

# THE COMMENTATOR

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## THE ELECTION & AFTER

As we enter the last stages of the campaign, the three major candidates seem to be Ford, Carter, and Apathy--not necessarily in that order. Even so, we cannot afford to allow this event to go by without analysis. If the left has been almost entirely unable to use this election to rouse and educate and organize working people, then at least we must try to figure out how this impotence can be avoided in the future.

No longer is Vietnam the burning issue it was four years ago what with the defeat of the U.S. in South East Asia. No longer are the eyes of the people turned toward another part of the world. In the last four years, the U.S. and the rest of the capitalist powers began sliding into what they all feared was the beginning of another Depression, with inflation first climbing up to the double digits, and then unemployment doing the same. Only the most massive increase in governmental debt in history, to the tune of some \$80 billion, under a balance-the-budget President, has brought the economy out of its nosedive - temporarily. There has been no recovery in many parts of the country, only a leveling off, and in some places not even that. The other ingredient of the "cure" has been a massive attack on labor and living standards generally, with big cutbacks in services and freezes or rollbacks of wages in many cities and areas.

It seems unlikely that things can go very much longer without an even more rapid decline, and an even more furious attack on working people. Long gone are the relatively prosperous 50's.



Gone too are the turbulent 60's, with the anti-war movement and third world movements and revolts in this country. What seems to be approaching us now is a direct economic and political attack on working people generally, and sooner or later this cannot help but drive working people to fight against these attacks and begin to waken from the relative lethargy that has afflicted them for several decades since WW II and before. For these decades the working class has remained in the hip pocket of the corrupt union bosses and the Democratic politicians. And indeed there was good reason. The union leaders did seem to be able to come up with wage increases fairly regularly, and the Democrats seemed to be able to come thru with a few reforms to patch up some of the rough spots--so why rock the boat? This certainly doesn't mean that working people have any great faith in the union bosses or the Democratic hacks--they certainly don't. But what alternative is there?--and besides - things are not all that bad, people would say.

### ....NEBULOSITY AND NOTHINGNESS

Which brings us up to the present. Once again the Democratic Party is casting itself in its traditional mold of the party of mild reform, the party which gives the poor and the working people the better break and so forth. Carter's rhetoric is as

safe and nebulous as can be, and he has committed himself to very little, if indeed anything at all. Nevertheless, he manages to convey the impression that he somehow intends to do something to protect the poor and working people against the attacks that have been mounted against them by the Ford administration and the Nixon administration before him.

As for Ford, he has gradually become a known entity, a Nixon with the rough edges removed, with a lobotomy even. Ford's sole appeal is his incumbency and blandness.

He very narrowly avoided being ousted by the more fanatical wing of reaction--Reagan and Co. Indeed, in some respects the Ford-Carter contest is already an anti-climax. It is less interesting than the Reagan-Ford contest was and is certainly rousing less passion.

He has so far managed to tip-toe along the edge of economic catastrophe, without yet falling off the precipice. For lack of anything better, he has the more or less automatic support of all the more conservative elements in the population. He has no hope of winning much support among the worse off section of the working class, or among Black and other third world people.

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**ELECTION CON'T**

Carter's rhetoric is much more appealing to working people, and third world people in particular. There is nothing new about this rhetoric. They have heard it many times before, only to see one Democratic politician after another turn around, once in office, and trample into the dirt every solemn pledge given to the voters before the election. So that while Carter's is by far the preferred rhetoric, it is highly questionable as to how much of it he will be able to cash in on at the polls.



As it is now, Mayor Beame, Gov. Carey, and Carter's Democratic cronies around the country, continue slashing away at wages, jobs and services, all the time with tears in their eyes, pleading for the working people to understand the fiscal necessities involved. And the union hacks, after a few shrill but phoney barks, meekly go along with the program hand in hand with their Democratic cronies, they too explaining the necessities to the workers. Just as Beame and Co. in the end do the bidding of Ford and Simon, so will Carter in the end do the bidding of magnates of high finance. He may do it apologetically a la Beame, but there is no reason in the world to think he will act differently. Every section of capital, in this economic crisis, seeks a way out at the expense of the working class.

Why can't there be a repeat of the Roosevelt phenomenon? There are several good reasons why it is unlikely in the extreme. First, Roosevelt himself was not a "new dealer" in the earliest few years. It was only after a few years of his first term that he embarked on the road of making concessions to working people and launched his campaign of mild reform and public works. He did so in the face of a militant labor movement, a labor movement which has yet to re-attain that same level of militancy. The policy he followed building up huge public debts is no longer a new one. It has been pursued by the Nixon and Ford administrations more than anyone else before, in spite of their rhetoric to the contrary. The

mountain of debt sitting atop the economy cannot be expanded indefinitely without bringing on a wild, runaway inflation at some point. Finally, the U.S. is no longer a young imperialist power as it still was in many respects in the Roosevelt era. The U.S. is a declining imperialist power, no longer able to make the concessions to its working classes that it was able to in years before. The Rooseveltian rhetoric is still with us, but the substance is gone; substantial concessions are no longer in the cards. The U.S. workers face an increasingly bitter struggle just to hang on to what they have.

In one sense Carter is a greater danger than Ford or even Reagan, in the sense that he delays the realization by the working class that it cannot depend upon anything but its own strength to defend itself. People may balk at such a statement pointing to the fact that Carter talks much less ominously than Ford (or Reagan) but that is the precise point. Such talk merely soothes people and diverts them from realizing clearly the only real alternative they have. The talk is completely unreliable, and will quickly melt into oblivion in the face of the economic realities faced by Carter's capitalist masters.

**PHOOEY ISN'T ENOUGH**

We can no longer delay turning to the theme--what's in all this for working people? There are some working people who say--phooey on the whole business, the whole thing is a waste of time--and these working people would receive considerable support in their attitude from a good part of the left here. There's another sector that says, well, look at Ford, I doubt Carter will do much either but what else is there?

