

Newsletter of

# THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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117

Edited by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

## Socialists examine the two souls of liberalism

*Editor's note—The following analysis is the basis of Michael Harrington's speech to the third convention of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in Chicago February 18, 19, 20 and 21. In part, the analysis flows from ongoing discussions within the DSOC, and Michael Harrington particularly wants to thank David Bensman, Harry Boyte, Luther Carpenter and Peter Steinfels for ideas they contributed.*

by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

During the next four years the long-run contradictions of American society, above all its hostility to full employment, are going to be its short-run problems. The achievement of even significant reform will require a challenge to the basic corporate domination of the economy. And it is quite possible that we will see the effective dissolution of the liberal ideology formulated by the New Deal and defining the point of view of the mass Left ever since. Indeed, the right-wing of liberalism has already sounded retreat.

We are the socialist wing of a mass democratic Left which is itself, in the main, liberal. We have never set any ideological preconditions on our participation in the common struggle for peace and social justice within that movement. We do not do so now. But we must say candidly that we believe that the time has now come when, out of imperative political necessity, the democratic Left must move in a more socialist direction. That is why we see a growing relevance for the DSOC.

### The failure of trickle-down policy

The signs of retreat from liberalism are visible on all sides. The Democratic Governor of New York proposes a conservative Republican budget which attacks the poor and the unemployed and pampers business. The Brookings, long the think-tank of Establishment liberalism, publishes scholarly papers demonstrating that there can be no new social initiatives for at least five years. And during President Carter's very first week in office, his Budget Director modified the Administration's economic program to give more subsidies to corporations to mechanize jobs out of existence in the middle of the deepest unemployment crisis since the Great Depression.

Yet the human needs that cry out for federal action—the rotting cities and preventable deaths, the wasted generation of the jobless youth, and so on—are more

urgent than at any time since the 1930s. Why, then, this retreat?

One reason is that a program of systematic public miseducation, initiated by Richard Nixon, has persuaded a large sector of the public that Washington spent and innovated wildly in the '60s and failed in practically everything it did. In fact, there were successes, like the reduction of unemployment and Medicare, and the failures were due to overselling, under-financing and the subordination of social programs to corporate goals.

There is, however, another reason for the retreat from liberalism which is even more serious than Nixon's pernicious myth of the 1960s. If one grants the liberals in rout a crucial premise, then they are quite right. If one is unwilling to attack the systemic bias of the Amer-

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## Days in the life of a socialist organizer

by JACK CLARK

January 19—The New York Labor Forum holds one of its best attended sessions as Robert Lekachman and Nat Weinberg discuss the issue of incomes policy and controls. I have worked with a committee of trade unionists from AFSCME, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the UAW and District 65 to plan the forum, and we've billed it as a debate on wage controls. Nat Weinberg, now an economic consultant, formerly Walter Reuther's chief advisor on economic program, opens his presentation by joking about the false advertising. "Our discussion will be closer to a waltz than a fight," Nat predicts, and he's right. With a trade unionists' insistence, Nat argues against controls on wages; Bob Lekachman counters that inflation is a danger, but a danger sparked by corporate greed, not by excessive wage settlements. So his prescription is price controls without wage controls. They do disagree on whether controls are essential to full employment policy without inflation. Nat considers price controls without wage controls politically unrealistic; Bob will abide wage controls rather than unemployment.

The audience picks up on these themes and others.

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## Organizer's diary . . .

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Questions about the relevance of nationalization, control of multinational corporations and distribution of wealth and income are raised by trade unionists present. The discussion is lively and informed. One should be wary about generalizing from this sample of radical trade unionists, but there does seem to be an increasing interest in the labor movement in questions of structural transformations of the economy.

### A new socialist insurgency

January 23, Ann Arbor, Michigan—I'm here to attend the first state-wide meeting of the Democratic Socialist Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party.

