

# DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY  
MICHAEL HARRINGTON

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## Coalitions: Too Many or Not Enough?

By Ruth Jordan

**T**HERE'S THE FULL EMPLOYMENT Action Council, the Citizen Labor/Energy Coalition, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA, Democratic Conference, COIN, CAPE and Progressive Alliance. There's Interchange, the Consumer Coalition for Health and even the Consumers Committee for No-Fault Insurance. Too many coalitions? For the trade union leaders called upon to provide the bulk of the financial support for many of these organizations, it must certainly seem so.

Increasing pressures on union funds whose revenues shrink in a time of high unemployment force a new look at coalition politics and its value to the overall mission of unions and other organizations that cooperate within coalitions.

Whatever bad taste was left in the mouths of unionists and radicals by the coalitions of the Thirties and Forties (which were often dominated by Communist Party activists and converted to their own political ends) was dispelled by the successes of the coalition of the Sixties.

Certainly the victories of the civil rights coalition, which included tens of thousands of citizens not usually engaged

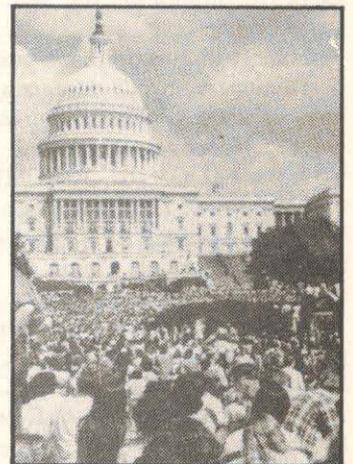


Photo by Marilyn Kaggen

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*The coalitions have  
opened dialogue with a  
new generation of  
political people.*

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in politics, showed Americans that coalition politics could provide a legitimate method for unity of program and action. Its solidarity of spirit convinced Congress and the president that on this issue they faced a nation unified in spirit and purpose.

During the Nixon period the effective coalition between civil rights activists, other liberals and labor was almost destroyed by the differences between coalition members over the Vietnam war, with shattering consequences. The

consciousness that there were some issues on which the left could be counted on to agree in principle, if not in detail, was destroyed. The divisions carried over to the drive by minority and women leaders to develop strategies for affirmative action.

The loss of unity was made even more poignant by the devastated political and social scenery facing the left:

- poverty programs being dismantled or under attack;
- the decline of organizations of

consumers;

- setbacks in Congress on initiatives to pass national health;

- A growing surge of political strength by the right—secure in the knowledge that the administration represented its point of view;

- erosion of gains made by environmentalists;

- attacks on legislation to protect working people against occupational health and safety hazards.

The bitter dissension between the

## LETTERS

To the Editor:

I was delighted to see the report in September on Greg Akili's work, and thought the newsletter would be interested in the recent formation of the Citizens Committee for Justice for Household Workers, which I chair, and which is directed by William Hafer, executive director of the Workers Defense League.

We will function as a citizen support group to anyone organizing household workers. At present, four AFL-CIO unions are actively organizing in New York State—DC 1707, AFSCME; Local 32B-32J, SEIU; Local 371, Social Service Employees Union, AFSCME; and District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees.

Some members of our board, now in formation, are Greg Akili, Carolyn Reed, Representatives Shirley Chisholm and Charles Rangel, Bayard Rustin, State Senator Vander Beatty, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Vinnie Burrows and representatives of the unions now organizing in New York.

As part of the background, you may be pleased to know that, following the passage of the Posner Household Workers Law, the first Household Workers Union was organized in the fall of 1977 by Ramon Jimenez (a

DSOC member and at that time a member of the Assembly Labor Committee staff) and a group of volunteers, including myself. This was at the Morrisania Community Corporation in the South Bronx, which was operating a household worker vendor service with funds given to it by the city.

This group of 210 workers, who were largely black and Hispanic women, won the first NLRB collective bargaining recognition election in U.S. history for household workers on January 5, 1978.

When this happened, the city, which has bitterly opposed the unionization of these workers (because it would then have to pay more than the minimum wage and start providing some of the protections required by law—such as Social Security, unemployment insurance coverage, Workers Compensation, etc.), proceeded to de-fund the Morrisania Vendor Corporation. So much for union-busting in the '70s.

Seymour Posner  
New York, N.Y.

*The writer is the former chair of the N.Y. State Assembly Labor Committee and presently a commissioner of the N.Y. State Workers Compensation Board.*

To the Editor:

I'm pleased to report that far from being stalled, the ACTWU campaign to organize J.P. Stevens and Company is going full steam ahead. On October 4, workers at Stevens' High Point, N.C. plant voted 68-48 to be represented by ACTWU.

Robert Howard's article (September) overlooks many important organizing efforts in the South—the most notable of which is the United Steelworkers victory at Newport News, Virginia. Other important developments include the victory of the United Furniture Workers in Jefferson County, South Carolina. Additionally, the United Rubber Workers and the UAW have progressively been organizing small plants throughout the South. Howard makes what I think are wrong distinctions between the militancy of "primary" and "secondary" workers and between union and community organizing.

Gretchen Donart  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

*The author is assistant editor of Labor Unity, ACTWU.*

*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

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participants of the Sixties' coalition continued beyond the Nixon administration and might have gone on indefinitely had it not been for a growing realization of two significant developments.

First, it became clear that organized labor could not rely on its traditional legislative skills to pass protective legislation and reform the law. Setbacks in situs picketing and a near squeaker in preserving and advancing the principles of the minimum wage proved that.

### Finding New Allies

On the other hand, it also became clear that new movements were turning to the traditional American coalition with increasing success.

The massive rally for the Equal Rights Amendment which pushed the congressional amendment through saw a revival of the coalition united by a moral imperative as well as political opportunism in the finest sense.

The right wing showed it had picked up a lesson or two from the left. Anti-ERA forces, anti-welfare movements, the Proposition 13 coalition, antiabortion forces were banking on the meanness of spirit that the inflationary period had generated to bring about gains for their negative politics.

Meanwhile, the labor movement organized its forces and for the first time in many years reached out beyond its current alliances to forge the labor law reform coalition. The coalition failed in its crucial test, but the spirit of coalition work was revived.

It is not accurate to say that the labor movement had spurned all coalitions in which there were severe differences prior to the labor law reform movement.

The Civil Rights Leadership Conference remained active and viable. Because of the essential commitment to advance equal rights and because of the labor leadership's consistent position on this question, the Leadership Confer-

ence provided a place where strategy could be aired and discussed. The parties did not agree, but they were able to go their separate ways on some questions without breaking the links that bound them.