There is a great deal in common between these two views

really. They both grow out of political impotence and apathy. On the one hand, there is really little faith in the Democratic politicians, and yet on the other hand the working class here does not even picture itself as a class in any very clear terms, as for example do most of the European working classes, not to mention workers in the rest of the world. The working class here is only just beginning to waken from its decades long sleep which was induced by imperialist prosperity (a prosperity which is now vanishing). So the alternative to political indifferentism--or--what comes out to the same thing, heaving a sigh and pulling down the Democratic lever--is not readily available to the U.S. working class.

What is that alternative? That the working class begin to break away from the two party system, from the two parties of big business and begin to form its own party, a working class party, begin to run its own candidates and do all kinds of other work in support of the working class as well. What is needed is a party which takes as its basic platform and premise the fact that there are different classes in this society, that the interests of working people, the working class, and the capitalists are opposed, that the working class needs a party not of one or another sector of the rich and wealthy, but a party of its own with which to fight against the capitalists.

In view of the low level of class consciousness at the present time, it would be ridiculous to think of such a party having any kind of advanced platform, never mind revolutionary platform. What is needed is a party that takes the first steps in the direction of separating the working class from the Democrats as well as various middle class parties of the right and left, convincing the working class to rely on

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# MARS AND THE SOUTH BRONX

## OR An Unscientific Scientist

At the time of the landing of the Viking spaceship on Mars, an article appeared in the N.Y. Times telling of a scientist associated with the Viking project who was complaining about the massive apathy which greeted the genuinely breathtaking scientific and engineering achievements of the Viking mission. And yet his very inability to understand this apathy points up one of the sharpest contradictions in the present day U.S. and indeed the entire capitalist world: namely, the extremely advanced state of natural and physical science, technology, and engineering contrasted to an absolute hostility to the very idea that there could even be such a thing as a science of society, and an even greater hostility to the idea that such a science already exists, has a name, and is called Marxism.

Had the Viking spaceship, by some fluke, or grievous computer error, landed in the South Bronx instead of on Mars, perhaps this scientist might have been compelled to turn his scientific mind to some of the causes of the mass apathy which greeted the Viking venture.

### THE BIGGEST RIDDLE

Let us suppose that at first the scientists did not realize what had happened, had gone ahead and taken the first photos, sampled the air, and then scooped up some soil looking for evidence of life. The first photographs would have readily indicated to the appropriate specialists that there had been life on Mars (really the South Bronx) but that evidently, judging by the decayed buildings and strewn rubble, the civilization was one in the later stages of decay. The first air samples taken might then dash any further hopes of finding still existing life-- any competent biologist would have rated the chances of life being sustained by such a mixture of pollutants as quite minimal. The final nail in the coffin would come when the soil sample revealed that the Martian soil is composed of something roughly comparable to brick and tin. How astounded they would

then be a little later when they saw what in all the world looked like a pack of dogs roaming thru vacant lots, and even doing their thing on the Viking landing gear. And then would appear the little furry animals which look like rats except that computer calculations quickly show that they are too big to be rats (in any case there's no reason to expect Martian rats to be the same size as Earth rats). Later, the picture would grow stranger still as computer processing provided higher resolution pictures at greater distances which revealed what looked like human beings actually entering and leaving the dilapidated buildings. How unfortunate these poor Martians to be so backward and primitive, unable to even provide themselves minimal shelter from the harsh Martian elements! It's a good thing we've gone there, because they'd never make it here.....



Eventually, of course, one of the poor Martians would find a phone in the South Bronx and report the strange contraption that has landed in the rubble at the corner of ----- and ----- . At that point the Viking scientists would be faced with an even greater riddle than that of whether life exists on Mars! How is it that a society which is able to send a spaceship in search of life on Mars is unable to house and feed its own members right here on Earth?

### THE NEED FOR SCIENCE

The fact is that ordinary working people in the U.S. are bound to be apathetic to marvels of modern science and engineering since over and over again those advances are not used to better their lives.

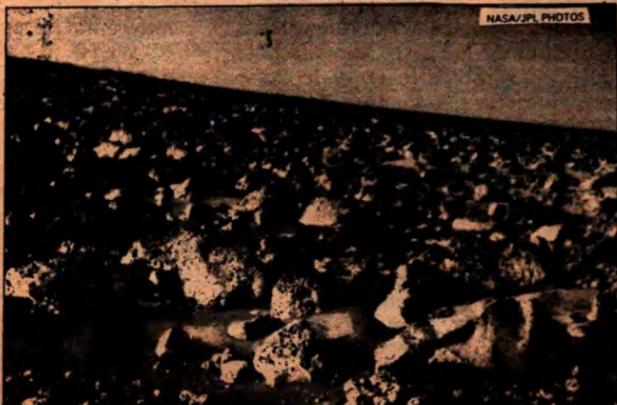
Capitalists are interested in science insofar as it helps profits, or at least does not threaten them. But when profits are threatened, the capitalists and

the intellectuals and scientists paid by them throw up their hands and proclaim science impossible, taking refuge in some god or in the old saw of the immutability of human nature. The problem is not that there is "too much science" but that science and scientific methods are not applied to society. In fact, it is Marxism, the science of society and class struggle which is the very thing that solves the problems of the people, and in the end promotes the further development of natural science and engineering. Developments which will make possible a paradise for working people here on earth, a world where men and women are obliged to devote only a small fraction of their waking hours to supplying themselves with the basic necessities of life in abundance, and will be able to devote the bulk of their lives to labors of love that at present are the exclusive preserve of a relatively small elite

### A Footnote on Mars

Up to this writing, the Viking mission has not given definite evidence one way or the other as to the existence of some kind of microbial form of life on Mars. One of the experiments, if performed here on Earth and gave the same results, would be interpreted as indicating the presence of some kind of life process. The complicating factor is that another one of the experiments failed to find the expected traces of organic materials which one would expect to be left as residues of any life process. Hopefully, further results from the second Viking landing will shed more light on the possibilities. At the very worst there is some extremely complicated and unimagined chemical activity in the Martian soil. At best there is some form of microbial life on Mars. This is no longer regarded as some remote, almost unimaginable possibility, but has to be considered as one of the very possible explanations of the results of the Viking experiment.

