Newsletter of
THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Rattling the "food weapon"

by CAROL DRISKO

Food and oil do mix. It's just that Gerald Ford mixes them badly.

At the United Nations, Ford rightly made the energy-food connection in primer style: "Energy is required to produce food and food to produce energy." He called for a "global strategy" (without indicating *whose* global strategy) for food and oil and promised to increase emergency food aid from last year's $800 million, though he wouldn't specify how much more. The United States will present a comprehensive proposal at the World Food Conference in Rome, November 5-16, according to the President. He also agreed to participate in a world food reserve program so long as each nation "determines for itself how it manages its reserves."

But a good portion of Ford's maiden address to the UN was devoted to rattling the "food weapon," America's answer to the Arab "oil weapon." Despite pious assertions ("It has never been our policy to use food as a political weapon despite the oil embargo and recent oil price and production decisions"), his message got through. The United States is the world's leading food producer; we are the so-called "Arabs of the food business." We produce 44 percent of the world's wheat, half its grains, two-thirds of its soybeans. And the price of those exports has gone up 55 percent in the last year. Developing countries which import 38 percent of all their wheat, 55 percent of their soybean oil and 74 percent of their rice are keenly aware of the dominant exporting role played by the United States in most of these crops.

In fact, the report to the UN Special Session on raw materials and development showed that the U.S. is the prime exporter of 8 of the 20 basic commodities which inflated most between 1970 and 1973.

Even the pledge to participate in a world food reserve program was hedged to carry a threat. We'll participate if each nation can manage its own reserves, Ford said. The idea of a world food bank implies a ready reserve, open to all; "managed" national reserves imply the possibility of withholding.

And that withholding of food reserves is a real threat. Despite Ford's assurances, the United States *does* use food as a political weapon. The refusal to supply wheat to Salvador Allende's Chile, even when the Popular Unity government offered cash, is a recent example. When the military junta assumed control, food shipments were resumed "for humanitarian reasons." Our vastly reduced Food for Peace stocks have also gone primarily to politically strategic and/or client Asian nations such as South Vietnam, Cambodia, South Korea and Pakistan.

Food and oil: mixing in production

Besides their similarities as geopolitical weapons, food and oil are linked functionally, as Ford pointed out. Modern agriculture requires fuel in the production, processing, storage and distribution of food; gasoline and diesel fuel run trucks and tractors; oil and electricity power water pumps; natural gas, coal or petroleum by-products are used in the manufacture of fertilizer; energy is consumed in fumigating, drying, refrigerating and transporting the harvested crops. Eighty gallons of gasoline are used to raise one acre of corn. The raw materials for fertilizers—phosphates, potash and nitrogen—are plentiful. But converting them requires technology and energy.

(Continued on page 4)

New unity spurs French Socialist progress

by BEN ROSS

Paris. On October 12 and 13, 1500 representatives of the Socialist Party (PS), the Unified Socialist Party and the "third component," composed largely of trade unionists, met in Paris to ratify a long-range program for what hopefully will become an enlarged "party of the Socialists."

This is the latest of a series of mergers which are making the French Socialists, who just a few years ago were in danger of extinction, into the country's most widely supported party. And this unification is not a mere marriage of convenience; the program adopted here last month reflects a remarkable agreement among people who a few years ago held widely disparate views. The new unity of the French Socialists is based on two fundamental principles: the long range goal of a "self-managed" economy and society, and the strategy of an alliance with the Communists.

By "self-management," French Socialists mean the principle that all organizations must be run by elected representatives of those directly concerned. This implies a pluralistic society in which conflicts will be openly expressed and democratically resolved. With this concept both left and right wings of the PS distinguish themselves from their Communist allies.

(Continued on page 2)

French Socialists . . .

(Continued from page 1)

In the mid-'60's French socialism was divided; it was losing strength and seemed in danger of being crushed between the conservatives and the Communists. The largest group, the SFIO (French Section of the Workers' International), had for many years been working in coalition with groups to its right. On the left stood the Unified Socialists, formed after the split in the '50's. In between, underneath, and on all sides was a profusion of smaller groups. Many of them were later federated into François Mitterand's CIR.

