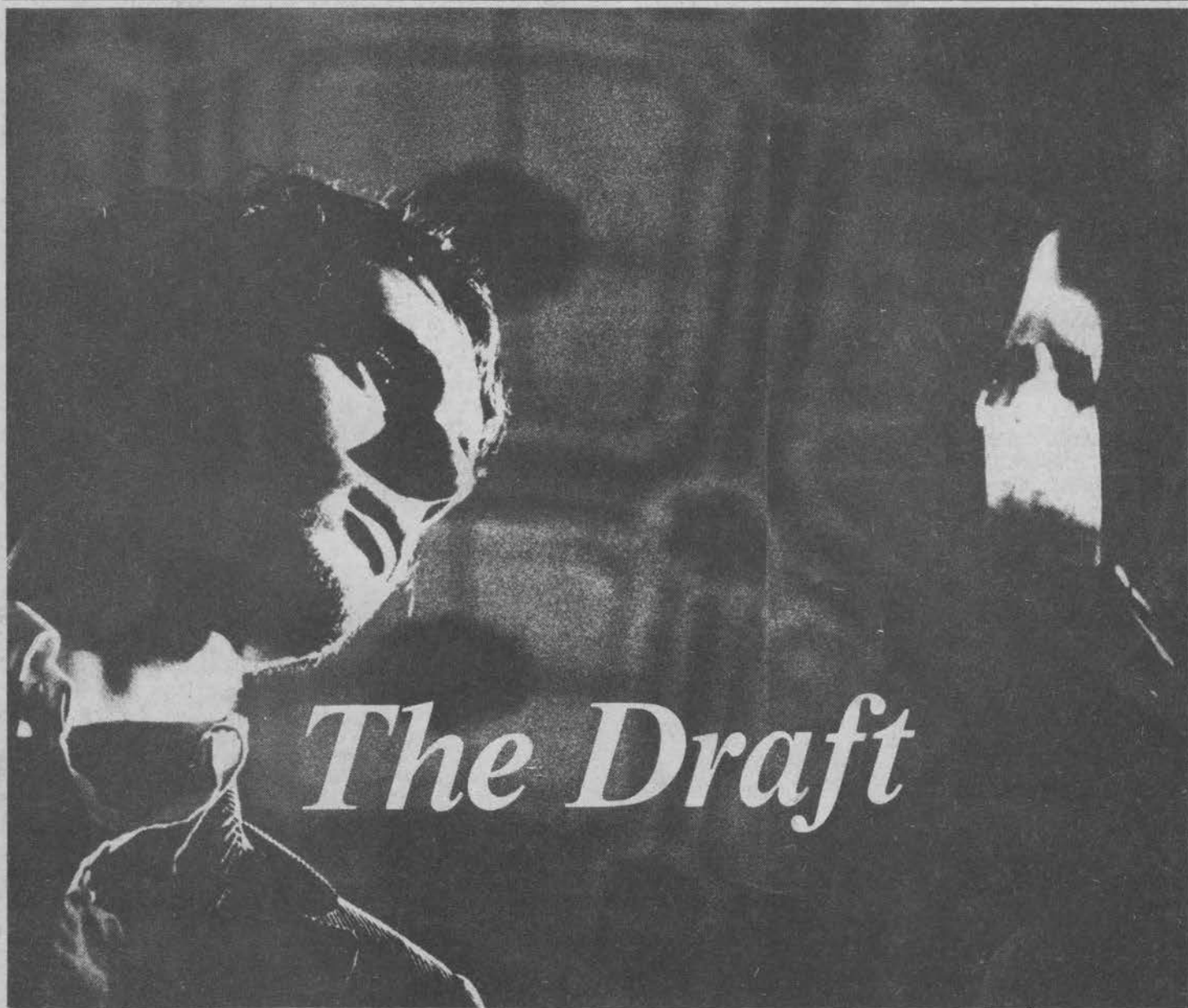


APRIL/MAY 1980

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Moving On

MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT



The Draft

The New Populist Resurgence

Rent Control Wins

Women—the Life Lived and the Life Suppressed

Moving On

APRIL/MAY 1980

VOLUME IV, NO. 2

Towards a socialist America

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FLAG, FAITH AND FAMILY AND THE NEW POPULIST

The New American Movement...

The New American Movement combines a Marxist analysis with careful attention to the current realities of American politics. It combines a deep commitment to its socialist principles with a tactical flexibility in its political approach. It combines a focus on the development of theory appropriate to our times with activist orientation that stresses involvement in the crucial issues of the day. And it combines a vision of a socialist future based on democracy and human freedom with efforts to project in our work elements of that future.

NAM has over 35 chapters involved in organizing for labor union democracy, against nuclear power, for abortion rights, against violence against women, for affirmative action, against apartheid in South Africa, and much more. Chapters also organize cultural and educational events that attempt to present a new and challenging socialist perspective on our world.

All of this work is informed and united by certain basic political ideas:

- NAM is committed to working toward a socialist society in which material resources and the decision-making process are democratically controlled by all people.

- We are committed to a socialism that has equality and respect for all people at its core — one that carefully balances the need for collective planning, ownership, and decision-making with a high regard for individual rights and freedom.

- The development of a movement for socialism in America will require

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by Bill Barclay

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EDITORIAL BOARD: NAM National Council; EDITORS: Bill Barclay, Rick Kunes, Halli Lehrer; MANAGING EDITORS: Bill Barclay, Peg Strobel; DESIGN & PRODUCTION: Tom Greensfelder, Bob Quartell, Ann Tyler, Dolores Wilber.

MOVING ON (USPS 467-810) is published bimonthly by the New American Movement, 3244 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60657, (312)871-7700. Subscription price: \$5 yearly. SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. Postmaster: Send address changes to Moving On, 3244 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60657.

the growth of socialist consciousness within the working class—all those who have to sell their labor power (even if they are not directly paid) in order to survive. For it is only a broad-based movement representative of the diversity of the American people that can fundamentally challenge the power of capital.

- American capitalism is a powerful and entrenched system. Yet it is also rife with contradictions. Organization is key to changing power relationships and exposing these contradictions. We are committed to the development of a socialist party that can carry out these tasks, as well as to the growth of the most strong and progressive possible popular organizations.

- Democracy is central to the process of building a movement for socialism. Only as working people become active, organized and begin to take control over their own lives can a new society take shape.

- NAM sees the struggle for the liberation of women as integral to a socialist movement. We value the contributions of the women's movement in showing how revolutionary change must deal with all aspects of people's lives. And we defend now, and in the socialism we project, the liberation of gay women and men.

- Racism cripples national life—it denies the humanity of minorities and thwarts the potential of the working class as a whole. NAM is committed to fighting against racism and national oppression in all forms.

- The fate of socialism in the United States is tied to the rest of the world. We support struggles for national liberation and human freedom wherever they occur.

- NAM supports the positive achievements of the existing socialist countries. However, we are also critical of various aspects of their policies, and see no one of them as a model for our own efforts.

THE DRAFT



Steve Cogan

Anti-draft demonstrations in Cleveland, Ohio, on February 9, 1980.

Iran, registration, Afghanistan, growing defense budgets — the new international disorder has once again put foreign policy at the center of U.S. politics. What are the problems and potentials for socialists of a period in which foreign policy issues may strongly shape the nature of political debate in the U.S.? How do we respond? Three NAM members discuss militarization, the draft, and the new cold war from a variety of perspectives. (This symposium has been printed as a pamphlet and is available from NAM for 25¢ a copy, 20% discount for 50 or more.)

Registration and the New Cold War

By Bill Barclay

THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY IN Moorhead, Minnesota; 1,000 in San Diego; 4,000 in Eugene. The anti-registration/anti-draft demonstrations continue, and the numbers are growing. Carter's first step towards reinstating the draft, his call for registration of 18-20 year olds, has triggered a surprisingly wide opposition. More significantly, this opposition comes from people too young to have any direct connection with the anti-draft movement of the 1960s/early 1970s. That

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earlier movement, intertwined with resistance against U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia, has become a part of American political culture. The current anti-registration movement self-consciously builds upon and draws from this experience. At the same time, however, there is growing appreciation for the ways in which this anti-draft movement is distinct. While drawing nourishment from the successes (and failures) of the past, we must clearly understand the different contexts and different problems and what they mean for political strategy in the present.

