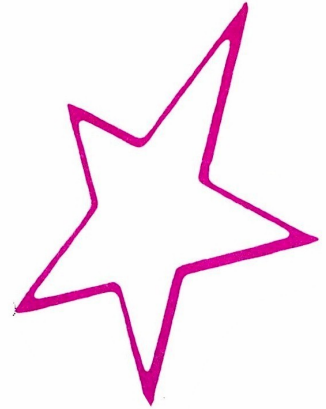


CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

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138



AMERICAN POLITICS

1. Return of Class Politics

The failure of the economic recovery and the escalation of the corporate offensive are unravelling the gentlemen's agreement between the employers and the labor bureaucracy. Class questions and class consciousness are returning to the heart of American politics.

Because it is the employers who have chosen to break this agreement and who are forcing the confrontation, the class war is still predominantly one-sided. The capitalist class is better organized and more conscious than its labor adversary, who has remained on the defensive.

While a powerful labor response is still in the future, the response of the miners and the class war language initiated by top sections of the bureaucracy are not isolated, peripheral events. They indicate the beginning of the development of a militant, left wing in the unions. This development will be the basis for a serious working class response in the years ahead.

2. The Crisis and Expansion of the Employers' Offensive

The economic crisis has set the stage for an upping of the ante in the employers' offensive. The return to double-digit inflation, the growing trade deficit, the fall of the dollar, the low return on investment, and high unemployment are all occurring during "recovery"--that is, even before the next recession begins.

The recovery has failed to stabilize the economy or to solve the problems of stagflation. Inflation, low investment, etc. are all laying the basis for a new recession in the next year.

Under the impact of this squeeze, the offensive by the capitalists which began as an attack on working conditions on the shop floor level, and then expanded to a general attack at the bargaining table, has now been taken further: into the halls of Congress. The employers are no longer limiting their attack to a primarily economic offensive; they are now launching that offensive in the arena of American national politics as well.

3. Corporate Political Action and the New Right

The ideas of the New Right, the co-ordinated force of numerous right-wing organizations, are providing the framework for the capitalist political response to the crisis, replacing the philosophy of corporate liberalism of the boom years.

The New Right has capitalized on a grass-roots strategy against issues like abortion, affirmative action, the ERA, gay rights and bussing. It is focussed on turning back gains won by mass movements of the 60's. It has found its major populist issue in the tax revolt. Here, by appearing to champion the interests of the "common people" by slashing property taxes, it has been singularly successful in perpetrating a serious attack on working people, especially public employees and those who benefit from social services.

Behind the New Right stands, not some local neighborhood kook, or some handful of highly-publicized Nazi scum (although they are its stepchildren), but the American Corporation. Big Business has provided financing for the program of the New Right. The New Right consists of sophisticated political organizers and fund-raisers working in the interests of the capitalist class.

The political offensive by the capitalists has been organized on a second, related front. 1978 saw the emergence of a rash of corporate Political Action Committees (PACs). The PACs, organized by corporations among their workforces for pro-business "citizen lobbying," represent the capitalists' move to give their political strategy another grass-roots dimension.

The development of the New Right and the corporate political offensive will, over time, make it increasingly clear to workers and the oppressed that it is the corporations, American capitalism, that is the enemy.

4. The Collapse of Traditional Liberalism and Political Action

These developments have underlined a national shift to the right in American politics. Under the impact of the economic crisis, traditional liberalism (the policy of government deficit spending, social planning and regulation of private industry, and band-aid reforms), is crumbling. This process is permeating the new breed of Democratic Party politicians.

There has been a void in traditional liberal response to the New Right's attacks; in fact a whole span of Democratic Party candidates are accepting and running on the conservatives' issues in this year's elections. In the cities

liberal administrations have been in the forefront of slashing social programs. Last year 54% of PAC funds went to Democratic candidates.

The shift to the right and the weakening of liberalism have had their proof in the record of the 95th Congress. We saw a legislature with a large Democratic majority, dominated by the so-called "party of the working people," fail to pass a single piece of labor legislation without lobotomizing it. From smashing labor law reform to natural gas deregulation, from defeating common situs picketing to record defense funding, anti-abortion riders, CETA cuts, the tax shaft, gutting OSHA and even opposition to the lukewarm Humphrey-Hawkins bill--the 95th Congress has a Republican record.

Other developments in this Administration punctuate this process, including Carter's back-tracking on Bakke with his refusal to support quotas, the formation of the cold war coalition "Peace Through Strength" by 148 Congressmen, and the Administration's stab in the back to labor on National Health Insurance.

1978 underlined the failure of traditional liberalism to provide solutions despite overwhelming Democratic control of Congress and the Presidency. While liberalism may momentarily revive around a Kennedy campaign, its acceptance of capitalist norms in an economic crisis will make a liberal revival short-lived and mean no solutions and dramatically decreased reforms for workers and minorities.

More than that, the utter failure of labor's long-time political strategy for a "veto proof" Congress and Democratic Administration is embarrassingly obvious. The shift to the right in national politics has had its reflection in a change in the balance of forces inside the Democratic Party itself, making labor's ability to win concessions in exchange for its support to Democrats negligible.

While it is true that we expect, in the immediate future, more rather than less activity in the Democratic Party, the return of class politics, the shift to the right within the Democratic Party and the failure of liberalism will strengthen our propaganda for independent political action.

5. Coalition Politics

In response to the attack by the capitalists in the political arena, some sections of the labor bureaucracy are recognizing the need for coalitions among social movements to fight the employer/right offensive.

Calls to this effect have so far, however, been empty. Frasers' conference of "labor, women and minorities" offered little but more of the same Democratic Party legislative strategy which has been such a singular failure.

In the future, sentiment for the formation of coalitions which ally the labor movement with the oppressed, as well as for more effective action and strategy by such organizations, will grow. We welcome that sentiment. It will mean openings to fight for mass action and serious mobilizations of the ranks of workers and the oppressed.

6. Movements of the Oppressed

Moves toward reviving coalition politics by labor will increase as an organized response by women and minorities takes form.

The crisis of the 70's cut into the gains made by the oppressed in the 60's. The new escalation of the right and the corporations has led to the embryonic revival of movements of the oppressed. This response is still predominantly defensive and uses liberal strategies. But in 1977-78 it produced the first revival of mass demonstrations.

Unfortunately this process has not yet developed in the Black community. With the exception of 15,000 anti-Bakke demonstrators last April, and small activities around police brutality and the African liberation movements, the Black community is still on the defensive. Yet the political process now developing in the traditional Black organizations is an indication that this is beginning to change.

Other documents explain this process in depth. In addition, in response to Anita Bryant, Briggs, and the anti-gay offensive, we have seen demonstrations of 100,000 in New York and 250,000 in San Francisco marching for gay rights. For women, the massive 100,000-strong ERA march organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) on Washington this year was the largest and most visible indication in a series of events that the basis for the building of a new women's movement is being laid.

A small, but growing, and significant aspect of these developments is the greater participation by workers and greater emphasis on economic and class questions. NOW is entering a conscious alliance with the labor movement, and the ERA march showed small but significant participation by union women. This bears out our perspective that the revived movements of the oppressed in the 1980's will have a stronger working class core and politics.