

FOR A NEW COALITION

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Introduction

Once again the American left faces the challenge of providing an analysis adequate to meet the political problems confronting radical and liberal activists. The emergence of Lyndon Johnson as a national political figure, independent of the late President Kennedy's New Frontier legacy, alters the political situation. The question now before us is whether radicals and liberals can successfully develop a political program to meet the needs of our society and initiate action to implement it.

We have attempted here to outline a style of politics requiring a wide range of tactics -- a strategic approach to progressive political activity. The building of a new political movement calls for participants with skills in community and trade union organization, electoral and legislative action, student organization, and equally important, committed academics in a variety of fields. We see such a movement, not as confined to any one class or race, but as a coalition of many elements in American society -- this concept is the cornerstone of our political analysis. For that reason, we have been quite pointed in our criticism of those radicals who have taken a narrow and often apolitical view of the new left and its constituencies. We refer to these people as utopian liberals because they base themselves on liberal, as opposed to truly radical, politics, philosophy, and sociology; the result is a subjective lack of concern with political power, akin to the utopian political philosophies of the nineteenth century.¹

Motion in Society

Contrary to the views of the various exponents of Mills' elite theory, we hold that unlike the situation prevailing in the 'Fifties, major forces in American society are today increasingly in motion, creating new opportunities for the advancement both of the emerging political movement and the new left, as well as dangers of their defeat.

There is motion in society in our urban areas, where the rent strike and other forms of direct action for integrated and improved housing, education, and employment are evidence of the burgeoning urban unrest. Some of the entrenched political machines are slowly yielding to grass roots movements for reform and minority group participation in the political process.

Much of the activity in our cities has come either directly or indirectly through the civil rights movement. The last two years wit-

I. The term "utopian liberal" is thus a composite, a characterization of many positions taken by American leftists -- it does not constitute a conscious style of political action, but this fact makes its errors no less real and its existence no less certain.

nessed the maturation of the Negro freedom movement into an increasingly important political force. The challenge to racist political power in Mississippi, Chicago, Boston, and dozens of other places is a sign of the increased sophistication and political awareness of this vital part of the emerging political movement.

There is motion in the American labor movement, which is still, for all its faults, the most powerful ally of progress in our society. In the past the radical has always played a creative role in the trade unions, and has both given and received valuable assistance. While some of the unions have failed to grasp the significance of the changed nature of production, many of the industrial unions are deeply troubled by automation. Recalling the massive waves of trade unionists who marched in Washington in 1963, the role of the AFL-CIO in securing the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and other gestures of solidarity with the Negro movement, we can see that the Negro is increasingly being viewed as a necessary ally rather than the recipient of liberal beneficence. The time is now for radicals to find a supportive role inside the labor movement rather than act as labor's detractors.

There is motion in society around the question of transition from military to peaceful production, not only in the disarmed world of the future, but today, when a cut in defense contracts means the loss of thousands of jobs. An increasing awareness in political, industrial, and labor circles of the crucial importance of this issue can lead toward the demand for planned reconversion, if a sufficiently broad educational campaign can be successfully mounted.

Our state legislatures and our Congress, which have historically born the burden of rural-conservative over-representation, are now undergoing a major restructuring as a result of the Supreme Court decision of February 17, 1964, which requires all Congressional Districts to be of the same size in population. In the state of Georgia, for example, the Congressional District including Atlanta, with a Negro population of 25%, was the most under-represented in the state, while the most over-represented District, which included Gainesville, had a Negro population of only 10%. Atlanta has now gained one more Congressman. Since gerrymandering can render redistricting ineffective, however, the fight for democratic representation is by no means won.

The churches, too, have risen to the call for civil rights, and are increasingly pronouncing the need for democratization of our foreign policy. Before World War II, only the more liberal denominations, such as the Quakers and Unitarians, displayed an active social conscience; today, members of the clergy have filled the jails with an almost visionary dedication. In its significant support for the March on Washington, in its support -- moral and financial -- for the Mississippi Freedom Summer, in its wholehearted participation in the drive which culminated in the passage

of the Civil Rights Act, and in its increasing articulation of the need for economic and social justice, one finds evidence of a re-awakening of that spirit which gave birth to such religiously inspired radical democrats as Norman Thomas and A. J. Muste.

These developments are leading to a greater awareness of the need for action to solve the crises in our society, as well as to the growth of insurgent political spokesmen. Younger, more vigorous politicians, born in the twentieth century and aware of the critical problems faced by contemporary society, are responding to the needs of social movements and the problems of their constituencies. The journey to the battle-scarred South this summer by the progressive Congressmen Ryan, Burton, and Hawkins produced a scathing condemnation of the complete inadequacy of federal involvement in the rights struggle. The yeoman service of Senator Clark in charting new directions for government policy in the fields of cybernation and employment have given us not merely the valuable studies by his Sub-committee on Manpower Policies, but a first hope for governmental action in this area. And the veteran Oregon progressive, Wayne Morse, now serving his third Senate term, has been a voice of conscience in condemning American adventurism in Vietnam (in which he has been joined by his colleagues from Alaska, Senators Bartlett and Gruening), and by demanding an end to military aid for dictators. The South Dakota Senator George McGovern has called repeatedly for slashing our bloated arms budget to finance a real war on poverty, and he was joined by Senator Nelson of Wisconsin in the successful battle for the restoration of the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation's tax-exemption. Thus, although these are liberal and not radical legislators, one cannot deny that a resurgence of traditional progressivism in American politics, buried in the hysteria of the McCarthy period, is beginning to take place.