The draft & foreign policy

In the 1960s we were against the draft because we were against the Vietnam war. For most of the organizers and participants of the anti-draft movement, the draft was simply a means to oppose the war more effectively. Of course there were a variety of reasons for which individuals didn't want to be drafted — moral, political, personal, etc. In fact, as a draft counselor I was frequently infuriated by what I thought were ethically or politically "bad" reasons for wanting to stay out of the military. I seldom said anything,

however, because here was one more body that could be denied to the war machine. This time the reasons for opposing registration are more important and closer to the center of debate and discussion among the new anti-draft activists. There is, after all, no war — yet. Arguments about "religious" vs "political" vs "personal" reasons for opposing registration are widespread. This difference in context, the fact of a foreign war, implies both a potential and a problem.

The problem is obvious. At one campus I visited recently there were three different anti-registration coalitions: the hard line politicians, the religious pacifists who were determinedly apolitical largely because of their experience with the first coalition, and the soft politicians who hoped to bridge the chasm between the other two groups. It is the potential that I think is more important, however. It was enough simply to be against the war last time: the politics of moral outrage were persuasive to large numbers of males of draft age and others. That isn't sufficient this time. Those of us organizing against registration and the draft in the 1980s will be asked "what's your alternative, what would you do about Iran and Afghanistan, about energy and inflation?" Thus to be successful the anti-registration/anti-draft movement will need to articulate a new conception of the U.S. as a world power and a social vision of a transformed American society. Only by doing both of these political tasks can the new movement emerge as an effective obstacle to Carter's remilitarization of our foreign policy world view and halt the drift of domestic political debate to the right. Thus the potential and the necessity for building links between anti-registration/anti-draft work and other progressive movements is greater today than during the Vietnam War.

There is another important way in which the foreign policy context of the 1980s differs from that of the 1960s. In

Continued on page 8.

Feminism and the Draft

By Judy MacLean

A LOT OF US ARE FINDING we're taking a peculiar stance toward the draft these days. We don't want registration, or a draft, for any young person in this country. But if there is a draft, we say it damn well better include women.

On the surface, this seems peculiar. against anyone being drafted, shouldn't we seize the opportunity to get a large group exempted from it?"

No. But not because, as some are saying, "If women want equal rights, they have to take equal responsibility." As long as the ERA isn't passed, as long as a woman makes 57¢ for every \$1.00 a man makes, as long as a woman is raped somewhere in this country every three minutes (to cite but a few instances of our non-equality of rights,) rattling on about equal responsibility is silly.

Nor should we support drafting women because women will "humanize" the army. Women have been in the army all along. The average male recruit starts out a lot more "human" than he will be in six months. That's what basic training is for. To reduce that "humanity" to military manageability.

The main reason I, for one, hope women are included in any draft that does emerge is this: it will mean a

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Steve Cagan

Signing a petition during the demonstration in Cleveland.

stronger, and less sexist opposition movement.

I recently did a very unscientific survey among draft age men and women. Among the men, the response ranged from "I'll go," to "Hell, no." But the women were different. The ones who believe women can serve and fight equally in the army are the same ones who oppose military action now by the U.S.. The ones who favor sending a couple of divisions over to the Persian Gulf to die for the U.S.' inalienable right to control world petroleum reserves are the very ones who think a

I found no women who both believed women should be part of a draft and were willing to go.

woman's place is back home, making cookies.

I found no women who both believed women should be part of a draft and were willing to go. Of course, there are a few such women in the U.S. today. Mostly, they are already in the army, or the reserves.

So, an opposition movement will be much stronger with all the young women — both the ones who will be outraged to be asked to fight and the ones who will be outraged that women are asked to fight.

I also don't want a replay of the macho anti-draft movement of the late sixties. Sara Evans, in *Personal Politics*, her excellent study of the roots of the women's movement, writes about the period when the New Left's focus shifted primarily to anti-war and anti-draft work. The space for women shrunk to that of support for the men who were doing the real action — courting jail by their refusal to risk their lives killing Vietnamese. The macho posturing and women being pushed into the background, were both justified by women not facing the real danger — death in the army.

It probably wouldn't replay exactly like that the second time around, not after a decade of feminism. But the pressures would be there. A draft opposition movement that includes women as front-line participants, on the other hand is bound to be different. Long hair became "unpatriotic" last time. Will pregnancy become "unpatriotic" now? If my survey reflects opinion among today's young people, there are going to be more young women than men in the anti-draft movement right from the start.

Is all this concern for the nature of the opposition movement, rather than the draft or the army itself, misplaced? I don't think so. Mass movements are tricky. Once the momentum starts, you never know where they might spill over or lead next. I just want to make sure there are lots of women leading us, wherever it goes. ■

Organizing Against the Draft

By Mark Stephens

IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS THERE has been a whirlwind of activity around the draft. Tens of thousands of people have marched, rallied, and otherwise demonstrated their opposition to reimposition of the Selective Service System. Much of this activity is diffused, in part because there are many principles upon which the draft is being opposed. However, one underlying theme has been the relationship between the draft and other issues. This is most important in order to develop a critical analysis of the proposed Selective Service System.

Why the draft now?

Given the current situation in the Near East, Central America, South America and elsewhere, the reasons for the draft might seem obvious. However, the Carter Administration is using the Middle East as the *only* focal point in discussions about the draft. While Afghanistan, Iran, & the Palestinian question make the Middle East a logical focus, Carter has ulterior motives in both the reimposition of the draft and in the recreation of a Cold War ideology.

These motives are twofold: 1) the domestic crisis and its relations to Carter's bid for reelection; and 2) the development of a better prepared military force. Given Carter's rating in most polls prior to the Iranian hostage

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An Army recruiter ready for the new draft.

situation, it was necessary for Carter to "come on strong." Rhetorically, he did. But after nearly two months (during which time his rating rose considerably) nothing substantial was accomplished in the release of the hostages. Just as his rating was beginning to go down once again, the Soviets saved the day for Carter and his reelection campaign. Cold War sentiment began to be fostered immediately. "Americans" were reminded of their commitment to "democracy, human

rights, and peace." For Carter this had conveniently diverted the attention of many voters from the very real and crucial problems we face here in the United States. As inflation, mortgage and interest rates, and unemployment rise, we are listening to Carter and Cronkite warn of mounting Soviet aggression. Once again Carter is "coming on strong," appearing to have all the qualities of "a leader."

The second motive, that of developing a "better prepared military," must

be understood with this qualification: prepared for what and whose interests? There are as many answers to this as there are geopolitical crises, tensions, and interests. These interests include maintaining military bases, markets, easily exploitable resources such as labor and raw materials. Persian Gulf oil is definitely at the top of the list, but situations in other places (e.g. El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Morocco, etc.) should be considered as well. That the Carter Administration will employ military forces in pursuing these and other interests was made clear in his State of the Union Address.

Responses to the draft

Responses to reimposition of the draft have been diverse. On the one hand, given the experience of Vietnam, one might expect greater popular opposition. But in the last seven years there have been rising feelings of individualism and protectionism as a response to domestic and international economic crisis. Thus, people's initial acceptance of the "Carter Doctrine" has its basis in experiences tied to definite social relations. Many people believe Carter is attempting to solve issues related to the economic crisis such as the price of oil, since the blame for the crisis has consistently been placed on other countries or cartels such as OPEC. With these "seeds of blame" planted in the minds of Americans during the last several years, it is now easier for Carter to re-create a Cold War ideology.

On the other hand, in contrast with the 60s anti-war/anti-draft movement, the current opposition is starting out with a very broad base of support. Much of this base was developed by the '60s and early '70s movement, but other bases have developed since, for example the women's movement. Working with this broad base of support, several coalitions have formed. The Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD), organized over a year ago, is a very broadly based coalition of religious, civil libertarian,

In contrast with the 60s anti-war movement, the current opposition is starting out with a very broad base of support.

educational, and political organizations. Mobilization Against the Draft (MAD) is another broadly based coalition, one in which NAM is an active member. West Coast MAD (loosely affiliated with MAD nationally) was initiated by NAM and includes representatives from labor, Third World, women's, community, religious, libertarian, and other socialist organizations.

The activities of the various coalitions, organizations, and individuals have included several marches, rallies, and demonstrations which have drawn heavily and yet received poor media coverage. Many of these groups are engaged in educational outreach to high schools, colleges, and other institutions with draft-age youth. There have been several "teach-ins," significant outreach to labor, and some — but not enough — coalition work with Third World organizations. A problem in some coalitions has been the inability of certain participants to develop their politics without conflicting with others in the coalition. For example it has at times been very difficult to raise issues

of the draft and racism and the draft and sexism precisely because of the broad base of anti-draft coalitions. These connections are integral to a socialist-feminist analysis.

