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Joseph R. Peden, Publisher

Murray N. Rothbard, Editor

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DEATH OF THE LEFT

Signs of the death of the Left are everywhere. When we proclaimed last spring that the New Left was dead, at least in heart and brain ("The New Left, RIP", March 15) we shocked many of our readers; but now it is clear to all that the Left is in a state of total collapse. For example, the campus. Last spring, the eminent conservative sociologist R.A. Nisbet wrote an article asserting that the student revolution was finished; Cambodia and Kent State seemed to make a mockery of Professor Nisbet's claim, but now he has had the last laugh. It is true that the student movement is always least active in the fall, and then picks up momentum in the spring; but not since the glorious days of the apathy of the 1950's has the student movement, on campus after campus across the country, been so totally *kaput*. Reports from all over the country confirm this observation.

Thus, take Columbia and Yale, two hotbeds of insurrection only a short while ago. Only last spring, Panthermania had seized the Yale campus like a frenetic disease; agitation for the Panthermania had seized the disease; agitation for the Panthers was everywhere, even unto afflicting Yale's liberal President Kingman Brewster. But now numerous unbelieving observers report that politics is totally dead at Yale; that the students have returned to the supposedly long gone Old Cultural pursuits of football, frat parties, and boola boola; students have resumed their pre-1965 concerns with studies, note-taking, and personal careers. The same story holds at Columbia, once a seedbed of the student revolution. At the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, which struck for about a week after Cambodia, students have reverted to their ancient conservatism; the only political activity this fall on campus was for Jim the student preferential poll by a large majority. But not only at Brooklyn Poly; the Left and the liberals had engineered a week or two-week pre-election recess on the campuses in the expectation of student antiwar activity; but the only really conspicuous student activity in New York this fall was for Buckley. The absence of all but conservative political activity on the campuses is for example, noted in "The New Right", *Newsweek*, December 7).

In our rapidly changing society it is perhaps perilous to analyze any phenomenon as permanent, but this seemingly strange happening can be easily explained. Our revolutionaries have long analyzed the escalating march of revolution as seemingly inevitable: beginning with leaflets and petitions for civil rights or for an end to bombing North Vietnam, the students, frustrated at the lack of success, escalated to mass demonstrations; then to sit-ins and non-violent resistance; then finally to violent revolution. Pursuing every route, every alternative, without success, the students finally turned to violent uprising. The litany of exaltation proclaimed by

the revolutionaries proved to be correct; but what they forgot to ask was what would happen once the turn to violence came. What then? There were two possibilities; one was a successful, spreading insurrection—a possibility which had no chance at all, given the hatred for the students by the vast bulk of the American population. And the other was that once the violent route had begun, once the students had taken their climatic peek into the abyss, that the entire movement would then fizzle and die. The orgiastic climax came this year—with the mad bombings of the Weathermen and the murders at Kent State. The students had their climactic look at violence and its consequences; *that* was obviously not working; the other paths hadn't worked; and so everyone went home, forgot about politics, and sunk back into the peace and quiet of the 1950's. What the revolutionaries forgot was that, with all routes exhausted, the more probable conclusion was not all-out violent revolution but abandonment of the whole losing business. It was a Long March through six years of trouble and excitement and turbulence; but it looks very much as if Baby has Come Home at last. It was precisely the fact that the student revolution had gone blooey that accounts for the lack of success of Agnew in trying to polarize the masses against the kids this fall; for it was clear to many voters that our Vice-President was engaged in thumping a very dead horse.

What was accomplished by the six years of turmoil? On the campuses, not very much. The larger anti-war movement, I believe, accomplished a great deal in creating a climate of opposition to the war, in preventing any further escalation, and in ousting Lyndon Johnson from office. But, on the campuses, the center of the troubles, very little was changed except for the worse. The large, impersonal bureaucracies of our universities remain just as large and even more impersonal than before; our State-ridden colleges are even more State-ridden than they were when the whole business began. What has been added is negative: a crumbling still further of educational standards on behalf of aimless "rapping" and the absurd myth that everyone, regardless of ability or fitness, is entitled to a bachelor's degree by divine right. And as a corollary: idiotic "black studies" institutes, "women's studies" institutes and similar boondoggles. Six years is surely sufficient to evaluate the results of any movement; and on that basis, any sensible person should greet the death of the student revolution not with mourning and lamentations but with a sense of profound relief. "Social Darwinism" has once again been vindicated, a movement with bad premises (febrile, egalitarian, anti-intellectual and anti-rational) has burned itself out. The

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road is now cleared for a new and better beginning.