*“The period of the Eighties is as pockmarked with political potholes as are the poor streets of our dying cities. It's not necessary to fall into every one of them.”*

The reason that coalition survived was in no small part because the participants shared an essential history of protest and ideas. The new coalitions that have been strengthened since the labor law reform struggle have opened dialogue with a new generation of political people who do not have the same history of repression and rebellion that unionists and blacks shared.

These are community activists, church radicals, environmentalists and others who were spawned by the New Left and antiwar politics and understand the issues of this generation.

This newer generation of activists has been introduced to the values and politics of working class movements. Coalition work showed new generations of political Americans that it was essential to include the organized might of working people if they wanted to get a job done.

### Progressive Spirit Renewed

Most importantly these new coalitions revived the progressive spirit in America. They are effectively countering the right wing on every level of American life. By organizing in communities and on the city and state level, the left shows that it can muster soldiers in the field as well as provide expert leadership

on Capitol Hill.

Practically, coalitions have supported research and activity around particular issues such as a national health program, energy, and occupational safety and health—developing a high level of expert knowledge in each area. It would be foolhardy to expect each organization within a coalition to duplicate that effort. It makes much more sense to pool resources to achieve the result.

The coalitions have expanded the number of people attracted to political work. As the number of issues expands, the number of people interested in any single issue are brought into the larger liberal-left coalition. The network between liberals is expanded and the spirit of optimism is also extended.

Coalitions provide a place for people to air their differences, which means there is less opportunity for misunderstandings between organizations that should work together and a greater opportunity for cooperative decision-making.

The less isolated organizations are from one another the less likelihood of sectarianism and separatism which needlessly harden strategy differences into differences of “essential principle.”

The period of the Eighties is as pockmarked with political potholes as are the poor streets of our dying cities. It's not necessary to fall into every one of them. We can avoid the mistakes of a generation past.

This is not to say that we should fail to air our differences. This is not to say we should turn our politics and principles into jello. But we should rescue and intelligently use those forms of organization which have brought us victories for progress.

The problem then is not “too many coalitions,” but the fact that there aren't enough. ■

Ruth Jordan is the coordinator of the 1979 DEMOCRATIC AGENDA Conference.

### THE WIZARD OF ID



By Parker & Hart

# Serious About Socialism

By Michael Harrington

**P**EOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT socialism again, more seriously than at any time in a generation. The labor movement, *Business Week* reports, no longer regards the democratic socialists as "political untouchables." Instead many unions, including internationals from the building trades, are working with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). Indeed, the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA conference on November 16 and 17 is the result of precisely that kind of collaboration. It has been put together by a broad coalition of trade unionists, minority activists, feminists and progressives of every type, and its most militant and dedicated organizers have come from DSOC.

Two questions might occur to a nonsocialist participant in such a coalition: Why does socialism seem to be returning to the American agenda at this time? and, What, exactly, do the socialists stand for?

The answer to the first question is, I think, almost obvious. In this fiftieth anniversary year of the stock market crash, the jobless rate is moving up and, at the same time—a misery which the Thirties never knew—prices are soaring. The liberal wisdom of a generation, which from the New Deal on provided the theoretical and policy basis of all of the great reform victories in this country, doesn't work anymore, not the least because the theory says that prices and unemployment can't go up simultaneously.

At the same time, there is a corporate offensive at every level of the society. Union busting firms with lawyers and public relations specialists and psychologists are trying to create a "union free" atmosphere in America. A moderate proposal for labor law reform was savaged by the corporate politicians, led by the Business Roundtable. Corporate Political Action Committees (PACs) are proliferating so fast that we might get a sophisticated late twentieth century version of the supposedly

extinct practice of buying members of Congress.

In short, socialism is coming back on the agenda because America remains—for all of the improvements won by progressives during the past fifty years—a crisis-ridden, contradictory class society in which the corporate rich are more "equal" than anyone else. Granted that, what do democratic socialists stand for?

Many people conjure up two images when they hear of socialists. First, they see them as dogmatic sectarians, often apologists for the Soviet or some other dictatorship. That is true of some of the people who call themselves socialists. It is emphatically not true of DSOC, which is an open organization with a vision and a strategy but without a finished blueprint for society. Its members include every democratic socialist tendency—Fabians, religious socialists, as well as democratic Marxists. Moreover, it is fundamentally committed to democracy. Indeed, it defines socialism as the *democratization* of economic power, whether that power is exercised by corporations

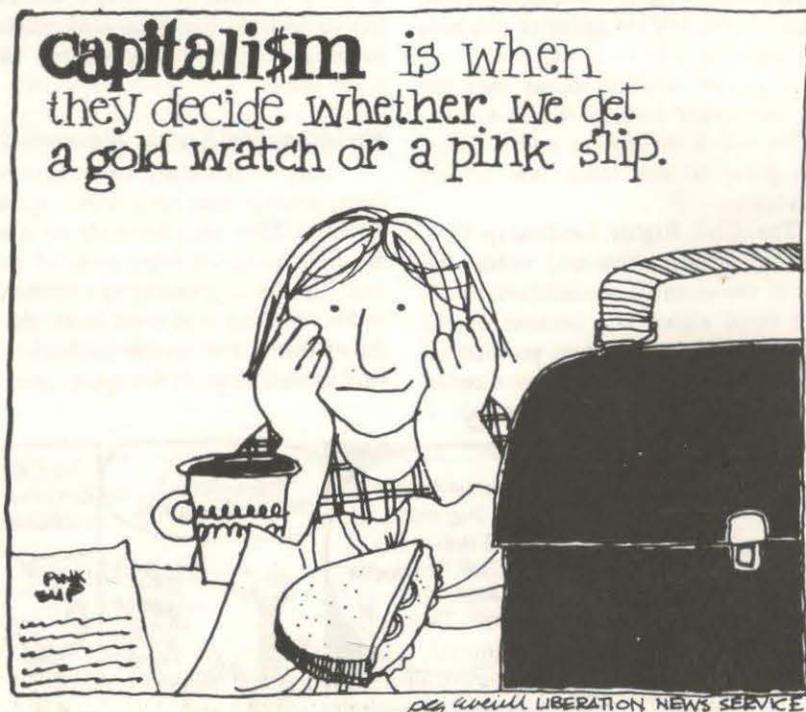
in America or by commissars in the Soviet Union.

Secondly, people often think of socialists as fanatics opposed to any immediate gains, counterposing their perfect, and unreal, utopias to the actual struggles of minorities, unions, neighborhood groups or women. DSOC has joined in every progressive struggle in the country. It does not operate as a disciplined faction led from the outside; its members seek to be the leaven of the movement and openly and clearly identify themselves as socialists.

## Why Call it Socialism?

But, one might ask, if socialists identify with the immediate struggles of working people and minorities and all the other constituencies for change, why, in God's name, drag in that word, "socialism," which is almost certain to be misunderstood?

