DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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INSIDE

MOBILIZE NOW!
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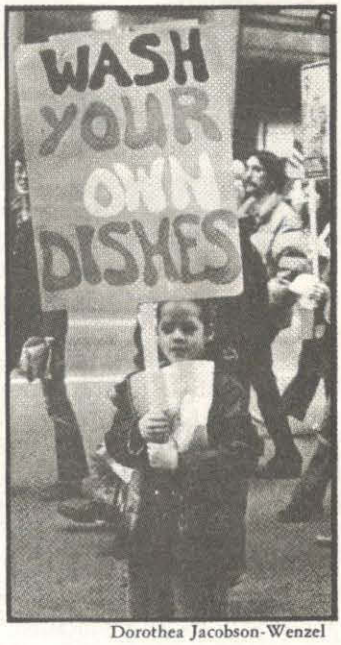
New Shift in Family Focus?

By Jan Rosenberg

THE FAMILY, ONCE THE BETE noire of feminism, is achieving new respectability. Two recent feminist gatherings—the Simone de Beauvoir Conference at New York University and the National Organization for Women (NOW) Assembly on the Future of the Family—presented revised views of private life and socal relations that seemed to come full circle from the well-known feminist critique of the family set forth in the early days of the women's movement. Charter feminists, shocked to discover that even the most intimate family relationships were warped by hierarchy and domination, rejected the family in toto. In the late Sixties and early Seventies, the family was the main symbol of women's oppression, a microcosm of women's psychological, social, sexual, and economic exploitation and subordination.

Feminists' antifamily polemic fed into the swelling tide of radical individualism; women were urged to reject the constraints imposed by family bonds (especially with husbands, but also with mothers, fathers, and even children) in order to liberate and recreate themselves. (At the same time, an emphasis on "sisterhood" sought to transpose familial feelings of unity and cooperation to all women, or at least to other feminists.) This individualistic tendency reinforced the professional strivings of many middle and upper middle class women, especially those just beginning their careers, while it excluded most of their



Dorothea Jacobson-Wenzel

"For women the family was never a 'haven in a heartless world.'"

mothers and working class and ethnic women.

The women's movement reached out to a wider constituency in the mid Seventies and broke through some limits of its earlier positions. New members brought new ideas and values with them, challenging the missionary zeal of founding members. In addition, many of those who had initially embraced careerism became disillusioned; and rediscovered the intimacy of the family. Even cooking, long a symbol of women's domestic oppression, was suddenly all right if done with a "raised consciousness." Back in early 1977 Betty Friedan announced that she had gone beyond automatically rejecting the traditional aspects of women's roles: "As for me I've come out the other end of women's liberation to make my own soup."

Questioning Orthodoxies

Gradual changes in feminist values and ideology crystallized this fall in New York at the relatively unnoticed conference, "The Second Sex—Thirty Years Later," held in September, and became official at the heavily publicized NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund's (LDEF) Assembly on the Future of the Family in November. To honor the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* the New York Institute for the Humanities, already a strong presence in New York intellectual life, brought together nearly 800 women (and a few men) to question feminist orthodoxies and to consider a wide range of issues from theoretical perspectives. Some key issues which surfaced were: the nature and development of gender identity, the social and psychological meaning of mothering, differences between dependence and oppression, and sexuality.

At the crowded workshop on women and socialism some of the participants questioned, on a theoretical level, the fit between the hierarchical/bureaucratic aspects of socialism and the egalitarian thrust of feminism. "Is socialism inherently sexist?" some women wondered. They also questioned and criticized the subordinate position of women in contemporary "socialist" countries, e.g. China and the Soviet Union. Others, recognizing the importance of individual rights in feminist philosophy and politics, were troubled by the fact that feminism seems to have flourished only in capitalist countries.

In several sessions both panelists and participants discussed positive aspects of heterosexuality, long a taboo perspective in feminist circles, in thoughtful, even searching, ways. At last heterosexuality was not reduced to "sexual politics." One author argued persuasively that women must learn to accept the fact of human dependency, and to disentangle notions of dependency from domination. Other women spoke from their experiences about the conflicts between having a family and being a feminist, between collectivism and individualism. The "reactionary housewife's" criticisms of feminism—that it is antifamily, antimen, and antichildren—were given voice and taken

LETTERS

To the Editor:

There is something missing in the Ruth Jordan analysis (November, 1979) of the political scene—socialist politics.

The problems faced by our country now can no longer be solved in the traditional capitalist manner. The economy of the country is no longer subject to the traditional market rules. The corporations no longer need or can use labor in their public veneer, nor can they promise full employment and a rising standard of living. This is not the place to go into a detailed analysis of the causes and results of the change. The struggle, which is becoming sharper daily, needs socialist solutions and socialist politics to unite and give direction to the many phases of struggle.

Socialist politics must use the language and democratic traditions to reach the public with socialist education. The single disciplined traditional socialist party does not fit our vacuum. There may be many socialist groups, with equal right and equal rank. There must be freedom for all ideas and projections. The only solution is a socialist coalition with an agreed upon program to practice socialist politics.

Leon Blum
Plantation, Fla.

To the Editor:

Frankly, I was very annoyed at the tone of the paragraph on Zero Population Growth (November, 1979) and their effort to focus attention on the extremely important issue of illegal aliens.

It is an issue which is not being faced by the two old-line political parties and certainly the democratic left should give it far more attention. Illegal aliens increase the population of this nation. Over 800,000 enter this nation annually.

I am offended that: (a) our laws are not being observed; (b) that billions are being spent on military weapons but very little is done to beef up the Immigration and Naturalization Service; (c) that huge population growth degrades the quality of life, has an adverse effect on wildlife, open space and resources.

Liberals with whom I have raised the question of illegal aliens are generally favorable towards stronger measures to prevent illegal entry and to improve population and economic measures in foreign lands.

