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Beyond Protest

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Notes on the Need for A Socialist Party

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The Scheer Campaign

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Anon.

Books Received

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### BEYOND PROTEST

IT IS NOW more or less generally understood that the new left needs to find a new approach. Ever since the first sit-ins and student demonstrations the new left has relied upon protest tactics as a means of dramatizing the failure of corporate liberalism to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality. Behind this orientation lay the unspoken assumption that once the hypocrisy of liberal rhetoric had been exposed, the corporate establishment would move to repair its shattered image by making real concessions and real reforms.

From Berkeley to Selma the underlying assumption was everywhere the same, and up to a certain point that assumption appeared justified by the results. Over the course of the last two years, however, it has become increasingly clear that the exposure of token liberalism can gain no more than token concessions. When the various Civil Rights Acts and offers of "unconditional negotiations" failed to silence the protest movement, the Johnson Administration, far from straining to preserve its liberal image through further concessions, openly aligned itself with the advocates of victory in Vietnam and riot control at home.

Within the protest movement this failure of the strategy of exposure is reflected in the dwindling size and number of the independent antiwar committees, the turn from Freedom Now to Black Power and the collapse or cooptation of most of the protest-oriented organizing projects in the urban slums. Thus the question facing the new left today is not whether a new approach is necessary, but rather, what should that approach be?

More than one answer to this question has already been suggested by recent developments on the left. In the 1966 elections there emerged a trend towards a "new politics" of coalition with the reform wing of the Democratic Party. By trying to elect liberal critics of the war in Vietnam, a group like the National Conference for New Politics offers the new left an opportunity, as it puts it, "to transform dissent into real political power." At the same time the crisis within the protest movement has also produced a reaction against the "mindless activism" of the past and a new emphasis upon theory and education. The formation of the Radical Education Project within SDS is an example of this trend. Finally, the concept of independent politics has been revived in the form of SNCC's turn toward black power and attempts to run radical third-party candidates in New York, Chicago and elsewhere. At present all of these tendencies are still in the formative stage, and their conflicting implications remain concealed within a common recognition of the limitations of the protest movement. As that recognition is translated into practice, however, it will become increasingly difficult to espouse one tendency without thereby rejecting another. Because the decisions have yet to be made, now is the time to examine the available alternatives and to assess their political implications. By the time that the necessity for choice becomes apparent, the opportunity to choose may already have passed.

## I.

Whatever else the "new politics" of coalition with liberal Democrats may or may not be, it is certainly not new. The old left has spent the better part of the last thirty years in a futile attempt to transform the Democratic Party into a "progressive" and "antimonopoly" instrument. The rhetoric may

have changed, but the new politics of "peace and freedom" has no other goal. In one respect, however, there is an important difference between the old coalitionism of the past and the new coalitionism of today. Ever since the Communist Party decided that Roosevelt was not a fascist, coalition politics in this country has been predicated upon the assumption that the national leadership of the Democratic Party was part of the liberal and progressive camp. As late as February of 1965 it was still possible for Bayard Rustin to maintain (in his celebrated article in *Commentary*, "From Protest to Politics") that the Johnson landslide in 1964 testified to the existence of a "majority liberal consensus" which Johnson had only to recognize in order for the Democratic Party to become "an effective vehicle for social reconstruction." Within six months Rustin's dream of a grand coalition stretching all the way from SNCC to the White House had been buried—along with much else—in the rice paddies of Vietnam. For the first time in thirty years it has become impossible for self-proclaimed radicals or socialists to support the national leadership of the Democratic Party.

The war in Vietnam has at once discredited the old coalitionism and inspired the new. At the same time that it made Johnson *persona non grata* on the left, it also alienated the reform wing of Johnson's own party—which has been driven into an increasingly explicit anti-Administration posture. The emergence of a liberal opposition to the war in Vietnam has provided coalition politics with a new lease on life and also a new appeal. Whereas the old coalitionism had always sought to obscure its differences with the national leadership of the Democratic Party, the new coalitionism affirms those differences by defining itself in terms of its opposition to "Lyndon Johnson's war." In this way, the new coalitionism achieves the best of all possible worlds. By supporting liberal Democrats (or "independent" peace candidates who run on a liberal Democratic platform), it holds out the promise of "real political power"; and by denouncing a Democratic president, it provides an outlet for radical sentiments which the old coalitionism was compelled to repress. Moreover, since those sentiments seem to be shared by many of Johnson's liberal opponents, the new

coalitionism also generates the belief that this time, at long last, it is the left which has imposed *its* program on the liberals, imbued them with *its* opposition to the war. Hence the enthusiasm inspired by ventures such as the Scheer campaign which permit radicals to believe that they are not so much supporting as actually capturing the Democratic Party.

Behind this belief stands a second and even more fundamental component of the new coalitionism. The emergence of a liberal opposition to the war in Vietnam coincides with and reflects the emergence of a new political generation: not only a new left, but also a new liberalism. In the reform wing of the Democratic Party, in the academic and professional wing of the peace movement, in the private entourage of a Robert Kennedy or a John Lindsay, in the pages of publications like *Ramparts*, *The Nation* or *The Village Voice*, this new liberalism is now in the process of supplanting the old. A product of the more relaxed climate of the post-McCarthy era, the new liberalism has more than a little in common with the new left. It shares not only the latter's opposition to the war in Vietnam, but also its resistance to anti-Communism and its sensitivity to moral, as opposed to social, issues. Whereas the old liberalism developed in close alliance with the labor statesmen of the AFL-CIO, the new liberalism identifies itself with civil rights and Freedom Now. For ethnic politics, the new liberalism substitutes reform politics; for the encrusted welfare bureaucracy, the community action programs of the OEO; for the tired rhetoric of the Great Society, a genuine concern with the quality of American life.

These attitudes, and the current of thought and feeling which motivates them, make it possible for the new liberalism to ally itself with the new left quite independently of the question of Vietnam. Whether it is a matter of supporting SNCC or not supporting Pat Brown, both groups often find themselves aligned against both the old liberals and the old left. Despite all the furor over black power, the National Conference for New Politics still extended its approval (denied to the radical peace candidates) to the Lowndes County Freedom Organization of SNCC. In short, it would be a mistake to regard the new coalitionism as simply a tactical alliance between liberal



and radical opponents of the war in Vietnam. It is that, but it is also the organic product of a political generation which is still in the process of defining itself. So long as that process continues, the new coalitionism will also continue. It has already given rise to local New Politics groups in several states; and 'here is every likelihood that the strength and number of such groups will increase between now and the 1968 elections. Even if the war in Vietnam were to end tomorrow—and it will not—the new coalitionism would continue to exercise a powerful influence upon the evolving political strategy of the new left.

In our view this is an influence which ought to be openly condemned. When all is said and done, the new liberalism, like the old, remains firmly fixed within the ideological and political framework of corporate rule. With regard to Vietnam, for example, almost none of the New Politics candidates has been willing to press the demand for the immediate and unilateral withdrawal of American troops. The new coalitionists limit themselves to the more "realistic" demand for a negotiated settlement. Thus they not only play into the hands of the Administration's own "unconditional negotiations" propaganda, they also—and this is the important point—make it impossible to educate the public as to the real nature of the war in Vietnam. To call for a negotiated settlement in Vietnam is to grant the major premise upon which the war is based, namely that the United States should have a voice in the future of Vietnam. To be sure, the liberals do not neglect to point out that this voice ought to be of a political or economic rather than military character. Unfortunately, it is precisely such political and economic intervention which, in Vietnam and elsewhere, has set the stage for a later military adventure. So long as the principle of interventionism itself—and the anti-Communist ideology which underlies it—is not openly repudiated, no effective opposition to American neocolonialism can possibly be built. By obscuring this fact, and by concentrating their fire on the person of Lyndon Johnson rather than the long-range policies which he serves, the new coalitionists actually impede the work of political education which must be carried through if the war in Vietnam is to be brought to an end.

The same holds true at home. Although the new coalition-

ism is highly critical of many aspects of the Administration's Great Society programs, it neither faces nor attacks the fundamental assumptions upon which those programs are based. Far from opposing the bureaucratic regimentation of American society which the old liberals (and the old left) did so much to promote, the new liberals seek only to extend it. The community action programs of the OEO may provide a few poor people with useful services, but their chief effect is to reinforce the powerlessness of the poor by coopting potential leaders and reducing the rest to the status of clients. The guaranteed annual wage might eliminate the degrading procedures built into existing welfare programs, but its chief effect would be to perpetuate dependence on the dole as a permanent feature of ghetto life. New public housing projects might temporarily abolish the rats and roaches, but they would also place more people at the mercy of the same capricious and arbitrary administration which controls public housing today. In other words, by confining themselves to the demand for expansion and rationalization of existing welfare programs, the new liberals are also proposing to extend existing techniques of manipulation and control. Benign interventionism abroad and compassionate totalitarianism at home, such is the program which the new liberals invite their radical friends to embrace.

In the final analysis such a program must inevitably become an instrument in the hands of interests which are neither compassionate nor benign. This would be true even if the new coalitionists could succeed in capturing the Democratic Party; and it is doubly true because they cannot. Despite all the talk about "real political power," the most striking feature of current liberal politics is its complete impotence. Only within the academic and professional middle class has the new liberalism discovered a genuine constituency. Its attempts to expand its political base beyond this narrow sphere have invariably been defeated by precisely that same elitist orientation which underlies the liberal program itself. Just as the new liberalism aspires to dole out happiness to a mass of clients (and client states), so it strives to "represent" the interests of a constituency which it is neither willing nor able to organize into an independent force. The new liberalism cannot accept the loss of control—

and of distance—which a mass organization of the disinherited would entail. But it is also barred from the politics of the media, the politics of the synthetic image and the distant smile, for it lacks the necessary financial support. Possessing neither a mass base nor the confidence of the great corporations, the new liberalism can offer the new left only as much “real political power” as the new left is itself capable of generating.

Since that power will not suffice to wrest control of the Democratic Party from its corporate backers, the new coalitionism must inevitably follow in the footsteps of the old. By confining itself to an attack on the person of Lyndon Johnson, it is already preparing the way for an alliance with that sector of the corporate elite for which Robert Kennedy is the current spokesman. The new coalitionists do not regard Kennedy as one of their own, but they will support him in 1968 or 1972, only to be “betrayed” in exactly the same way and for exactly the same reasons as their predecessors were. Like their predecessors they will console themselves with the thought that such are the “realities” of political life, and some of them will go on to serve as the ideologues of corporate power, implementing bits and pieces of their original program within the general framework imposed by the harsh demands of the military-industrial complex. Santayana said that those who are unable to learn from history are condemned to repeat it. That the new liberals should have learned nothing from the past is only natural, otherwise they would not be liberals. That the new left should imitate their example is neither natural nor necessary, for the new left, unlike the new liberals, has somewhere else to go.

## II.

But where? For lack of a positive alternative to the new coalitionism, a part of the new left is now tending towards the conclusion that before radicals can move from protest to politics, they must first pass through a period of intensive theoretical and educational work. Since the “mindless activism” of the protest movement has led the new left into an impasse, the development of a new theory of American society would appear to constitute an indispensable precondition for the de-

velopment of a new political practice. Within SDS, long regarded as the very model of "mindless activism," the formation of the Radical Education Project testifies to a new interest in theory and research as well as a new emphasis upon the specific needs of the student community. That this tendency is not confined to SDS is apparent in the success of the last Socialist Scholars Conference, and in the growing number of Free Universities, "counter-universities" and study groups of all kinds which have been formed over the last two years. Whereas the original inclination of many student activists was to negate that side of their character which defined them as students and as intellectuals, the crisis within the protest movement seems to have led to a negation of the negation. They now attempt to find a viable theoretical and organizational base for radical politics within the context of the student community itself.

Insofar as this attempt proceeds from a repudiation of the pragmatism and anti-intellectualism of the past, it marks a significant advance. That American radicals have never possessed a fully adequate theory of American society and do not possess one today; that radical politics in the absence of such a theory is ultimately a contradiction in terms; that the accomplishment of new theoretical work requires new organizational forms: all these are positions which *Studies on the Left* itself has long upheld. Even if the Socialist Scholars Conference or the Radical Education Project were to fail to produce a single new theoretical insight, their mere existence would still constitute an important and necessary step in the right direction. By helping to overcome that unbearable isolation which was the lot of most radical intellectuals throughout the 1950's, such groups play an essential part in the building of a radical intellectual community—a community within which collective tasks can be formulated and collective work accomplished. Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary practice. In view of the present state of the American left, the need for radical intellectuals to begin to act like intellectuals is all too plainly manifest.

What is equally manifest, however, is the need for a radical political *practice* which would, among other things, permit radical intellectuals to formulate their theoretical goals in rela-

tion to actual tasks and actual struggles. Since the student and intellectual community does not constitute an adequate base for such a practice, the growing tendency of the new left to reaffirm its original campus orientation has a negative as well as a positive side. Insofar as that tendency represents a retreat from politics as well as from protest, it threatens to transform theory into a substitute for, rather than a guide to, political practice. Such was the substitution which radical intellectuals were compelled to make during the 1950's; and the absence of radical political activity throughout that period did not fail to leave its imprint upon their theoretical work. Thanks to men like Marcuse, Baran, Sweezy, Mills and Williams, we now have a fairly good understanding of the ways in which American corporate liberalism has succeeded in displacing or transmuting those contradictions which Marx correctly believed were inherent in any capitalist system. Unfortunately, our understanding stops where radical politics begins, as we try to identify the new contradictions to which the corporate liberal and neo-colonial "solutions" have given rise. These problems cannot be solved through theoretical analysis alone. Without the active intervention of radicals themselves, the underlying strains and tensions within the corporate system will always remain partially concealed and inaccessible to theoretical analysis. In other words, the ability of radical intellectuals to elaborate a dialectical model of American society depends in large part upon their willingness to expose the internal contradictions of the system in actual political practice. In the absence of such a practice, it will prove extremely difficult to avoid falling back upon a static and monolithic model of American society (e.g. Marcuse), a model which may then serve as a justification for continued inaction.

The self-justifying and self-perpetuating character of the retreat to academia is not unrelated to the material circumstances of academic life. The academic and student community constitutes a privileged elite within American society as a whole—privileged not only because of its standard of living, but more importantly, because of the range and variety of life styles which leisure and education make available. To reject the packaged existence of the media, to experiment with drugs,

with sex, with ideas, to develop new forms of personal and social relations, all this is to partake in a way of life which, however neurotic and unfulfilling, is necessarily denied to all those whose need to earn a living absorbs the better part of their physical and emotional energies. Hence the ill-disguised envy behind the attacks on LSD and the bearded peace marchers, hence also the ill-disguised contempt which many of those peace marchers feel for the very people whom they are trying to influence. The new left may indeed be radically democratic and anti-elitist. But it can hardly immure itself within the academic and student community without reinforcing an involuntary sense of elitism, an elitism which is at once an insurmountable obstacle to radical politics and an indispensable precondition for liberal politics. Far from preparing the way for an eventual transition to independent politics, the retreat to the campus may well prove nothing more than a staging ground for the new coalitionism.

### III.

Is there an alternative? To understand the relevance of radical politics to American society it will be necessary not only to reexamine that society but also to redefine that politics. After all, if the old left still sees no alternative to coalitionism, this is not because it does not believe in radical politics but because the radical politics in which it believes requires it to subordinate itself to the liberal cause. For more than thirty years the political strategy of the old left has been predicated upon the curious notion that the best way to combat the evils of capitalism is to strengthen the capitalist state. Whether it was a matter of demanding government "regulation" of big business or government "protection" of civil rights, the old left has consistently behaved as if the state were simply a neutral instrument which could be directed to either "reactionary" or "progressive" ends depending upon the relative strength of the "monopoly" and "antimonopoly" forces. Given this assumption, which owed as much to the legacy of American populism as it did to the Popular Front policies of the Comintern, the old left had no choice but to align itself with the liberal camp. To be sure, the liberals were less concerned with restricting big

business than they were with the technocratic and elitist aspects of state intervention; but precisely for this reason, they were ideally suited to provide the technical and administrative cadres for the emerging corporate state. Having hit upon the system of regulating big business by awarding it military contracts, the liberals then proceeded to purge themselves of their former allies, whereupon the old left decided that it had erred in not electing enough liberals. In order to correct this mistake, the old left has now arrived at the point where it abandons even the pretence of political independence for fear of embarrassing those very forces which have already destroyed it.

If this exercise in self-immolation is not to be repeated by a new generation of American radicals, the first imperative is a reformulation of the radical position on the question of the state. The great historic merit of the new left is that it has opened the way for just this departure. Because it understands that democracy means nothing if it does not mean active *participation* in the decision-making process, the new left also understands that the corporate state, despite its parliamentary and liberal facade, is not and cannot be subject to democratic control. So long as it retains its present bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, the modern American state can no more be transformed into an instrument of popular democracy than General Motors or the Catholic Church can be. Moreover, given the obvious structural identity between public and private bureaucratic forms, the new left finds no difficulty in recognizing an essential identity of interests between the corporate state and its private counterparts. Unlike Marx, the new left tends to describe this identity in terms of institutional forms rather than class interests. But even so, the new left concept of an interlocking "power structure" embracing both government and business corporate bodies stands far closer to the original Marxist notion of the ruling class than the old left mythology of "monopolists" and "antimonopolists" contending for possession of a neutral state apparatus.

