

socialist struggle. The forms of such vanguards and their specific content are as varied as the historical circumstances and period in question. The theory, strategy, and tactics of the various parties styling themselves socialist, communist, revolutionary, Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, Maoist, etc., over the past fifty years in the United States, have marked them like other splintered evangelicals as witnesses to revelations long ago and far away, but have made them virtually anything but qualified for adequate leadership of the American working class in a revolutionary struggle for socialism, literally anything but a "vanguard," however elect they may be for standing in the hereafter.

It would be a considerable step forward if we could aim for adequacy in our socialist political discussion and planning. With radicals and doctrinaires, their words and gestures go beyond sustained achievements; with revolutionaries, their achievements—their deeds—go beyond their words. Even the great mystic, the poet Blake, knew better than we "practical" and "scientific" Americans the dead-hand of abstract formalism upon living thought and healthful activity. As he said: "Go, put off holiness, Take on intelligence."

PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPER*

THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL, written with the assistance of Martin J. Sklar, describes a newspaper that I and several other people are now organizing. If everything goes on schedule, the newspaper staff will assemble in Chicago in late July or early August this year, with publication beginning as soon after the November election as possible. Staff members are now being recruited and we are trying to raise the \$200,000 needed to begin publication. We are seeking people with journalistic experience who share our political perspective to join the staff, as well as people who might function as correspondents or stringers, or who will set up local support groups. In addition, we need money and urge you to contribute as sponsoring

* This is not an offer for the sale of securities or a solicitation for investments, but solely an announcement; offers of shares will be announced in accordance with applicable laws.

subscribers to the newspaper. Checks should be made out to the New Majority Publishing Company. Those interested in making contributions of over \$1,000 should write me at the New Majority address, 1615 Polk Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

—James Weinstein

Initial Conception

THE INITIAL CONCEPTION of the paper is as follows:

Frequency: Weekly.

Number of pages: 24.

Initial press run: 20,000.

Paid circulation: Estimated 15,000 minimum paid circulation the first year, divided between mail subscribers and bulk sales through distributors and left organizations.

Promotion: 200,000 direct mail pieces, plus advertising in left publications and organizations.

Staff: 13-14 full-time staff to include: editor, managing editor, foreign news editor, cultural editor, three reporters, business manager, circulation person, two production people, typesetter and layout person, general office worker.

Bureaus: A full-time Washington, D.C., office with two people, one to do general contact work, promotion and circulation, the other one of the three reporters. An office in Geneva, Switzerland, staffed part time.

Legal structure: Limited partnership.

Budget: Write New Majority Publishing (address above) for a full preliminary budget.

Why a Socialist Newspaper Now?

FIRST, AS A RESULT of the war in Vietnam, Watergate, inflation, and the deep recession, more Americans than ever before have begun to question and lose confidence in American capitalism and in the major political parties. The People's Bicentennial Poll last August reported that thirty-three per cent of Americans (some seventy million) "believe that the capitalist system has reached its peak" and is "now on the decline." Forty-four per cent think that public ownership of oil and other natural resources would do "more good than harm," and forty-nine per cent think that big business is "the source of what is wrong today." At the same time, fifty-seven per cent

recognize that the Democratic and Republican parties favor big business over the average worker. A news story shortly after the PBC poll reported not only that Republican registration had dropped to twenty-six per cent, but also that Democratic registration was down to forty-two per cent. An unprecedented thirty-one per cent of voters are now registered independents. "If this trend persists," the executive vice president of the Gallup organization said on October 30, "the United States will in the near future experience its greatest crisis of confidence since 1933." And yet, despite the unquestionably widespread sense of frustration and hostility toward American business, no political alternative is being offered by the left. As Jeremy Rifkin commented after he saw the results of the PBC poll, "the people have outdistanced not only the liberals and progressives, but the 'radical' community as well."

Second, in the face of this undeniable opportunity, organized left groups and parties are fragmented, isolated, and culturally narrow. There is a great deal of activity among left groups, but it is either local and invisible to the general public, or it makes the left appear to be a band of lunatic desperadoes. No group or publication speaks convincingly to the concerns of millions of Americans about economic insecurity, personal safety, a meaningful and fulfilling life. No group or publication addresses itself to the unique and particular purpose of a socialist left: to convert the prevailing discontent with corporate capitalism into consciousness of the need for socialism as the only democratic way of organizing a highly industrial society—and to make clear the possibility of attaining socialism through organized collective action.