The Caucus is being organized by Zoltan Ferency, an energetic, charismatic and controversial figure in Michigan politics. In the 1960s, Ferency was state chair of the Democratic Party and once the gubernatorial candidate against George Romney. From his position in the party leadership, he jostled with other Democrats in Michigan and Washington over Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam war policies. Before the decade was finished, Ferency had left the Democratic Party to become a moving force in the Human Rights Party of Michigan (HRP). Last fall, he announced his intentions to re-enter Democratic politics and to establish an explicitly socialist caucus in the party.

Zoltan and Mike Harrington have been in touch about these plans since December; in early January, Zoltan joined the DSOC. He's been using DSOC's founding statement, "We Are Socialists of the Democratic Left," as a basic document in his recruiting to the Caucus.

At the Caucus meeting itself, 44 people are present. Ten are Michigan DSOC members, some are former HRP activists and there's a small contingent from the People's Business Commission. Most of those present are Democratic activists; some of them have recently decided that they're socialists, others have radical politics but no political home. The turnout is respectable under any conditions; it's all the more impressive when Zoltan explains that the meeting was called quickly and advertised mostly by word of mouth. After some preliminaries, which include my message of greetings from national DSOC and a motion to formally constitute a Democratic Socialist Caucus, the meeting considers plans for the Democratic state convention February 12 and 13 in Detroit.

Only one major controversy surfaces: a motion directing the Caucus to form a search committee to find candidates for state party office. The young former HRP activists seem to be for it. Roger Robinson, a Detroit DSOC member, speaks against it first. Such a move, he argues, would cast the Caucus in a factional and divisive role before it has a chance to reach out. Harry Philo, a Detroit attorney and ally of Rep. John Conyers, agrees. It's the one issue which might cause a deep rift at the meeting, but fortunately someone moves to table the motion, a course everyone is willing to take.

So, the Caucus ends its first meeting on a note of agreement. The Caucus will meet during the state convention and will present resolutions calling for public ownership of banks, utilities and insurance companies. Individuals might oppose current party leaders, but the Caucus will take no position this time on such contests. Zoltan and I talk briefly after the meeting. He's excited that a sense of unity emerged and that the splintering instinct sometimes so common on the Left was avoided.

I gather the notes of several days of observation and conversation on my Monday morning flight to Washington. Even those who have deep reservations about him respect Ferency's energy, acumen and ability to mobilize people. He already has a firm local base in Lansing where the Democratic leadership welcomed him back, and in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, the Caucus has a strong corps of former HRP activists and some office-holders. So, the Democratic Socialist Caucus is likely to be a serious force in state politics. Many people are uncertain about its relations with the UAW; there's an obvious potential for conflict in several Congressional Districts. How does a socialist insurgency function in a state where the forces of the democratic Left are powerful? It's a question socialists have not needed to face in a long time.

### Of mugwumps and warriors

January 24, Washington D.C.—The Democratic Forum, a group formed in 1974 to stimulate issues discussion in the Democratic Party, is holding a one-day meeting on "The President and the Party." This is the same group which put together the highly successful Louisville Democratic Issues Conference in late 1975.

Former Ohio Governor John Gilligan recently chosen as the chair of the Democratic Forum, keynotes today. The Democratic Party, he notes, is now in a strong position, all the way from the White House to Capitol Hill to the majority of the state houses and major city halls. He suggests that this conference is a good place to raise questions about the role of the Party and of the average Democratic voter and to examine the policy-making process. We should be concerned about low voter participation. People don't believe they can make a difference.

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# Catching a runaway: Stevens boycott

by ERIC LEE

The J.P. Stevens boycott may be a dress rehearsal for the labor struggles of the future. Not only is Stevens the first Southern-based corporation singled out for unionization by the AFL-CIO, but, more importantly, Stevens is a notorious runaway shop.

In 1951, Stevens closed three unionized woolen plants in New England. This began a runaway policy that eventually threw nearly 12,000 Northern workers out of work, wrecked local economies, and weakened the union movement as a whole. Twenty-one textile mills were closed in the Northeast—every single woolen mill the company had been operating in 1951.

