

# DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY  
MICHAEL HARRINGTON

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DSOC Youth Conference  
December 28-29, New York City  
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## Missile Debate Spurs Activism

By Patrick Lacefield

**T**O SOME IT GOES UNDER THE label of "Dutch disease." Ronald Reagan diagnoses the development as one of "creeping neutralism" and "creeping pacifism." State Department envoy Lawrence Eagleberger is dispatched to the Old World to denounce "the soft young men of Europe."

The phenomenon in question is a burgeoning European peace movement—stretching from Cornwall to Berlin and the Falklands to Sicily—which has begun to challenge the U.S. bipartisan myth of fighting a "limited" nuclear war in Europe. It has raised fundamental questions about the purposes and processes of the NATO alliance in the 1980s and the Reagan thrust toward confrontation rather than negotiation with the Soviets.

At issue is the December 1979 NATO decision to deploy 572 intermediate-range nuclear missiles (108 Pershing II and 464 Tomahawk cruise missiles) in Holland, Belgium, Italy, Britain, and West Germany. The rationale for deployment is to counteract deployment of mobile SS-20 missiles by the Soviet Union in the Ukraine. The SS-20s, designed to replace the obsolete Soviet SS-4s and SS-5s, carry three independently targetable warheads and have a range of approximately 2500 miles—giving them the capability of reaching any point on the continent.

Although NATO approved the deployment of the U.S. missiles, the deci-



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sion was far from unanimous. Belgium, slated to take 48 missiles, has postponed the stationing date from next year's scheduled start. The Dutch, also, seem unlikely to accept any missiles. Denmark and Norway have a standing policy against the stationing of NATO nuclear weapons on their soil. Last month, more than 250,000 people rallied in London against both U.S. and Soviet Euromissiles. A mammoth demonstration in Bonn, West Germany, drew 200,000 while 100,000 rallied in Milan, Italy, with 50,000 each in Paris and Rome and smaller demonstrations in Sicily, Stockholm, Oslo, and Venice.

In Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher's regime has readily agreed to the basing, even as it moves against opposition from all other political parties to modernize Britain's Polaris nuclear submarine force with U.S. Tridents.

The opposition to both the Euro-missile deployment (Britain's share is 160 missiles) and the British Tridents is fierce. "Both the NATO missiles and the SS-20s must be removed," Michael Gapes, the Labor party expert on defense told me at party headquarters in London in June. Still, he argued, the SS-20s are a modernization, not a wholly new factor in the European balance. "The Soviets view the NATO plan to deploy cruises in much the same way the U.S. looked upon Russian missiles in Cuba. The NATO missiles would be fifteen minutes from Moscow and would—along with U.S., British, and French submarine missiles and existing tactical nukes—place the Soviets in a very disadvantageous position. They will respond by upping the ante."

The Labor party, led by veteran "Ban the Bomb"-er Michael Foot has adopted a position favoring multilateral and unilateral measures to stop the arms race. Labor would scrap the expensive British nuclear modernization (under fire even from Conservative forces) and ban all U.S. nuclear weapons from British soil or British territorial waters.

Behind the British concern—and that of other Europeans—is the U.S. notion of NATO's fighting and winning a "limited" nuclear war. This strategy—embodied in Jimmy Carter's "Presidential Directive 59" and accepted as giving added U.S. "flexibility," envisions exchanges of short and medium range weapons between the U.S. and the Soviet Union without escalation to strategic launches against the superpowers' homelands. "When the U.S. speaks of a 'limited'

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*“The striking thing about the new European peace movement is the increasing cooperation across national boundaries which gives hope that all Europe will have choices other than to ‘obey and die.’”*

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nuclear war," argues Labor Party Chair Alex Kitson, "they mean limited to Europe." Former U.S. SALT negotiator Paul Warnke has gone so far as to quip that a tactical nuclear weapon may be defined "as a weapon that explodes in West Germany."

West Germany is the linchpin in the NATO strategy to deploy the Euromissiles. It was West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt who first voiced concern over the SS-20s and who has attempted to steer his government toward deployment while urging the Reagan administration to try to negotiate away both the SS-20s and the Euromissiles. It was largely at Schmidt's insistence that the United States agreed to negotiate while the missiles are being deployed. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) congress in April 1980 adopted this "two-track" decision to deploy *if and only if* the United States engages in negotiations with the Soviets.

Though consultations on the mis-

siles are slated to begin in November, Arms Control and Disarmament chief Eugene Rostow and others in the administration have stated that they will not "rush through" talks since they count on a massive U.S. buildup to bring the Soviets to the table "on our terms." Moreover, U.S. negotiators reject the idea of removing the NATO Euromissiles in return for the removal of the SS-20s. They see the SS-20s as only a quantitative increase in Soviet ability to target Western Europe while the NATO missiles represent a *qualitative* increase in the U.S. ability to accurately target military and political control centers in the U.S.S.R.

Both within and without the Social Democratic Party, opposition is growing to the "two-track" deployment and negotiation approach. Fully forty percent of the delegates to the last SPD congress voted against any deployment and several state SPD parties have since declared against the missiles. Spearheaded by the Young Socialists, (the SPD youth group) by the churches, and by demonstrations of tens of thousands throughout Germany—protests outside dissent's traditionally youthful corridors—the peace movement has made it likely that an anti-deployment position will carry at the April 1982 SPD congress. "Ronald Reagan is our greatest sponsor," said Erhard Eppler over a beer just off the Free University campus in West Berlin. "He is enabling our peace movement to grow by leaps and bounds." Eppler, a member of the nine-person SPD national executive committee, was development minister under Willy Brandt's government. Though encouraged by the movement, Eppler realizes the missile question could bring down the government, since the SPD's coalition partners (the Free Democrats) are strongly in favor of a U.S.-dominated NATO. That would usher in Christian Democrats who would deploy the Euromissiles with considerable enthusiasm.

"It is evident that the 'two-track' approach will work only if Reagan ne-

# DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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gotiates seriously," explained Karsten Voight, the SPD's foreign policy spokesperson in the Bundestag. "We have made that clear to him." Yet Voight is not optimistic on that score. Others go much further in venting their sentiments against the deployment and heavy-handed U.S. pressures. Egon Bahr, the SPD's disarmament expert, has taken to referring to the U.S. as "the former occupation power" and saying that in case of war the only role reserved for Germany is "to obey and die if necessary."

The striking thing about the new European peace movement is the increasing cooperation across national boundaries which gives hope that all Europe will have choices other than to "obey and die." The European Nuclear Disarma-

ment Campaign, led by historian E. P. Thompson, is winning support throughout Europe—east and west—for a nuclear-free zone from Portugal to Poland, including the endorsement of the Italian Communist Party. The churches, particularly in Holland and West Germany, have taken a leading role in attacking the possibility and consequences of a "limited" nuclear war.

Europeans are not unmindful of the Soviet military buildup which has given the Russians essential parity in military prowess, but they are even more fearful of an escalation of the arms race. Ronald Reagan's November 19 disarmament proposal to the Soviets, announced as DEMOCRATIC LEFT goes to press, fails to take into the equation U.S. European-

based bombers and nuclear submarines and the British and French nuclear forces. Whether it constitutes merely a negotiating feint to deflate the peace movement or the start of serious negotiations with the Soviets remains to be seen. ■

*Patrick Lacefield is executive director of New York State Americans for Democratic Action. This summer he was a DSOC delegate to the Fourteenth Congress of the International Union of Socialist Youth in Vienna, and traveled in West Germany under the sponsorship of the SPD.*

*This is the first in a series of articles on defense issues.*

# No Security on Homefront

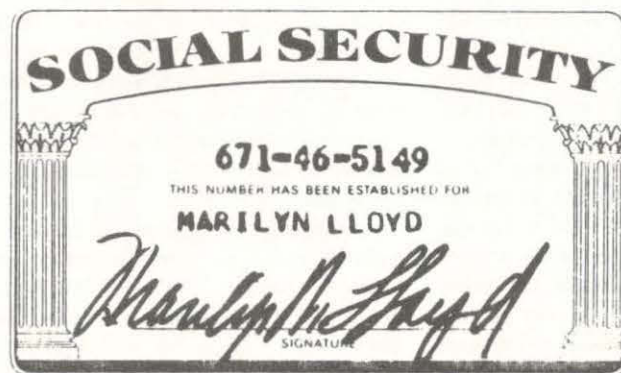
By William R. Hutton

**S**INCE LAST MAY, WHEN THEY announced their horrendous proposals to cut Social Security benefits "in order to save the system from bankruptcy by November, 1982," President Reagan and his director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), David Stockman have succeeded in covering up the real reasons for their savage cuts. The Social Security law, which has evolved over nearly 50 years of effort to create America's basic national retirement system, is a complex, little-understood piece of legislation. There are few experts among the press, the broadcast media, or among the members of the key congressional committees—the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. Though the committee members are more familiar with the system than are other members of Congress, they are more conservative and largely unwilling to make the fundamental changes—including acceptance of some regular general revenue financing—which will ensure the security of the system in the long-range future when the post World War II baby boomers, who now contribute to the system as young workers, will be ready to retire.