Raymond Mostek
Lombard, Il.

Letters to the editor must be signed. We reserve the right to edit for brevity. Please limit letters to less than 250 words.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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seriously by many who attended the conference. On a more theoretical level, several authors discussed the philosophical underpinnings of feminist politics and ideology. Roz Petchetsky's article on abortion, "Reproductive Freedom: Beyond a Woman's Right to Choose," provided a model of analytic clarity. She differentiated the "two essential ideas that underlie a feminist view of reproductive freedom"—the social position of women vs. a biologically based individualistic view. Petchetsky's paper demonstrated how theory is relevant to politics, a major objective of the conference.

The conversations about "domestic violence" moved more tentatively in the same direction. While some women genuflected before the altar of women's moral superiority, arguing that all heterosexual relationships (under patriarchy, some quickly added) are inherently, ultimately violent because they are backed up by man's individual and collective state power, others strained to disclose the deeper biographical and psychological sources and meaning of male-female violence.

Karen Sjoholm/cpf

New Excitement

Much of the Simone de Beauvoir Conference "challenged feminist orthodoxies," as Conference Coordinator Jessica Benjamin and the organizing committee had intended. In thinking the unthinkable, people asked: Is "independence" necessarily good, or is this merely part of the atomization and "me-firstism" of our current cultural life? Should pornography be a major political target for feminists, or are contemporary feminists repeating the mistakes of 19th century temperance activists by lashing out at a symptom rather than a cause of women's subordination? Is the current emphasis on mothers and daughters, and the correlative focus on early infant experience, a sophisticated new demonization of mothers ironically made in the name of women's liberation? The discussions prompted by these questions generated a level of enthusiasm and excitement among those attending that recalled the early days of the feminist movement, yet revealed that we are in a later, more sophisticated stage of feminist thought.

NOW's Assembly on the Future of the Family took up similar themes from a more concrete, establishment-oriented perspective. Several thousand participants attended "star-studded" panels on such topics as child care, new family roles, the homemaker, life after 50, domestic violence, and government and the family. Typically, the panelists approached an issue from the perspective of their particular programs or activities and made predictions and policy recommendations for the future. In the session on child care, for example, the speakers discussed various public, corporate, and union sponsored preschool programs in the United States, programs offered in other industrialized nations, specific pieces of upcoming legislation and legislative strategy, funding issues, and the economic and status struggles of child care workers.

In the session entitled "Helping the Homemaker—New Needs, New Problems" the panelists came down squarely on the side of the beleaguered homemaker. Sociologists Alice Rossi and Jesse Bernard, community organizer Janice Peterson (a founder of the National Congress of Neighborhood Women), and lawyer Roxanne Barton Conlin reinforced the emerging feminist emphasis by discussing various points where the women's movement converges with women's traditional homemaker roles. Alice Rossi analyzed the decline in permanent, fulltime homemakers and urged a more flexible, life cycle perspective which sensitizes us to changes in women's roles and needs over the span of their lives.

Participants at both conferences recognized and sought mechanisms and strategies to support the diversity of family forms that currently exist. Only 15.6 percent of all families currently fit the "ideal" model of a mother at home with one or more children and a father in the work force. Participants criticized the tendency to judge social relations from a narrowly defined set of expectations, and applauded changes in social policy such as the omission of the "head of the household" designation from the census.

Feminists' new romance with the family is no mere fad, nor is it primarily an attempt to rediscover the "good ole days." For women, the family was never a "haven in a heartless world." Feminists' rediscovery of the family can build on and transform the earlier criticisms into a fuller, more balanced view of social life—one that incorporates the positive dimensions of women's traditional roles. ■

Jan Rosenberg is a sociologist, a feminist, a wife and mother.

Iran: Troubled Past, Turbulent Future

By Irving Howe

AS WE GO TO PRESS IN EARLY *December the Iranian crisis remains unresolved. We cannot hazard a guess as to its outcome. In the following article Irving Howe offers some observations on the regimes of both the deposed Shah and the Ayatollah and thoughts on the prospects for the development of democratic institutions in Iran.*—Eds.

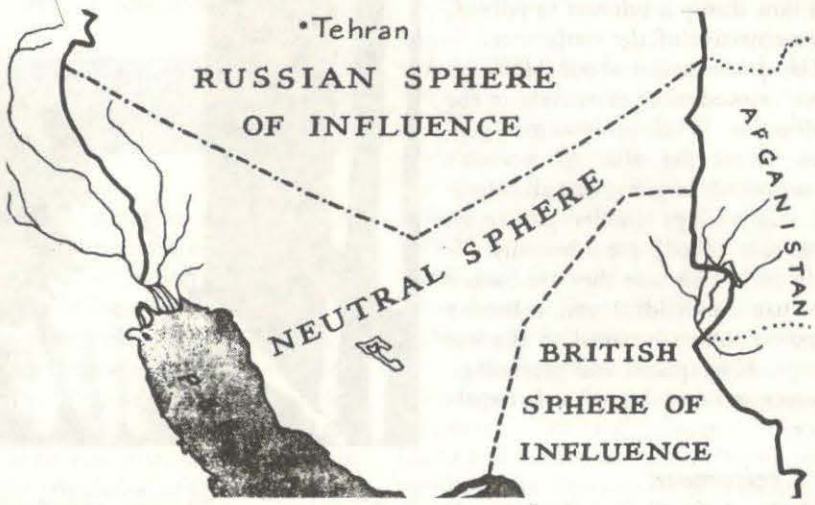
I am not, of course, an expert on Iran, and all I can offer is a few tentative notes. Let me urge you, meanwhile, to read an authoritative, brilliant analysis of the Iranian situation by Sharif Arani in the winter *Dissent*.