Beyond the left as presently constituted there is a new popular movement in the making, but it is still amorphous and diffused throughout American society. More unaffiliated leftists are active in various social movements than at any time in this century. They are culturally and vocationally more diverse, and politically more experienced and sophisticated than ever before. But dispersed throughout the trade unions, the National Organization of Women, the Democratic Party, the Black Political Caucus, the ecology movement, the consumer protection movement, and others, these leftists do not yet constitute a coherent political force or even a visible movement.

Nor are they likely to come together as a unified force in the next few years. Indeed, although the potential is beginning to be clear, the political character of this emerging movement is by no means predetermined.

Our purpose in organizing and producing this newspaper is to identify and clarify the struggles against corporate power now multiplying in American society, to bring to explicit consciousness their implicit anti-capitalism, and to point out that a socialist democracy is a necessity for the fulfillment of the popular needs and aspirations underlying these activities. Our vision is based on the idea that socialism flows from the American people's historical experience and needs, not against them. In this sense we will distinguish ourselves and socialism both from the "radicalism" of recent years and from liberalism.

We will attempt to leave behind us the obsolete ideas of the sectarian left, which are so unsuited to a highly industrialized nation with a liberal democratic heritage. We will explore and develop the political principle that sovereignty resides with the people, not with the state or "the party." And we will initiate thinking on forms of socialist politics, on the idea of multi-party socialism, and on the relationship of socialism and republican institutions in a democratic society.

In short, the political role of the newspaper is to begin making socialism a concrete *public* issue, related directly to the most pressing problems in American life—and to act as a catalyst in the formation of a coherent organized movement with the perspective of forming a major party for socialism. This can be done only if we report and attempt to explain events and issues that are the actual concerns of the majority of the population. We will address what is news and try to make sense of it. We will not do what all left publications now do—speak mostly to the concerns of "radicals," either "cultural" or "political." Our potential audience is the seventy million Americans beginning to question the desirability of capitalism. Our goal is to win as many as possible of them to socialism.

Why a National Newspaper?

SOCIALISM REQUIRES A change in the basic principle upon which society as a whole now operates. Under capitalism the primary principle underlying all social decisions is profit

rationality. Under socialism the primary principle will be social rationality. Above all, this means that "government," which is now the disguised rule of those who own productive property, will become the popular activity of everyone. Since capitalist society is organized on a national and even an international basis, a socialist movement cannot be effective or credible unless it, too, is organized nationally and oriented on that basis to the international economy and community of nations. While local decision-making and decentralization are goals of a socialist movement in a highly industrial society, society as a whole must first be transformed. To have any hope of success a socialist movement must have a national presence and nationwide organization. The paper will be a first step in developing a socialist presence nationally. As such it will help to provide a framework for, and greatly aid, local work.

Why an Independent Newspaper?

IDENTIFICATION WITH ANY ONE of the several groups that now exist on the left would estrange the paper from all the others, would trivialize the idea of socialism in the eyes of the public at large, and would hinder the development of fresh approaches and thinking to which the newspaper is deeply committed. When, or if, a popular socialist movement comes into existence the newspaper will identify with it and consider the question of its responsibility to it. These are not now practical questions. At present the newspaper can only have friendly working relations with as large a number of different organizations as is politically desirable and feasible.

The paper will, therefore, be independent both organizationally and editorially. Its staff will function as a political collective, but day-to-day operations will be conducted within a clearly defined structure of responsibility. To encourage maximum participation in the paper and the paper's responsibility to the left as a whole, we will establish an advisory board of representatives from non-sectarian socialist organizations and some individuals. This board will meet two or three times a year to evaluate the paper's work, to suggest improvements and general guidelines, and to explore ways to help the paper expand its coverage and circulation. Preliminary solicitation of these groups will begin in early 1976.

How Will the Paper Be Distributed?

MOST OF OUR PAID circulation will be by mail subscription, initially solicited through a direct mail campaign of 200,000 pieces and through exchange advertisements. We anticipate a return of 8,000 to 10,000 subscriptions from this campaign. A second way of selling the paper will be through individual agents recruited from local chapters of the organizations on the advisory board. They will take responsibility for regular distribution. This should be possible in thirty to fifty cities. Finally, we will use independent commercial distributors in the few cities where they exist.