What is the significance of this increasingly possible conclusion? It would confirm all the indications biology has been giving in recent decades that life, far from being an "accidental" development, either divine or otherwise, is a necessary and natural development of matter, given the appropriate conditions. Moreover, those conditions might not be quite as narrowly defined as had been



Second Viking lander took photo of boulders.

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# MAO



Chairman Mao during the fighting in northern Shensi, 1947.

The reaction to a man's death is often a measure of his life. Mao Tsetung's death has shaken the world because during his life he was such a powerful force in transforming it, in pushing history and humanity forward. Even his enemies are obliged to admit that here was not just another contemporary personage, but an historical figure whose ideas and memory would survive centuries. For millions of poor working people, poor peasants, students, and others the world over, it was their great hero who departed. For them, for us, there could be no greater loss.

Mao Tsetung's achievements cannot all be listed in a short article such as this. We will try to touch on some of those we think are the most important, and also the most relevant for us here and now.



Chairman Mao studying a military map in northern Shensi in 1947 while directing the great People's War of Liberation.

Mao Tsetung was one of the really great Marxists of all time - along with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Mao was the first to successfully apply Marxism to the problem of revolution in a colonial, backward, Third World nation. Studying the example of the Soviet Union, which at that time was a beacon to all oppressed peoples, he had the courage to both emulate this powerful example and also to strike out in a different direction where concrete reality dictated doing so. Clearly recognizing that some major things would have to be done differently in China from the way they were in the first socialist country, Mao developed his theories of People's War, of the countryside encircling the cities, of the New Democratic Revolution. He could never have developed these theories and successfully put them into practice by just reading and copying what he found in books, even Marxist books. By all accounts Mao read voraciously all his life. However, he took the basic ideas of Marxism not as a dogma or rigid set of ideas, but as a living powerful weapon and method of analyzing reality.

## PEASANTS AND PROLETARIANS

In this regard there is a falsehood that has long been propagated about Mao Tsetung by the capitalists. They have maintained that Mao differed from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin - that while the former were leaders of the proletariat, Mao was a peasant leader. There is a truthful element in this assertion, however it is by far the lesser half. The truthful half is that Mao Tsetung has understood the peasant as has no other Marxist and has been able to mobilize and lead the peasantry to a new life with unmatched success. This is of the utmost importance and significance in a world where the peasants are the overwhelming majority. But in what direction has Mao led the peasants? In the direction of proletarianization! He has constantly led the peasants in overcoming peasant ideology, in transforming the peasants of China into modern proletarians who work collectively and join their city brothers in fighting the capitalists (who

in China are first of all some party leaders who are taking the capitalist road.) Mao has never deviated from the idea of the leading role of the working class in society and class struggle. He has developed Marx's thesis that the working class cannot liberate itself without liberating all mankind - and on a world scale the peasantry is the majority of all mankind.

Mao's theories on making revolution in Third World countries have had tremendous and continuing relevance in the world, for the Third World is still a long way from having finished its struggle against imperialism. The Third World struggle is only now really getting into full stride. The ideas of Mao Tsetung, creatively applied in various countries, will play an even greater role in the future.

Chairman Mao chatting with steelmakers while inspecting factories in Anhwei Province, 1959.



exposition of dialectics, and in it he clearly points out the importance of grasping the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction. He also clearly developed the importance of distinguishing between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. Mao Tsetung was a genius, but not the kind who stands aloof and keeps his ideas to himself. He always developed theory out of practice, for the sake of practice, for the sake of the people. And he always strove to arm the people with theory. From one point of view, Mao's popularization and development of dialectics might be considered his most powerful and permanent contribution to Marxism. Never before in the history of Marxism has so much attention been paid to spreading dialectics. The Chinese are sometimes portrayed in the West as blind followers of Mao Tsetung and other leaders. But the Chinese are a people who are being armed with dialectics, the most powerful weapon for independently analyzing reality yet developed. Mao did his utmost to educate people to think, to analyze things for themselves and to accept or reject any idea, even his own, by using their own brains, carefully thinking things over and testing them in practice. Certainly this is something we are all going to have to learn now.

There can be no guarantee that things will always proceed smoothly in China or the world, but the Chinese people are armed with Mao's ideas on continuing revolution and class struggle.

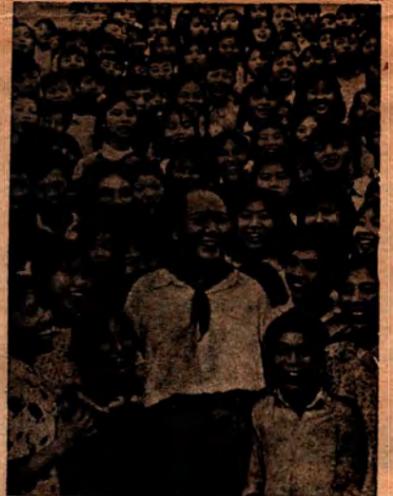
## CONTINUING CLASS STRUGGLE

After the success of the New Democratic revolution in China, Mao was not content to rest on his laurels. He always maintained great respect and admiration for Stalin and for the people of the Soviet Union. But after Stalin's death, after power was seized by the revisionists, and after they embarked upon the path of restoring capitalism in the Soviet Union, Mao Tsetung led the struggle against this great betrayal by the new Soviet leaders. He analyzed the example of the Soviet Union, and began developing his theory of the continuation of class struggle under socialism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was a direct product of Mao's theory and the lessons Mao drew from the example of the Soviet Union. This theory of Mao Tsetung's is a tremendous development of Marxism, one of universal importance.

Working people, revolutionaries, even heads of state the world over are anxious over the fate of China now that Mao is gone. Ironically, even the U.S. rulers who for so long were anxiously awaiting his demise, in hopes of a "softening" of China's proletarian dictatorship, now are anxious and fearful with his departure. However much they detest socialism and communism, they in some ways prefer a powerful China facing the Soviet Union and not a regime that is likely to capitulate to the Soviets. Even this reaction to Mao's death is another proof of the correctness of his view of the present alignment of world forces on which he placed great emphasis in recent years.