1. The complicity of the United States in the tyranny of the Shah is beyond question. The U.S. put and kept him in power. It indulged his megalomaniac delusions. It looked the other way when his secret police, the Savak, tortured thousands. It even refused to take the ordinary precaution of keeping informally in touch with his political opponents. Repellent as is the present regime of the ayatollahs, one can hardly deny that the Iranians have a point in attacking the U.S. for having been the protector of the Shah. Indeed, it was the Shah's tyranny that all but made certain the sequel of obscurantist and demagogical theocracy.

2. The Shah, in one sense, was a "modernizer." Blessed with oil, he imposed on Iranian social backwardness a vast bureaucratic superstructure of a centralized state, challenging to some extent the traditional privileges of the mullahs, urbanizing the country in a planless frenzy, encouraging a vast network of corruption, building an elephantine army with illiterate soldiers and ultrasophisticated weapons, and stimulating the growth of a *nouveau riche* class, half-bureaucratic, half-bourgeois.

But political freedoms were denied. No self-confident middle class could enter the political arena, no independent intelligentsia ventilate ideas, no autonomous labor movement break free from the grip of either government agents or ideological manipulators. Structural modernization without social and political modernity: a formula for disaster.

A large array of groups and classes was driven into opposition. The mullahs feared their traditional authority was being undermined and looked with horror at those innovations of lifestyle that necessarily go along with modern urbanization. The traditional norms and sanctions of Islamic belief were somewhat undermined, but no enlarging liberal spirit was allowed to appear as a substitute. The small merchants of the bazaar felt squeezed by the Shah's encouragement of large-scale commerce. Segments of the enormously increased student body were susceptible to a mixture of nationalist sentiment and an ill-digested, authoritarian "radicalism." The intellectuals and some enlightened portions of the middle class were gasping for a bit of air.



The U.S. wasn't the first country to find strategic interest in Iran (Persia) as is shown by the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907.

In a word, tyrannical "modernizing" from above managed to unite temporarily opposition from "right" and "left," whatever those increasingly useless terms may mean in Iran. Those who wanted to go back to a pre-modern theocratic regime and those who envisaged some sort of revolution establishing a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in a country that barely has a proletariat were thrust together by the Shah's policies and police.

Another way of saying this would be that the Shah tried to achieve some of the goals of the bourgeois revolution while trampling the political values and accomplishments that have traditionally accompanied bourgeois revolutions. A highly centralized state, modern industry, large cities, secular authority—yes. But political freedoms, an independent middle class, the tradition of liberalism—no. This effort is inherently doomed, since it discourages those skills and values upon which bourgeois society rests, and fails to sustain those classes which could give such a society a popular base. In the end, even the bloated army fell apart.

4. The problem here is not confined to Iran. Most of Islam, as well as other segments of the "Third World," have behind them little or no tradition of the Enlightenment. The liberal values and procedures – separation of state and church, freedoms of speech and association, multi-party pluralism, secular liberal ideas–upon which democracy rests have only a precarious place (sometimes none at all) in such countries. Without such values and procedures, no genuine progress in a socialist or social democratic direction can be made. One tyranny overthrown is likely to be replaced by another.

5. The regime of Khomeini has not yet had the opportunity to consolidate its power, and crush its enemies, as the Shah did. But everything about it–from Khomeini's weirdly apocalyptic declarations for the manipulation of street mobs, from the contempt with which feeble "governments" have been treated by the theocratic power to the obscurantist measures already undertaken (denial of women's rights, closing down of movie theatres, public orgies of pseudo-flagellation)–makes it perfectly clear that a consolidation of theocratic power, even though it has gained some sickly support from Western "leftists," would create a new kind of despotism. It might be less efficient than that of the Shah, but in some social respects more backward.

Whether the ayatollahs can manage a modern society is another question. The country is a shambles. What will happen to, what will be done with the mobs of unemployed in Teheran once the spectacle of parades denouncing "spies" is over? How will the modest demands for autonomy of the various ethnic minorities be met? Who can suppose that any government will be able to function if constantly under the check of theological power centers?

6. Surely one reason for the taking of hostages was to divert the mob, to create an issue that would temporarily unite the country in an emotional orgy behind Khomeini. That has worked for a while. It cannot work indefinitely. The centrifugal social forces tearing at Iranian life will make themselves felt all the more strongly in the next few years. The appalling fanaticism of Khomeini, though it obviously can elicit shaken religious emotions (elicit them perhaps just because they have been shaken),

Network

"There ought to be a serious discussion in the U.S. about the hidden maneuvers which led to his (the Shah's) entry."

will not be able to solve the problems of a country tormented by the pulls of past and future.

7. It need hardly be said that the taking of hostages is a barbaric act. Norms of civilized relationships among nations, such as they are, ought to be preserved. At the same time, while it is a matter of principle to support the right of the detested Shah to asylum, we can be pleased that he has found it elsewhere. And once the hostage crisis is over, there ought to be a serious discussion in the U.S. about the hidden maneuvers which led to his entry–Kissinger, David Rockefeller, etc. When Teddy Kennedy brought up the role of the Shah, he was violently attacked; but whether or not his timing was tactless, the content of what he said was right.

8. There seems no chance in Iran for even a modestly liberal regime. Not after the destructive work of the Shah's despotism and the Ayatollah's counter-despotism. All one can hope is that there will continue to be a diffusion of power, preventing, first, consolidation by Khomeini, and second, a coup by either a resurgent military or the authoritarian "left." (It's worth noting, by the way, that the Communist Tudeh Party voted for Khomeini's theocratic constitution.) Perhaps, slowly, as the country staggers toward a modern society, there will be some room within the interstices of the political struggle for those who would advance a liberal or social democratic vision of secular democracy. But not, alas, today. ■

Author and critic Irving Howe is co-editor of Dissent *and a member of the DSOC national board.*

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Does Liberation Theology Speak to North America?