As the Gaullist presidential system of government pushed France toward a two party system, the old tactic of alliances with centrists no longer worked. Based on the new strategy of cooperation with the Communists, a new Socialist Party was formed in 1971 by a merger of the SFIO, CIR and some other groups.

Since then, the progress of the Socialists has been remarkable. The original membership of 60,000 has more than doubled; the Socialist vote has increased markedly. And even more important, the party is transforming itself from an electoral machine into a party actively involved in social struggles.

The party gained more momentum from the near-success of François Mitterand who got 49 percent of the votes in last May's presidential election. Immediately after that election, planning began for a further unification, to bring in the PSU and trade unionists from the CFDT, France's second largest union federation, which since World War II has moved from Catholicism to socialism. An influx of trade unionists is particularly important for the PS, an essentially middle-class party which lost most of its working class base to the Communists years ago.

The October meeting, called to ratify the political agreement that had been reached by the three groups, turned out to have an even broader representation. Although an anti-merger faction took control of the PSU in early October, the pro-merger tendency came in force. There were representatives of many single-purpose reform organizations which had previously stayed out of party politics. Even several leading left-wing Gaullists (including one former minister) came as observers.

The new program is generally described as a step to the left—and in a sense it is. Its goal of a self-managed society is to be reached by a combination of political, economic and social struggles which will all involve the mobilization of the masses. This is a far cry from the parliamentary maneuvering of past years.

But more significantly, the program unites radicals who a few years ago were far apart. The ardent advocates of direct democracy in the factories now agree that self-management must be conducted by elected representatives and regulated by a democratically determined economic plan. They now agree that local struggles cannot succeed without a political victory on the national scale, and that self-management is impossible in factories that have not been nationalized.

Ecological advocates of zero growth and partisans of economic expansion both want "not so much to limit production as to produce other things in other ways for other purposes." Sharp disagreements remain, mostly on foreign policy, but the French Socialists now agree on what they want to make of France and how they propose to go about it. □

Portugal at the crossroads

by David Selden

Alexandria, Virginia, October 1, 1974. Two days ago Bernice and I piled our luggage into our rented VW for the last time and headed for Lisbon Airport. We had been staying near Setubal, 45 miles south of the capital city. We left four hours before flight time—and we almost missed our plane.

The day before we had driven a few miles to Sesimbra, a fishing village in the process of becoming a summer resort. We were stopped twice at roadblocks manned by soldiers; nothing serious, just a polite search for guns. But on our final drive after four weeks in Portugal we ran into something different. Twice we were stopped by roadblocks thrown up by hundreds of civilians, some with rifles, some wearing armbands designating various political party affiliations, and some with partial army or navy uniforms.

For the most part, those carrying out the car-searching were good-humored but firm. There was little show of military organization, but all seemed united by the common purpose of preventing the conflagration which had been threatening to erupt for a week or more. The resulting traffic jams, however, were monumental.

The next day, as we were driving back to Washington from Kennedy Airport, we heard the news that Portuguese President Antonio de Spinola had resigned. As I write this I can only guess what will happen next in that little country with so many big problems—and by the time this is printed the whole situation may have changed. I can only tell you what we saw and heard as we traveled the country from south to north and from the sea to the mountains.

From fascism to freedom

We had decided to visit Portugal not long after the successful April 25th revolt of the younger armed forces officers against the fascistic Caetano regime, successor to the long dictatorship of Salazar. We wanted to see and feel the metamorphosis. Then, in August, we learned that a world-wide trade union conference was planned to take place in Lisbon in mid-September to mark the first anniversary of the death of democracy in Chile. The proposed meeting with trade union leaders from other countries gave an added purpose to our trip.

It is hard to imagine a country without unions, yet that was the situation in Portugal for more than 40 years. Now a struggling labor movement is striving

to confirm its birth. Intersyndical, the Portuguese labor federation, is a sketchy structure with few unions carrying on the kind of collective bargaining Americans are used to. Political parties and ideological groupings have more significance than trade unions—but even the parties operate in a strange, unreal world. There have been no elections and none are scheduled until next March, when the voters will elect delegates to a constitutional convention.