That word describes an analysis that socialists believe must be shared with the broad democratic left. We fight together with progressives on issues, such as strikes or battles for national health





# Political Publics Decline: Will Left Fill the Vacuum?

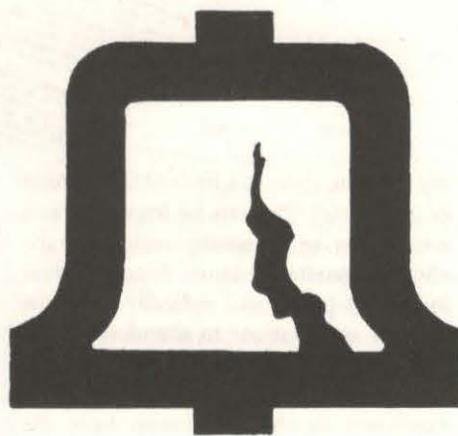
By Irving Howe

A LARGE NUMBER OF AMERICANS mistrust their government, perhaps even the entire process of democratic politics. So we hear from many sources, and one's impressions tend to bear them out. On the right there is crabbing about high taxes, government bureaucracy, meddling with business (though the Chrysler Corporation doesn't seem to mind a little meddling right now . . .). In the center, there is a sense of impotence: government can't help much with problems of inflation, energy, jobs. On the left, strong memories persist of Watergate, Vietnam, the FBI-CIA violations of civil freedoms.

All of these sentiments swirl around, mixed, confused, not yet settled into a precise politics. Some take the form of a Proposition 13 middle class revolt. Among liberals there's a well-deserved disenchantment with President Carter, but this lacks political definition—mostly it consists of "Waiting for Teddy," which could easily decline into a non- or anti-politics.

Some friends tell me all this will prove to be helpful to the left, crystallizing as anticorporate sentiment (especially against the oil corporations). But I'm not at all sure. It could go the other way, or just dribble out into griping, malaise, demoralization.

Strong liberal-leftward politics in the U.S. have usually arisen when people were active, involved with issues of government, not when they felt helpless or disgusted. Perhaps, in accord with the cyclical fluctuations that seem to characterize our political life, we may be getting ready for a new upsurge of political energy—insurgent, liberal, more than liberal—in the Eighties. If so, the intellectual-political preparation for it is not yet sufficiently visible.



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*“The intervening fashion of ‘me-ism’ is too puny, too trivial and evasive a system of values for a country as strong and as troubled as the U.S.”*

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Carter never deceived us. He never claimed to be a man of strong, let alone liberal, opinions. He ran as an “outsider,” an innocent from Georgia, free of the Washington stench. Why then is there now so pervasive a disdain for him? One would be glad to suppose that it's a result of his paying so little attention to the 1976 Democratic platform, which said many of the right (that is, liberal-left) things. But that would probably be self-deceiving.

People feel that Carter isn't a bad fellow: if he sold second-hand cars. . . . What troubles people is, I think, a growing awareness of Carter's *social emptiness*. Just as a European novelist once wrote about “a man without qualities,”

so Carter is seen increasingly as a man without commitments. Opportunism got him the presidency; opportunism has ruined his presidency. Carter doesn't identify with the ideas of Reagan, or General Motors, or the ADA, or anything else. The people around him are mostly small-time provincials who regard politics as a craft of manipulation. In a time of social ease, that might work. But now, when there are so many pressures and problems, it won't do.

And since there is no backbone of principle—good or bad—the Carter regime *must* turn out to be essentially conservative. For in the U.S., to be liberal or reactionary requires an effort; while to be conservative means simply to drift along with conventional notions such as one can find in the editorials of small-town newspapers.

What many people feel about the Carter administration is that it's a political vacuum, an intellectual nothing—the dreary consequence of the exhaustion following the Sixties. And they're right.

## Roots of Malaise

But what about the deeper causes, insofar as we can identify them, of the current malaise? I'd mention three:

- The apparent erosion of American power in the world; not as severe as the cold warriors would have it, but quite considerable, as a result of Vietnam, the OPEC stranglehold on oil, the temporary stabilization of the Soviet bloc, the increasing Russian influence in Africa, the upheavals in Latin America.

- A heritage of irritation and tiredness—barely suppressed antagonisms—from the Sixties. The social issues that troubled millions of people then—feminism, drugs, homosexuality, racial clash, youth culture—were neither removed nor resolved; they were simply brushed aside for awhile. The intervening fa-

shion of "me-ism," or privatism, is too puny, too trivial and evasive a system of values for a country as strong and as troubled as the U.S. in the late twentieth century. A new outbreak of social hostilities seems all but certain during the next decade.

● The inner crisis of the American welfare state taking such forms as stagflation, energy problems, social pathology, etc. One major symptom here is the virtual collapse of American liberalism as a coherent movement or body of opinion.

We don't yet know to what extent the crisis of the welfare state is due to intrinsic socio-economic factors, expressing and paralleling the traditional crises of capitalism, and to what extent it is due to external factors, such as OPEC pressures. Of course, when more deeply scrutinized, the two factors have a way of blending into one, but analytically it's worth keeping the distinction.

One consequence of these developments is that a central premise of much liberal and some social democratic thought during the Fifties and Sixties has been called into question. I have in mind the premise that the welfare state is able, more or less, to contain capitalist crises; move along on a plateau of gradualism, with some bumps but no major ups and downs; and steadily improve the lot of many citizens. Nor, in saying this, do we need to envision apocalyptic breakdowns like the 1929 crash, let alone Marxist-style revolutions (which now seem to occur only in countries without a significant working class or socialist tradition).

More than ever, it should be clear that the welfare state is *an arena of social conflict*; that, with the decline in economic growth, the pressures of rising energy costs, and the seemingly insoluble problem of inflation, there is going to be a sharper social conflict. As the economy fails to grow according to the pace of recent years, the struggle for the division of the social product becomes more intense. Either American liberalism will recognize this fact, taking on a new militancy, or it will wither away into irrelevance.

### Coalition Conflicts

The breakdown of the coalition which helped usher into existence the welfare state (New Deal, social legislation) is due not just to low-level poli-

tical rivalries, on the one hand, and the serious split over the Vietnam war, on the other. We have to recognize the probability that the component groups in that alliance—because the development of the welfare state has been uneven, benefiting some more than others—now have some conflicts of interest. These conflicts may be perceived as, and sometimes may really be, more important than traditional bonds of cooperation.

Workers in monopoly industries who are strongly unionized and deal with two or three major corporations can sometimes gain for themselves advantages that workers in others kinds of industry cannot. Workers in industries like steel, where competitive advantages have been lost through ineptitude and

*“With the decline in economic growth, the pressure of rising energy costs, and the seemingly insoluble problem of inflation, there is going to be a sharper social conflict.”*

international competition, may soon find themselves in an especially bad position.