By 1974, Stevens had opened 84 Southern plants, and maintained only five in the North. Sixty-three of those plants are in the Carolinas—an area plagued by the lowest wages in the United States.

Stevens succeeded in simultaneously wrecking the lives of thousands of its former Northern employees, brutally exploiting more than 40,000 Southern employees, and reaping annual profits in the realm of \$40 million.

For several decades, Stevens could afford to laugh at the futile efforts of the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) to organize its Southern plants. It fired pro-union workers, wiretapped union organizers' phones, and when confronted with unionized plants (the TWUA succeeded in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina one and a half years ago), it refused to bargain. Stevens so blatantly violated the federal labor laws that the Supreme Court was forced to rule against the company three times, and Stevens had to pay over \$1.3 million in settlements to illegally-fired workers. Despite more than a decade of TWUA organizing, and nearly a hundred cases against the company pending before the National Labor Relations Board, Stevens grew into the second largest American textile manufacturer with over a billion dollars in annual sales.

Stevens became a model firm for corporations "endangered" by unionization, for businessmen who had nightmares of paying decent wages, pensions, providing job security, etc. Like Houdini, Stevens escaped collective bargaining, the Wagner Act, and all the other restrictions on the authoritarian power business can exert on workers' lives. The textile industry's emulation of the Stevens runaway policy and bravado in

the face of the law resulted in unemployment for over 372,000 Northern workers.

The union movement needed to develop a counter-strategy that could not only stop Stevens' runaway shops, but teach a lesson to all such employers. As a counter-strategy, an international boycott might work.

The TWUA merged last year with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers to form the 500,000 strong Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU). And ACTWU appealed to the rest of the labor movement for support in the fight to bring the Twentieth Century to J.P. Stevens. With the support of the AFL-CIO, ACTWU called on the public to boycott Stevens' home furnishings products, which account for more than a third of total sales.

Further, the ACTWU asked for—and got—the support of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation at its 1976 Congress. The Federation, in its resolution, urged its affiliates "to exert all possible pressure in their respective countries aimed at full international labor support" and endorsed the call for a world-wide boycott. Stevens, which has subsidiaries and associated companies in seven countries outside the U.S. cannot take lightly the threat of strikes in solidarity with its American employees or other job actions. Nor can it ignore the possibility of unionized workers refusing to handle Stevens goods (as Swedish dock workers refused to unload California grapes, for example).

Though the boycott suffers from restrictive labor laws which forbid informational picket lines at stores, Stevens has already begun to retreat. They're reducing prices in anticipation of reduced sales. They're attempting to make large sales to stores now, for fear of reduced demand in several months.

Meanwhile the ACTWU is utilizing innovative tactics—such as intervention in the upcoming Stevens shareholders meeting—to get around its difficulties. And it is beginning a major informational campaign on the boycott issues.

With the successful experience of Farah and Oneita boycotts behind them—both aimed at reactionary Southern employers—and with the support of the American and international labor movements, the underpaid, over-worked victims of J.P. Stevens—the workers—may actually win. □

WALNUTS



## Organizer's diary . . .

(Continued from page 2)

But if Gilligan poses the problems accurately and perceptively, he proposes solutions which are simply vacuous. People don't believe their participation matters? "We believe it does," says Gilligan, who sees a need "to educate the public." On rank-and-file Democrats' participating in policy formation, Gilligan tells the audience, "it's a two-way street. Office holders have to be more open; the people have to know more about the complexity of public issues."

Will we convince apathetic citizens to participate by lecturing them on civic virtue and urging them to understand the complexity of issues? No. Such an approach under-estimates the depth of current voter alienation. In an article published last spring, Walter Dean Burnham argued that, as of early 1976, the national mood would support some outrageous propositions: the United States is a plutocracy; it is governed by a closely connected economic and political elite which functions to promote the welfare of the haves at the expense of the have nots; government money buys off vocal groups but its spending only creates inflation instead of solving problems.

Burnham qualifies his case saying that such attitudes can be over-estimated. Even so, such cynicism will not be overcome by Gilligan's call for an anti-political politics, but rather with a deeply political approach which begins to overcome cynicism by defining important fights which can be won.