The Rise of the Ultra-Right

In the winter of 1961, a small group of highly influential right-wing Republicans gathered in a Chicago hotel room to map the campaign which was to bring Barry M. Goldwater the Republican presidential nomination. Goldwater's success last June in San Francisco was not his alone; it spelled the capture of one of our major political parties, not by a personal machine, but by a movement, desperately ideological in content, precise in organization, more European in style than American.

Traditionally in times of crisis, America has witnessed the rise of a simplistic reaction as a response which draws support from surprisingly large sections of the nation -- witness the KKK of the 'Twenties, the Coughlinites and Huey Long supporters of the early 'Thirties, the America Firsters of the immediate pre-war years, and the McCarthyites' hysteria of the early 'Fifties. But Barry Goldwater's movement was not confined to the traditional ultra groupings -- the racists, the anti-Semites, the anti-income taxers -- though these all found a comfortable home in his campaign. What has deeply disturbed radicals and liberals has been

the resurgence of a new Know-nothingism among the suburban and urban middle-class and among the white, rural uneducated poor. This is a base for which Goldwater had considerable appeal.

Concurrent with the growth of reactionary sentiments among new elements, we witnessed during the campaign the institutionalization of ultra-right wing control over much of the Republican Party. From the national campaign organization, through the national and state committees, down to the city, town and ward organizations, right-wingers --in many important cases spearheaded by Birchers -- took over the control of power and made the groups their own.

The Politics of National Concensus: Johnson's Coalition

The effect of the November 3 election was to bring the political forces into new relationships, and, consequently, to shift the scene of struggle for political power. When prior to the June party conventions we examined the nature of political conflict in America, we noted that unlike the political situation in most countries, the major political conflict here is not between the left and the center. On the contrary, we identified the conflict as between the "liberal Establishment" (Kennedy-Johnson) and those to the right of it (the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition and the civilian and military ultras).

Nationally, the forces in contention have not changed as a result of the 1964 elections. But the alignment in Congress has shifted. While the Dixiecrats still retain their vital committee chairmanships, the power of the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition has been greatly weakened. The important conflicts in the new Congress are likely to take place between the Johnson Administration and the more liberal legislators.

The "American Concensus" is a phrase that has been bandied about a good deal by liberal sociologists in recent years, yet its political import has never been concretely defined. It is our view that, if the Goldwater movement consolidates its control over the Republican Party, and institutionalizes rightist cadre within Party policy posts, Lyndon Johnson will attempt to broaden his already wide-angled alliance into an even more all-encompassing coalition of disparate forces. In effect, we may move into a one-and-one-half party period, in which the liberal-left, Democratic conservatives, and the center are brought together encircled by the Texan's long paternal arms, while the Goldwater right, by its own actions, removes itself from the historic two-party "concensus." Thus the political limits of the "American concensus" may begin to be defined.

Since the arena of political struggle in Congress between liberal-left and conservative has moved largely into the Democratic Party, what opportunities does this shift offer? On the one hand, liberals are now tied more firmly than ever to a strengthened Democratic Party coalition; the Johnson margin of victory was so great that no single group can claim particular credit. On the

other, the very fact of a great victory leaves liberals much freer to criticize Johnson within the context of the coalition without playing into the hands of the right.

The New Congress

The 89th Congress reflects this new situation.² The new House contains 295 Democrats and 140 Republicans. The Democrats could withstand a 77-vote defection and still maintain a majority. There are 61 Democratic representatives from the Deep South (including Texas) and 101 congressmen considered Southerners. This is, on the whole, an improvement in Administration strength compared with the 88th Congress, which saw a Democratic majority of 79, only half the present figure. While there will probably be defections by Southern Democrats, the Congressional Quarterly has computed the incidence of Republican support for the Administration at 2.5% higher among re-elected Congressmen than in 1964. In the Senate, there has been a net Democratic gain of two votes; the new 68-32 lineup will strengthen Johnson's already firm hand.*

In the last Congress, the liberal Democrats had to stand closely behind the President for fear of splitting the New Frontier forces in the face of stiff Dixiecrat and Republican opposition. In the more liberal Senate, Medicare passed by only 5 votes, as sharp cut in foreign aid was beaten back by only 10 votes. In the conservative House, the margins were even narrower (relatively speaking): the wheat-cotton bill, an 8-vote margin; mass transportation, 23; the poverty program, 41. A minimum wage raise, area redevelopment, Medicare, and the Appalachian anti-poverty program died in committee.

We would look forward to initiative for creative legislation from the Congress rather than from the Administration; liberals in the Congress could take their cue from the Clark and McGovern bills, two excellent examples of forward-looking legislation.

This new situation will prevail in the House for at least two years, but then the country will face the prospect of Republicans returning as conservative districts, which voted against the irresponsible Goldwater image, pass judgement on Democrats who have no coat-tails to cling to. In the Senate, however, Democratic control is assured until 1970.

That Goldwater's movement received a rebuff in the Presidential contest and all down the ticket has led many liberal utopians to proclaim the end of the ultra-right danger. Nothing could be more tragically premature. The New York Times of November 23 front-paged the story of increased rightist activity -- book-burning in California, anti-Negro sentiment in Chicago, and the tightening of the ultra-right grip on the Republican Party. (As Murray Kempton pointed out in the New York World-Telegram on November 4, "Goldwater set out, after all, to destroy the Eastern Republican Establishment; and as of the moment /emphasis ours: DI/SM/ he has plainly done a more

*These figures based on unofficial returns available at this writing.

complete job than Cato did on Carthage." This was indeed a movement, a movement with staying power. Its sponsors are proclaiming that, as bumper stickers now appearing throughout the nation proclaim, "26 Million Americans Can't Be Wrong."