The Newspaper's Content

THE MAIN EMPHASIS will be on domestic national news. We will attempt to make sense of major domestic issues each week and will have three or four full-time reporters to work on these stories. We plan to have a full-time reporter in Washington, another who will concentrate on trade union and labor developments, and a third and possible fourth to cover the various social movements and special stories. A foreign news editor will be responsible for news of the world, which we will get largely from Internews, from our Geneva office (including translations from *Le Monde*, which has the best international news coverage available), and from the daily press. Foreign news stories will be largely rewritten and synthesized from other sources, but we will develop our own correspondents and stringers as quickly as possible and will try to report developments that are suppressed in the commercial press. We will particularly try to keep abreast of foreign political and social developments that are relevant to Americans facing similar problems. We will, of course, also cover events in colonial and semi-colonial nations, but unlike much of the left press we will not give these disproportionate coverage or succumb to the euphoria that so often leads to dishonesty and disillusionment.

There will be many brief articles and items, all of which will be written clearly and succinctly. Our language will be direct, our style lively. We will attempt humor whenever appropriate, and try to develop our own cartoonists. We will strive to clarify

but not to simplify events and their meaning. And by means of vigorous and consistent copy editing we will develop a distinct overall style and personality for the paper.

Our cultural coverage will be most complete in the area of movies and books. Movie reviews and articles on film will concentrate on films shown in neighborhood theatres, and we will try to develop one or two regular reviewers. We will review both mass circulation books and books of special interest to the left that need promotion. Book reviews will be assigned to a wide variety of individuals according to their special competence and interests. We will seek articles on general cultural questions and commentary on trends and developments in TV and in sports. These will come primarily from outside contributors. In general, the paper will critically examine the popular culture without putting down its consumers.

In addition, we plan to do several series of articles on various questions and issues. These will appear in installments of eight hundred to a thousand words and will run for several consecutive weeks. The most important of these will be several series on socialism—what we mean by it, what it is and isn't, how socialism in the United States will differ from that in the pre-industrial nations that have had revolutions; party politics and the state in the present period and also under socialism; the working-class majority; how production priorities will appear and be determined under socialism; civil liberties and socialism; uniformity and diversity, centralization and decentralization; how specific industries and institutions might be reorganized on the basis of socialist principles and popular participation; the process of revolutionary transformation, etc. These will then be available in pamphlet form for use by various left groups.

Similarly, we plan to do series on women's conditions and movements; national minorities and the struggle for equality (race, class, and politics); the labor movement and its politics; crime in the United States; public education and the quality and function of the schools (including community control, busing, and integration); old age and the treatment of the retired and aged under American capitalism; the energy crisis and the oil industry; AMTRAK and public transportation; inflation as a way of life under capitalism. These series will be

concrete and will be based on the actual developments and the real concerns and fears that people have. They will offer perspectives for immediate activity around each question but will also explain why socialism is the only democratic solution to any of these problems, and how they might be solved under socialism. We will also reprint these as pamphlets for general use.

Finally, we will attempt to get regular columns from various well-known individuals and from representatives of organizations on the advisory board. These will be run in regular column form, will be signed, and will be the opinion of the columnist. This will institutionalize a diversity of views and especially of views not represented in the working collective.

Legal Structure

THE NEW MAJORITY Publishing Company is being set up as a limited partnership so that the first two years' operating deficit will be fully tax deductible. Shares (\$1,000 minimum) will be sold to investors (limited partners). A total subscription of \$300,000 is being sought. The first year's deficit will be (is planned to be) approximately \$200,000. The second year's deficit should be well under \$100,000 (probably \$50,000). We will begin operations when we have raised \$200,000 but will continue to solicit contributions until we raise the full \$300,000.

All contributions or investments will be held in escrow until the \$200,000 is raised. If the full amount is not raised all monies will be returned to contributors/investors. None of the initial capital will be used as organizing money, which is being raised separately. So, if you make a contribution and the project does not get off the ground, your money will be returned and you will lose nothing. If the project does get off the ground, the full amount of your contribution should be tax deductible (unless something goes wrong and we make money).

Organizing Committee

Dorothy Healey, Los Angeles
Elinor Langer, Chicago

Doyle Niemann, Atlanta
Martin J. Sklar, Chicago

James Weinstein, San Francisco

Initial Sponsors

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