Having gone so far, however, the new left has found it difficult to go further. Its commitment to democratic values has enabled it to develop a penetrating critique of corporate rule. But its relative indifference to the social and economic *function*

of that rule has prevented it from projecting a viable alternative to existing corporate forms. The example of the Soviet Union notwithstanding, the bureaucratic organization of American society is not a necessary product of modern industrial techniques, but rather of the utilization of those techniques as a means of perpetuating the class domination of those who quite literally "own" corporate America. It is the institution of private property, which confers a real mastery over men under the legal fiction of a mastery over things, that stands at the heart of every undemocratic feature of American life. What the new left, taken as a whole, still hesitates to admit is that the full realization of such slogans as "participatory democracy" or "black power" requires nothing less than the elimination of private "ownership" of the means of production in the United States. Rather than face up to the consequences of its own analysis of the corporate state, the new left has tended to retreat in the direction of a Utopian "counter-community" whose cooperative institutions can be supported by none other than the government itself. Just as the retreat to the campus may pave the way for a revival of elitist attitudes, so the retreat into a mythical "counter-community" of the urban poor may well culminate in an attempt to elect more liberals as a means of securing federal support for local community unions and cooperative enterprises. In short, the longer the new left postpones the necessary task of translating its democratic values into socialist terms, the more liable will it be to succumb to one or another variety of the new coalitionism.

It is one thing, however, to recognize the need for collective ownership of the means of production, and quite another to project a vision of a truly democratic socialist society and a strategy for achieving it. If the new left still hesitates to adopt an openly socialist perspective, the major portion of the blame must be assigned to the historic failure of American socialists to evolve a theory of democratic socialism in the United States. The mechanical imitation of Russian (and more recently, Chinese) models has been partially responsible for this failure; but that imitation was itself conditioned by the capitulation of every sector of the old left to the centralizing concepts and statist ideology of corporate liberalism. This



capitulation was nowhere more complete than in the case of the so-called "democratic socialists," whose abject worship of technocratic manipulation was matched only by their equally abject surrender to the political dictates of American imperialism and the Cold War. Although it is easy to criticize the mistakes of others, it must also be recognized that latter-day socialist critics of the old left have not proved capable of developing a viable alternative to the coalitionist strategy and corporatist goals of their predecessors. As has already been suggested, one of the main reasons for this failure was and is the absence of a radical political practice upon which a dialectical analysis of American society might be grounded. But inasmuch as we have also argued that radical politics requires a radical ideology, we are left with the apparent dilemma: without radical politics, no socialist theory, but without socialist theory, no radical politics.

To pose the issue in these terms, however, is itself a static and undialectical way of proceeding. If it is true that theory and practice are mutually interdependent, then the way out of the impasse in which we find ourselves lies in the emergence of a radical political movement which sets itself, *as a conscious goal*, the elaboration of a new theory through the process of testing existing hypotheses and insights in actual political practice. In other words, what is needed is a *transitional* movement, one whose purpose will be not only to change society but also to change itself. In the absence of an adequate theory of American socialism, there is no point in attempting to organize yet another socialist sect whose sole *raison d'être* can only be the defense of one set of unverified hypotheses against the existing sects' equally unverified hypotheses. On the other hand, there is also no point in attempting to organize a third-party movement whose formal independence of the Democratic Party conceals an informal dependence upon liberal concepts and liberal ideology. At present it may not be possible to project a meaningful alternative to corporate rule. But as radicals we both can and must act upon the assumption that such an alternative does exist, and we can and must orient our political activity around the task of developing it. The only way in which a radical political movement can overcome the all-pervasive influence of liberal ideology today is by seeking to create both

the theoretical and practical basis for its own transformation into a socialist movement tomorrow.

What would this mean in practice? In the first place, it would mean that such a movement ought to value diversity over unity, experimentation over orthodoxy, local initiative over national direction. Over the course of the past year there have emerged perhaps a dozen Committees for Independent Political Action and similar groupings across the country. Some of these groups have adopted an explicit (although vague) socialist position; others have confined themselves to a negative critique of corporate rule. Some of these groups ran independent candidates in the last elections; others have concentrated on the work of political education and community organization outside of the electoral arena. Some were formed with the aid of existing radical organizations (most notably SDS); others grew out of the initiative of unaffiliated socialists or radicals. Some seek to base themselves upon an essentially middle-class constituency; others have concentrated on work among the urban poor. Assuming that the movement towards independent politics continues to spread and gain momentum, this diversity of groups and tendencies can only be accentuated. And in view of the pressing need for the widest possible range of practical experimentation, this is as it should be. What must be overcome is not the diversity of local groups but rather their isolation. To this end the various CIPA's and related groupings ought to give serious consideration to the formation of a loose national federation capable of providing local movements with a means of exchanging information and ideas, coordinating activities and formulating common tasks. A federation of this type will become an urgent necessity within the next year or two. On the other hand, what is neither necessary nor desirable is a premature attempt to launch a unified national party, socialist or otherwise, for which no real basis yet exists.

In the second place, a political movement which seeks to transcend the categories of liberal accommodation must begin by transcending the limitations of the protest movement. The whole point of the above analysis has been to suggest that radical politics means considerably more than a new form of protest against the war in Vietnam. At the very least, a radical

political movement must begin to relate its opposition to the war to a general critique of American capitalism. Proceeding from this critique, a radical political movement should also set itself the task of formulating a positive program of radical demands around which new forms of struggle can be developed. We may develop a most attractive vision of the socialist alternative to corporate rule; but if we cannot use that vision as a guide to struggle in the here and now, we proclaim its ultimate irrelevance. Here again the new left has already led the way in attempting to transform the liberal demand for "more" into a contest for control of that "more." By raising the issue of power and control within the context of even the most limited struggles, the new left has taught us how to pose immediate demands in a radical way. What we need now, however, is not only a means of exposing powerlessness but also of overcoming it, of creating forms of struggle through which people can in fact achieve some measure of control over their lives. This was what the trade union movement achieved at one time; and there is no reason why the present generation of radicals, working both on the job and in the community, cannot develop similar organs of resistance appropriate to the new conditions which we face.

Finally, and most important of all, a radical political movement will need to evolve a long-range social vision to which immediate struggles can be related and through which an ongoing program of political education and political action can be sustained. We have already argued that the only name for such a vision is socialism; but even assuming this to be the case, we have yet to relate the concept of collective ownership of the means of production to the technological requirements of advanced industrial society and the human requirements of democratic and nonrepressive forms of social organization. This task cannot be solved by theory alone, for one of the essential determinants of the kind of society we ultimately achieve will be the kind of movement we build today. The class basis of that movement, its organizational structure, its internal character and style of life, these and other features of the movement, which can only be evolved in actual practice, will play a key role in shaping the content of an American

socialism. At the same time as we seek to develop a long-range social vision, therefore, we must also seek to test our present ideas, to organize around a limited and partial conception of our ultimate ends, to build upon what we already know as a means of enabling ourselves to learn more. In this as in other respects the prime task of a transitional radical movement will be *to discover itself*, to give form and substance to its vague and implicit vision of a new society by unfolding that vision in the test of practice.

Does there exist a potential basis for such a movement within American society today? In view of the severe limitations of present socialist theory, we have no real idea of which class or classes will be at the center of a new radical movement. The interests of the great majority of Americans, including both blue and white-collar workers and the urban poor, are clearly at odds with those of their rulers; but it remains to be determined whether this or that conflict of interests can be translated into a conscious opposition to corporate rule. What we can state with some certainty is that the corporate system itself, taken as a whole, is now entering a period of growing crisis and disequilibrium. After twenty-five years of unprecedented stabilization, the very means by which American capitalism succeeded in staving off an internal collapse have now, in their turn, given rise to a new set of contradictions, contradictions whose depth and significance are still imperfectly understood.

At the root of these new contradictions stands the crisis of American imperialism as reflected in the war in Vietnam. Dependent for its very existence upon a policy of global expansion growing out of foreign investment, military spending and anti-Communism, American capitalism has discovered that it lacks the means of imposing its will upon even a relatively small and defenseless nation. Far from constituting the first in a long series of colonial wars, the war in Vietnam represents a crucial test case for American imperialism; for if it cannot win this war, it will find it extremely difficult to mobilize for the next one. An American defeat in Vietnam—and what other outcome is possible?—cannot but undermine that entire system of military spending, foreign investment and anti-Communism

upon which American capitalism now depends. This is all the more true in that the domestic function of American imperialism is also entering a critical stage. The rise of the military-industrial complex may have prevented a repetition of the Great Depression, but it has also diverted both public and private resources from the increasingly pressing task of reconstructing the physical basis of American life. The much-discussed "crisis of the cities" (the rapid deterioration of urban housing, transportation, schools and services) is only the most striking manifestation of a growing disproportion between the profit priorities built into the imperialist system and the actual social needs of most Americans.

At the same time as the imperialist system engenders new contradictions at home and abroad, it also reveals itself increasingly unable to cope with the underlying tendencies of that corporate monolith to which it has helped give rise. The growing trend towards automation and cybernation, the constant threat of inflation and/or unemployment, the diminishing impact of new military expenditures upon the economy, the declining gains of even the most privileged strata of blue-collar workers—to all this the "new economics" of fiscal management has no real answer. By the same token, the new techniques of manipulation and control which capitalist concentration has made available have proved incapable of arresting that progressive social disintegration which they themselves have done so much to promote. The corporate regimentation of service and professional trades has largely eliminated the independent entrepreneur, but in so doing it has also begun to eliminate traditional middle-class forms of family and social life. The rise of the corporate state has enormously enhanced the powers of the federal bureaucracy, but in so doing it has also undermined the entire basis of the old state and local political machines. The emergence of the mass media as the dominant form of cultural interchange has provided the corporate elite with an unprecedented opportunity for totalitarian manipulation, but in so doing it has also undercut that entire complex of social, fraternal and cultural ties which once played such an important part in assuring the stability of American institutions. In short, although corporate power is today more concentrated than

ever before, it is also more fragile, more remote, less real than ever before. Most Americans may still accept the impersonal dictates of the corporate bureaucracy and admire the plastic surface of the corporate media; but they do not and cannot feel themselves a part of that increasingly alien and inhuman universe.

Because America is a racist country, all of these features of the new crisis of American capitalism have found their most intense and concentrated expression in the black ghetto. It is in the ghetto that the war in Vietnam, the "crisis of the cities" and the impact of automation have been most keenly felt; and it is also in the ghetto that both the extent of corporate manipulation and its underlying failure are most greatly apparent. Up to the present time, however, the revolt of the ghetto has not been able to pass beyond the stage of a purely negative and increasingly desperate protest against the dehumanizing effects of corporate rule. Since the problems of the ghetto are not confined to the ghetto alone, there can be no solution to those problems without a general movement for radical change among both black and white Americans. In the absence of white radical allies, the revolt of the ghetto must either succumb to despair or seek other allies who will use that revolt as a means of advancing both themselves and a few black "leaders." When SNCC tells its former white organizers to go to work in their own communities, it is therefore saying more than perhaps it knows; for if those organizers and others like them do not do as SNCC suggests, SNCC itself will find it difficult to avoid the eager embrace of the new coalitionism. For black as well as white radicals, the building of a radical political movement without as well as within the black ghetto is a matter of immediate and pressing concern.

If it is true that the revolt of the ghetto is primarily a response to new contradictions within American capitalism, contradictions which racist oppression has merely concentrated and magnified, then there is good reason to believe that such a movement can in fact be built. Merely because there exists little or no spontaneous movement towards revolt in white America does not prove that most Americans are profoundly committed to the system under which they now live. On the

contrary, there is every indication that their strongest desire is to "drop out" of that system, to enjoy its limited benefits while disassociating themselves from its impersonal routine. But since those benefits are neither so secure nor that routine so easily avoided as some believe, the urge to escape from the system may well be transmuted into a desire to change it. What is needed to this end is above all an alternative solution capable not only of providing material abundance, but also of fulfilling those personal and social needs which capitalism both inspires and frustrates. That alternative solution needs to be spelled out in clear and meaningful terms; it needs to be related to the class forces and social antagonisms created by existing society; and it also needs to be embodied in a political movement that practices the social values which it preaches. We are not yet at the point where we can do these things. But what we can do is to put our present knowledge to the test of practice, to seek to organize poor, working-class and middle-class Americans around our present program for radical change, and to develop the theoretical ideas and practical skills which will eventually permit us to form a socialist movement worthy of the name. To those within the new left who do not now regard socialism as a relevant concept, we say: let us unite around a joint program of radical political action and serious theoretical work, and if our analysis is correct, you will yourselves help to build a socialist movement whose relevance you will not dispute because it will arise out of your own experience and your own efforts. This is our perspective. But regardless of whether it proves ultimately correct, a turn towards radical politics remains the sole alternative to a new and disastrous capitulation to the forces of liberal accommodation.

—Robert Wolfe

# PROLETARIAT AND MIDDLE CLASS IN MARX: HEGELIAN CHOREOGRAPHY AND THE CAPITALIST DIALECTIC

Martin Nicolaus

*The historical dust has not settled, but at this moment it seems clear that a proletariat which does not embrace Marxism is entirely possible. Why not, then, Marxism without a proletariat? In a thoughtful article, "Radical Chains: The Marxian Concept of Proletarian Mission" (Studies on the Left, September-October, 1966), Oscar Berland argues that this is not only a thinkable but also a necessary thought. Ronald Aronson's "Reply" to Berland agrees that the proletariat has lost its revolutionary potential, but forcefully asserts that to scuttle the concept of proletarian mission is to scuttle Marx himself. The present paper in general sustains Berland, but puts the argument in sharper terms. At the same time, and this is its major purpose, this paper attempts to show that Marx's mature economic theorizing (the core of which Berland rejects as "droll") was by no means centered around the concept of a "mission," proletarian or otherwise, and that Marx's formulation of the laws of capitalist development—unfortunately, for the proletarian cause—can be shown to have been depressingly ac-*

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*curate and realistic. Bringing to light a much-neglected aspect of Marx's work, this paper hopes to stimulate interest in investigating the usefulness of the surplus-value concept for the understanding of modern capitalist class structure.*

### I. Hegelian Choreography

TO BRING MORE CLARITY into the delicate subject of Marx's Hegelianism, it is necessary to make a distinction among three aspects of the dialectic. There is, first, the *context* of the dialectical movement, which in Hegel is either the timeless realm of pure logic or a sphere which is called History but is only the ephemeral context in which an abstract Idea unfolds its purpose. Second, there is the *content* of the dialectical categories, which in Hegel is typically abstract, void of concrete reference. Finally, there is the dialectical *movement* itself, the inevitable process by which contradictions unfold, affirm, negate and gracefully vanish from the scene with a dazzling *Aufhebung*—annulment, preservation and supercession in one motion. With polemical intent I have called this *movement* of the categories in Hegel his "choreography," for, it seems to me, Marx remained under the spell of this dance long after he had succeeded in bringing the *context* and the *content* of the dialectic down to earth and under a plain light. It was Marx's captivation with this choreography, I shall argue, which led him to the prediction that capitalist society must inevitably become polarized into two directly antagonistic classes, and that, in this polarization, the industrial proletariat must play the role of successful negation.

That this prediction has proved to be mistaken, and that its fulfillment seems least probable precisely where it was most to be expected, namely in the *advanced* industrial nations, has been apparent for some time. In the second section of this paper, I argue that Marx himself developed the theoretical principles on which this prediction can be shown to be invalid, and that on occasion these principles led Marx himself to make predictions which explicitly contradict those of the *Communist Manifesto*. My thesis is that Marx's major contributions to the understanding of capitalism—the labor theory of value, the theory of the surplus, the law of the tendential decline of the

profit rate—constitute a body of theory from which the failure of capitalist society to polarize, the rise of a new middle class, and the declining militancy of the industrial proletariat—in other words, the essential features of advanced industrial society—can be accurately predicted and explained, and indeed that Marx himself did so. In discussing Marx's theory of classes I shall be concerned chiefly with his theory of classes arising out of industrial capitalism and not with his general theory. By the latter I understand the series of propositions centered on the ideas that class struggles are the moving force of history, that classes and their conflicts arise out of contradictions in the means and modes of production, etc. Nothing in this general theory, unfortunately, permits instant and spontaneous deductions to the specific conditions which prevail in a given society. In the *German Ideology* Marx was quite unambiguous about the necessity for empirical investigation. The general theory is that "given individuals who are active in production in a given way, enter into certain social and political relationships." However, "The connection between production and the social and political structure must in every case be uncovered by empirical observation, without mystification or speculation."<sup>1</sup> But Marx himself did not carry out a program of thorough empirical investigation of capitalist production until several years after the *Manifesto*, and it was the resulting weakness in his understanding of the capitalist social structure which permitted the Hegelian choreography to exercise so strong a hold over him.

Although biographical information about the genesis of an idea can provide no more than circumstantial evidence, that sort of evidence has its usefulness when it arouses skepticism; and when skepticism leads to a fresh examination of certain ritual formulations, then the introduction of biographical evidence may prove to be instrumental in bringing back to life an idea long after the period out of which it first arose. In the present case, the key item of circumstantial information which should arouse our skepticism and lead us to look at Marx afresh is the biographical fact that Marx proclaimed the historic liberating mission of the proletariat *before* he had more than the vaguest notions of the political economy of capitalism, before

he had read the bourgeois economists of his day, and long before he had grappled with the economic problems to which his mature theory is the solution.

