfish, good or evil; that while they are an *element* of human nature, they cannot be said to constitute it, for they never manifest themselves except as socially patterned. It is these needs *as socially patterned* which constitute human nature. And since they are socially patterned through the group to which the individual belongs, human nature is itself variable, dependent on the nature of the group.

The social patterning of basic needs by the group leads to the emergence of new needs, emotions and modes of action which are characteristic of the group, and, hence, also of the individual within the group. The implications should be obvious. There is a bourgeois and a proletarian nature, each of which has its own set of needs, emotions, and ways of acting. If, as ethical

naturalism holds, the validity of ethical principles is bound to one's nature, then the morality of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat must differ. This does not mean that ethics lack rationality or objectivity. Ethical principles are valid insofar as they promote the historically created needs and interests that individuals have as members of a group, and both those needs and interests and the means of furthering them can be ascertained rationally.

An example which Fisk offers may help make this clear. The basic need for deliberation creates among the members of the working class the need for workers' organizations which will promote the realization of those needs (unions, political parties, etc.). Since the need for an organization can only be collectively satisfied, there is a need for worker's solidarity. There is also a need for economic conditions which will make workers' organizations effective in advancing the interests of the working class. Ultimately, however, this entails a need for socialism understood as a worker's democracy. Thus, worker's solidarity and socialism are objectively in the interests of members of the working class and can be rationally ascertained to be so. But they are not in the interests of the members of the capitalist class. The interests of capitalists require the maintenance of capitalism and the continued exploitation of the working class, hence the ineffectiveness or dissolution of independent workers' organizations. In short, workers and capitalists require a different set of ethical principles to promote their historically created needs and interests. In each case, those principles are valid for the members of their respective groups. Their validity does not depend on there being any overarching principles which arbitrate between group interests. Once we understand that proletarian nature is really different from capitalist nature, we come to realize that there could be no such "universal" ethical principles.

Two problems arise at this juncture. First, how are we to distinguish between valid ethical principles and moral ideology (false consciousness)? Second, how do we account for the assumption that there are some moral principles which would apply to all persons regardless of class and which we want to see embodied in the communist future? Is that assumption necessarily ideological?

One of the key insights of Marx and Engels on moral ideology concerns the form that it takes: the interests of the ruling class are presented as universal interests. For the ruling ideology to be effectively hegemonic, subordinate classes must come to believe that their needs and interests and the needs and interests of the ruling class coincide. In fact, not merely do subordinate groups come to believe something about their needs but they come to *have* certain needs which are not in their interest but which bind them to the very system which dominates them. As Erich Fromm has put it, a social system develops a "social character" which shapes "the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behavior is not a matter of conscious decision . . . but one of *wanting to act as they have to act*" in order to reproduce the existing social order.³ Here, we come to the problem of distinguishing between true and false needs. This is especially a problem for ethical naturalism, which appeals to human nature for the validity of ethical principles. If members of the working class have

developed needs to sustain capitalism, then those needs would seem to be also a part of their nature. Doesn't ethical naturalism, then, commit us to saying that they ought to act so as to fulfill those needs?

Fisk's response to this problem is to insist that such needs are *imposed* and are, therefore, not generally a part of a person's nature. Imposed needs are those which are acquired within a structure of domination. To illuminate this structure, Fisk introduces a new concept into Marxist theory, the concert of the "sum group."

A sum group is an overarching, artificial group whose function is to "perpetuate the relations of domination within one or more pairs of sub-groups" (p.42). Thus, "American society" or "the State" understood as a sum group contains such pairs of sub-groups as the capitalist and the working class, men and women, whites and blacks. The ethics of this sum group calls for each of the dominated sub-groups to live in harmony with the sub-group which dominates them. Such an ethic is clearly to the ultimate advantage of the dominant group even if it conflicts with its interests in particular circumstances. Examples: when the working class responds to cries of patriotism and goes forth to fight imperialist wars; or when there is talk of a "new social contract" between corporate management and workers. Thus, while posing as an ethic valid for all groups, it is in fact valid only for the dominant group. It is through the sum group, then, that the interests of the ruling class are presented as universal; which is to say that the ethics of the sum group is moral ideology.

We can rationally distinguish, then, between two sets of needs. There are the "internal historical needs" which arise as a result of the way in which the survival needs are socially patterned within a given group and which are an intrinsic part of the nature of the social person. And there are the "imposed historical needs" which are generated by the sum group. Here, we can discern the real meaning of alienation. It is not a separation from a universal human essence but rather a separation from the internal historical needs which constitute the social person. Imposed needs, then, alienate us from our true *historical* selves. Valid ethical principles are those which help us to overcome our alienation, understood in this sense, which promote the realization of our internal historical needs, and which challenge the imposed historical needs and the ideological morality of the sum group.

One problem yet remains. "How can one . . . distinguish between what people, as members of their class, *really* want and what they have been *made* to want by institutions of the sum group?" Fisk suggests that the answer cannot be found through intellectual reflection alone but only through the ongoing, political struggle. "Struggle against domination undermines certain needs—the imposed needs—and brings others to awareness—the internal needs. . . . The only motive for being fully critical will . . . be that of overcoming domination, and this motive atrophies without struggle" (pp. 140–41). Thus, it is only through the class struggle itself that we can come to distinguish between ethical principles valid for the working class and moral ideology.

Let us return to the second problem concerning ethical relativism. If I come upon a stranger hurt in an accident, I do not first attempt to know his or her class identity before deciding that I ought to give assistance.