Elmo Roper has stated³ "the backlash was there, enough to carry five Southern states," and on a local level as well -- note the repeal of the Rumford Fair Housing Act in California, an event which occasioned the rejection of former Kennedy press aide Pierre Salinger in favor of the McCarthyite song-and-dance man George Murphy in the Senate battle there.

How do the reactionaries themselves view their future electoral chances? The election post-mortem in the National Review is indicative:

It will nevertheless have been said...that Goldwater conservatism is dead dead dead. It is only safe to say that it is dead if one assumes that otherwise the Senator would have been elected. The undertakers are premature...those conservatives who have given way to despair might remind themselves that the socialist party in England only five years ago lost by a percentage roughly equal to Senator Goldwater's: and here they are, back in power. Those Liberals who have given way to elation should remind themselves that the Democrats lost in 1924 by a margin roughly comparable to Senator Goldwater's, just eight years before they seized American history by the mane and ruled supreme for twenty years. One year's landslide loss, in other words, is not necessarily a permanent thing in a dynamic society, and there is no reason for American conservatives to believe either that their hearts deceived them in telling them that he was right, or that the time will never come again that the American people can correct our public policies.

Leonard Hall said it: the 1964 Republican campaign was unique in that it had more mass support than anything he had ever seen...500,000 active political workers in the field by election day, working for Goldwater. Five Hundred Thousand! Financial support of the Goldwater campaign tells the same story. Whereas in 1960 the Nixon campaign received about 40,000 individual contributions, in 1964 the Goldwater office received well over a million. ...Is it seriously believed that the 25,000,000 votes cast for Goldwater were cast by a sort of catatonic Republican who supported his party out of habit, and in reckless ignorance of the charges that had been made against the ticket? The opposite is more likely: that a substantial majority of those 25,000,000 Goldwater voters knew precisely for who and for what they were voting, and would have stuck their hands into a barrel of rattlesnakes to pull the Goldwater lever. A small, well-organized band of plotters? a fringe group? every one of them a billionaire? No gentlemen, this was a genuine grassroots

3. Saturday Review, November 28

The Convergence of Issues

Radicals have traditionally talked of the convergence of issues. In the current period, however, the perception of convergence is extending to ever-increasing sections of society. The link between civil rights and full employment is already clear to many, and tied to the question of full employment are the interests of labor and the unemployed. The problems of industrial conversion to peacetime production are vital not only to the labor and peace movements, but to some industrial interests as well, and therefore to the Administration. Conversion bears heavily on the problem of full employment, and on the related issues making up a large portfolio of problems requiring national solutions. Involved is Federal, as well as state and local, planning -- and achieving adequate solutions to these pressing problems requires in turn the democratization of politics and the defeat of the right. The liberalization of American foreign policy as an extended result of this process is not unlikely, particularly with the race for the markets of Russia, China, and other bloc nations already beginning among some of our NATO allies -- a race which bears no little weight on full employment.

Today, then, the notion of convergence is no longer solely the property of radicals. The concept of a converging stream of social issues is implicit in President Johnson's "Great Society" speech of May 5, 1964. "This nation," declared Johnson, "has the power to shape the civilization we want".

He called for "a creative federalism between the nation's capitol and the leaders of local communities." This of course poses certain problems for the left. On the one hand, it is necessary to work for and defend the progressive features of the Johnson program. On the other, it is necessary both to maintain a position independent of the Administration and to seek ways of going beyond Johnson's legislative proposals.

What are the differences between Johnson and the left? Many utopians consider the central issue to be Democracy vs. Manipulation. They argue that Johnson is concerned with manipulation and control from above, whereas radicals should be involved in the organization of the poor and the unemployed so that the latter will have a voice in the programs supposedly constructed on their behalf.

But is the question of Democracy vs. Manipulation the central one? Essentially not; the war on poverty, like most national legislation affecting domestic activity, requires a close link between local organizations and committees, local and state governments, and the Federal government. The charge

4. National Review, December 5, 1964

of manipulation is true in general, but it is more often manifested in the unrepresentative nature of the local bodies which cooperate with Federal planners. Whether Johnson has a democratic or bureaucratic personality or style of work is largely irrelevant.

The crucial problem which the utopian overlooks is that the poor, the unemployed, the minority groups -- and in most cases the middle class and the employed as well -- are not organized for participation in local politics. As a result, they cannot choose the municipal decision-makers who deal with Federal agencies.

A major difference between the left and Johnson is that Johnson is unwilling to interfere to any large extent with private industry. While it is possible that, in the next four years, legislation providing for the planning of government spending in relation to unemployment will be passed, there are as yet no signs that Johnson is willing to discuss industrial planning in the private sector. And, more important, Johnson is unwilling to encroach on the private sector with government-operated enterprises of any kind; indeed, it is doubtful that even the new Congress would authorize this kind of Federal policy.

Many radicals are beginning to lose sight of the need for democratic planning. Taking his cue from the provocative statement of the Ad Hoc Committee on The Triple Revolution, the utopian liberal assumes that the era of laborless production will be upon us within a few years, and that therefore the only planning involved will be private planning for maximization of profits. (It is these same notions which cause some utopians to lose interest in the trade union movement and the immense task of organizing the unorganized 75% of the labor force).

While the Triple Revolution statement is a challenging conception of the shape of the future, there has not been sufficient substantiation of the notion that a society without labor may be upon us "in three or four generations." Let us assume, however, that the Triple Revolution document is correct, and that in four generations we will indeed have a workless world -- four generations is 100 years, and we cannot base our current strategy on a Rip Van Winkle theory of politics. It is the progress made today which will shape the society of one hundred years hence; and to be real, that progress must be made within real institutions -- even if those institutions are slated for eventual demolition. If radicals are to differentiate themselves from Johnson, it should be by initiating the crusade for public planning in the private sector and expansion of the public sector of the economy.

