

# "FRED HALSTEAD (Rating, Very Good to Excellent)"

NEW YORK POST, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1968



## The Other Candidates (1)

MURRAY KEMPTON

I made the mistake a few years ago of telling David Susskind that I had given up voting. Susskind, whom I have known to engage with undiminishing tolerance in dialogues with pederasts, talent agents, junkies, embezzlers, Kluxers, Jew-baiting blacks, and women of the street, reeled with enough shock at this confession to instruct me that not voting is the only social offense unforgivable in the American canon. I have since done my best to reform.

But this happens, at the top of the line, to be a year putting insupportable stress on regenerate addicts of abstention from the polls. We must seek the off brand. What follows then is the first of of what I hope will be a series of reports on Presidential Candidates of Whom You May Never Have Heard, a category which starts with an immeasurable advantage over those of whom you have.

Fred Halstead (Rating, Very Good to Excellent) is the Presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party. His party is part of the political estate of the late Leon Trotsky, a highly flamboyant personality, whose heirs always surprise you by how sober and American they are. One or two Trotskyites of my acquaintance began, in fact, as Taft Republicans in Ohio.

\* \* \*

Halstead is just back from Saigon; he is the only Presidential candidate so far to go there for no other purpose than talking to his constituents. He told them, of course, that he was against the war and even passed out leaflets to that effect in Saigon. He visited the Army base at Long Binh, was admitted, and sat around the PX and exchanged ideas with the troops.

"When I got to Long Binh, I told the guard," Halstead says, "I'm a candidate from the states," and he let me right in. All they listen for is the accent."

Halstead is a comfortable-looking 40-year-old with glasses. He fits both my own special middle-class bias in favor of revolutionaries who wear neckties and the general ruling-class prejudice in favor of anyone who wears neckties. He found

the troops polite, interested and unhappy. "A minority were in favor of the war, a larger minority were outright against the war, and the rest were just confused. It's a little hard to get around to the war; there is just a general malaise; everyone is introspective, intense and nervous; the soldiers in Saigon are just a corner of the whole country."

Apparently, if you are serious and contained enough about it, you can say anything you want to about the war in Saigon, so long as you say it to Americans; the government of South Vietnam has a reputation for losing its temper if it catches you talking this way to its constituents. We have come in America to a point where Fred Halstead and our soldiers can exchange ideas which used to be thought of as close to treason and the Army no longer knows what to do about it.

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Fred Halstead came home to the teachers strike. He is a union garment cutter and a member of the PTA of PS 33 in Chelsea. His PTA had a rough meeting this week before voting 28 to 23 to reopen the school despite the strike. Halstead voted with the majority; his daughter Laura's teacher, the union chairman, led the argument to keep the school closed.

"Afterwards, my daughter cried," Fred Halstead says. "My father's on one side and my teacher's on the other. What am I going to do?" I told her I thought it would work out; I think it will."

Perhaps we are not as unlucky in our candidates as we think. Fred Halstead can go to Saigon and come back talking about divided, unhappy young men and not cardboard symbols painted to suit his political position; and he can come home to struggle quietly and soberly and in fairness to both sides with the same problem that is agonizing many other parents all over this town today.

Our politics is in a rather extraordinary condition when the first candidate you see who sounds like a real person and not some poor painted doll turns out to be the Trotskyite candidate.

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# SOCIALIST WORKERS NATIONAL CANDIDATES GO TO GIs

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1968

## Candidate of Socialist Workers Discerns G.I. Antiwar Sentiment

By M. S. HANDLER

Fred Halstead, Presidential candidate of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers party, said yesterday that the moral climate among American troops in South Vietnam, Japan and at home was ripening for a major antiwar movement in the armed forces.

Mr. Halstead, returning from a round-the-world trip, said that in a week's visit to South Vietnam no obstacles were raised to his talking with servicemen. He said he had spoken to about 100 in the streets of Saigon, in clubs, post exchanges, USO's and at the big base at Longbinh.

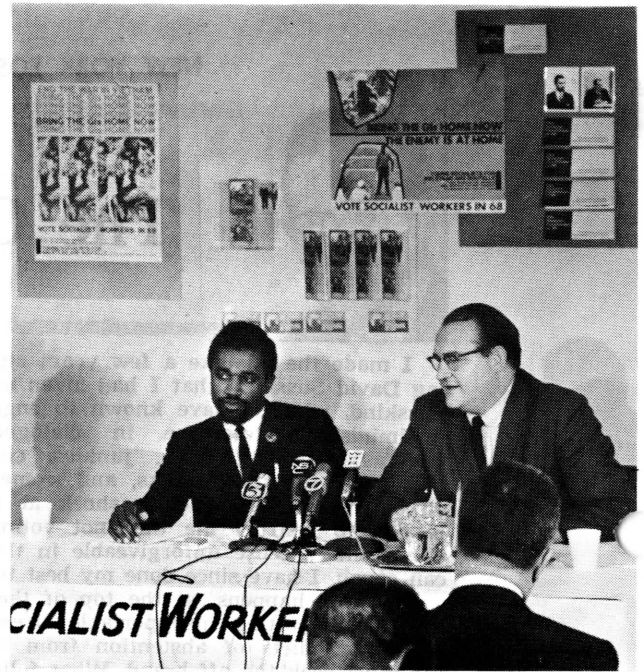
Mr. Halstead said that, in the interviews, he had found that more servicemen opposed the war or had doubts about it than favored it. A considerable number, he said, were confused and had no definite opinions because of a lack of information.

The Trotskyite leader said he had begun every conversation by identifying himself and his antiwar opinions but had never encountered any hostility from the soldiers.

The candidate said that the circulation of "underground" servicemen's newspapers was increasing in South Vietnam. Two newspapers he brought back, "Vietnam GI" and "Task Force," had as their main themes allegations of incompetence of the United States command, needless sacrifice of soldiers in battles and missions that had little or no military significance, and abuse of the soldiers.

In his meeting with reporters yesterday, Mr. Halstead contended that there was no law forbidding soldiers in uniform to demonstrate publicly their views on war, peace and other subjects. He recalled demonstrations in 1946 demanding an early return home.

Mr. Halstead said that his party would therefore urge servicemen in the United States and abroad to use this channel to make known their opinions. A demonstration in San Francisco is planned for sometime in October, he said.



Paul Boutelle and Fred Halstead, Socialist Workers Party candidates for Vice President and President.

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Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee  
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