Are there then certain ethical principles which transcend class or other group membership? Fisk offers an alternative explanation. There is sometimes "a gap in my class existence" in which I do not know the class identities of those I encounter. At such moments I experience what life might be like without class or other form of group antagonism. ". . . gaps in the existing class struggle prefigure the absence of antagonism. In a gap, the morality that will become appropriate in the future society already holds" (p. 131). However, doesn't the notion of such a future morality, which would be a "really human morality," pose a challenge to ethical relativism? Do we not have here the possibility of a universal morality which holds not only for the communist future but "in the gaps" even for the present? Fisk's answer is to distinguish between the possibility of such a universal morality and an absolute morality. A classless society could not, by definition, have a class relative ethics. A society without domination by any group—and Fisk argues that this would be the case in a genuinely classless society—would have no group relative ethics. Human nature in such a society would be universal. But this applies only *within* a classless society. It does not apply across history. "The internal historical needs of people in a classless society. . . will be the basis for an ethics that is universal only in the sense that it applies to everyone in that society. It is not universal in the broad sense that it applies to everyone in any time in any society. Only an ethics that is universal in the broad sense would be absolute" (p. 260).

There are a number of implications of Fisk's sustained defence of ethical relativism. Some of them have already been mentioned or follow immediately from what has been said. Marxists need no longer be caught in the dilemma of either equating all morality with ideology or finding some absolute, ahistorical basis for a Marxist morality. While there is no transcendent morality to arbitrate between a proletarian and a bourgeois morality, there is a rational basis for a proletarian morality. The ethics which call us to action lead us not to reassert a transhistorical human essence (species-being) but to overcome the imposed historical needs which alienate us from our historical selves. Marxism does not, in the fashion of Marcuse, advocate liberation from repression in the abstract but liberation from a specific historical system which blocks the realization of the group's internal historically created needs.

Finally, ethical discourse will not become obsolete in the communist society; ethical thinking will not wither away. What will replace a class relative ethics is a "universal" ethics derived from a *historically* created universal human nature which has overcome class antagonism. Such an ethics, while universal, is still historically relative in that it does not apply outside those specific historical circumstances.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a more directly political agenda which animates Fisk's work. The individualist conception of human nature is perhaps the primary ideological prop of bourgeois society. It is this conception which grounds the concept of reason beyond class struggle, which gives ideological sustenance to liberalism's appeal to the common good, a social contract, and the notion of absolute human rights. But in a class-divided society there can be no common good and no rights which adhere to a "core"

person independent of social position. The appeal to those concepts when made in the name of "Marxist humanism" can only vitiate class solidarity and willingness to struggle. Whether it wears a liberal or a Marxist garb, it still remains the ethic of the sum group which calls for those who are oppressed to live in harmony with those who oppress them and which, therefore, leave intact the system of class domination.

Fisk follows up this general critique of liberalism with more specific critiques of several of its ideals—tolerance and pluralism, freedom from interference, free speech, equal rights for all, and gradualist reform as opposed to revolution.

The principle of toleration says that the interest of each must be respected and be given its due. Corporations, unions, banks, farmers, consumer groups, educational administrators, teachers, students, etc. must each be given some consideration. But who can arbitrate and on what basis? The interests of those who dominate can only be achieved at the expense of those who are dominated. The attempt to harmonize group interests or arbitrate them can only sustain the advantages of the former. The Social Democrats in Germany in the early thirties attempted to accommodate the Nazis. The principle of toleration has seen a number of such tragic attempts.

Liberalism's ideal of freedom sees the individual as having a right to non-interference from the group so long as he or she is not causing direct harm to others. But the principle is both too strong and too weak. Too strong, because some groups—e.g., the family—require for their continued existence a level of cooperation that may interfere with such a right. Too weak, because from the standpoint of a dominated group, the individual has a right to challenge the system of domination and, thus, has a right to act in a way that can hurt the sum group and the dominant group. Rights, then, are valid relative to a given group. The right of capitalists to make a profit by exploiting workers cannot be recognized by the working class. On the other hand, the working class has a right to revolution which would impose a severe curtailment of the rights of capitalists. The notion of equal rights that apply to all individuals without respect to class or other group identity is another ideological illusion.

What, then, do we say about liberalism's favorite right—the right of free speech? While many socialists either shy away from the issue or give assent to an absolute civil liberties position, Fisk pursues the implications of his analysis without flinching. The right of free speech must be examined in historical context. Since in a non-revolutionary period the capitalist class holds the reins of State power securely, the attempt to deny free speech to members of any group (including spokespersons for the ruling class) will be to the detriment of all subordinate groups. Therefore, in such periods it is to the interests of the working class to defend the right of free speech for all. But in a revolutionary period when the working class is prepared to seize State power, it has every right to seize the means of communication and use it for its interests. Is this hypocritical? Not at all, Fisk insists, for we are dealing with two different historical periods. The right of free speech, like all rights, is relative to the interests of a given group in a specific historical context.

Perhaps liberalism's most significant assumption is its belief that by respecting the basic principles critiqued above—tolerance, pluralism, individual freedom, free speech, etc.—gradual reform can be achieved and will, in turn, lead to a qualitatively improved social order. This, in fact, is the position of a number of socialist and communist parties in the advanced industrial countries. Since history demonstrates that the dominant class will not be willing to give up its power in the absence of a revolutionary struggle, why is it that gradualism has such an appeal? Fisk suggests that one reason is the absolutist conception of ethics. Gradualism must ultimately assume that humanity and not class is the basis for rights, and that, therefore, no group in society can deny another group its basic interests. But this is just what revolution requires. Thus, perhaps the most important political implication of ethical relativism is its ability to ground the right of revolution.

