

Let Us Render Unto Caesar

(The following are the lead paragraphs of three separate news stories, all of which appeared on the front page of the Oakland Tribune for April 14, 1966.)

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The Alameda County Grand Jury will consider indicting former Oakland mayor John C. Houlihan on embezzlement charges.

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Alameda County Assessor Donald E. Feragen was found guilty of eight counts of bribery today by a jury in the court of Superior Judge Redmond C. Staats.

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The city council today voiced formal opposition to the entry of self-styled agitator Saul Alinsky into Oakland.

Councilman Robert Osborne asked the council to oppose moves to bring Alinsky from Chicago into the Bay Area to organize minority races and the poor.

Osborne said, "It's about time the clergy of all denominations including my own (Roman Catholic) stick to things ecclesiastical and leave politics and the welfare of the community to the politicians."

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SPARTACIST-WEST

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FREE
ISSUE

No Place Else To Go?

The Scheer Campaign And an Alternative

Does anyone remember the struggle in the Vietnam Day Committee over the endorsement of Robert Scheer's campaign in the Democratic primary? We ask because certain promises made then by the leaders of the pro-Scheer wing of the VDC seem to have vanished from the popular memory. At that time two camps appeared in the VDC. On one side stood those who warned that the Democratic Party was a trap and that running in its primary could not advance the movement. On the other side stood those, mainly certain self-styled "New Left" leaders, who swore by all that was holy that they had no illusions about the Democratic Party, and that this primary campaign was going to be different. (Bob Scheer himself even tried to pose as standing to the left of the Marxists, by claiming to have doubts about the whole mechanism of parliamentary democracy. This appeared to us at the time as not so much dishonest as grotesque.) And most of the independents in the VDC who voted to support Scheer honestly believed that his campaign would indeed attack the Democratic Party and that it would not spread illusions about the possibility of radically



Drawn by Lisa Lyons for the April issue of Despite Everything, 1937 1/2 Russell Street, Berkeley. Reprinted with permission.

transforming the party of Lyndon Johnson.

We have now seen several months of the Scheer campaign -- not the promises but the reality. Now we can see whether or not this campaign is another phoney "radical" primary campaign or a genuine attack on the Democratic Party. SPARTACIST-WEST confesses that it has been able to find precious little evidence of any "attack on the Democratic Party" in Scheer's campaign, but perhaps our "marxist dogmatism" has blinded us to examples of

(Continued on inside pages)

Independent Politics: Difficult,

such an attack. (After all, we couldn't see the campaign in the first place.)

Therefore, we are offering a free 6-issue subscription to SPARTACIST, our national magazine, to any reader who sends in a piece of Scheer campaign literature, which attacks the Democratic Party. (Literature distributed by Scheer forces to VDC radicals several months ago does not count.)

Some Scheer supporters maintain that "what's important is Vietnam, not the Democratic Party. Of course Scheer is against the Democratic Party, but he doesn't see that as the main issue." But to attack the American role in Vietnam without attacking the party that makes possible that role, is self-defeating. To attack the fraudulence of the War on Poverty without attacking the party that keeps the allegiance of the poor in order the better to keep them in poverty, is self-defeating. To attack the anti-labor moves of the Administration without attacking the party which courts labor's vote so as to keep in power that anti-labor Administration, is self-defeating. To support civil rights without attacking the party which betrays the Negro's cause while it keeps his loyalty, is self-defeating. It's like warning against bubonic plague and prescribing rat bites for its cure.

Let us suppose that Scheer succeeds in convincing significant numbers of people that the war is wrong, that LBJ does not intend to end poverty, etc.. It is then incumbent on Scheer to suggest a solution to the problems he has revealed. We Marxists hold that the first step in eliminating these problems is to build a political party based on the ghettos, on the trade-union movement and on the working people in general. Until such a time as that party comes into being, we must continue to attack and expose the party which now holds the loyalty of the working people, the Democratic Party.

CONTRADICTION

But, the Scheer forces ask, why can't we attack the Democratic Party by running in its primary? Because to call for the destruction of a party in the primary of which you are waging a campaign, is a blatant contradiction. (A contradiction which, to be sure, Scheer has neatly avoided: he doesn't attack the Democratic Party.) For even if Scheer did convince people that the Democratic Party was "unreformable" he

would have to explain why, if the Democratic Party is so bad, he's running in its primary. His reply is the strongest of all arguments for staying in the Democratic Party: "because there is no place else to go--running independently is impossible." (This, remember, was how the campaign was sold to the VDC: the Democratic Party may be bad, but there is no place else to go.) So even if Scheer did attack the Democrats (as he has not, in fact) his actions would prove stronger than his words, and would be the best possible evidence that even bright radicals who realize the true nature of the Democratic Party end up running in it because independent politics are impossible.

NOT IMPOSSIBLE

In fact, independent politics are not impossible. But they are difficult. This difficulty is something we will have to surmount, however, if we ever want to be effective. This course of action is dictated to us by the very social structure and corresponding political alignments of this country. About 85% of the families in this country get most of their income from salaries or wages. On a whole range of questions their interests are opposed to the interests of those who really rule this country, those who own its wealth. The war in Vietnam is a prime example of this. However, most of the 85% are not aware of this divergence of interests; a variety of social mechanisms instill into them a "false consciousness." Thus the labor movement

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SCHEER

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and the Negro people voted Lyndon Johnson into office. What is needed as the next step is for this majority to form a party of its own, based on its mass organizations and responsible to it. Until such time as it does, we must keep up our propaganda for such a party and against the Democratic Party.