The political highlight of the Democratic Forum conference comes in the afternoon panel "The Democratic Party: What Policy Role With an Incumbent President?" Ben Wattenberg shifts the focus somewhat by charging that Carter has upset a delicate foreign policy balance within the Democratic Party by appointing a "McGovern State Department." Wattenberg and his allies, he asserts, will not stand by while "the Democratic Party is called the party of mush and meekness." They will fight, and, if necessary, go into public opposition to the President.

The only reply on the panel comes from Patt Derian, a genuine liberal who has staked out a difficult position in the Mississippi politics. But she was introduced as a special advisor to Carter, and she only advocates "the right of Ben Wattenberg and his allies to be heard."

The Democratic Forum is behaving as something less than neutral ground for discussion it claims to be. Wattenberg, a Jackson advisor, founder of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and one of the Committee on the Present Danger, represents one pole in the foreign policy debate in the party. He admits as much in his presentation. The activists who form the other pole on that issue are not represented on the panel. It finally falls to Curt Gans, speaking from the audience, to remind Wattenberg and everyone else that the dove wing of the party is not entirely satisfied with Carter's choices, either.

Cyrus Vance never led a peace demonstration.

The sessions have been overly technical and non-political. At the end of a full day of discussion of policy formation, participation of Democratic voters, and the role of the party in an Administration whose policies and purposes remain unclear, there has been hardly a word about domestic politics. There was no place on the agenda to talk about unemployment, or poverty, or energy. The group which has built a reputation for promoting ideas in the Democratic Party looks toward moral suasion and technical solutions to solve our political crises. My approach is to use issues of immediate concern, like the economic crisis, as a way of involving people, transforming the structure and limits of our society. I'm increasingly convinced that such a political thrust, motivated by socialist values, is necessary for the entire democratic Left. Unfortunately, part of that democratic Left is headed elsewhere—in a crusade to resume the Cold War (Wattenberg and his friends in some of the higher reaches of the AFL-CIO)—another part is promoting the least political and least promising traditions of middle-class liberalism.

### Can capitalism work?

January 25, Washington, D.C.—After lunch with a leader of the Machinists' union, Marjorie Gellermann and I head toward Capitol Hill for some appointments with contacts on Congressional staff. There's a long and fruitful conversation with Bob Brower in Rep. Ron Dellums' office. We talk about the various organized efforts on the Left to respond to the political and economic crises and to prod the Carter Administration. He's actively involved with the national New Democratic Coalition (NDC) and with the California Conference for Economic Democracy being called by Dellums, Tom Hayden, Derek Shearer, Cesar Chavez and others. He and Marjorie, a vice chair of the New York State NDC, discuss NDC future activities, and we fill him in on plans for the DSOC convention in Chicago. Though Dellums is scheduled to be at the California conference the same week, Bob expresses interest in attending our convention. Whether he comes or not, he shares our concern that all the various groups function with some level of cooperation and coordination.

From there, we go to the House Budget Committee hearings to meet Rep. John Conyers' new aide, Ev Ehrlich. He's there as Conyers and Leon Keyserling testify on the need for a greater economic stimulus and a full employment budget. Keyserling, who chaired Truman's Council of Economic Advisors, remains a tireless full employment advocate; once again, he and Conyers are advocating the Humphrey-Hawkins bill before an unreceptive Congressional audience.

After they finish testifying, Conyers invites all of us, including Tom Timberg, a Washington professor who helped prepare Conyers' testimony, into his office. We're soon engaged in a fascinating dialogue about full employment strategy. Conyers is convinced that the lack of receptivity to the Humphrey-Hawkins bill in Congress results from the absence of visible grassroots support. We need, he argues, the equivalent of the fervor of the anti-war and civil rights demonstra-

tions around the issue of jobs. Groups and individuals are organizing and lobbying for full employment, but echoing our earlier conversation with Brower, there is too little coordination. Certainly, we'll need imaginative tactics; the immediate need is to simply compile the names of thousands of interested people in various groups have collected. And, Conyers concludes, we need a conference or two per year in Washington to gather people in, articulate our demands and get people mobilized until we've won full employment.

