

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY
MICHAEL HARRINGTON

October 1979 Vol. VII No. 8 \$1

INSIDE

Fifty Year Blues, p. 3

Robert Lekachman looks at the Black Thursday of a half century ago and tells us history won't repeat itself. It could be worse.

As Nicaragua Goes, So Goes . . . p. 4
Will El Salvador be the next right wing regime to topple?

Youth Conference, p. 5

Not since the '60s have so many democratic socialist youth been in one place at one time.

Gann Gaining Ground, p. 6

Harold Meyerson asks why the California left is so passive.

What's Left to Read, p. 7

A New Left capitalist's search for roots and a South American bishop's road to socialism.

Language vs. Livelihood, p. 10

Is the Spanish left's enthusiasm for regionalism and separate languages misplaced?

Homegrown Violence, p. 12

Someone once called violence as American as apple pie. David Gil talks about the uselessness of programs designed to prevent personal violence.

On the Line, p. 13

B.J. Widick describes auto workers' plan to hold the line in negotiations.

Socialist Notes, p. 14

Housing has become an inflammatory issue from coast to coast and DSOC locals tackle it in many ways.

Cheerio to Welfare State

By Clancy Sigal

ASPECTER IS HAUNTING BRITAIN, the specter of a social counter-revolution whose code word is "cuts." The welfare state is being systematically wrecked by Margaret Thatcher's cabinet ministers, who are acting out the implied logic of the last Labor government's niggling, but almost equally devastating, undermining of Britain's social services. As a matter of policy, and not because of some emergency like a balance of payments crisis or a demand note from the International Monetary Fund, the whole apparatus of state concern and intervention that has slowly built up since 1945 is literally being sold out.

The recently departed Wilson and Callaghan administrations cruelly slashed health, housing and welfare programs in a vain effort to prove to the "international financial community" that socialists could be trusted to run Britain's increasingly ramshackle economy. Where Labor wielded their axes in clumsy embarrassment, the Conservatives hack away with a terrible relish. But if you're on the receiving end—as a pensioner, one-parent family or state-aided student—it makes not a jot of difference who is doing the bloody job.

This perception—that Labor was doing the Tories' traditional job, so why not vote for the real thing?—probably is the reason for Labor's defeat in the June general election. Britain as a whole did not swing massively to the right. (For example, the fascist National Front which



Britain's Information Services

“We are back to the law of the jungle.”

mounted a widespread campaign lost ground compared to its recent successes.) But voters—especially working-class housewives and skilled manual workers—could not stomach Labor's hypocrisy. Mr. Callaghan and his disastrous Chancellor of the Exchequer, Denis Healey, had successfully rallied workers to a conservative economic program by promising some form of income redistribution in return for the "social contract." But the rich grew richer and the poor poorer under Labor. A Royal Commission has reported that from 1974 to 1976 the top one percent of the population increased its share of the national wealth while the bottom 50 percent dwindled further. So much for Mr. Healey's threat

to "soak the rich until the pips squeak."

Labor's suicidal determination to show itself as the iron-handed hard-hearted party of social authority—its pathetic need to prove it can govern to the manner born—eroded its socialist base among party activists. Its sterile, militaristic policy on Northern Ireland; its waffling on Rhodesia; its refusal to relax the Official Secrets Act; its repeated cave-ins to the Powellite right on black immigrants; above all, its meanly bureaucratic bungling of the health and social welfare services . . . all these added up to a tough guy image that in the end lost it both the election and the confidence of its most loyal (i.e., socialist) supporters.

To suggest that Britain was brought to its knees because the Labor government truckled to the unions is farcical. For five years the unions, dutifully heeding the Labor leadership's pleas for "responsibility," tightly checked their members' pay demands. "Our" party was in power, so don't rock the boat. The union's reward? The Labor government smashed the firemen's and hospital workers' strikes. In the face of two-figure inflation, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) was told it must adhere to a 5 percent pay limit.

Labor's hold-the-line-at-all-costs wage policy finally exasperated the unions and set off a savage competition to see

Continued on page 15

LETTERS

To the Editor:

It is good to see DEMOCRATIC LEFT give coverage to the peace and anti-nuclear movements (June 1979).

Today we not only have a growing peace movement, but we have a better peace movement than what we had eight or ten years ago, although it is still not as good as it should be. Ten years ago we had "peace" coalitions which accepted within their ranks groups which advocated and practiced trashing, rock throwing, and other violence; today direct action is conducted on a strictly nonviolent basis, and is usually preceded by intensive training in nonviolence.

Ten years ago N.L.F. flags were a frequent sight at "antiwar" demonstrations, and many "antiwar" groups proclaimed their desire for a military victory by North Vietnam; today few peace groups openly endorse the military activities of foreign governments, and a number of peace groups have made some criticism of the role of Communist and Third World countries in contributing to the arms race.

As democratic socialists we need to work to end war and to eradicate from

the peace movement any double standard between East and West.

Michael Brunson
Seattle, Wash.

■ ■ ■

To the Editor:

The resource guide accompanying Robb Burlage's excellent article on health in the June issue neglected to include the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). They publish *Food for People, Not for Profit* and the "Nutrition Scoreboard" and "Chemical Cuisine" posters. Write CSPI, 1755 S St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Mark Schaeffer
St. Louis, Mo.

■ ■ ■

To the Editor:

I was most disappointed in the article on nuclear power in the June DEMOCRATIC LEFT. Although Michael Harrington does recognize some of the tactical dangers posed for the left by the middle class orientation of the anti-nuclear movement, he fails to recognize the utopian, anti-socialist premises of the anti-nuclear power argument.

As Comrade Harrington has pointed

out so eloquently in his books, the very premise of the socialist argument is that the social and technological development of modern society inexorably tends toward collectivism. The issue is not between individualism and collectivism, as the right would have it, but whether we are to live under a system of corporate collectivism or in a democratically controlled collective society.

There is not enough space here to explain in detail why the idea of individual or neighborhood self-sufficiency in energy is a myth; however, socialists should understand that an individualistic free enterprise ideology will generate this sort of unrealistic dream. Such middle class utopianism has, after all, bedeviled the socialist movement since the time of Fourier and Saint-Simon. By now we should know better than to call for "providing an energy source available to single families and small communities."

Ben Ross
Cambridge, Mass.

Letters to the editor must be signed. We reserve the right to edit for brevity. Please limit letters to less than 250 words.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Formerly the
Newsletter of the
Democratic Left

Michael Harrington
Editor

Maxine Phillips
Managing Editor

Jim Chapin
National Director

DEMOCRATIC LEFT is published ten times a year (monthly except July and August) by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003. Telephone: (212) 260-3270. Subscriptions: \$10 sustaining and institutional; \$5 regular; \$2.50 limited income. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors. ISSN 0164-3207. Second Class Permit Paid at New York, N.Y.