From October to March is a long incubation period for democracy in a nation as tension-filled as Portugal is now. Spinola, in resigning, said he could not prevent a slide toward anarchy.

Life in Portugal is not easy, even though there seems to be little of the abject poverty found throughout Latin America and the Orient. There is a fairly large commercial class. Banks abound. But outside the four or five large towns the peasant style of life prevails—back-breaking, unending work, skimpy schooling, child labor, and few luxuries. Even those who live in the coastal towns are sea-going peasants. Yet they live in permanent homes, carrying on in time-tested ways, and they get enough food to keep them going. One would not think of such people as left radicals.

Left or right?

In the free-wheeling Portuguese political melee the extremes of Left and Right are the noisiest. The communists, hardened by years of underground activity which even Salazar's secret police could not prevent, are probably the best organized. The fastest growing, however, may be the socialists, but no one really knows. We got the impression, moreover, that most Portuguese are in the center.

The planned world-wide conference of trade union leaders to protest the Chilean military dictatorship never took place, probably because the project was just too big and complicated for a fledgling organization like Intersyndical, its chief sponsor. Nevertheless, there was a great effort to connect the current Portuguese situation with Allende's Chile. Posters proclaimed "solidariedade ao povo do Chile." Judging by the numerous posters, Salvador Allende, if he could return to earth, would easily be elected as Portugal's chief of state.

The left parties were able to establish a common front for a week of activities centering around the Chilean anniversary. They seemed to be driving home the lesson that although Portugal is under military rule, the nation must not fall back into any sort of repressive regime. The solidarity-with-the-people-of-Chile activities were carried off with varying success, with a good deal of inter-party maneuvering, but the spirit was encouraging and infectious.

Spinola goes—what next?

In the meantime, remnants of the fascist Caetano regime attempted to gather their forces—either to stiffen the wobbling Spinola government or to launch an armed takeover.

Spinola is an older man, a long-time general, a moderate, and more a father figurehead than a leader of the nation, as the events of the last week in September proved. On September 18th he was finally persuaded by leftist supporters in the armed forces movement to suspend publication of the rightist newspaper, and two days later the rightist party itself was banned. It was this action which touched off the roadblocks, "anarchy," and Spinola's resignation.

Apparently advised by conservative fellow officers, Spinola attempted to rally the political middle by scheduling—or acquiescing in—a massive public meeting of support. The leftists strongly urged that the meeting be cancelled on grounds that the fascists would use the gathering to initiate a wave of violence and possible repression. When Spinola temporized, the roadblocks went up and the president and his conservative supporters capitulated.

Portugal's impact

Portugal may be a small country—the population is just over 7 million—but what is happening there could have a widespread effect. Right next door the Franco dictatorship in Spain at last seems to be on its way out. What is happening in Portugal provides inspiration for Spanish anti-fascists. And then there is the great Spanish-Portuguese diaspora throughout Central and South America and in many other parts of the world. Displaced Portuguese and Spanish have continued to look to the old mother countries despite centuries of separation.

So the events in Portugal will have a far greater import for Americans than their effect on our military bases on the Iberian peninsula and in the Azores. Bernice and I came to Portugal with the greatest of good will, and we were treated with unfailing warmth and courtesy. Yet we left with concern for the future relationship between our two nations. Early in our visit came the confirmation of the CIA's role in bringing about the military dictatorship in Chile. When the roadblocks went up in Portugal, the brand-new Lisbon Sheraton was ringed with peaceful but armed guards. Sheraton is owned by ITT, which was deeply involved in the Chile tragedy.

The United States cannot afford any more Chiles, Dominican Republics, Guatemalas or Vietnams. If our government cannot rebuild its moral position in the world we may not find it pleasant to say when traveling abroad, "I am an American." □

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THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Food crisis . . .

(Continued from page 1)

"The Green Revolution," mistakenly seen by many as a panacea for the developing world, received its death blow from increased energy prices. The revolution's "father," Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug, thought of the new technology as simply a way to buy time until world population growth leveled off. As it turned out, the revolution didn't even do that for long.