## "ONE INTO TWO"

There is one more extremely important contribution that Mao Tsetung made to Marxism. He developed Marxist dialectics. He has given us the best popular



Chairman Mao with teachers and pupils of the Shaoshan School, 1959.

We have every reason to be confident that China will remain red for a long time to come. Even if the revisionists were to succeed in grabbing power, they could not rule easily in China and would most likely lose their grip before long, as Mao himself pointed out.

## LEADER OF WORLD PROLETARIAT

The capitalist papers and commentators, leaders and politicians try to emphasize that Mao Tsetung was the leader of People's China, a national figure, a great national figure who had world impact, but still a national figure. That is, once again, only half the truth. Mao Tsetung was the leader of the world's proletariat, of poor and oppressed peoples of the world. Cynics, bourgeois observers, or even just ordinary people who haven't thought about it carefully might scoff at this Marxist phrase as rhetoric. These people would ask - how many U.S. working people look to Mao Tsetung? We'd answer - not too many right now, of course. But on a world scale there is no other figure who enjoyed the love, respect and con-

## WHO REPRESENTS CHINA?

One point repeatedly mentioned by our "representatives" as the basis for attacking Canada is that Canada was deceptive in the way the whole situation was handled - that at the last minute under pressure by the People's Republic they decided to ban Taiwan. This is simply not true! Canada notified the International Olympic Committee in the summer of '75 that it had doubts about the Taiwanese participation as the Republic of China and as early as January of '76 the Taiwanese were banned from participation in an international boxing match because they refused to drop the name of Republic of China.

It would appear that Taiwan will have a tougher and tougher time participating in world sports competitions unless they agree to drop their charade. However, the fact remains that the People's Republic has yet to be admitted to the competitions as the sole representative of the Chinese people (the only way they will agree to participate). The 1980 Winter Olympics will be held in Lake Placid, New York, right here in our own country. This offers a tremendous opportunity to us to make our voice heard on this important issue. When the time comes we must demand that our government observe the principles of the Shanghai Communiqué and concede to the People's Republic the place in the 1980 Olympics she has earned.

The vast majority of the countries of the world recognize the People's Republic of China as the sole representative of the Chinese people. Because of this understanding the Canadian government refused to allow the athletes from Taiwan to compete in the Olympics under the name of the Republic of China; they refused to help them masquerade as the representatives of the Chinese people.

Even our government, who, through our representatives and the press, attacked Canada bitterly, recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole representative of the Chinese people. That was the heart of the Shanghai communiqué signed between the U.S. and the People's Republic recognizing them as the representative of the Chinese people and Taiwan as being a province of China.

So why the tirade against Canada? It seems our government just doesn't have too much respect for the agreements that it signs. This action in support of the Taiwanese clique that is kept in power through U.S. military presence is a good example of the real attitude behind our government. They are not really serious in negotiating an agreement with China and they jump at any chance that comes to them to keep their imperialist domination a little longer. □

# TSETUNG



Chairman Mao with friends from Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1959.

spreading and deepening of the world communist movement, not one, but many, many great leaders of the working class movement will come forward in many parts of the globe. This will be in large part thanks to the efforts of Mao Tsetung and the other great Marxists.

We've been lucky to have lived in the era of Mao Tsetung. We must not forget that Mao, up to his last breath was looking ahead, to the truly unprecedented battles and struggles yet to come. It is in this direction that we too must look.

Chairman Mao on May 20, 1970, issued the solemn statement "People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and All Their Running Dogs!"



confidence that Mao did, and still does. The communist movement is spreading to every nook and cranny of the globe. The breadth of the movement is already giving some indication of this. As soon as working people in whatever country do begin waking up and becoming class conscious it is to Mao Tsetung's ideas and to Mao Tsetung's China that they turn for inspiration and hope in the future, for the strength to carry on the struggle in their own countries. And it is with these workers, no matter how small a minority they might be in some countries, that lies the future, a little closer or a little more distant, of every country.

## GENIUS AND THE MASSES

Mao Tsetung's greatness is a product not only, or even primarily, of his genius. Rather, Mao was created, was a product of the Chinese Revolution. History presented the Chinese and Mao with a long series of historical tasks to solve. Mao Tsetung and the Chinese people were tempered in many struggles: against imperialism, against revisionism, against the capitalist roaders within the Chinese Communist Party. Without these struggles there could be no Mao Tsetung. Without the great masses of people who waged these struggles, there could be no Mao Tsetung. Mao's greatness is but a reflection of the greatness of the common people, of ordinary men and women, of their enormous potential, initiative and creativeness. Mao's greatness consisted in knowing how to unleash that potential. Look at China's accomplishments! Individual genius could not account for even one millionth of one percent of these accomplishments. But great talents devoted to mobilizing and leading working people has resulted in untold miracles.

The capitalists - the bourgeoisie - have ceased producing great heroes. For the last hundred years or more the really great thinkers and leaders have been those that have placed their talents in the service of the proletariat - the working people. Mao Tsetung ranks with Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin as one of these great leaders and thinkers. The proletariat is still a young and vigorous class. It will produce many more great leaders and thinkers -- in ever increasing numbers. Perhaps in the future no single leader will enjoy the authority, love, and respect bestowed upon Mao Tsetung and the earlier leaders. But if that is so, it will only be because through the

## ELECTION CON'T

its own strength in doing battle with the rich and their government and politicians. This does not mean that it can or should avoid taking stands on a wide range of issues affecting the working class. A party, for example, that does not come out foreshore in opposition to all forms of discrimination against third world people and women has no chance whatsoever of building class consciousness among U.S. workers. It would also be a mistake to think that such a party can emerge overnight on a national scale. It will first have to get its feet wet running in local elections, and only later begin to make use of the forum that national elections provide.