After the Crash, Before the Fall

By Robert Lekachman

CUSTOM NOMINATES OCTOBER 24, 1929, Black Thursday, as the official beginning of the Great Crash and the dismal decade of the Thirties. As John Kenneth Galbraith has demonstrated in his ironic account of these events, *The Great Crash, 1929*, the chronological distinction properly attaches to Tuesday, October 29, possibly "the most devastating day in the history of markets." In a few hours, the *New York Times* industrial average dropped a sickening 43 points, more than enough to cancel the market gains of the preceding twelve months.

Accordingly, on every self-respecting editor's calendar in this 50th Anniversary year of the Great Depression must be a notation to ask some genuine or purported pundit the unavoidable question, Can it happen again?

I am tempted to return the frivolous response, Maybe. But since the single word is manifestly inadequate to mark so solemn a date, I shall briefly amplify it. Whether or not the world economy is approaching a psychodrama as fearful as the Great Crash and its protracted sequel of deep depression is debatable, but what is certain is that the differences between 1929 and 1979 ensure a fresh and original scenario of calamity. For one thing, the stock market cannot repeat its earlier collapse because there is no bubble to burst or balloon to collapse. The market has been so sluggish for several years that some astute investment counselors are actually buying common stocks on the ground that they are bargains.

There is a second and weightier reason for distinguishing 1979 from 1929—the emergence of John Maynard Keynes. As current events unfortunately

demonstrate, Keynesian remedies these days cure neither inflation nor unemployment. At the moment, we have more than enough of both. But the permanent influence of Keynes is political, having placed economic management on congressional and presidential agendas.

As Americans older than I (*aet.* 1920) may recall, sound economists and men of affairs held in 1929 that the business cycle was a natural phenomenon. As dawn followed night, revival succeeded recession. The sterner moralists insisted that hard times were the appropriate punishment for the spendthrift habits of businessmen and consumers. To such profligacy, a touch of bankruptcy and unemployment was a salutary corrective. All that government ought to do was balance its own budget as an example to the citizens and wait for nature to take its course.

Public Expects More

Keynes' precious legacy is legislation like the Employment Act of 1946 and the Humphrey-Hawkins Act of 1978 which, despite grave weaknesses, do register public expectations that government will do something quickly and effectively about unemployment. The depression of the 1930s was a massive failure of effective demand. Because men and women had no jobs, they had no income. Because they had no income they were unable to buy the products that farmers and manufacturers were desperately eager to sell. We are safe from a rerun of this sort of calamity, and a good thing that we are.

Take no premature comfort from these words. It is quite possible that the Great Crash of 1980 or 1981 will begin on the supply side. If we want to make our flesh creep, just imagine another OPEC embargo or blockage of Middle



GrassRoots/cpf

Eastern oil by the PLO's sinking a couple of supertankers in the Straits of Hormuz. Any substantial shortage of oil will lead in short order to massive factory layoffs, rapid spread of unemployment to the remainder of the economy, and the sort of depression that will encourage historians to recall with nostalgia the 1930s as a golden era. The world's economy is a great deal more fragile, far more dependent on a continuous flow of oil from the most politically inflammable part of the globe, than the world economy of 1929. The potentialities for disaster naturally are all the greater.

Cheer up. A huge majority of possible crises never occur. That, I fear, is the best hope I can offer. ■

Robert Lekachman is the author of *Economists at Bay*.

■ ■ ■

NEW YORK CONVENTION

The New York City DSOC will hold its first annual convention October 20-21. The theme is "Their City or Ours: Corporate Priorities or Human Needs?" For information, call Chuck McKnight at (212) 362-6100 or Betty Lorwin at (212) 787-5942.

El Salvador Takes Heart From Nicaraguan Victory

By Patrick Lacefield

THE DOMINO THEORY IS ALIVE and well and relevant in Central America. With the victory of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan people over the Somoza dynasty that ruled their nation for nearly half a century with the blessings of eight U.S. presidents, the people under right-wing military regimes in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have drawn new hope and inspiration. In Guatemala City, trade unions staged a demonstration of thousands in the city square to celebrate the Sandinista triumph, only to be dispersed by bayonet-wielding government troops using tear gas. The government of Honduras has been cordial to the Nicaraguan junta to the point of returning airplanes flown to their country by fleeing troops loyal to the deposed General Somoza. And in the sleepy capital city of El Salvador—the letters “FSLN” are scrawled on buildings throughout the city center. “The people here can’t talk about Nicaragua,” a young church opposition activist told me, in hushed tones, “but we feel it here,” pointing to his heart.

Nicaragua, a country whose fields and factories lay devastated after the liberation struggle, became something of a 1970s version of the Spanish Civil War, as volunteers flocked to the Sandinista banner from throughout Latin America. The far more difficult struggle, however, lies ahead, as the five-person ruling junta has acknowledged. With a country laid waste and a national treasury sacked by Somoza and his compatriots, the first order of business is reconstruction and the campaign to win international support for the business of rebuilding the country. Indeed, the first plea for international help was made by the Sandinistas to the Socialist International meeting in Stockholm in July. The International responded by sending a delegation



Photo by Patrick Lacefield

Signs in front of the San Salvador cathedral charge that from January to June 412 opponents of the Romero regime have been murdered.

headed by former Portuguese prime minister Mario Soares to assay the situation and draw up recommendations for action.

The new government has nationalized Somoza's properties, as well as all institutions of banking and credit. At the same time it has displayed a reconciliatory policy toward former supporters of General Somoza, and a political pluralism that has surprised many naysayers. Pledging to follow a nonaligned course in world affairs, the junta recently issued a bill of rights guaranteeing freedom of religion, speech and the press, abolishing capital punishment and restoring due process, and subordinating the right of private property to the national and public interest.

Repression Next Door

Next door to Nicaragua, in El Salvador, the Sandinista victory has touched off a new wave of repression by the inflexible military government of General Carlos Humberto Romero and quasi-official right wing terrorist groups. In

late July, the only opposition daily newspaper in this smallest and most densely populated of the Central American republics was destroyed by fire. On August 4, another priest was assassinated, the seventh in the past two years. Between January and June of this year, more than 400 Salvadorean opposition activists, mostly *campesinos* and students, have been killed by military and paramilitary forces.

El Salvador is perhaps the starkest example of maldistribution and concentration of wealth, land, and power. Eight percent of the population controls more than half the national wealth, with 90 percent of Salvadoreans subsisting on incomes of less than \$100 a year. Half the arable land is owned by 1,800 families, while 86,000 others share the remainder. El Salvador has the lowest caloric intake per person in Latin America and studies indicate that 73 percent of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition. In a nation more wealthy than its neighbors due to lucrative coffee exports and extensive light manufactur-

ing, the official unemployment rate stands at 46 percent.