Earnest and competent voices such as those of Robert M. Ball, Social Secur-

ity commissioner under presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, or Wilbur J. Cohen, HEW secretary under President Johnson, have been given little exposure by the national media, though they have tried many times to report the Reagan-Stockman strategy as they see it.

submitted. The government economists told Johnson he had a unique opportunity as a retiring president to help every president who followed him if he would support enactment of the unified budget concept. All the input and outflow of federal funds could be shown on one sheet.



The clue to that strategy lies in the concept of the "unified" budget which was adopted in 1969. When President Lyndon Johnson saw the results of the New Hampshire primaries and announced he would not run for re-election, he soon received a visit from the director of OMB's predecessor office, the U.S. Bureau of the Budget.

For more than 30 years prior to 1969, the condition of the Social Security Trust Funds was reported separately when the president's annual budget was

No one seems to have pointed out that the purpose of the president's annual budget is to present choices among expenditures, giving preference in the budget period to one expenditure over another, and to determine who pays what and how much for the expenditures. On the other hand, the social security actuaries work over a 75-year time span to secure adequate financing for the system. It does not make sense administratively to have the huge program, which touches the lives of almost every American fam-



ily, operated as a subordinate part of another government agency.

Although it is true that social security funds can be used only to pay social security benefits and administrative expenses, if a president successfully cuts back on social security benefits, there will be an excess in income over outgo in social security operations. This excess shows up as available money which can be used to balance the president's budget. It gives the country a distorted picture of the financing of other programs, leaving the impression that the budget is closer to balance than in fact it is. Thus, the administration-proposed cutbacks in social security amounting to \$82.5 billion by 1986 (and infinitely more thereafter), would, if enacted, enable Stockman eventually to balance the budget on the backs of America's older people!

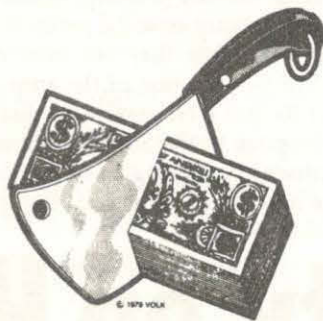
According to ex-Commissioner Ball, the president's tax and budget proposals signed into law in August improved the financial status by about \$33 billion over the next five years by cutting benefits needlessly. It is true the administration claimed that a shortage of \$11 billion could develop in the cash benefits—old age and survivors insurance (OASI) trust fund over the next five years—and this was the basis for their charge that this fund could cause social security bankruptcy. The bankruptcy story was necessary to help develop public support for the proposed cuts. In addition to supporting the removal of 1.3 million older women from the rolls, who for many years had been receiving a minimum benefit of \$122 a month, the administration's proposals of May 12, 1981, were for an over-all cut in social security protection of nearly one-fourth, one-third cut in disability protection and over a 40 percent cut for people forced to apply for retirement benefits at age 62. Seventy percent of the latter are involuntary retirements caused by a worker's ill health or because of unemployment without benefits.

Although projections over the next 25 years show a surplus, there is a need for additional income for the old age and survivors insurance part of the Social Security system during the next few years.

This can be done without further reducing social security benefits or reducing promised protection for the 115 million Americans now contributing to the program, but congressional Democrats cannot seem to unite to defeat the Reagan-Stockman proposals.

## Backing Down

In a clear indication that the poorest groups were beginning to reach him and the Congress, in September the president backed off the administration's plan to wipe out minimum social security—although failing to fully restore the minimum benefit as voted by the House of Representatives. Then to soften opposition to his anti-social security program and to attempt to enlist Democrats in a



bipartisan weakening of benefits, he announced his decision to appoint a social security study commission. When he suggested that he would appoint five members of the commission, the U.S. Senate (which his party dominates) would appoint five and the speaker of the house would appoint five, it was clear whose direction it would follow.

It is unlikely that this new commission will succeed where others have not and it is unlikely that such a commission can be insulated from politics. The administration and the Republicans are certain to use it to try to achieve their social security objectives and to ensure that Democrats share responsibility for what is done. Thus, who is appointed to the commission is crucial.

Although he backed off further attacks on social security, no one believes President Reagan is backing off permanently. The Republican-controlled Senate Finance Committee, meeting on the minimum benefit proposal, also found time to approve a provision to reallocate the Social Security tax among the three trust funds—old age and survivors, disability and combined hospital and doctors' insurance funds. However, it added two more punitive cutbacks—extending disability maximum family benefit to retirement and survivor cases and extending social security payroll tax to the first six months of sick pay. All the Democratic members concurred.

Clearly, the Reagan administration seeks to reduce social security protection

partly, at least, to help balance the federal budget, but also to reduce the role of the federal government in the provision of economic security.

The best way to protect the system against this manipulation is to remove social security from the unified budget, as was the case prior to 1969. The Save our Security (SOS) Coalition, a group made up of labor, church, and social welfare organizations of which DSOC is a part, is also in favor of managing the program through a bipartisan board with staggered terms that report directly to the president. This important change has been introduced in a bill by Representative Mary Rose Oaker (D-Ohio).

The board of directors should have the right to hire and fire the chief executive officer without regard to usual civil service rules. The power to set benefits and the financing of the program would, of course, remain with the Congress and the president as it is today.

Just about every American has a major stake in protecting the longterm commitments of the social security program from fluctuations in politics and policy. The administration of the system by a separate board and the separation of Social Security financial transactions from other government income and expenditures would strengthen public confidence in the security of the long-run commitments of the program and in the freedom of the administrative operations from short-run political influence.

Social security benefits are paid as an earned right as well as a legal right. It is not surprising that the country is beginning to act with outrage to proposals that would violate the compact between the contributing worker and government. ■

*William R. Hutton is executive director, National Council of Senior Citizens.*

## RESOURCES

Robert M. Ball, "Cutting Social Security Benefits Is Unnecessary and Wrong," testimony presented before the House Select Committee on Aging, May 21, 1981. Available from the Coalition to Protect Social Security (SOS), 1050 17th St., N.W. Suite 770, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Social Security Cuts: Violating a Trust," *AFL-CIO Federationist*, June 1981, available as a reprint from SOS (address above).



# Finding a Defense Balance

By Michael Harrington

**O**UR FOREIGN AND DEFENSE policy is in obvious disarray. Indeed, events of recent weeks could be seen as low comedy if only they did not threaten the peace of the world and the future of humanity. But just because Ronald Reagan and Company go from pratfall to pratfall does not mean that the democratic left has a rational alternative to their policies. That fact is underlined by Reagan's decision to abandon Jimmy Carter's proposal for an MX missile system in a "racing track" mode. His decision was, in one sense, welcome: better half a Maginot Line than a whole Maginot Line as *Commonweal* so aptly put it. *Business Week* responded editorially to the Reagan MX decision by discovering one of the most tired, and truest, of dove clichés: that the ability to incinerate the planet once suffices, after that firepower becomes redundant. *Business Week's* reaction reflected in part typical Republican pinch-penny reasons: Reagan was saving money. And yet, it is positive that a sophisticated business publication has, for whatever reasons, begun to see the light on the crucial subject of overkill.