People might say, isn't it a little late to begin talking about a third party now? True, for this election of course, it's way too late. And to that extent, we are severely limited in the ways in which we can make any kind of positive use of this election. But what can be done is to use this election to raise the idea and the necessity for such a third party--a working class party. Preparations can be made in the coming period to see that we are in a position to make use of the capitalist elections against the capitalists, to use them not to befog, benumb and pacify the working class, but to rouse it to class consciousness and militancy in defense of its interests and the poor and exploited of our country - the overwhelming majority.

## ELECTIONS AREN'T THE CURE

We by no means are suggesting that things can be radically changed via the elections--Chile and Hitler Germany show how shallow the capitalist commitment to elections and bourgeois democracy is. But as long as they exist, they can be used by the working class to organize itself and rally its forces. Nor are we suggesting that a broad labor party is the ultimate instrument of liberation of the working class here either. We are well acquainted with the fate of the British Labor party and other such labor parties. And yet they did play an enormous role in educating and organizing the working class there at a certain stage in their development, and even today, the European working class is far in advance of the U.S. working class in class consciousness and militancy. Nor are we suggesting that such a party can in any way be a substitute for a much smaller revolutionary (Communist) organization. But what we must look for and develop is an elementary form for developing and instilling the beginnings of class consciousness in the U.S. working class. □

## Editors' note:

The above article reflects the views of a majority in our group. A minority, however, thinks that Carter should be given critical support and are not convinced of the timeliness of the labor party idea.

## U.S. - AN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY ?

There was an interesting article in the N.Y. Times not too long ago entitled "Foreign Industries Expanding in The U.S.". Why, according to the article, are foreign industries investing in the U.S.? The first reason is that U.S. labor is growing relatively cheaper!

"For example as of mid-1975 average hourly compensation in the United States including fringe benefits stood at \$6.22, compared with \$6.19 in West Germany. Five years earlier, the United States was at \$4.20, while West Germany paid \$2.32."

What this means is that some of the lower-wage and non-union states, primarily in the South, provide attractive opportunities not only for U.S. capital but for foreign capital as well. The capitalists owe their thanks to the government, President Ford, and Nixon before him for driving down the living standards of the U.S. working class so as to make the "investment climate" more attractive!

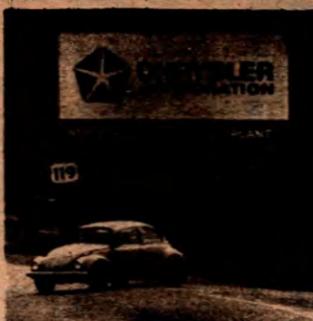
Another reason mentioned in the same article for this development is that:

"This country gives good management more of a chance than in West Germany," says Herbert Hergeth, President of Hergeth KG, a textile machinery company with one plant in South Carolina. "The right of the worker to interfere in Germany makes it nearly impossible for good management to handle a company. According to law the worker can decide who gets the job, who gets fired; they can even look at financial statements and even tell us what

machine to buy."

'Business climate is the most important thing', says Ives Trelu, executive Vice-President of Michelin. 'Here, at the state level, all agencies are pro-business. They want to attract industry and evidently give the laws the same interpretation.' South Carolina, like many other southern states, has a right-to-work law and with the rapid expansion of the union-garnered benefits (German workers get six weeks paid vacation at 150% pay plus many holidays), this is considered very desirable by Michelin and other foreign companies."

There you have it! The heyday of U.S. imperialism is already gone by, and from now on working people are going face a desperate struggle against the efforts of the capitalists to drive down our wages to even lower levels and attack our rights. Class struggle and class consciousness are back on the order of the day for American workers! □



In Pennsylvania: VW's will be built in this ex-Chrysler plant by late 1977 if plans jell.

## WHO WE ARE

The Commentator is put out by a Marxist-Leninist collective in the New York area.

In the Commentator we try to analyze current events in the country and the world from a Marxist point of view. We attach special importance to tackling political and social issues on people's minds, as well as economic issues.

In particular, we feel that under Nixon the danger of fascism became very real in this country. We also feel that the danger has not lessened. Fascism will not come to this country in the same form it did in Germany or Italy. It decks itself out in the red, white and blue, goes under the slogan of "law and order" and uses Black people as its chief scapegoat.

We attach special importance to exposing and educating people to this danger, in order to help build a united struggle against it. However, we believe that of all the forces that can be united to oppose the fascist danger, it is the working class which must lead.

While we believe that the main struggle of the American people right now is against encroaching fascism, the fundamental problems of our society, such as inflation, unemployment, war, racism and poverty can only be solved by the establishment of a socialist government, one which gives the ownership and control of the means of production to the majority of the people, protecting their interests rather than those of a small group of exploiters.

To achieve the above goals, we believe the working class needs a genuine Communist party, based on Marxism-Leninism and the teachings of Mao Tse-Tung. We want to make contact with progressive minded people, working people especially (but not only), who find the ideas in our paper interesting and useful. Also we want to make contact with other revolutionary groups and individuals. We want to make the Commentator as useful and interesting as possible and would appreciate your criticisms and comments.

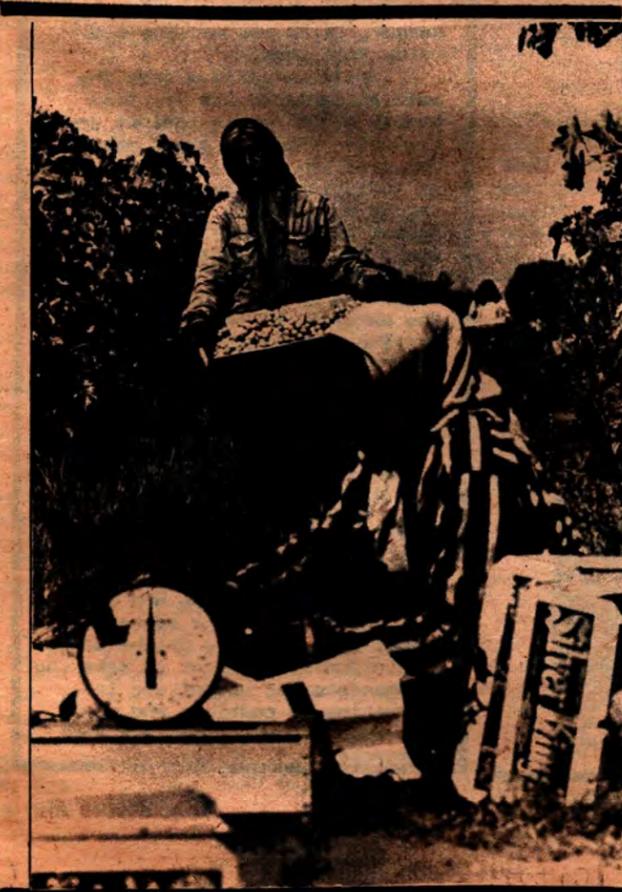
had to do with how women perceive one another and themselves. She discovered enormous resentment of the organized women's movement (the "women's libbers") on the part of working class women.