The military has ruled in El Salvador since squelching a peasant rebellion in 1932, frequently allowing elections which are, as in 1972 and 1977, invariably tainted by fraud and intimidation. Following the massacre of unarmed protesters on San Salvador's cathedral steps in May by the army, General Romero announced a "dialogue" with the opposition, in advance of next year's assembly elections. But the opposition is not buying. "There is no credibility for The Dialogue because a dialogue implies the presence of and toleration for dissenting voices," argues Archbishop Oscar Romero, whose defense of human rights and the poor has earned the Salvadorean Catholic Church the undying enmity of the government and wealthy oligarchy and Romero a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. "It is absurd that a national dialogue has been called during a state of siege and that during this . . . more acts of violence have been com-

mitted by the extreme right and—in revenge—by the extreme left."

Boycott of Elections

At this point the moderate opposition, the Christian Democrats, the social democratic National Revolutionary Movement and the National Democratic Union, are vowing to boycott the 1980 elections unless the daily assassinations, disappearances and incidents of torture are halted and *campesinos* given the right to organize economically and politically. Most observers, however, feel that the baton of leadership in the Salvadorean opposition has been passed to the Church of Archbishop Romero—with its espousal of a "theology of liberation"—and to the radical "street" groups. The latter, in particular the Popular Revolutionary Bloc and the Popular Leagues of February 28, are Marxist-led coalitions of trade unions, students, *campesinos*, shantytown dwellers and others who use such militant nonviolent actions against the government as general strikes,

land occupations, and demonstrations. "What the bourgeois parties don't realize," a leader of these forces told me, "is that the popular movement for democracy in El Salvador is not in the electoral arena but in the streets."

"Remember," intones the English-language Salvadorean *News-Gazette*, "that whenever you repeat the rumor 'El Salvador is next' and believe it, you are a propagandist for the other side." But with the "other side" in El Salvador and in Central America generally being the bulk of the population—landless, hungry, and poor—can liberation be far behind? ■

Patrick Lacefield is a free-lance writer in New York who gathered information for this article during a two-month trip to Latin America this summer.

not permanently alter the American socio-economic system." He and other speakers urged young activists to adopt the perspective of "long distance runners" who occasionally may sprint to gain a psychological advantage but who know the race is "long-run."

The need to work in coalitions on and off the campus with labor, minorities, feminists and community activists of all ages was a dominant theme of the

Youth Section Grows

By Joseph Schwartz

MORE THAN 160 STUDENTS and young trade union and community activists gathered at the SNPJ camp in Enon Valley, Pennsylvania August 24-27 for an educational conference sponsored by the Institute for Democratic Socialism. The conference marked the largest gathering of young socialist activists since the late 1960s. Most were members of DSOC, which in the past two years has seen its Youth Section grow from 200 to close to 800 members, with chapters at more than 15 campuses and communities.

The conference sessions reflected a broad range of political interests with plenary sessions on socialist/feminism, the state of the labor movement, activism in the minority community and the role of socialists in mainstream American politics. Workshop topics ranged from the antinuclear movement to the antiapartheid movement, from reproductive rights to Marxism and democracy.

DSOC Youth Section groups have

been active in feminist, anti-apartheid and antinuclear movements as well as in organizing labor support activities and socialist education. At Wayne State University and Northwestern they have played a key role in the antidraft movement, while chapters at Georgetown, University of Illinois, University of Missouri and Cornell have held educational forums on the labor movement and helped with labor organizing drives.

Many chapters, particularly those at Harvard and Stanford, have been active in the Nestlé boycott and the South African divestiture movement, and a new chapter of twenty members at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville has worked against the reinstatement of the death penalty. Reproductive rights work and feminist education has been a growing priority within the Youth Section. Cornell students protested *Playboy* photographers' presence on campus and the Harvard-Radcliffe chapter co-sponsored a successful national conference on socialist/feminism last spring.

"The most essential lesson of the 1960s," Youth Section Chair Mark Levinson told the conference in his opening remarks, "was that students alone could



Photo by Deborah Schultz

T-shirts were a hit at conference.

conference. Chapters made commitments to work with the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition on Stop Big Oil Day October 17, to participate in Abortion Rights Action Week October 22-29, and to build for a youth presence at the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA Conference November 16-17 in Washington. The Youth Section also discussed plans for a major outreach conference in late December. ■

Joseph Schwartz is the national youth coordinator of the DSOC Youth Section.

Bye, Bye Sunny Welfare State

By Harold Meyerson

ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF next month, unless the experts are universally wrong, the citizens of California will enact Paul Gann's "Spirit of 13" initiative, a specimen of social thought that ranks somewhere between the criminal code of Vlad the Impaler and laws against dancing. The Gann panacea limits any increases in state and local spending to commensurate percentage increases in population, cost of living, and aggregate personal income. To be sure, the cost of living can increase while aggregate personal income falls—this happened in 1974—and Gann is a little fuzzy about what happens then. The state may at that point be mandated to cut expenditures during the next recession, and another California innovation will be loosed upon an unsuspecting world: counter-counter-cyclical spending.

But the most striking aspect of the Gann campaign is the nature of the organized opposition. Seven weeks before the election, it is nonexistent. At the

equivalent point in the Proposition 13 campaign, millions of dollars had been raised in opposition; at this point in the Gann campaign, the opposition has raised nary a dime. Democratic Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy, who led the fight against Prop 13, is one of the three signatories to the ballot argument in support of Gann. The inevitability of Gann's passage has become an article of untested faith: as yet, no one has even commissioned a poll on the issue. Which brings us to the paradoxical state, both militant and demoralized, of California's public sector unions.

For California has just passed through a summer of unprecedented labor discontent. During the last four years, the wages of California's public employees have slipped well below parity with those of their private sector counterparts. During the past year's reign of Jarvis economics, their wage adjustments ranged from zero to 5 percent. This July, then, as their salary adjustments were debated in the Legislature and in city and county halls, perhaps as many as 50,000 public employees across the state participated in day- or week-long, often spontaneous, work stoppages. For one brief, shining moment, it looked as though Howard Jarvis was to join Harry Bridges on the very short list of those who have sired a general strike in the Golden State. Indeed, this clearly seemed the hope of Jerry Brown, who tried to hold wage adjustments to strike-provoking

levels well beneath Carter Administration standards but whose vetoes the Legislature overrode when confronted with the strike threat.