The proclamation that the proletariat would make the revolution came in the third of a series of philosophical papers in which the young Marx worked out a critical stance toward Hegel and his followers. In the first of these papers, the *Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts* (written summer 1843, when Marx was 25 years old), he still held, with the Hegelians, that the French Revolution had created a political state in which the distinctions that existed in the private lives of its citizens, in "civil society," had no material relevance, or, in other words, that rich and poor were equal in the political sphere.<sup>2</sup> In the second paper *Zur Judenfrage* (autumn 1843), he amends this position drastically by stating that differences of civil standing might not be of importance in the political sphere, but that the political sphere itself was of little importance, and that civil distinctions nevertheless remained civil distinctions, which must not be ignored.<sup>3</sup> A short time later in the *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie, Einleitung* (winter 1843-1844), the "distinctions" of civil standing become "contradictions within civil society," a most important change; the relevance of the political sphere and of the philosophy that deals with it as if the state were the celestial realm here on earth is completely denied; philosophy itself is given a properly philosophical funeral with the proclamation that deeds, not words, will change society; and finally, the men who will wield the historical broom to sweep German thought and German politics clear of their interlocking cobwebs are ushered onstage:

Where, then, is the *positive* possibility of German emancipation? *Answer*: In the formation of a class with *radical chains*, a class within civil society which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which possesses a universal character because of its universal suffering. . . . This dissolution of society as a special estate is the *proletariat*.<sup>4</sup>

Here the Hegelian context has been liquidated, and the Hegelian categories have received a historical content, but the choreo-

graphy has, for all that, emerged more strongly. Marx has discovered no more about the proletariat than that it develops and grows larger as industry does,<sup>5</sup> and already he has it dancing the leading negative role in the dialectic of History. Only after this proclamation did Marx begin to read the political economists to find, as he wrote later, the anatomy of civil society.<sup>6</sup>

The record of the collision between Hegelian philosophy and the political economy of Adam Smith, Ricardo, and others, appears in Marx's *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. None of his works reveals more clearly the difficulties Marx experienced, and probably those which anyone must experience, in attempting to grasp the dismally pragmatic confusion of data and theory that prevails in so unpoetic a discipline as economics with the intellectual equipment of a sphere so clear, uncluttered and even elegant as the Hegelian philosophy. The struggle is uncompromising and complex. On the one hand, Marx writes that ". . . my conclusions are the fruit of an entirely empirical analysis, based upon a careful critical study of political economy."<sup>7</sup> And then: "Political economy has merely formulated the laws of alienated labor."<sup>8</sup> However: "Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He conceives labor as the *essence*, the self-confirming essence of man."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless: Hegel is wrong "because his conception is *formal* and *abstract*, [and therefore] the annulment of alienation becomes a confirmation of alienation."<sup>10</sup> This is a battle of methods, of ways of seeing and explaining the world, a struggle between disparate epistemologies. Here the dialectic power of German idealism struggles like Hercules against the giant, Antaeus, the son of Earth; and, it must be said, the outcome is the same as in that mythical trial: philosophy lifts its antagonist off the ground, away from the source of his strength, and crushes him in midair. Thus Marx seizes upon the capitalist production process, its relations of property, together with its system of exchange and circulation, and lifts this entire edifice of empirical fact and empirical fancy into the Hegelian air, where he compresses the pragmatic giant into the single concept of "alienated labor." And Marx aims higher than Hercules; he not only crushes his antagonist, but he also be-

believes that he can then reconstitute him on a higher level by unfolding the content of the fundamental core to which he has been reduced. Thus he writes, as only a philosophical idealist could write:

As we have discovered the concept of *private property* by an *analysis* of the concept of *alienated labor*, so with the aid of these two factors we can evolve all the categories of political economy, and in every category, e.g. trade, competition, capital, money, we shall discover only a particular and developed expression of these fundamental elements.<sup>11</sup>

Here metaphysics has won over empiricism, not only in method but also in substance. Marx's theory of classes, as it was forged in this crucible, represents a two-fold defeat for economics. First, Marx sees both the division of society into classes and the division of labor as equivalent aspects of the touchstone concept "alienated labor."<sup>12</sup> Only from a perspective beyond economics can one afford to ignore the difference between them. A political economist, on the other hand, must grasp and explicate the fact that the division of labor is not the same thing as class division, or else his entire craft runs into confusion. As late as the *German Ideology* (1846) Marx still stands outside political economy in that respect, as is shown by his famous remark that communism will abolish the division of labor, so that man may be a hunter, a fisherman, or a critic as he pleases.<sup>13</sup> This is a brilliant philosophical vision, but a less poetic spirit would not have ventured it without first asking where the hunter is to get his rifle, the fisherman his rod and reel, and the critic his books—and the answer to those questions is again within the realm of the economist, not of the philosopher. There is a measure of irony in the fact that Marx puts the division of labor and the division of classes into proper economic perspective only when he notes that Proudhon has committed a similar philosophic confusion—for Marx himself, he later wrote, was responsible for "infecting" Proudhon with Hegelianism.<sup>14</sup>

The second and more disastrous effect of the victory of philosophy over economics on Marx's theory of classes was his discovery that the antagonism of labor vs. capital could

be made to “fit” neatly into the dialectical pattern. The earlier proclamation of the proletariat as universal negation was strengthened and amplified here to the point where the development of capitalist industrialization appeared to Marx as a fateful unfolding of a contradiction whose path *must* conform to the choreography *because* it was dialectical. “The relations of private property,” he writes—and here he still speaks of “private property” instead of capitalism, of “*buergerliche Gesellschaft*” (civil society) instead of bourgeois society—“are capital, labor, and their interconnections.” And then the pattern that is fundamental to his thought: “The movements through which these elements have to go are: First—*unmediated and mediated unity of the two . . . [then:] opposition between the two . . . opposition of each to itself . . . [and] clash of reciprocal contradictions.*”<sup>15</sup> Although it became filled out with a great deal of historical material, this dialectical schema remained the basis of Marx’s view of social classes and their conflict up to and including the *Manifesto*, and to a great extent for the rest of his life. The notion that “capital” and “labor” may not be the only determining components of a fully developed capitalist society, and the idea that “the movements through which these elements have to go” may not be the movements through which any self-respecting dialectical contradiction must go, but that these movements may be determined by the specifically capitalist contradiction, which may be quite different—these notions do not occur until later in his work and will be discussed in the second part of this paper. Meanwhile, however, the movement of history seemed to confirm the dialectical prognosis, making a detailed analysis of the capitalist economic process unnecessary; for it was a fact, as Engels reported in his *Condition of the Working Class in England*, that the onrush of industrial capitalism was destroying the previous small middle classes of tradesmen, manufacturers and craftsmen, and that the social and economic distance between a small number of big capitalists and the swelling propertyless proletarians was growing wider and wider.<sup>16</sup> Was it so wrong to project the impact of primary capitalist accumulation into the future, as in this crucial passage from the *Manifesto*?

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, the distinctive feature that it has simplified class contradictions. The whole society more and more splits into two great antagonistic camps, two great classes directly opposed to one another: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.<sup>17</sup>

Only a small leap of faith was required to envision a society in which this initial polarization had continued to sharpen, finally reaching the outer limits of human endurance; that is, a society in which an absolutely wealthy capitalist class confronts an absolutely impoverished proletariat—and one does not need to be a Hegelian to predict that a revolution will occur under such circumstances. Yet it was a peculiarly Hegelian exaggeration, a Hegelian leap of faith, to assume that the contradiction between capital and labor would continue to develop and unfold in this manner until the two classes confronted each other with all the unmediated antagonism of a pure negation confronting an absolute affirmation. To assume without further analysis of the capitalist economic process that the dialectic of capitalism must conform to the dialectic of ideas was a most Hegelian error of procedure; and the error of procedure resulted in an error of substance. The advance of capitalist society has not meant increasingly sharp conflict between capital and labor. The most industrially advanced capitalist nations typically have the most quiescent, noninsurrectionary proletariats—witness the United States; and in every capitalist country there has arisen a broad, vocal and specifically new middle class to thwart Marxist theory and to stifle and crush Marxist action. Marx's captivation with the Hegelian choreography has cost his followers in advanced industrial society a heavy price. The prophets of class conflict have too often stood powerless to explain or to deal with the class structure of the society that their reading of Marx leads them to think should never have been.

## II. The Capitalist Dialectic

### A. *The Model of Capitalist Economics in the Manifesto*

Marx's contributions to political economy—the labor theory of value, the theory of the surplus, the law of the tendential fall

of the profit rate—all date from about 1857-1858, the years during which Marx wrote the *Grundrisse*.<sup>18</sup> None of these discoveries is foreshadowed in the *Manifesto* (1848), and indeed this early work shows no clear evidence that Marx had yet become aware of the *problems* to which his later contributions were the *solutions*.

Although Marx writes repeatedly in the *Manifesto* that capital employs labor in order to increase or augment itself (*vermehrten*),<sup>19</sup> one looks in vain here for a theory of precisely how this process of capital accumulation takes place. The closest approach to an understanding of capitalist accumulation, and thereby to a theory of the surplus, comes when Marx mentions that communism wants to do away with the capitalist's appropriation of the net yield (*Reinertrag*) of production.<sup>20</sup> But this insight remains unconscious of itself, and the various references to capital accumulation are so rudimentary and cursory that no systematic theory of accumulation can be extracted from them or projected into them. The *Manifesto's* economic theorizing in general suffers from a great amount of vagueness. Here, for instance, is one example of a powerful prediction based on a chain of diffuse economic reasoning:

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. *Wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers.* The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their involuntary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry therefore cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.<sup>21</sup>

I have italicized the phrase "wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers" in order to emphasize what strikes me as the weakest link in this argument. The statement is at best a half-truth; it is not even a full truth if one says



that the *level of wages* rests exclusively on competition. But even if the statement were correct, then the conclusion that workers' associations will bury the bourgeoisie does not follow; the only thing that follows is that wage labor will get more expensive, from the capitalist's standpoint. And that, of course, is precisely what has occurred wherever workers' associations (unions) have succeeded in defeating competition from non-unionized labor; the reduction of competition has by no means done away with wage labor or with capitalism. Only if the bourgeoisie were absolutely economically incapable of granting wage demands put forth by associated workers would there be any necessary revolutionary consequences in the elimination of competition between the laborers. Had Marx at this time worked out an economic theory to account for the fact that the bourgeoisie is *not* incapable of raising wages, this particular prediction would have had to be argued differently. What the excerpt above shows chiefly is that Marx's analysis of bourgeois production had at this point penetrated little further than the insight that the bourgeoisie turns all human values into market values, all human beings into commodities. Thus, here and elsewhere in the *Manifesto*, Marx sees the *market* as the center of gravity of bourgeois society; in this case he goes so far as to believe that a change in the market (the labor market, here) will produce a drastic change in the whole social structure. While this emphasis on the importance of the market cannot be discounted, Marx himself in his mature economic works came to see the market as a dependent variable, and he then identified *capital accumulation* and *production* as the real fulcrum around which all the other phenomena of bourgeois society gravitate.<sup>22</sup>

Insofar as the *Manifesto* contains any theory of capitalist accumulation and production at all, which is debatable, that theory centers on the concept of exploitation. "Wage labor," Marx writes, "creates capital, i.e. that kind of property which exploits wage labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of creating a new supply of wage labor for fresh exploitation."<sup>23</sup> But here all clarity stops, for what exactly does exploitation mean? It should be noted that in *Capital*, after Marx had developed the theory of the surplus, he gives

this term a very precise, quantifiable meaning; here, however, it is more a physical and moral term, denoting suffering, degradation, destruction, dehumanization, etc. The closest economic term for this usage of "exploitation" would be destructive consumption; that is, capital is accumulated by using up, destroying the labor commodity in the act of production. The more the capitalist deprives the laborer of his commodity, labor, the richer the capitalist gets; the fatter the capitalist, the leaner the worker. Eventually the workers will become absolutely impoverished, and at the same time, the capitalists will have all the wealth of any kind in the nation. The capitalists will have everything but no one to sell it to, and the workers will have nothing but a world to win. Then, in the terms of the *Manifesto*, a classic overproduction crisis sets in ("too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce"<sup>24</sup>), or rather, there is a series of such crises, which culminates in the grand, final crisis which will bring the revolution. That approximately is the *Manifesto's* model of capitalist accumulation, and this also appears to be the model many Marxists still cling to.

The affinities between this model and the Hegelian choreography should strike the eye. For if this is indeed how capitalism operates, then it follows that capitalism must throw all possible parts of the population into the industrial labor supply, which means that all intermediate classes must and will be destroyed (which is exactly what the *Manifesto* says), thus creating a society perfectly polarized between an absolutely rich capitalist class and an absolutely poor industrial proletariat, the two facing each other with the undiluted antagonism of a logical contradiction. And then indeed the *Aufhebung* is nigh.

But, to return a last time to this economic model, what if for one reason or another the total wealth of the nation were not a fixed constant; what if there were an increment, say  $x$ , which arose to augment the total without diminishing the wealth of either labor or capital proportionately? The existence of this extra increment, this surplus, removes the weight of the iron law of destructive consumption. Absolute wealth on one side would not necessarily mean absolute impoverishment on the other side; which means that capitalist accumulation would

not necessarily mean absolute social polarization. And this would be especially true if it were discovered that this  $x$  were not an arbitrary *deus ex machina* conjured into the system from outside, but a regular and essential feature of capitalist production itself.

### B. *The Discovery of Surplus Value*

If I am correct in saying that the validity of the Hegelian social choreography depends on the validity of the simple, surplus-less model of destructive consumption outlined above, then the liquidation by Marx of the Hegelian choreography can be fixed in time and space with considerable precision. The spell of that dance is broken in principle in the *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie (Rohentwurf)* of 1857-1858, a voluminous work which has not been translated into English. After a lengthy critique of economic theory which treats capitalist production as if it were production in general, as if its special characteristics were not worth investigating, Marx brings up the central problem of the theory of capitalism and proceeds to solve it. How is it, he asks, that at the end of the production process the capitalist has a commodity which is worth more than the elements that went into it? He pays the price of machinery, raw materials and the price of labor, yet the product is worth more than all three together. What, in other words, is the source of the surplus value (*Mehrwert*) which the capitalist appropriates? The problem is insoluble, Marx writes, so long as "labor" is considered a commodity like any other commodity (as it was, specifically, in the *Manifesto*).<sup>25</sup> If labor were such a commodity, then capitalist production would be: price of machinery + price of raw materials + price of labor = price of product. Where, then, is the capitalist's profit? If we evade the question by saying that the capitalist fixes an arbitrary profit percentage and simply adds it to the price of the product, as high as the market will bear, then it appears that the buyer of the commodity is the source of the capitalist's profit. Yet what the capitalist gains in this way, the buyer loses, and it is impossible to see how an aggregate surplus could arise out of such transactions. Marx rejected this mercantilist theory, according to

which one nation could get richer only by cheating another in commerce. This theory is overcome, and the problem of surplus value is solved, when one realizes that the worker sells the capitalist not "labor," but labor *power* (*Arbeitskraft*). Although its price varies with supply and demand, this specific commodity has the exceptional quality of being able to produce more value than is necessary to reproduce it.<sup>26</sup> For example, all the commodities necessary to keep a worker alive and able to work, i.e. groceries, clothes, shelter, etc., have a value represented by the letter *n*. Working in a factory, the worker produces for the capitalist a quantity of commodities whose value is equal to the value of the commodities he needs to consume, in *n* hours. This *n* is what Marx calls necessary labor time, that is, the time necessary to produce enough value to allow the worker to live and work on. But once he is fed and clothed, the worker is able to continue to work more than *n* hours, and that is exactly what the capitalist forces him to do. If at a given stage of social productivity it takes on the average six hours to produce enough for the worker to live, i.e. if *n* is 6, then any hours worked in addition to 6 are what Marx calls surplus labor, and the product of this surplus labor is the surplus product, which, when sold, yields surplus value, a part of which the capitalist pockets as profit.

The specific nature of capitalist production, then, is the creation and appropriation of surplus value by the capitalist class. To increase surplus value, the capitalist must increase the amount of the workers' surplus labor. Marx distinguishes between two methods of increasing surplus labor. In the early stages of industrialization the first method was the prolongation of the working day over and above the necessary labor time, thus stretching the day to 12, 14, 16 and more hours, up to and beyond the limits of human endurance. This form of surplus accumulation Marx calls the production of "absolute surplus."<sup>27</sup> However, eventually the labor force becomes exhausted in this way; the worker dies too young, the laboring population diminishes through disease and wages must rise. Then, Marx writes, the capitalist class finds it in its own interests to limit the working day by law to a humanly endurable "normal" length.<sup>28</sup> Once that stage has been reached, a

point which according to Marx occurs when capitalism has taken over all branches of production and becomes altogether the dominant form of production,<sup>29</sup> then the capitalist class turns to the creation of what Marx calls "relative surplus," that is, the extraction of more surplus labor within a fixed number of hours.<sup>30</sup> While the production of absolute surplus is possible with the instruments and machinery of earlier periods, the relative surplus can only be increased by revolutionizing the whole basis of production, which means principally the rapid introduction of modern machinery. Machinery raises the productivity of each worker, so that he produces the equivalent value necessary to sustain him in less time; that is,  $n$ , necessary labor time, is reduced relative to surplus labor time. In this way, the capitalist can appropriate greater and greater amounts of surplus without necessarily working the worker to death in the process, although he can also do both. For Marx, the production of relative surplus by the use of ever more efficient machinery resulting in ever greater productivity was one of capitalism's fundamental historical tendencies.