The traditional alliance between blacks and Jews has been ruptured not only for the obvious dramatic reasons (the Young affair, the Mideast crisis), but also because the two groups are decreasingly in what might be called parallel social circumstances. The Jews, by and large, are now a middle class community; the blacks are not. Some measures, like affirmative action, which many blacks regard as essential, many Jews see as disadvantageous to themselves. Public works programs for the jobless young, essential to the blacks, may not be as important to other groups—and the black community is likely to find that overtures to the PLO aren't going to help gain support among would-be allies for social legislation.

All of this, and much more, is part of the disintegration of once coherent political publics. It's inevitable, or largely so, at the present phase of the welfare state. We all share a feeling that the coalition ought to be rebuilt, but it would be delusory to say that we have found a secure foundation for that. The program that has been worked out for DEMOCRATIC AGENDA is a step in that

direction — but as Michael Harrington, its main author, readily admits, no more than a step. For what we're entering is something I've called the "second stage of the welfare state," far more complicated and troubling than the first stage, when liberals, unionists and socialists all understood the need for social legislation, organization of unions, etc.

### Teddy Watching

So, along comes Teddy. I hope he runs. But I'm uneasy about the public mood regarding him. There's something not at all promising in a man identified with social liberalism becoming the shining hope of a population grown increasingly conservative. Or is that just an illusion? Is the conservatism giving way to a realization that only social policy undertaken by the society at large can begin to cope with our problems, and that the cant of "free enterprise" is mostly an ideological hangover?

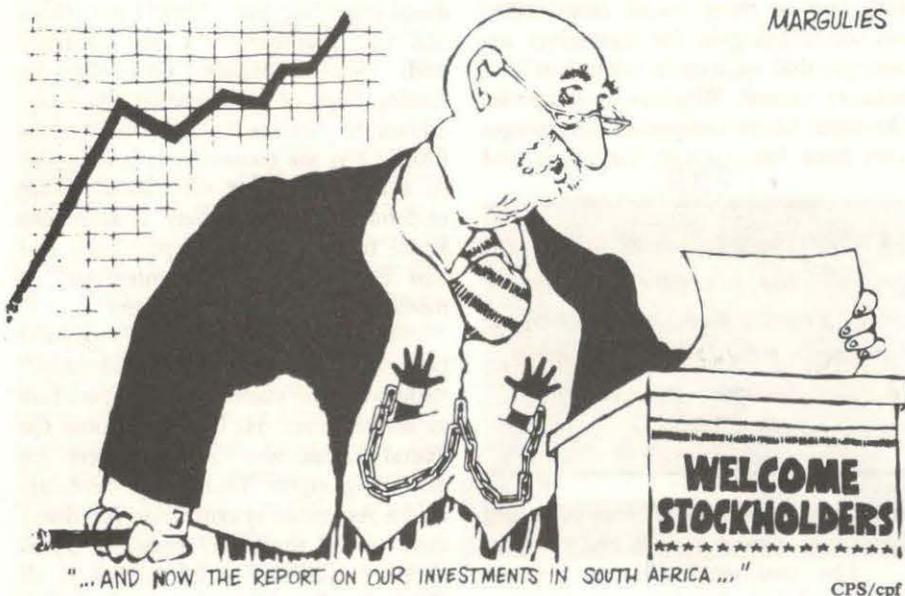
If Kennedy sweeps in as a popular hero who will provide "leadership," there won't be much pressure upon him to define issues. He'll then become the liberal Eisenhower. Already there are disturbing signs. That every candidate in the American system must (or does) shift toward the center once the nomination is gained, we know. But if all Kennedy offers is his glorious Self, then to hell with it!

I think he will be forced to offer more. For one thing, whoever the Republican nominee might be, he would surely, if confronted with Kennedy, attack him for his past liberalism. Kennedy would then be forced to take positions. That's why a Kennedy candidacy offers the possibility of a renewed political-social debate in the country.

But whoever the candidates may be, our task, as socialists and democratic leftists, remains the analysis and articulation of social ideas and programs. This isn't just a favorite notion of an intellectual. Before a program can become popular, before it can be broken down and simplified into a few easily remembered points, it must be elaborated, debated, torn apart and reconstructed. Some of that has been done; more remains. And that's what we're here for. ■

*Author and critic Irving Howe serves on the DSOC national board. He is co-editor of Dissent.*

# Mixed Strategies Needed To Combat Corporations



By David Vogel

**T**HROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY, popular efforts to change the priorities of corporations have usually attempted either to increase government controls over business or organize workers into trade unions. But over the last fifteen years, some activists have pioneered a new way of challenging corporate decisions. With the use of such tactics as consumer and investor boycotts, the filing of shareholder suits and public interest proxy resolutions, the questioning of board members at annual meetings, the picketing of corporate facilities, and the organizing of demonstrations in front of corporate headquarters, they have brought their grievances directly to the attention of those who govern the giant corporations.

The civil rights and antiwar movements were the first to make extensive use of these tactics. Many of their most widely publicized struggles, including

the Montgomery bus boycott, the sit-ins at lunch counters in the South, the campus protests against recruiters from Dow Chemical, the four-year challenge to Honeywell's manufacture of antipersonnel weapons, the burning of the Isla Vista branch of the Bank of America, and Alinsky's battle with Kodak over the lack of adequate employment opportunities for ghetto residents, involved direct confrontations with corporations.

Over the last decade, protests against corporations have become institutionalized. The more than 750 public interest proxy resolutions that have been filed since 1970 deal with virtually every contemporary political and social issue whose solution is affected by business decisions. These range from the social composition of the boardroom to bank loans to South Africa and Chile, from redlining the inner cities to corporate compliance with the Arab boycott of Israel. Proxy resolutions have been filed by a wide number of groups, including

church agencies belonging to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, the American Jewish Congress, the Project on Corporate Responsibility, and even by rightwing groups such as Accuracy in Media. The annual meeting of any major multinational corporation without the appearance of social critics has become as unusual as the appearance of shareholders concerned about the social implications of corporate decisions was less than a decade ago.

Consumer boycotts have also increased in frequency. They played an extremely important role in the organizing efforts of grape and lettuce workers in California and a major effort is now underway to encourage consumers to avoid purchasing products made by J. P. Stevens. Last year an international boycott was launched against Nestlé to protest the Swiss multinational's marketing of infant formulas to mothers in underdeveloped nations. In the United States, more than 250 organizations are currently refusing to hold their conventions in states that have refused to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Scarcely a month passes without some organization urging that a new product or company be boycotted.

In order to assess the political effectiveness of this approach to challenging corporations, it is useful to distinguish among three possible objectives of citizen pressures.