As a socialist-feminist it is of utmost importance that we not treat the draft as an isolated issue. The draft cannot be fully understood separated from military intervention, energy resources, the war economy, etc. Only in making connections between the draft and other elements of capitalism can our opposition to the draft have political relevance. If we oppose the draft without talking about the social relations of power, of decision-making, and questions of equality, that is without a socialist analysis, then we do not distinguish our analysis from that of the individualism of the "me decade."

Ultimately, we must strike a balance between doing broad base-building coalition work, developing and advocating an explicitly socialist analysis that is something more than a "minimal program," on the one hand, and fighting the "Right" while building the movement with this issue on the other. Working in coalitions with women's and Third World groups is important in this process. Both of these movements have responded to draft issues by pointing out that the government wants equal obligations while denying equal rights. This is most clear in the issue of the ERA. However, draft activity can and should be done with all coalitions in which at least some critical analysis is made of capitalist social relations.

In sum, Carter is using registration and the draft to appear as a strong leader and to demonstrate support for his reelection campaign. We as socialists should organize with those of different political perspectives to demonstrate that just the opposite is true. The focus, however, should not be Carter, but the role of the U.S. government and multinational capital in perpetuating situations precisely like the current one. ■

Continued from page 4.

response to the "Vietnam syndrome" of an internally divided society, demoralization in the armed forces, and diplomatic isolation abroad, Carter articulated "human rights" as the guiding principle for U.S. foreign policy. Both Carter and his advisors clearly understood that domestic political disunity makes foreign intervention difficult and that the domestic consensus around foreign policy could only be recreated if the political legitimacy of American foreign policy could be recreated. Human rights was a tactical retreat from the aggressive interventionism of the 1960s and early 1970s. It was thus an important, even though limited, victory for the anti-war movement.

However, human rights has always contained the potential for a reassertion of an interventionist foreign policy. After all, if the world is to be made safe for human rights, then human rights must, to some extent, be imposed upon the world, especially that part of the world that U.S. policy makers see as "strategically important." Of course the strategically important part of the world has tended to grow in recent years. As Carter expressed in October, 1979, "The United States has a world-wide interest in peace and stability. Accordingly, I have directed the Secretary of Defense to further enhance the capacity of our Rapid Deployment Forces to protect our own interests and to act in response to requests for help from our allies and friends" (New York Times, October 2). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan thus provides an important opportunity for human rights to emerge as the basis for an aggressive and interventionist approach to foreign policy and a return to the long term imperative of maintaining/enlarging the capitalist world marketplace.

In all of this trauma of Vietnam remains crucial. Defeat in Vietnam followed by economic instability in the 1970s left many Americans with a sense of declining world power, a sense that

we could no longer have our way in international affairs. While some Americans have been relieved at this decline of U.S. power, others have simply been confused or frustrated. With neither a strong progressive mass movement to provide an outlet for political energies nor a confident sense of moral legitimacy and political success abroad, Americans have turned inward both politically and personally. I suspect, however, that the resulting unmet expectations and built up frustrations would, in many cases, be mobilized for a new foreign crusade if success looked probable and moral legitimacy seemed assured.

During the last few years a series of cultural and political events have occurred that have reasserted, at least in our own eyes, our claim to moral leadership on a world scale. After being ignored, Vietnam is now being reinterpreted through films such as the *Deerhunter*. The Vietnam/Cambodia and the Vietnam/China conflicts along with the issue of the refugees have lessened many of the doubts that were raised U.S. intervention in that area of the world. Finally, of course, the taking of hostages in Iran and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan have encouraged many of us once again to see the U.S. as a beacon of moral responsibility in a self-interested world. Carter's proposal for resuming registration can thus be seen as simply a response to the actions of unprincipled and perhaps wicked adversaries whom the U.S. faces in the arena of world politics.

Alliances

In what ways does the new anti-registration/anti-draft movement promise a response to these events? First, it seems to me that opposition to registration and the draft is the most viable means for opposing the remilitarization of American foreign policy. Struggles against growing defense budgets, deployment of new missiles, and in favor of SALT ratification are important. However it is often difficult to in-



volve large numbers of people because these issues seem remote from our daily lives. Registration and the draft, in contrast, are like Thoreau's tax collector — a direct and intimate contact with an arm of the state. A defeat for Carter's registration proposal would be an important, even if limited, victory over remilitarization.

Second, guns and butter cannot co-exist given the energy-intensive nature of guns in a high technology military machine. The limits on U.S. power that became clear in Southeast Asia mean that a new cold war will force important decisions about the economic and social direction of our country. Growing military involvement abroad means growing urban austerity at home. The links between anti-registration/anti-draft and the new urban coalitions are already implicit.

Finally, the anti-registration/anti-draft movement is drawing into political activity large numbers of previously apolitical youth. Nor are these new activists limited to elite campuses. (They weren't last time either. While the 1960s anti-draft movement began at elite campuses, my experience as a teacher at a rural community college during 1969-1971 made clear that the movement had spread to other sectors of the population.) The experience of anti-registration/anti-draft work in the 1980s may help shape the political consciousness of a generation, a political consciousness that opposes foreign intervention and provides the basis for an alternative politics of domestic reform. ■



Bob Goren

Rent Control Wins in Baltimore

**By Claudia Leight,
Elliot Lieberman, Jerry Krutz,
and Dean Pappas**

IN AN UPSET VICTORY THAT COULD have national significance, Baltimore voters approved 72,000 to 67,000 a charter amendment establishing rent control in this city of 860,000, eighth largest in the nation. It was the first time in recent years that

rent control has been enacted by referendum in a major U.S. city.

Less than two weeks later, a Maryland judge ruled unconstitutional the rent control law as well as the right to institute it by referendum. This threw the victory into limbo pending a decision, expected in March, from the State Supreme Court of Appeals.

Although we do not yet know whether rent control will be allowed to stand in Baltimore, the campaign and electoral victory were in themselves significant.

The November 6, 1979 victory handed Solem and Associates, a San Francisco consulting firm that specializes in high-powered, anti-rent control cam-

The authors of this article are members of the Baltimore Rent Control Campaign and Baltimore NAM.

Rent control forces enlisted the support of over sixty groups including community organizations, labor unions, women's organizations, church groups, the NAACP, tenants' organizations and political groups like NAM.

paigns, their first defeat. Prior to the Baltimore setback the firm could boast a perfect 7-0 record in defeating similar initiatives in other cities.

The odds against a rent control victory were high.

The city newspapers and television stations had come out against rent control. So did the mayor, city council president and 15 of the 18 members of city council. And the opponents of rent control spent nearly \$400,000, while the proponents could raise only \$10,000.

How We Won

The upset can be attributed to several factors:

(1) *The severity of the housing situation.* Baltimore is a majority-renter city. The U. S. calls a 5% vacancy rate an "emergency" and Baltimore, with less than 2%, is a "No Vacancy" town. Many tenants have seen their rents rise 70% in the past year and do not have the alternative of leaving for a cheaper apartment — they don't exist. On top of this, even the city admits 71,000 units are substandard, and 28,000 families are waiting on line for public housing.

In recent years the housing squeeze has been further aggravated by real estate speculators' and developers' new-found interest in Baltimore. They have been encouraged by the city's downtown redevelopment program — an intense promotional effort — and Baltimore's nearness to the ballooning Washington market. The result has been a dramatic rise in housing costs.

Within this context many saw rent

control as an important step in relieving the pressure on housing.

(2) *A broad-based, racially-integrated, grassroots, pro-rent control campaign.* In the course of the six-month campaign, pro-rent control forces enlisted the support of over sixty groups including community organizations, labor unions, women's organizations, church groups, the NAACP, tenants' organizations and political groups like NAM. Each was represented at bi-weekly steering committee meetings and each played a distinct role in mobilizing a particular constituency. Hundreds of workers went into communities the weekend before the election and thousands worked on Election Day itself. In contrast, the anti-rent control forces were narrowly organized around the real estate industry and their supporters in the political establishment.

(3) *Mobilization of the Black electorate.* Baltimore's population is 55% Black. The rent control campaign succeeded in turning out the Black vote as few other issues have. Two major factors figured in the turnout. First, key organizations with roots deep in the Black community — the NAACP, the City Tenants Association, the Welfare Rights Organization and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance — actively supported the rent control initiative. Secondly, the campaign made turning out the Black vote a cornerstone of its Election Day strategy. Precincts were targeted and 20 sound trucks drove through them all day while 200 youth-organized into "blitz" teams — knocked on doors and dropped flyers.

(4) *An aggressive, conscious, creative campaign strategy.* The campaign saw as its prime constituencies tenants, the elderly, Blacks, and moderate-income homeowners. To reach them, rent control advocates devised a range of tactics, including speaking engagements, leafleting, church services and a pre-Election Day car caravan through key neighborhoods.