I am generally in sympathy with Fisk's analysis. Nonetheless, I think his scholarly style may conceal a too heavy-handed and partisan a stance. Fisk's brief for ethical relativism is too self-enclosed. It does not allow some of the more subtle nuances and ambiguities of the issue to emerge. For example, in addition to a theory of history and a critique of capitalism, Marxism clearly provides some utopian moments.⁴ How are we to understand these visions of the communist future? Are they simply predictions? Or, if they raise ethical demands, how are those demands tied to the present internal historical needs of the working class? What, in fact, is the relation between the ethics of the proletariat and those of the classless society? The question cannot be evaded, since the attack on capitalist social relations is not only in the interests of the working class as presently constituted but seeks *self-consciously* to make a final assault on the class antagonisms of all past and present societies. In other words, since the proletarian morality of the present intends self-consciously and non-ideologically a "really human morality," its validity ranges across a larger span of history. Another problem: when the capitalist class is revolutionary, it does not merely pose its interests as universal; it, in fact, does more accurately represent the universal interests. Now, however, since capitalist relations of production are no longer compatible with the productive forces, its interests are no longer universal or rational. Proletarian interests might then be said to represent a higher rationality, and the ethic derived from it might be accorded a "higher" status. Put another way, since historically developed human powers and skills are part of the productive forces, the class in whose interests these human powers can be realized has a greater historical claim to moral rationality. Again, what are we to say about forms of domination other than class? Is the only reason to assume that working class ethical principles oppose racism and sexism that Marxism assumes the primacy of class in the system of domination? What if that assumption were untrue? Would it then be "right" for white workers to oppress black workers, men to oppress women? I do not intend these comments to undermine what I take to be an excellent defense of ethical relativism, but rather to suggest that there is more here to consider. Perhaps there are some necessary universal "moments" imbedded in an essentially relativist ethic ■

BOOK REVIEW: **POWER** AND SEXUALITY

by Peter Drucker*

Michel Foucault's work has become surprisingly popular among American socialists, and some non-socialist feminists, during the past few years. The translation of his *History of Sexuality* in 1978 from French into English made him into a virtual hero among some leftists. This enthusiasm for Foucault has grown up on the left despite the fact that Foucault considers Marxism and feminism (along with psychoanalysis) the orthodoxies of our time, and constantly attacks them. Given the hostility he expresses toward the theories we believe in, we need to take a more critical look at what he says.

For Foucault, power is the central fact of human existence, an ever-present element in all human relations, quite apart from transitory, historical systems like capitalism and patriarchy. This starting point explains his fascination with the ways power impinges directly on people's lives (especially when it pretends to be helping people), such as psychiatry, medicine, social work, the educational system and prisons. It explains why his thought becomes relevant when people are debating the relation of power, violence and objectification to sexuality. Foucault challenges people on the left who reject his approach to abandon simplistic notions that we already have the keys to a complete understanding of society. He challenges us to examine phenomena like psychiatry and education, and to show how capitalism and patriarchy (and in the US at least, racism as well) are crucial to understanding them, even if they are not simply manifestations or effects of capitalism or patriarchy.

No Natural Sexuality

The chief merit of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* comes from his adopting, ably defending and seeing the full consequences of the radical position that, whatever the biological basis of human sexual drives, there is nothing innate or "natural" in the way these drives are channeled or structured. Feminists have always insisted that there is nothing "natural" about the social roles our culture assigns to males and females. The early movement for gay liberation added that neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality are innately determined forms of sexual behavior; both are socially shaped and defined by the institutions and ideology of our particular culture. The latter-day lesbian/gay rights movement

has largely retreated from this position in order to label homosexuality as genetic (and thus presumably blameless and harmless). But gay historians like Jeffrey Weeks, Jonathan Katz and John Boswell have piled up a mountain of evidence in recent years to show how unlikely it is that people are born either homosexual or heterosexual. The notion of dividing people into homosexuals and heterosexuals (as opposed to dividing acceptable from prohibited kinds of *behavior*, such as "sodomy") dates back only to the nineteenth century.

Foucault has carried this argument a step further by saying that the modern conception of sexuality, as a crucial part of life requiring careful scientific study and social control, originated only in the eighteenth century. Before the eighteenth century, Foucault says, there was no "deployment of sexuality" but only a "deployment of alliance: a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (pp. 105-106).^{*} In other words, before the eighteenth century the state and church concerned themselves with sexuality *only insofar* as it fit or did not fit with the established system of family organization and property relations. In the early middle ages, for example, "sodomy" was condemned no more and no less than other forms of sexuality ("adultery," "fornication") that existed outside the sanction of the church and outside the established system for passing property and rank from parents to children. Sex that fit in with this system was undifferentiatedly acceptable and of little concern. It could safely be left to devotees and instructors in the "erotic art" (found in ancient China, Japan, India, Persia and Rome as well as [more or less diluted with allegory] in medieval Europe), which left law and morality behind and concerned itself only with pleasure (pp. 57-58). Sex that did not fit in was sinful, criminal or both, but not "abnormal."

Only in the eighteenth century did categories like "healthy," "normal" and "deviant" begin to appear alongside the older categories of "sinful," "criminal" and "licit." The emerging idea of "abnormal" sexuality marked the first time that sexuality was condemned and controlled using a vocabulary and standards independent of family life, property rights and religion. As the state and church began this effort to define "nor-

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* All quotations in this review are from Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980)

mal" sexuality and to stamp out or control "abnormal" sexuality—as they carried out this "deployment of sexuality"—ordinary people began to adapt to the new ideology of sexuality and to become concerned in a new way over whether they were having the right kind and right amount of sex. As Foucault sees things, both the Victorian suspicion of sex and the twentieth-century fascination with it were products of political, religious and scientific interventions in people's sexual lives, which began in the early bourgeois era and have continued and intensified ever since.