"The sex issue became a class issue. That broad coalition (of ERA supporters) was transmuted, in the public eye, into a elitest minority fringe that didn't give a damn about homemakers or women at the bottom of the labor market and would, by the force of its own ambitions, push all women out of the home and into jobs."

"Women's libbers" worked in order to develop themselves and not because they had to...

"The heart goes out to the supermarket clerk who said, bitterly: 'I would love not to have to get up at 7 o'clock every morning and go to work.'"

The STOP ERA people exploited these sentiments by lie and innuendo. The fact is that women who must work especially need an ERA and women who don't have to work won't be forced to by an ERA. But--and there's no way to get around it--work is the ultimate liberator! By work we mean women's inclusion in production, that process which advances society. Of course, in order that working men and women can realize the full advantages of their labors, production itself will have to be liberated from private ownership. Until such time, though, the woman who has been dependent on a man all her life and suddenly must cope with the world by herself is completely unprepared. Unless she is independently wealthy, a woman is as subject as a man is to the financial crises that capitalism engenders. Unless women see the need to be fully included in the work force (and men must see that need too!), they will be unable to play an equal role in the fight to better conditions of labor. Men and women will both suffer as a consequence.



DEFENDERS OF DEPENDENCE

The STOP ERA folks are concerned with protecting women's dependent status within the family, her "rights" to not work, to custody of her children and alimony when her family breaks up. They have also expressed concern for the woman's Social Security benefits once her source of support has died. Martha W. Lear rebuts: Homemakers were warned that the ERA would force them to share equally in the financial support of the families. The record shows otherwise. In 22 states, including 7 that do not have an ERA, parental obligations are indeed mutual.

But the courts have consistently defined "mutual" in terms of each parent's role, needs and earnings and non-monetary contributions to the family welfare. If Mr. and Mrs. Smith have structured their marriage so that he is out working as breadwinner and she is home working as homemaker, the ERA mandates no change. The amendment simply sex-neutralizes the language of the laws, substituting the word "spouse" for "husband" and "wife" and thus removes the traditional legal assumption that all men are breadwinners and all women are homemakers. It is a case of the law catching up with life."

She goes on to outline concretely how in child custody and alimony suits, whether or not the state has an ERA, the courts are more and more reaching decisions based on individual criteria rather than on traditional sex stereotypes.

"Widows could lose the additional benefits they enjoy under currently structured Social Security laws." Is there a woman in the STOP ERA movement that wouldn't like to see widow's benefits extended to men? (excluding those who disapprove of Social Security benefits altogether as a feature of the Welfare state.) Individual men have recently gone to court contesting the government's sex bias in denying them benefits that widows would get in their place. Women's position can only be strengthened by joining their effort.

The military draft for women is also a bogus issue. 1) Congress has always had the power to draft women. 2) The draft has been replaced with a volunteer army (a factor that could change overnight). These facts do not dispense with the question of women serving in the military, however. Both men and women should consider the nature of the war the U.S. involves itself in or starts. Is that war justified? A just war, such as the U.S. participation in WWII should be supported by men and women serving in whatever capacity they can. A just war, if propagated in a correct way, will never lack for volunteer fighters. The nation that would

deny women an equal place in that fight would be courting defeat. Unjust wars, such as the U.S. war of aggression against Vietnam should be opposed by all. Sex should be no criteria for service in wartime. The question is the nature of the war itself.

EQUALIZE UP-- NOT DOWN

Not all opposition to the ERA comes from well-heeled conservatives like Schlafly. Some leftists, notably the Communist Party (in the Soviet camp) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (in the Maoist camp) also oppose the ERA. Both the STOP ERA organization and the above parties argue that women would lose protections they currently enjoy under the law. They differ only in the protections they are concerned with.

While the STOP ERA people have argued largely bogus issues (there is no legislation guaranteeing women custody of children or alimony etc.,--only court tradition) some leftists argue that women fought hard to



secure legislation governing hours and conditions of labor; legislation that could be wiped out by an ERA. In fact when Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was enacted forbidding discrimination in employment based on race, religion, national origin or sex, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission banned all protective labor laws that applied only to women. Although the question of protective legislation is legally closed in light of the above, the point is well taken. Equal rights laws can cut both ways. National minorities and women seeking affirmative action to overcome past discriminatory hiring, promoting and admissions practices have seen white men charge that they are being discriminated against under the aegis of equal rights laws! Which way the law cuts depends on the state of the movement. The women's movement, like that of minorities, has never fought for privileges, only equality. Any movement in oppo-

## ERA CON'T

sition to passage of the ERA helps maintain privileges for men that don't even benefit most men. In the pamphlet "Why Women Need the ERA" by Diane Feeley, it is shown just how the law might apply...

"In 1970 the Citizens' Advisory Council on the Status of Women put out a memorandum on the ERA. It outlined the effect the amendment, if ratified, would have on existing legislation in various states. Where a law serves to restrict or limit the rights of one sex, that law would be unconstitutional; but where the law grants a right to one sex, the words of sex identification would be stricken from the law. This would extend rights to both sexes. That interpretation is an example of what women should fight for.