A very bold media committee figured out how to use our scarce resources. Talk shows, debates and media events were the staples. During

the last two weeks of the campaign we managed, using the FCC "Fairness Doctrine," to force television and radio stations to give us free advertising time. This helped counter the thousands of dollars spent on advertising by the opposition.

(5) *Taking advantage of the excesses of the opposition.* The anti-rent control forces outspent rent control advocates by 40 to 1. In a city where high-budget campaigns are not the norm, the spending disparity created suspicions among voters that grew as Election Day approached. Following a pattern that had been successful in previous campaigns and that has become the hallmark of the Right's anti-tax movement, consultants Solem and Associates designed a campaign based on saturation targeted mailings and television and radio advertising. By Election Day voters had received as many as five separate slick direct mailings. Offensive in themselves, these excesses became doubly offensive to Baltimore's electorate when the "Anti" forces attempted to disguise their propaganda as a community newsletter and sent personalized computer-typed letters in envelopes that looked exactly like city tax bills.

The pro-rent control forces were quick to react to these tricks. We called in the media and filed mail fraud charges with the Maryland Attorney General. So successful was the counter-attack that politicians supporting the Antis were obliged to publicly disown the mailing.

Campaign organizations

The organizational structure of the pro-and anti-rent control forces was indicative of differing campaign strategies. Early in the campaign, pro-rent control forces could not avoid splitting into two groupings though many were afraid we could not beat the landlords with a divided campaign. Baltimore Welfare Rights Organization and Youth Against War and Fascism split from the original coalition to form the People's Campaign for Rent Control. They tried to gear their campaign almost exclusively to Black and poor

people, using the slogan, "People before profits."

The Baltimore Rent Control Campaign, by far the larger of the two "pro" groupings, set out to create a multi-racial coalition of organizations and individuals. While stressing the importance of rent control for the city's poor, elderly, and Blacks, the Rent Control Campaign saw the need to build broad-based support for the issue.

Among the Campaign's endorsing organizations, Baltimore NAM and to a lesser extent the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee provided an openly socialist presence. When some in the campaign, angered by the disruptiveness of the split into two groups, reacted with anti-communism, NAM people made it clear that the issue was really differences in strategy and tactics. These two remaining socialist groups helped bring a long-range organizational perspective to the campaign and offered support through the active involvement of many of our members.

NAM members worked throughout the campaign; every member of the Baltimore chapter did some work. About 10 members have met regularly as a chapter rent control caucus to guide and elevate our involvement in the campaign and to organize other chapter members. Our contributions as a group were substantial and recognized. We organized a number of all-day blitzes, mobilizing primarily our friends and associate members. One of our members served on both the research and media committees of the campaign. Another was a full-time, volunteer office co-ordinator for the campaign. NAM also played an important role in pushing for strategy that went beyond what seemed most immediate.

The pro-rent control camp stressed grassroots, community-based organizing. By contrast the "Anti-s" Keep Baltimore Best Committee relied on telephone surveys, direct mailings and saturation media coverage. Their supporters read like a *Who's Who* of the Baltimore real estate industry. They

hired a large paid staff to carry out their campaign. Their tactics, familiar in other cities, were designed to heighten fears — of higher taxes for homeowners, evictions for the elderly, fewer apartments for tenants. They also tried to create confusion and doubt to the point that the voter would choose the status quo rather than risk the uncertainty of a rent control remedy.

The situation now

As people in Baltimore await the appeal ruling we are working to keep the issue alive by pressuring city council to pass a comparable rent control bill. Supporters of the referendum are determined to preserve the most crucial of its components:

- (1) rent rollbacks to alleviate recent gouging;
- (2) rent increases limited to a percentage to be fixed each year;

(3) no rent increases at all for units with substantial housing code violations;

(4) real penalties for landlords who don't comply with rent control laws.

But regardless of the outcome of the appeal, the Rent Control Campaign is considering its future as a citywide housing organization. Building on strengths developed in the campaign, the coalition believes it can be the basis of a powerful, continuing bi-racial movement in Baltimore.

Thus far we have run a campaign that was both grassroots and sophisticated. We beat a well-financed and unscrupulous enemy. We foiled the predictions that we would get slaughtered at the polls. We think we've been able to show that the local government is rigged against democracy. Even if this particular victory is snatched away, our new-found confidence will be hard to shake. We are the majority.

AGAINST THE DRAFT

Commemorative buttons and posters from March 22 demonstration against the draft.

Poster is 24-by-16 inches, five-color design by Kerry Tremain. Two-inch diameter button with same design in red and yellow. Posters \$2.50 including postage, buttons 3/\$2 and 10/\$6 including postage. Proceeds to pay off March 22 debt. Limited editions, so order today.

March 22 Mobilization
853 Broadway, Room 802,
New York, NY 10003.

Flag, Faith, and Family

The New Populist Resurgence

By Harry C. Boyte

“A central problem with the ‘progressive’ strain of modern western thought may be precisely its alienation from ‘tradition.’”

JOE HOLLAND'S PAMPHLET *Flag, Faith and Family: Rooting the American Left in Everyday Symbols* speaks to the left's detachment from the lives and concerns of people which NAM has, to some degree, intuited since its foundations. Yet the pamphlet is more than a description of a problem. By tracing such detachment to certain features *intrinsic* to left wing theory itself, Holland helps illuminate the nature of the crisis afflicting socialist and communist movements around the world. Thus his work is an entre into a debate and process of reconceptualization which I believe will basically alter our political imaginations in the coming years. Such an intellectual process is in turn, fed by deep wellsprings: the emergence of popular democratic protest out of people's ethnicity, neighborhood institutions, religious groups and other traditional relations that can be described as a new populist resurgence.

On one level *Flag, Faith and Family* is an eloquent call for the left to engage in struggle on terrain which radicals

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Residents on the west side of Chicago pose in front of 38 flags were flown.

customarily abandon. “Unfortunately, the Right understands the role of symbol better than the Left,” writes Holland. “The response of the contemporary American left to the Right's manipulation of symbol has generally been to reject the whole dimension, rather than struggle over its direction.” Instead of rooting itself in the language, themes, collective memories and folkways of the people, the Left tends toward critical analysis of the



front of their homes on the Fourth of July, 1961. There are 36 houses on the block and

ways that the past "weighs like a nightmare" on people's consciousness, as Marx put it, mystifying real relations. Thus, continues Holland: "Leftists have shown how jingoistic patriotism supported imperialism; how uncritical religion legitimated the exploiters and distracted the exploited; and how received family patterns socialized members into alienated or oppressive roles." Such perceptions are full of insight. But they are also

one-sided, ignoring tradition's contradictory complexity: "The dominant strains of the Left tradition have not fully understood how apparently conservative social institutions like nation, family and religion have played important defensive roles for the working class within the capitalist experience. Least of all has the tradition grasped the opportunity for engaging these institutions and their symbols in a cultural offensive against capitalism."

Alienation from tradition

Holland's argument, moreover, moves from description to etiology, suggesting that "the analytical categories of the Marxian tradition," like liberalism, reflect "Enlightenment rationality." As he puts it: "A central problem with the 'progressive' strain of modern western thought may be precisely its alienation from 'tradition', specifically its failure to grasp the creative role of rooted, passion-filled, metarational collective symbols." With such an argument, Holland joins a number of other contemporary theorists who have begun to discover common, rationalist assumptions in modern thought — across the political spectrum.

Once made explicit, it is not hard to trace the rationalist structure of left wing categories through the mainstream socialist tradition. Bathed in Enlightenment sensibility, the left combined deep insight into the ravaging dynamic of modern capitalism with a kind of tragic embrace of its inevitability and "historical necessity." For example, Marx described with unsurpassed brilliance the ruthless dehumanization structured into the very logic of the modern factory which "obliterates the individual characteristics of workers" and turns diverse, actual human beings into "abstract individuals" shorn of particularity, cultural difference and history. Yet Marx, reflecting the dominant world view of his age and the left specifically, also saw such a ravaging process of detachment as the precondition for "emancipated" and "progressive" consciousness. In his view, modern revolution *requires* a kind of cultural and historical amnesia — indeed it grows from detachment. Thus he wrote, "since the abstraction of all humanity is practically complete in the full-blown proletariat... it follows that the proletariat can and must free itself."

Such a viewpoint was customary among socialists — Marx's great

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genius was as a critic, not as a political activist or strategist, roles which he gave relatively little attention. Yet the image of "class consciousness" as involving a radical process of detachment continued to undergird the left. It remains central to the thought of the most sophisticated modern socialists. For example, Ralph Miliband in his *Marxism and Politics* recently argued that "The Marxist notion of 'almost radical rupture' with traditional ideas signifies a break with all forms of tradition and must expect to encounter the latter not as friend but as foe."