Before the oil embargo, poorer farmers in India could not command the credits needed to buy the "miracle seeds," the fertilizer, the water pumps or the fuel to run them. Many lacked technical know-how. So, the Green Revolution tended to benefit the haves. Even so, increased over-all production did bring India to the brink of cereal self-sufficiency by doubling its wheat production in six years. The advance proved to be fragile.

India: in the vanguard of the world famine

Now, with increased energy prices, India is in a more serious bind. In 1971, that country spent $560 million to import crude oil, fertilizer and 80 billion bushels of food grains. At today's prices, that would cost India $3.1 billion, clearly impossible since India earns only $2.4 billion from exports.

For lack of 15 cents worth of fertilizer, India fails to grow 10 pounds of wheat which it must try to purchase on the world market for $1. The entire situation becomes more tragically absurd when one considers the 3 million tons of nitrogen, phosphates and potash Americans use every year on lawns, cemeteries, golf courses and rose gardens—an amount equal to the entire Indian agricultural use.

Strict agricultural comparisons between the U.S. and India are also revealing. We have roughly equivalent crop acreage—360 million acres. American farmers use seven times as much fertilizer on the same amount of land. To compound the problem, the United States put a quasi-embargo on fertilizer exports so that we could meet expanded domestic needs.

For all these reasons and more, India's crop is off 40 percent this year. The subcontinent is facing its most somber food shortage in decades, and starvation there may soon be more serious than the recent Sahelian famine. India's shortfall of grain amounts to the food needs of 50 million people for one year. A West Bengali official estimates that in his state alone 15 million are starving or subsisting on one meager meal per day. In India and elsewhere, the price of a meal exceeds a full day's income for some people.

At a conservative estimate, India needs 7 to 10 million tons of grain now. Because of shipping shortages, 70 days are needed to move grain from Galveston to Calcutta. Grain for India should have been in the holds of ships, ready to go, in September. The World Food Conference in Rome may be too late for India.

When that Rome conference convenes on Nov. 5, it will face what A. H. Boerma, the director of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) calls a grave food shortage. Cereal stocks are at their lowest in 20 years. "The world food situation," says Boerma, "is more difficult than at any time since the years immediately following the devastation of the Second World War." Lester Brown of the Overseas Development Council estimates that the entire world has less than one month's grain reserves. Earl Butz, the U.S. Agriculture Secretary, disputes that figure, but his

The food gap

Distributing the world's food is a much more serious problem than producing enough food, according to a new study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The report, due to be released December 9 but summarized in the October 21 Washington *Post*, implicitly criticizes Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz and directly challenges Malthusian pessimism about world food production.

The authors of the report differ with the policies of Butz (and of President Ford) calling for the United States to keep a "low profile" on the world food situation; instead the authors urge concerted international action by the leading food producers.

Blaiming the current shortages on decisions by four major grain producers, the U.S., Canada, Australia and Argentina, to cut back production between 1968 and 1970, the report notes that 90 million additional tons of grain could have been produced in those three years. Only about half of the world's available farm land is now in cultivation, the report says, and it would be relatively easy to produce 2 percent more grain each year (enough to feed the undernourished throughout the world).

"But getting it (the increased grain output) into the stomachs of the malnourished would would be so enormously complicated as to be quite impractical," the authors say. In fact, between 1954 and 1972, food production did outstrip population growth, but the surplus grain has remained in the developed countries, while the underdeveloped world had a food deficit. Unless something is done, by 1985, the developed countries could have a food surplus of 51.9 million tons while the developing countries have a food deficit of 47.6 million tons.

As for the proposal that people in the developed countries eat less to benefit the Third World, the authors are skeptical. In their view, that might lower prices for a while, but the ultimate effect would be to reduce production incentives. Instead, the study proposes stimulating production abroad and setting up modest international food reserves. Production in the underdeveloped world should be aided by technical assistance, free seeds, increased incomes for farmers and further research, the report maintains. And the food reserves should be small enough so that the developing countries avoid developing a false sense of security, according to the report.

own estimate would involve the slaughter and consumption of most of the world's livestock.

René Dumont, professor of agriculture at the Paris Institute of Agronomy, is more blunt: "We are not heading for famine—we are already there." A third of the world is suffering from hunger and its consequences.