By Rosemary Radford Ruether

THE TERM "LIBERATION THEology" has become well known in theological and church circles in the last fifteen years. But it is still relatively unknown to the general public, including the secular media. In fact, on the day that I wrote this article, the chief editor of the *New York Times Magazine* told me that it sounded like a "mushy" term and then admitted that he had never heard of it before! Those who have heard of it often equate it with a left wing, Latin American perspective that has little relevance for North American Christians.

What do theologians and Christian activists mean by liberation theology? What kind of social reality do people intend to illuminate by this term? What kind of social reality do they wish to influence by this perspective?

Liberation theology understands theology as a message about human sinfulness and human hopes for salvation, primarily in corporate, systemic and historical terms, not just in private, individual and spiritual terms. Liberation theologians believe that this is, in fact, the dominant perspective of the Scriptures. The private and otherworldly perspective is a distortion of the prophetic and Christian message that occurred when Christianity became identified with the social establishment, rather than with the oppressed and outcast nation (Israel) and peoples of the Roman Empire.

The Hebrew Scriptures never talk about sin in purely private terms. Even sexual and religious sins are regarded as public sins, violations of the public covenant that binds society together with God and with the cosmos. Much of their attack is directed against the rich and powerful who oppress and defraud the poor. The prophets thunder against those who write oppressive laws, who steal the land of poor farmers, who cheat widows and orphans. Even such matters as unjust weights and inflated prices come under their judgmental eye.

New York Circus

> *"It is not surprising that liberation theology comes from the experience of oppressed and marginal people."*

The prophets' basic vision of salvation is of a new era of peace and justice when these wrongs will be righted; "when each can sit under their own vine and fig tree and none be afraid." The same perspective is continued in the New Testament in the preaching of Jesus, who announces, in his hometown synagogue, that he has come "to preach good news to the poor, release to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). Liberation theologians see themselves as recovering this social message of the Scriptures and applying it to the concrete issues of oppression and liberation of the contemporary world.

Major Force in Latin America

It is not surprising that liberation theology comes from and expresses primarily the experience of oppressed and marginal people. It has become a major continental tradition of theology in Latin America. Writers such as Gustavo Gutierrez of Peru (*A Theology of Liberation*; English translation, Orbis Press, 1973) and Argentinian José Miquez Bonino (*Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation,* Fortress Press, 1975) are among the better known names of a widespread and popular movement that affects nuns, priests, and laypersons throughout Latin America.

In 1968 the Latin American Bishops' Conference endorsed a document that committed the Latin American Church to combat not just individual but structural oppression and exploitation of the poor, both by Latin American elites and "the international imperialism of money." In 1979 a major effort by conservative churchmen in Latin America to renounce this perspective was turned back at the Third Latin American Bishops' Conference at Puebla, Mexico (DEMOCRATIC LEFT, April, 1979).

In the recent revolution in Nicaragua both civil libertarian bishops and revolutionary priests supported the Sandinista victory. Ernesto Cardinal, a priest-poet who led his whole Christian community into active armed struggle against the Sandinistas, became Minister of Culture of the new government. While one would hardly expect liberation theology to have the universal endorsement of a traditional Church in such a divided continent, its influence is considerable. This has led many Christians into a variety of political actions, from community organizing in poor barrios to guerrilla activities.

Liberation theology has been denounced as Marxist. Far from regarding this as a slur, liberation theologians generally regard Marxism as an essential tool of social and economic analysis for liberation theology. They see it as an auxiliary science for theology, much as Aris-

totle was used by theologians in the past. Liberation theologians take it for granted that capitalism cannot solve the problems of Latin America and that North American aid for development is, in fact, a continuation of neocolonialism. A new society of justice must break with this system of economic dependency by both nationalization and socialization of the means of production. They acknowledge socialism as the appropriate term for this new society. But they are not dogmatic either in their ideology or their social models for this. They believe that Latin Americans must build a distinctively Latin American road to socialism.

Not a "Christian Socialism"

Although they see the Christian gospel as pointing in the same direction as Marxist critique and hope, they are not interested in building a "Christian socialism." Rather they regard Christianity as one perspective among others that should lead Christians and Marxists to work together on secular terms for a new society. The Church should not seek some new power position for itself. It should relinquish its historical role of supporting elites to serve as a critical force on the side of the poorest.

Is there a North American counterpart to liberation theology? In 1973, after the coup in Chile, Latin American theologians called for a dialogue on liberation with North American theologians and church people. They hoped to foster an awareness of the oppressive role played by American institutions in the coup and in Latin American society as a whole. They hoped thereby to mobilize the American Church to oppose these policies of its government, corporations and financial institutions.

The results of this call for dialogue on theology in the Americas are instructive. Few white male theologians responded. Instead, most of the response came from people doing theology in minority situations: feminists, blacks, American Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, labor organizers, and poverty workers. They created a network of groups—Theology in the Americas—engaged in dialogue on liberation theology. Theology in the Americas defines its views of social oppression in terms of the "interstructuring of class, race and sex." It seeks to relate oppression by class and international economic structures with the American movements that have stressed racism and sexism. This dialogue forced each group to become aware of new dimensions it had previously ignored. Thus, black theologians had to become aware of sexism and of the class dimension of oppression; feminists of racism and class. Latin Americans were challenged to incorporate an awareness of race and sexism into their perspective on class oppression.

Reaching the Affluent

What is still lacking is a way to reach the affluent with an analysis of oppression and liberation, rather than simply engaging in dialogue between different perspectives on oppression! Sister Marie Augusta Neale of Harvard University has spoken of a "Theology of Letting Go." This is perhaps as far as the dialogue has gotten in developing a theology of response to liberation theology from those who benefit from oppression. Recently a group of theologians at Duke University circulated a statement in which they call for a theology of response to liberation theology as the first agenda for North American theology. Theology must help nurture the critical minority who will favor change in the direction of greater justice for all.