Here we must briefly discuss what Marx called the solution to the mystery which had plagued all of political economy since Adam Smith, namely, the "law of the tendential decline of the profit rate."<sup>31</sup> This law states quite simply that as the capitalist class as a whole invests more and more heavily in machinery, and proportionally less in wages, the *rate* of profit will tend to decline. The fact that Marx assumed competitive market conditions, and that these no longer are typical today, however, does not destroy the usefulness of this law as an explanatory concept. What Baran and Sweezy in *Monopoly Capital* have called the "tendency of the surplus to rise" is not only not contradictory to Marx's law, but is in fact only another aspect of it.<sup>32</sup> Marx was quite specific, and repeatedly so, in stating that the tendential decline in the profit *rate* not only can but *must* lead to a corresponding rise in the *mass* of profits, and that a decline in the profit *rate* *must* tend to *increase* both the *rate* and the *mass* of the *surplus*.<sup>33</sup> (The surplus is computed only on the basis of necessary versus surplus labor time; but the profit is computed on the basis of invest-

ment in machinery also, which explains the seemingly contradictory movement of profit and surplus.) Thus in the course of capitalist development, Marx held, the capitalist class tends to realize a smaller profit rate on its investments, but the volume of profits, as well as the rate and volume of the surplus which it controls, tends to grow disproportionately faster. For example, an 18th-century manufacturer employing one thousand workers with hand tools might make a profit of fifty percent, for a mass of profit measured in a few thousands of dollars; but a modern corporation with an equal number of workers, and a multi-million-dollar investment in machinery, may make only five percent, but its profits may also be in the millions.

This tendency has important implications for the relationship between the capitalist class and the working class. One of them is that the process of advanced capitalist development enables the capitalist class to face workers' demands for higher wages with an unprecedented degree of flexibility. The small capitalist of an earlier period sometimes literally could not increase wages without eventually going out of business. For the huge corporation with its voluminous reserves, the refusal to grant wage increases is less a matter of life-and-death necessity and more a matter of policy. What happens then, Marx foresaw, is that the workers' submission to the capitalist class is clothed

. . . in bearable, or, as Eden says, "comfortable and liberal" forms. . . . From the workers' own swelling surplus product, a part of which is constantly being converted into additional capital, a greater portion flows back to them in cash, so that they can broaden the sphere of their consumption, equip themselves better with clothing and furniture, etc., and develop a small reserve of savings.<sup>34</sup>

Since a large capital can and does expand faster, although with a smaller profit rate, than smaller capital, wage increases of this sort at this stage of capitalist development may be safely granted, for they in no way hinder the accumulation of capital or its concentration in the hands of the class of big capitalists.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere, Marx writes that what really matters under capitalism is not the absolute level of wages, but the incomes of the

classes relative to one another.<sup>36</sup> Once capital has accumulated a certain volume of surplus, in other words, the absolute impoverishment of the workers becomes a negligible possibility because it is no longer the essential precondition of capitalist accumulation. Exploitation itself becomes a relative term; in *Capital* the rate of exploitation means the ratio of necessary labor to surplus labor in the working day. Thus the rate of exploitation may escalate almost *ad infinitum*, yet at the same time the working class may live more comfortably than ever. The rising surplus makes it possible for the capitalist class to exchange its tyranny for a benevolent despotism.

The saddest victims of capitalist accumulation in its advanced stage, as Marx charted it, are not the workers but the unemployed, the "industrial reserve army." As productivity rises, the demand for productive labor in a given industry or in all industries generally may drop temporarily, or in the long run, will tend to drop permanently. Thus is created a constant stream of underemployed, unemployed, prematurely used up, obsolete, or unemployable individuals.<sup>37</sup> When unskilled labor is the standard mode in the society, as Marx posited in *Capital*, then this reserve army serves to depress the wages of the employed; but, he might have added, at a certain stage in the development of productivity only skilled labor can be used (e.g. the replacement of ditch-digging gangs by earth-moving machinery), so that the unskilled unemployed lose even their competitive link with the working class, and as one generation of unemployed begets another, a permanent welfare class comes into being. At the same time, the greater volume of surplus makes it possible to support growing numbers of these people, however miserably. In the advanced stages of capitalist development, the "exploitation" of the working class appears as prosperity beside the poverty of this never-working sub-proletariat.

The implications of Marx's theory of the surplus, in short, destroy the relationship between capital and labor which the *Manifesto* had foreseen. In the hands of an intelligent capitalist class bent on its own survival, the swelling surplus provides a cushion against the more acute forms of class conflict, and prevents absolute social polarization along the lines laid out by

the Hegelian choreography. The specifically capitalist dialectic does not obey the laws of the great philosopher.

### C. *The Rise of the Surplus Class*

The rise of the surplus not only alters the relationship between the capitalist class and the working class, but it also creates an entirely new class between them. While the term "surplus class" to designate this stratum does not to my knowledge occur in Marx's writings, the idea and its implications were clearly seized and expressed by him.

The essential feature of capitalism, Marx says, is to appropriate surplus labor. That is to say, labor is productive for capitalism only insofar as it yields surplus labor; or, as Marx put it succinctly, "labor is productive only insofar as it produces its own opposite."<sup>38</sup> As labor becomes more and more productive, it produces more and more of its own opposite. This tendency yields what may be called the "law of the surplus class" in its most general form: as less and less people are forced to produce more and more, more and more people are forced to produce less and less. As Marx put it:

Given an advance of industrial productivity to the point where only one third of the population takes a direct part in material production, instead of two thirds as before, then one third furnish the means of life for the whole, whereas before two thirds were required to do so. Before, one third was net revenue (as distinct from the workers' income), now net revenue is two thirds. Disregarding the class contradiction, the whole nation would now need only one third of its time for direct production, whereas earlier it had needed two thirds. With equal distribution, everyone would now have two thirds of his time for unproductive labor and for leisure. But in capitalist production, everything appears and is contradictory.<sup>39</sup>

The contradiction resides in the fact that the distribution of disposable time cannot be equal so long as the capitalist system operates by appropriating surplus labor, i.e. so long as it is the capitalist system of production; for if everyone worked only long enough to reproduce the means of life, there would be no surplus for the capitalists to appropriate. What does happen,



under capitalism, to the mass of people who are released from direct, productive labor by the advance of productivity? The question is the same as the question of what happens to the mass of surplus value generated by advanced capitalist production.

Marx divided the surplus value into a number of categories, of which we need distinguish only the broadest, capital and revenue. Capital is that part of the surplus value which the capitalist reinvests in further production. Revenue includes everything the capitalist pays out to himself and others, such as dividends, interest payments, land rent, taxes, and most importantly, payment for services rendered to his enterprise by *other than productive workers*. A great number of people who produce no commodities for profitable sale are essential to the capitalist enterprise and consume a part of its revenue; e.g. bookkeepers, clerks, secretaries, lawyers, designers, engineers, salesmen, etc.—in general, all the people who do not themselves control capital (as bankers do) and who fulfill a function in the vast system of financing, distributing, exchanging, improving and maintaining the commodities produced by the proletariat and appropriated by the capitalist class.<sup>40</sup> From the law of the rising surplus, it follows that except during times of exceptionally heavy capital investment, the mass of disposable revenue must also tend to rise; that is, there must be an increase in that part of the surplus which can be expended for the utilization of unproductive labor.

The surplus not only can, it *must* be expended for unproductive labor, for two reasons.

First, as productivity rises, the number of unproductive laborers required to service and maintain the growing capital establishment also rises. The number of the traditional unproductive workers increases, e.g. clerks, bookkeepers. More significantly, entirely new branches of unproductive work are called into being, of which the banking system, the credit system, insurance empires and advertising are the most obvious examples, but the growth of the scientific and technological establishments, as well as an increase in public education generally, are also in this category. Marx himself pointed to the growth of this requirement for nonproductive services.<sup>41</sup>

The second reason why there must be an increase of non-productive workers is that an increase in the surplus product requires an increase in the number of people who can afford to consume it. Surplus production requires surplus consumption. The capitalist system is based on the extraction from the laboring class of more commodities than that class is permitted to consume; the system would collapse if there were not also a class which consumed more than it produced. Some excerpts from Marx on this problem will be quoted below.

Together, these two corollaries of Marx's theory of the surplus make up what I have called the "law of the surplus class," that is, the law of the tendential rise of a new middle class.

That Marx formulated precisely such a law may come as something of a surprise to many Marxists. The reasons for this surprise, if my conjecture is correct in that regard, are not difficult to find. First, Marx's theory of the new middle class remained embryonic, though explicit; it was one of the many implications of his economic discoveries which he chose not to develop further, or was prevented by time from developing. The phenomenon which this theory describes, after all, had not emerged in its full dominance at the time he wrote. Secondly, the works in which Marx does develop this theory most clearly (the *Grundrisse* and the *Theorien Ueber den Mehrwert*) have not been translated into English (as far as I know), and the originals are not available in every library. Third, the theory of the middle class follows directly from the labor theory of value, the theory of the surplus and the law of the tendential fall in the profit rate, and there seems to be considerable tacit acquiescence on the left in the orthodoxly academic refusal to take these Marxist theses seriously.<sup>42</sup> Finally, there are still some Marxists, particularly in the new left, who have not taken the trouble to read attentively anything that Marx wrote after the *Manifesto*, or, worse, anything after the *1844 Manuscripts*. There is an amusing tendency, at least in the academic circles known to me, to repeat an experiment Marx ventured when he was twenty-six, namely to try to squeeze the concept of alienated labor hard enough to make all the categories of sociology, politics and economics come dripping out of it, as

if this philosopher's touchstone were a lemon. The drippings are flavorful but somewhat lacking in substance.

To make the data on Marx's theory of the middle class more widely available, I should like here to quote a number of excerpts at length, all of them from the untranslated works.

It was apparent to Marx from the beginning of his investigation of the surplus problem that the class of capitalists could not and did not consume all of the surplus which it extracted from the workers. Thus, in the *Grundrisse*, a few dozen pages after the surplus problem has been raised, we find the following footnote:

. . . the creation of surplus labor on one side corresponds to the creation of minus-labor, relative idleness (or *non-productive* labor at best) on the other. That goes without saying as far as the capitalist class itself is concerned; but it also holds for the classes with whom it divides; thus, for the paupers, flunkeys, bootlickers and the whole train of retainers living off the surplus product; the part of the *servant* class which lives not from capital but from revenue. Essential difference between this *servant* class and the *working* class. . . . Thus Malthus is entirely logical when he calls not only for surplus labor and surplus capital but also for surplus idlers, consuming without producing, or the necessity for waste, luxury, ostentatious philanthropy, etc.<sup>43</sup>

Here Marx is thinking only of workers, rather, nonworkers who perform *personal* services for the capitalist, not those who fulfill a necessary unproductive function for the capital establishment. As the following excerpt from the *Theorien Ueber den Mehrwert* shows, he is not entirely clear that there is a difference.

Although the bourgeoisie is initially very frugal, with the growth in the productivity of its capital, i.e. its workers, it imitates the feudal system of retainers. According to the last (1861 or 1862) Factory Report, the total number of persons employed in the factories of the United Kingdom (managers included) was only 775,534—while the number of female servants in England alone was one million. What a beautiful arrangement, where a factory girl sweats in the shop for 12 long hours so that the factory owner can use a

part of her unpaid labor to take her sister as maid, her brother as groom, and her cousin as policeman or soldier into his personal service!<sup>44</sup>

When one sees the individual capitalist as the embodiment of the capitalist class, however, as Marx does consistently, the inclusion of soldiers and policemen together with domestic servants in the single category of *servants* makes more sense. In a relatively well-known section of *Capital*, he measures out his scorn and ridicule impartially to all unproductive workers, including valets, politicians, churchmen, lawyers, soldiers, landowners, rentiers, paupers, vagabonds and criminals,<sup>45</sup> regardless of whether they perform their services for the individual capitalist or for the class as a whole.

His contempt for these people vents itself with particular fury (in the *Theorien*) on the dismal parson, Malthus, who advocated the creation of ever larger masses of these idlers to keep the capitalist economy going by consuming its surplus product. "What a ridiculous idea," Marx writes, "that the surplus has to be consumed by servants and cannot be consumed by the productive workers themselves."<sup>46</sup> Yet, he writes that Malthus is right about the necessity for unproductive consumers in a *capitalist* economy.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Malthus' "remedies" for the evil of overproduction—"heavy taxes, a mass of state and church sinecures, great armies, pensioners, tithes for the churchmen, a heavy national debt and periodic costly wars"<sup>48</sup>—have been in great part adopted by every advanced capitalist system would not have surprised Marx. He writes of Malthus that

His greatest hope—which he himself indicates as more or less utopian—is that the middle class will grow in size and that the working proletariat will make up a constantly decreasing proportion of the total population (even if it grows in absolute numbers). That, in fact, is the course of bourgeois society. [*Das ist in der Tat der Gang der Bourgeoisgesellschaft.*]<sup>49</sup>

Although Marx had nothing but spit and venom for any scheme designed deliberately to foster the growth of an unpro-

ductive class, he was repeatedly forced to recognize that the growth of productivity, i.e. the rise of the surplus, created precisely such a class. A few excerpts will make that clear:

In order to produce "productively" one has to produce in a manner that excludes the mass of the producers from a part of the market demand for the product; one must produce in contradiction to a class whose consumption stands in no relationship to its production—since precisely this excess of production over consumption makes up the profit of capital. On the other hand, one has to produce for classes which consume without producing.<sup>50</sup>

On a low level of development of the social productivity of labor, where therefore surplus labor is relatively small, the class of those who live off the labor of others will in principle be small in relation to the number of workers. This class can grow to significant proportions to the degree that productivity, i.e. relative surplus value, develops.<sup>51</sup>

The progressive transformation of a part of the workers into servants is a lovely prospect, just as it is a great consolation for them [the workers] that, as a consequence of the growth of the net product, more spheres open up for unproductive workers who live off surplus labor and whose interests more or less compete with the directly exploiting class in exploiting them.<sup>52</sup>

Marx's consistency in this matter can be tested negatively as well; if he agrees, as we have seen, with economists who predict a growth of the unproductive class in the course of capitalist development, then he should also disagree with economists who think that they can do away with this class without abolishing the capitalist system itself. The bourgeois economist Ramsay advocated the abolition of interest on capital, i.e. the dividends paid by industrialists to investors and coupon-clippers, and the abolition of land rent. Ramsay saw no useful function for either of these groups. Marx's acid comment on this proposal should be read with the phrase about the simplification of class contradictions (from the *Manifesto*) in mind:

If this bourgeois ideal could really be put into practice, its consequence could only be that the entire surplus value would fall directly into the hands of the industrial capitalists, and all of society would be economically reduced to the simple contradiction between capital and wage labor, a simplification which certainly would hasten the dissolution of this form of production.<sup>53</sup>

Here again is the role of the surplus as a complicator of the simple class antagonisms reckoned with earlier. (A further, minor, example of the distance Marx's theory has carried him comes when he discusses economic crises in Volume II, part 2 of the *Theorien*; he writes that his analysis proceeds without dealing with "the real constitution of society, which by no means consists only of the class of workers and the class of industrial capitalists.")<sup>54</sup>

The clearest statement of Marx's theory of the middle class known to me occurs in his critique of Ricardo's analysis of the effect of increased productivity on the labor force. Ricardo, like Marx, was a bitter enemy of all forms of unproductive labor, which were to him as to Marx so many "*faux frais de production*," false production costs; and consequently Ricardo called for the extension of productive labor on a maximal scale. While Ricardo saw that only machinery permits the efficient utilization of vast quantities of industrial laborers, he was troubled by the fact that the growing productivity of machinery tended at the same time to make the worker superfluous. Marx comments:

One tendency throws the workers onto the pavement and creates a superfluous population. The other tendency absorbs it again and expands wage slavery on an absolute scale, so that the worker's lot changes constantly but he can never escape it. That is why the worker correctly considers the development of the productive capacities of his labor as a hostile tendency, and why the capitalist treats him as an element to be constantly eliminated from production. These are the contradictions with which Ricardo struggles in this chapter. *What he forgets to emphasize is the constant increase of the middle classes, who stand in the middle between the*

*workers on one side and the capitalists and landed proprietors on the other side, who are for the most part supported directly by revenue, who rest as a burden on the laboring foundation, and who increase the social security and the power of the upper ten thousand.*<sup>55</sup> (Italics mine—MN)

These excerpts represent, as far as I know, the most explicit statements of Marx's theory of the new middle class in the entire Marxian opus. It seems entirely possible to explain why Marx did not carry this theory further, and it may even be possible for someone to show somehow that this theory does not contradict Marx's prediction of class polarization and proletarian revolution (although I doubt it); but one thing cannot be done with Marx's theory of the middle class: it cannot be explained away. Even if Marx himself had never mentioned the terms "unproductive class" or "middle class," someone else would have to draw these implications of his theory, for the rise of the middle class follows directly from the law of the tendency of the surplus to rise, which is part of the law of the tendency of the profit rate to fall, which arises directly out of the solution of the surplus value problem, which consists of the labor theory of value. Let me review this chain of ideas once more. The labor theory of value holds that the only agency which is capable of creating more value than it represents is labor; that is, only labor is capable of creating *surplus* value. The capitalist system of production consists of the appropriation by the capitalist class of ever greater quantities of this surplus value. In a developed capitalist system, the capitalist class will concentrate on increasing *relative* surplus value. That is, it will introduce machinery in order to decrease that portion of the working day which is necessary to reproduce the workers' labor power, and to increase that portion which is surplus labor. On the one hand, increased productivity requires increased investment in machinery, so that the *rate* of *profit* will tend to fall. On the other hand, the mass of profit will rise, and both the *rate* and the *volume* of *surplus* must rise. What happens to this swelling surplus? It *enables* the capitalist class to create a class of people who are not productive workers, but who perform services either for individual capitalists or,

more important, for the capitalist class as a whole; and at the same time, the rise of productivity *requires* such a class of unproductive workers to fulfill the functions of distributing, marketing, researching, financing, managing, keeping track of and glorifying the swelling surplus product. This class of unproductive workers, service workers, or servants for short, is the middle class. In short, the middle class follows from the central principles which Marx spent the best decades of his life and his health in elaborating, and which he considered his historic contribution to the understanding of capitalism. If one denies, as it seems to me one must, the validity of Marx's class polarization and proletarian revolution predictions from the *Manifesto*, one does not deny that Marx was a champion of the proletarian cause; one cuts out of Marxism only its youthful optimism, the product of excessive captivation with the elegance of Hegelian idealism. But in order to cut out of Marx his theory of the middle class, one has to overthrow Marxism, scientific socialism, at its core—and fly in the face of contemporary reality. There *is* after all a middle class in advanced industrial society; and it must be considered one of Marx's great scientific achievements (and a great personal achievement, considering where his sentiments lay) to have not only predicted that such a new middle class would arise, but also to have laid down the fundamental economic and sociological principles which explain its rise and its role in the larger class structure. The outlines of what may become an adequate theory to account for the generation, growth, economic function and movement of the middle class have to my knowledge not been contributed by any other social scientist before Marx or after him. Here is a rare accomplishment and a rare challenge.