The immediate differences between Johnson and the left lie not only in the token character of the Johnson anti-poverty program, but in the utterly inadequate nature of the War on

Poverty, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Thus, while we applaud the closing of military installations, we condemn the tragic absurdity of failure to include a plan for conversion as part of the decision to cease operations.

For A New Coalition

The growing awareness of the new objective situation makes it possible for those groups whose interests demand immediate and major social change to work in concert as a new national coalition for progressive political action. This is the old dream of a popular democratic coalition -- the dream of the Populists, of the LaFollette progressives, of the First New Deal. A broad alliance such as was brought together over the March to Washington in 1963 needs to be expanded to encompass all of the progressive sections of the trade union movement, the civil rights movement -- North and South, the poor and unemployed, the liberal, peace, and intellectual communities, the socially active religious groups, and the emerging new American left.

The New Coalition should not necessarily be seen in terms of the creation of new national organizations, and only partially in terms of formal declarations of cooperation between existing ones, although these are in fact occurring. Rather, the concept of coalition implies that the groups involved should and can conduct themselves so that their actions and their demands are mutually reinforcing and complementary.

What gives substance to this concept is the fact that, as we have already stated, the interests of the constituent elements of the New Coalition do coincide, and their need to organize independently within the Johnson coalition as well as to defend the Administration and themselves against the right is the same. The job of building the New Coalition entails developing with these groups the realization of their interdependence and mutual needs, both at the national and local levels.

The New Coalition would manifest itself at the local level in forms such as the Texas Democratic Coalition, one of the first attempts to build an interracial social and political movement around inter-related issues.

The Example of Texas

Early in 1962, a group of liberal intellectuals, grouped around the weekly newspaper, the Texas Observer, began expounding the idea of a united effort to win control of the Texas Democratic Party by a direct assault in the party primaries on the Daniel-Johnson-Connally machine. This was to be accomplished by the building of precinct-by-precinct, village-by-village, city-by-city, county-by-county grass roots political organizations expressive of the needs of the voiceless majority. Oil money, cotton money, and cattle money dominated the conservative machine of the Texas Party. The new alliance was to be an

alliance of people -- labor, liberal intellectuals, Negroes and Mexican-Americans (the latter make up 10% of Texas' population.) All groups were to view each other as equals, and no candidate would be endorsed without complete unanimity among the four major elements of the Coalition. Thus was born the Texas Democratic Coalition, supported by the state AFL-CIO, and by the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations (PASO), voice of the Mexican-American in politics.

A symbolic victory came in April, 1963, when in the southwest Texas town of Crystal City - controlled for years by a minority of "Anglos" (middle and upper class white Protestants) -- the Mexican-American voters won control of the city government, electing Mexican-Americans to all five council seats and the mayoralty. This represented the first time in Crystal City's history that Mexicans had held public office, although they constituted 85% of the town's population. The drive was led by the town's teamster local and by PASO.

"Remember Crystal City" became the battle cry of the TDC, which has given such progressives as Henry Gonzales, Don Yarborough, and Maury Maverick Jr., a base of support for electoral victories. Thus has real democratic content begun to assert itself in Texas politics. The struggle is by no means over -- many battles remain to be fought; but the power-base of success, a popular New Coalition, has been created.

Radicals and the New Coalition

The radicals are a constituent part of the New Coalition; they are not the New Coalition themselves. The radical has a particularly necessary role in the creation of the coalition. As one of its most active elements -- as the element which sees the inter-relationship of issues most clearly -- the radical may play an important role in both policy formation and strategic implementation. Realizing that not all parts of the coalition are equal in their militance and understanding, the radical works as an active partner on terms that the others, whose commitments may not be as emphatically directed, can accept. At the same time, the radical works to move the coalition to the left and to extend the area of common interest in a progressive direction.

The New Coalition expresses itself nationally in the creation of an atmosphere of common interest and common action, which enables cooperation between national organizations and movements. Locally, the New Coalition functions more concretely as an alliance of grass roots organizations working both independently and together around common issues. The New Coalition is a natural and necessary development, but that does not mean that it will occur automatically. Pre-Fascist Spain is an example of its occurrence; pre-Fascist Germany of its failure to materialize. The First New Deal is another positive example from the

same period.

Undoubtedly some aspects of the New Coalition will be, and indeed are being, inaugurated without the direct participation of radicals. However, we would doubt on the basis of historical experience that the full potential of the New Coalition can be fulfilled without the participation of the emerging new left.

Utopians and the Retreat from Politics

In recent times it has become the standard view among utopian liberals that American society is overwhelmingly hostile to democracy and that the future holds no possibility of social reorganization without drastic change -- change which could only come about through the exercise of democracy. This circularly pessimistic view is to be found in the writing of the currently popular social critics: in Riesman's Lonely Crowd, in Whyte's The Organization Man, in Mills' The Power Elite, and even in Goodman's Growing Up Absurd. While there are vast differences between liberals of Riesman's stripe and those who follow a more radical path, they share one thing in common: the current utopian liberal view of history, of society, and of reality.⁵

For the utopian liberal, the old concept which views the historical process as the cornerstone of belief in the possibilities for change is no longer valid. The past is "seen as largely irrelevant to present reality...thus the present becomes the only place in which men can live."⁶ The present is seen as cut off from the immediately preceding period. New, self-propelling and autonomous forces present new problems, which cannot be evaluated in terms of past forces. Only from the immediate situation itself can any meaning be derived. When change, the essence of history, is seen as absent from the future, "society becomes a gigantic gyroscope; impervious to new ways of doing things, in a very real sense it is standing still even as it revolves."⁷