Stunned Left

This defensive militance on the issue of wages stands in sharp contrast to the stunned passivity with which public employees, and, indeed, much of the California left, contemplates the dismantling of the welfare state. The problem is that the social contract that evolved during the Thirties is unraveling faster in California than anywhere else, and is being renegotiated at a time when the forces for progressive change are largely demobilized. Offered little, people don't vote. This leaves the left biding its time or fighting other wars, awaiting that moment when chronic underfunding so destroys the public sector (around 1981-82) that a majority for progressive tax reform can then be assembled and the welfare state variously reinvented. ■ *Harold Meyerson is a free-lance writer based in Los Angeles.*

■ ■ ■

DEBS FOUNDATION PRIZE

Eugene V. Debs Foundation-Bryant Spann Memorial Prize (\$500) for the best article or essay (recently published as well as unpublished) in the tradition of Eugene V. Debs. For further details, write to the Bryant Spann Memorial Prize Committee, c/o The Department of History, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana 47809. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

■ ■ ■

NDP TO HOLD PARLEY

The New Democratic Party of Canada invites foreign observers to its tenth federal convention, November 22-25 in Toronto. Write to: Steve Thomas, Ontario New Democrats, 3 Church St., Toronto, Ont. M5E 1M2.



"Take a couple of aspirin and call us after the election."

CAPITAL QUOTES ■

“Profits were absolutely sensational (in 1978)... The median return on stockholder's equity—14.3 percent—was the highest on record since the *Fortune* 500 was first published in 1955.”

Fortune
May 7, 1979

WHAT'S LEFT TO READ

By Ronald Radosh

Mother Jones (Sept.-Oct. 1979) \$1.50 per copy; \$12 per year, 10 issues, from *Mother Jones*, 1886 Haymarket Square, Marion, Ohio 43302.

MOTHER JONES IS RAPIDLY BECOMING the MOST widely-read popular magazine of the left. Culturally, it resembles its ancestor *Ramparts*. But politically, it is much more in tune with the developing social movements of the 1980s, and its editors seem more and more to identify themselves as being in the democratic socialist tradition.

The current issue features editor Adam Hochschild's moving memoir of political identity, "Two Faces of Russia," a beautifully written piece in which the author assesses the impact on his own life of his dashing uncle, Boris Sergievsky, a captain in the Tsar's air corps, who fought with the Whites in the Russian Civil War. Hochschild has come to appreciate his uncle's individualism and spontaneity, and to honor the life-force present in him, which he finds absent from his own compatriots in the '60s New Left.

But Hochschild continues to contrast the personal lessons gathered from his reactionary uncle with those he absorbed from the writings of Victor Serge, a revolutionary contemporary who fought with the Reds, but who "never abandoned his passion for free speech and civil liberties, his sympathy for the free spirits who didn't toe the Bolshevik line." Fighting with Trotsky's troops against the Whites—and, it seems, a few feet from Hochschild's uncle—Serge continued to argue "ceaselessly against the increasing arrests by the Bolsheviks, the closed trials and the death penalty for political prisoners."

A revolutionary whose works would never be published by the Soviet tyranny, Serge's radicalism made him unknown in Cold War America as well. Taken with Serge's life and vision, Hochschild travels to the Soviet Union today, to see the doomed revolutionary's homeland, and to look for modern descendants who keep Serge's spirit alive. Serge has become his emotional father—a way for Hochschild to transcend his own very capitalist lineage.

Visiting with Soviet dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov and Lev Kopolev, Hochschild learns that support of their cause entails breaking with preconceptions. Many of the dissidents hold a pro-Western stance he finds jarring, and he notes his need to suppress a gut reaction that "any friend of Senator Jackson's is *not* a friend of mine." His conclusion: "An ideal vision of democratic socialism is all very well, but sometimes you have to put traditional formulas aside and engage in the battles at hand." In his case, it means democratic left support for Soviet dissidents, even when their motivation of "ethnic nationalism" is something he admits he and other leftists view with "snobbish dismay."

■ ■ ■

GEO. Vol. 1, No. 5 (Sept. 1979) \$4 per copy, \$36 per year, from GEO, P.O. Box 2552, Boulder, Colo. 80321.

GEO can be described simply as an intelligent person's photo guide to the modern world or, more accurately, as a leftwing version of *National Geographic*. Photo fans will buy it alone for its exquisite photography, unexcelled anywhere. But there is more reason than the pictures to read it.

The current issue contains a most unusual and sensitive article by *New York Times* reporter Joseph B. Treaster, titled "The Bishop." It is a moving and emotional account of Treaster's few weeks with Pedro Casaldáliga, the Bishop of Sao Felix, Brazil—the man whose diocese in the Brazilian wilderness exemplifies the work and politics of the priests who espouse the theology of liberation. With brilliant photos by David Burnett, Treaster brings us into a world we could otherwise never manage to enter or understand.

Father Pedro works unsparingly for the peasantry of Brazil, risking police attack and disease as regular parts of his work. He turns down the offer of a plane for easier travel, and insists instead on grueling travel by public bus and truck, to stay close to the people and gain their confidence. "I am not canonizing socialism," Casaldáliga tells journalist Treaster; "I know very well its failings, its weaknesses and limits. However, from the starting point of conscience, of simple humanity and of faith, I think it is the only legitimate human path."

After ten full years of work in the region, among the poorest of Brazil's population, Casaldáliga states his only hope that "to some small extent at least, I have awakened the consciousness of the people . . . have helped a little with their unity." Kudos to Treaster and GEO for allowing those of us in the rich First World to understand the depths of this socialist Bishop's commitment and inspiring good works. ■

DONALD SHAFFER ASSOCIATES, INC.

ALL FORMS OF INSURANCE

Specialists in Pension & Employee Benefit Planning

11 Grace Avenue
Great Neck, N.Y. 11021
(212) 895-7005
(516) 466-4642

FREE . . . FREE . . . FREE . . . FREE . . .

On Religion and Socialism, a reprint of a speech made by Peter Steinfelds at the DSOC Chicago Convention in 1977. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope to John Cort, Editor, *Religious Socialism*, 1 Maolis Rd., Nahant, Mass. 01908.

(PLEASE POST)

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA



**ON THE CUTTING EDGE
OF A NEW GENERATION
OF AMERICAN POLITICS**

This November – at the Democratic Agenda Conference – the 70's end and the 80's begin. A new generation of American activists will take a stand for people, not profits ...

**DEMOCRATIC
AGENDA CONFERENCE**
November 16 and 17 *
International Inn
Thomas Circle,
Washington, D.C.

* NOVEMBER 18, AD HOC CAUCUSES.

... You should be there, too!

TELEPHONE: (212) 260-3270 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

OR WRITE: DEMOCRATIC AGENDA, ROOM 617,
853 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10003

INITIATORS: Wallace Albertson, Jo Baer, Michael N. Bleicher, Julian Bond, Heather Booth, Rep. John Conyers, Rep. Ronald V. Dellums, Murray H. Finley, Douglas A. Fraser, Michael Harrington, Irving Howe, Mildred Jeffrey, Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier, Arthur B. Keys, Jr., Robert Lekachman, Joyce Miller, Marjorie Phyfe, Cleveland Robinson, Rosemary Ruether, Rick Scott, Paul Soglin, Lester Thurow, William W. Winpisinger, Jerry Wurf, Ruth Jordan, Conference Coordinator.

