

# POLITICS--WHAT'S LEFT

A liberal is essentially an optimist. That is, he is willing to give human nature the benefit of the doubt and chooses to view man's historical progress up from the Neanderthal stage as confirmation of his belief that things will get better. Consequently, the liberal is prone to seek social change within the system (usually via education or the electoral process) and opts for gradual undramatic modification. He is not to be confused with the conservative who is basically a pessimist or lover of tradition. The conservative is dedicated to pushing back the hands of time to a more secure past or dogmatically holding on to a fleeting status quo, whereas the liberal is future oriented and concerned with not repeating the mistakes of the past. The conservative looks at history and interprets its wars and hedonistic greed as evidence that man cannot be trusted and must be suppressed while the liberal looks at the same test and sees hope. Quite a reasonable fellow, the liberal. Don't you think?

Bullshit. He is typically a hypocrite, and, in that respect, far worse than the conservative--at least the latter admits it when he is a racist. What's wrong with the liberal is that there is a large area of inconsistency between his fine ideas and what he actually does.

The liberal is an integral part of the Establishment and his compliance with its ruling power structure (the military-corporate elite who back Nixon) subjects him to a least part of the burden of guilt for Amerika's genocide in Indo-China, exploitation of the Third World, and calculated repression of the nation's idealism with materialism and made him think twice about having the courage of his convictions through its numerous exhibitions of mindless conformity and blatantly organized official violence. He has almost passively accepted a status quo of war, exploitation, poverty, suppression, and racism and he fits very well into the middle-class norm.

Indeed, the ruling elite have institutionalized the middle-class way of life and imbued the Silent Majority with the conviction that its values are identical to those of the corporate power structure: what's good for G.M. and U.S. Steel is good for Amerika. Despite the pressure of the Establishment to the contrary, the liberal is not the complete dupe that the elites hope finds his status within the system more of a predicament than a standing because he is constantly confronted with its brutalizing effects. For example, he does

not need to probe too deeply in order to discover that his suburbia is predicated on the sweat of Amerika's 30 million poor.

Nor does he need to be an expert on ecology to understand that this nation consumes a totally disproportionate amount of the world's resources while billions starve in the Third World, and our oceans become a garbage dump. Regardless of his level of consciousness, he knows that the "good life" that the middle-class is rewarded with is really a hollow success that is cheapened, overcommercialized, consumerized, tranquilized (by alcohol, pills, spectator sports, television, etc.) and stagnated to the point that a large part of our population has begun to follow prearranged patterns like unthinking automatons. Indeed, one does not have to be alienated to feel a condition of existential anxiety over the pointlessness of much of life and the individual's utter lack of power to do anything about it.

Naturally, the military and the industrialists foster this feeling and, as a logical development, the less we think about it, the smoother things seem to run. We know what's good for you Mr. Blue. The liberal, like most of the rest of us, has been black-mailed into a position of social impotency and pliant affluence: living the illusion of the "Great American Success Story" while the reality of Whatts, Newark, Mylai, and Kent State drift across his t.v. screen.

The liberal's malaise is not difficult to understand and there are definite reasons for his inability to cope with what he knows he must do. Social conflict is peripheral to acquisitiveness for the liberal. He likes his nice split-level and position on the faculty; he is fond of his sporty car and nights on the town; he is secure in his 3.0 cume; he keeps up with fashion. But he is not about to jeopardize them by putting his humanistic and equalitarian principles on the line--they might get chopped off. Like the conservative, the liberal prefers to celebrate what is right with America and gloss over the seamy evil that occasionally reveals itself. Our inner cities decay and he gives lip service to reforms that are tantamount to putting a band-aid on a huge laceration. We need a Revolution and he seconds Black Capitalism. True to Conviction, things improve in the liberal's eyes as humanity moves from the sacred of the past to the secular of the future, from the *Gemeinschaft* to the *Gesellschaft*, from the folk to urban. He explains man's evolution as a liberation from the state of nature through the

application of science and technology; from the turmoil of the inner self, through psychoanalysis; and from myth, through education.

Parochial and ethnic differences must be absorbed in order for the liberal to posit a smoothly functioning harmonious society; integration and stratified equalitarianism. Obviously, he has no philosophical stake in the present system, and, indeed, he differs only with the New Left radical only on the latter's insistence that the smoothly functioning whole must be the sum of diverse yet complementary components before they become one with the system. Hence, the radical's emphasis on race pride and individualism. Evidently, this is only a small difference. Yet why do the liberals fail to join the Revolution? The largest area of dispute between radicals and liberals concerns the means towards their mutual goal-- a humanized society. Liberals have not yet reached the stage of confrontation and resistance that is basic to the radical and still fight the system on its own terms. Also, because of their economic and social vulnerability, liberals are more prone to be "put in line" by the tirades of the Nixon Administration. Witness the floundering of the Democratic leadership when faced with modified red-baiting.

In the past, liberals have either fallen behind the lead of the radicals or cheered them on from the sidelines. It is about time that they live up to their convictions and lend a sense of balance to the radical drive. You do not have to be a revolutionary in order to be radical. In fact, Gandhi was one of the most successful "radicals" of recent history. Indeed, just plain thinking can be one of the most revolutionary acts one can perform in this society. The time of protest has passed and we must attack the War Machine on every level. If the Draft is an obscenity, you must stop it. If the college aids the greedy warmongers, you must put an end to its complicity. Only you can decide how. The system is violent, and we must understand the motives of those who have been driven to strike back. Nixon decries the bombing at Madison yet continues to ravage Vietnam. If you are opposed to violence, then you must show that the War Machine can be stopped through other methods. The thing is, the system is vulnerable on many levels and it is up to good old Yankee ingenuity to find them. Right on and all power to the imagination.

By JOHN LYNCH