Keyserling argues that we must convince sections of the business community that full employment is in its interest, too. He expresses some irritation with recent statements by Robert Lekachman and Michael Harrington which, in his view, may alienate possible business support. That leads to an argument about whether capitalism is systematically hostile to full employment. Ev Ehrlich, Marjorie, Tom Timberg and I argue that it is; Keyserling disagrees, and Conyers is undecided. Times must be changing when that kind of debate is going on in Congressional offices.

After working out some details on Conyers' speech at our Chicago convention, we're ready to leave. He promises us a tough, radical presentation.

#### Convergence on the Left

January 31, New York—A dozen people are huddled around the fireplace at Debbie Meier's house. A few activists in New York DSOC have initiated a discussion meeting with several people from New Left backgrounds who are interested in the organization but

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### Capital quotes

“While similar pressures are building for public campaign financing at the state level, such funding will be slow coming to poorer states such as West Virginia—or at least, so says John D. ‘Jay’ Rockefeller IV, who spent \$2.7 million (including \$1.9 million of his own money) to win the governorship this month. There, Rockefeller says voluntary checkoffs on tax forms would not generate enough funds to finance elections. Rockefeller defends heavy campaign spending by the rich as a legitimate way of getting their messages across because ‘being rich can also be a liability.’ He adds: ‘There are lots of people who would have voted against me because my name is Rockefeller. Telling people who you really are and what you are going to do is expensive.’”

*Business Week*  
December 6, 1976

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have some questions. Ron Radosh, who wrote an account of DSOC's founding convention for *Socialist Revolution*, is the spokesperson for a group which, as he says, came out of the faculty anti-war movement, related or still relates to the New American Movement and is now interested in pursuing a dialogue with the DSOC. Ron and others see a convergence on the Left

represented by the publication of the new socialist weekly *In These Times*, the debates in *Socialist Revolution* and other radical periodical over the Democratic Party. We proceed to an animated discussion about how DSOC functions, how it should function, etc. Radosh and others at the meeting express some reservation about foreign policy directions in DSOC and there's a general concern about lack of an emphasis on community organizing and grass-roots work. Of course, in three hours of informal conversation we don't cover these questions in great detail, but there turns out to be no great gap between the DSOC members and non-members in the room. There's a political range in the discussion but it overlaps those categories. Since DSOC began, we've aimed for broadness of viewpoint, and we've achieved it. And the series of crises of the last four years, along with the divided response of the larger liberal community in which we function, has pulled a number of our DSOC activists to the Left. At the same time, the McGovern campaign, the radical elected officials' successes and the collapse of the original organizations of the New Left have brought a number of serious New Left thinkers and activists around such networks as *Radical America*, *Socialist Revolution*, the New American Movement, the Midwest Academy and the Alternative Policies Conference, to consider and in some cases reconsider relationships with the labor movement, the Democratic Party and the larger liberal community. The discussion tonight is at once a small and significant step in that larger convergence on the Left. We're breaking down some old barriers, setting up new possibilities for communication and activity. As the meeting ends, two non-members, Ron Radosh and Steve Andersen, the New York distributor for *In these Times*, decide to join. □

### Socialists . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ican political economy in favor of the corporations and the corporate rich, then we do indeed face intolerable constraints. And conversely, if the democratic Left maintains its commitment to liberal aims, like full employment, it must now fight for structural changes that go beyond liberalism.

There always have been two souls in conflict within liberalism. On the one hand, it has inspired all the movements which have sought progressive change within the system: trade unionists and minorities and women as well as the middle-class reformers. For the last forty years, liberalism has been as far left as mainstream politics go in this country. On the other hand, the liberal ideology has tacitly accepted the corporate domination of the economic infrastructure even when it opposed particular big business policies. The welfare state was designed to make capitalism work, not to replace it.