One cannot be content to leave the MX issue with these optimistic comments. Although Reagan abandoned Carter's incredibly expensive proposal, his alternative is, if cheaper, in some ways worse. Carter and Reagan, prior to his decision, based their proposals on the "window of vulnerability" thesis that the Soviets will, in this decade, be able to hit the American missiles in hardened silos. This makes it necessary to develop an alternate mode, and an alternate missile. Carter's race track scheme was crazy, but at least it had a certain logic. Now Reagan has abandoned the conclusions that follow from the "window of vulnerability" thesis, but not the thesis.

That is not simply a flaw in logic. It bears very much on the balance of international terror. For if, as Reagan proposes, one puts MX missiles in hard-

ened silos said to be vulnerable to Soviet attack, they stop being defensive weapons, not the least because they cannot be defended as long as one holds to the "window of vulnerability" argument. As a consequence, they turn into offensive,

Senate defense specialist. "There is genuine apprehension that maybe he really doesn't know what he's doing on the MX. The program is ill-defined, it has the appearance of political expediency and it may be less capable than the Carter system.'"

That confusion threatens to change the character of the MX and to dangerously destabilize East-West relations. And it points to why the democratic left alternative to the MX in both its Carter and Reagan versions has to attack the faulty, dangerous assumptions of the "window of vulnerability" thesis.

The need for that alternative is highlighted by the unbelievable flap caused by the administration's contradictory statements on the issue of limited nuclear war. The Soviets' move to put SS-20s on their western perimeter and, above all, the speed with which they have increased the deployment of those weapons, is indeed a break in the European status quo and a threat to stability and peace. No serious person in the peace movement on the Continent disagrees with the "zero option," i.e., removing all nuclear weapons, Soviet and American, from that area.

Of deep concern to many of the activists—including the socialists of Belgium, Holland, and Sweden—is the fact that the NATO missile response to the SS-20 challenge tacitly, but obviously, assumes the possibility, and even the desirability under certain circumstances, of limited nuclear war. The most optimistic assumptions—that nuclear war could indeed be limited—would make Europe the battlefield in the most devastating "conventional" war in history. It would make the Old World the trigger for the start of World War III. The incredible ineptness of the administration in Washington—the president and secretary of state toying with the limited nuclear war thesis in public and the secretary of defense denying that Reagan and Haig said what they plainly said—serves to underline the fears of the Europeans.

All of this obscured the latest So-



first-strike weapons. Only if Reagan would publicly repudiate the assumptions he has worked on for many years does it become possible to avoid this.

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, Norman Miller captured the confusion in the Reagan stance. He writes: "The problem is that their (Reagan, Haig and Weinberger's) compromise plan is dubious from a military standpoint—the Joint Chiefs of Staff oppose it—and looks like a half-measure shaped mainly by a desire to 'do something' about deploying larger missiles. . . . The President's credibility has become an issue," says one



viet action. A Swedish socialist friend who opposes the Euromissiles told me he was "outraged" at the Soviets for bringing an armed nuclear submarine into Swedish waters. It wasn't the spying that bothered him, he said ( he assumed that the Soviets spy on the Swedes), but to flagrantly violate a nuclear free zone respected by NATO powers—Norway and Denmark, members of the alliance, refuse to stockpile nuclear weapons in their countries in peacetime—was, he held, a dangerous and unconscionable escalation. At such a moment, the American president and his chief international advisers were busy fighting one another. The only

positive outcome is that it probably helped recruit supporters to the European peace movement.

But the left cannot rely upon the stupidity of the right in this situation. Unilateral disarmament may be—is—morally appealing, but it is also politically irresponsible, not the least because the Soviet Union remains a dangerous totalitarian power capable of destroying the world. The democratic left has the difficult task of opposing the destabilizing weapons systems, arguing for unilateral initiatives toward bilateral and multilateral disarmament and at the same time putting forth proposals for a lean de-

fense system that meets the needs of the national security of the United States. It would be wrong for the left to talk as if the national security of this country is not a matter of concern or is something that can be achieved easily. Indeed, it is precisely because Reagan's moves on the MX, the bomber and the NATO missiles do not enhance our national security that we oppose them. We have begun to work on the reasoned alternatives to the madness in Washington—but only begun.

Ed. note: *This article went to press just as the president announced a shift in the U.S. position on the Euromissiles.*

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# A SPECIAL REPORT



## Abortion Politics



By Jan Rosenberg

IS ANYONE AS SURE OF THEIR stance on abortion as they were five years ago? Undercurrents of private doubt and ambivalence are bubbling to the surface of the abortion issue, even on the left. Once suppressed concerns are now being voiced about the personal and political meaning of abortion, concerns which would have been silenced earlier because of the vehemence of the right's attack on feminism and the perceived need to boldly state one case or another. Leftwing journals and institutions, as well as individuals, reveal a crumbling consensus that is as welcome to some as it is disturbing to others. Recently Mobilization for Survival and New Jewish Agenda faced internal divisions over abortion, and several prominent publications, including *In These Times*, *The Progressive*, *WIN*, and *Chrysalis* ran features on the morality, experience, and politics of abortion that criticized aspects of the "pro-choice" position. These articles provoked an overwhelming response from two types of people: those who felt that the left was selling out women's gains by even discussing the matter, and those who were greatly relieved to see their minority views given voice within the left and looked to a redefinition of the abortion issue.

We offer this symposium on abortion in hopes of identifying the major contradictions or sticking points in the current debate, as well as the areas of agreement, thus clarifying the range of political choices open to the democratic left. DSOC is actively prochoice, but within its ranks there is a range of opinion both on abortion *per se* and on political strategies concerning it.

Is abortion a realigning issue in American politics? Should it be? Should being "pro-choice" become the litmus test of leftwing politics? Are coalitions with some antiabortion groups possible? If so, under what conditions?

Kathleen Bartle, Ruth Jordan, and

Kate Ellis emphasize the tactical and ideological dangers of the organized anti-abortion movement. Rosemary Ruether and Peter Steinfels urge a reformulation of the issue, and a reconsideration of its political significance for socialists.

Bartle points to the liberal/bourgeois (individual right) and socialist feminist (sexual equality) underpinnings of the current prochoice position, and concludes that DSOC should be actively prochoice, refusing to work in coalitions with antichoice groups. Both Bartle and Jordan stress the economic aspects of abortion: its effects on a woman's (and her family's) standard of living, her ability to work, and her chances of ad-

vancing in her job. In addition, Jordan points out how rightwing legislators and federal administrators have made abortion into a union issue through their efforts to bar abortion coverage (now standard in medical coverage) from federal employee health benefits. These attacks on collective bargaining may send new allies from within the labor movement to the prochoice side. Ellis looks primarily at the ideological roots of the antiabortion movement in the age-old conflict between nature and culture, a duality that many regard as central to the subordination of women. Those who oppose abortion, Ellis argues, reverse socialist priorities; they value nature (ran-

### DSOC ON ABORTION\*

#### WHEREAS:

- ⊙ The right to choose whether or not to bear children is a fundamental right of every woman, rich or poor;
- ⊙ The antichoice movement is the focus of and springboard for proponents of right wing, regressive political goals (ranging from a constitutional convention to an end to public funding for health care programs);
- ⊙ The Human Life Amendment and Human Life Bills threaten the basic civil liberties of men and women in this country to control their reproductive lives in privacy, dignity and conscience;
- ⊙ The withdrawal of federal and state funding for abortion divides women along class lines: the rich, who can choose whether or not to bear children, and the poor, who cannot;
- ⊙ At the same time, we recognize that abortion is often a personal tragedy brought about by unemployment, poverty and the lack of needed social supports for women with children.

#### THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

1. Supports the right of women to choose whether and when to bear children;
2. Opposes the Human Life Amendment and Human Life Bills and any other Constitutional or legislative attempts to define a fertilized ovum or fetus as a person;
3. Will, ourselves, and in coalition with the hundreds of other groups so organized, work to preserve the right to choose safe, funded abortions;
4. Supports the right of every woman who chooses to bear a child to decent jobs, day care facilities, food, clothing and shelter. We will make every effort to convince honest supporters of the right-to-life movement that this is the true "pro-life" program, not the HLA.

\*Since its founding DSOC has supported the prochoice position. This latest resolution was adopted at the 1981 convention.



domness, tradition) over culture (planning, rationality).

Ruether differentiates perfectionist ethics from situational ethics, comparing antiabortionism and pacifism. Both are morally consistent positions which, she argues, could be taken in the best of all possible worlds. According to Ruether, those who oppose abortion should not be required to have them, and should work to secure an environment for women in which they will be unnecessary. Finally, Steinfels asks that we look beyond the familiar criticism of the rightwing anti-abortionists. There is more to the anti-abortionist position, he argues, than some sexually repressed prigs trying to impose their misogynist views on the entire society. Steinfels poses questions about the moral status of the human fetus, the mixed (sometimes racist) history of the prochoice position, and the contradictions between different socialist values that impinge on abortion, i.e. personal rights vs. protection for the most vulnerable.

These papers raise important questions:

1. What about the immediate political challenge to the legalization of abortion? Can those who dissent from aspects of the prochoice position be part of a coalition to stop the political counter-attack?

2. What is the moral status of the fetus? This is an unavoidable "bottom line." Can feminists reconsider the current position, which doesn't draw sharp distinctions between fetuses of various ages? This, in turn, presents problems.

Amniocentesis, a procedure for detecting fetal anomalies, can (at present) only be completed during the second trimester of pregnancy. Should abortion be denied for second trimester fetuses with serious medical problems?

How do we arrive at a compelling, nonarbitrary cutoff point in differentiating the key stages in fetal life?

3. Left critics of abortion argue that beefed-up health services, and improved contraception for women (and men) will eliminate or drastically reduce abortion. But many women having abortions know about and have access to contraceptives; they just don't use them. For many wo-

men and girls, becoming pregnant is a nonrational "choice" intimately connected with problems of identity/adulthood/femininity/sexuality. Some of these problems would, one hopes, diminish in a less sexist world, but for the long range, our abortion politics must take them into account.

4. For many years feminists have argued that the personal is political. Is the thrust of the women's movement, which calls for increased government involvement in social programs to curb discrimination and aid women, consistent with the claim that abortion is solely a personal matter?

5. DSOC's modus vivendi is coalition building. What should we do about antichoice groups that share our other concerns and positions?

We invite your reactions, criticism, and comments in hopes of discovering areas of agreement for abortion politics.

*Guest editor for this section Jan Rosenberg is a member of the DEMOCRATIC LEFT advisory committee and a sociologist.*

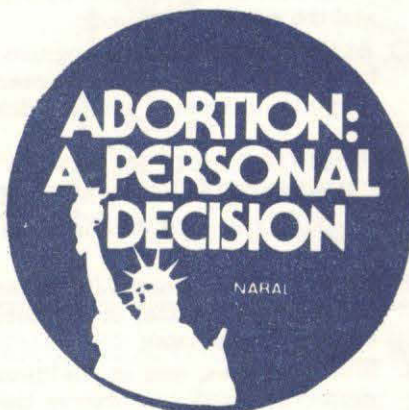
# Commitment to Choices

By Kate Ellis

**T**HE BATTLE TO TAKE REPRODUCTION out of the legislative arena has been going on for most of this century, and both sides see the next few years as critical. At the level of implementation, the anti-abortion forces must nullify the Supreme Court decision of 1973 (*Roe v. Wade*.) If they succeed, they could permanently alter the balance of power not only between liberalism and conservatism, but between the legislature and judiciary at the federal level, and between the federal government and the states.

The mechanisms for doing this range from proposals to grant "personhood" to the fetus from the moment of conception to efforts to strip lower federal courts of their power to stop enforcement of state abortion laws, to the latest ploy, Senator Orrin Hatch's deceptively simple amendment to the Constitution that states that the "right to abortion is not secured by the Consti-

tion." The situation is so fluid that what seems to be the greatest danger today could be replaced by another, more sophisticated danger tomorrow that might garner broader support.



Fortunately for supporters of *Roe v. Wade*, a division exists in Congress and in the right-to-life movement around strategy. For instance, many in that movement have been horrified by Hatch's

move, considering it a sellout since it would allow each state and Congress to legislate on abortion. Once exceptions are admitted to the ban on taking "innocent" life, the animating principal behind the whole movement falls from its untouchable position as god-given truth and enters the murky realm of human negotiation.

From the point of view of the right, reproduction is the last frontier in the appropriation of nature by culture. Culture is manmade, mutable, and subject to error. Nature is other than this, and every society has its myths telling us that we meddle with it at our peril. Since culture is an expression of power, a class-stratified, male-dominated society will produce a culture that reflects class and sexual dominance. Because of their special relationship to reproduction, women have been associated with nature and feelings rather than with culture and thought.

From its inception, the women's movement worked against this dichotomy



izing, but ambivalently. In a culture that regards feeling as intrusive and unreliable, while at the same time exalting it as the most "real" (hence closest to nature) part of the human personality, women have used their special relationship to the realm of feeling to assert their superiority to men. And since there are still so many areas to which men are assumed to have a special relationship, women are not rushing to give this up.

At the heart of the kingdom of feeling is the mother-child relationship. The belief that not only children but all of humanity will suffer if the maternal bond is not regarded as the bedrock of human relationships is virtually axiomatic in what we call the civilized world.

Yet into this deeply held belief system has come technology, profoundly altering the relationship between women and the reproductive process that had hitherto been virtually unmediated by culture. Like any increase in the control by human beings over material forces, this annexation of reproduction to culture contains the ever-present potential for misuse, for harm, for regret.

The right would like to give the awesome responsibility for reproducing ourselves and our species back to the realm of nature, which is run either by its own dynamics or by a God who does not consult individual human wishes. As maternal and infant death become less and less likely forms of "natural" intervention in the reproductive process, a woman's decision to intervene in the interests of culture becomes very weighty in a world where people have so little control over the immediate circumstances affecting their lives.

At this point, women who want to hold this option open for themselves and others are being held up as symbols of a much wider cultural phenomenon of alienation. The word "natural" is probably the most overused in our vocabulary today. "Natural" means "the way it was meant to be." Thus Reagan's deregulation program is presented as a return to nature. Once we get rid of these man-made restrictions on market activity, the economy will function again as it was meant to do.

So at a time when nature seems to be disappearing from everywhere except the shelves of supermarkets, a powerful minority is waging outright war against women. The unborn fetus is our last link to uncorrupted nature, and woe unto her

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*“As maternal and infant death become less and less likely forms of 'natural' intervention in the reproductive process, a woman's decision to intervene in the interests of culture becomes very weighty in a world where people have so little control over the immediate circumstances affecting their lives.”*

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who decides to sever that connection in the name of other priorities. Women themselves have strong feelings about their ties, and the ties of their species, to the continuous stream of events that go on whether culture is there to mediate them or not. But these concerns have been so emphasized for women that it is now hard to say what is natural to the female and what has been constructed by a culture for purposes of excluding her from its projects.

Given these conditions, the decision to abort may have a wide spectrum of accompanying emotions, but guilt is very likely to be one. What enrages the right is that women have come that much closer to full citizenship that they are choosing to risk choosing rather than withdrawing altogether from the sphere of choice.

In making abortion an issue in DEMOCRATIC AGENDA at the state-wide level

as well as nationally, DSOC can play a valuable role in raising reproductive issues in progressive organizations whose primary focus is not women's rights as such, thus providing links to the women's movement in unions, community groups, liberal churches, social service organizations and the like.