In the larger culture the Left is also in its death throes. We have been living in an increasingly sick culture; over the last year, that sickness has been embodied in intense and febrile faddism; the media, almost as if someone had pushed a button, have taken one absurd ideological fad after another, pushed it to an intensity unheard of before, and then dropped it as suddenly as it had begun in order to run after some new glamorous craze. Thus, from sometime after the end of October 1969, all of a sudden the media had discovered The Environment; and it was impossible for anyone to pick up a book or a magazine, to listen to the radio or to watch a TV show, without The Environment being beamed at you from all directions. Environment clubs were everywhere; paperbacks were poured out, each repeating the data of every other in a frantic quest for the quick buck; and then, Boom!, the orgiastic climax of Earth Day last spring, and Bingo! The Environment was forgotten, finished. Now whatever merit the Environment or pollution has as an issue, of one thing we can be damned sure: we did *not* have a pollution-free environment up till October 1969, suffer grievously from it until Earth Day, and then have pollution magically disappear ever since.

After Earth Day, we were happily spared hearing any further about The Environment, but then Women's Lib took its place. Once again, it was impossible to pick up a magazine or watch a TV show without being subjected to the endless repetitions of the Women's Lib cacaphony; and once again, dozens of paperbacks were rushed to press to take advantage of the new hoopla. But, praise the Lord, there is only just so much that the human mind can take, and once again there are sweet signs that Women's Lib has begun to have its day. The one good thing about sick faddism is that it *must* burn itself out; after the 2000th harangue about Women's Lib or The Environment, the audience finally calls a halt, and sanity, at least on this particular fad, must return.

The sickness of our culture is also embodied in the total, the complete absence of a sense of humor, particularly among our youth. If we had any sense of humor at all, any sense of perspective on the absurd and the idiotic, then the faddism and cultism of our time would never get under way. What we need today is not the magnificent rationality and wit of *one* H.L. Mencken, but a platoon, an army of Menckens to clean the Augean stables and to save us from the next onslaught of faddism, to prick the balloons before they get under way to plague us with month after month of solemn and raucous hooey.

In the meanwhile we happily have Tom Wolfe, and Wolfe has, almost singlehanded, destroyed the phenomenon that he himself named "radical chic." In the June 8 issue of *New York*, Wolfe, in a brilliant, witty article, "Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's" (see the *Lib. Forum*, July), devastatingly reported on and lampooned the "radical chic" of Panthermania among affluent New York liberals. Neither the Panthers nor Panthermania nor "Lenny" Bernstein has been the same since. Now Stewart Alsop reports that, partly because of the self-destructive inner nature of faddism, partly from the Wolfe article, "Radical Chic is Dead." (*Newsweek*, December 14.) As Alsop notes: "Watch the faces at some more-or-less politically sophisticated gathering the next time the 'rage and alienation' of 'the kids' is mentioned. Is there not a certain glazing of the eyeballs? Or when Eldridge Cleaver, say, or the Black Panthers, or Dr. Timothy Leary, or the youth culture, or Ti-Grace Atkinson, or women's lib, or the Gay Liberation Front, or some other icon of radical chic is introduced . . . The fact is that radical chic . . . was essentially a fad, and all fads die . . . The promoters of the fads go from excess to greater excess, to hold the attention of the faddists, until appetite

sickens on the surfeit, and so dies. When this crossover point is reached, the fad suddenly comes to seem a bit silly, or a little sickening, or very boring, or all three together." Now, Tom Wolfe has hammered a few more nails in the coffin, with the reprint of his article in book form, along with another hilarious article, "Mau-Mauing the Flak-Catchers", showing how radical leaders of minority groups in San Francisco organize confrontations in order to frighten and intimidate liberal anti-poverty bureaucrats ("Mau-Mauing"), so that these bureaucrats (who "catch the flak") will put these leaders onto the state gravy train. (Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak-Catchers*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$5.95.) The Left is hollering like stuck pigs, but none of their clamor can put radical chic back together again. Tom Wolfe has never been known as a conservative, but a long-time association with left-liberals will do the trick; and now Wolfe reports to the *New York Sunday Times Book Review* that Helmut Schoeck's important conservative-libertarian work *Envy* (*Lib. Forum*, Sept. 15) is one of his three favorite books of 1970.