I doubt that this view will sweep an American theological education which is heavily underwritten by Rockefeller and Lilly. Nevertheless, at most liberal theological seminaries, Catholic and Protestant, this perspective has enough of a toehold that those who have ears to hear at least have an opportunity to hear. At my own seminary, a Methodist institution, about eight professors out of a faculty of 31 could be described as speaking from a liberation theology perspective.

Liberation theology today can be said to occupy the left wing of the historic liberal and social gospel type of Christianity in American churches. It tends to divide every denomination, even historically liberal ones, down the middle, with right and left wing factions. This means that both conservative and liberal-left activity of the churches in society tend to be carried out on ecumenical lines, evoking opposite wings of the churches. But the churches are undoubtedly one of the most widespread grassroots organizations in America. Those interested in fostering a critical perspective in favor of systemic change cannot afford to ignore this social gospel wing of Christianity. Liberation theology brings to this social wing a sharpened sense of the international dimensions of injustice and of the inadequacies of capitalist solutions. ■

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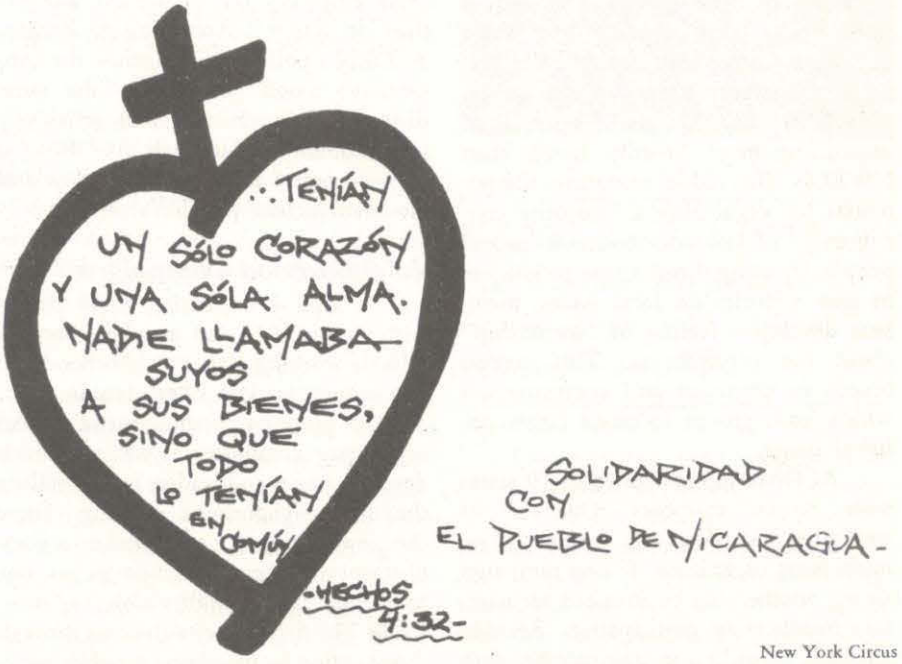


New York Circus

"... and they were united of one heart and one soul; no one claimed for his/her own anything s/he had, as everything they owned was held in common." (Acts 4:32).

Neighborhood Organizing Leads to Nat'l Platform

By Carey Rogers

DESPITE THE MEDIA-DECLARED era of conservatism in the Seventies, many neighborhoods in America have witnessed the growth of activist, reform oriented citizen action groups. These groups follow the tradition begun by Saul Alinsky and have often been organized by refugees from the Sixties. Local issues have provided an initial focus for building viable community organizations where none existed. Groups such as Massachusetts Fair Share, California Action League and Carolina Action have developed an effective organizing model which brings average Americans into the political arena.

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) has become one of the largest and most successful of these groups. Founded in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1970 by Wade Rathke, a former organizer for the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), ACORN tested a model of organizing more broadly based than NWRO's. This model recognizes the potential for organizing a "majority constituency" of low and moderate income people. By using direct action techniques to gain victories on local issues, members develop a feeling of "ownership" about the organization. This success breeds an optimism and aggressiveness which leads groups to tackle larger political issues.

ACORN has expanded to 19 states with 30,000 members. One of its strengths has been its emphasis on multi-issue organizing. If one campaign slows, another can be initiated to maintain membership participation. Another strength, according to staff member Seth Borgos, is ACORN's "non-ideological and pragmatic" character which places

Robert Clare/ACORN

"less emphasis on theoretical analysis than on action." According to Borgos, ACORN's politics "run against the conservative mood" but share "the same distrust of bureaucrats and sensitivity to community." Although ACORN "is anti-corporate" it is "more pro- low and moderate income people."

Neighborhood Campaigns

A typical organizing drive begins with an ACORN staff member choosing a likely working class neighborhood and proceeding to knock on hundreds of doors to pinpoint potential members. An organizing committee is set up which develops issues and leaders before calling the first neighborhood meeting. There the newly formed group makes a commitment to begin a campaign on one local issue that is both visible and winnable. The first victory will come through direct action by members; a public meeting with the mayor, a "mill-in" at the utility company, or perhaps a media event to embarrass the proper bureaucrat. After its first win the group is integrated into the larger ACORN network where it intervenes in utility rate hikes, pushes for tax reform, fights redlining or attacks any of the other issues which touch the lives of low and moderate income people. Community organizations such as ACORN succeed by proving to their members that collective action on their part can bring about change.