Society, then, according to the utopian liberal theory, is dominated by certain powerful forces, so totally stifling that utilization of institutionalized methods of achieving change is rejected. "Politics has become so impregnated with other-direction that it now consists of nothing more than veto groups, capable only of blocking one another rather than providing a creative dynamic...politics ceases to be the means by which men and society transcend themselves."⁸

The acceptance of utopian liberalism by many radicals has led them to alienation from the society and culture in which they

5. We are grateful for a useful phrasing of the problem to William J. Newman's Liberalism and the Retreat from Politics (N.Y., 1964).
6. Ibid., p. 26
7. Ibid., p. 27
8. Ibid., p. 47

live and seek to work. This alienation has become so acute that the utopians search quixotically for ways to overcome the dominant forces by sudden and abrupt removal of all impure and oppressive institutions, at the same time shunning ways of thinking and methods of organization that would enable them to build popular democratic movements within the society as it is rather than as they would wish it to be.

These liberal-radicals have become infected in Shaw's term, with a Weltverbesserungswahn -- world-betterment-craze -- which leads to disconnected and misdirected adventures in organization for dramatic social improvement.

One corollary of this Weltverbesserungswahn is the notion that the worse things in America become, the better are the left's chances of achieving change. This attitude, first articulated by Bakunin in the days of the First International, has been given new force by a prevalent misunderstanding of the depression of the 'Thirties. It was, indeed, the worsening economic conditions which laid the basis for social discontent, and to that degree the success of the left stemmed from the depressed conditions. But during that period, the relevant and organizationally successful movements were those which participated in the popular front and supported the New Deal, gaining prestige and power to the degree that conditions improved during the depression.

A second, equally tragic corollary of the utopian attitude toward history and society is the dearth of any directed attempt to form a lasting, although flexible, ideological vantagepoint from which to view social reality. This failure can again be traced to their negation of history, and their consequent separation from political life. Even though some liberal utopians loudly proclaim their opposition to the anti-ideological diatribes of Bell, Hook, et. al., they fail to produce any consistent theoretical approach of their own. This leads inevitably to the loss of perspective in critical evaluation of specific strategic and tactical alternatives. Thus, in an effort to be "radical," to hold up the banner of the New Jerusalem, the Gideon's Army of the world-betterment-craze ignores the axiomatic proposition that radicalism must "go to the root." The root is man -- and the story of man's dynamic development is history. In rejecting history, in rejecting society, the utopians are rejecting reality.

The Utopian Solution

The utopian, unwilling to make an ideological commitment, has institutionalized the search for vagueness, and values the quest for a theory far more than the prospect of finding one. In such a state, the utopian has only one "objective criterion" to apply to a given tactical problem -- "how left is it?" Powerful vehicles are concocted for the pursuit of the "true radical solution"; but, as with Thoreau's steam engine, when the smoke clears, and the shouting dies down, it is the utopian who has been run over. In reality, the question of "how left is it/" means "how far does it depart from what,

is considered proper behavior for middle-class America?" And, in the last analysis, the utopians' criterion of leftness is subjective. When this approach breaks down, as it must in practice, the utopian turns to the old stand-by, pragmatism. He casts about for whatever works, and since the "radical" solution sought was subjective in the first place, he has only to proclaim what works as the logical outcome of what was sought all along. This approach can sometimes yield results; indeed, the capitalist system has been operating on it since 1750. However, if pragmatic politics turn out to have radical content, it is accidental. And genuine, radical solutions never come by chance.

In their attempts to find a way out of the old society, some utopians retreat into the "islands of alienation" -- the ghettos of the Negroes, the Puerto Ricans, and the poor. These are felt to be the most "radical" place from which to fight the "Establishment." What the utopian proposes is not merely that the left engage in community organization. No one opposes this. But the utopians would have community organization stop short of political participation by ghetto elements.

We most emphatically support political organization in the ghetto. We have previously noted that the ghetto groupings are a vital part of the New Coalition; our critique is of the manner in which utopian liberalism approaches the problem of work in the ghetto, and the degree to which that approach de-emphasizes other forms of activity and ignores other possible constituencies.

In his approach to community organization, the utopian relies almost exclusively on the tactical weapons inherited through the CIO and other movements of the 'Thirties which have been perfected by the civil rights movement: the demonstration, the sit-in, and other forms of direct action. The tragedy is that because utopianism rejects history, it fails to see the other lessons of the 'Thirties. It fails to discover that the CIO used other methods to consolidate its power and make its voice felt in the seats of decision-making. The leaders of the industrial unions recognized that one must move beyond direct action and attempt to wrest from the static elements in the society the power through which they maintain the status quo -- the political power of the city, state, and federal governments.

When the utopian sees a community movement wither and die because of its inability to achieve even a short range victory, he can only wail that this proves the corruptly absorbent nature of the "Establishment" -- the "power structure". His rejection of history, of society, and of reality does not allow him to recognize that for any movement to succeed, it must nourish itself with the hope of victory; and victory cannot be won if real, political power is seen as too tainted to be grasped.

There are specific times and situations in which mainstream organizations and movements become bureaucratically encrusted or politically misdirected to such a degree that they become unresponsive to the needs of their constituents. There are also times when the members of an organization or movement surpass their leadership in understanding of the issues, in militance, and in readiness to act. It is from the observation of repeated occurrences of such situations that some utopians come to insist on the necessity for building new organizations -- new trade unions, new political parties, new social movements of all kinds. The difference between us and the utopians on this point is two-fold. First, the utopian liberal tends to generalize and wants to work for "newness now" in all organizational areas. We agree that some situations call for fresh organizational approaches, but this is a matter of specific tactical policy, and not one of political philosophy. Second we believe that the major function of organizational innovation by radicals, is to urge the mass movements into a more forward posture rather than attempt to replace them (although at times they are in fact replaced).