Spain Faces Divisions on Language, Class, Goals

By Ricardo Otheguy

ANNIVERSARY DATES ARE POOR reference points for understanding political events, but in Spain July 18 is too tempting to overlook. The day arrived trailing memories of past July 18s when history had been made, and then managed to claim for itself another major political development. On July 18, 1936 the army rebelled against the Spanish Republic, leading to a bloody civil war and a 40-year pause in the development of democratic institutions in Spain. On July 18, 1676 the Basque country was stripped of its ancient rights of autonomy by a royal edict designed to consolidate the power of the Spanish king's central government.

With only occasional exceptions, centralism has been the norm ever since. During the long years of military rule after the Civil War of 1936-39, this centralism went beyond political and administrative structures to encompass other aspects of life such as language. Prohibitions were issued against revivals of Basque or Catalan, and only Castilian (what most Americans call Spanish) was allowed for official purposes and in the schools and universities.

The two anniversaries were very much in evidence this summer. Extremist holdovers from the ancien régime announced celebrations of the fascist uprising with slogans of "keep the same flags" and posters showing the national standard waving next to the Falangist flag. Political posters and regional flags are literally everywhere in Spain. Much of this paper flood—and the corresponding litter—consists of flags and insignia of the different regions demanding their autonomy. The rightist campaign was thus aimed at those who find regional banners as unpleasant as dirty streets and who see symptoms of disorder and

decay in both. It continued the right's insistence that only an authoritarian—and centralist—regime has a legitimate claim on the symbols and emotions of national identity.

A Third Anniversary

The clash of the anniversaries and the battle of the wall posters came to a head when, on July 18, the right-of-center government of Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD) announced that it had reached agreement with the major Basque Party in the *Cortes* (the Spanish Parliament) on a new autonomy bill for the Basque country. The success of the negotiations meant that Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez was moving Spain in exactly the opposite direction from that of his authoritarian predecessors and their current spokesmen. The "same-flags" celebration was hardly noticed in the wave of general optimism that swept the country after the signing.

Despite their profound differences, autonomists and fascists cannot be discussed separately, for these two groups seem to be the most important in the political landscape of the new Spanish democracy. The issue of administrative

structure—the regions and their form of governance—has become the nation's main concern, pushing aside what to Socialists might seem the more important issue of economic structure. To judge from the vitality it now shows under an open system, the one idea held in check under the dictatorship was political autonomy for the Basque and Catalan countries and cultural recognition (we could almost say revival in the case of Basque) for their languages. What scampers from under the general's boot when it was finally lifted was not equality and an end to privilege, but regionalism and local flags and languages.

For its part, the right lacks the popularity, the interest, and especially the votes, that the autonomists have, but it is nevertheless significant because of its potential influence on the military. The generals have so far been loyal to the king and his government. The betting is that they will remain so. The danger that they won't is always there and may increase if the Socialists, who are now the opposition, should gain the majority in the national *Cortes* that they now have at many local levels.

The generals have long claimed the



Spanish National Tourist Office

Castilian remains, for the moment, the official language of Spain.

unity of Spain as one of their sacred trusts and made sure, when the current constitution was framed, that the responsibility for maintaining it was placed upon their willing shoulders. There may

“What scampers from under the general's boot when it was lifted was not equality and an end to privilege, but regionalism and local flags and languages.”

be, of course, no incompatibility between national unity and regional autonomy in Spain. Few see the autonomy bills for such areas as the Basque and Catalan countries as a first step toward full independence, despite the publicity given to the terrorist activities of a very small minority of Basques. The demands of the autonomy-seeking regions, such as power over aspects of taxation, police, and education, would strike Americans used to a federal system as uncontroversial. But the stridency of the autonomist campaign, understandable in a climate of competition for parliamentary votes and for concessions on the details of the bills, coupled with the violence in some of the Basque groups, has allowed the far right to cast supporters of autonomy in the role of secessionists. If this spurious equation of autonomy with independence and terrorism were to gain acceptance among the military, the influence of the extreme right in the life of the Spanish state would once more grow well beyond its true political strength.

The problem is made more difficult by the left's inexplicable passivity in the face of the right's nationalistic stance. It isn't only that national flags and patriotism are allowed to become the exclusive property of the right with the resulting political deficit, as happened in the U.S. during the Vietnam war. It is that left circles are distracted from the problems of unemployment and inequality by loose talk about "colonialism" on the part of the Castilians and "oppression" by the Castilian language itself over the other languages of the state.

But after almost 500 years of centralism, political and economic power in Spain appears much more understandable in terms of class lines than of regions,

Discover Democratic Socialism

Do you think of yourself as a socialist? Do you belong to a socialist organization? If you answered yes to the first question and no to the second, then you should join the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). DSOCers are active in unions, minority, community and feminist organizations, the anti-nuclear movement and the left wing of the Democratic party. We do not separate our vision from practical politics. It is because we are socialists that we have a unique contribution to make to the democratic left, showing how incremental reforms must be extended toward a structural transformation of society. By joining thousands of DSOC members in 40 locals and every state you can be part of the resurgence of the American left.

I'd like to join the DSOC. Enclosed find my dues. (\$50 sustaining; \$20 regular; \$10 limited income. Dues include \$5 for DEMOCRATIC LEFT.) Send to: Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003. Tel.: (212) 260-3270.

I want to subscribe to DEMOCRATIC LEFT. Enclosed is \$10 for a sustaining subscription; \$5 for a regular subscription; \$2.50 for a limited income subscription.)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Union, School, Other Affiliation _____

and talk of internal colonialism seems shallow and unproductive. The regions supposedly being oppressed are among the most prosperous in the entire peninsula. It makes little sense to push autonomy and language rights (otherwise perfectly reasonable demands) by equating centralism per se with inequality and colonialism. The rhetoric of oppression is particularly inappropriate when the now popular drive for autonomy in such areas as Catalonia is and has been led by the capitalist and merchant class.

The left is correct in supporting demands for autonomy because they make sense and because it shouldn't be counted out of the liveliest political development of the new democracy. But it must also continue to support the idea and the fact of a united Spain.

Beyond the need to convince the generals that it, too, has the best interests of a united Spain in mind, there are other reasons for the left to try to shift the public's attention away from the regional issue.