The case of Potlatch Forests Inc. v. Hays gives an indication of how such an extension works in practice. Arkansas state law provided that women be paid time-and-a-half for working more than eight hours a day, and the employers argued that federal antidiscrimination legislation superseded state law, allowing them to cease paying the women an overtime bonus. The court dismissed the complaint, pointing out that the state law did not require women to be paid more than men. The employer could comply with both state and federal law by paying overtime rates to both men and women.

Certainly this sort of victory can be the only legitimate goal of a struggle for equal rights."

### PRIVILEGES OR UNITY?

Those who enjoyed admission, employment and advancement because they were white and male no doubt deserved admission, employment and advancement. The point is that those Blacks and Latins and women denied admission, employment and advancement because they were Black, Latin and/or women did not deserve what they got. In spite of all that needs to be done, Capitalist society does not find it profitable to do those things we need. Instead, it needs unemployment and the question then becomes, which segment of the population do we throw overboard? In better times, it sufficed to lock minorities and women out of employment. A fact, often overlooked, however, is that many white males with seniority are pounding the pavement today in spite of the fact that those last hired (minorities and women) were first fired. Today, more than ever, the working class cannot tolerate the scapegoating of women and minorities. We need one another in the struggle to better our lives and equality must be the basis of our unity.

The Equal Rights Amendment is fighting for its place in the U.S. constitution and needs the ratification of 4 additional states by 1979 in order to pass.

# READERS' COLUMN

It is our intention to start a readers' column with our next issue. We've been getting a fairly steady trickle of letters in the last few months. We would like to see even more people write and let us know their views -- both on our paper and the issues we deal with (or issues we are not dealing with).

People should say whether or not they want their letters published - and whether their name or initials should be included. We won't publish anything without explicit permission.

We can't promise to publish everything, but we do promise never to exclude a letter just because it is critical of us or views expressed in our paper. We will show a bias against "left rhetoric" and letters comprehensible only to "left heavies". Thought-provoking critical letters will get favored treatment. Letters agreeing with us fall between the above two.

WRITE!

## OUR APOLOGIES

Those Commentator readers who have been with us a year or two know that our paper is not altogether regular in coming out. But some of our newer subscribers began to worry as the many months between the previous issue and this one rolled by. Our apologies for the excessive delay - we will try very hard to do better from now on.

### THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM

by Georgi Dimitroff  
Limited quantities of this classic are now available for \$1.00. (price includes postage). Mail to address on page 7.

The defeat of state ERAs in N.Y. and N.J. has spurred moves to rescind N.Y. and N.J.'s ratification of the federal ERA claiming that these state's legislators have a mandate from the people.

The defeats the ERA has suffered obliges those who want its passage to examine the economic, political and social changes that have transpired between the 60's and the 70's and the effect those changes have had on the outlook of working class women. Our propaganda must take these factors into account if we are going to demonstrate how the ERA can provide women a useful legal weapon in the fight for economic, political and social justice. □

## MARS CON'T



Artist's drawing pictures a Viking spacecraft imagined. Certainly it would prove that life must exist in many millions of places throughout the universe, if it could develop independently on two of the sun's nine planets. For the sun is a very averagetype of sun in but one of billions of galaxies, each containing billions of stars. It would constitute another proof of the correctness of materialism, that life, human life included, is entirely material in nature, a development to a high form of matter.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INSIGNIFICANCE

Not a very "consoling" view of life; one which seemingly reduces human life to a minimum of significance in a infinite universe containing millions of others examples of various kinds of life, coming into existence, and with equal certainty passing out of existence at some point. No, not consoling, but one which spurs humankind to get up off our knees, realizing we have no one to account to but ourselves, and set to work reshaping the world to our own liking, to aggressively and boldly say: as surely as the race will one day die, just as do individual members of it now, today we are still young and will certainly not leave our small corner of the universe untouched before the stars turn cold and the lights go out!

And if there is no reason for humanity to bow down before the gods, still, less is there any reason for one man to bow down to another (or a woman to man for that matter), or to think that any set of relationships among people are not subject to change or even transformation in this turbulent universe. □