A concept long implicit in the work and thought of the utopian liberals has recently been given theoretical expression. In an article, "Beyond Automation," in the November, 1964, issue of Monthly Review, George and Louise Crowley speak of the chronically unemployed and never-employed in these terms:

"The (lumpenproletariat) today constitutes a true class...with a common aspiration: to consume the fruits of humanity's conquest of nature without submitting to repressive social relations. The permissive lumpenproletariat scorns...the factitious morality that upholds wage enslavement and privation. Their slogan is "Now!" -- freedom now, peace now, abundance now..They and they alone can settle for nothing less than the transformation of society and the transformation of man. Their ranks are growing, and their vanguard is on the move. "

Let us examine for a moment this lumpenproletariat. Excluding the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and other minority groups, what observations can be made? First, it is important to distinguish between structural unemployment and the unemployed themselves. The utopian liberal states quite correctly that because unemployment is the result of structural defects in the economic system, the unemployed are not to blame for their idleness. However, it is necessary to realize that structural unemployment determines the number and not the names of the individual victims (we again exempt the regionally unemployed and the minority groups).

What this means is that the total number of unemployed is structurally determined, while the question of who shall

remain unemployed and who shall find employment is largely determined by individual factors of education, training, background, skill, etc.

In other words, the composition of that segment of the work force -- now 5%+ -- is fluid; workers move in and out of unemployment. Many never find employment, and this is determined as much by individual characteristics (e.g., age, skill, motivation) as by structural and regional factors. In Appalachia, for example, the biggest obstacle to organization is the fact that most workers with any leadership potential and skill have long since left the area. The old, the sick, the illiterate and the broken make up the majority of those who stay behind. (When the Appalachian immigrants reach the cities, they tend to form a large part of the urban pool of chronically unemployed; they cannot compete for jobs with the native city-dwellers, who have seniority and greater industrial experience, but Appalachians often make the best members of community organizations. On the other hand, the native lumpenproletariat of a city is itself composed of the aged, the illiterate, the sick, and the unskilled youth.)

What the exponents of lumpen theory have so far failed to prove is that it is this sub-class as a whole which is potentially revolutionary, and not just those elements who have been placed there by nearly-objective circumstances (e.g., minority and regional groups.) In order to be convincing, the utopian liberals will have to tell us just how large a group they are referring to, its size in ten years, its composition, and its origin.

The utopian liberal, in speaking of the lumpenproletariat, also confuses nihilism with the desire to build a new society. "The permissive lumpenproletariat scorns all precepts to thrift, industriousness, and self-denial -- that is, to the factitious morality that upholds wage-enslavement and privation."⁹ This characterization of lumpen culture is largely true (although we note in passing that to live on a welfare check is hardly to scorn the precept of thrift -- it is, rather, to epitomize thrift.

It is indeed difficult to find anything that this "class" is not against, and for good reason. French workers and peasants were more than willing to oppose Louis Napoleon violently, and the radical leaders of the time therefore assumed that these elements were for the same goals as the intellectual and political figures who led the fight against the Emperor in 1870-71. It was not until the Commune had gone down in a blood-bath, unaided by popular forces outside of certain sections of Paris, that the "radicals" realized their mistake. It is one thing to be against the system and quite another to consciously strive to replace it.

Is it true, as the Crowley's claim, that the lumpen's slo-

9. Monthly Review, op.cit., p. 437

gan "is 'Now!' -- freedom now, peace now, abundance now"? We would doubt it on the basis of our own experience in community work. Was it the lumpenproletariat who assembled in Washington three hundred thousand strong to shout "Freedom Now"? Clearly not. Is it the lumpen who belongs to the trade unions, the churches, and civil rights organizations that participate in the civil rights struggle? Clearly not, unless latter-day utopians have redefined Marx's term "lumpenproletariat." Negroes, as an oppressed minority, have a universal desire for freedom. Obviously, there is no basis on which to make this claim for white lumpen elements.

We would also desire more evidence to support the contention that the lumpen elements are demanding "peace now". No doubt the lumpen, as the Crowley's state, does not want to be enlisted into the army; neither do we. (Their children, however, do enlist in large numbers for the security, employment, and training offered at present solely by the army; if the draft is abolished, it will be in part due to this source of enlistees.) Opposition to being drafted is scarcely synonymous with being for peace. The lumpenproletariat are the first victims of the mass media's lowest level, and are consequently subject to the hysteria of the continuing cold war. While the lumpen does not want to be affected by war, neither does he want to have his country's name tarshished by "all those pipsqueak Dommunist countries," in the Daily News' slangy phrase, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The claim that the lumpenproletariat, with their alleged slogan of "abundance now," constitute a new vanguard class is not only speculative, but contrary to the historical pattern of this group. Worse, pre occupation with the lumpen-as-vanguard notion diverts attention from the hard job of developing the alliances essential to the New Coalition. Exponents of lumpen theory would do well to remember that, automation notwithstanding, less than 25% of the work force are members of trade unions -- there is still work for radicals as organizers of the unorganized, particularly in the South.

In addition to their misinterpretation of the political potential of the lumpenproletariat, some utopians have plunged into the Jordan River of cybernation. Responding to the Crowley's declaration of faith in the lumpen vanguard, Todd Gitlin (Monthly Review, December 1964) states:

One advantage of the jobs-or-income formulation is that...it allows the workers themselves to work out their preferences: if they want to work (in the old sense), okay; if they don't, also okay. Such an outcome requires that cybernation be neither uniformly endorsed nor uniformly concerned, but rather implemented or halted according to the option of the democratic planning bodies that must come into being.