Left wing rationalism represented more than a powerful world view. It has also reflected, in important ways, the social character of certain institutions central to the left (mass or Leninist Party, trade union, intelligentsia, state apparatus). Holland makes the point well in describing the struc-

Real world social movements inevitably are nourished out of rich themes buried within traditions.

tural and experiential basis of middle class intellectuals' myopia about patriotism: "White middle-class intellectuals and professionals in this society often fail to understand the importance of the symbol of nation (patriotism) in the life of working people, precisely because liberal university training tends to create an uprooted, highly individualized ego. Thus the graduate of the liberal university turn instead to a career as a source of personal identity and worth. This career identity may be in the competition of the business world or it may be precisely a political career, including a professional revolutionary commitment." For most working people, however, the job offers few such satisfactions. "Quite logically, therefore, many working class people turn to nationhood (and subnational identities) as the strongest collective symbol grounding their identity, and rightly so, for it is their frustrating work which builds the nation."

Other structural foundations for left wing rationalism are to be found in the modern factory and its working class accompaniment, the trade union. As Linda Gordon has recently observed, Marx and Engels — and it should also be added the socialist tradition more generally — drew language and images of the future society almost entirely from the factory context, slighting other arenas of life like family, religion, folkways, neighborhood patterns, etc. Moreover, the left saw the very structure of modern industry and the destruction of older crafts at the hands of modern technology as historically "progressive." In a famous passage on the modern factory, Engels thus argued that even under socialism the nature of the factory would retain certain essential characteristics: "If man, by dint of his knowledge and inventive genius, has subdued the forces of nature, the latter avenge themselves upon him by subjecting him...to a veritable despotism independent of all social organization (italics added)."

Trade unions commonly formed in

resistance to the process of rationalization, collectivization and deskilling. Yet they ended up also accepting such a process (even in the "best," most "left wing" of cases). Indeed, by their very nature they *assume* the collectivization of humanity, the destruction of particular identities, and the replacement of older "organic" connections of place, craft, religion with what Emile Durkheim called "functional identity" based on work.

The education one receives in a university, the collectivizing dynamic of modern factories and other experiences produce important insights into people's commonality beyond specifics of background, race, sex, etc. And trade unionization historically has meant a vital line of defense for working people against the predations of the system and, potentially, a key power instrument for transformation of modern society. Yet the actual process of insurgent social movement is far more complex than theory based on critical reason understands. As Holland notes, "Analytical reason is a negative instrument, ruthless in penetrating every social secret and exposing it to the light of day. But the exposure of social secrets is also a frightening process... Only living symbols nourish hope. Only living symbols contain the creative energies to give birth to something new." In fact, a generation of social history has now massively documented that real-world social movements inevitably are nourished out of rich themes buried within traditions. They normally incubate within old-fashioned, traditionalists, often apparently "conservative" social structures which retain a moment of autonomy from dominant power. Indeed, one of the most exhilarating, strengthening dimensions of insurgent movements is the activation of democratic currents within the traditions and institutions of an oppressed population.

A cultural strategy

In the final section of his pamphlet
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DIVIDED *against* HERSELF

by Deborah S. Rosenfelt

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURAL legacy of the past can give us a valuable sense of continuity, a felt kinship with those who have asked similar questions, waged similar struggles before us, and can renew our commitment to the future in which they also believed. International Women's Day celebrates the tradition of political struggle by working class women. The literature of which I will speak records and affirms similar struggles.

In the past decade, feminist scholars have identified a literary tradition of women writers who read one another's work, corresponded with one another about everything from domestic irritations to the major issues of the day, and looked to one another for strength, encouragement, and insight. The left, too, has its literary tradition, though the ravages of McCarthyism in the late forties and fifties drove it underground. At the intersection of these larger traditions is a body of literature that merits consideration in its own right: a line of women writers associated with the American left who unite a socialist or class consciousness and a feminist consciousness in their lives and creative work, who articulate the needs and grievances of women as well as those of other oppressed groups—workers, ethnics, the colonized and the exploited, and who speak out of a profound

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Rockwell Kent

*The conflict
between the life
lived and the life
suppressed*

commitment to social change.

In fiction the tradition extends from turn of the century socialists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman to contemporary writers like Marge Piercy and Alice Walker. Though the specific political affiliations of these writers have varied from era to era the questions they raise have been surprisingly consistent: basic questions, like how to survive economically; more complex ones, like how to understand the connections and contradictions between women's struggles and those based on other social categories and issues, or how to find a measure of emotional and sexual fulfillment in a world where egalitarian relationships are more ideal than reality, even in one's own political circles. Sometimes, as in Gilman's *Herland* or Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, these writers try to imagine a socialist feminist future. More often, as with the many women writers associated with the left, especially the Communist Party, in the 1930's, their works constitute a sharp critique of the present. In this article, I want to look at the contributions of two women writers to the socialist feminist literary tradition. One, Agnes Smedley, died thirty years ago; the other, Tillie Olsen, now in her late sixties, began publishing her most significant work only a decade ago.

Agnes Smedley

Born in 1892 in northern Missouri, Agnes Smedley had an itinerant childhood, her father moving the family from town to town, mining camp to mining camp; her mother dying before forty of overwork and malnutrition. She began working as a domestic at

twelve; the family's main means of support, however, was the income of her prostitute aunt. Bright and hungry for knowledge, she managed to attend normal school in Tempe, Arizona, in 1911-12, where she began to write. Next she went to San Diego, taking courses at San Diego State University and then teaching typing until she was fired because of her membership in the Socialist Party and her association with organizers of San Diego's free speech movement. Moving to New York in 1917, she wrote for the Socialist Party's newspaper, *The Call*, and for Sanger's *Birth Control Review*. She became deeply involved in the Indian revolutionary movement, serving for a time in the Tombs prison as a spy, after which she wrote sketches of some of the women whom she met there. In 1920, she moved to Berlin to join the radical Indian Revolutionary Committee, becoming part of the remarkable circle of leftwing political and cultural activists that included Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger, and graphic artist Kathe Kollwitz, who worked with Smedley translating and illustrating birth control pamphlets.

In early 1929, Smedley arrived in China, sending back reports to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. For most of the next decade she lived and worked in China—in Shanghai, in Sian, in Yenan with Mao and the Red Army—writing a succession of articles, stories, and books sympathetic to the communist revolution and working tirelessly on securing adequate medical care for the Chinese wounded. The book titles suggest the scope of her involvements: *Five Years of Kuomintang Reaction* (1932); *Chinese Destinies: Sketches of Present-Day China* (1933); *China's Red Army Marches* (1934); *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army* (1938); *Stories of the Wounded: An Appeal for Orthopaedic Centres of the Chinese Red Cross* (1941); *Battle Hymn of China* (1943); *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (1956). During this time, too,

Smedley became close to the great Chinese writer, Lu Hsun, with whom she coedited a book on Kollwitz and whose mastery of the short story no doubt influenced the style of her own later stories and sketches. In the transformation of women's roles and consciousness during the Chinese revolution, a transformation slow and often contradictory, but dramatic nevertheless, Smedley found one of her most significant subjects.

Smedley returned to the U.S. in the forties, working productively until, in 1949, she was charged with having been a Soviet spy (she had spent some

Smedley struggled to resolve ambivalences about her guilt at leaving her family behind.

time in the Soviet Union in the thirties). In 1949 also, the Chinese Communist Party won its final victory. Ill, Smedley set out once more for China. She never arrived; she died in England after an operation, on May 6, 1950. In accordance with her last wishes, her ashes are buried "with the Chinese revolutionary dead" in a cemetery of honor near Peking.

Smedley's inner life was perhaps less happy than her outer life was productive, particularly before her involvement in the Chinese revolutionary process gave it so significant and insistent a direction. In her earlier years, in addition to the objective suffering she endured as a woman and a member of the working class, she struggled also to resolve her own ambivalences about her origins, her guilt at leaving her family behind, her sense of isolation and alien-

ation as a working class woman first among radical intellectuals and then among the aristocratic men of a nationalist movement not her own. In the late '20s, in Berlin, she suffered a nervous breakdown. As part of her therapy, she wrote the autobiographical novel *Daughter of Earth*, published in this country in 1929. That novel is an important work of politically committed art, but along with Smedley's other works, it virtually disappeared from the library shelves during the reaction of the 1950s. Since its reissue by the Feminist Press in 1973, it has gone through two editions, a new generation of politically receptive readers apparently recognizing a kindred consciousness.