## FOOTNOTES

1. "Die Deutsche Ideologie," in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Werke* (Dietz, Berlin) Vol. 3, p. 25.
2. Cf. *Werke*, Vol. 1, esp. pp. 283-4.
3. Cf. *Werke*, Vol. 1, esp. pp. 354-5, 368-9.
4. *Werke*, Vol. 1, p. 390.
5. *Ibid.*
6. "Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie. Vorwort," *Werke* 13, p. 8.
7. For reasons unclear to me, the *Werke* edition does not contain the 1844 MSS. Because of its reliability and wide availability, I have quoted from the Bottomore translation, in Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (Ungar, New York, 1961). The present quotation is on p. 91.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
12. "The consideration of *division of labor* and *exchange* is of the greatest interest, since they are the *perceptible, alienated* expression of human *activity* and *capacities* as the *activity* and *capacities proper to a species.*" *Ibid.*, p. 161.
13. *Werke* 3, p. 33. A page earlier, Marx writes that "private property and division of labor are identical expressions" for the same thing, i.e. that the division of classes is only another aspect of the division of labor, and vice versa.
14. "Ueber P.-J. Proudhon" in *Werke* 16, p. 27. For Marx's clarification of the difference between division of labor and division of classes see *Misere de la Philosophie* (1847) in *Werke* 4, pp. 122, 144-156.
15. "Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" in Fromm, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.
16. "Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England," in *Werke* 2, pp. 250-251.
17. "Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei," in *Werke* 4, p. 463. I have relied in general on the English translation appearing in *The Communist Manifesto* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1964) for my renderings of the original. However, some of the technical economic terms in that translation are not quite accurately put; see footnotes 20 and 23 below.
18. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie (Rohentwurf)*, Marx-Engels-Lenin Institut, Moscow (Dietz, Berlin, 1953). The actual *Grundrisse* of 1857-58 occupy 760 pages in this huge volume. A complete translation, or at the very least a translation of selected excerpts, would be highly desirable.
19. *Werke* 4, pp. 468, 473, 475.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 476. "Reinertrag" is misleadingly rendered as "surplus" in the English translation cited above, footnote 17.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
22. For example, see Marx's polemic against the tendency to "explain" capitalist economics with reference to the so-called laws of supply and demand, i.e. the laws of the market, in *Kapital III*, *Werke* 25, p. 191 and elsewhere.
23. *Werke* 4, p. 475. The English translation renders "erzeugen" as "getting" instead of "creating" a new supply of wage labor; the point, however, is not vital.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
25. "Der Preis einer Ware, also auch der Arbeit, ist aber gleich ihren Produktionskosten." *Ibid.*, p. 469. The editors of the *Werke* duly note that Marx would have said "Arbeitskraft" instead of "Arbeit" in his later writings, a crucial difference on which may be said to hinge the entire distinction between Marxist and non-Marxist economics—as well as the distinction, perhaps, between the "young Marx" and the "mature Marx." See *Ibid.*, footnote 298, p. 649, and footnote 198, p. 636.
26. This definition is restated frequently, notably in "Lohn, Preis und Profit," *Werke* 16, pp. 121-132, in *Capital*, and elsewhere.
27. *Kapital I*, *Werke* 23, p. 532.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 281.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 533.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 534.
31. *Kapital III*, *Werke* 25, p. 223.
32. Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1966). The authors of this monumental study consider the "law of the rising surplus" a *substitution* for Marx's law of the tendential fall of the profit rate (see p. 72) without however discussing the fact that the law of the rising surplus is really no substitution at all, but merely another aspect of Marx's law.
33. This is already stated in *Grundrisse*, p. 649: "Thus the profit rate stands in an inverse relationship to the growth of relative surplus value. . . ." More explicitly in *Kapital III*: "As the process of production and accumulation progresses, the mass of surplus labor that can be and is appropriated, and thus the absolute mass of the profits appropriated by the capitalist class, *must grow.*" (*Werke* 25, p. 229; also pages 228, 230, and elsewhere in the same chapter.
34. *Kapital I*, *Werke* 23, p. 646.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 647.
36. Karl Marx, *Theorien Ueber den Mehrwert*, Karl Kautsky, editor, (Dietz, Stuttgart, 1919), Volume II, part 1, p. 141. A new edition of this important work is being issued by the editors of the *Werke* series; however, only Volume I of the new edition was available to me, and I have preferred to quote from the Kautsky edition, which seems to be more widely available in libraries. This work, consisting of three volumes in four books, figures in the *Werke* edition as "Volume Four" of *Capital*; it was written in manuscript by Marx in 1861-1862, however, and thus predates the other volumes of *Capital*. I shall refer to it as "*Theorien*" in the notes below.
37. *Kapital I*, *Werke* 23, p. 673; also *Kapital III*, *Werke* 25, p. 232.
38. *Grundrisse*, p. 212.

39. *Theorien I*, p. 189; see also p. 199.
40. These are of course the so-called white-collar proletarians, and the fact that this class also works for wages has aroused hopes that it also might in time be stimulated to develop along the classic lines of increasing proletarian militancy. Whatever the merit of this idea, however, it should be clear that to Marx, the proletariat meant *productive* workers only. If the proletariat is defined to include all those who work for wages, then many corporation executives and managers are proletarians too. Marx's early view of wage labor shows, by contrast, considerable lack of rigor; thus in the *Manifesto* he writes that the bourgeoisie has turned the judge, the parson, the poet, the scientist into its "paid wage laborers" (*Werke* 4, p. 465), which would put these worthy gentlemen into the proletariat, too, or so it would seem. Here again, as mentioned before, Marx sees the transformation of human values into market values as the overriding characteristic of the capitalist epoch, and has not yet become aware of the profounder characteristic, namely the creation and appropriation of surplus by the capitalist class. The shift from the market concept to the surplus concept marks, in my opinion, the central difference between "young" and "mature" Marxist thought. See footnote 25, above.
41. *Kapital III*, *Werke* 25, p. 310. The necessary connection between the rising requirement for such auxiliary services and the rise of the middle class is evident, but Marx does not state it at this point.
42. For example, even so sympathetic an economist as Joan Robinson dismisses the labor theory of value as an "incantation" which is insubstantial for the rest of his work, which is a bit like saying that the concept of motion has no relevance for the understanding of Newton's laws. See Joan Robinson, *An Essay on Marxian Economics* (Macmillan, London, 1949), p. 22.
43. *Grundrisse*, pp. 304-5, fn.
44. *Theorien I*, p. 171. See also p. 189.
45. *Kapital I*, *Werke* 23, pp. 469-70. See also Engels summarizing Marx in "Zur Wohnungsfrage" *Werke* 18, p. 214, where he speaks of the division of the surplus among unproductive workers, ranging from valets to the Pope, the Kaiser, the night watchman, etc. At one point Marx calls the various strata of civil servants, churchmen, etc., nothing but "elegant paupers." (*Theorien I*, p. 189.)
46. *Theorien I*, p. 184.
47. *Ibid.*; see also footnote 43 above.
48. *Theorien III*, p. 49.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 139 fn.
51. *Theorien II*, part 1, p. 127.
52. *Theorien II*, part 2, p. 365.
53. *Theorien III*, p. 423.
54. *Theorien II*, part 2, p. 264.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 368. A part of this excerpt appears in a not-quite-tight translation in T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, editors, *Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (McGraw-Hill paperback, 1964), p. 191.

# NOTES ON THE NEED FOR A SOCIALIST PARTY

James Weinstein

*These notes were prepared for a conference sponsored by Studies on the Left and held in New York on December 27th, 1966. They were presented at that meeting, as was the editorial in this issue by Robert Wolfe. Pressure of other work has prevented me from developing these ideas further; the notes are presented to stimulate discussion now.—JW*

## I.

MY APPROACH to socialist politics in the United States starts with an estimate of the dominant political ideology of the corporations and the nature of the liberal state. Most *Studies on the Left* readers accept the concept of corporate liberalism as the ideology of big business, so there is no need for elaboration of that here. But it is important to know, and to remember, that this concept is almost totally at variance with the thinking not only of ordinary liberals, who form the great majority of politically conscious Americans, but also of Communists and of many others who call themselves socialists. Both the Communist and Socialist Parties for the past thirty years or more

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have accepted the myth created in the Progressive Era and perpetuated by Democratic Party ideologues that liberalism is a political movement against the power of business. It is, therefore, necessary to reassert our understanding of this and to make clear that liberalism is not a neutral system of political thought but an ideology that sustains and strengthens the existing social structure.

If this is not understood by most radicals today, it was clearly perceived by many socialists over fifty years ago. Like so much else in American socialism, there has been a regression here since the collapse of the old Socialist Party. In 1912, Robert Rives LaMonte, a left-wing Socialist, explained that "no matter whether the Republicans or the Democrats win the Presidency we shall get more workmen's compensation acts, more and more restrictions upon child labor, more and more regulation of women in industry" as well as the suffrage, reduction of unemployment and old age pensions.

"Very soon," LaMonte argued, "there will cease to be any real opposition to reforms that aim at preserving your health and efficiency.

"Old age pensions, insurance against sickness, accident and unemployment are cheaper, are better business than jails, poor houses, asylums, hospitals, etc., to care for the unemployables.

"They are even learning that too widespread joblessness and a wage too far below a decent subsistence level leads to agitation that threatens the whole fabric of capitalism."

Beyond that, the rich "know more about the poor today than ever before." "And this increased knowledge begets increased sympathy." "The rich, altogether apart from self-interest, want to help the poor. And this kindly desire is a factor in all modern social legislation. But the rich are so placed that they can afford to help the poor only when by so doing they help themselves still more."

Reforms, LaMonte concluded, were therefore the business of progressives. The speed of reform would depend on the size of the Socialist vote. Socialists should demand only impossible reforms—those which embodied truly socialist principles and which educated the public to the ethical and social superiority of socialism.

Other socialists understood the role of the state in a way that Communists and socialists since have either forgotten or submerged for "tactical" reasons.

"The clearest thinkers among the capitalists and their politicians," the *International Socialist Review* wrote in 1912, "realized that if American manufacturers were to compete with Germany in the world market," the "next step" might be for the businessman "to act on the discovery that he can carry on certain portions of the productive process more efficiently through HIS government than through private corporations." "Some muddleheads may think that will be socialism," the *Review* added, "but the capitalist knows better." "The right of wage workers to organize and to control the conditions under which they work—that is the issue that must be fought out between the two great opposing classes."

## II.

The second assumption, which is explicitly rejected by most of the new left and implicitly rejected by the old left of the Communist and Socialist Parties, is (to quote Kenneth McNaught in the December, 1966 issue of *The Journal of American History*) that "the collapse of American socialism, and thus of all twentieth-century attempts to organize a political basis of ideological dissent outside the major parties, could scarcely be more crucial as a determinant of the nature of the present Great Society." Put another way, activity that does not explicitly lead toward the emergence and development of a popular socialist party as a rallying point for anticapitalist dissent can only lead to the strengthening of the dominant liberalism. This, too, is nothing new. In 1919 Harold Laski, complaining about the lack of a socialist commitment on the part of the new leftists of that day, wrote that "the worst of it is that the liberals [new left] have no program beyond specific protest. . . . There is interest in the teachers' sufferings one day and it dies before the strike at Lawrence the next which, in turn, gives way to riots on May Day. . . . The most hopeful thing I see is twofold in aspect—the movement toward a labor party and the restlessness of the undergraduates."

Today, as in 1919, we have a move toward independent

politics and we have restless undergraduates. And, indeed, in the forty-six years since 1919 that situation has been repeated more than once, but the result has always been what it is today: activity that leads to despair or desperation. The reason for that should be clear: to be meaningful activity must either lead to immediate change of a significant nature, or it must lead to the strengthening of a visible organization that has a long-range commitment to transform society in a specific manner, that is, a party with a program and a strategy. In this society the first alternative is rarely possible, partly because the state has come to understand the efficacy of what Veblen called "patient ambiguity and delay," and partly because those in power realize that sporadic, ad hoc, or single-issue movements represent no challenge to their power—that to move beyond protest and dissent, which in the end can lead only to dropping out of the system, requires a permanent rallying point that has a serious and public intention to replace those in control. Dropping out, of course, is frowned upon by some conscious radicals and appreciated by others, but whatever it may signify about the state of mind of the drop-outs, and, therefore, of their potentially revolutionary character, it is clear that if all dissenters dropped out there would be no one left to run things but those who now do so.

To advocate the formation of a popular socialist party in the United States is to evoke two responses, each of which in its true nature is a criticism of the *internal* and *fundamental* failure of twentieth-century Western socialism, and of American socialism more than any other. One criticism is that ideological politics is a dead end. That criticism, although few realize it, is exactly upside down. What is seen as ideological politics, namely the disputes between Communists, Socialists and Trotskyists in the 1930's and since, is ideological only in the sense of ideology as false consciousness. What this "ideological" politics really represents is what Daniel Bell correctly calls the end of ideology, only where Bell means to apply this to politics in general, it has been true only of the left. Liberalism, consensus, the politics of negotiated social reform, is the most highly ideological of all American politics. It is precisely with Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson that the dominant politics

becomes highly and *consciously* ideological at the center. And it is since Wilson that the socialists have become absorbed by the dominant ideology, while retaining their differences about the nature of Soviet society. The need is to discard the falsely ideological politics of the left of the last forty years and to resume the job of developing a socialist ideology for the United States.

The other criticism is that which appears to some to be a put-down of Marx—Ronald Aronson's insistence that Marxism is no longer useful because its central thesis, the working class as revolutionary agent, has been proved invalid. This, too, is really a criticism of the American socialists above all, although, as I will explain below, I think it is also a misreading of Marx. On this point it is interesting to see that the new socialists in Europe, those that put out the *International Socialist Journal*, are already more advanced in their analysis and consciousness of what they call neocapitalism than are traditional socialists in the United States of corporate liberalism—even though American corporate liberalism dates back to before the First World War, whereas European neocapitalism is a post-World War II phenomenon.

Aronson, and many others, view the call for a new socialist party simply as an act of faith, since the "agent" has disappeared. There seem to me to be three things wrong with this, or, at least two and one half. 1) Although Marx did speak of the working class as the agent of change, in fact he acted, and all socialists since him have acted, on the understanding that the *agent* of change is the party—the self-conscious socialists—which has always been made up of several classes, and has always been led by what we call middle-class intellectuals (at least in those countries with successful parties). 2) Marx's concept of the proletariat and proletarianization went beyond the industrial working class, although his stress was on this section of workers because he was describing an emergent industrial system. Indeed, the true inner logic of *Capital*, which is, above all, a theory of capital accumulation, leads inevitably to the disappearance of the industrial working class as the largest social grouping. This is implicit in the theory of the falling tendency of the rate of profit. Marx does assert



that the law does not mean a decrease in the total number of workers, even though it operates through a steadily increasing proportion of fixed capital (machinery) to variable capital (labor power). But Marx was describing the early stages of industrial expansion, when capitalism was still restricted to relatively narrow spheres of activity. At one point he does recognize that "a development of the productive forces which would diminish the absolute number of laborers, that is, which would enable the entire nation to accomplish its total production in a shorter time, would cause a revolution because it would put the majority of the population on the shelf." (The point here is not whether such a situation would, by itself, cause a revolution, but that Marx saw such a development as coming at some time as a result of the operation of the process of accumulation he described.) "In this," Marx continued, "the specific barrier of capitalist production shows itself once more, proving that capitalist production is not an absolute form for the development of the productive powers and creation of wealth, but rather comes in collision with this development at a certain point [*Capital*, Volume III, page 309, Kerr edition]." I will come back to this. 3) The working class has not yet disappeared in the United States. In fact, the industrial work force is today approximately the same size as it was fifty years ago. It has declined relatively, but unlike the agricultural work force, which has shrunk from fifty percent of the population to seven percent, its decline has been slight.