So despite the successful reforms of those years, corporations remain in control of our economy. Therefore public intervention must be shaped by private priorities. Trickle-down is the policy of the United States and as a result public monies often induce public disasters. The

subsidies paid to agribusiness allowed it to mechanize twice as fast as industry in the post-war period, displacing millions of the rural poor who were forced into the cities just when other federal incentives were financing the exodus of jobs and affluent taxpayers. The costs of this process were socialized, the enormous profits privatized. The consequent fiscal crisis was then blamed on liberals who often had done no more than to seek relief for the victims of these government policies in which profits are more important than people.

In good times, there were social gains as well as losses. But even then, the contradictions accumulated, and in the 1970s they boiled to the surface. There was a cyclical crisis, and perhaps a secular crisis, of capitalist growth throughout the Western World; international competition subverted the absolute dominance of the world market which America had enjoyed between 1945 and 1960; gigantic Federal subsidies to multinational oil companies allowed them to make the energy economy both wasteful and dependent on foreign sources and thus prepared the way for the success of the OPEC cartel. Above all, it turned out that even a very modest approximation of full employment (a 3.6 percent jobless rate in 1968) threatened corporate profitability—but the traditional remedy of restoring profitability and price stability by increasing unemployment no longer worked.

This last point is critical, for full employment is the key to progress in every sector of the society. With chronic, high unemployment there will be neither the political nor the economic conditions for ending racial and sexual discrimination in the labor market. We will not have available even the relatively modest amount of money needed to fund national health insurance. We will be unlikely to increase our foreign aid much beyond the present, derisory .27 of 1 percent of GNP and, even more importantly, unlikely to cooperate in helping the Third World develop. Disarmament will be made difficult because of the understandable resistance of people working in the defense industry.

#### **An agenda and a vision**

We stand behind the unanimous commitment of the 1976 Democratic Convention and the repeated promise of its Presidential candidate: that every worker in America has a *right* to a job. We agree with the AFL-CIO that Mr. Carter should immediately move to redeem that promise by a \$30 billion economic program which will reduce joblessness by 2 million.

The best way to accomplish that goal is by increasing public service employment at the federal, state, municipal levels and in neighborhood and community-based, non-profit cooperative programs. We know from the careful analyses of the Congressional Budget Office that such an investment is the cheapest and most productive way of stimulating the economy. Tax write-offs for corporations do not simply reinforce the maldistribution of wealth and power; they are also expensive and ineffective in achieving full employment policy.

We most emphatically do not propose to federalize all of the work in America. Indeed, we would stress that one of the most important areas for the creation of new

jobs is within the framework of neighborhood and community programs. The Rural Electrification Administration has demonstrated that money from Washington can be used to underwrite and encourage the creativity of the grass roots. And that would be an important dimension of our proposal.

But how will these jobs be funded? By redeeming another basic Carter campaign pledge: tax reform. There are \$112 billion worth of handouts in the Internal Revenue Code. Rather than "solving" the current crisis with the lives of the unemployed, we should move to require the rich to pay at least their fair share and thereby help fund full employment. The redistribution of wealth is thus not simply an egalitarian ideal. It is a practical necessity if we are to solve the immediate crisis of our economy.

Peace is another weapon in this fight. If the Administration vigorously pushes SALT II to a successful conclusion and sets the Vienna discussion on conventional arms limitation in motion, we might finally get that peace "dividend" we have been talking about for so long. Within this context, we do not simply oppose the Cold Warriors, like the Committee on the Present Danger, because their proposals for a re-escalation of the arms race threaten the security of America and the world. We are also against them because their program would destroy the possibility of progress at home.

In addition to peace, that progress demands national economic planning. We do not, like the tax cutters, trust in the corporation-dominated market to make the right allocation of resources. The disasters currently being visited on cities and entire regions is overwhelming proof that private choice does not maximize the common good. But then Washington has not really been taking a hands-off attitude toward the market. It has constantly intervened in the investment process and always with the same aim: to reinforce the goals of the corporations. It is time for a national planning mechanism which will shape the investment process on the basis of social priorities.