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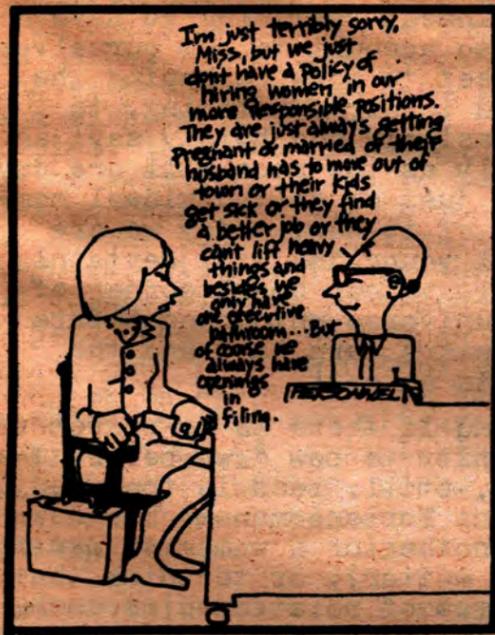
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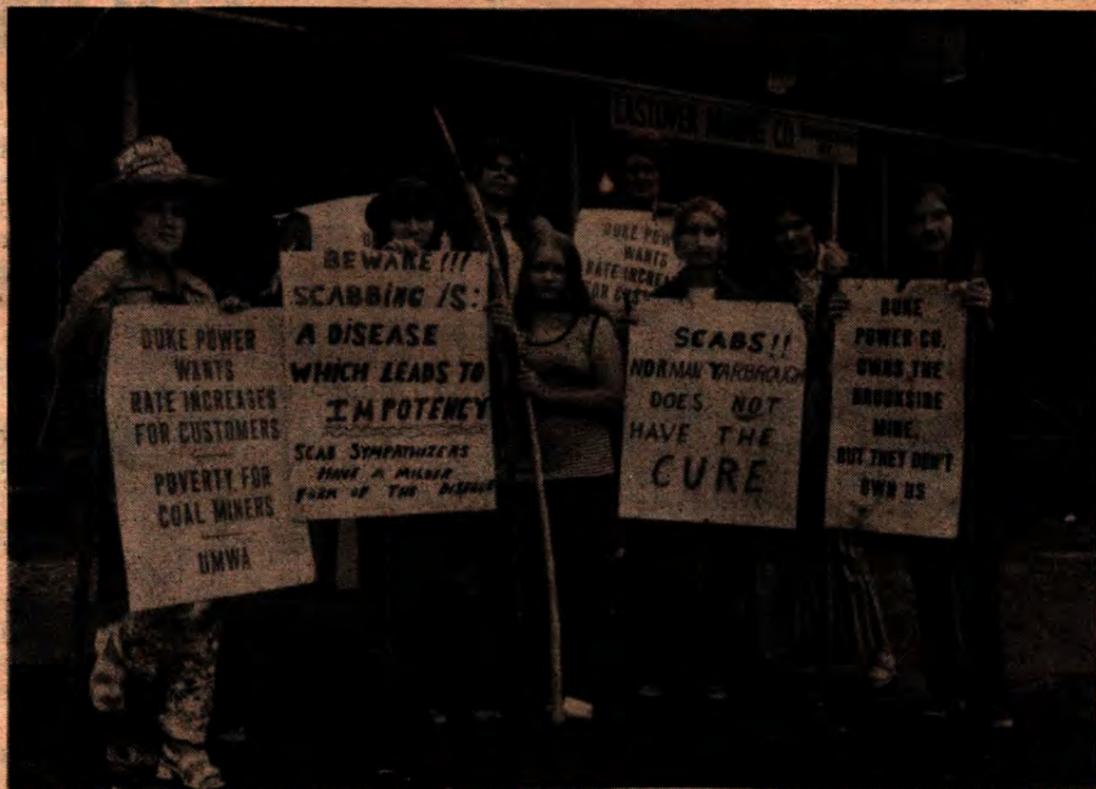
"Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the U.S. or by any state on account of sex." It's such a simple statement, so full of simple justice that one wonders why this constitutional amendment has yet to be ratified. Well - a majority of those voting in N.Y. and N. J. in November of 1975 voted against state Equal Rights Amendments (both N.Y. and N.J. legislatures had already ratified the federal E.R.A.). The middle class women who make up the bulk of the women's liberation movement were shocked by the election results. They were prompted to comment bitterly about the lies resorted to by the STOP ERA people, the bit money (mainly from insurance companies) that funded the STOP ERA campaign, and more self critically, about their own complacency. In fact, they had conducted a defensive campaign around ERA, responding only to those issues raised by the STOP ERA organization. But perhaps more fundamentally, they labored under the illusion that women's consciousness and that of many men would only advance in a straight line. They did not see the effect that a deteriorating economy could have in altering that consciousness. They failed to understand how the social circumstances of 1975 had deepened the chasm between middle and working class women or



even that social circumstances mattered between sisters!

## ECONOMICS OF ERA

The impetus for equal rights legislation corresponded to tremendous economic expansion. As the benefits of this expansion filtered downward to the white working class black people began demanding their just share. The Great Society followed the War on Poverty in quick succession. Blacks took white trades to court, broke the stranglehold of father-son unions and opened up trades like construction, not only to minorities, but to whites who formerly could not have gotten these jobs because they didn't have the connections or the price of a union card. Open admissions opened up higher education, not only to minorities but to the child-



ren of white, blue collar workers who formerly didn't stand a chance against the children of doctors, teachers, etc.

The challenge to zoning and other segregationist laws erected during and after Reconstruction was sparked by Rosa Parks who after a hard day's work refused to give up her bus seat to a white person saying simply "My feet are tired". The ensuing civil rights movement gave impetus to the women's movement. Women too, entered business and the professions in ever increasing numbers. A token number of women made their presence alongside a token number of Blacks in the better paying, skilled, craft jobs. The issues were very similar. Equal educational opportunity. Equal employment opportunity. Equal advancement. Equal pay for equal work. Equal participation in the political process. The movements differed, however. The civil rights movement became the concern of all black people. Mostly educated, middle class, white women took up the cause of women's equality. Little effort was made to incorporate the demands of blacks for equality into the fiber of the women's movement. Rather the two movements were seen as "separate but equal". Still less effort was made to relate the issues of women's equality to that huge segment of the population left out of the social movements of the day -- the white working class. Instead, working women, white and black, concerned with preserving their families in the face of increasing financial hardships of the 70's saw a women's movement characterized as being unconcerned with the family and most concerned with issues like advancing already privileged women into executive positions.

As the economy began to contract the attack on the family became more and more real. Inflation and the subsequent recession were blamed on government spending on social programs.

The tide of "public opinion" was directed against minorities who were portrayed as the undeserving beneficiaries of government windfalls. Women were bound to be caught up in the backlash.

## THE "ADVANTAGES" OF SLAVERY

The federal ERA had been quietly wending its way through state legislatures picking up ratification all along the way. The attempt to vote in state ERAs in N.Y. and N.J. brought Phyllis Schlafly and her bunch out of the wall. They succeeded in exploiting the fears and resentments of many working class women unable to comprehend the attack on their families' welfare.

Fundamentally, the STOP ERA organization's defense of the "advantages" of women's dependent, protected position within the family contains the same flaws as did the arguments for slavery over a century ago. It was said that the slave did not have to worry where the next meal was coming from or about a roof over his or her head. Conditions for slaves varied as do conditions for women. Just as there were a small number of house slaves that "enjoyed" certain privileges, so there are a relatively small number of women who "enjoy" certain privileges. But the legal position of women remains one of subjugation (slavery being the most extreme form of subjugation). The ERA would not compel women to abandon their dependency. Economic necessity has done just that for most of the more than 40% of working women in the U.S.

Martha W. Lear, in her N.Y. Times Magazine article of April 11, 1976, "You'll Probably Think I'm Stupid..." attempted to find out why so many women voted against N.Y. and N.J. ERAs and concluded that much of the reason