From Confession to Diagnosis

A wealth of evidence about sexual practices and beliefs, drawn mostly from church and medical documents, buttresses Foucault's contention. This fund of information alone would make *The History of Sexuality* important, without the accompanying theoretical baggage. Foucault shows that in the medieval Christian world, particularly after the Lateran Council of 1215, confession became an increasingly important means for the church to uncover and chastise sins, and sexual sins became more carefully defined and more sternly punished. He describes how doctors and scientists took over the role of confessors from the church in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and used their new-found power to create a whole new system of sexual ideology and control. They labelled women as hysterical and pathologically sexual; they emphasized the dangers of children's sexuality; they developed a whole ideology around the need to detect and prevent masturbation; they insisted that the state foster fertility by hunting down and outlawing contraception. He shows how Freudian psychoanalysis, which claimed to (and in part actually did) free sexuality, created a new caste of experts with a socially legitimized claim to investigate and change people's sexuality, and propped up a crumbling family system by reforging ideological links between sexuality, family and property and insisting on the inescapable, biological connection between sexual desire and children's relation to their parents.

All this information fits in well enough with feminist accounts of the patriarchal roots of contemporary sexuality and the narrow limits within which the "sexual revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s took place. Feminist historians have shown, in much greater depth than Foucault, how much women's sexuality was denied, restricted and redefined in the nineteenth century. They have shown that the "sexual revolution" of the twentieth century did not fundamentally change the institutions of the family and labor market, which underlay the nineteenth-century definition of women's sexuality and to which women are still chained today. They have pointed out that, as long as birth control and abortion are illegal, unsafe, expensive or difficult to get, as long as women still have to act as mother and housekeeper to any children who are born, as long as women are paid little more than half what men are, and the alternative to marriage for many women is poverty, sexual freedom is still not fully a reality for women. Feminists have also been aware of the sexist assumptions about "natural" female masochism and "penis envy" behind the supposedly liberating principles of Freudian psychoanalysis. Foucault can help us to see these shifting forms of women's oppression as part of a large-scale, mushrooming array of power structures that define and regulate sexuality.

Redefining Repression

Foucault also opens up a whole new area for us to investigate by undermining the concept of repression. He points out that once we reject the idea of a natural sexuality (that would be the sexuality of all of us if power did not repress and twist our psyches), repression can no longer be the central category for our analysis of sexuality. "I do not maintain that the prohibition of sex is a ruse," he says, "but it is a ruse to make prohibition into the basic and constitutive element from which one would be able to write the history of what has been said concerning sex starting from the modern epoch" (p. 12). For decades the left has been misled by this "ruse" into demanding merely that the state stop repressing our sexuality. We have avoided taking into account all the ways in which the institutions of the economy, state, family, religion, education and medicine have shaped sexuality, fostered and channeled sexual desire, and created ideologies of sexuality as well as repressing it.

Having shown that repression cannot be explained simply as an evil society clamping down on benign instincts, Foucault ought to try to explain what does cause repression and what does shape power in sexuality. But he cannot. He could never explain the forces that shape power in sexuality, because for him power is a first cause, eternal and ubiquitous. He does not believe that economics without power, science without power or sex without power could ever exist. Furthermore, "Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations." He maintains that relations of power are formed in the confrontations that always and inevitably occur in any kind of human interaction. "Major dominations [like capitalism, patriarchy and racism] are [merely] the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations" (p. 94). This worldview severely limits the intellectual horizons of anyone who accepts it since it portrays the major social systems people live under as simply the result of individual conflicts, which interact with one another and eventually percolate up to the summit of a social order. It rules out in advance any overall structural account of history.

Foucault therefore finds himself in a quandary when he tries to give an account of the transition between the Victorian, nineteenth-century deployment of sexuality and the Freudian, twentieth-century deployment of sexuality. "The first phase corresponded to the need to form a 'labor force' . . . and to ensure its reproduction," he says. "The second phase corresponded to that epoch *Spät-kapitalismus* [late capitalism] in which the exploitation of wage labor does not demand the same violent and physical constraints as in the nineteenth century," (p. 114). This link between psychoanalysis and late capitalism makes sense. Successive waves of popularity for psychoanalysis in the late 1920s and 1950s focussed on the notion that people were too repressed and ought to gratify themselves more; this notion fitted well with the growth of consumer capitalism and advertising propaganda that people ought to gratify themselves by buying more and more products.

Cause or Coincidence?

But in Foucault's account this link is a fragile one. He says Freud's influence "corresponded to" late capitalism, not "was caused by," late capitalism, because his whole

schema insists that large-scale structures of domination do not result from each other or from their own internal dynamics, but from the cumulative effects of small-scale conflicts. In his view of the world, capitalism is nothing more than the sum total of little bits of power capitalists have over workers, and patriarchy is nothing more than the sum total of little bits of power men have over women. If he were consistent, then, he would have to say that the origin of psychoanalysis and the transition to late capitalism arose from independent causes and occurred in the same historical period pretty much by coincidence. But this coincidence, so strikingly convenient for both patriarchy and capitalism, would be too incredible for many readers to swallow. Foucault therefore begs the question, and says (mysteriously) "corresponded to." He never even comments on, let alone tries to explain, the fact that his all-important transition from the deployment of alliance to the deployment of sexuality "corresponded to" the epoch of bourgeois revolutions.

Marxist feminists do not have any ready-made explanations of the connections between emerging capitalism and the redefinition and repression of sexuality, or between late capitalism and relaxing repression. The causes here are indirect and complex; the mechanisms still need to be carefully explored. But ultimately, from a Marxist-feminist point of view, sexual repression must be seen as an internal contradiction of the system in which it exists. Something in capitalism and patriarchy leads them to foster (or at least allow) forms of sexuality which the society they undergird must then repress.

Foucault's approach rules out any attempt whatsoever at a comprehensive explanation of sexual conflict and repression. Furthermore, the consequences of his doctrine are still worse for practice than for theory. If inequalities of power are eternal and inevitable, then in fighting to destroy capitalism and patriarchy we are merely fighting to bring into existence another inequitable system of domination (perhaps like the one that exists in the Soviet Union). Foucault believes that major structures of domination can never be wholly eliminated; they can be shifted, made less burdensome, even replaced by fundamentally different ones, but some structures of domination are always produced anew by human life. Finally (says Foucault), because power is no more than the ability to get other people to do what you want them to, the complete abolition of power is not only a utopia but an undesirable utopia.*

A Bankrupt Libertarianism

Marxists and feminists should recognize that this underlying perspective is antithetical to Marxism and feminism. It poses as an alternative to them, which upon examination turns out to be bankrupt. It denies the legitimacy of the overall perspective Marxism and feminism offer of society, without trying or wanting to put any other overall perspective in their place. More important, it attacks the visions of human liberation offered by Marxism and feminism as empty and utopian. In their place it offers only a half-hearted, pessimistic, reformist brand of libertarianism.