And now women's lib, too, is beginning to fade—partly under the hammer blows of writers who have begun to mount a counter-attack. In *Commentary*, Midge Decter and others have slashed away at women's lib; also John Corry in *Harper's*, Martha Lawrenson in *Esquire*. And now the weightiest dissection of all: a long review-article of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* by the brilliant Social-Democrat polemicist Irving Howe. (Irving Howe, "The Middle-Class Mind of Kate Millet", *Harper's*, December, \$1.00.) Howe eviscerates Millet as theorist, as historian, and as literary critic; and when he is done, there is nothing left, either of Miss Millet or of the rationalizations for women's "liberation." Furthermore, Howe asserts that, in all probability, there are important biological differences between men and women, derived from (1) "the distinctive female experience of maternity"; (2) "the hormonal components of our bodies"; (3) "the varying possibilities for work created by varying amounts of musculature and physical controls"; and (4) "the psychological consequences of different sexual postures and possibilities", namely, the "fundamental distinction between the active and passive sexual roles" as biologically determined in men and women respectively. Howe also notes that Miss Millet cites with approval Dr. Eleanor Maccoby's study of female intelligence, but neglects to mention Dr. Maccoby's admission that "it is quite possible that there are genetic factors that differentiate the two sexes and bear upon their intellectual performance . . . For example, there is good reason to believe that boys are innately more aggressive than girls—and I mean aggressive in the broader sense, not just as it implies fighting, but as it implies dominance and initiative as well—and if this quality is one which underlies the later growth of analytic thinking, then boys have an advantage which girls . . . will find difficult to overcome." Maccoby adds that "if you try to divide child training among males and females, we might find out that females need to do it and males don't."

Irving Howe sees that underlying Miss Millet's attitude is a rage against the very existence of women. "Miss Millet dislikes the psycho-biological distinctiveness of women, and she will go no further than to recognize—what choice is there, alas?—the inescapable differences of anatomy. She hates the perverse refusal of most women to recognize the magnitude of their humiliation, the shameful dependence they show in regard to . . . men, the maddening pleasures they even take in cooking dinners for 'the master group' and wiping the noses of their snotty brats. Raging against the notion that such roles and attitudes are biologically determined, since the very thought of the biological seems to her a way of forever reducing women to subordinate

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status, she nevertheless attributes to 'culture' so staggering a range of customs, outrages, and evils that this 'culture' comes to seem a force more immovable and ominous than biology itself."

Howe also perceptively points out that, in a wider sense, underlying the revolutionaries of the Left is a hatred for "the usual", a raging contempt for the ordinary life of men and women, a life which is sneered at as "one-dimensional": "this scorn for the inherited pleasures, ruses, and modes of survival by which most of us live; this nagging insistence that life be forever heroic and dramatic, even if ordinary humanity must be herded by authoritarian party bosses and ideologues to make it so." Howe sums this up as the left intellectuals' "contempt for ordinary life, contempt for ordinary people, contempt for the unwashed and unenlightened, contempt for the unschooled, contempt for blue-collar workers, contempt for those who find some gratification in family life, contempt for 'the usual.'"

Howe concludes that "you would never know from Miss Millett's book that there are families where men and women work together in a reasonable approximation of humanness, fraternity, and even equality." Movingly, he declares that he has known two worlds; one, the world of his current intellectual friends, is a world where the women, along with their men, "have it hard", but, "are struggling and fulfilled human beings creating the terms of their freedom even as they recognize the bounds of limitation that circumstance, gender, history and fortune impose upon them." The other world he has known was the world of his parents, poor struggling immigrant Jewish workers on the Lower East Side.

I recall my mother and father sharing their years in trouble and affection, meeting together the bitterness of sudden poverty during the Depression, both of them working for wretched wages in the stinking garment center, helping one another, in the shop, on the subways, at home, through dreadful years. And I... know that... there were thousands of other such families in the neighborhoods in which we lived. Was my mother a drudge in subordination to the "master group"? No more a drudge than my father who used to come home with hands and feet blistered from his job as presser. Was she a "sexual object"? I would never have thought to ask, but now, in the shadow of decades, I should like to think that at least sometimes she was."

Three cheers, Irving. Right On!

And yet women's lib has taken its toll. I personally know half a dozen couples whose lives have been wrecked by the canker of women's lib. Previously happily married, in each case the wife absorbed the sweet poison of the supposed existence of "male oppression", stormed against her husband as living embodiment of this oppression, and then broke up their home. Worst of all, in each of these cases the stunned male continues to assert that his wife was somehow right, as he wallows in the masochistic guilt of the "male liberal." One New Left leader in this situation, writing to us in objection to our stand against women's lib, tells us that we do not understand that women, suffering from "male colonial oppression", have to separate themselves from men for years to "get their sisterhood together." O judgment, thou hast fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason!