(emphasis ours: DI/SM)

In other words, the workers in transition to lumpen status must be democratically organized so that they can decide whether or not cybernation is necessary for their "good life." It is our opinion that, so long as there is international economic competition, certainly as long as there is economic competition within this country, cybernation must be viewed as a stage in the further development of the industrial revolution, not as a policy which can be revoked at will. Cybernation, while qualitatively different from the introduction of steam or electric power to industry, is similar in that, once it is adopted in one factory, industry, or country, the anarchy of capitalist competition demands that all others rush to develop their cybernetic capabilities to prevent loss of markets and investment capital. Thus, cybernation is an objective economic factor which develops quite independently of the individual producer's will.

In short, cybernation is with us as an inexorable process, a part of the continuing industrial revolution. The left must address itself, not to the false questions of whether cybernation is "good" or "bad," "sufficient" or "insufficient," "desirable" or "undesireable" -- to do so is to imitate the 1924 Arkansas state legislature, which voted to change the value of the symbol "pi" from 3.1416 to 4. Rather, radicals must determine how social consequences of cybernation can best be organized to fulfill human needs.

Data for Lumpen Theory

Voicing the feeling of many utopians, Todd Gitlin¹⁰ has written: "what Myrdal calls the 'underclass' and what the Crowley's call the 'lumpenproletariat' (is) the primary agent of social change at this time...the initiative must come from the bottom." Inherent in this position is the assumption that the deprived third of the nation feels alienated from American society, is discouraged with existing economic policies, and is, therefore, ready to be organized into a radical interracial movement of the poor. A movement composed of that large a portion of the population, it is asserted, would have sufficient strength to form a militant nucleus and draw around it a broader-based movement, thus achieving a radical breakthrough.

This thesis requires closer inspection. It is correct to state that certain segments of the poor can be organized around radical economic issues. large portion of the poor is currently receiving aid from Federal, state, and local assistance programs of various kinds, they are organizable around the

10. Monthly Review, op.cit., p. 527

questions of extending and improving welfare benefits and programs. A far smaller number of the poor than the utopian supposes is organizable around the issues of jobs and employment.¹¹

There are 47 million families in the United States, and 11 million unrelated individuals -- 191 million Americans. Of these, 7.5 million families have an annual income of under \$2,500, while 3.2 million unrelated individuals have an annual income of under \$1,500. Using this base, and a conservative family size of 3.4 persons, one can estimate a total of 28.7 "hard-core" poor.

Of these 28.7 million Americans who constitute the heart of poverty in our society, 7.8 million are in families whose head is over sixty-five years of age. If we assume that when the head of a household is over sixty-five, the family usually consists of an elderly couple, occasionally with a grandchild, we can conclude that the number of these families represents approximately the number of the indigent aged. To these 7.8 million must be added an additional 2.7 million poor, unrelated individuals who are over sixty-five, giving a total of 10.5 million aged poor.

Given their health problems, in addition to the simple fact of age, we cannot expect these people to be active workers, or even active members of a movement of the impoverished. The aged do not have an immediate stake in employment-related questions. They could be -- and have been -- made a vocal part of efforts in support of the King-Anderson medicare bill, for example, or increased social security benefits. The inclusion of the aged in a movement of the poor would be a miscalculation; including them as a portion of the New Coalition would be a more realistic and accurate view.

This leaves 18 million poor -- 10.9 of these in families headed by females. Approximately one-third of these are adults, the rest dependent children. Mothers who must care for children with no male in the household are a difficult group to organize. Issues related to the education of their children evoke interest, as does the question of increased welfare payments and liberalization of aid to dependent children and other relief measures. Again, these are legislative issues requiring political allies and electoral action. It is doubtful that many women in this category are organizable as unemployed per se -- and indeed, we would consider the appropriate radical demand in this area to be that these individuals be comfortably provided for so that they are not forced to work until after their children are grown.

Subtracting the 10.9 million persons in families headed by a female leaves 7.3 million persons, one-half

¹¹. Our thanks to Raymond G. Brown for his assistance with this statistical analysis.

million of them unrelated and the rest composing 2 million families. Assuming that both husband and wife are considered as in the labor force, and adding the single individuals and subtracting dependent children, we find that there are only 2.5 million adults who can be considered as generally organizable into a radical movement of the poor. This figure includes 1.4 million Negroes. What percentage of this 2.5 million is unemployed, and what percentage is employed in low-paying or part-time jobs has not yet been computed.

It is apparent from these statistics that the organizable "hard core" poor -- no matter what name they are given -- are by no means a sufficiently large group to constitute a separate and successful movement by themselves. It is absolutely necessary to consider these poor as one part of a broader and more diverse New Coalition. A failure to devote as much effort and attention to the development of allies of the poor and dispossessed as is devoted to the poor themselves is to betray them into the hands of the status-quo.

Politics of the New Era

Daniel Bernd recently noted in the New Republic¹² that we are living in a time of great paradox. "...We have just elected the most liberal Congress in 25 years, yet never before have we been in greater danger from the right wing, not even...in the McCarthy era."

We have elected a President who, at least, recognizes what problems confront us and is opening frank discussion while beginning limited attempts at their solution. We have a more favorable international situation in terms of relations with the Soviet Union and other bloc nations than we have had in twenty years. We are confronted by a popular movement for Negroe rights, and we are witnessing the development of Negro-white action for full employment. And, for the first time since the 1930's a student movement exists which is not isolated and invisible. In short, not since the New Deal have the opportunities for real social progress been so great. We do indeed stand on the brink of a "Great Society," not merely because President tells us so, but because the forces are present to make this society great if we can only seize the opportunity.