I believe that Foucault's conclusions rest on a basic confusion between two different kinds of power, between power in a neutral sense and domination. We all value the

ability to make things happen; often this power to accomplish something includes the ability to persuade other people to work with us toward our goals. Power has another sense, however: the ability to force people to cooperate with us when our goals are contrary to their own will or interests. This kind of *domination* over other people results from an inequitable distribution of resources or influence: greater physical force, money, help from the police or army, abuse of specialized knowledge, or indoctrination through use of threats. In our society, whole groups of people exercise this kind of domination over other groups: capitalists over workers, men over women, white people over people of color, straight people over lesbian and gay people, temporarily able people over disabled people, young and middle-aged adults over children and old people. As a consequence both kinds of power do permeate human relations in this society. But we can still distinguish between these two kinds of power, in theory if not always in practice.

In particular, we can distinguish between these two kinds of power in the realm of sexuality. In much sexual activity (though by no means all) one person plays an initiating or active role while another person plays a receptive role. (People traditionally assume in our culture that the male, or the one who penetrates, plays the "active" role and the female, or the one who is penetrated, plays the "passive" role. This assumption is neither inevitable nor shared by all cultures.) Even in this kind of sex both people may be determining what happens, one primarily through actions, the other through words, gestures or the active partner's knowledge or intuition of what the receptive partner wants. In this sense, as long as the sex is genuinely consensual, both people are exercising power.

But all such acts take place in the context of a society whose basic structure includes systemic power imbalances. The domination that ruling or privileged groups exercise over subordinate groups permeates, directly or indirectly, almost all human relationships. As a result asymmetrical sex, which does not necessarily *have* to be unequal sex, often *becomes* unequal because of its entanglement with the sexism and domination that pervade our culture.

Pornography and S/M

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* achieved much of its popularity because it appeared as a debate was beginning among feminists and leftists about pornography and sadomasochism, and people on the anti-anti-pornography, anti-anti-s/m side thought the book provided them with important ammunition. Defenders of pornography and s/m have seized on Foucault's arguments that power is an inherent part of all sexuality, and that condemning forms of sexuality like s/m that openly play with power only props up the regulations of existing power structures: the state, the church, and medical and scientific establishments. These people have used Foucault to argue that the left and women's movement should champion all forms of consensual sex, rather than aim for some utopian ideal of power-free sex. But, on the one hand, once we have understood the distinction between power and domination we no longer need to mystify power (as Foucault does) in order to defend s/m and pornography. As practitioners of s/m point out, two people of whom one is inflicting pain on the other or playing a dominant role

Foucault made these last two points explicitly at a seminar I attended in 1981 at the New York Institute for the Humanities.

can both be exercising power in the neutral sense, without any real domination, especially if they planned the scenario together in advance and/or either could stop what's happening with a single word. Erotica too, even if it constitutes one person as an object of observation and another as a subject, does not necessarily create or indicate an imbalance of power between the two.

On the other hand, no amount of Foucault-citing can erase the reality that domination often does appear unmistakably in any kind of sexuality. In practice, women are depicted in pornography far more often than men; in practice, whoever is shown, men almost always determine how they are shown; in practice, pornography very often expresses violence, degradation or humiliation of women (or sometimes of gay men). These symptoms of domination transform acts of objectification (potentially innocent of power imbalances) to acts of reification, acts which make women into *nothing more* than objects, hinder them from *ever* acting as subjects, and treat them as things rather than people.

Some socialist-feminists (such as Ann Ferguson in the fall 1983 *Against the Current*, pp. 15-16) conclude that, because pornography and s/m so often reflect systemic power imbalances in practice, such practices are always "suspect" and feminists should avoid them. Curiously, feminists who argue this way rarely label heterosexual marriage as suspect, although marriage has notoriously reflected and reproduced systemic power imbalances between men and women. Such people should consider that any person acting as a masochist in an s/m scene has the option, legally and very often in reality, of charging the sadist with assault; whereas in 43 states of this country a legally married woman who is continually raped by her husband has no immediate legal recourse, since she is presumed to have given permanent consent to sex when she said "I do." Should the consent given in a lesbian s/m scene be regarded then as more "suspect" than the consent given to sex within a "normal" heterosexual marriage?

The Innocent State?

The argument becomes even less persuasive when a feminist opposed to the power imbalances reflected in violent pornography asserts (as Ferguson does) that such pornography should be banned by the state. Is the state, unlike pornography, totally innocent of power imbalances? Or does Ferguson consider the power of the state a neutral force, which men or women, reactionaries or radicals, can each use to suit their own purposes? In fact, state regulation or censorship of pornography does nothing to change the overwhelming power imbalance between men and women, or the sexist attitudes that the power imbalance engenders. The solution to sexist pornography is not to ban it, but to offer non-sexist, erotic alternatives to it, both in images and (much more difficult) in reality. We can only take small steps in this direction before fundamental changes occur in this society, which empower women economically and socially as well as culturally. Meanwhile, neither condemnation nor defense of existing pornography directly hurts patriarchy at all.