Tillie Olsen

It was Tillie Olsen who first brought *Daughter of Earth* to the attention of the Feminist Press, for in addition to being a gifted writer, Olsen is also an encyclopedic reader who has helped to democratize the literary canon by acquainting teachers and students with the works of women, Third World writers, and working class writers. She is a teacher, too, in and more often out of the classroom, giving of herself unstintingly to her students, to her friends, and to droves of aspiring young writers, especially women. Her fiction and essays have won her wide acclaim. In 1961, she published a collection of four powerful short stories, *Tell Me a Riddle*, each focusing on the relationships between family members or friends, each exploring the injuries inflicted by poverty, racism, and the patriarchal order, each celebrating the stubborn endurance of human love and will in spite of those things. In 1974, she published *Yonnondio: From the Thirties*, the first section of a novel about a working class family, told mostly from the point of view of the daughter, Mazie; begun in the thirties, put away, the novel was finally revised forty years later by "this older writer in arduous partnership with that long ago younger one." In 1978,



Agnes Smedley

she published her collected essays in *Silences*, a sustained prose poem about the silences that befall writers and those who would be writers—especially, though not exclusively, women; especially, though not exclusively, those who must also struggle for sheer survival.

Not all of Olsen's admirers realize that she herself comes from what I am calling the socialist feminist tradition. Her parents, Samuel and Ida Lerner, were involved in Russia in the 1904 revolution, fleeing to the United States when it failed. Her father, in addition to working at a variety of jobs from farming to packinghouse, became state secretary of the Nebraska Socialist Party. The young Tillie Lerner began to write in high school but had to leave before graduation to go to work. She held jobs ranging from slaughterhouse trim-

mer to mayonnaise-jar capper, and she also became an activist in the Young Communist League, going to jail in Kansas City after attempting to organize warehouse workers. She began *Yonnondio* at 19, bore a daughter at 20. In the early '30s, she moved to California, continuing her connection with the YCL in Stockton, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

She felt at times deeply divided by her longing for the extended privacy and solitude required for the development of her art and the demands of an activist movement in a decade that cried out for activism. Later, the deepest pull would come from the loving, loved burden of her growing family. Still, she wrote—deeply political poems and essays and more of the novel that would become *Yonnondio*. In 1934, the first chapter

was published in *The Partisan Review* as "The Iron Throat," a title referring to the whistle that summons workers into the mines. Ironically, when east coast editors and reporters, impressed with the story by the 21-year-old writer, tried to reach her, she was in jail for her participation in the great San Francisco Maritime Strike, becoming something of a cause celebre and writing essays about the strike for *The New Republic* and *Partisan Review*.

In 1936, Tillie Lerner married her longtime comrade Jack Olsen; in the years that followed, she mothered four children and took a variety of jobs to support them. She remained an activist as well, writing for *People's World*, serving as president of the California CIO's women's auxiliary, organizing other CIO work related to the war effort and to war relief, and also working in many non-left and non-union organizations related to childcare and education, including the PTA. During the fifties, she and her family endured the same soul-destroying harassment from the government, through the FBI, that had sent the dying Smedley back toward China, that virtually destroyed, as it was intended to, the cohesiveness of left culture in this country. It was not until the late fifties that Olsen began writing again, her style less polemic, more rich and complex, her vision deepened by the years, her consciousness still profoundly political.

Olsen's *Yonnondio* and Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* bear some striking similarities: both are essentially stories of the lives of working class people told mainly from the point of view of a young girl coming of age; both record the deprivations and honor the dignity of such lives. But *Yonnondio* is still unfinished; its present ambiguous ending was originally intended to lead instead to an account of how Mazie and her brother Will migrate to California from the Midwest and become involved in organizing in the Imperial Valley. *Yonnondio* is a fine example of the proletar-

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ian art of the thirties, but Olsen's greatest achievement as a writer is the title story of *Tell Me a Riddle*; it is that work I want to compare with *Daughter of Earth*.

Daughter of Earth is about a young woman growing up to become a committed revolutionary. *Tell Me a Riddle* is about an old woman, dying painfully of cancer, whose youthful commitment to revolutionary struggle has been submerged for decades beneath the weight of her obligations to her husband and seven children. The content of their lives is profoundly different, yet they share a fundamental kinship: both are radicals, both are visionaries; both have been damaged by the deprivations they endure. Like other protagonists in this tradition, both are torn between the conflicting imperatives of activism, of engagement, on the one hand, and, on the other, of love, marriage, motherhood, security, rest. Their fragmentation is not reducible to a psychological conflict or an existential dilemma though it encompasses both; it is clearly a function of both their class and their sex in a world ordered on the principles of capitalism and patriarchy, and it becomes a measure of the need for social change.

The children of earth in Smedley's novel are those who mine it and till it, those who walk it, eyes downcast, exhausted by toil. Earth becomes a dual emblem in the novel, an image both of working peoples' strength and the limitations on their lives; a source of their life, their livelihood, and literally and figuratively, of their death. "I belong to those who do not die for the sake of beauty," the protagonist-narrator, Marie Rogers, writes in the first few pages of the novel. "*I belong to those who die from other causes—exhausted by fighters in great causes...For we are of the earth and our struggle is the struggle of earth.*"

Marie grows up as did Smedley herself in the mining towns of the Southwest, experiencing first-hand the deprivations and humiliations of poverty.

The painful and stunted lives of her own family teach her to rebel; her life, she determines, will be different; so will the lives of others. She ekes out an education, supporting herself with a variety of jobs; she learns something about the class structure that requires the exploitation of people like her and her family. The novel is full of passages which cry out against "those up there"—the ruling class which survives on the labor of the children of earth. "We pay for those up there...we, such as my brothers and I." She joins the Socialist Party and later the IWW. Eventually she becomes involved in the Indian nationalist move-

*Each of the
protagonists is
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ment, finding a gentleness in the Indians lacking in her countrymen. But she is a woman in a movement that attacks imperialism and imperialism but is predominantly male and openly male supremacist; a member of the working class among men of the upper classes in their own country. Her marriage to one of the men cannot endure the contradictions. She is alone as the novel begins and ends, an exile in Europe.

Loneliness, in fact, is one of the conditions of Marie Rogers's life. She leaves her family behind, though ridden by guilt and given to sporadic gestures of support; she cannot ally herself with other women, whom she sees primarily as victims; she cannot endure the vulnerability of love, though longing

for its warmth; and she cannot abide the ignorance of the intellectual left—"those interesting and charming intellectuals who idealize the workers from afar," though yearning herself for knowledge, for understanding. Both psychologically and materially then, her life is polarized between alienation and commitment. The sometimes rambling and disjointed quality of *Daughter of Earth* as narrative comes from following closely the contours of such a life, characterized as it is by repeated episodes of engagement and withdrawal and by repeated attempts to interpret these fluctuations in both psychological and social terms. In real life, Smedley went on to do her most productive work in China. The novel concludes more ambivalently, more painfully. Yet always it suggests that Marie Rogers's struggles are not only inevitable but worthwhile.

Like *Daughter of Earth*, *Tell Me a Riddle* is partly autobiographical, though it is far more carefully wrought than the loosely chronological *Daughter of Earth*. It is autobiographical in the sense that Olsen's life as well as her art bears witness to the tension between familial care and devotion to creative and political work.

The novella begins with a deadly battle of wills between Eva and her husband David over whether or not to sell their home and move to a cooperative run by his lodge. That conflict is shaped by the different ways their poverty has affected the man and the woman. For David;

"Poverty all his life... He could not, could not turn away from this desire: to have the troubling of responsibility, the fretting with money, over and done with; to be free, to be carefree and where success was not measured by accumulation, and there was use for the vitality still in him." (p. 64)

For Eva,

"...the old humiliations and terrors... The children's needs; that grocer's face or this merchant's wife she had to beg credit from when credit was



Tillie Olsen

a disgrace...school coming, and the desperate going over the old to see what could yet be remade; the soup of meat bones begged "for the dog." Enough. Now they had no children. Let him wrack his head for how they would live. She would not exchange her solitude for anything. Never again to be forced to move to the rhythms of others." (pp. 67-68)

David longs to be surrounded by friends; Eva longs only to be left alone. The long struggle to perform the nurturant roles of wife and mother, always with the desperate ingenuity of poverty, has ironically transformed her early capacity for engagement into its obverse: the terrible need for solitude, for "reconciled peace."