During the past decades the Spanish working class has been forced to migrate both within Spain and to Northern Europe in search of employment. The destination of the internal migrants has usually been Madrid and the industrial

centers of the Basque and Catalan countries. Thus, Spanish workers constitute the most national—and least regional—of constituencies. The working class of an autonomous Catalonia will be speakers of Castilian—not Catalan—and will stand to gain least from autonomy if the new administrative structure is controlled by the class that has traditionally supported regional rights. For the workers, inequality and mounting unemployment are ultimately far more important than autonomy. And the issues already raised by the Socialists—bargaining on contracts, strengthening of genuine unions (as opposed to those of the prior regime), instituting interregional transfer payments to the poorer regions—have to regain the political spotlight now dominated by autonomy. For the Socialists, neither of the July 18 celebrations holds much promise, and none of the current wall posters is much help. Soon justice expressed in the amount of *pesetas* of workers' checks and programs will have to take its place alongside — perhaps above — the justice of the flags and the languages that is today's concern. ■

Ricardo Otheguy is a member of the DSOC Hispanic Commission. He traveled in Spain this past summer.

Violence 'Plague' Endemic Throughout U.S. Society

By David G. Gil

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAS BEEN identified in recent years as a major social problem. In 1977, 450,000 incidents of child abuse were reported to authorities throughout the United States. According to President Carter, "each year three to six million acts of severe violence occur in American homes," a fact that led him to create an Interdepartmental Committee on Domestic Violence chaired by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Efforts to prevent domestic violence have so far failed dismally and are unlikely to succeed in spite of the new presidential initiative. This failure is not surprising since preventive efforts have not been directed against the violence in the fabric of our society and in the daily experiences of many people but merely against symptoms in the behavior of individuals. The tendency to blame individuals for social problems affecting them, rather than social, economic, and political dynamics in which they are enmeshed, is not limited to domestic violence. We approach most social problems in this way, from poverty and unemployment to crime, addictions, and mental ills. We tend to treat and punish individuals whom we define as sick, incompetent, evil, lazy, or deviant. This approach is conducive to preserving the social status quo because when individuals are viewed as problematic, the social order can more easily be absolved.

To overcome domestic violence, we need to understand and attack its roots in the social realities with which individuals and families interact rather than viewing it as a phenomenon with supposedly separate causes and cures. From such a perspective, *violence may be defined as human-initiated acts or social conditions which interfere with human*

development. Such acts and conditions can occur among individuals and also between individuals and social institutions. Individuals may act violently toward one another using physical or psychological means or by creating condi-

**THE WORST
THING THAT CAN
HAPPEN TO SOME
CHILDREN IS
THEIR PARENTS.**



Sad, but true. There are many confused adults in America today who are abusing their children. **Help destroy a family tradition.** Most abused children grow up to abuse their own children, since they have learned no other way to raise their own children. Child abusers can be helped. Let us tell you how.

PREVENT CHILD ABUSE. WRITE:



National Committee for
Prevention of Child Abuse,
Box 2866, Chicago, Ill. 60690.

A Public Service of This Magazine
& The Advertising Council **Ad
COUNCIL**

Anti-child abuse campaigns focus on individual responsibility.

tions which interfere with the development of others through deprivation, exploitation, and oppression. Social institutions such as schools, health and welfare systems, and corporations may disregard developmental needs of people through their policies and practices, and may thus subject people to conditions that harm their development. Finally, societies may create and sanction, through values and policies, phenomena such as poverty, discrimination, unemployment, and inflation, which inevitably inhibit individual and group development.

Socially initiated violence, as distinguished from individual violence, may be thought of as "structural violence," intrinsic to certain social structures. Structural violence is usually a "normal" condition, inherent in established social patterns and practices, while personal violence usually involves acts which conflict with prevailing social norms or laws. Personal and structural violence interact with and reinforce one another. Personal violence is usually reactive violence rather than initiating. It occurs when people retaliate against stresses and frustrations caused by structural violence they encounter in everyday life. Structural violence thus tends to breed personal counter-violence. Government agencies and the media focus on sensational cases of personal violence. They disregard the roots of personal violence in structural violence, precluding understanding and effective, preventive intervention.

Why does personal violence occur frequently in homes rather than in settings where people are more likely to confront structural violence? In modern, industrial, urbanized societies, the family and home are expected to restore the emotional stability of individuals who encounter dehumanizing and alienating experiences at work and in other settings. Families function as balance wheels or lightning rods for the stresses of everyday life. The home is the milieu for uninhibited discharge of feelings of hurt, frustration, and anger—that usually can not be discharged at their places of origin, as such direct discharges would be too risky. There are several reasons why people tend to express and act out these feelings at home rather than at work or elsewhere. First, families are traditionally informal settings suited to emotional exchange and to "unwinding" of feelings. Next, society in general, and law-

enforcement authorities, tend to refrain from involvement in family tensions and quarrels. Risks of punitive sanctions are therefore more limited for violent behavior in one's home. Finally, people spend more time with their families than in formal settings, and time spent with the family tends to be less structured.

There is a further link between family life and structural violence, namely, the family's responsibility for preparing children for roles as adults. Whenever personal violence and submission to structural violence are normal aspects of adult life, families, along with schools, the media, and other agents of socialization, will prepare children to adjust to, and participate in, these practices and experiences. This preparation for living with violence is carried out through normal child-rearing and educational processes. These include sports, stories, art, cognitive and experiential learning, quality of human relations and emotional milieu, rewards and punishments and, especially, an ample measure of corporal punishment. Hierarchical structures,

male dominance, and irrational, arbitrary authority, are frequent attributes of our homes. All prepare children for adjustment to a lifetime of structural violence.

Space does not permit a description of the many features of structural violence in our society, all of which obstruct the free development of the rich innate potential of children and adults. We can only note that development-obstructing tendencies can be traced in all our social, economic, and political institutions, and in our inegalitarian, competitive, selfish and exploitative human relations and social philosophy. Structural violence inheres in the manner in which wealth and resources are owned, used, or rather misused, and controlled by a small minority of the people for narrow, selfish ends.

This analysis suggests that violence in families and elsewhere can be prevented. However, prevention cannot be accomplished by treating or punishing individuals who are trapped in cycles of violence. Rather, structural violence, the roots of personal and domestic violence, must be eliminated by transforming so-

cial, economic, political, and cultural institutions in accordance with egalitarian, cooperative, and genuinely democratic values. While such a transformation will not eliminate all personal violence imme-

“Prevention of violence is primarily a political rather than a professional and technical issue.”

diately, it will begin to reduce its incidence, and it is certainly an essential, though perhaps not sufficient, condition towards its eventual prevention. In any case, it seems clear that prevention of violence from our homes and lives is primarily a political, rather than a professional and technical issue. ■

David Gil is professor of social policy, Brandeis University, and author of Beyond the Jungle and Child Abuse and Violence. ●

Auto Workers Able to Fight Back

By B.J. Widick

WHILE THE LARGE MAJORITY of people who work for a living seem defenseless against the ravages of soaring inflation, job insecurities and job layoffs, the exceptions are the strongly unionized workers like the 1,200,000 auto, aircraft and agricultural implement workers, and the 300,000 retirees represented by the United Auto Workers union. They are in a better position to fight back, and are doing so.