But the reason that this is a time of paradox is that in spite of all of the positive factors of the present period, we nonetheless face the gravest threat from the ultra-right in recent times. The ultras feel that they, too, are on the brink of their great society: for the first time they seem to have captured a major party; for the first time they have won 27 million votes for a reactionary ticket; for the first time they have a grass-roots movement.

The ultras are smug in their assumption that a coalition of the liberal-left forces cannot solve the problems of the country, and that the next round in the political battle for power will be fought in their ring under their rules.

This, then, is the contradiction of our present politics: on the one hand a great possibility for change, and on the other a real possibility of victories for reaction. It is the essential political question confronting America in the new era.

While it is not within the scope of this paper to draft a legislative program for the emerging New Coalition, we would like to give a few examples of the kind of demand which radicals can raise. Some of these could be achieved in the next four years if political developments favor the growth of a real and lasting New Coalition, and while they do not reach the society we would like to establish, they do create some of the pre-conditions for it.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

There can be no effective beginning of a war against poverty so long as chronic, high unemployment persists. Under such circumstances even the minimal and most modest proposals for job training in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 will fail--because one cannot train a man for a nonexistent job. With the goal of full employment in mind, we should work for:

- * The AFL-CIO's call for immediate passage of a \$2 billion appropriation for accelerated public works, as an urgent first step toward a massive public works program.

- * The majority proposal of the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower for an additional added expenditure of \$5 billion a year on socially useful projects.

- * Building of 2.3 million new dwelling units per year for the next 10 years, with the deficiency of privately built housing made up by a massive public low cost housing program. Adoption of new principles in the construction of public housing to improve its quality radically: no more high-rise class and race ghettos; building on new land that can be genuinely integrated; full rights to tenants' committees in public housing; imaginative architecture.

- * Increase in the federal minimum wage to \$2 an hour and extension of coverage to all workers, including farm workers.

- * The 35 hour week, increases in vacation time, and expansion of the sabbatical principle.

DEPRESSED AREAS

The depressed area legislation passed in the first years of the Kennedy Administration shows the price exacted by the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition: the refusal of funds to many industrial areas; their concentration in the south, often under the control of a white racist power structure; the denial of rational planning procedures. We should work for:

- * The Appalachian bill, as the start of a beginning of a commitment to that region.
- * The principle of regional authorities in depressed areas planning.
- * A crash program for education in rural depressed areas.
- * Federal grants to depressed areas community action programs-- with the provision that all groups in a community, and particularly minorities, have a right to take part in the direction of the program.
- * The creation of T.V.A.-type authorities in the war against poverty in Appalachia, in the Ozarks, in the Columbia and Missouri River valleys.

AGRICULTURE

In recent years, agricultural production and misery have been the simultaneous wonder of the nation. The scandal of poverty in the richest fields of history is well known. Much of this scandal can be blamed on a generation of special laws written at the behest of corporation farms and other agricultural giants. We should work for:

- * Extension of minimum wage and collective bargaining rights to migrants and farm workers.
- * Expansion of Migrant Health Act to provide for hospital care and medications.
- * Abolition of the entire pattern of migrant labor through control of the effects of the new technology, through planned provision for re-training and employment opportunity in expanding sectors of the economy.
- * Provision for a loan and grant program for poor farmers under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.
- * Planned encouragement of cooperative farming as against corporation farming.

PLANNING

Our basic committmant is to national economic planning, with all that this implies in democratization of the economy. We should work for:

- * Implimentation of the Employment Act of 1964 through the presentation each year by the President of a national full employment budget, proposing public action to make up that year's deficiencies in job creation in the private sector.

- * Expansion of the role of the council of Economic Advisors, charging it with projecting rowth trends on a long-term basis and with proposing legislative remedies for deficiencies in the private and public sectors.

- * Immediate initiation, under the Department of Labor, of a long-range manpower study, to provide a rational basis for educational and other planning.

- * Creation of a Department of Urban Affairs with cabinet rank in the federal government. This department would concern itself with burgeoning problems of our growing metropolitan centers and should aid in the creation of regional planning agencies to cope with water resources, public transportation, water and air polution, land use and orderly urban development.

WELFARE

An adequate public welfare program is essential to a meaningful war on poverty. Present welfare programs are often woefully inadequate. We should support:

- * Expanding of the Social Security program to all Americans as a right, independent of their experience in the labor market.

- * Immediate doubling of Social Security O.A.S.I. benefits; and of the federal tax base for Social Security, with employers and allocations from general funds meeting the increased payments.

- * Complete federal financing of the A.C.D.U. program (Aid to the Dependent Children of the Unemployed), rather than the present system of federal-state matching payments.

- * Raising all welfare benefits up to the level of adequacy ad defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and total rejection of the notion that benefits can ever be computed as a percentage of need.

EDUCATION

The technological society now coming into existence requires higher and higher levels of skills and training. Yet, of the 26 million young Americans entering the economy during the decade of the 60's, 7.6 million will not finish high school and 2.3 million will lack even a grade school education. And many millions of those graduating from our high schools will, in fact, also lack the skills required by our society. In this economy, such education is education for poverty: we should work for:

* The proposal of the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower that this society commit itself to fourteen years of universal, free public education.

* Recognition that going to school is a productive activity, and therefore should be compensated through a "G.I. Bill" for all American youth.

* Federal aid to public education, with money appropriated according to need as defined by the original Kennedy Task Force, rather than the inadequate sums proposed in the present bill.

* Extensive federal aid for adult education in the area of vocational training and retraining, as well as in the development of liberal arts educational programs for those above high school age.

MEDICAL CARE

We should work for:

* A plan for universal medical care in which the citizen is free to choose the doctor and the type of care he desires, similar to the one proposed by President Truman in 1947.

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LITERATURE FROM P. E. P.

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