There are real life models for Eva among Olsen's acquaintances, including her own mother. Another was Genya Gorelick, socialist revolutionary, one of the couple to whom *Riddle* is dedicated. A member of the Jewish Workers' Alliance, the Bund of pre-revolutionary Russia, Genya agitated in the factories of Mozyr. When she was nineteen, writes her son, Al Richmond, in his autobiography *A Long View from the Left: Memoirs of an American Revolutionary*:

"...the 1905 revolution burst forth like the splendid realization of a dream, shaking the Czarist regime enough to loosen its most repressive restrictions, so that revolutionaries at last could address the public, not any more through

the whispered word and the surreptitious leaflet but openly and directly in large assemblies. She discovered her gifts as a public orator. She was good, and in her best moments she was truly great." (p. 8)

Much of this history is embedded in *Tell Me a Riddle*. But sometimes inexperienced readers miss it, because the first impression of Eva as a silent, embittered old woman, the antithesis of an articulate activist, is so powerful. It is crucial to the way *Riddle* works as art that we meet Eva now, at the end of her life. Only gradually does Olsen reveal her stature; only through superbly integrated fragments of dialogue and interior monologue do we slowly realize that this grouchy, sick grandmother, this silent woman, was once an orator in the 1905 revolution, that she and her husband met in the prison camps of Siberia, that she had once articulated as passionately as Marie Rogers a vision of human liberty. The structure of *Riddle*, in its gradual revelation of the past, forces us to question radically the present; forces us, like David, finally to experience fully the discrepancy between what is and what should be.

In their protest against a social order that forces women to choose between love and work, nurturance and creativity, domesticity and activism—activities that should be simultaneous and mutually reinforcing—these works express one version of a theme familiar to all who have read much women's literature: the conflict between the life lived and the life suppressed, between the revealed life and the buried life. Each of the protagonists is divided against herself; each has a stunted or crippled side, not quite extinguished. For Marie, who has lived the life of the political activist, the buried life is the mother nature that would have found fulfillment in nurturance.

"I was a mother nature," she thinks at one point. "It seems to me now that had this part of my nature been permitted to develop, instead of being poisoned, I would have loved life more than I

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do now—and sometimes I love it very much—and I would have been very happy and very creative...But as it was I came into constant conflict...I searched for rest and found none...In the early hours of morning, leaving my work, I often passed through lonely streets. Sometimes I heard the voice of a woman weeping. She is perhaps a married woman, I thought, hurrying on, her voice haunting me. 'Why do women weep so...I cannot endure the weeping of women.' (pp. 364-365)

The weeping of women is a motif that echoes throughout the book—it is the weeping of Marie's mother, beaten and abandoned by her father, dead early of malnutrition and exhaustion; of her sister Annie, embracing marriage in her early teens and disappearing into the silence of the frontier and death in childbirth; of her aunt Helen, turned prostitute to support the family, at first strong in her autonomy by later weakened by age and by venereal disease; of women in prison; of women behind closed doors, bartering their autonomy in exchange for the essential patronage of a male partner. Always, Marie is horrified by the dependency of the women around her; the book is a virtual catalogue of all the brutalities and innuendoes of sexual politics. Marie imagines a world that would offer both freedom and love; for now, she must choose to work for freedom.

For Eva, who lives the life of wife and mother, the buried life is the equally vital passion of the activist, the passion for engagement in what Marie calls the "movements of people to be free." "It was not that she had not loved her babies, her children," Olsen writes; for the family always has a dual role in Olsen's work. It is at once the repository of strength and security and, because we live in a patriarchal world, an inevitable burden, generating the "endless defeating battle" of women's work that transforms even the beloved family into the enemy. Yet, like Marie, though for opposite reasons, Eva is filled with a yearning

Olsen felt deeply divided by her longing for the solitude required for the development of her art and the demands of an activist.

for peace, and with a terrible sense of loss, of incompleteness:

"Surely that was not all, surely there was more. Still the springs, the springs were in her seeking. Somewhere an older power that beat for life. Somewhere coherence, transport, meaning. If they would but leave her in the air now stilled of clamor, in the reconciled solitude, to journey to her self." (p.84)

From Silence to Action

The theme of the buried life is expressed in both these works partly through an imagery now recognized as one of the central metaphors of women's literature: an imagery of silence/speech. Poets Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, for example, have spoken movingly of the essential transformation of women's silences into language and action, referring to Olsen's own analysis of those silences in her essays. Olsen regards her function as an artist partly as the obligation to articulate the experience of the inarticulate—not the silent, so much as the silenced. In these two works, the silences are those imposed upon working class people by physical and intellectual deprivation, isolation, routinized work; imposed upon women by the role-related demands and patriarchal ideologies so fundamentally antagonistic to the act of creative articulation. Speech becomes an act of resistance and creation, at once cathartic and political.

Marie Rogers' story is one of "un-learning to not speak," to borrow from Marge Piercy. Marie feels profoundly her own ignorance, her lack of knowledge, her lack of language. Speaking of her tutor, Sardarji, she writes: "It was a misfortune that I was too ignorant, too undeveloped to grasp the meaning of all he might have taught me—and all that I might have taught others...Had I been otherwise I might have spoken in words so deep, so true, so convincing, that even the people of my country, with their worship of external things, might have listened; have listened and seen...that subjection of any kind and in any place is beneath the dig-

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Democracy, Capitalism, and Socialist Politics in the 1980s

By Bill Barclay

Chicago has joined New York City and Cleveland. In New York it was the city budget; in Cleveland the municipal power company; in Chicago it is the public school system. Mayor Byrne and Illinois Gov. Thompson's solution to the financial problems of Chicago education is the New York model: control of Chicago public schools will be taken away from the Chicago Board of Education and placed in the hands of a School Finance Authority (SFA). The SFA consists of five bankers and corporate executives and will be given the power to approve or reject budgets and to hire and fire the chief financial officer of the Chicago school system. Thus the SFA will have both overall and line item budget control. The members of the SFA will not be democratically chosen, there will be no popular vote on the decisions made by the SFA, nor will the term of office of SFA members be set by the people of Chicago. In short, the SFA is a capitalist's coup with budgetary decisions in Chicago education effectively insulated from the processes and mechanisms of democracy.

If the Chicago school system will no longer be run in even a semi-democratic manner (patronage and corruption undercut educational democracy in Chicago long before the current financial crisis), what is the new organizational model for Chicago education? The answer is obvious: the corporation in which management and a board of directors (the SFA) make the decisions and employees implement these decisions. Corporations themselves have never claimed to be democratic institutions. Management and management theorists argue that "economic efficiency" requires authoritarian control. Thus the New York model that has come to Chicago will undoubtedly be suggested for other cities and municipal agencies that experience financial problems in the future.

In this respect what has happened to New York, Cleveland and Chicago has an interesting parallel in the corporate economy. Chrysler has asked for \$1.5 billion of public money to save its corporate skin. There will be no democratic control over this money nor any guarantee that we, as citizens, will be repaid. We do not even get a single representative on the board of directors to look after our interests and money.

Each of these cases raises the same important and fundamental question: is the corporate mode of decision making compatible with democratic participation? Or, posed more generally, how compatible are democracy and capitalism in the contemporary U.S.? As Americans we are

not used to asking this question but the combination of an authoritarian and hierarchical economy with a political system that in theory and to a greater or lesser extent in reality is democratically controlled is always a potentially uneasy mix. In our own case the democratic rights of citizenship (however unequally and gradually extended to various groups) have co-existed (although not without conflict) with what we call "the rights of property" throughout our history as a nation. In the last decade, however, the combination of inflation, unemployment, and slow economic growth have put new strains upon this relationship.

The growing antagonism between democracy and capitalism in the U.S. is tremendously important for the possibility of socialist politics during the coming decades. Democracy has, of course, been at the center of the socialist vision. However, in the U.S., unlike most other advanced capitalist societies, the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism were not linked. The winning of the democratic rights of citizenship occurred largely before the rise of working class and socialist movements in America. Socialists in this country have consistently fought for the defense (and extension) of democracy but, unlike much of Western Europe, our history and our culture do not intertwine the two struggles.

Thus the emerging political conflict between the values and institutions of democracy and capitalism offers socialists an important opportunity to participate in and bring a socialist vision to the popular movements of the 1980s and 1990s. These movements are the most viable representatives of a counter program to the corporate demands for social service cutbacks, wage freezes and speed ups in the public sector, and attacks on union gains in both public and private sectors. Movements to demand decision making power over budgets, to cut administration instead of social services, to control runaway shops, etc. are increasingly a part of U.S. politics. These goals, the democratization of budgetary and investment decision making, are an essential part of the democratic socialist vision and politics.