This summer, General Motors, a giant multinational corporation, felt constrained to offer its 400,000 UAW members a new contract offer better than most American workers could hope for, but considered unsatisfactory to a well-organized and dynamic union lead by Douglas A. Fraser, a man viewed as the best bargainer the auto industry has ever faced.

Before the GM offer—which almost matched the disgraceful wage guidelines of the Carter administration—7 percent

for labor when inflation is running at 13 percent—two events made a new contract without a national strike possible.

The UAW won a big victory at the new GM Oklahoma large assembly plant. Fraser and the UAW team walked out of negotiations until the results came in. A major sore point was removed when GM dropped its southern anti-union strategy.

Secondly, the UAW calmly set a series of strategic mini-strikes at critical GM production points—seven plants were targeted. After a brief skirmish, GM got the point. Although at this writing (early September) both sides hope for a peaceful settlement, the UAW has a \$280,000,000 strike fund ready to use.

Pacesetter Contract

As the pacesetter, the GM contract, with variations, will be negotiated at Ford. For Chrysler, the UAW may be expected to negotiate a contract with “promissory notes” in return for concessions calculated to give Lee A. Iacocca, the new Chrysler boss, a breathing spell.

The UAW is vitally concerned with the 132,000 jobs at stake if Chrysler collapses. So is the city of Detroit, which can't stand the loss of its largest employer and taxpayer.

The recent faux pas of Thomas Murphy, president of GM, who argued against federal assistance to Chrysler—it would violate the principle of free enterprise, he said—reflects the basic 19th century attitude that still prevails in the corporate mind at the top. This could cause a last minute foul-up of the trend towards a peaceful settlement.

For labor, the UAW negotiations in auto, to be followed by those in agricultural implement and aircraft industries present a clear lesson. In a time of oligopolies, inflation, and antiunion political administrations, small unions are obsolete. Unorganized workers take a terrible beating. The UAW model should be “the vanguard, and the architect of the future.” ■

B. J. Widick's latest book is Auto Work and Its Discontents, The Johns Hopkins Press.

SOCIALIST NOTES

By Nancy Kleniewski

SEVERAL DSOC LOCALS AROUND THE COUNTRY have been working successfully on housing issues during the past year. At the initiative of several members active in the housing movement, the Washington, D.C. Local last winter began a Study-Action Group (SAG) to investigate housing problems in the District. The group focused on the two most crucial housing issues in Washington: rent control and conversion of apartment buildings to condominiums. The SAG invited representatives from the City Council, the city's Rental Accommodations Office and other groups to a series of meetings to discuss the policy implications of D.C.'s housing problems. The DSOC Local then published a position paper on housing, charging that the private market in housing has failed because people can no longer afford housing, and calling for more public control, including greater use of public housing development corporations and the creation of a pub-

In late spring the local held a Speak Out on housing problems with a panel of speakers representing labor, a tenants' organization, a religious group, the City Council, and DSOC. The unexpectedly large audience of 270 exceeded by far the number who attended the mayor's housing conference. The televised event had been endorsed by several local unions and drew a good cross-section of the D.C. population.

Other DSOC action around housing in Washington has included participation in demonstrations against condominium conversions and will continue with active support for an anti-conversion and anti-displacement bill introduced into the City Council by Hilda Mason. The local will also attempt to make the Speak Out coalition into a more permanent force in District politics.

DSOC member and Speak Out organizer Bob Gaw pointed out the importance of housing as a coalition-building issue. "For unions, especially, whatever gains are made at the bargaining table are being wiped out by inflation. Housing has emerged as the number one political issue in Washington, because it involves more groups than just tenants."

Bay Area DSOC has also become active in housing issues this year. The local has joined San Franciscans for Affordable Housing (SFAH), a coalition formed to combat the Bay Area's high rents, which are the most expensive in the country relative to the standard of living in the area. Although the Board of Supervisors passed a rent control bill this year, SFAH calls it "meaningless" since it controls only a few very large realtors in the city.

The coalition is supporting a ballot initiative in the November election that would revamp the rent control ordinance by providing that any rent increases over the consumer price index would automatically be appealed to an election rent board. Other provisions of the bill are a set of tough requirements for conversion of apartment buildings to condominiums, an eviction protection mechanism which makes evictions difficult to obtain and gives present tenants the first right to move

back in after renovations are made, and an anti-speculation tax. Because a short supply is at the root of the housing crisis in the Bay Area, the ballot initiative, if passed, will also encourage new apartment construction by exempting it from rent control. Simultaneously, it will forbid demolition of old apartment buildings in order to construct new ones.

The housing coalition consists of groups doing grassroots organizing around the initiative as well as groups participating in a more professionalized media campaign. DSOC members have been working mainly in the local communities on door-to-door and neighborhood campaigns. Bob Munson, of the Bay Area DSOC Local, says that as in Washington, housing is the most important issue in San Francisco right now. He said the benefit for the local of working in the housing coalition has been to gain more widespread public identification which has helped "stabilize" DSOC in local politics and has helped recruit new members. As this is written, a meeting of local housing activists with Mike Harrington is being planned for late September, which will be a further opportunity for publicity and recruitment.

■ ■ ■

According to Chicago DSOC housing activist Milt Cohen, Chicago faces the same housing problem as Washington and San Francisco. Apartments are being withdrawn from the rental market and converted into condominiums, driving up the rents of remaining apartments. Residents feel forced to buy the condos to prevent eviction and rent increases, but even when they buy, they often find that the services are poor and the prices high.

Within the past year, Citizens for Condominium Legislation has emerged to organize people being displaced from their homes. They recently held a demonstration of over 100 senior citizens at the mayor's office to protest the current round of huge increases. Cohen says that Mayor Jane Byrne reneged on her campaign promises to do something about housing costs and condominium conversions, but he thinks that the housing coalition may have a chance against the presently powerful real estate lobby if the present rate of organizing is maintained.

RESOURCES

For more information on housing issues:

- *Shelterforce* magazine, 380 Main St., East Orange, N.J. 07018, \$5/six issues.
- The Planners' Network (Information Exchange), 360 Elizabeth St., San Francisco, Cal. 94114
- "We Shall Not Be Moved" (Slide show on displacement), Dayton Community Media Workshop, 215 Superior Ave., Dayton, Ohio 45406

Have you subscribed to SOCIALIST FORUM, DSOC's Discussion Bulletin? Send \$8 to SF, Room 617, 853 Broadway, New York 10003. Coming up: "Coalition Politics in the '80s."