## *Goals of Citizen Pressure*

The most obvious goal of a citizen challenge is to change the conduct of a corporation. Here the record of achievement is mixed. With the exception of a few inspired boycotts, direct protests have not been able to measurably reduce corporate profits. Whatever they have accomplished has been due to the pressure of public opinion, not economic coercion. Similarly, the real point of

filing a shareholders resolution is not to win 51 percent of the vote; that is impossible. It is rather to gain a respectable show of opposition sufficient to embarrass management; the support of 5 percent of the shares voted is often sufficient for this purpose.

Corporations have made a number of important, though modest, concessions to their critics. Several large American investors in South Africa and Namibia have measurably improved the working conditions of their black employees, while there have been some significant changes in the way companies market infant formulas. On the other hand, no company has conceded anything that financially injured it. Thus no firm has withdrawn its investments from any nation as a response to public protests—however extensive or impassioned. The one company that has recently left South Africa—Polaroid—had only a small sales office there with no production facilities. Similarly, while Dow Chemical was successfully pressured into ending napalm production, defense contracts were a very small part of its business. In contrast, major war producers such as Honeywell, though subjected to far more pressure, did not change their relationship with the Defense Department.

Changing corporate behavior is only one objective of citizen protests. Indeed, for many activists, it has been a secondary one. Citizen challenges have proved far more effective as a device for forcing new issues onto the agenda of the political process. The sit-ins and freedom rides had a minimal effect on the segregation policies of restaurants and buses; they did, however, play a critical role in bringing the need for a federal fair accommodations law to the public's attention. The real impact of the antiwar movement's challenges to Dow Chemical and Honeywell was to heighten public awareness of the brutality with which the war in Vietnam was being fought. The shareholder campaign organized by the American Jewish Congress to discourage corporate compliance with the Arab boycott of Israel helped lay the groundwork for the passage of a federal antiboycott law. Most recently, the campaign against corporate investments in South Africa has made U.S.-South Africa relations into a focal point of political controversy.

A third purpose of direct challenge

to corporations has been to provide citizens with a convenient vehicle for political participation. Demonstrations against recruiters for Dow Chemical mobilized tens of thousands of students during the Sixties. Student protests over the last two years, aimed at pressuring universities to dissociate themselves from corporations investing in South Africa, have helped to revitalize the student movement. Consumer boycotts, regardless of their economic ineffectiveness, do enable individual citi-



zens to do something about the political and social issues that concern them in their everyday lives.

### *Why Divest? Where Invest?*

Those involved in organizing future antibusiness protests should become more self-conscious about their actual political objectives. Do they expect their demands to be met, or are they challenging a corporation as a means to advance other goals? This distinction assumes particular relevance when applied to the demand of many student groups that their universities sell all their stock in corporations doing business in South Africa. There has been remarkably little hard-headed analysis of the implications of this strategy. Are the protestors actually convinced that the transfer of the ownership of a few million shares of a company's stock from various universities to profit-seeking investors will convince a company to abandon a profitable subsidiary? And if not, then how do they justify imposing the considerable costs of divestment on universities—certainly among the institutions least capable of assuming additional financial burdens?

My own sense is that corporations committed to remaining in South Africa would be delighted if universities sold their stock. Then they would be spared any further criticism of their policies

from these socially concerned shareholders. A more effective protest strategy might be to identify two or three corporations whose complicity in *apartheid* is particularly glaring. Then activists could take advantage of a broad array of pressure tactics to make these companies into symbols of American support for South Africa—just as the antiwar movement did with Dow and Honeywell's involvement in the war effort. But if hundreds of corporations continue to be challenged simultaneously, none is going to feel particularly pressured.

A similar note of caution should be applied to the growing interest of activists in using pension fund monies to advance social objectives. It is one thing to avoid purchasing the stock of a few companies, or to give workers a say in how their proxies are voted. But if unions were actually to invest the savings of their members in "socially responsible" ways on a large scale, they might well find themselves subsidizing only those projects regarded by the private sector as unprofitable. This would leave capitalists free to reap the full benefits of their investments in the highly profitable ones. While the beneficiaries of pension funds should certainly be encouraged to more closely monitor both the selection of stocks and the voting of proxies, it is important that whatever efforts are made to politicize pension funds not adversely affect their financial integrity. Otherwise, the left will lose its credibility among precisely those constituencies whose interests it is trying to serve.

In sum, citizen challenges have a useful role to play in pressuring corporations: They can encourage concrete improvements in corporate policies, bring new issues involving business to the attention of the public, and create opportunities for mobilizing various constituencies. Direct pressures have accomplished more than was believed possible ten or fifteen years ago; used carefully, they can accomplish even more over the next decade. ■

*David Vogel teaches at the School of Business Administration at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of Ethics and Profits (with Leonard Silk) and Lobbying the Corporation: Citizen Challenge to Business Authority, on which this article is based.*

# Fighting Corporate Flight

By Victor S. Kamber

**T**HERE'S NO COUNTRY AND Western song that tells the sad story, but tens of thousands of Americans in cities and towns all over the nation are crying the blues. They've been deserted by American business—the same business that sold them the tale of happy prosperity ushered along by bond issues that built community-supported factories, roads and other facilities to attract industry.

The issue of plant closings is so pervasive and touches so many regions of the United States that it can no longer be privately endured by those who have gambled and lost in their relationships with Corporate America. It has now become an issue of public policy. Who shall pay the cost of corporate fickleness?

Runaway corporations have levied a social and economic hardship on American communities in the same way that runaway parents create hardships not only for their abandoned spouses and children but also for the taxpayers who must pick up the responsibilities they have left behind.

Discounting plant closures caused by economic misfortune, the planned and premeditated closings of large northern shops in order to cash in on tax benefits or to relocate in areas where workers have historically settled for lower wages and fewer benefits is a sign not only of greed but also of social irresponsibility.

For instance, the now famous closing of Lykes-Youngstown Sheet and Tube resulted in the immediate termination of some 5,000 employees. While this is a horrifying figure in itself, the closing of this plant actually resulted in associated loss of jobs for 11,199 workers in the surrounding Youngstown, Ohio, area. It has been estimated that the costs imposed on the federal government in the form of lost corporate- and income-tax payments, in unemployment compensation, food stamps, welfare and medical services resulting from the closing of that one steel plant will total nearly \$50 million by the end of 1980.

While it is easy to cast a suspicious eye on such overwhelming figures, it must be clear that the bearer of the burden of this disaster was not the corporation that slowly undermined the fiscal health of the plant operation and escaped with great tax write-offs and other tax benefits.

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics offers a staggering figure regarding the loss of jobs in New England, the mid-Atlantic states and the Great Lakes region caused by runaway corporations.