I would like to emphasize two things about this political strategy that I am suggesting for socialists. First, we must defend the gains of past struggles, the social services and policies that are a part of the welfare state. The right to organize, the minimum wage, affirmative action, unemployment — none of these are inscribed in stone. They can be taken away in the context of stagflation. Second, while preserving these gains won by insurgent movements of the past, we must seek to extend democracy. Budgets, bureaucratic decision making processes, and the allocation of scarce resources (for example oil) should be brought into the realm of democratic decision making. None of this can be done if socialists remain outside popular and reformist movements in expectation of mass radicalization. ■

Bill Barclay is Political Secretary of NAM.

All the News

MOVING AND SHAKING

•This issue of **MOVING ON** focuses on the Cold War and the anti-draft movement. Well, **NAM** is not just writing articles, we're doing something about it. **NAM** joined Mobilization Against the Draft (**MAD**) and planned a national march held March 22nd in Washington D.C. Many other organizations including **CARD**, **AFSC**, **DSOC**, **CCCO** and others joined in this effort. **NAM** is represented on the **MAD** Steering Committee. Many East coast chapters participated in the March 22nd event. Two **N.Y.** **NAM** members coordinated **NAM** presence at the march. On the West Coast members of **Santa Cruz NAM** initiated a call for a rally coordinating with the D.C. event in San Francisco. Planners of this rally and march include members from **East Bay**, **Oakland-Berkeley**, **San Francisco** and **Santa Cruz NAM**. **LA NAM** and **Eugene-Springfield NAM** held smaller rallies on March 22nd. A Mississippi member-at-large William Johnson was among the speakers at an anti-draft rally at the University of South Alabama on March 5th. Roberta Lynch received an enthusiastic reception from an audience of 400 people attending a teach-in on Peace and Politics in the 1980's in Ann Arbor,

MI. Two new pamphlets are available from the National Office at 25¢ each: "Afghanistan and the New Cold War," an interview with Eqbal Ahmad and "Here We Go Again: Militarization, the Draft, the Cold War." They're going fast!

ENERGY

•**St. Louis NAM** was one of 34 groups which won a new rule from the Missouri Public Service Commission banning winter shutoffs for those making an effort to pay. No one who agrees to a minimum down payment can be shut off from Dec. 11 to Mar. 31. **NAM** has joined 62 other national organizations in the Coalition for a Non-Nuclear World is sponsoring an April 26th action in Washington D.C. **Portland NAM** along with local activists initiated the Ratepayers Union which has grown to 400 strong in one year. The Ratepayers Union, part of the Multnomah County P.U.D. (Peoples Utility District) Coalition, is campaigning for public power. The Coalition wants to put the question of the formation of a PUD (this doing away with the private investor owned utility) on the ballot in November, 1980. Associate **NAM** members in Austin, Kevin Batt and Priscilla Ebersole have

done some successful muckraking, publishing a story on Todd Shipyard's Pelican Island waste dump. Stockpiles of low-level waste in the dump had exceeded allotted levels and caused excessive levels of radiation. Following the story's release Todd was shut down pending an investigation.

TAX REFORM

•**California NAM** Regional Council designated tax issues a statewide priority. **San Diego** and **Santa Cruz NAM** are among the chapters working for progressive taxation. California voters face two tax proposals on the June and November 1980 ballots. *The Tax Simplicity Act*, developed by California Tax Reform Association as an alternative to Jarvis II, would create a more progressive State personal income-tax. The tax on banks and corporations would be increased and the monies gained would be used to give tax relief to low and middle-income people. The biggest tax break would go to the heart of the Jarvis constituency. **NAM** members are opposing Proposition 9 or Jarvis II which would bring cuts of 20-25% in California services that benefit (you guessed it) lower-income and minority people.

Flag

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Holland suggests elements of a cultural strategy. He shows extraordinary sensitivity to personal dimensions involved in the reclamation of symbols and traditions. For example, in describing the importance of kinship, he points out that "It may be awkward for many in the Left to reflect creatively on family symbols if only because some of our deepest hurts are precisely in this area." The process of radical-

ization, for many, involved breaking with and articulating secret angers about relations and beliefs which were oppressive, stifling and mystified; to look again at such relations and discover other dimensions often requires courage and the capacity for a kind of forgiveness.

Yet as Holland observes, such reclamation is also more than an individual journey. At the forefront of a reconceptualization about the role of family, for example, are feminist organizations themselves. Thus the National Congress of Neighborhood Women organizes working class ethnic women for feminist self-assertion precisely through valueing, building

upon, detending — and through such a process opening up for men — work in the home. Day care, education, housing, inflation, home life and jobs for both sexes are **NCNW's** major issues in what they call a "true pro-family" approach. Similarly, Holland points out that around the world traditional religious groups are not only experiencing a rebirth but at points are generating insurgent, radical democratic and anti-capitalist politics.

Thus Holland's argument connects with actual processes of insurgency at work in the world today. I believe that in sum, such insurgent currents represent the resurfacing of a tradition of popular democratic protest better

described as "populist" than socialist. In the United States, such a tradition historically was kept alive mainly in the methodology of community organizing, especially in the work of the late Saul Alinsky. In classic form, the popular democratic tradition also had its own severe shortcomings — especially tendencies toward parochialism. But in recent years as organizers of neighborhoods and citizen protests have sought to adjust to the corporate offensive that characterizes late capitalism, various majoritarian strategies of alliance building begin to address such weaknesses.

In the 1980s, a popular politics with the capacity to mount significant democratic challenges to concentrated power (in both corporate and governmental structures) and with a vision that goes beyond marketplace rationality will emerge from a dialogue between left wing and populist traditions.

The "unity discussions" between NAM and DSOC are important and exciting on an intellectual and ideological level because they open opportunity for beginning such broader reconceptualization and dialogue about the direction and future of our movement. Over time, that dialogue will refashion the very structure of socialist thought, I am convinced, reworking our language, adding depth, organic connection and multidimensionality to classic categories like class. Holland's argument, emerging from within the left and reaching beyond it, is a vital, timely aid to the process. ■

Herself

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nity of man, and that the highest joy is to fight by the side of those who...are unable to develop to full human stature. I might have shown that the movements of people to be free...are...the greatest ethical manifestations that mankind has

experienced." (pp. 279-280) And she concludes, "One understands these things faintly—even if one is not learned enough to express them—as I am not." On one level, *Daughter of Earth* itself represents the effort to find words adequate to Marie's, and Smedley's, vision. The novel is both didactic and therapeutic, a catharsis allowing Smedley to express and purge the pain of her own experience by shaping it in language, and a political act designed to inform others and move them to feel the necessity for change.

Tell Me a Riddle, even more than *Daughter of Earth*, owes much of its power to the imagery of speech and silence. Always there is the ironic juxtaposition of the silent older woman and the orator she once was. At the end, there is another transformation, for the delirium of Eva's dying releases the torrent of word and thought submerged within her for decades. In dying she speaks and sings not of her family but of her visions for humankind. In dying, she makes the journey homeward to the buried self; not the matriarchal nurturant self of middle age nor the embittered, withdrawing self of old age, but the youthful self who spoke, as David finally remembers, for "that sense of mattering, of moving and being moved, of being one and indivisible with the great of the past, with all that freed, ennobled man" (p. 113). And he remembers that "she had not always been isolated, had not always wanted to be alone," remembers a voice "before this gossamer one"—a "girl's voice of eloquence that spoke their holiest dreams" (p. 110). Eva in dying again speaks those dreams, weaving together fragments of poems, lines of song. In Eva's dying, she becomes heroic, for she transforms David's life, restores his lost vision, and passes her vision on to her granddaughter Jeannie, who tends her at the last. Forced from his complacency, David is transfixed with horror at "the monstrous shapes of what had actually happened in the century," yet filled with astonishment and love. "Eva!" he whispers. "Still you believed? You lived

by it? These things shall be?" Eva's dying monologue performs the same function for David that *Tell Me a Riddle* performs for us, a function of art at once traditional and subversive: to lift the veil of familiarity from our sight and make us see the world fresh, in all its horror and all its potential beauty. For Olsen, art and activism are inseparable.

Though these works are full of the pain of conflict, their dominant tone is not despair but a compound of rage and affirmation. Neither offers to resolve the contradictions so fundamental to the protagonists'—and our own—lives. Yet reading them can strengthen our own commitment to change what we know is wrong, to transform our own silences into language and action. ■

Letters

Historical Error

Thanks for your warm portrait of Barbara Nestor. Unfortunately it suffers from one glaring historical error: the Socialist Party in the U.S. did not support World War I, and almost all of its leaders were indicted under the Espionage Act. The split of the party into the SP, CP, and CLP came after the war, basically over the proper response to the Russian Revolution.

B.R. Douglas
Iowa, City

Editors Note: Our sincere apology for this mistake.

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