While maintaining a base through neighborhood campaigns, ACORN members have set up Acorn Political Action Committees (APACs) which put an emphasis on electoral politics. These APACs question and endorse local and state candidates based on their support of the group's positions. In some areas the APAC endorsement can make a real difference in close races. Campaigns to institute Lifeline utility rates (a minimum amount for a set price) and to reform the regressive sales tax have given the organization valuable electoral ex-

perience. Although a 1978 effort in Arkansas to remove the sales tax from food and medicine failed, it showed that a community organization which has a popular issue, a motivated and broadly based constituency and coalition partners such as organized labor (in this case the AFL-CIO), has the potential to be a solid political force.

ACORN's appeal has been strongly populist. It is now ready to move beyond its local battles to intervene in national politics in 1980. Beginning with its first convention in Memphis in December 1978 (NEWSLETTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT, February 1979), the organization has drawn up a "People's Platform." Local group meetings developed the position planks which were ratified in another convention last summer in St. Louis. The platform includes demands such as:

- Creation of publicly owned utilities as a yardstick for private utilities;
- Establishment of new public energy corporations to develop and market renewable energy sources and develop federally owned oil reserves;
- Creation of a new national health care system which is progressively financed and controlled by democratically elected community committees;
- The right to a job and decent income with the federal government as employer of last resort;
- New laws preventing redlining by banks, the requirement that every bank board of directors have seats for low and moderate income representatives, and the establishment of new public banks to meet essential credit needs;
- Democratically elected neighborhood boards that have jurisdiction over all public and major private investment;
- Requiring that low and moderate income people be proportionally represented in all major political institutions, including: the cabinet, the judiciary, regulatory boards, and party conventions;
- Requiring all corporations with more than $10 million in assets to include worker and community representatives on their boards.

Tactics of the People's Platform Campaign will include running for delegate positions, seeking endorsements by public officials, and intervention in party platform hearings. Philadelphia ACORN leader Mary Ellen Smith believes that the campaign by ACORN and its allies can "force the party to react to our demands for the representation of low and moderate income people on every level."

The growth of community organizations such as ACORN has been one of the most promising political trends of the last decade. The organizing model of ACORN and similar groups has reached an unorganized stratum of the working class in a profoundly democratic and participatory manner. Although it may develop into another shortsighted interest group, the broad political nature of the issues it confronts should prevent this. Community organizations must struggle continually to produce wins and maintain their constituency. They deal directly with the effect of corporate power on government. The People's Platform suggests that ACORN's response is to contrast public democracy with private economic power.

ACORN has been criticized for a tendency to "go it alone," eschewing coalitions except when absolutely necessary. Yet, in the People's Platform Campaign the group is actively seeking like-minded allies on the democratic left. Community organizations will play an essential role in building an anti-corporate movement in the 1980s by reaching working people who might have remained unorganized. Democratic socialists must participate in and support their efforts, not as ideological outsiders with a separate agenda, but as committed allies in the same struggle. ■

Carey Rogers is a staff member of the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tennessee. Copies of the People's Platform and information on the campaign can be obtained from ACORN, 628 Baronne, New Orleans, La. 70113.

■ ■ ■

ATTENTION
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

Several community activists in DSOC feel the need for an ongoing task force or commission on community organizing to discuss developments in the field and our role as socialists. Those wishing to be involved in the creation of such a group should send their names and their ideas about what the group might work on to Carey Rogers at the Highlander Center, Rte. 3, Box 370, New Market, Tenn. 37820.

Socialism Is Politic in Canada

By Eric Lee

CANADA'S NEW DEMOCRATIC Party (NDP) met in Federal Convention over the U.S. Thanksgiving weekend, 1979 in an atmosphere of cautious optimism. The convention provided an opportunity to reexamine the party's successes and failures in the 1970s, and to prepare for the new decade.

Harry Fleischman

"Ed Broadbent, the NDP's federal leader, has emerged as the most popular of Canada's political leaders."

The Seventies were a decade of mixed fortunes for the NDP. The party fell from thirty seats won in the 1972 election to 27 seats today; from a balance of power position with a minority Liberal government to a third party status with the majority Conservative government. The NDP percentage of the vote actually *declined* in Quebec, Ontario,

Continued on page 11

SOCIALIST NOTES

By Nancy Kleniewski

A RELATIVELY NEW AREA OF INTEREST FOR A NUMBER of DSOC locals around the country is organizing around health issues. As a way of connecting health activists from different areas, DSOC has formed a Health Task Force. At its first meeting during the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA Conference, Patrick Lacefield outlined some of the issues that the task force will confront. These include support for the National Health Plan (the Dellums Bill), gaining better consumer representation on boards of health systems agencies, increasing funding levels for public sector health care facilities, gaining control over occupational safety and health, and organizing for reproductive rights. Any DSOC member who wants to become part of the Health Task Force should contact Pat at the DSOC National Office for more information.

Several DSOC members in the *District of Columbia* are working in the D.C. Health Coalition, an organization consisting of groups like the Gray Panthers, political groups, and health planners and workers. It is concerned with making access to health care more equally available to all residents of the District. The Coalition leafleted the opening of a regional shock trauma center at a community hospital, protesting the use of funds for this highly specialized and prestigious installation rather than for improving the hospital's poor level of general care. DSOCer Tom Gagliardo tells us that the Coalition participated in a larger coalition of groups trying to get the District budget, which was "held hostage" over the Medicaid funding for abortions, released so that basic social service delivery would not be interrupted.

Champaign-Urbana DSOC is participating in the Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC), a group working to increase consumers' impact on health care delivery. For the past two years,. CCHCC has helped elect consumer-oriented slates to the board of the local health systems agency. The consumer representatives on the board have been effective in recommending new ways of providing cheaper and more efficient health care to the community. In response to this consumer influence, a coalition of physicians and business interests launched an all-out attack against the consumer slate in this year's election. The American Medical Association hired a fulltime organizer to work for the slate put up by the providers, i.e., physicians, hospitals, and insurance companies. In the end, although the CCHCC turned out many more members of the general public than did the AMA, the huge number of hospital employees voting (under supervision) tipped the balance in favor of the AMA/business slate.