The bureau says that at least 1.4 million workers have found themselves jobless because of such moves since 1968. Many of these men and women have invested so many years in one job or industry that the prospect of finding other adequate jobs in their home area is unlikely.

Citizens' groups in various states have begun to take measures toward preventing such abandonment of responsibility by corporations. Several pieces of legislation recently proposed have emphasized the necessity of cooperation between industry, labor and communities.



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Common aspects of these proposals in Ohio, Massachusetts and Wisconsin include these:

1. There should be advance public notice by any corporation intending to close or relocate. The amount of time of such notice required by each proposal varies from 60 days to two years. Considering the enormous interdependence a community shares with the corporations in its boundaries, the length of time must be adequate to prepare for the possible effects of tax-base loss and increased strain on government funds and social services.

2. There should be adequate severance pay for employees left behind.

3. There should be adequate and mandatory contributions by corporations to counterbalance the increased drain on public funds stemming from unemployment compensation and social and medical welfare services. In order for corporations to benefit from the legal tax deductions and credits allowed during a relocation or divestiture, the corporations would have to cooperate with local and federal governments in avoiding the social and economic chaos possible in such moves.

It is clear that any truly effective legislation in this field must come from the federal government in order to prevent one state or another from becoming the competitive victim in the relocation process.

Obviously, no economic system can hope to prosper in an atmosphere in which change and progress are discouraged. On the other hand, no social system can survive amid thoughtless or greedy economic chaos. Industry, labor and the community as a whole must cooperate with each other to make the most careful and prosperous use of resources, the labor force and each other's good will. It is only reasonable. ■

*Victor S. Kamber is assistant to the president of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO. This article is adapted from a piece that appeared in the New York Times.*

# SOCIALIST NOTES

By Nancy Kleniewski

**C**HICAGO DSOC HAS BEEN HELPING TO CLEAR AWAY the remnants of the Daley machine from Chicago's political life by organizing support for collective bargaining for city employees. When Mayor Jane Byrne ran for office last year, her platform included a stand in favor of collective bargaining, which won her—rather than Michael Bilandic—the support of municipal employees' organizations like the firefighters. After her inauguration, however, Byrne's commitment to collective bargaining waned. When a collective bargaining bill was introduced into the state legislature, Byrne killed it, setting up her own committee to "explore" the issue further.

At this point, DSOC became involved by organizing a citizens' committee to show the breadth of support for collective bargaining by both labor and community groups. The citizens' committee published literature on collective bargaining and organized testimony at public hearings in the City Council set up by Byrne's "exploration" committee. It also waged a postcard campaign, collecting thousands of signatures on postcards reading, "I support collective bargaining for city employees," to be delivered en masse to Byrne's office.

The DSOC local held a series of educational sessions on the necessity for a collective bargaining bill and the components of an adequate bill, ultimately making a public statement for the citizens' committee in order to pressure the Byrne committee into action.

Byrne's position now seems to be worsening. According to Chicago DSOC activist Nancy Shier, "Byrne has departed on a collision course with the rest of the labor movement on traditional issues such as paying prevailing wages to building trades workers."

The DSOC-initiated citizens' committee is putting on a final drive which will culminate in the delivery of the thousands of postcards to Byrne's office just before the expected release of her committee's final report.

■ ■ ■

TWO NEW YORK MEMBERS, JACK CLARK AND FRANK LUGOVIÑA, were responsible for the strong showing made by progressive candidate Victor Marrero in his recent bid for Bronx Borough President. A poll taken in June showed low recognition for Marrero, New York State Commissioner of Housing, and no enthusiasm for his campaign among members of the Puerto Rican community. Clark, Marrero's campaign manager, developed a strategy to gain publicity for his candidate and to increase the predicted low voter turnout in the Puerto Rican community. Jack was aided by Bronx Democratic Party leader Frank Lugoña to organize the *barrios* and turn out the voters.

Lugoña used his contacts in unions, churches, and political clubs along with the aggressive media campaign. Result: an excellent Puerto Rican voter turnout that netted the previously little-known Marrero 25 per cent of the vote borough-wide, for a second place showing in a field of four.

## RESOURCES

MIKE RIVAS, DSOC NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR AND HEAD OF the Hispanic Commission, suggests an excellent film on Nicaragua that locals may want to use for outreach to Hispanic groups or for internal educational purposes. Entitled "Nicaragua, September '78," the film was made for the World Council of Churches and is available from the Office of Human Rights, Rm. 634, 475 Riverside Dr., N.Y.C. 10027.

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TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS HAVE RECENTLY APPEARED ON THE labor front. The first is our own *DSOC Labor Exchange*, edited by DSOC member Jack Plunkett and published by the New England Trade Union Council. The *Labor Exchange* contains news of general interest to trade unionists as well as labor news specific to the New England area. Subscriptions are \$7.50 per year from DSOC New England Region, 120 Tremont St., Boston, Mass. 02108.

The second labor publication of interest was passed along by Mike Schippani. It is *The Newsletter of International Labour Studies*, a publication oriented toward linking the labor movement in the U.S. and Europe with labor groups in the Third World. Published twice a year, the subscription price for three years is \$7.00. The address is Galileistraat 130, 2561 TK The Hague, Holland.

While we're on the subject, the labor committee of D.C.-Maryland DSOC also publishes a good newsletter, *Metro-Labor*, from its office at 1346 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Room 713, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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For community organizers and DSOC locals interested in mounting dramatic community campaigns, a community organizer's handbook has recently been published by ACORN (The Association of Communities Organized for Reform Now) Institute. The handbook, *Actions & Campaigns*, describes the elements of a good campaign from choosing the issue to follow-up and includes a checklist of items for each action. It also analyzes five successful ACORN campaigns, including one against redlining in St. Louis and one against the Redfield, Arkansas telephone company. *Actions & Campaigns* costs \$3.00 and can be obtained from The Institute, 628 Bayonne, New Orleans, La. 70113.

## CORRECTION

We made a mistake in listing the address of the Sacramento Valley DSOC in our September issue. The correct address, from which you can order fist-and-rose buttons, is 3941 K St., Sacramento, Calif. 95816.

## DAYS OF DECISION

Subscribe now to *Days of Decision*, the Newsletter of the DSOC Youth Section. Five times a year we report on DSOC Youth Section activities across the nation and provide intellectual ammunition for young democratic socialists active in movements for social change. Five issues for \$4.

# Stalking the Wily Corporation

By David Salomon

**A** MAJOR NATIONAL COALITION effort is emerging to focus public attention on the abuses of corporate power in American life and enact a federal Corporate Democracy Law to help curb these abuses. First on the agenda is "Big Business Day," scheduled for April 17, 1980. Prominent members of the liberal, labor, consumer, civil rights, feminist, public interest and minority movements will be active in the newly formed Americans Concerned About Corporate Power, which is sponsoring the Day.