While India and the developing nations suffered from the oil shortage and vicissitudes of the world market, the advanced nations' agriculture was beset by the vagaries of weather. It was the driest summer in the Middle West since 1936, and both the U.S. and Canada faced spring floods, summer droughts and early fall frosts. Australia suffered an insect blight, and a Siberian drought cut into the Soviet harvest.

Distribution and control

Still, the advanced nations have done well. The Siberian drought hurt, but the Soviet harvest totaled an ample 805 million tons. While early estimates of the U.S. harvest proved to be over-optimistic, our own harvest was bountiful. In fact, the advanced nations do so well that, with distribution on the basis of need, the whole world could be fed.

What about food supply as it relates to world population? Population control has become the developed nations' favorite prescription for the underdeveloped nations. The World Food Conference in Rome is integrally related to two earlier conferences, the UN Special Assembly Session on Resources and Development held in New York in April and the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in April. At Bucharest, the developed nations made a strategic retreat. (Even John Rockefeller, the population control advocate, conceded at the time that population control couldn't precede, but must accompany, development.) Population growth tends to level off after development takes place—China being a clear example, not to mention the developed countries of North America and Europe. As the New York *Times*' Gladwin Hill put it: "Population is virtually an abstraction. Its meaning lies chiefly in its relation to resources and the consumption of them. . . . From this standpoint, the responsibility is that of the developed nations."

"Many farmers view permanent scarcity of food as a goal that would be appropriate to their self-interest."

René Dumont states the distribution problem succinctly:

". . . There would be more than enough protein sources in the world to satisfy the minimum needs of all today's children if these were distributed rationally and equally. . . . What happens is that they are shared out almost solely in proportion to financial resources."

As Dumont explains, a number of wastes result. Powdered milk and fish, two rich protein sources, are used to feed animals. More grain is used for livestock in North America than for total human consumption in India and China. Five times more land, water and fertilizer are needed to support the average North American than the average Indian. Present world food production could only take care of one billion people if all ate as Americans do.

This leads to the Roger Revelle paradox. Revelle, the director of Harvard's Center of Population Studies, points out that the life expectancy of children in underdeveloped countries is lowered by undernutrition while that of adults in developed countries is reduced by overnutrition.

That is a paradox and a bitter one, but its statement cloaks the nutrition gap at home. Although there is a huge statistical overconsumption, we are not a well nourished nation. The Senate Select Committee on Hunger reports that the poor in the United States are hungrier and poorer than they were four years ago. That simple statement translates into ghetto residents feasting on dog food and the elderly slipping cans of tuna into coat pockets and handbags.

The Rome conference—miracle, revolution or despair?

Given this generally gloomy world picture, what is likely to happen this month in Rome? What indeed can be done, either in the short term or the long term? To combat undernourishment simply by increasing food production would require a sixfold increase by 2000. An FAO nutritionist calls that an impossible task. Altering distribution may be equally impossible. Dumont says that adequate changes in distribution "presuppose a social revolution."

No social revolutions are on the agenda for the Rome meeting. In fact, most of the proposals contained in an FAO policy statement, coincide with George McGovern's "Plowshares for Peace" program. Like McGovern's earlier "Food for Peace" concept, Plowshares and the FAO document avoid earth shaking or sovereignty shaking measures. Still, the world would be in luck if Administration proposals were as serious as these two ideas. Plowshares calls for agricultural and weather research; assurance of adequate supplies of water, fuel and fertilizer, especially an investment in the latter; increased technological assistance in harvesting, storing, processing and distributing crops; and establishing an emergency, worldwide food reserve "isolated from commercial marketing."

Of course, some of that modest program and many of the more sweeping steps required to deal with the world food crisis run afoul of corporate agribusiness. As the head of the National Farmers' Union recently told a Senate subcommittee, "Many farmers view permanent scarcity of food as a goal that would be appropriate to their self-interest." The Ford Administration seems unlikely to shake corporate farmers from that view, or even to try very hard. It will take leadership to convince Americans and other citizens of the industrialized world to eat lower on the food chain and to commit resources to developing agriculture in starving nations. And it really is so much easier to use and threaten to use our powerful food weapon.