Given the efforts of the right to remove abortion from the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, we need to mount an education campaign around the potential threat, not only to women's lives but also to our traditional American system of checks and balances. As socialists, too, we have a tradition of our own to uphold, a commitment to a culture that expresses human needs through human labor acting upon, and transforming, nature. ■

*Kate Ellis, a columnist for In These Times, is a member of the DSOC Feminist Commission.*

## A Union Issue

By Ruth Jordan

**A** FEW YEARS AGO NO ONE talked about abortion in trade union circles. Male leaders, most of whom were either prochoice or neutral on the subject, believed it was an issue better left alone. Many imagined that union involvement in the question would trigger a right-to-life backlash from conservative members. It was a continuous source of frustration to women staffers and leaders who felt they could not discuss abortion and were annoyed that their unions were not sufficiently involved in standing up to the right-to-life movement.

Now recent moves by the right-to-life movement to forbid all federal funding of abortion have brought organized labor directly into the conflict, in this

instance in defense of collective bargaining rights.

For union women and their supporters on the democratic left who already considered "choice" an economic issue, it has become even more focused as a trade union issue. The fight began at the end of the 1980 congressional session when Representative Robert K. Dornan (R-Calif.) introduced a rider to the Treasury Employees Appropriations Bill in the House to forbid federal employee health plans from covering abortions for federal employees or their dependents.

It was defeated by a close vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee thanks to a concerted effort by a coalition of feminist groups and public employee unions. This session, when it was reintroduced, the presidents of government em-



ployee unions joined together to send a letter to all members of Congress asking them to defeat it.

I'm  
**PRO-CHOICE**  
and  
**I VOTE**

The measure, which had passed the House, failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee by a 14-6 vote. But before it could be debated on the Senate floor, the Office of Personnel and Management moved to cancel abortion coverage administratively. The American Federation of Government Employees mounted a successful court challenge to the OPM action. As a result, its plan, and those of three other unions, can now provide for abortion coverage. Labor's initiative in this area has protected thousands of federal workers and their dependents from denial of abortion coverage. However, the Senate is soon to vote again on a rider to the Treasury Employees bill that would prohibit such coverage.

Federal employees are an obvious target for legislators, but the anti-abortion movement has moved in states, too, passing similar riders that affect both public and private employee plans in Kentucky and North Dakota and public employee plans alone in Illinois and Massachusetts.

While union women are particularly upset about this flagrant interference with free collective bargaining, they're concerned about abortion as an economic question as well. Veteran legislative representative Evelyn Dubrow, vice president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), notes, "Today, it's abortion, tomorrow it will be mental health or some other therapeutic measure that is outside the belief of one group or another."

Dubrow believes that abortion is an economic issue for millions of American working women and their families. The ILGWU has already passed a resolution, which like that of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), supports the right of all women to "choice." Dubrow believes that whether or not a woman chooses to have a child is a matter for her and her family to decide, not her legislator. "That decision will have an enormous impact on her standard of liv-

ing, her ability to continue working and to make progress on the job," she adds.

CLUW joined with other women's and family planning groups to express opposition to proposed legislation in the Senate that would have established legal rights for the fetus from the day of conception. In a statement submitted to Senator John East's (R-N.C.) committee, CLUW commented: "We find it particularly ironic that these latest proposals come from members of Congress who are the least concerned about the welfare of working women and their families. They have steadfastly refused to provide decent child care for preschoolers or after-school care for older children. They only reluctantly preserved minimal levels of infant and maternal nutrition programs. They are the people who are for state right-to-work laws that prevent parents from organizing and negotiating decent wages. They would entice teenagers to compete against their mothers and fathers in the job market by paying them a sub-minimum wage. These same politicians who would prevent women from having an abortion because they are worried

about the rights of a fetus are also willing to undermine OSHA standards that would protect workers lives, prevent sterility and most particularly, protect the lives and fetuses of pregnant workers."

While East's bill has been discredited, the new move by antiabortion forces in the form of a constitutional amendment would deny a constitutional right to abortion, a right the Supreme Court has stated is part of a woman's constitutional right to privacy. The amendment would also allow Congress and the states to legislate concurrently, with the most restrictive legislation taking precedence. The National Education Association and The Newspaper Guild have already passed prochoice resolutions along with the ILGWU and CLUW. As the right-to-lifers continue to press their point in the legislature while encroaching on employee health plans as well, union women are going to be more likely to raise the issue at union conventions. ■

*Ruth Jordan is active in CLUW and is a member of the DSOC National Executive Committee.*

# Drawing the Line

By Kathleen M. Bartle

**H**OW DEEPLY SHOULD A SOCIALIST organization be involved in the politics of abortion? Should a left-based, multi-tendency organization like DSOC actively participate in the prochoice movement?

Or, having taken a pro-choice stance, should it simply ignore the issue in the hope of attracting those constituencies or individuals who may have our position on other important questions—the economy, foreign policy, equal pay for comparable work, racism—but who are either neutral or opposed to freedom of choice? On a deeper level, does the democratic socialist tradition address the cause of reproductive rights in general and abortion in particular?

## *Beyond Liberalism*

The familiar liberal position is that of individual choice free from state or church dictation: specifically, that a woman has the right to control her own

body. The liberal position goes beyond concern for individual freedom, though, to include concern for equality of condition: so long as men control the area of reproductive rights and women are subjected to the whims of male sexual and social conduct through unwanted consequences of sexual relations, it contends, the campaign for women's equality remains unfinished.

The socialist feminist position incorporates the liberal position and its focus on individual autonomy and sexual equality but looks beyond these, to historically specific social contexts. It proclaims the relationship between economic and social reproduction: that is, it argues that capitalism has an interest in the unpaid labor of women whose work is to breed and raise the next generation of workers. In this perspective, the struggle for reproductive rights becomes an integral part of the struggle for social liberation as well as for individual freedom.

But even if one were to reject the



case for control over the means of reproduction, surely there is a socialist position on the efforts to repeal reproductive rights being advanced and enacted today. The Hyde Amendment, for instance, discriminates against the poor. Before the 1979 restrictions, federal money funded nearly 300,000 abortions annually. Today, the federal government pays for only 2000 to 3000 abortions in a year, those in which low income women's lives are endangered. Recent federal regulations eliminated rape and incest as grounds for Medicaid abortions. Many of these abortions are still taking place, of course: women are simply using money necessary for food and shelter to pay for them. Proposals to outlaw abortion altogether would enable the wealthy to purchase expensive and probably safe abortions, and relegate most women to the backroom horrors of the pre-1973 period. The politics of abortion, then, are inescapably the politics of class.

They are also the politics of social reaction. For we cannot ignore the fact that abortion functions as a smokescreen for a movement that would repeal the whole of women's advances, that it is the one issue—the hoped-for failure of the Equal Rights Amendment is another—on which a movement is to be turned around and routed. To treat abortion without dealing with the rest of reproductive rights, then, is to play the game of the right wing. For them, abortion is the way to win on limiting freedom of choice, after which the logic of legalized contraception, or of almost any woman's rights, is shaky at best. To shy from the controversy over freedom of choice on abortion is to concede to the right the arguing point it needs to move to broader attack, just as to shy from a defense of public employees' right to strike is to endanger all rights of all workers.

If defending the right of choice to abortion is a social imperative, what are the consequences of such a defense? Actually, abortion and reproductive rights emerge as less divisive and unpopular than most causes we consider supporting. A Harris Poll of June 1981, shows 68 per cent of the public supporting "a woman's right to decide with her doctor whether to have an abortion in the first three months of pregnancy," and 56 per cent supporting "legalized abortions."

But beyond mere numbers, isn't this a socially divisive question, splitting one constituency from another when both

## WHAT DO WOMEN THINK ABOUT ABORTION?

A survey published in the November issue of *Life* magazine looked at the attitudes of a sample of 1,015 American women. Conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly and White, the poll found that although women who were anti-abortion tended to be traditionalist, 45 percent of those who opposed abortion supported the Equal Rights Amendment. Below, some answers to the questions.