There are proposals already before the Congress in the Humphrey-Hawkins bill which point in this direction. Humphrey-Hawkins is a "process" bill which does not mandate any specific action for the fulfillment of its goals but describes a way of deciding what actions should be taken. It is extremely mild and has already been watered down, but it can be taken as an important point of departure. Within the Humphrey-Hawkins framework, we could fight for:

- the creation of a publicly-owned gas and oil corporation;
- credit allocation, requiring all banks to provide a percentage of their loans for specified social purposes;
- a tax credit only available for those investments which promote the goals of public policy, e.g. for companies that hire minorities or women, which move into depressed regions and urban areas;
- public and employee representation on the board of directors of all major corporations so that all basic decisions on pricing, technology, plant location, etc. are made in the open and, if necessary, are the subject of

public hearings to ensure it that public priorities are followed;

- a national policy to restore the railroads under public ownership within the context of a planned development of mass transit;
- job guarantees, on the Amtrak model, for all workers displaced because of defense cuts, environmental protection or American measures designed to facilitate the development of the Third World.

This is an extensive agenda and it requires careful consideration in each and every detail. We are committed to it because we regard democratic decision making as a central value which is constantly overridden by corporate power. We also believe that, with all of the errors that are inevitable in any human enterprise, our program will be more efficient than the present, scandalously wasteful system.

But our agenda is not socialist even though it moves in that direction. Almost every proposal we have made is contained in the 1976 Democratic platform or, like tax reform, was vigorously endorsed by Jimmy Carter during the campaign. A serious political movement must begin where the people are. The plurality of Americans who voted for Jimmy Carter know that they need full employment, health care, liveable cities, fair taxation and the like. And the 47 percent who were non-voters, a group which is mainly composed of working people, the minorities and the poor, require such measures, too. But no one will get them if the liberal retreat becomes national policy.

The first step, then, is to mobilize the Carter majority and the non-voters in a democratic Left coalition of trade unionists, the minorities, feminists, political and social activists. Its program would call for the kind of structural change we have outlined here, proposals which move in a socialist direction but are not themselves socialist. In the foreseeable future, the tactic of that movement should be one of struggle to help, or if necessary push, the President to fulfill the key promises of the Democratic Platform and campaign of 1976. Clearly, there are forces hostile to that undertaking within the Administration—and just as clearly, there are those who are friendly to it. We are simply, but most emphatically, demanding that the Administration live up to its own promises.

We do not propose that the democratic Left become socialist tomorrow morning. There is not a potential majority for such a step, not within the democratic Left itself and certainly not in American society. But we believe that, here and now, democratic socialism must once again become a normal and natural tendency within the mainstream of American political life. If the democratic Left adapts itself to the reactionary anti-socialist myths which pervade this country, that will not merely push back a renascent but still small socialist movement. It will move all political debate, all legislation, to the Right. Proposals will be formulated so as to prove that they do not threaten the corporate status quo—that they are not socialist.

Secondly, we must frankly say that we believe that the democratic Left must sooner or later—the sooner

the better—move to a full socialist position. The evils which we have described are systemic, part of a structure of private corporate domination of an increasingly social and international technology with disastrous consequences for Americans and the poor of this world. That system is itself in movement, forced to adopt non-capitalist techniques of making economic decisions politically in order to preserve capitalism.

So the choice before us is not “free enterprise” or “statism.” It is whether the increasing collectivization of economic life is going to take place behind closed doors where basic choices are made by an alliance of government bureaucrats and corporate executives, which is the present trend; or whether it is possible to make that collectivization democratic and libertarian and communitarian. It is the struggle toward that latter goal that defines socialism today.

We make no messianic claims about the future we seek. Socialism could solve some of the most critical of human problems, like hunger and preventable disease and urban decay, but it will not transform human nature. Our goal is political: not the creation of heaven on earth, but the construction of a better earth. We do believe, however, that our movement is relevant to the profound spiritual crisis of these times, even if it is in no way pretends to be a substitute religion. For one of the sources of the bewilderment and confusion one senses throughout this culture is that we have done such a poor job in mastering the products of our own genius, that we seem so often to be the victims of our creativity. And one of our hopes is that the people, in the course of winning control of their society, will find new meanings in their individual lives.