All three of these questions need to be examined in depth and given serious thought (not just offhand remarks, such as these); I do not mean to belittle the importance of them. But Aronson's pronouncement that "by mistaking his personal commitment to socialism for a real historical trend, the Marxist can view his role as making Americans 'see the relevance' of socialism, as working to bring about 'socialist consciousness'—whatever that might mean at a time when proletarian consciousness no longer exists," misses the mark. In the first place, there never was "a real historical trend" toward socialism, except to the extent that a self-conscious *party* worked to create socialist consciousness among certain social groupings (industrial workers, skilled workers, tenant and family farmers and intellectuals

in the United States). Indeed, in the last issue of *Studies on the Left*, along with Aronson's piece, Gabriel Kolko pointed out that the main weakness of socialists in the United States was their mistaken belief in the inevitability of socialist development—that is, in “real historical” social trends as something that existed outside of the conscious and purposeful intervention of committed individuals. No class or group of classes has ever spontaneously developed its class consciousness, but only an interest consciousness. As Marx asserts, this interest consciousness, or immediate interest, may often run counter to a class's real or historical interest. The success of the corporations, in fact, has rested largely in their great sophistication and ability to transcend their immediate interests when necessary in the pre-World War I days and to have developed and accepted what we call corporate liberalism as in their true class interest, even though at some points such social reforms as were instituted violated the more narrow interests of those sponsoring them. But this development did not occur spontaneously in response to historical trends without conscious intervention by individuals.

The same was true of working-class consciousness where it existed, or of socialist consciousness; it was always the result of the willful action of parties.

Now, of course, this begs the question of the role of the working class, and I will come back to that, too. But it does indicate that a personal commitment to socialism on the part of intellectuals is, indeed, the first prerequisite of a popular socialist movement. If there is to be such a movement there must first be a group of people committed to social transformation, capable of developing a vision of a better society and then of working out a strategy for its attainment. Neither task can be done except through the existence of a rallying point for those who would move in that direction: a party. The intellectual work that Aronson calls for cannot be done outside such a framework, since outside it there is no need for the work. It is, of course, true that the working out of these ideas and this strategy have not gone very far. The question is how far they can go without a collective, willful commitment to, and need for, their further development. Sociological arguments such

as Aronson uses are self-fulfilling, since no judgment can be made about the possibilities of socialist politics and the development of socialist consciousness in the absence of an attempt. As long as there is no socialist program, no socialist alternative presented to workers and other classes, it is impossible to say that they cannot accept such ideas. The ideas will not develop out of the masses spontaneously. A party is needed if only to test the possibilities of socialist politics. Until such a test is made the only conclusion that one can draw is that proletarian consciousness does not develop unaided.

### III.

I have already indicated that the agent of social change is a conscious group of individuals committed to transforming society in a specific direction or manner, and organized to do so. If such a party is to be taken seriously it must solve two theoretical problems. It must develop both a vision of a new society, and the theoretical and technical competence to plan for and run such a society. As Veblen put it in 1919, "No movement for the dispossession of the Vested Interests in America can hope for even a temporary success unless it is undertaken by an organization which is competent to take over the country's productive industry as a whole, and to administer it from the start on a more efficient plan than that now pursued" by those in power. Veblen pointed out that the problem of revolution in an advanced industrial society was different from that in Soviet Russia. "As compared with America and much of Western Europe," he wrote, "Russia is not an industrialized region, in any decisive sense," and this was in part responsible for the "astonishing measure of success" she had achieved. "They have been able to fall back on an earlier, simpler, less close-knit plan of productive industry: such that any detailed part of this loose-knit Russian community is able, at a pinch, to draw its own livelihood from its own soil by its own work, without that instant and unremitting dependence on materials and wrought goods drawn from foreign ports and distant regions, that is characteristic of" the United States [*Engineers and the Price System*, page 95].

Veblen's stress was on competence and efficiency, and his

vision was somewhat distorted by this emphasis. But he saw also that "management of industry by business methods" had become highly wasteful and was bound increasingly "to run more and more consistently at cross purposes with the community's livelihood." "With every further increase in the volume and complexity of the industrial system, any businesslike control is bound to grow still more incompetent, irrelevant and impertinent [pages 100-101]." Veblen, however, did not talk about the uses to which this industrial capacity should be put, although he clearly implied a rejection of the imperatives of the market economy as a determinant. Since he was concerned primarily with competence and efficiency, he looked to the engineers and technicians as the group to rely upon for the reorganization of industry and society. We need to go beyond this, but we should also recognize the importance of the above.

#### IV.

It seems to me that those of us who assert the need for a socialist transformation do so not as an act of faith, as Aronson implies, but out of a real need for a better life and because we can see that under capitalism things are organized both irrationally and inhumanly. The large number of socialists like ourselves and the widespread dissatisfaction with material comforts as a substitute for human relationships and meaningful activity indicates something about the potential constituency for a socialist movement. It is related to and an outgrowth of Marx's insistence on increasing proletarianization under capitalism. "Within the capitalist system," Marx wrote, "all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers . . . they transform life-time into working-time. . . . In proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the worker, be his payment high or low, must grow worse [*Capital*, Volume I, pages 708-709, Modern Library edition]." Marx, of course, was writing about industrial capital; in his day there was still much room for new investment in manufacturing industry. Since then, with the constant growth of surplus capital, corporate investment and control has spread beyond manufacturing to the realm of distribution and service industries. The result has

been a rapid decline in the number of individual entrepreneurs. Formerly independent entrepreneurs, urban and rural, have become and are becoming the wage or salaried employees of corporations. These people are deprived of economic independence, not only in the former sense that they were dependent on general market conditions, but also in the sense that their very jobs depend on the needs of other people's enterprises. Beyond this, the universities, both private and state, are increasingly converted to training grounds and service operations for the corporations, and faculty and students into appendages of the market economy.

William A. Williams has made this point strongly in his *The Great Evasion* (pages 114-122). He emphasizes the loss of any participating role in the principal decisions of the capitalist marketplace due to the loss of control over any private property which plays a part in the productive activities of the system. The overt sign of proletarianization, as Marx defines it, is the change from entrepreneurial standing to that of wage or salaried work. As Williams puts it, in a political economy based upon the control of private property, with its law codified in that framework, the loss of productive private property also involves a fall into second-class citizenship. It is the consciousness of this that has created the popularity of the SDS slogan of participatory democracy, not among the poor, but among the students.

What this process implies to me is that increasingly the real interests of the great majority of the population, including the poor, the industrial workers, service workers and large sections of what we mistakenly call the middle class, run counter to those of the corporations and the further extension of the market economy.

It would seem most useful to view the potential constituency for a socialist movement—that is, a party with an intention to take power and transform society—as having to include large numbers from all those classes whose real interests are violated by the corporations and who are not a part of the governing system. This includes those that we know as the poor, the workers and the middle classes. It also includes racial minorities.

But the process of building a socialist movement will go through many stages. The problem at the beginning—which is where we are—is how to bring together those who already think of themselves in some way as socialists into a coherent and self-conscious grouping so that the work of developing a vision of a new society and an initial organizing strategy can be done consistently. We know that there are hundreds of thousands, maybe a million or two persons in this country that consider themselves socialists in some sense or other, but who are unaffiliated and unorganized. We know these people are largely of the so-called middle class, that is, intellectuals, students, teachers, technicians, white-collar workers of various kinds. In the absence of a meaningful left many are beats and hippies. We ourselves are from these groups. Many of these people already reject the dominant values of American business society. Many are immune to cooptation through material payoffs. Many understand the idea of socialism as a prerequisite for the good society. It seems self-evident that the first steps toward a socialist party should be to bring these people into a dialogue about transforming the United States, so that we can find those among them who will be serious revolutionaries.

The poor, who in classical Marxist thought are not working class but an unorganizable lumpen proletariat, are not now a likely source of recruitment for a new socialist movement, nor are they likely to contribute substantially to its development in the initial stages. The primary social goal of most poor people—those who are not totally demoralized—is to make it, to enter the “middle class,” or to have their children do so. They have, as a class, neither the leisure nor the education to do the work of revitalizing the concept of socialism or to work out a strategy for a socialist transformation of society. Their immediate interest is to improve their material conditions, and on an individual basis this can be done in the context of the existing social order. This does not mean that the poor will not be part of a socialist constituency if a party emerges. But they will become that only after we have a visible, relevant, substantial party with which they can identify from the beginning of their association with us.

The white working class is inaccessible to socialists through

its places of work at present because we have no public identity. In the past socialists have been influential among workers in the shops because they were in the forefront of union organization. Now the trade-union movement is tightly controlled by supporters of the dominant liberalism, and is inaccessible to individual radicals or socialists unless they totally submerge their ideology. Our views of American society are relevant to industrial workers, but we will have no influence on them in their work places until we have a visible party with a public presence and program.

That leaves us with the need first to bring together those who share in a general way our view of the existing society and our incipient views of the alternative. Those people are mostly young students and intellectuals, but also include numbers of older unaffiliated socialists.

The immediate job is not organizing in the sense that term has been used on the new left in recent years, or, for that matter, by Communists for decades. Every debate on the left, in SNCC, SDS, CIPA, certainly in the sects, makes it clear that the lack is in the realm of ideas, in our knowledge of American society and how it got to be what it is, in beginning to be able to talk about what we mean by the good society. We must begin to be able to say not simply that socialism is the answer, but to define what socialism could mean in the United States. Our demands and program must develop out of such a framework of thought, otherwise we will put together nothing more than another competing organization.

# THE SCHEER CAMPAIGN

Buddy Stein and David Wellman

BOB SCHEER'S CAMPAIGN for Congress ended on June 7, 1966. Its achievements are well known. Against a liberal incumbent Congressman—a "dove" on the Vietnam issue—the campaign piled up 45 percent of the vote. In so doing, it mobilized the Berkeley movement, tapped the discontent of left liberals and linked them organizationally with campus radicals, spent 69,000 dollars, and disseminated widely a vigorous critique of the war in Vietnam. Shortly after June 7 the Campus Community for Scheer held a meeting to discuss carrying on the work that had been begun. People talked about working for a civilian review board in Oakland, about a school boycott, about renewing the electoral effort on the municipal level with candidacies for the Berkeley and Oakland City Councils.

Nobody talked about the war.

As the pattern set at that meeting repeated itself again and again, radicals began to complain that the Scheer organiza-

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tion was abandoning the war issue. To meet the criticisms the campaign turned again to the ballot box and proposed a "peace initiative." Seven thousand signatures would place on the ballot a proposal to create a Peace Office which would declare Berkeley's opposition to the war, disseminate information and seek reconversion of war industry. But although Scheer had won a clear majority in Berkeley, he could not find the workers, conjure the enthusiasm, or hold together the organization to collect 7,000 signatures. To date they have not been collected.

"Scheer lives," a local bumper sticker brightly proclaims. His campaign has been succeeded by the Community for New Politics. Like the campaign, the CNP has offices, workers and a mammoth printing bill—all the trappings of a going organization. All the same, the Berkeley peace movement lies in ruins. By its sheer bulk and its ideological bias, the Scheer campaign effectively squashed all efforts to sustain a direct action movement in Berkeley. At the same time, the CNP has run out of gas, unable to decide where to go from here.

Its frustration is, we think, inherent in the effort to base the future of the movement on an electoral campaign. If our analysis of its failure is harsh, it is not because the campaign didn't end the war, or because we are unsympathetic to its problems. Rather, it is because the Scheer campaign has become a model for radical success in electoral politics. Throughout the state and across the country movement people are preparing to follow its course. We think it is a model to be shunned. Electoral politics evolved out of the inability of protest to create a growing and sustained movement. The Scheer campaign organization now finds itself in the impasse it was designed to overcome.

This process is a familiar one. The teach-in movement which began in the spring of 1965 was abandoned when its headline value fell and its adherents became ready for direct action. In Berkeley 25,000 people attended a teach-in in May of 1965; as a result of the enthusiasm for direct action which that meeting generated, the Vietnam Day Committee was formed. From the VDC in turn went out the call for the October 15 International Days of Protest. Across the country 100,000 people marched. But this great numerical success also

marked the beginning of a decline. The succession of marches which followed were sterile repetitions of October 15. By directing its efforts towards the mass media and the Johnson Administration, the movement cut itself off from both the uncommitted and its own, increasingly frustrated, base.

We had marched into a *cul-de-sac*. The Scheer campaign was created to get us out. Sharing the movement's critique of short-lived direct-action organizations which were unable to operate outside of crisis situations, the radical advocates of electoral politics argued that a campaign was a new *tactic*. Winning was not important. Rather, they said, the campaign would serve as a vehicle for community organizing while providing a framework within which to educate the organizers. Moreover, by focusing its opposition on a liberal Congressman, the campaign would broaden the protest against the war to a critique of liberalism itself, and in so doing, link foreign policy to domestic concerns. Initially, then, Scheer and his spokesmen accepted what we would consider a radical notion of success: they hoped to create a permanent organization which could educate its members, attract and hold newcomers and build an enduring movement. They spoke of democratic control of the campaign, of a continuous process of critical self-scrutiny by those involved and of an uncompromising stand on issues. These were the original criteria for what the campaign called "a new style of politics." In rapid succession they were abandoned. The label lasted throughout the campaign; its definition changed.

Within a short time after the race began, Scheer was telling audiences that his opponent had been forced to take him seriously. His campaign had breathed new life into the political process, he would argue, by demonstrating that a serious approach to issues of consequence could attract voters. This concern for the vote was a new departure for the campaign. From it a new vision of success evolved. Again and again Scheer and his followers insisted that their effort would prove that a candidate who campaigned on a radical platform could win a large—possibly a majority—vote. This new touchstone shattered the hopes that the radicals had placed in the campaign. Success at the polls led away from a new politics and into America—

into the belief that the truly effective work for change is done at the ballot box.

With one exception the campaign was able to meet none of the criteria its radical wing had set for it. It did, as it had promised, examine the issues and criticize the war in Vietnam and the war on poverty in no uncertain terms. Perhaps no section of the movement is blessed with so articulate and intelligent a spokesman as Scheer. Inevitably, his platform and statements had weaknesses, but within the context of the American electoral system it was a daring effort. Scheer appealed to the rank-and-file of the ILWU over the head of its leadership with an attack on the union for feeding on the war. He got the endorsement. He told Democrats that their party was bankrupt and castigated liberals whose votes he was seeking. Scheer supporters are justly proud of their issue orientation—of an electoral campaign which offered a vigorous critique of the war and an outspoken condemnation of American society. In this respect, the campaign's politics were new. But by harnessing their stand on the issues to the pursuit of votes, the Scheer people bound themselves to forms of organization and communication which were scarcely distinguishable from those employed by the major parties. In quest of an old goal—the vote—they reverted to old formulas.

The hope of creating new political forms was doomed to failure from the start. At the time the campaign began the radical movement was in disarray, torn by tactical problems, a gulf between spokesmen and workers and political schisms. Nor was there an organized constituency to which radicals could relate. An SDS community-organizing project had been crushed in the fall of 1965. Students at the university were essentially unorganized. Even the poverty program had been remarkably unsuccessful in the East Bay. There was, then, no real constituency that radical advocates of an electoral campaign could claim to represent. Since radicals within the campaign were neither united nor representative of a political base, they were left with only one option—coalition with groups whose aims and methods diverged considerably from their own.

There were essentially three distinct tendencies within the campaign. The original impetus for a congressional race came

from the loose radical movement centered on the campus on the one hand, and from old leftists and disenchanted liberals on the other. The radicals were aware of the pitfalls inherent in entering the coalition with a small political base, but they saw the campaign as a mechanism for building the constituency they lacked. They believed that the campaign would mobilize the workers and expose the issues with which to organize the community. And, in fact, had community organizing become a significant and successful aspect of the campaign, the radicals would have been able to relate to the other elements in the coalition on equal terms and the campaign might have broken out of traditional political molds. But the organizing schemes crumbled before they could be put in practice because of the June 7 deadline and the desire to meet it with a substantial vote in hand. The radicals did not share that desire, but they were forced to contend from a position of weakness with the other elements of the coalition, whose assumptions implied another notion of success.

The liberals had seen their influence within the Democratic Party fade, the California Democratic Council destroyed and their advice spurned. They believed that Cohelan was *their* man, who, like Johnson, had betrayed them. The campaign would, they felt, demonstrate the viability of pressure group politics in a pluralist democracy by forcing Cohelan to take a stronger stand on the war and by "getting the message" to the president.

For the Communist Party and those who shared its perspective, the beauty of the campaign lay precisely in the fact of coalition. It presented them with the opportunity to link all of the "progressive" forces in the community—liberals, Negroes, ILWU trade unionists and student radicals. Like the liberals they hoped to permeate the Democratic Party, while like the radicals they wanted to link up the various issues around which the campaign would be run. They advocated a strong issue-oriented campaign using traditional methods, and attempted to head off any effort to experiment for fear of alienating some element of the coalition.