One final assumption that Ferguson and like-minded feminists make is that pornography and s/m inevitably involve "risks" that they will reinforce power imbalances they reflect. I would agree that there are such risks. But I

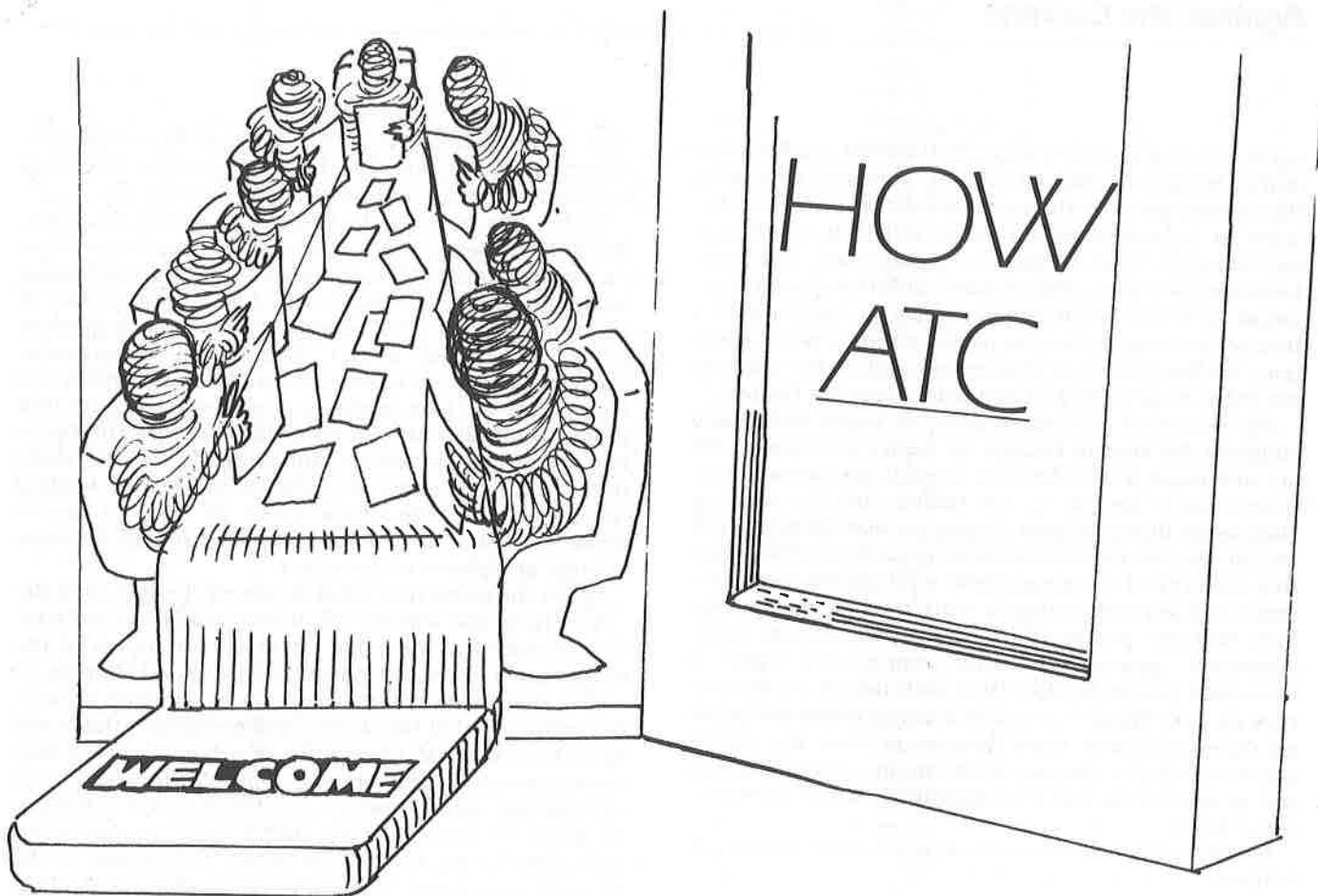
would add that similar, often clearer risks exist in any relationship between a black person and a white person, between a rich person and a poor person, or between almost any man and almost any woman. The point is that hardly any form of sexuality (or anything else) in our culture can be entirely innocent of the effects of domination. We live almost entirely in what Marx called the "realm of necessity." The innumerable constraints under which we live our daily lives determine almost all our actions. There are no "safe" relationships in which we can escape this reality.

The aim of a socialist and feminist transformation of society is to enlarge as much as possible the "realm of freedom," in which "the full and free development of each is the precondition for the free and full development of all." With such a transformation the whole notion of "normal" sexuality, a relatively new idea in history, would disappear, and be replaced by varied conceptions of different sexualities appropriate for different kinds of relationships and different circumstances. Sexuality would no longer be judged according to an independent, socially imposed set of norms, but according to its capacity to add pleasure and fulfillment to many kinds of human relationships. It would no longer have to be compartmentalized separately and evaluated according to different standards from productive and reproductive activity, as (Foucault shows) it has been only since the rise of capitalism. Children and adolescents could learn about their own bodies much as they discover the rest of the world around them, unrestricted by arbitrary moral rules. Sex among comrades or colleagues could become complementary to, rather than a source of tension or distraction from, politics or creative work. Men and women deciding to have children together would no longer have to find in each other the perfect combination of arousal, romance and lasting companionship.

The result of this integration of sexuality with other parts of life, combined with a material abundance no previous society has known, would be both a freeing of sexuality from repression and the eroticization of many other aspects of life. Variety and individuality would not have to disappear, but in both apparently equal and apparently unequal sexual activity each person could find means of creative self-expression and empowerment, without antagonism.

The possibility of such a world is only a hypothesis. None like it has ever existed. Even pre-class, pre-patriarchal, paleolithic societies restricted sexuality within complex marriage and kinship rules that could ensure their cohesion and survival. We can only discover whether a truly free sexuality is possible by destroying capitalism and patriarchy, and creating a social order structured to provide for collective and individual needs. Michel Foucault and his followers, while they can help us to understand the role of power within sexuality, attempt to discourage us from even trying to transform it. If we accept his notions that domination is eternal, and liberation not even conceivable, then our long and difficult struggle may be even longer and harder than it has to be.