Perhaps C. P. Snow was right. Six years ago he warned that we might be destined to watch one third of the world starve on TV—and in living color. □

FIGHTING SEX DISCRIMINATION

Victory in the Loop

Women Employed (WE), an organization of working women in the Chicago Loop (See Day Creamer, "Battles in the Loop," NEWSLETTER, April, 1974.) has won a major victory over sex discrimination at Kraft Foods, according to *The Spokeswoman*. Kraft signed an agreement with the Department of Agriculture committing the company to hiring women and minorities for 85 percent of all openings in the next year.

Women Employed filed charges against Kraft with the Department of Agriculture, because the USDA, like every federal agency, requires affirmative action plans from all its contractors. The USDA began its investigation of Kraft in December, 1973, and reached agreement with Kraft on a new affirmative action plan last August—lightning speed for a sex discrimination suit.

Specifically, Kraft must hire women and minorities for 67 percent of openings for officials and managers, 66 percent of all professional openings, and 85 percent of openings for technicians. The affirmative action plan also requires Kraft to post all openings for lower and middle management positions and to set out promotion criteria in writing. Kraft must revise job descriptions and accurately portray the work done and the relevant qualifications for each job title.

Reporting at the *Post*

The Spokeswoman also reports that the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has made a determination of probable cause in a sex discrimination case brought by the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild on behalf of women employees of the Washington *Post*. The EEOC found that women were discriminated against in promotions in the news department and were "denied equal consideration with male reporters for story assignments on the city and suburban desks."

The EEOC findings went practically unreported in the media, according to *Spokeswoman*. The *Post* itself carried a small item on a back page—and no one else picked it up.

Subscriptions to *The Spokeswoman*, an independent monthly newsletter for women, are available from 5464 South Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60615 for $9 per year.

When is sex a bfoq?

When is sex a bona fide occupational qualification? What are women's rights under the Civil Rights Act of 1964? What is the fastest way to win an equal pay case? If you've been asking these questions and suspect that you are a victim (male or female) of sex discrimination in your job, Katherine Stone and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers have come to your rescue. *Handbook for OCAW Women* will take you through the labyrinth of laws, executive orders, forms, hearings, deadlines and administrative interpretations and procedures in clear language. Stone also tackles such difficult areas as revamping seniority and determining the validity of qualifying tests. A sub-section on women's occupational health problems pays particular attention to chemical hazards to pregnant women, but women in any occupation will find this booklet immensely helpful.

Handbook for OCAW Women by Katherine Stone is available from the OCAW, Box 2812, Denver, Colo. 80201 for $1.75.

—GRETCHEN DONART

Poor Jerry's Almanac

Events have been unkind to our new President.

The very same day that the press reported on his major "policy address" in Kansas City before the Future Farmers of America, two lesser stories appeared.

Alas, for Mr. Ford's sake, they made his pietistic lecture on individual restraint ("balance the family budget . . . clean your plate . . . spend less . . . plant WIN gardens") look even more foolish than it had sounded the previous night.

One story concerned some Wisconsin farmers upset by high feed costs and low cattle prices. To protest their plight, they publicly slaughtered 650 calves. "Waste less in every way."

The other, more damning item appeared in a New York *Times* editorial. It told of plans by the Cities Services Company, which is leaving its New York City headquarters. But the minor oil barons are not content to just leave the city behind. Rather, they will save taxes and *increase* the value of their land by tearing down their financial district office buildings. In so doing, they follow an urban trend set by the Franklin Savings Bank (a healthy institution with no tie to the ill-fated Franklin National) and W.R. Grace, both levellers of perfectly usable buildings.

"Destruction of sound and often fine buildings for speculative open space, is a perfectly legal way to do a city in," editorialized the *Times*. And so it is. But an economic arrangement which makes such things "practical" is certainly more significant than the deficits in our family budgets as a cause of waste and inflation.

—JACK CLARK

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Is decent health care more expensive?

by ALFRED BAKER LEWIS

The United States needs a system of health care paid for collectively, free to the individual medical consumer.