In an article in the Champaign-Urbana DSOC newsletter, health activist Tom Edstrom commented: "The HSA election confirms the ownership of our country's health care industry. . . . It is clear that the medical interests are merely reviewing and approving their own plans for profiting from our illnesses."

The CCHCC now plans to demand a secret ballot in the next election and to organize on a neighborhood basis to turn out the consumer vote.

RESOURCES

American Labor #1, Nov., 1979; whole issue devoted to occupational safety and health. Write American Labor Education Center, 1835 Kilbourne Place N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010.

What Every UAW Representative Should Know About Health and Safety, a 32-page booklet including an extensive bibliography on occupational safety and health resources. $1.00 from UAW Purchasing and Supply Dept., 8000 E. Jefferson, Detroit, Mich. 48214.

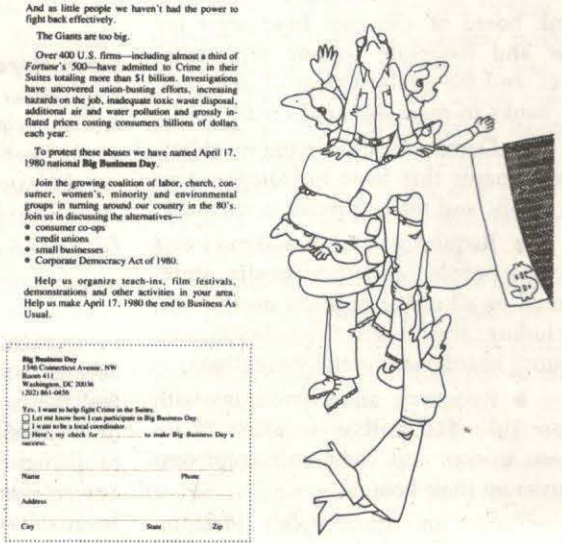
■ ■ ■

Organizing for the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA was very beneficial to the DSOC local in Atlanta. It held a fundraiser for the D.A. in early November. Sasha Futran, chair of the DSOC local and coordinator for the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA, who is also a freelance journalist, used some of her ties with the media to obtain good publicity, including an article on the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA in the *Atlanta Journal,* a telephone interview with Mike Harrington on a radio talk show and interviews with Sasha and DSOC Vice Chair Mike Rivas on an all-news radio station.

■ ■ ■

Congratulations to DSOCer David Sullivan, an attorney and tenants rights activist who was elected to the Cambridge, Mass. City Council in the November 6 election. DSOC members provided a lot of the energy for the campaign, which stressed Sullivan's support of Cambridge's rent control plan and his stand against condominium conversion. On the other side of the country, DSOCer Harry Britt was the only one of five San Francisco supervisors to win reelection in the December 11 runoff.

The Corporate Giants have us in their clutches.



And as little people we haven't had the power to fight back effectively.

The Giants are too big.

Over 400 U.S. firms—including almost a third of *Fortune*'s 500—have admitted to Crime in their Suites totaling more than $1 billion. Investigations have uncovered union-busting efforts, increasing hazards on the job, inadequate toxic waste disposal, additional air and water pollution and grossly inflated prices costing consumers billions of dollars each year.

To protest these abuses we have named April 17, 1980 national **Big Business Day**.

Join the growing coalition of labor, church, consumer, women's, minority and environmental groups in turning around our country in the 80's. Join us in discussing the alternatives—

- consumer co-ops
- credit unions
- small businesses
- Corporate Democracy Act of 1980.

Help us organize teach-ins, film festivals, demonstrations and other activities in your area. Help us make April 17, 1980 the end to Business As Usual.

Big Business Day
1346 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Room 411
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 861-0456

Yes, I want to help fight Crime in the Suites.
☐ Let me know how I can participate in Big Business Day.
☐ I want to be a local coordinator.
☐ Here's my check for ..... to make Big Business Day a success.

Name ..... Phone .....

Address .....

City ..... State ..... Zip .....

BIG BUSINESS DAY April 17, 1980

Among the sponsors of Big Business Day are: RALPH NADER (Consumer advocate); JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH (Prof. Emeritus, Harvard University); WILLIAM H. WINN (Pres., United Food and Commercial Workers); DOUGLAS A. FRASER (Pres., United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America); PATSY T. MINK (Pres., Americans for Democratic Action); JAMES FARMER (Exec. Dir., Coalition of American Public Employees); ED ASNER (Actor); CAESAR CHAVEZ (Pres., United Farm Workers of America); BISHOP THOMAS GUMBLETON (Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Detroit); JOYCE HILLER (Pres., Coalition of Labor Union Women); ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR. (Albert Schweitzer Prof. of Humanities, City University of New York); RABBI MARC TANNENBAUM (American Jewish Committee); WILLIAM W. WINPISINGER (Inter. Pres., International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers); BERRY WUMP (Pres., American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) (Institutional affiliation for identification purposes only)

NDP, from page 9

Alberta, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island. The party has yet to achieve even 20 percent of the national vote, though with more than two million votes in the most recent elections, it is getting close.

The provincial elections of the late Seventies were also, largely, setbacks for the NDP. The party was thrown out of power in both Manitoba and British Columbia, and pushed from the position of Official Opposition to that of third party in Ontario. In Alberta, where the party membership has increased enormously in the last decade, the NDP still holds only one seat in the provincial legislature. The party won a major victory in Saskatchewan in 1978, but was defeated again in British Columbia in May 1979.