SCHEER ARTICLE

Why do Scheer and his co-thinkers reject this analysis? Perhaps the answer is to be found in an article Scheer wrote in the second issue of Root and Branch, a defunct radical quarterly. In this article Scheer maintained that the workingclass had been "eliminated as an agency of social change. Unemployment insurance and big business unionism have eliminated the kinds of crises which could have 'radicalized' this class. The basis of our problem lies in the fact that the types of crises we do face are not felt by any one class of the society in any obvious way. There is then, no mass base of discontent in which the intellectual can operate." Further, he discovered that "American capitalism has solved many of the problems which fired the spirit of an older generation of radicals. The problems of full employment, and the rights of labor unions, are not the major crises faced by modern America." Another discovery was that the "category" of "imperialism" was a "dead fiction."

With this no-class analysis, it was highly probable that Scheer would end up in the Democratic Party. (However, let it be noted that his major campaign slogans are "Withdraw Troops" and "End Poverty." That would seem to have something to do with the "category of imperialism." LBJ at least recognizes the reality of these two problems: he fights one with a fake war and reinforces the other with a real one.) The theoretical propositions set out by Scheer in this article represent in finished form a very dangerous kind of impressionism. Because the poor were not so "visible" back then -- this was before Mike Harrington and the "War on Poverty" -- Scheer concluded that income distribution was not a major problem. Because the organized workingclass was relatively quiescent he decided that it is no longer an agency of change. What is lacking is any deep-going analysis, even to back up his own conclusions. Certainly, if the United States is going to remain relatively pros-

perous, then radical change is not to be expected. But Scheer does not try to prove that this will be so -- he merely takes it for granted. For our part, we expect "the problems of income distribution, full employment and the rights of labor unions" to assume increasingly important scope as colony after colony in the American Empire (not at all a "dead fiction" -- ask any Vietnamese) is pulled into the vortex of the colonial revolution.

But the rising curve of social struggle in America does not mean an automatic victory for "our side." Most particularly will we not succeed if our discontent is deflected into the Democratic Party. Thus the necessity of anti-Democratic Party politics. Thus the necessity of an independent campaign calling for a real working people's party.

DOOR-TO-DOOR

A serious independent campaign would have meant going door-to-door, convincing people not to vote in the primary elections but to be ready to endorse an independent nominating petition to have our candidate's name placed on the ballot this fall. About 8000 signatures would have been needed in this Congressional District. (We understand that several thousand people around the University community have been registered already just to be able to vote for Scheer -- most of these would have been willing to support an independent campaign.) Even if we did not succeed in getting on the ballot, we could run a write-in campaign. At all times we would have kept up an attack on the Democratic Party. The long-run results of this kind of campaign would have been far and away more important than the superficial radicalization that any Democratic Party primary campaign

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Cracked Heads & Shattered Illusions

The Berkeley Police Department did the anti-war movement a service on April 12 when they ripped off their liberal masks and cracked heads. The image of a neutral and benevolent gendarmerie has aided the spread of pacifist illusions in the student movement. We remember coming home after the October 15 march and listening to a panel discussion on KPFA. There we heard Steve Weissman praising the Berkeley police, contrasting them to the terrible Oakland police, etc. ad nauseam.

And in the April 22 Berkeley BARB Joseph Vetrone writes: "no body anticipated such violent conduct from the Berkeley police. But this was an illusion shared by all of us, can anyone deny it?"

Just for the record, we deny that we ever had any illusions about the Berkeley police, or any other police for that matter.

In this BARB article Mr. Vetrone suggests that non-violent resistance would have been appropriate: "If everyone had sat down in the streets and linked arms, the police would have been confronted with a real problem, a problem which could not have been solved with clubs. They would have had to peel away each demonstrator, one by one, and drag them off."

Alas, it appears that not all illusions are yet dead. Has Mr. Vetrone forgotten tear gas? Or does he still believe that local police will not use as much force as they

"The operation of using the Democratic primary as a "forum" for something radical a little resembles stealing priest's robes in order to put forward atheist arguments from the pulpit -- in church latin. The semantic heart of it is the conviction that people can't be approached directly with the truth, but only through the existing church. The conviction tells you little, indeed, of the people, but much of those who "approached" but are tired now, and project their fatigue on the people. . ."

-- Scheer-Schmeer, by P.M. in Despite Everything, April 1966.

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find necessary to control the situation?

Shedding illusions by the April 12 method is somewhat painful. Better not to have any illusions to begin with: let's be prepared to expect anything from our ruling class.

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(Continued from inside pages)

might achieve. Even if the Scheer campaign does succeed in registering several thousand votes "against the war" it will simultaneously have put over a cruel hoax on the working people of this district: it will have tried to convince them that the Democratic Party, the demagogic party of war, racism and poverty, can be transformed into a genuine party of the people.

The only place for campaigns against Johnson's war is outside Johnson's party. Such campaigns will not be easy. Building a new party of the working people will not be easy. But it will be ten thousand times as easy as transforming the party of Lyndon Johnson, Pat Brown and James Eastland into our party.

-- Doug Hainline