Of course, whenever I say that, I run into some argument from conservatives that "nothing is free" and nationalized health care, particularly the Griffiths-Corman version supported by most liberals and organized labor, would be too costly. But that cost argument is completely fallacious, and those of us who are working for genuine national health security should be aware of just how wrong headed and how incomplete the "big cost" argument is.

First of all, those who argue against an adequate health security bill just ignore the fact that we already have the most expensive medical care system in the world. Not only do we spend more money on health care than any other country, we also spend a larger percentage of our Gross National Product. In 1970, the United States spent 7.1 percent of its GNP on health care, while the Soviet Union spent 6 percent, Sweden 5.5 percent and Great Britain 5.1 percent. And in 1971, it got worse as health costs raced ahead of inflation and went up to 7.4 percent of our Gross National Product.

That certainly doesn't mean that we have the best health care system—if you look at the infant mortality or life expectancy figures, we certainly don't—but we do have the most expensive. Having the government take over health insurance won't add a penny to the total cost of health care. In fact, government administration of health care, especially under the Griffiths-Corman bill, could save money by reducing administrative costs and by establishing some price controls. But adding to the federal budget, which national health care will do, won't mean adding anything to the cost of health care now borne by the entire society.

Then, too, the conservative argument on cost ignores the total costs of sickness or non-industrial accidents (industrial accidents are already covered by workmen's compensation). If a man or woman is ill or is injured, the high medical bills are paid by that individual or by the family if they can afford it. That's a cost, and a financial one. In addition, though, the labor that a man or woman usually contributes to his or her employer and to society as a whole is lost. If an insurance company pays part of the bill, we all bear a little of the cost in higher premiums. If the man or woman is indigent, or if the illness forces him or her into poverty, the taxpayers pick up the tab for Medicaid and welfare payments. So, the cost is there. Someone in the community pays the bill. All national health insurance will do is distribute those costs more equitably.

But there are some other costs of health care which a national health insurance system could reduce.

For example, there's preventive medicine. Conservatives will tell you that if we pass national health insurance, the doctors' offices will be swamped. They forget that right now, millions of people who don't feel well or who are seriously ill put off going to a doctor because of the prohibitive costs. By the time they do go, the disease is more serious and more costly to treat. With national health insurance, publicly paid for, these people could get early care at less expense. Systems of preventive medicine could be established to keep people healthier all the time.

National health insurance would also cut into the "overhead" costs of running private health insurance companies. According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* for 1974, private insurance companies (excluding Blue Cross and Blue Shield) paid out only 75 percent in benefits on the premiums taken in. That's a whopping 25 percent for socially unnecessary costs like advertising, acquisition costs and duplicated administration.

Decent health care is a right, and it's long past time for the Federal government to recognize that right. The only answer is national health security, publicly financed and available on the basis of need. The only bill that comes close to meeting those criteria is the Griffiths-Corman bill. □

The real "big costs"

In 1973, the United States spent $85 billion on personal health care; the Department of Health, Education and Welfare estimates that the figure will rise to $103 billion this year.

We don't have national health insurance, yet, but there are some private health insurance plans. Last year the premiums on those plans cost over $20 billion. That's a pretty rapid rise from $8 billion in health insurance premiums we paid ten years ago, but the inflation is continuing, and if no system of national health insurance is enacted, health insurance premiums will cost more than $40 billion five years from now.

When you look at health care costs that way, the projected price tags for national health insurance (remember the projections were made by the Nixon Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare which had a strong bias against the Health Security bill) don't look quite so staggering:

The Administration plan would cost $109 billion; the insurance industry bill $111 billion; the U.S. Chamber of Commerce plan $107 billion; Long-Ribicoff catastrophic insurance plan $107 billion; Griffiths-Corman Health Security plan $116 billion.

Since none of the other bills do anything about controlling health costs, and since all the others would leave the private insurance industry intact, the Health Security bill could prove to be a bargain in straight dollars and cents terms in five years time.

Jimmy Higgins reports . . .

DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT?—In his recent warning against a legislative dictatorship, President Ford was sounding a variation on the right wing theme in this year's Congressional election. Before Nixon stepped down, some Republican strategists desperately launched an attack against the AFL-CIO's "Elect a Veto Proof Congress" slogan. Last spring, Nixon apologists were actually arguing that such a veto proof Congress would destroy the constitutional balance of power. Official Republican fund raisers and right wing zealots also predicted that a veto proof Congress would kill the two party system and lead straight to unbridled rule by "Big Labor bosses." The National Right to Work Committee took up the issue. NRWC commissioned a nation-wide survey (cost $6500), took a full page ad in the Washington *Post* (cost $5000) and sent out national fund-raising appeals lamenting that the conservatives can't match George Meany's funds. They also set up an ad hoc "Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress." And Senator Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.) and Congressman Steve Symms (R.-Ida.) are pushing another group, "Americans Against Union Control of Government." A widely circulated letter from Helms (on Senate stationery) begins with the warning that "freedom's days are numbered" because of the danger of "America's takeover by a relative handful of union bosses."

SOME OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR warnings have been issued by the Republican National Committee. One fundraising letter, signed by Robert Michel (R.-Ill.), has an illustration of a colonial town crier and the headline "Sound the Alarm! Your Nation, Your Party, Your Congress are being BURNED and SACKED!" The letter actually warns of a "George Meany dictatorship."

A LABOR DICTATORSHIP is, to put it mildly, unlikely, but a more liberal and Democratic Congress is a certainty. It might even be "veto-proof." Some Democratic leaders, from a broad cross section of the party, met recently in Washington to discuss the election. They quite soberly projected that 100 of the 187 Republican seats in the House are winnable while only 25 of the 248 Democratic seats are vulnerable. Within the Democratic ranks, there has been some shift—because of resignation and primary victories—toward the liberals. Some key leadership positions will switch, too, as William Proxmire takes over the Senate Banking and Currency Committee and Hubert Humphrey succeeds Proxmire in chairing the Joint Economic Committee. The JEC, under Humphrey's frenetic and informed leadership, is likely to turn out a plethora of material which the Democratic ticket can use in the '76 campaign. One significant switch, below the leadership level, is Congressman Charles Rangel's move to the House Ways and Means Committee; he'll become the first black seated on that powerful committee.

BRACING FOR A COAL STRIKE—The United Mine Workers union is clearly preparing for the worst—a long, highly politicized strike. The most recent issue of the *Mine Workers' Journal* informed members of the "Ten Myths Operators Are Cooking Up for November 12" (the contract deadline). A week before that was released, the union research department sent out a report on "Coal Miners and the Economy." (The current issue of the *Journal* and the study on "Coal Miners and the Economy" are available from the UMW, 900 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C.) Both drove home the point that the giant coal companies—which are enjoying record profits—represented by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association can afford to meet the UMW's demands. And on October 10, UMW President Arnold Miller reminded management that they must meet the non-economic demands if a strike is to be averted. Charging that the BCOA's proposal on safety would be "a three year renewal of their license to kill," Miller warned emphatically that "the UMW will not trade the lives, health and safety of American coal miners for a little more money."

JUST WHAT ROLE the various arms of the federal government will play in the negotiations—or in the strike—is not yet clear. The Federal Mediation Service, under the leadership of W. J. Usery (who earned the Mine Workers' respect for the role he played in recent negotiations with Harlan County operators) is watching the current negotiations closely. If both sides want federal mediators, the mediators are ready to come in. And given their past record, they will act fairly and judiciously. The same can't be said for other officials in the Ford Administration. The UMW *Journal* reports that the Federal Energy Administration and the Interior Department have drawn up coal allocation plans for the possible strike. The plans, according to UMW Vice President Mike Trbovich, blatantly favor big business. In the October 10 statement, Miller accused the coal operators of trying to force a strike "and then demand government intervention in order to undermine the bargaining power of the UMWA." Under provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act, the government *could* intervene—with an injunction forbidding a strike. A well-concerted public relations campaign, conducted by the steel industry, the coal operators and the President of the United States is more likely than an injunction. In the name of a national energy policy and the fight against inflation, the miners will be exhorted to return to work. But the UMW leadership has clearly done its homework in preparing the members to answer that kind of an appeal. If the contract isn't negotiated by Nov. 12, look for the most politicized national strike in a generation.