Positive Signs for Future

These setbacks should be measured against other developments which bode well for the NDP in the coming decade. For example:

- The socialists are emerging as a real power in the Maritime Provinces. The NDP vote in Nova Scotia more than tripled between 1972 and 1979; it tripled in New Brunswick; it rose from 4.7 percent to a whopping 31.4 percent in Newfoundland.
- The NDP has got all the issues on its side. Declaring itself the "real Opposition" in Ottawa, the NDP's parliamentarians have spearheaded the defense of Petro-Canada (the publicly-owned energy corporation) and Canada's medicare system against the Conservative assault .The socialists are now leading the fight to establish a board to regulate prices and profits, and continue to play the lead in the fights for full employment, lower interest rates ,and for a fair deal for Canada's farmers.
- A vibrant internal life was demonstrated at the convention itself, as vigorous debates rocked the party on issues such as public ownership, nuclear power, and self-determination for Quebec. There are now about 360,000 NDP members (compared with 30,000 when the party was founded nearly 20 years ago).
- Ed Broadbent, the NDP's federal leader, has emerged as the most popular of Canada's political leaders. A Gallup poll taken after the 1979 elections showed that a plurality of Canadians felt him to be the best campaigner; 25 percent of those polled thought more of the NDP after the campaign than before it. Broadbent was the focal point of a truly nationwide, issue-oriented campaign waged by the NDP, and withstood well the pressures of national leadership.
- Finally, if Quebec votes for "sovereignty-association" in the Spring 1980 referendum, the NDP's strength within Canada should increase. Quebec has been the center of Liberal power and it is certain that the Liberals would disintegrate shortly after Quebec leaves Canada. That would put the NDP in the position of Official Opposition—making it the pole of attraction to all anti-government sentiment. (Ironically, the NDP has encouraged Quebec to remain within the Confederation. This position has hindered the growth of the party within Quebec as well as encouraged the continuation of a situation that seems to leave the NDP permanently in a third party role.)

Before writing off the NDP, or declaring its success inevitable, one should note that Canadian electoral history shows periodic massive shifts of party loyalty and strength. At press time, news comes that the NDP has precipitated a no-confidence vote for the Conservative government. Elections will be held in February. The NDP could emerge in the next decade as Canada's second party, or even—particularly if Quebec secedes—as Canada's first party, thereby constituting the first democratic socialist national government in North America. ■

Eric Lee is editor of the New International Review *and a member of the DSOC national board.*

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JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

WHO IS JIMMY HIGGINS, ANYWAY?—This column has run since the publication was founded in March 1973. Every so often, we're asked who Jimmy Higgins is and why he doesn't show up elsewhere—at DSOC conventions or at meetings of the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA, for instance. As we enter our eighth volume, we've decided to answer the queries. Higgins, of course, does attend many meetings; he's the archetypical socialist and trade union rank-and-filer. In 1904, Ben Hanford, Eugene Debs's running mate, called Higgins into existence. Hanford saw a growing socialist movement; many stalwarts were convinced that a Socialist Party victory was at hand. And all credited the leadership of those like Debs and Hanford. But in his stump speeches, Hanford identified another cause for the party's growth: "Jimmy Higgins never had a front seat on the platform; he never knew the tonic of applause nor the inspiration of opposition; he was never seen in the foreground of the picture. But he had erected the platform and painted the picture; through his hard, disagreeable and thankless toil, it had come to pass that liberty was brewing and things were doing."

SINCE THEN, Jimmy Higgins has stood as a symbol for the rank-and-file. Upton Sinclair wrote a novel about him, and thousands of organizers have invoked him. His name on this column indicates our interest in reporting on the struggles of all the movements we're involved in on the democratic left: trade unions, electoral and political groups, women's organizations, community, and minority activists' struggles. Our hope has been to present some new or little known information in a lively and provocative manner. To do that even better, we'd appreciate getting your ideas, comments, suggestions, and reports for inclusion in this column. Please address them to Jimmy Higgins, at the address below.

BESIDES, THERE ARE ALWAYS TENTS—Harry Helmsley of Helmsley-Spear controls $3 billion in residential and commercial property, making him the largest landlord in the United States. He's opening a new luxury hotel (price tag $80 million) in New York this summer. Rooms will rent for an average of $125 a day; a ten-room triplex will be available for $2000 a day. What if you're in the market for something more modest? "I wouldn't think of building a new apartment for the middle-income family," Helmsley told Dan Dorfman of the New York *Daily News* in an interview published November 15. Dorfman, who identified middle income families as those earning between $20,000 and $40,000 a year (even the lower figure is above the national median income of about $17,000), asked where such families could live. Helmsley's reply: "There's always trailers down south and used houses, though not in the best areas . . . and this is what a lot of people are going to have to get used to."

USING WORKERS' PENSION FUNDS to combat corporate power has been widely discussed in the labor movement for several years now. Now, there's some indication that business is worried about the tactic. In a November 15 issue, *Business and Public Affairs* (published twice monthly and available for $75 annual subscription from American Political Research Corporation, 4312 Montgomery Avenue, Bethesda, Md. 20014), warns business readers that "growing basic forces are pushing union leadership toward pension fund activism." Editor Kevin Phillips notes the support of the Industrial Trades Department of the AFL-CIO (but omits the Building Trades Department's similar position) for more aggressive use of pension funds. The International Chemical Workers bring the issue up at contract negotiations, and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers as well as the UAW and Machinists are pushing social criteria in pension fund investments. The social criteria include avoiding corporations that invest in South Africa, that are anti-union or violators of environmental, equal opportunity, or safe work standards. Phillips's research indicates that unions have significant investments in companies that have violated these standards. "In 53 of the 99 companies studied," Phillips writes, "the combined investments of public and private union-rated funds constituted 5 percent or more of the outstanding stock." Five percent can constitute controlling interest.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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