*"From your own personal point of view, do you feel having an abortion is morally wrong or do you feel it is not a moral issue?"*

Morally wrong . . . 56%      Not a moral issue . . . 35%

*"On the whole, do you agree or disagree with those who feel that any woman who wants an abortion should be permitted to obtain it legally?"*

Agree . . . 67%      Disagree . . . 29%

*"Should a girl who is under 18 years of age have to notify her parents before she can have an abortion?"*

Yes . . . 78%      No . . . 18%

*"As a woman, does it bother you that decisions about abortion are often made by politicians and judges who are men?"*

Yes . . . 70%      No . . . 25%

*"Do you think that a political candidate's position on abortion should be an important factor in deciding whether or not to vote for him or her?"*

Yes . . . 38%      No . . . 53%

*"A new law has been proposed in the U.S. Senate that says that human life begins at conception. Under this proposed law, abortion would be a serious crime and could even be considered murder. Would you favor or oppose a law under these circumstances?"*

Favor . . . 32%      Oppose . . . 59%

Not everyone responded to each question. Therefore the figures do not add up to 100%.

should be working in common cause around economic issues? This is a false dichotomy: abortion is an economic issue. And what social issue isn't divisive? DSOC itself was founded in large part as a result of a split over a social issue—the Vietnam war—at a time when there were those who argued that the mainstream left should unite around the preservation and expansion of the Great Society even if it meant burying the war as an issue.

Is reproductive rights that kind of realigning issue? I can only suggest that the eighties will continue to feature assaults from the New Right on both economic and social fronts. The gains of the thirties—the welfare state, the right to form unions, the right to a secure retirement; of the sixties—of blacks to vote and to use public accommodations; and of the seventies—of women to control their own bodies—are all under attack. It is in our interest to unite in battle to defend these rights with all possible force—a unity that will elude us should we not include the rights of women along with those of workers, blacks, seniors and others.

DSOC must work with other organizations on broad reproductive rights issues, bringing to these struggles our own economic and social perspectives. We

must work with groups like the National Abortion Rights Action League, which tend to focus on the single issue of abortion. It is critical that we bring our pro-choice perspective with us in coalition work: not only in women's coalitions, where it is an unqualified asset, but in coalitions generally, to ensure that people understand the economic and social ramifications of this issue, and that the feminism of DSOC and the left be reinforced.

More than this, though, I would argue that we should not work in coalitions formed by antiabortion groups that may be good on the issue on which the coalition is called together. American history is filled with racist and/or anti-Semitic organizations that have had basically populist economics. In their better phases, other left organizations have refused to work with such groups, denying them the legitimacy that working with them in coalition would confer. This should be our policy towards groups that deny women freedom of choice. To overlook an organization's opposition to abortion is to dismiss the cause of women as unimportant, to leave a key constituency vulnerable at a time of sweeping rightwing assault, and to deny our own convictions. ■

*Kathleen Bartle is chair of the DSOC Feminist Commission.*



# Allowing for Differences

By Peter Steinfels

**T**ODAY THE LEFT IS GENERALLY in favor of easy access to abortion, a position it has not always held in the past and may not always hold in the future. The roots of the current attitude are both good and bad. They include concern for the autonomy and wellbeing of women; anger at the danger, degradation, and discrimination involved in illegal abortions; humanitarian desire to relieve the stigma or burden of unwanted pregnancies and to eliminate the suffering faced by unwanted or abnormal children.

But this almost automatic standing of abortion as a leftwing cause also has roots in the left's nineteenth century identification of Progress with the distinctly "modern" forces of science, engineering, and medicine, and in a frequently utopian confidence that these forces could remedy most human suffering. Today's attitude reflects the liberal and utilitarian scorn for "metaphysical" questions of meaning and principle as distractions from the "real" problems of meeting material needs. And the left is often the unthinking heir of a superficial bohemian individualism in matters of sexuality.

Many of us cringe when we read the eugenic arguments that early in this century were the mental baggage of right-thinking and "liberated" people; Margaret Sanger's "More children from the fit, less from the unfit—that is the chief issue of birth control" comes to mind. The socialist Henry Bergen, though critical of the class basis of eugenics, endorsed eugenic programs to strengthen the position of whites against blacks. In Germany, pacifists, socialists, and feminists contributed to the discussion of "race hygiene" and the possibility of eliminating the burdensome for reasons of "social efficiency." Will many of today's arguments for abortion-on-demand make equally painful reading in the future? Will socialist support for unrestricted abortion someday appear as unfortunate as past socialist flirtations with imperialism or elitism? My first hope is only that



leftists at least contemplate these possibilities.

## Addressing Ambiguity

If the roots of the left's attitudes on abortion are mixed and ambiguous, that is also true of the antiabortion forces. For some conservatives, abortion is associated with a decline in sexual mores; for others, it is condemned as an expression of women's autonomy and as a threat to the unequal gender roles they assume are necessary to the survival of the family. For many others, however, the *essential* issue is life, not sexual morality or conventional gender roles. Is there any satisfactory reason for not giving this unborn human entity, at either an earlier or a later stage of development, the same protection we give the newborn infant? Those who answer this question "no" include both the moral traditionalists and many who are not at all content with traditional morality. Both groups believe that widespread resort to abortion (paralleled by its social acceptance) is a step, not toward a more humane society, but toward one where unproductive, vulnerable life is devalued and, if troublesome enough, eliminated.

My second hope, then, is that the democratic left would recognize and address all the objections that antiabortionists raise, not just those it finds easiest to characterize as sexist, repressive, reactionary, etc. The left itself is the frequent vic-

tim of stereotyping and psychological reductionism: pacifists are "cowards"; critics of U.S. foreign policy are "anti-American"; egalitarians are "envious" or "levellers"; environmentalists are "elitists" or "Luddites." No doubt these accusations are sometimes true. But they evade the hard questions leftwing dissenters raise. The left should not apply the same approach to those opposed to the status quo on abortion.

The recognition that some opponents of abortion are motivated not by blue-nosed hostility to sex or rednecked repression of women, but by concerns that are at least as much "left" as "right," has political implications. It means that abortion should not be an issue that separates the sheep from the goats politically, determines what coalitions are possible or not, and eclipses issues such as economic justice, racial equality, and international sanity. It means the left should refuse to accept literally the rhetoric of a recent NOW appeal about abortion: "The battle lines are drawn."

## Moral Questions

But recognizing the seriousness of some antiabortion concerns also means the left should confront those concerns in the discussions within its own ranks. When the left says anything about abortion, it studiously avoids the question at the heart of the problem: *What is the moral status of the human fetus?* The answer is not as obvious as many anti-abortionists believe. But the question cannot be wished out of bounds either, as the Supreme Court and many prochoice activists believe. Is there any nonarbitrary reason why killing a retarded newborn infant, whether for her own or her family's good, is morally and legally intolerable—while killing the same individual in the womb, three months earlier, is acceptable? It is not enough to say that the needs of others, even tragically pressing ones, require such deaths. The goal of socialism, after all, is to move towards a society in which people exist as creators of their own destinies and not simply as



objects of others' needs. Does that freedom from treatment as an object extend to the unborn as well? From the moment of conception? From some later stage of development? If so, why? If not, why not? Statements about "choice" and "imposing morality" cannot substitute for this kind of reflection and discussion. If abortion, at some stage, is a matter of a human person's life or death, then socialists, above all, should not be willing to treat it in the spirit of liberal *laissez-faire*.

### Reading Public Opinion

If one carefully examines public opinion studies on abortion, two things stand out: first, a majority of Americans reject the premises and practical policies enunciated in the Supreme Court's 1973 decision. Second, a majority of Americans also reject the right-to-life movement's alternative, a constitutional ban on all abortions whatsoever. (The March 1980 National Opinion Research Center sur-

vey shows that fewer than half of U.S. adults approve of legal abortion for "soft" reasons — unwed status, limiting family size, or simple choice on whatever ground. For "hard" reasons — strong chance of serious birth defect, rape, or a serious threat to the woman's health — the approval level jumps to 80-90 percent.) Ultimately we can not take our political or moral bearings from public opinion polls. But we would be strange democrats indeed if we dismissed out of hand the moral intuitions, however inchoate, of so many fellow citizens.