The business of America, it was once rightly said, is business. Economically, politically—morally—that is no longer good enough. The work of this society should be the democratic satisfaction of the needs, not only of its own people, but of humankind throughout the world. We propose, then, not simply a program, but a vision. □

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# Jimmy Higgins reports . . .

**COFFEE BOYCOTT—NO.** The coffee boycott is usually portrayed as a heroic consumer struggle against an international cartel . . . for truth, justice and the return of the ten-cent cup of coffee! Alas, the realities of the world market aren't that simple, and the interests of consumers in advanced industrial nations sometimes conflict cruelly with the needs of the less-developed countries heavily dependent on world commodity prices. And the functioning of the commodities markets allows for no selective sentiment. If we successfully drive down the price of coffee beans and thereby punish the right-wing dictators in Brazil, we'll simultaneously punish the democratic socialist regime in Costa Rica and the masses of people in all the coffee-producing countries. In a letter to the *New York Times* published January 30, Daniel Oduber Quiros, the socialist president of Costa Rica, summed up the problem from the perspective of the coffee-producing nations: "The rise in the price of coffee beans has been caused by the impact on the market of natural phenomena outside the control of the producing countries, though obviously it is to us a godsend in helping us cope with the consequences of the world energy and financial crises. It would be most unjust if—after having suffered a serious deterioration in our terms of trade in the last 25 years—our access to markets should be closed or reduced by factors beyond our control just at the moment when the trends of trade are working temporarily to our advantage . . . Perhaps American consumers have not realized the sheer magnitude of the disadvantage which we suffer. . . . While in 1950 we needed to produce 2,100 kilos of coffee in order to earn enough to buy a small tractor, by 1974 we needed to sell four times as much coffee to acquire the same tractor. This disadvantageous trade relationship explains why, for some considerable time now, Latin America has advocated the replacement of foreign aid from the rich countries by a fairer system of international trading."

**NINE CENTS ON THE DOLLAR**—that's how much the New Right campaign committees actually turned over to their favored candidates in last year's Congressional elections. The three committees, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, the National Conservative Political Action Committee and the Gun

Owners of America, spent \$6,384,214 through mid-October; only \$594,824 went to candidates. All the groups talked about the need to build toward the future as one rationale for the ridiculous level of overhead. A top beneficiary of this conservative money was Richard Viguerie, previously famed as the fund-raiser who put together George Wallace's direct-mail appeals. Viguerie received about \$3 million from the three groups in 1975-76 for consultant services and sale of mailing lists. Incidental footnote: Viguerie has told conservative groups to give up their exclusive Republican strategy and begin work in the Democratic Party.

**LEFT OUT OF THE CURRENT** tax rebate scheme are 11 million mothers and children who receive state welfare benefits. It seems odd that a program which has a stated goal of stimulating demand should omit those most in need and those most likely to spend whatever increment they receive. So why aren't they included? Although federal official claim that technical difficulties keep them from including welfare recipients in the rebate plan, precedent exists for designating state welfare commissioners as federal agents for the disbursement of funds. And it is possible to exclude such tax rebates from income calculations so that recipients would not lose other benefits. It's been a hard winter for the poor already; this is only one indication that Washington intends to keep them out in the cold.

**WHAT'S IN A NAME**—In the late 1930s Gus Hawkins, then a member of the California state assembly, proposed creating day care centers where working mothers could leave their children during the work day. The *Los Angeles Times* decried it as a "socialistic" idea. A few years later World War II came along, Southern California needed many "Rosie the Riveters," and suddenly the *Los Angeles Times* discovered that day care centers were "patriotic." Of course, times have changed. Hawkins, now a leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, has another proposal: the full employment bill he co-authored with Hubert Humphrey. It's now attacked as radical, but maybe that idea too could become "patriotic."

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