Thus the campaign was subjected to considerable internal stress and conflict. June 7 was scarcely relevant to the radicals, but to the liberals it was Judgement Day. Their participation

in the campaign, with the attendant risk of ostracism from the seats of influence, could only be justified by a high percentage of the vote. For their part, the adherents of the old left wanted to build an electoral machine rather than a community organization. To this end they also sought to achieve a large vote in June. They agreed with the liberals that important gains could be made by moving Cohelan to the left, and they realized that the campaign coalition could best be maintained by giving first priority to the election. Therefore, they saw primary day as a milestone pointing toward a long-term effort. This theory of organization put them in an excellent position to act as brokers between radicals and liberals, for they could argue for a major effort to get out the vote while assuring the radicals that they agreed with their long-range vision.

Because Scheer's personal ties and beliefs are radical, and because the Vietnam Day Committee was the major antiwar force in the Bay Area, the original campaign committee was dominated by radicals. If, at a later stage, talk of community organizing was to become mere window-dressing, the campaign's initial commitment to such an approach was genuine. "Are we trying to win?", asked a pamphlet designed to recruit workers from the campus:

Yes. The primary election will be a Vietnam referendum. A vote for Scheer will be seen as a vote for American withdrawal from Vietnam. It is crucial that we get as many votes as possible. If we are successful in taking this campaign to every home and street corner in this district, we can win. However, we will not measure our success only by the number of votes we receive. More important is our success in stirring debate, dialogue and protest, and in developing an ongoing, articulate political movement in this area.

But this appeal concealed a contradiction. In attempting to square its commitment to "developing an ongoing, articulate political movement" with its effort "to get as many votes as possible" the campaign was requiring its volunteers to work at two different paces on two separate timetables. Community organizing is a year-long process; the primary was over in five months. Work began in February for an election in June. A

large number of people had to be registered in the Democratic Party in order to vote; the rudiments of an electoral organization had to be quickly developed. Faced with an avalanche of work and beset by the claims of their new partners, the radicals either dropped out or were forced out of their positions. Nor were they entirely innocent victims. Many were unable or unwilling to cope with their responsibilities—to complete the drafts of programs with which they were entrusted or to set up the mechanisms through which the campaign would function.

For most of the radicals community organizing was a euphemism for organizing within the black ghetto. Little consideration was therefore given to organizing in the middle-class hills or in the white working-class sections of Berkeley and Oakland. But, ironically enough, when control of the campaign fell mainly into the hands of the old leftists—who allegedly do not share the student radicals' romantic attachment to the ghetto—the campaign still remained without an appeal to the white working class. There are old-left adherents of the campaign who attribute this failure to their preoccupation with the internal struggle against the new left. But this explanation obscures the contradiction between organizing people and amassing votes. The votes of angry and alienated ghetto-dwellers are relatively easy to obtain, while white workers are among the least likely to respond to a radical appeal. That a concerted effort in the white community might well have sown the seeds of future change was beside the point. The reality of election day a few months off triumphed over old left theory fully as much as over new left theory. The strategy it dictated was to appeal for the combined vote of the Oakland Negro and the Berkeley intellectual.

Thus people within the campaign moved from a perspective of developing permanent community organizations to one of amassing a large vote. Deprived of campaign resources, the few who continued to suggest or put into practice organizing schemes were faced with a vicious cycle. As people discovered the difficulties and frustrations of trying to build a grass roots organization, the temptation to fall back on mere canvassing became stronger; while, as more and more people concentrated on soliciting votes, the collapse of organizing work was ac-

celerated. The result was that each day hundreds of volunteers would pick up lists of registered voters and go into the precincts to remind people to vote and give them some campaign literature. Others would sit at tables in strategic areas and register new voters. Rarely was there an attempt to sit down with people, talk about their problems and bring them together with others who shared common concerns. The function of the campaign office in West Oakland was to coordinate registrars and canvassers. It did not serve to bring the people of the area together for common action until after the campaign had ended.

Efforts to work out mechanisms through which the candidate's constituency could control his campaign were the first casualty of the decision to forego community organizing and woo votes. Control of the campaign by the campaign workers was the second. To have instituted such a policy might, of course, have threatened those who were in charge, but, more importantly, it would have threatened the campaign's "efficiency." Like community organizing, the development of internal democracy presents enormous difficulties. It would have required sensitivity, inventiveness and a willingness to experiment. Undoubtedly many of the experiments would have failed. In the meantime the campaign would have lacked effective direction; the cement holding the coalition together would have been weakened; and some workers might have drifted away, demoralized, *before* the election.

The *ad hoc* organization of the campaign presented another stumbling block to democratic control. One of the campaign's coordinators has rightly claimed that community is an indispensable precondition for participatory democracy. "Once the Scheer campaign made the decision to accept within its fold anyone who agreed with the two basic planks," he states, "the possibility of a meaningfully democratic decision-making body . . . was doomed."<sup>1</sup> The continued presence of irreconcilable outlooks was not, however, the result of the campaign's political program but of its *strategy*. It was not shared opposition to the war which thrust a bureaucratic and hierarchic organization on the campaign; rather, the decision to

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1. Gerald Rosenfield, "Nouveau Politics," *Steps*, No. 1, p. 16.

subordinate political principle to coalition was necessitated by the desire to focus on the election. In the interest of holding together the coalition to pursue the big vote, the campaign decided to dispense with "frills" and concentrate on "being effective."

For the same reasons internal education was abandoned. That too would have been time-consuming and risky, incapable of persuading a single uncommitted voter and likely to lead to disillusionment and flight for some workers. The ambitious schemes of the campus radicals were reduced in the campaign's "Suggestions for Area Chairmen" to "periodic 'pep' meetings"; and the document went on to warn that "they should not be held too often as they would interfere with the work itself."

The failure of internal education was closely linked to the demise of democratic control. Top-down hierarchies have neither the means nor the desire to disseminate crucial information to the ranks. The disparity in the fundamental assumptions of the coalition's various components had to remain hidden from the mass of volunteers. Radical politics is usually dedicated to drawing people out of their isolation, but the Scheer campaign allowed its workers to become atomized. In fact, its hidden timetables and conflicting commitments were deliberately masked in order to prevent a breach in the coalition. To avoid an alienated interest group the campaign paid the price of alienated people. Those who were skeptical of the campaign's potential might nevertheless have found a place in the organization while giving voice to their doubts inside it. They could have taught by challenging others' assumptions, and learned by having their own challenged in return. Instead, those who were critical left; those who remained had no context within which to view their experience and no way to learn from it.

Campaign workers who remained loyal were led to accept—as the movers and shakers of the campaign had already accepted—a purely mechanical valuation of their effectiveness. Effectiveness was measured in billboards, precinct workers, money collected and spent, names on letterheads. Reports that Cohelan was running scared, that Johnson was concerned, that Congressional doves were pleased periodically renewed the campaign's spirit. These were the indications which proved that



the campaign was “real,” “serious,” “legitimate.” The uncritical acceptance of these claims fixed on the campaign a style which departed hardly at all from that of any other well-oiled, well-financed political machine in America. The conduct of the campaign, like its organization, was red-white-and-blue. Seven thousand dollars was invested in flyers sent to 80,000 homes. Another \$6,753 was allocated for billboards, signs on buses and slap-up posters. When a Scheer volunteer requested \$2,000 for an experimental theatre project in the ghetto, his request was flatly denied.<sup>2</sup>

Advertising agencies, celebrities and a topless dancer were added to the cadre of organizers. Scheer officials boasted about the 800 precinct workers who labored in the highly structured precinct organization that had become the mainstay of the campaign. “Suggestions on Precinct Work,” the campaign’s instruction sheet for volunteers, abandoned not only the pretense of community organization, but even the effort to convince people to accept the Scheer program. It worked from the premise that a substantial portion of the Berkeley-Oakland population was already in opposition to Administration policy, and that the job of the precinct worker was to identify that segment, inform it of Scheer’s campaign, remind it once or twice and lead it to the polls. The unenlightened were written off, and with them the argument that the campaign would provide a vehicle—unavailable to the protest movement—for reaching people outside the antiwar consensus.

“Suggestions on Precinct Work” provides specific instructions on which homes to go to (“We will talk to Democrats only”), how to arrange cards on each voter, and how to reduce conversations with constituents to a single symbol (“as inconspicuously as possible”). But its general instructions provide the most illuminating glimpse into what the campaign had become:

1. Address householders by name and identify yourself.

Precinct workers should always make their initial remarks to a householder brief and to the point and then ask him his ideas

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2. Zoe Isom, “Scheer Bureaucracy,” *Steps*, No. 1, p. 11. Like Gerry Rosenfield, Zoe was a campaign coordinator.

and opinions and what he considers important issues. *This enables the worker to determine early in the discussion where the householder stands. It may not pay to continue the conversation if he is hostile or it may not be necessary to talk at length if he is with us.* Also, we then know what the areas of agreement are and what questions and arguments need to be answered. Emphasize desire to open up discussion on issues. [Our italics.]

The vaunted dialogue on issues had come to mean debate between the candidates, not discussion between the campaign and its constituency. In the world of the precinct worker issues were important only insofar as they provided an indication of voter preference. If a voter disagreed, the hell with him. And for that matter, if he agreed get his name and beat it. "Emphasize desire to open up discussion on issues." When?

2. At all costs, lengthy arguments should be avoided. They may do nothing more than convince the voter to go out and vote against Scheer.

The sheet, it is true, continues with a rhetorical plea for deeper involvement in the community:

Again, areas of agreement should be found and then broaden his knowledge and understanding.

3. People should be told that house meetings will be held and ask if they would be interested in attending one. Above all make it clear that Scheer is their candidate and wants to know their opinions.

But how was the precinct worker to broaden knowledge and understanding while avoiding argument and watching the clock? How could meaningful house meetings be held with doubtful or apathetic citizens? In practice most precinct workers carried the gospel to the voter, tabulated his response and moved on. House meetings were few and were attended by the already-committed; they provided a recruiting platform to swell the ranks of precinct workers.

Precinct organizations became the functional alternative

to community organizing. The campaign stood the advice of the radicals on its head—instead of using the election to organize the community, it used “community organizing” to win the election. This flight from direct involvement with ordinary people manifested itself in a number of ways. The campaign began to seek out the endorsement of visible labor and “community” leaders, ministers and other politicians. Billboards boasting “Scheer Integrity” blossomed in the district. “Vote Scheer, build our cities, end the war,” said signs on the backs of city buses. The thousands of brochures sent out were hardly any better. They were designed to win votes not to provoke discussion, and in the hollow tradition of American politics their contents varied with the communities to which they went. For the enlightened communities of Berkeley and Albany there was a simple but direct statement about the war and the poverty program; for workers, an argument against guns and butter and a proclamation of Scheer’s union affiliation; for the “culturally deprived” Negro, pictures. Almost 100,000 brochures were distributed. Only 3,000 copies of the campaign’s full platform were printed and their distribution was centered on the campus.<sup>3</sup>

The rejection of direct action as an integral part of the campaign’s tactics completed the organization’s defection from the style of the movement and its embrace of conventional politics. By turning its back on the protest movement which had spawned it, the campaign hastened and on occasion actively collaborated in its demise. True, the movement was moribund; its rapid fall revealed weaknesses for which it cannot escape responsibility. Nevertheless, the campaign had promised to raise protest to a higher level by using it in behalf of an electoral effort. A proposal by a campus radical who played a prominent role in the VDC and in the early stages of the campaign was put this way:

The CCFS [Campus Community For Scheer] should pay careful attention to the role of direct action in the campaign. . . . We sit in because only pressure will cause the man

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3. Isom, *Steps*, pp. 9-10. The article provides a detailed summary and evaluation of the campaign’s literature.

upstairs, whoever he may be, to respond either to our voices or to simple morality. We march because their [sic] is no way to stop the Vietnam madness. . . . This campaign is in no sense a rejection of these tactics; it grows out of them; indeed, it is a continuous demonstration.

Scheer's candidacy is a protest—it is not an affirmation of the American electoral process. CCFS should plan numerous direct actions to dramatize the issues we are raising intellectually.

The position paper went on to suggest four areas for protest of various kinds.

In his announcement of candidacy, Scheer himself declared:

. . . this campaign will be an opportunity to bring into the political arena the energies, the moral example and the excitement of America's protest movement. We will identify ourselves in this campaign with all those marching and demonstrating for peace in Vietnam and with the activists in the South and the ghettos of the North working to build decent communities.

Shortly after the campaign was launched it did organize a joint protest demonstration with the VDC. On the heels of the February resumption of bombing in North Vietnam Scheer led a march followed by an abortive sit-in in Congressman Cohelan's office. A good many campaign leaflets featured pictures of Scheer addressing the demonstrators through a bull-horn. But the organization never took to the streets again.

In part the commitment to rally the exhausted protest movement was disingenuous. In the campaign's early days the Vietnam Day Committee was still a large and strong organization. Many of Scheer's lieutenants felt that VDC endorsement was crucial to the campaign's future. But the VDC was divided on the issue and debate on the question was long and heated. In order to win over a majority of the membership the campaign had to assert its kinship and solidarity with the protest movement. As the VDC began to funnel students into precinct work its own membership dwindled, and some of the

organizers of the Scheer for Congress effort began to think their pledges to the VDC rash. Since a number of the radicals on the original campaign committee were associated with the VDC as well, the rift with the VDC also reflected the internal battle on the campaign committee. The liberals and old leftists—including some who had praised direct action in the past—looked upon the radicals as utopian or infantile leftists. As the campaign's priorities were reordered, they came to fear that direct action would divert their efforts from canvassing while alienating the voters to boot. The fact that those who remained in the VDC, SDS and other activist organizations were for the most part people who had declined to join in the campaign, reinforced this view.

There was also a psychological component in growing enmity toward those who remained aloof from the campaign. Scheer's adherents saw their organization as the heir of Berkeley's radical history. Following a pattern that has developed on the Berkeley campus, the campaign had a monopoly on morality for the semester; working for Scheer became synonymous with serious commitment. As a former campaign official has noted:

. . . we insisted that the campaign was what was happening, that we had become the movement, and that those who stayed outside of the campaign were in some way finking out or betraying their commitment to radical politics.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, radicals outside the campaign rarely chose to challenge this view publicly. Many of them, although skeptical, were by no means certain that the campaign wasn't both correctly defining the goals of the movement and capable of achieving them. In any case they were reluctant to interfere with a brother organization or to expose a quarrel in movement ranks to hostile outsiders. Consequently, the issues which divided people remained clouded and the last opportunity to involve participants in the campaign in an examination of its assumptions and direction was lost.

Deprived of both finances and personnel by the one-sided

4. Rosenfield, *Steps*, p. 17.

competition for resources, the activist organizations were reduced to pale shadows of their former selves. Had it been less concerned with maximizing the chances for victory, the campaign might have developed and nourished a movement parallel to its own. Instead, it left itself with no antiwar strategy apart from the polls. The demands it made on its workers were enormous, while a large vote was the only means it held out to them to measure their success. Scheer's constituency was not organized to take any action beyond marking the ballot. Thus the campaign reached a dead end on primary day. Like the protest marches in October, it had pulled off the biggest event of its kind, squeezed the last shred of newsprint out of it, and found itself with nowhere to take its antiwar program. Its exhausted workers returned to their studies, its constituents to their homes; the campaign had nothing more to ask of them.

The campaign's successor, the Community for New Politics, is geared to the domestic half of Scheer's program—its concerns are local. It operates on a much smaller scale than did the campaign, with only a remnant of the 1,500 participants who at one time worked on the primary. The West Oakland office made a fitful attempt to convert itself into a center for community organizing but then closed down. Contacts with a few local organizations of the poor have been maintained, and CNP aided a school boycott in Oakland and supported demonstrations demanding minority group hiring for the construction of a Bay Area subway system. The organization remains devoted to electoral politics and will run a slate for the Berkeley City Council. In principle, such a campaign is, we think, far more meaningful than a congressional candidacy. Whether it will depart from the conventional forms which the Scheer campaign accepted remains to be seen, but it offers the opportunity to demand of the constituent more than his X on the ballot and to demand of the candidate more than the futile pursuit of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Municipal elections cannot, however, sustain activity against the war. And so long as the CNP remains firm in its certainty that electoral politics is *the* strategy for the movement, it will continue to be an obstacle to the new politics it once sought to create and a major contributor to the exhaustion of opposition to American imperialism.

The Scheer campaign achieved what, in the end, it sought—an excellent showing at the polls and the formation of a strong left-wing political machine in Berkeley. No doubt we will be told, as Scheer supporters have told us in the past, that we are quarreling with success, squeamishly avoiding the “taint” of “real” politics. We are not afraid of success; but we are concerned with its meaning.

What if Scheer had won the primary? How would electing a congressman contribute to changing American society? Swept with victory fever in the last weeks of the campaign, Scheer workers attempted to answer that question. Some projected the image of a “fighting congressman” like Vito Marcantonio. Activists spoke of how he would lead sit-ins and mass marches. What a boost to the movement it would be, they argued, to have a congressman lead a demonstration. But why is a demonstration legitimate when a public official leads it but improper without him? Such a perspective reinforces the very institutions and relationships which radicals seek to change. It furthers the notion that politics is congressmen and Senators and not those for whom decisions are made. It continues the belief that people can't do things for themselves, but must have them done by those who are expert or respectable. This is the America we know too well, not the nation to be created.