Many prochoice activists, having previously imagined that the right-to-life movement was a manipulated creature of the Catholic bishops or the residue of atavistic religious beliefs that would soon disappear in a secular society, have been shocked by the persistence and strength of antiabortion feeling in the country. The result, unfortunately, has been a hardening rather than a reexamination of their stance. Radical journals

have carried denunciations of individuals who, from pacifist, religious, or even feminist standpoints, have demurred from the prochoice orthodoxy. It would seem that any deviation from abortion-on-demand-with-government-funding-if-necessary gives aid and comfort to the enemy. This position, I believe, is sadly mistaken.

On the contrary, continued opposition to the human life amendment by the left should be accompanied by open discussion of the shortcomings of *Roe v. Wade* and the increased resort to abortion that has followed it. The left has laid claim to being the source of political imagination. It should therefore do more than fight off a human life amendment. It should continue the search for an alternative to the two unsatisfactory positions confronting us. ■

*Peter Steinfeld is executive editor of Commonweal and a member of the DEMOCRATIC LEFT advisory committee.*

# No Easy Choices for Left

By Rosemary Radford Ruether

**I**N MY OPINION PERSONAL POSITIONS on abortion operate in an area of human life where it is not appropriate to be ideologically dogmatic. Leftists may disagree about the ideology/morality of abortion, as they may disagree about whether they support armed revolutionary struggles or are pacifists. The connection between the two seems appropriate as well. Only a person who is prepared to be a pacifist, to oppose all taking of human life for whatever reason, can be consistently antiabortion. But this is a perfectionist ethic that cannot be regarded as possible for society as a whole, at least in its presently violent and contradictory form. A person who takes such a position must recognize this as a personal morality, not one that can be imposed on others. Above all it is not a morality that can be imposed on others by law. At most, one can try to persuade others on an ethical level. This is the basic distinction that must be made.

In the ethics of abortion, we are dealing with a conflict of values: the

weighing of goods against each other. In ethical choices where there are serious conflicts of goods, there is no possibility of giving a simple yes or no answer.



The factors that weigh in this decision have different subjective weight for different persons. So there is no possibility of absolute criteria to be imposed by outside authorities.

Every woman who wants to have an abortion must be presumed to have serious reasons for doing so. As a decision

that involves conflict between values, it is never a light or neutral decision. It is essentially an ambivalent decision that involves the sacrifice of one good for the sake of another, or to put it the other way, the incurring of one evil to avoid other evils. In this sense all abortions are evil and involve us in guilt and regret. To terminate the life of a potential human being is an evil and tragedy, but it is a decision that can be responsibly made when the weight of other evils to be avoided overbalance this regret at a lost potential person.

We must clarify, in the matter of abortion, the difference between optimum moral principles and what should be translated into law. There are many things that are morally unfortunate and yet should not be made illegal. Americans already have a precedent for the negative results of an effort to translate the strict moral principles of a minority group into a law imposed on everyone. This was the Temperance Amendment passed in 1919, after almost 80 years of temperance agi-

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# ON THE LEFT

By Harry Fleischman

**M**ELINA MERCOURI WON IT ON A SUNDAY. Known best for her portrayal of a warm-hearted prostitute in the movie "Never on Sunday," Mercouri was re-elected to Parliament as part of Panhellenic Socialist Movement's (PASOK) sweeping victory in Greece's national election. She has since been sworn in as Minister of Culture and Sciences. . . . The victory of Andreas

Papandreou as prime minister of Greece's first Socialist government has a strong American connection. Just before Mussolini's invasion of Greece, Papandreou came to the United States in 1940, earned an economics doctorate from Harvard in 1943, became an American citizen in 1944, served in the U.S. Navy for two years and then taught at the University of Minnesota. There he met and married Margaret Chant. "My commitment to socialism goes back to when I was 12," she says, when "my grandfather, George Chant, was running for the Illinois state legislature on the Socialist ticket. He lost." Margaret Papandreou, an ardent feminist and the guiding inspiration behind the Greek Women's Union, believes her husband's new Socialist government will mean a breakthrough for Greek women, who she says "have been largely suppressed through our capitalist system and our patriarchal mentality."

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Last month we mentioned that Edward Asner, television's Lou Grant, had joined DSOC. Now he joins the ranks of other DSOC labor leaders. The militant unionist has just been elected president of the 50,000 member Screen Actors Guild and pledged himself to fight the "ever-encroaching tide against unionism in America." He laid part of that anti-union swell to Reagan's machinations, and said he would never lose his senses like Reagan, one of his predecessors as Guild president.

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SACRAMENTO VALLEY DSOC and the La Semilla Cultural Center cohosted a talk by filmmaker Saul Landau and a showing of his films on Caribbean socialism last month. . . . The local played a prominent role at the Solidarity Day rally in Sacramento and participated in the Sacramento Peace Fair. . . . A tuition tax credit measure favored by President Reagan, and strongly opposed by City Council member Hilda Mason, a DSOC member, went down to resounding defeat in Washington, D.C. by a vote of 73,829 to 8,904. The measure, heavily supported by conservative groups, had been condemned by teachers unions, DSOC, and other groups favoring public education. . . . *Downstate Left*, published by the Champaign-Urbana, Ill. DSOC, featured articles on the local PATCO strikers and a public hearing sponsored by DSOC and other left groups to grill Representative Ed Madigan, which drew 400 voters.

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BOSTON BLASTED REAGAN'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM IN THE recent election. A referendum initiated by the Jobs With Peace campaign urging the city council to call upon the Congress to reduce military spending and make federal funds available for jobs, housing, education, mass transit and health programs won by 42,910 to 16,397. . . . Ruth Yanatta Gold-

way, the newly elected progressive mayor of Santa Monica, Calif., was scheduled to speak for *Boston DSOC* November 18. . . . The New England Regional Retreat in October drew 100 activists who heard Michael Harrington, state legislators and DSOC members Harlan Baker, Tom Gallagher, and Scudder Parker, as well as Gloria Clark, Earl Bourdon, Peter Dreier and Ben Tafoya speak.

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IOWA CITY DSOC members Gary Sanders and Rick Taylor ran unsuccessfully for the city council in the recent elections. Voters in Caribou, Me., turned back a proposal to require the city's public schools to teach the theory of creationism along with evolution. . . . Washington state voters approved legislation requiring approval by localities before nuclear power plants can be built.

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DETROIT DSOC has started a new project, Youth for Seniors, to assist older Americans in their struggle for a better life. Initial funding has been provided by the Machinists Union and Vicki Hugley is project director. . . . Comic Robin Tyler gave a show last month, sponsored by Detroit New American Movement (NAM) and DSOC. . . . Ann Arbor DSOC held a conference on Alternative Economics November 13-14 at the University of Michigan. Among the scheduled speakers were Rep. John Conyers; Karen Nussbaum of District 925, Service Employees International Union; pension expert Randy Barber; City Council member Lowell Peterson; State Representative Perry Bullard; labor educator Hy Kornbluh; UAW official Dan Luria and Zolton Ferency, candidate for governor. . . . Two Minnesota DSOCers have been published in the last year. Harry Boyte wrote *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement* and Paul David Wellstone co-authored *Powerline: The First Battle of America's Energy War*. Citizens Heritage Center is planning a conference on The Democratic Heritage: 150 Years After De Toqueville, to be held January 8-10, 1982 at Macalester College, St. Paul. . . . *Ithaca DSOC's* newsletter features a "Socialist Shopper's Guide to Ithaca," stressing cooperative and environmental concerns. . . . *New York City DSOC* joined other groups in an "Afternoon in Solidarity with Solidarity." Speakers included Mike Harrington, I. F. Stone, Sam Meyers and Barbara Garson.