Britain's Information Services

Margaret Thatcher wasn't kidding when she promised voters a clean sweep. Labor opponents think her programs deserve a shovel.

BRITAIN, from page 2
 which workers could win the largest increases by strike action. The newspapers, exploiting last winter's strikes, played effectively on people's fears that the unions had gone wild. Perhaps more than blacks the unions now have become the prime scapegoats; there is a quite alarming popular bitterness that the unions under Labor were the "real government." Finally, young voters, who cannot realize what a difference the welfare state has made, were attracted by the Tories' carefully manufactured image of efficiency plus individual freedom.

Intellectual Paralysis

Part of the problem is that the TUC, faced with a staggering growth in membership (especially in new white collar areas) and also in rank-and-file movements that no longer accept the old assumptions, is—like the Labor Party—intellectually paralyzed. We have moved out of the Affluent Society into something more complex, but English social democrats still sit mesmerized in front of the cobra of change, playing the old hymns and hoping somehow to muddle through. Any "new thinking" inside the Labor Party tends to flatten out into the old left-versus-right quarrels which have more to do with jargon than any real issue. For example, in preparations for this year's Labor Party Conference, the left is using up much energy trying to reshape the constitution to block what is

in effect a veto of Conference decisions by the Parliamentary Labor group. With few exceptions, Labor MPs are so opportunist and non-socialist—most voted for their own £5,000 pay rise while lecturing the lower-paid unions on restraint—that one instinctively applauds any move to break their stranglehold on policy. But reflexive bashing of the right wing is no substitute for thinking through a relevant leftwing perspective.

The Labor Party cannot be blamed for the present industrial decline. The causes of Britain's weakness are historical and, in some measure, outside the control of Whitehall's suave mandarin elite. Not even North Sea oil revenues can totally disguise the world slump which is even beginning to affect those capitalist paragons, Japan and West Germany. What the Labor Party can be blamed for is a refusal to even try to understand what the possibilities might be for a nation as advanced in crisis as this one. This political bankruptcy extends across the spectrum. Labor leadership, bumbling along between the stools of an authoritarian, watered-down socialism and an ineffective capitalism, looks even to sympathizers like a faction-ridden relic rather than a party capable of evolving new policies, new choices. Indeed, in its heart of hearts, that may be how Labor looks even to itself. Two revealing incidents: Recently the National Executive "forgot" to send its usual delegation to the annual meeting of the Socialist International in

Sweden. And, in a songbook just issued by Labor headquarters, the stirring party anthem *Red Flag* has been relegated to the section titled "Historical."

If the Labor Party cannot believe in itself, why should voters believe in it?

Tory Cuts May Aid Labor

As in the past, Tory vengefulness may solidify Labor ranks. Mrs. Hatcher's first inglorious 100 days have shaken even her Cabinet colleagues. The new budget betrayed the Tories' favorite voters, skilled workers and junior managers. Top bosses were handed generous tax concessions at the expense of the £10,000-a-year family person. Thatcher has enraged both Tory- and Labor-controlled local councils by indiscriminate spending cuts. And Tory pay policies are turning even mild civil servants into picket line militants. Court clerks, impeccably traditionalist, have just gone on strike.

The Tories' monetarist fantasies and determined attempts to discredit the idea of the public sector have opened a new era in British politics. For short-term advantage the new government is selling off, denationalizing, some of the most profitable state-owned industries, such as British National Oil Corporation and British Airways. Unemployment has been promoted as the prime weapon against inflation. We are back to the law of the jungle. The logic of Proposition 13, not the accumulated decencies of the welfare state, now operate.

The tragedy is that the Tories probably will be as grossly incompetent at rejigging the economy as Labor. The basic imbalance of City dominance over the rest of UK capitalism, and an under-financed antiquated industrial base, will not be solved by doctrinaire *laissez faire* nor by punishing the workers. There is still a chance, but only a chance, of converting late British capitalism into something else within the democratic socialist mainstream. Demolishing the welfare state is a step backwards into a tired past. ■

Clancy Sigal is an American writer who has been living in London. He is the author of Going Away, Weekend in Dinlock, and the recently published Zone of the Interior. This fall he is teaching at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

HERE AND THERE—In Washington, Carter can't do anything right when it comes to dealing with the labor movement. While the White House Labor Day picnic was highly touted, the secretary-treasurer of the local Hotel and Restaurant Workers pointed out that non-union waiters were used and deliveries came in non-union trucks. . . . In Paris, Karl Marx is a profitable prophet. An original copy of the *Communist Manifesto* was sold by an auction firm for \$65,000.

STUNG BY KILLER BEES—A group of twelve state legislators who disappeared to deny the Texas state legislature a quorum grabbed some headlines nationally over the summer. It turns out that their protest may have begun to transform party alignments in the Lone Star State. The reason the liberal legislators left was to prevent a cynical manipulation of the state's election laws. Conservative Democrats wanted to allow Democratic and Republican primaries on different days. That way conservative voters could come out for the expected Connally-Reagan fight in the Republican primaries and still maintain conservative control over the Democratic party. Since the law did not change, a number of Democratic conservatives are reportedly preparing to switch party affiliation. An exodus of rightwingers from the Democrats to the Republicans has long been a hope for the labor movement and the liberal-left in Texas; the killer bees may have accelerated the trend toward a two-party state and genuine political competition.

CAN CAPITALISM COLLAPSE AGAIN? It's fifty years this month since the stock market crash that precipitated the

Great Depression, so every political and economic commentator poses (and attempts to answer) the Big Question: can it happen again? Robert Lekachman offers thoughts elsewhere in this issue, and in the interests of political balance, this column cites the *Wall Street Journal's* survey. The general consensus of those economists polled for the August 28 *Journal* article was that it can't happen again. The reasons were interesting: multiple-wage earner families; income maintenance programs; and the willingness of the government to bail out failing institutions like the Franklin National Bank and Penn Central. And this analysis came from even conservative economists like Arthur Burns. So much for the sermons on cutting back government spending and leaving more to the free market!

SOMEHOW WE'VE MISSED THE OUTRAGED PROTESTS from freedom-loving conservatives who object to Big Government violations of privacy. What should they be protesting about? Plans by the Selective Service to use Internal Revenue and Social Security files in the event the draft is resumed. The Pentagon is worried that in a peacetime situation, young people simply will not register for the draft, so some military leaders and congressional supporters of the draft favor "passive registration" whereby the Selective Service gets its lists from other government sources—notably the IRS and the Social Security Administration. Waivers of some tax statutes and privacy laws would be required to implement passive registration, and such waivers are now unlikely. So, according to *Computer World*, some Selective Service officials are looking toward authorization of a test to see if the system would work.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

853 Broadway, Room 617
New York, N.Y. 10003

412



SECOND CLASS
POSTAGE PAID AT
NEW YORK,
NEW YORK