A radical campaign which succeeds in conventional terms makes the task of changing this country more difficult, not easier. If radical action is to be at all meaningful, it must be successful and effective in its own terms. To accept the standards of the American political process, as the Scheer campaign did, is to validate those standards. In seeking the blessings of America for their radicalism, the supporters of the campaign found that they were forced instead to confer the blessings of their radicalism on America. Neither Scheer nor his adherents are sell-outs. Their effort was made in good faith. And from it a few of them discovered that “an electoral campaign is an ass-backwards way to build a political style and a political theory.”<sup>5</sup> There must, of course, be a movement first.

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5. Rosenfield, *Steps*, p. 16.

# THE COOK CAMPAIGN

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THE SETTING of Robert Cook's independent political campaign for Congress was the greater metropolitan area of New Haven, Connecticut, including more than 300,000 people. Democrats predominate among urbanites and suburbanites in this congressional district, which has higher than national averages of per capita income and education. A large number of people of Italian, Eastern-European, German and Irish backgrounds live among the Yankee third of the population.

The largest local employers are United Aircraft Corporation's subsidiaries, Pratt and Whitney Jet Engines and Sikorsky Helicopter and the Olin-Mathieson subsidiary, Winchester Firearms. The war in Vietnam has stimulated these and other local plants to 24-hour production, has ended the high unemployment of the early sixties, and caused a frantic search for more workers. Consequently, more Negroes (who form one-tenth of the district population) are working than at any time in the last fifteen years. Several thousand Negro and Puerto Rican families have recently taken up residence in New Haven in the hope that their jobs will be permanent.

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\* The author, who was intimately connected with the Cook campaign, prefers to remain anonymous.



One family owns the morning and afternoon dailies printed in New Haven. Some constituents read the *New York Times* and the Bridgeport and Hartford dailies, however the New Haven afternoon paper is the crucial medium for any district political effort. (There is one local TV station affiliated with the ABC network.) The vast majority of families in this district live in private, usually single, dwellings. These isolated families spend their evenings at home with newspapers, radio and TV. We quickly came to appreciate the central importance of these media to any success we might expect.

New Haven forms the administrative, commercial, financial and political focus of the district. Yale University makes it the cultural center as well. The politics of New Haven provide a good look at the reality underlying the American liberal idealization of the "modern, reform-minded" city. New Haven gets as much federal money per person as any other city in the country if not more. Through the poverty program, aid-to-education bills, and especially the highway construction and urban renewal programs, Mayor Richard Lee has, in his words, rebuilt and renewed this city. Community Progress, Incorporated (CPI), a huge coordinating agency with a staff of hundreds, runs the collection of "poverty programs," several of which were meant to be experiments and models for the rest of the country. From retraining programs for high school dropouts to rehabilitation programs for unwed mothers and neighborhood legal services, CPI's carefully prepared promotional literature has created in New Haven the liberal reformer's dream come true. Mayor Lee, a former employee of Yale, couches every phrase in the finest liberal rhetoric.

Two facts about the federally financed programs critically condition the political situation. First, the Democratic mayor and his party dispense the federal funds. They thereby cement their alliance with the AFL-CIO, especially the building trades that benefit so generously from urban renewal and highway building. Creation of the CPI staff meant at least doubling the patronage at the mayor's disposal. Second, the mayor issued press releases by the thousand on the good works he was performing for the poor, for the beautification of what had been slums, and for the city's commercial well-being. Moreover, he

could all the while boast that his reforms were costing little in extra local taxes, for he had the special genius to secure Washington money. The press releases won the enthusiastic support of middle-class liberals, urban and suburban, and the mayor became the local incarnation of President Kennedy's domestic reform image for them. Local tax savings won over the better part of the remaining population. Mayor Lee has held his office continually since 1952.

Before the winter of 1964 no independent political movement existed in the district. Political campaigns often seemed to bore even the candidates. Governor-Cabinet Member-Senator Abraham Ribicoff has been the most exciting political phenomenon.

During that winter a few SDS (Yale) undergraduates began a "community-organizing project" in the poorest of New Haven's two Negro neighborhoods. For a year the students and a few local people tried their hand at rent strikes, welfare protests and related activities. The project suffered from the lack of experience of white students, meagre finances, no systematic program or schedule of actions and distracting academic demands on the students. The city, on the other hand, wielded the rich, powerful CPI against their work and their appeal. Yet the project did find and activate some local people. By early 1966 frustration, disappointments and continuing lack of direction threatened complete collapse of the project. Temporarily diverted by a dramatic, successful drive to remove a local, racist school principal, the students knew time was running out. Some new project or situation was needed to revive the organization and to thrust its increasingly articulate Negro leadership into prominence in the Negro community.

In the white community, as one SANE member put it, "We all moan about things, but that's about all." SANE, Women's Strike for Peace and a Local Human Relations Council were all small and, except for the Council, consisted mainly of old mailing lists. The Human Relations Council worked on busing programs for school integration and for nondiscriminatory housing codes—both explicitly reformist and nonpolitical activities.

The bombings of North Vietnam in February, 1965

awakened Yale University from fifteen years of political hibernation. The New Haven-Yale Committee for Peace in Vietnam quickly became the largest active political movement on or off campus. Working feverishly, graduate students and young faculty members sustained forums, teach-ins, demonstrations, convoys to Washington, letter-writing campaigns and petitions. By June, 1965 several hundred persons, half of them from Yale, half from the community (mainly middle-class professionals), were loosely associated by this Committee.

By January, 1966 both the community-organizing project and the antiwar committee sensed that without some significant next step they would disintegrate. Someone proposed running a candidate for Congress. Mindful of the independent campaign of Stuart Hughes for the Massachusetts Senate in 1962, activists put forth the standard arguments for mounting a political campaign. A candidate has *per se* a ready audience unavailable to pressure groups, and can therefore do more to educate the public. A campaign makes politically legitimate a position otherwise ignored. A campaign assembles all those who have been isolated, quiet and invisible into a political force. Skeptics argued, on the other hand, that a campaign was hopelessly premature, would fail utterly and would dissolve the young movement in disappointment and despair.

Throughout these debates and throughout the campaign, no systematic attempt was made to define our ideological position. We included independent socialists, "nonideological" radicals, black militants, pacifists, traditional liberals (a few trade unionists, clergymen and peace activists) and some recently disillusioned Kennedy Democrats. Significantly, very few advocated working with either major party. We agreed to run an independent campaign and nominated Robert Cook, 32, assistant professor of sociology at Yale.

We decided to run Cook for the main purpose of gathering people willing to work and to build a political organization over the years. We took pains to make this explicit at all times, especially to prospective campaign workers. We calculated our public exposure to encourage as much as possible permanent connections in the community. We avoided the term "peace candidate" by integrating our position on the war into a

broader platform. Rarely, if ever, did Cook speak on Vietnam without relating it to other aspects of the platform. We believed the educational value of the campaign lay largely in reiterating the interrelatedness of the issues.

Our organization operated on one basic principle. Those who work, decide; those who decide, must work. Projects "took off" when someone devoted himself to them. We relied (because we really had no choice) on the individual initiative of people attracted by the campaign. Be initiating projects on publicity, door-to-door canvassing, fund raising, etc., one could become a member of the policy-making committee. Those who joined later reflected the cross-section of the original leadership.

After choosing the name AIM (American Independent Movement), we announced Cook's candidacy in the first issue of the AIM newsletter, which has been published every two weeks since. The first issue contained a draft platform. We called for an end to the war in Vietnam, to be achieved by an immediate halt of all United States bombing and other combat operations, the establishment of negotiations for a neutral South Vietnam, a coalition government which would include the NLF, and a timetable for the complete withdrawal of American military personnel. We called for full NLF participation in negotiations, and demanded cessation of all support to reactionary dictatorships. We also stood for an immediate end to all forms of discrimination. We proposed a massive federal program to provide jobs now for everyone seeking them as a matter of explicit government responsibility. We suggested that the use of resources saved from war and the support of foreign dictatorships might be used to finance adequate public housing and education and medical facilities for every citizen.

During the course of the campaign we elaborated on this call "for peace in Vietnam and an end to poverty and discrimination at home." In speeches and leaflets Cook proposed a tax on war profits to provide a fund for conversion to a peacetime economy. Such monies would pay the wages of men temporarily laid-off and could be applied to any needed retooling or relocation of plants. Cook also described high prices and interest rates as the result of pricing policies of private business which shifts the cost of war onto the consumer.

Alone among Connecticut politicians, Cook endorsed a march of welfare recipients to Hartford to present grievances and proposals, which panicky police turned into a minor, although brutal, brawl. Cook protested publicly and promised to join the next march. He frequently referred to the institutionalized racism of white America as an obstruction to any significant improvement in the Negro community. In subsequent meetings with white constituents—both sympathetic and unfriendly—Cook found greater resistance to his points on the “Negro question” than to his attitude toward Vietnam. However, Cook continued to demand full participation and decisive power for recipients of poverty and welfare programs. He explained the complete inadequacy and corrupted purpose of current programs. As a result he lost a considerable number of supporters, especially among the liberal, professional middle-class population willingly caught in Mayor Lee’s glowing phrases.

Cook stressed the theme of powerlessness. Campaign literature called on people to refuse manipulation by political leaders not responsible to them by declaring their support of the American Independent ticket. We acquired an early appreciation that most people felt that they did not participate in and control the decisions affecting their lives. The SDS slogan of participatory democracy became a potent political weapon. We realized its power only in part, however, because we never articulated a coherent vision of alternative social structures in which people could readily project what they felt would be better lives for themselves.

Cook endorsed the slogan of black power, and always spelled out his understanding of the term. Our Democratic opponent seized upon this endorsement, implying publicly that money was flowing from SNCC to AIM. In midsummer the chairman of the Negro militant organization working on the campaign joined the AIM ticket to run for the Connecticut Assembly.

AIM’s lack of ideological clarity or unity only partly explains our platform’s lack of depth and precision. Equally important was our constant concern with the mass media. We

felt that success demanded public exposure of our position, movement and candidate, which in turn required getting the public to want to know who and what we were. Given the isolated household life style of most constituents, we had to use the mass media. Media costs forced us to extreme brevity. We feared that such brevity in expounding our position would unavoidably cause misunderstanding and perhaps hostility. We were determined to use the media as most advertisers do, that is, to announce our campaign and candidate, to extoll its independence and historic importance, and to imply the need of every responsible citizen to inform himself about the issues Cook was raising. To get across a few simplified yet alluring glimpses of the campaign was our most urgent task. It distracted our attention from precise articulation of the platform. Our strategy was intended to entice a public audience and to leave to Cook the job of elaboration and explanation at the opportunities created for him by our media fanfare.

We concluded in June that although the content of our campaign would be new and striking to most voters, our style would be traditional and hopefully aesthetically pleasing. We anticipated that our campaign would not frighten anyone off, and that sufficient curiosity would be aroused for the public to hear us out at least one time. Cook travelled the commuter trains, set up booths at all nearby county fairs, shook endless hands at shopping centers, factories and beaches. The campaign bus was painted red, white and blue. "Cook for Congress" balloons were dispensed to children. We devoted a lot of money and effort to make every leaflet or ad colorful and tasteful (supporters in the Yale Art Department were very helpful). We spent several thousand dollars on roadside billboards as well as radio, newspaper and TV advertising. Time and again we experienced the far greater willingness of a voter at a shopping center, factory or on the street to listen to Cook if he remembered hearing or seeing Cook's name somewhere before. Given our manpower resources, the communication of our platform presupposed the energy and expense of this campaign style.

Cook is convinced that his success in attracting volunteers, donations and votes was a result of detailed, personal conversa-

tions. We concentrated on the scheduling of coffee-hours in homes across the district. To new listeners, in relatively informal surroundings, Cook elaborated slogans into detailed critiques and proposals, and answered questions. When Cook could speak at some length, larger meetings were also valuable. This explanation was crucial for us because we stood for change, for new stands on issues against a Democrat who counted on the usual voting behavior. Coffee-hours could at best reach only a small percentage of the voters. We needed somehow to canvass the district door-to-door. From mailing lists of friendly organizations and our own list of supporters (2,000 by summer), we browbeat people to canvass their wards. By November, 1966 some canvassing was underway in half the wards of the district, heavily concentrated in New Haven where our main strength had always been. We relied on the initiative of ward workers to cover their territory. They did so in varying degrees. Predictably, voting results correlated excellently, not perfectly, with the amount and intensity of canvassing.

Each canvasser was told to emphasize that aspect of the platform which he felt most ready to advocate to his constituents. As far as possible canvassers worked their own neighborhoods, with the assistance of Yale students dispatched to wards as the need arose. We urged canvassers to spend extended lengths of time and effort on anyone who might be brought into the organization permanently. This was always our highest priority.

Beyond coffee-hours and door-to-door canvassing, we emphasized a careful, systematic series of press releases. This paid off by winning the respect of numerous reporters who slipped stories past hostile editors. Press releases, therefore, turned out to be a highly effective educational device with a minimal cost of mimeographing and mailing. After Cook addressed the State Convention of the AFL-CIO, we decided to prepare a special labor leaflet. Workers in defense plants and elsewhere indicated disgust with the Democratic Party over 14b and the President's wage guidelines. Many workers were anxious about jobs and seniority in the face of peace and automation. While in general our leaflet drew morale-boosting support from workers, we also noted some skepticism. One worker at Winchester Firearms said

before the election, "Listen, we know it's like you guys say—in fact we could tell you a lot you don't even dream about—but who are you? Sure Cook sounds good, but where will he be next year, the year after? You guys mean business? You're really willing to buck the Democratic machine?" The response from rank-and-file workers was as encouraging as that of the union officials was hostile.

Concerts, direct appeals and private solicitations brought in nearly \$40,000, mostly from local sources. Small businessmen provided a considerable portion. One person had the responsibility of handling most of the fundraising.

The data of our experience are insufficient to warrant more than the most tentative conclusions. We educated people on the issues; but how many people, on how many issues, and to what depth? We gathered several hundred campaign workers; but will they work further, will they even remain in the coalition that is AIM, do even they understand what is at stake? We received over 8,500 votes, or 5.6 percent of the votes cast for congressman. We know that perhaps 2,000 Yale students and faculty and local liberals voted for us, and maybe a few hundred Negroes. But who else? And why?

The campaign was successful in that it collected several hundred poll-watchers on election day, it mailed out two to three thousand copies of the AIM newsletter every two weeks, and it taught a hard core of twenty how to function as a political party. It taught us just how closely integrated is the power structure assembled against us. The election laws, the prejudices of the population on issues and on the political process, the economics of the mass media, the life style of most citizens, the control of tax revenues—all these factors blended together to block our efforts to change the order of things in the minds and daily lives of our constituents. To break into their consciousness is a complex problem, yet we did it. Desperate to move ahead, we exploited whatever opening we found. The profound alienation of most Americans from power in politics and at their jobs, and the sense of being grossly used and abused gave us an opening everywhere. Educated and uneducated, rich and deprived, Polish worker and Yankee businessman—everywhere individuals exhibited an instinctive response when we



told them outright what they tried to hide from themselves, namely, that they were pawns used by one politician or another, one business or another, that they were essentially powerless. It is a difficult task to translate this response into systematic political effort from voting to ward work. That is how we see our work. It is perhaps made easier by the disaffection of younger people, especially students, from the life style and thoughts of their parents. Confused in the extreme, nevertheless, they are looking for something better, more human. Straw polls in high schools consistently gave Cook many times the percentage of votes cast by the students' parents. An undergraduate poll sponsored by the *Yale Daily News* gave Cook 54 percent of 1,000 votes cast.

We expected more votes. Perhaps the main reason our vote was not larger was best expressed by the worker who asked if we would be around next year. Actively interested local people were used to seeing local politics as a kind of business: you paid with a vote and perhaps some work, and in return were granted a favor. We had no favors to give, and we were unable to convince the politically interested person that we meant to continue until we finally got the power to do favors.

But to be around is insufficient. We concluded that we must build an organization capable of fighting for its immediate and long-term goals in a visible way. We knew when we decided to run a candidate that building a political organization is the most compelling priority. The campaign succeeded in finding the people most likely to participate in this work. Perhaps the only possible definite statement on the campaign's practical achievement (beyond teaching many useful tactics to budding political activists) is that the campaign confirmed this original premise.

Our campaign did abstain from use of the word socialism. The coalition of black militants, socialists of various kinds and left-wing liberals was not stable. Peace movement activists intent upon nearly exclusive concentration on the war issue felt uncomfortable among the others pushing for a radical program of social change. The socialists—not a self-conscious grouping—feared dissolution of the coalition if the subject were raised. They were generally satisfied that the platform contained

“socialist planks,” and promised to move further in that direction. They shared with the entire leadership the determination to utilize the campaign to create a committed audience, however small, which would really listen to and participate in arguments about the movement’s future. They felt certain that before systematic internal education of AIM members overcame their ignorance of economics and politics, any full discussion of strategy would degenerate into name-calling, hostility and mistrust. Campaign workers made a few, rather random efforts at internal education during the campaign. Many AIM activists now agree that self-education is the highest-priority next step in building our cadres, and precisely defining a program for ourselves and the public.

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