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OREGON PROGRESSIVE AGENDA held a conference last month to promote progressive political action and candidate recruitment for 1982. Cochaired by Representative Gretchen Kfourrey and Senator Ted Kulongoski, speakers included many labor, women and civic leaders as well as many state legislators. . . . *Philadelphia DSOC* supported the Teachers Union in its strike to force the school board to live up to its contract. A motion made by Deborah Meier and Nancy Kleniewski at the DSOC national executive committee meeting to send a letter of support to the striking teachers was amended to send along a contribution of \$50. Instead, when the hat was passed, the total came to \$100 to be sent as a symbolic token of solidarity. . . . Mike Harrington got a standing ovation at the Bricklayers Convention in October.



**NO EASY CHOICES, from page 13**

tation by an evangelical Protestant minority. The majority of Americans did not agree with this temperance position. The result was widespread flouting of the law which became the basis for a new stage of organized crime.

A law that defines human life at conception would be a similar effort to impose a minority morality upon most Americans who do not agree with this position. Recent polls show that only 10 percent of Americans reject all abortion from conception. The other 90 percent of Americans would allow abortion under some circumstances. To impose such a minority position on everyone would create an enormous traffic in illegal abortion aided and abetted by many Americans acting from conscientious principles. There would also be an enormous outbreak of litigation surrounding illegal abortion, maternal death, manslaughter charges against those who might cause a miscarriage and the like. The situation would be a legal nightmare. There is no question that such legislation, if allowed to pass, would eventually be repealed.

The legal issue is *not* pro-life versus pro-abortion. The issue is legal, safe abortions *versus* illegal, unsafe abortions. Legal abortion does not force anyone who does not approve of abortions to have one. Those who believe that all abortion from conception is murder are perfectly free to continue to affirm those principles as their personal morality. But this is different from imposing that personal morality on others who have different ethical and religious viewpoints.

On the other hand, banning abortion in no way stops abortion. It merely makes it illegal and kills many mothers because of the unsafe conditions that prevail when abortion is clandestine.

Abortion can be reduced as a social necessity, not by criminalizing it, but by enhancing women's social and reproductive self-determination, in order to eliminate it as a remedy for situations that cause women involuntary pregnancies. Those who are really interested in eliminating abortion should mobilize church, medical, and community services to enhance women's reproductive self-deter-

mination. When women can avoid involuntary pregnancies, they will no longer need abortion.

Finally, it should be said that the thesis that human life begins at conception is not one that necessarily follows from religious or theological principles. On the contrary, there are strong reasons for considering alternative positions that allow a conscientious choice of abortion, particularly in the early months, on the basis of carefully considered religious and theological principles and based on well established moral values. ■

*Rosemary Radford Ruether, a vice chair of DSOC, is a professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. This article is excerpted and adapted from testimony on the human life bill given this summer before Senator East's committee.*



**NOTE TO READERS**

Because of the length of this forum, Ron Radosh's column will appear in the December issue.

***"What has 16 pages, is blue and white and should be read all over?"***



**DEMOCRATIC LEFT, of course, and this is the time of year when you can do your part to make sure that it is read all over. Do you have a friend, or skeptical relative who should**

**be reading articles by Michael Harrington, Peter Steinfels, Roberta Lynch, Peter Dreier, John Stephens, Kate Ellis and many other provocative commentators? Give a gift this holiday season that's sure to delight or enrage someone. Don't miss out on these fantastic savings: first sub, \$8, two for \$14, three for \$19. Each additional sub, \$5 each.**

Send gifts (complete with card signed by Jimmy Higgins) to the following people. (Attach extra sheets if necessary.)

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Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
 Mail to: DSOC, 853 Broadway, Suite 7801, NYC 10003.  
 I want to join DSOC. Enclosed is my check for: \$25 regular; \$50 sustaining member.



# JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS



TO COMBAT THE POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION, the neoconservatives and hardcore rightwingers are working together on a "theology of democratic capitalism." Michael Novak, who used to consider himself a firebrand sixties leftist, will be editing a publication tentatively called *This World: A Journal of Religion and Economics*; the magazine's editorial board will include Walter Berns, Midge Decter and Jeane Kirkpatrick. The idea for the journal grew out

of discussions held by the Institute for Educational Affairs (IEA), which will also be providing guides to businesses on which-charitable causes stand squarely for free enterprise in the war of ideas. IEA, founded in 1978 and now taking off, says it hopes to be a bridge between the academic and business communities. It seems also to bridge the neoconservative and old right, bringing together lights such as Novak, Diane Ravitch and Irving Kristol with Robert Bork (former Attorney General), and William Simon. More than 74 corporate sponsors and close ties to both the powerhouse rightwing think tanks (Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute) and smaller research institutes and individual scholars guarantee IEA definite clout.

**REBUFFING PRIVATEER INSURERS.** Ohio labor led a successful coalition to turn back an insurance industry effort to raid the highly successful, publicly-run workers' compensation fund. By a four-to-one vote, Ohio citizens decided to keep the insurance funds under public control rather than allowing the private companies to raid the fund for profits. It was a fiscally sound decision. Under Ohio's public insurance system, a disabled worker receives \$1.31 benefits for every \$1 paid into the system (since profits on investing the fund are plowed back into benefits. New Jersey's disabled workers collect only 41¢ on each dollar invested in the fund, and the disabled worker in Texas receives only 25¢ on each \$1 invested in compensation funds. Insurance companies spent heavily to get a piece of the Ohio funds, but even large segments of Ohio's business community sided with labor on this one. Even with the anti-public sector religion now reigning, it makes more sense for other states to copy Ohio's success than for Ohio to abandon its model. Incidentally, the Ohio public compensation system was originally introduced by a state legislator named William Green in 1913; twelve years later he succeeded Sam Gompers as AFL leader.

SOME GOOD NEWS about the fanatics of the right. The October-November *rural america* reports on the problems of Bill Wilkinson's *The Invisible Empire*, the largest and in recent years most violent faction of the Ku Klux Klan. Quoting from Randall Williams of the Southern Poverty Law Center, *rural america* indicates that Wilkinson's Empire may be out of business by the end of this year. Fundraising just isn't bringing in as much as it used to, and the legal fees for the many cases where Klansmen are facing civil or criminal prosecution are draining the treasury. The National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC, a.k.a. U.S. Labor Party, Fusion Energy Foundation, National Democratic Policy Committee), is facing a similar decline, according to a report by Joe Conason in the November 11-17 *Village Voice*. Hit by two major waves of defections in recent months, the NCLC and its leader, Lyndon LaRouche, have lost major fund sources, including a computer business formerly tied to the political cult. Defectors estimate the remaining hardcore membership at about 300. Most of them have been with LaRouche since he was a leftist in the late 1960s. With increasingly open anti-Semitism and appeals to far-right and pro-Nazi elements like the Liberty Lobby, LaRouche is making even these hardcore followers uncomfortable, according to the *Voice*. Finances and lifestyles also present problems. LaRouche asks his followers to live in spartan simplicity and donate to the cause. Meanwhile, according to the defectors, he continues to live an upper middle class lifestyles, with homes in Manhattan and suburban Detroit and vacations in Europe.

**THE ADMINISTRATION THAT** brought us an economic program full of holes and called it a safety net now brings us another colorful image. In the December *Atlantic Monthly*, Office of Management and Budget Director David Stockman admits that across-the-board tax cuts were "always a Trojan horse" to bring down the tax rate for the wealthiest of the taxpayers. Sound like a familiar gambit? "It's kind of hard to sell 'trickle down,' so the supply side formula was the only way to get a tax policy that was really 'trickle down,'" he told the interviewer. Stockman seems to be weathering the storm caused by that and such other candid comments as, "None of us understands what's going on with all these numbers," but for a couple of days "l'affaire Stockman" provided welcome comic relief. As the holiday season approaches, let's remember the wisdom gained from the original Trojan horse experience and beware of GOPs bearing gifts.

## DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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