Although it is modeled on the highly successful Earth, Food and Sun Days, the Day should go beyond those earlier events—to a thorough re-examination of the role of the giant corporation in America and the world.

Its central thrust is to counteract the pervasive campaign of Big Business to convince the American public that government, taxes, government regulation and government spending for social programs are the central problems in our society rather than the abuse of power by Corporate America.

## Focus on Corporate Crime

The Big Business Day campaign can be expected to focus upon the issue of corporate crime, or "crime in the suites"; price fixing, monopolization; and other anti-competitive practices. It will examine the role of the multinationals; the political power and influence of the proliferating corporate political action committees; the disappearance of small locally owned businesses and family farms in favor of large conglomerates; the decline in real wages of working people in the face of soaring corporate profits and galloping inflation; and mounting unemployment. Other key concerns include the corporate campaign for a "union-free environment" and the growth of a new sophisticated "union-busting" industry; the corporate assault upon the environment; the corporate takeover of the media and the

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**“The campaign will fight crime in the suites.”**

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universities; and plant closings and the need for social control of investment.

The Day will focus on *solutions* as well as problems—making corporations more law-abiding and democratic; promoting consumer cooperatives; reducing structural unemployment and inflation; spurring economic competition; distributing wealth more equitably; insuring a safe and healthy workplace and marketplace.

The national Big Business Day office in Washington will coordinate activities, prepare materials, and offer assistance to participating national and local groups.

Another aspect of the broadened anti-corporate campaign is the Corporate Democracy Act, now in draft and being circulated for comment along with an explanatory "White Paper." Its chief architects have been Mark Green of Ralph Nader's Congress Watch, Jules Bernstein, a Washington, D.C. union lawyer, Alice Tepper Marlin, Director of the Council on Economic Priorities, and Vic Kamber, formerly Director of the AFL-CIO's Task Force on Labor Law Reform and presently principal aide to Robert Georgine, president of the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department.

The bill deals with such subjects as corporate governance and disclosure; corporate crime, and individual rights in the workplace.

It is described by some as a Landrum-Griffin Act for corporations, a reference to the Labor Law Reform law of 1959 which imposed federal regulation upon the internal affairs of unions.

Corporate lobbyists have already shown their concern by criticizing it to congressional representatives, even though the bill has not yet been introduced.

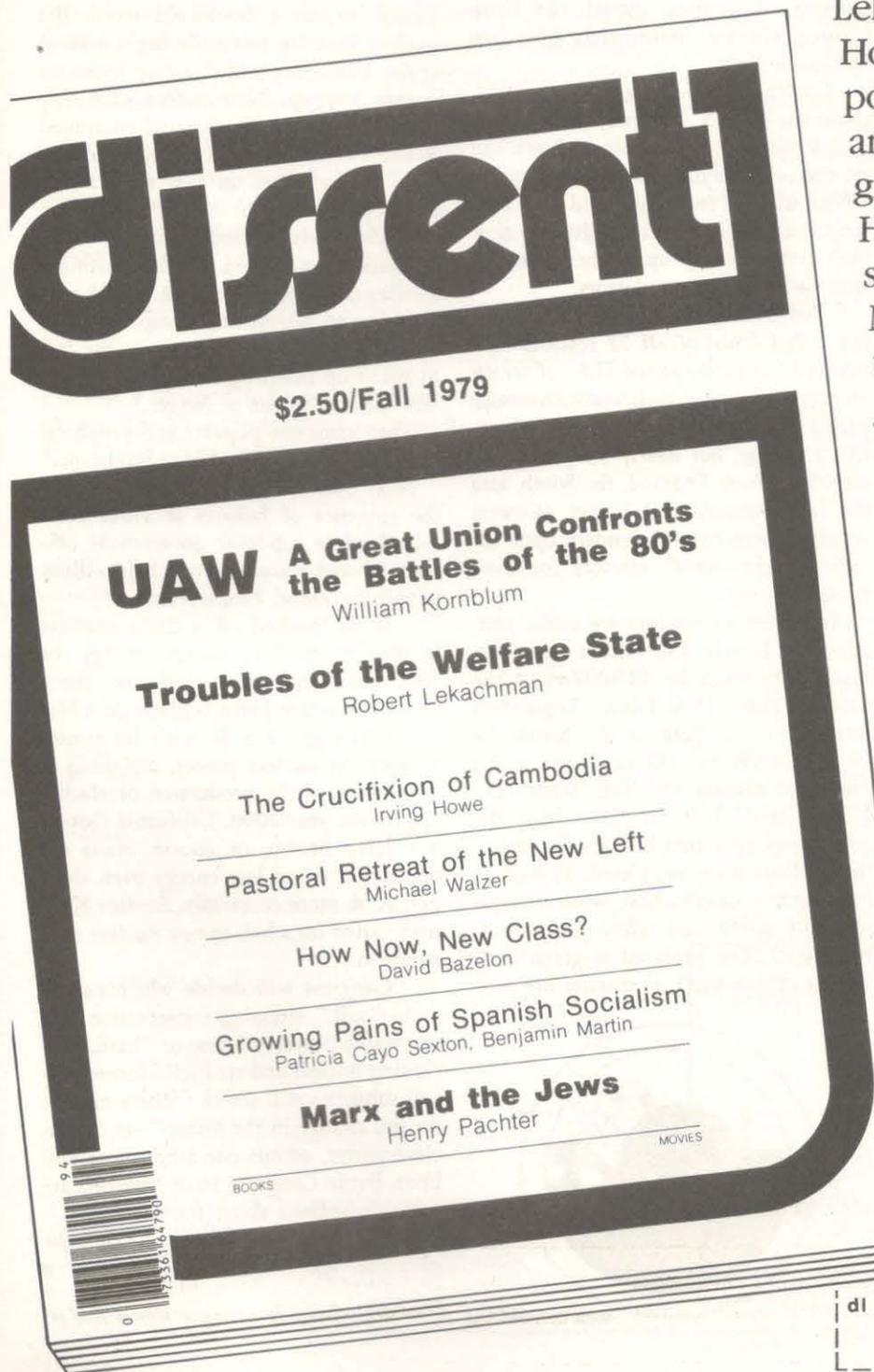
Big Business Day and the Corporate Democracy Act signal the launching of the Eighties as a period in which the public will scrutinize the workings of corporate power, and take action to curb its excesses. ■

*David Salomon is a research associate at the Center to Protect Workers' Rights in Washington, D.C.*

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# Nuclear Critics Gain on the Hill

By David Hoffman

**M**ORE THAN HALF A YEAR after the nation held its breath over the events at Three Mile Island, there is no mass movement in Congress to abandon nuclear power or seriously retard its development.

