SOLIDARITY AND MYTH

Well, Bunkey, don't say we didn't try to warn you. . . .

Last November fourth, while millions of Americans flocked to the polls to pay ritual acclamation to the (un)representative system, your friends here at the AAA demonstrated in favor of "Nobody" for president. Our thinking was and is that no leader or representative will ever articulate the desires and satisfy the needs of all the people better than the people themselves. On a global level, we maintain that nationalism is both a poison and a drug, while locally we hold that no wage package or economic program can substitute for mutual aid and self-management.

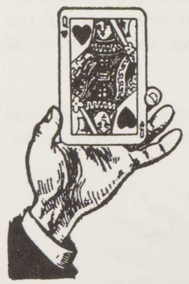
On Election day, however, millions of Americans, including many traditionally "democratic" [sic] elements, were caught up in the prevailing nationalistic, anti-Iranian hysteria. Lemming-like, they crammed voting booths to put a strong leader in office, a tough guy who wouldn't take any crap from foreigners, a man through whom to vicariously compensate for their gnawing sense of impotence.

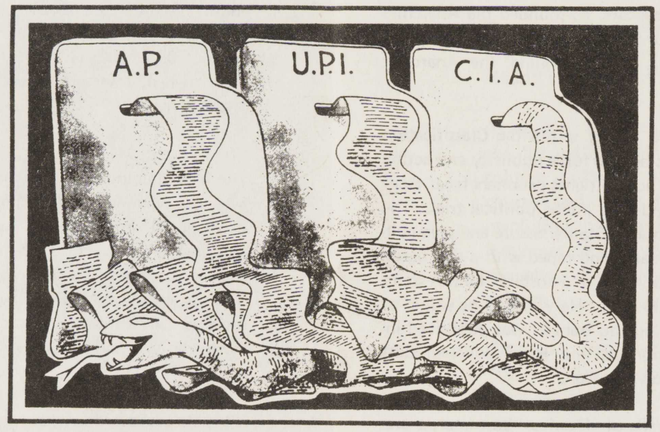
But lo, a fly in the ointment. The unfortunate voters discovered they had accepted a package deal. As the hostage crisis fades into memory, blue collar conservatives found smaller social security benefits for their parents, and even bleaker prospects for themselves. They found cutbacks in school lunches for their children, and less availability of loan funds for college. They found that, while they had been distracted by the alien menace, they were being screwed faster than they could turn around at home.

Not to take all of this laying down, the AFL-CIO proceeded to organize "Solidarity Day!" As we went to press last month, September 19th, 400,000 people came to Washington to protest "Reaganomics." As laudable as this may seem, to what did the AFL-CIO and their "grass roots coalition" object, and what did they propose?

Let us first dispense with one fallacy. From the beginning, "Solidarity Day" was not and was never intended to express affinity with the Polish workers, nor to endorse international syndicalism in any form. Because of the context of events there, however, Lane Kirkland was able to add a number of gratuitous remarks to that effect, which simultaneously served the function of reinforcing the anti-Soviet Cold War sentiment exploited by Reagan in last year's campaign.

"Solidarity Day" was directed against the tax and budgetary policies of the new administration. As such it was based on false premises, diversionary at best, and system-reinforcing at worst.





THE FREE PRESS IS NOT SO FREE

Skimming through any big daily one can't help but notice the 3/4 page ads, and one might wonder why so much space is given over to Saks Fifth Avenue to display models in the latest underwear. Well, anyone associated with a large establishment paper will explain that it's the advertisements not your 20 cents that makes the paper money. And in fact all biggies, like the New York Times with its 800,000 circulation, do not print what they see as fit but what will fit around the advertising.

With the papers' bread and butter coming from big business we would expect to see a direct relationship between how well the economy/company is doing and how large their advertising budget. Thus it follows that the publishers are most interested in the welfare and growth of their advertisers' companies, for when the community prospers, the newspapers prosper.

At first glance such advertiser support may not seem too bad. After all, no one wants to pay even 20 cents for the Post let alone a dollar (by the way, "Emancipation" costs over 20 cents a copy). However upon closer investigation, we find that the publisher/business community relationship is more than service/client oriented. For what a large influencial paper prints can have great effect on a company, which may send ripples through the entire economy. For example, if the New York Times or Washington Post give front page coverage to the US Government-backed Guatamalan death squads and the extent of involvement of Coca-Cola and Dole amongst others, the boycott against these companies might just catch on. And these companies will lose money, the economy sags and advertisers drop out. Thus we can't really expect coverage of these events.

The same is true for more general political or economic topics. The plight of Native Americans, troops in the Philippines, and support for Samozas and Amins are "hands off" stories because they will cause Americans to question further the practices of one company and question capitalism and the state. However, if our analoges the USSR or Cuba invade, station troops or mistreat one person it is not only front page news but continuous news, because it keeps Americans believing that if all isn't well it's better than over there.

In this way the publisher develops his/her own little party line of what is news worthy and what his customers in big business want. And it doesn't matter how many reporters go out and dig up the facts because sitting back at the office is the editor appointed by the publisher and the story is not going to print.

So what it all boils down to is that the freedom of the press is the freedom of the corporations to support a newspaper publishing a million copies in all kinds of shapes and sizes all saying the same thing. And all us little publications don't add up to even one hundred thousand for 225 million people in the US.

One last thing to think about, the Federal Government is the business community in D.C.

Scott M. Rodell

Take tax policy. Objection to policy ignores the question of the legitimacy of taxation itself. First, what argument justifies taking money from individuals, or even corporations? This is not meant as an endorsement of Ed Clark libertarianism. Rather, what moral, qualitative difference exists to support taxation of the rich as opposed to taxation of the poor? In both cases, the state is interfering with the right of individuals and freely constituted associations to dispense with their own resources. The usual argument is that the state serves a just purpose in securing a minimal standard of living for the disadvantaged; that is, immoral means serve moral ends. If this is not sufficiently damning, consider the pre-supposition of inequality of incomes, standards of living, and social and economic advantages. The argument is thus circular, metaphysical, and contemptible.

Look, then, at the budget. That is merely the other side of the same coin. By limiting its pleas to a larger slice of the pie, Solidarity Day protesters fail to question the right of a central decision-making body to do the slicing in the first place. In popular philosophy we have the chicken and egg argument. In police interrogation rooms, we have the Mutt and Jeff routine. In like vein, American union leaders are suckered (or bought) into supporting both capitalism and the big government programs which its destructive side-effects make "necessary."

It remains possible that, despite its false pretenses and political misdirection, "Solidarity Day" may yet prove to be of some consequence in the American (and even international) labor movement. Many participants experienced an inevitable feeling of power and, yes, even "solidarity" for the first time. With a little imagination, those same 400,000 people could make a real impression on the power structure, the non-participating public, and not least of all, on themselves. A nation-wide general strike of 400,000, plus the thousands more who might have participated but could not make the trip to Washington, could cripple the United States economically.

Enough moral victories and love fests, workers! When the energy and dedication (not of the AFL-CIO leadership, friends, but the masses of supporters on the Mall) that was brought together on "Solidarity Day" becomes enraged or disillusioned enough to direct that energy effectively, we will hail the beginning of a real popular movement in the United States. If it feels good, do it, friends, but let's not confuse catharsis with satisfaction.

— Ernst Staatsfeind