Thanks to Bruce Boone for inspiring this article, and to Johanna Brenner, Nancy Holmstrom and Steve Zeluck for their comments.



The editors of *Against the Current* have often called it "a journal of regroupment": an attempt to foster discussion and unity on the non-sectarian, revolutionary left. Although most members of our editorial board belong to Workers Power, we do not see *ATC* as a forum for working out or expressing only Workers Power's politics. Instead, we want to foster a dialogue among a range of revolutionary left tendencies, including our own. We do sometimes publish editorials that represent the board's own politics. But any of the other articles in the magazine will probably contain statements that some or all of our editors disagree with. Otherwise *ATC* would not be part of a genuine dialogue.

It is difficult to get a wide range of leftist readers and writers with a board drawn mostly from one small organization. We are bound to be influenced by our own politics in the articles we select and the way we edit them. We have tried to broaden the board's composition in the past, without much success. We still hope to create a board more representative of the audience we want. Meanwhile, our situation requires extraordinary tact and sensitivity, as well as complete openness about what we are trying to do and how. Only in this way can we convince people that we honestly want to give their politics space in *ATC*, and that we want to present their politics fairly and effectively.

We know that *ATC*'s functioning has been far from problem-free, and that we have not won people's trust as much as we would like. For this reason we are publishing this statement about how we work. In some ways this statement makes changes in how we function. In other ways it reaffirms standards that we have set for ourselves in the past, but not always managed to meet. By publishing this statement now, we want to make

clear that we mean to hold ourselves to these standards in the future, and that we want our writers and readers to judge us by them. We welcome comments, both on the procedures we have adopted and on how we carry them out in practice.

How We Choose Articles

Against the Current aims to be a magazine for socialist activists, who recognize the importance of Marxist and feminist analysis as a guide for action. We want our articles to be readable by people who have some acquaintance with Marxism and feminism but are neither academics nor theorists. Articles submitted to *ATC* should try to avoid jargon. They should also talk about what leftists should do, and not only about what leftists should think. We especially welcome articles from activists in the women's movement, the lesbian/gay movement, the labor movement, anti-racist movements, anti-war and anti-intervention movements and other mass movements for change. We would like these articles to be interesting to people in these movements, but also accessible to people outside them. We would also like the magazine to include more articles on cultural themes, and on personal and daily life, than it has so far. We will always choose an article that argues forcefully for a position over an article that merely gives an account of a movement or event.

Ideally, articles for *ATC* should be not longer than 4000 words. We will be very happy to publish articles shorter than that. We will sometimes, reluctantly, publish an article longer than that.

Articles should be useful both for members of different left organizations and for independents. We will not

reject any article simply because of the organization the author belongs to. But we are not interested in articles that merely present an organization's position. We also want to represent people from different traditions, including socialist-feminism, Trotskyism, Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, revolutionary nationalism and libertarian socialism. Writers should try to avoid phrases that are meaningful only to people within a single tradition. We hope that our editors and writers can contribute to the creation of a common language for the left.

The statement *ATC* made when we began publishing suggests the kind of politics we want to represent. We are interested in articles that present capitalism as an unacceptable system to live under, and the working class as an indispensable agency for abolishing it; that see the abolition of capitalism as requiring a revolution; that are critical of bureaucratic regimes and organizations; that support struggles carried on by women, lesbian and gay people, third world peoples and other oppressed groups; and that respect the right of oppressed people to fight their own battles in the way they choose. These four principles may eliminate political discussions with most Americans today. But we are convinced that a diverse, wide-ranging discussion can still be carried on, and most fruitfully carried on, within these limits.

We regret that we are unable to pay our writers (or our editors).

How We Edit Articles

Each manuscript submitted to *Against the Current* will be distributed to every member of our board. Within seven days of receiving it we will let the writer know we have received it, say what day we received it on and send the writer a copy of these guidelines. We will discuss it as soon as possible at an editorial board meeting, and decide whether we want to publish it. We will let the writer know our decision within 60 days of receiving the manuscript. If for any reason we cannot meet this deadline, we will let the writer know before the deadline that we cannot meet it, apologize for the delay, explain the delay as best we can and indicate the date by which we will, without fail, let him or her know our decision.

If the editorial board decides to publish an article, we will discuss among ourselves cuts, additions or changes we would like to see in it. We will propose changes only: if we think a particular point is unclear, and requires further exposition; if we think the article is in some way internally contradictory; if we think a different order of argument would work better; if we think there is an important objection to the article's argument which requires a response, or if we think a particular section does not contribute significantly to the article. Our goal in proposing changes will always be to help the writer express his or her positions, never to change those positions to make them fit our own. When we propose changes we will also decide which (if any) of them are preconditions for the article's publication. We will insist on a change only when we feel that without it an article will be too weak to interest our readers.

After discussing an article, we will assign one editor (or sometimes two) to work with the writer to put it in final form. From this point on the editor will have sole responsibility (with the writer) for seeing the article published. Those of our editors who live in New York

may be more involved in *ATC*'s day-to-day correspondence and production, but they have no share in editing articles that have been assigned to other editors.

Within two weeks of the decision to accept an article, the editor assigned to it will send the writer: (1) an introduction of from one to three paragraphs, explaining what the article is about, who the author is and (if appropriate) why *ATC* considers the topic important (issues or sections of *ATC* focussed on a particular theme will begin with general introductions, which will incorporate the introductions to all the articles on that theme), and (2) a statement of the changes the board has asked for. The editor will probably discuss these things with the writer over the phone before sending them. But the introduction must be sent no matter what. The editor has the responsibility to write an introduction acceptable to the writer.