In the words of one Congressman opposed to nuclear energy, "People still think we need more 'nukes' to make their toast pop up in the morning."

There is, even so, greater skepticism on Capitol Hill and a corresponding hesitation to buy the package of legislative initiatives peddled by the pro-nuclear lobby. If nothing else, a bill speeding up nuclear plant licensing—once thought likely to win approval in this Congress—now seems dead.

At the same time, a majority of legislators seem unwilling to back a proposal to halt the issuance of nuclear construction permits for even a short period. Led by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Gary Hart (D-Col.), supporters of a six-month "moratorium" on nuclear construction offered this amendment in July to the 1980 budget bill for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). They lost, 57-35.

This was the first time the issue had been debated on the floor in either chamber. In the House, nuclear moratorium advocates will rally behind the author of the six-month ban idea, Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), when the NRC bill comes to the floor sometime this autumn.

The five-man panel heading the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), meanwhile, accepted an NRC staff proposal in May to suspend any licensing activity while NRC personnel sought to "learn the lessons" of Three Mile Island, now labeled "TMI" for short. In August, the chief staff licens-

ing official urged a resumption of the issuance of licenses, though the Commission did not immediately give him the green light.

"Cynical political garbage," NRC chairman Joseph Hendrie termed congressional efforts to impose by law a ban on the issuance of construction permits. "Why are they fooling around with construction permits? If that's the way they feel, let them step up to the plate and shut down operating reactors."

No member of Congress has called for a shut-down of all 72 reactors now licensed to operate in the U.S., of which 68 were operating in late summer supplying more than 3 percent of total national energy, but nearly 13 percent of electricity. New England, the South, and the Mid Atlantic and Upper Midwest states are even *more* dependent upon so-called "light water" reactors for their electricity.

An added 93 reactors are under construction. Nearly \$50 billion had been invested in them by 40 utilities at the time of Three Mile Island. Legislation introduced this year in the Senate by George McGovern (D-S.D.) and in the House by Markey and Ted Weiss (D-N.Y.) would halt for three years the issuance of operating licenses for any of these plants once completed, as well as ban any new construction, while a major study of unresolved safety problems is completed. The proposal is given little serious chance short of another big acci-

dent.

Also being pushed by nuclear critics such as Weiss is a re-examination of the Price-Anderson Act of 1957, which Congress extended in 1975 for 10 years. That law is one of the many federal subsidies of commercial nuclear power. It limits the total liability for any major nuclear accident to \$560 million, even though estimates of the cost of a full-scale nuclear core meltdown range from \$14-\$17 billion.

For some time before Three Mile Island became a household word, the nuclear industry was suffering a serious crisis. Costs—for added safety measures—were way up. New orders were way down. Nuclear waste disposal continued to nag with unanswered questions. A "de facto" moratorium on new applications had begun.

The nuclear lobby planned a counterattack. The Edison Electric Institute, a utility trade association, readied \$5 million for an advertising campaign. The centerpiece of their efforts was the bill to speed up licensing new plants, which now takes 12 years or longer.

Then came the popular and prophetic Jane Fonda film, "The China Syndrome."

Next nature imitated art, and we saw the sequence of failures at Three Mile Island while top-level government officials debated evacuation of a half million people in central Pennsylvania.

It all touched off a chain reaction in the "politics" of nuclear energy. In July, President Carter endorsed then-Energy Secretary James Schlesinger's National Energy Plan II with its strong reliance on nuclear power, assigning it 35 percent of the production of electricity by the year 2000. California Governor Jerry Brown, of course, made his opposition to nuclear energy even sharper. And, more cautiously, Senator Kennedy called for a halt to new nuclear construction.

Congress will decide which energy path—"soft," stressing conservation and renewable power sources, or "hard," including nuclear and synfuels—future federal subsidies will travel. "There may be no real change in the lineup" yet on nuclear power, admits one antinuclear lobbyist. But in Congress, more members are asking questions about nuclear energy—questions they admit they hadn't thought of a year ago.

David Hoffman is a congressional staffer.



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# JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

**LABORING TOWARD A REBIRTH**—George Meany's retirement marks an end to an important period in American labor history. Meany is the only member of the AFL-CIO's original, post-merger 1955 Executive Council still sitting; more important, he is the only president the merged organization has ever had. At the end of his career, he can justifiably boast that "I held the boys together." Out of the welter of trade union interests and conflicting personalities, Meany helped lead the way toward a united labor movement and held most of it together through more than twenty trying years. His retirement will not splinter the AFL-CIO (in fact, a Meanyless Federation has better chances to win back the UAW), but the labor movement will have a different—and more diverse—character without Meany in the lead.

**IF LANE KIRKLAND** (who is facing strong opposition) is elected, he will assume Meany's office but not his mantle. An intellectual of sorts with a background as a trade union staffer, Kirkland isn't "one of the boys," so he'll have difficulty holding them as closely together. What's more, there are all sorts of indications that new directions, new leadership and new spokespeople are emerging. Organizations like the Progressive Alliance and the Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition offer a public forum and an opportunity for leadership to numerous trade union leaders. The renewed emphasis on building ties to liberal, black, Hispanic, women's and community groups also offers many labor leaders increased opportunities for visibility. Even *Business Week* has detected sympathy for socialists among the supposedly reactionary building trades (see Labor Day ad in **DEMOCRATIC LEFT** from Building and Construction Trades Dept.,

**AFL-CIO**). Kirkland's basic neo-conservatism (or as he and his comrades would have it "centrism") fits poorly with the growing anticorporate militancy among all segments of organized labor. Organizing the unorganized was never a top Meany priority; Kirkland probably faces difficulties with several constituent unions if the Federation under his leadership fails to assign a higher priority to organizing. On issues like foreign policy and nuclear power where Meany was able to forge Federation unity, Kirkland may be publicly overshadowed by better-known union leaders who differ with him. But Kirkland's problems should not be overrated; he is an intelligent and experienced leader; he may prove more than equal to the job.

**FOR SHAME**—Since this publication regularly pushes the idea that labor unions should make alliances with middle class reformers, let us set the record straight on the kind of alliance we *don't* mean. In a recent mailing to trade union lists, Zero Population Growth (ZPG) appeals to the unions' enormous fears of illegal immigration and *then* identifies labor's impulse to exclude and expel the undocumented workers with the "broader" view contrasted with the narrow trade union interest in organizing the unorganized. To be sure, the flow of immigrants into our economy poses difficult problems (it always has). But the Third World is a fact, and it is on our doorstep. To identify a view which says we exclude the "illegals" as the "broader" view smacks of eugenics. ZPG has had some very sensible and progressive things to say at times (and in the same mailing referred to here, there are some good articles). It's too bad they're tying it in with updated nativism.

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