When the editor discusses proposed changes with the writer, he or she will say when the changes would have to be finished in order for the article to appear in the magazine. If the writer rejects the proposed changes or insists that they cannot or will not be finished in time, the editor will tell the writer which changes the board considers essential. Once the writer has made the necessary changes, the editor will copy-edit the article. The copy-editing should correct any grammatical mistakes. At the same time, without simplifying the argument, and while trying to keep as much as possible of the writer's own voice, it should make the article flow smoothly and make it accessible to *ATC*'s readers. The editor will also insert subheads if the writer has not already done so. The editor will send the final, copy-edited version to the writer at least two weeks before the final deadline, and say when the final deadline is. The writer should discuss any problem he or she has with the final version with the editor before that deadline.

If at any time the writer and editor cannot agree, the writer should write a short letter to the whole editorial board. Within seven days the writer will be told that the letter has been received; within 60 days the writer will be told the board's decision. If the board accepts the writer's arguments, even partially, it will assign a new editor to work with him or her. If the board and the writer cannot agree, the writer should decide whether the article will be published in the form the board requires or not at all.

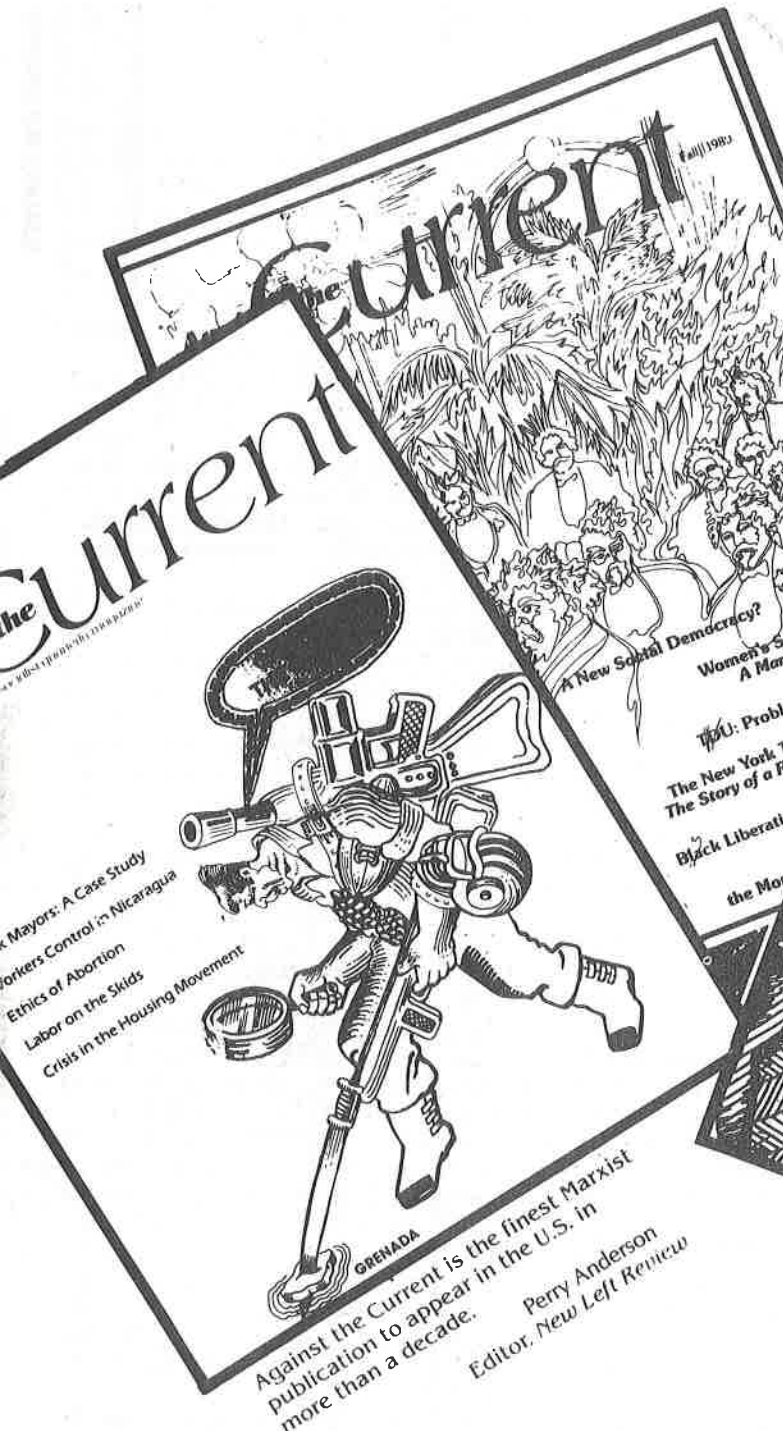
It should be possible to print the article in *ATC* exactly as it appears in the final copy-edited version. Given the difficulties of the magazine's production, though, small, last-minute cuts may be necessary. The printers will make every reasonable effort to reach the editor and writer before making any cuts. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that they will be able to.

We will be working on a procedure to ensure that articles are accompanied by appropriate graphics.

How We Take Criticism

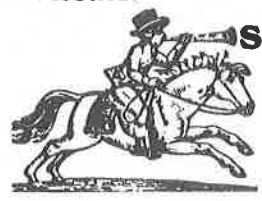
Gladly, we hope. We have every intention of conforming to these guidelines, and every hope that we can have smooth working relations with our writers and make *Against the Current* an important tool for our readers. But we cannot anticipate every problem, or even be sure of dealing well with those we do anticipate. We will try always to be critical of our shortcomings, and we hope others will try to be understanding of them. ■

Against the Current tries to advance the concept of "socialism from below" — which we in City Life see as the cornerstone of our politics — through analysis of actual workers' struggle.
 Kathy McAfee, City Life, Boston



Against the Current is the finest Marxist publication to appear in the U.S. in more than a decade.
 Perry Anderson
 Editor, New Left Review

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