HAWAII—GROWTH AND REPRESSION

One of the most important and fastest growing libertarian movements in the country is in the state of Hawaii. Led by the intrepid Bill Danks, a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Hawaii, the Hawaiian movement is organizing a giant libertarian conference in January. The theme of the conference will be "Freedom in our Time", and there will be panels on Ecology, Poverty, War and Peace, Students Versus the System, the Free Market and Monopoly, and Strategy for Change. Speakers from the mainland will include Paul Goodman, Robert LeFevre, David Friedman, Roy A. Childs, Jr., and Tibor Machan; Hawaiian speakers will include Danks and Dr. Arthur Carol, professor of economics at the University of Hawaii, and a distinguished new addition to libertarian ranks.

Even more remarkable is the fact that the libertarian movement was able to take control of a major radio station in Honolulu, KTRG, which for two years was beaming libertarianism at the listeners for many hours per day. Or at least was until recently, when the naked arm of fascist repression descended upon the station—and none so bold or so interested as to make any protest. It was a two-pronged assault; for one thing, the FCC, which has life and death control over the nationalized radio-TV airwaves, closed the station down. The second prong was the indictment of several of the leading personnel of the station on the heinous grounds of... refusal to answer questions in the 1970 census!

On the mainland, there have been little or no attempts to crack down on either the massive number of census violators, or even on the intrepid libertarians who agitated for census resistance. But in Honolulu, in a case where an important radio station had come under libertarian control, the State clearly used this absurd "crime"

in order to crack down on libertarian dissent from the existing system. (How about it, Leonard Read? Is civil disobedience moral *now*?)

Specifically, on November 19, penal summonses charging refusal to answer census questions were served on: David Watamull, president and general manager of station KTRG, Donald P. Dickinson, manager and moderator of the station, and Bill Danks, leader of Census Resistance '70 in Hawaii. Conviction carries a maximum penalty of \$100 fine and 60 days in jail. The government wanted to try these men at the hands of the U.S. Commissioner, since this is classified as a "petty offense", but the three defendants successfully insisted on moving the trial to Federal Court, where they can demand a trial by jury. Our three libertarians are being defended by the American Civil Liberties Union, and are expected to challenge the constitutionality of the compulsory census laws. A warrant was also made out for Bill Steele, former head of Hawaii YAF, but Steele has apparently skipped the country. Even our little movement now has its martyrs and exiles!

And now we have *our* slogans of liberation: Free Dave Watamull! Free Don Dickinson! Free Bill Danks! Amnesty for Bill Steele! Let the cry resound throughout the land.

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Anarchism—A New Convert

In Defense of Anarchism

by Robert Paul Wolff. Harper & Row, 1970. 86 pp.
\$4.50; paperback \$1. Reviewed by Jerome Tuccille.

Professor Wolff has presented us with a valuable contribution to the expanding anarchist library. In his preface the author admits that he has failed to analyze the "material, social, or psychological conditions under which anarchism might be a feasible mode of social organization." This defect he hopes to correct in a larger work on the subject in the foreseeable future. What is important about the book is that Professor Wolff, after a long period of careful research and exploration during which he tried to find a satisfactory justification for political authority, has reached the conclusion that "anarchism would seem to be the only reasonable political belief for an enlightened man." In the course of this brief and lucid account of the subject he proceeds to explain why this is so.

The author opens his book with a three-part section dealing with: the concept of political authority; the concept of individual autonomy; and the inevitable conflict that must arise between the two. The largest drawback in this section rests in the fact that Wolff assumes the morality of individual autonomy as a given absolute, and is therefore rather sketchy in his philosophical justification for individual self-determination.

In Part Two he analyzes the several forms of democratic government that have been suggested in the attempt to bridge the gap between political authority and individual autonomy. He discusses unanimous direct democracy, representative democracy, and majoritarian democracy in turn, spending a bit too much time attacking Rousseau's shaky defense of majoritarianism in the *Social Contract*. Wolff concludes that unanimous democracy is totally unworkable and that *direct* majoritarian democracy, with each citizen voting on every issue that comes up (possible now through technological development), is still a long way from guaranteeing the autonomy of each individual in society. Every form of political rule depends on the abridgment, to one degree or another, of the right of the individual to determine the course of his own life. To agree to abide by the will of the majority, or the will of parliament, or that of a dictator, requires the surrender of one's personal autonomy, and no matter how "democratic" or "benevolent" the rule it is still "no more than voluntary slavery . . ."

The final section offers "utopian glimpses of a world

without states." By the author's admission it is the weakest part of his presentation, speaking in general terms about "far-reaching decentralization" and "voluntary compliance." For practical alternatives readers are advised to turn elsewhere (Jane Jacobs, some of Goodman, some of Jefferson, Rothbard, others). Individualist libertarians will also find Wolff's comments on the free market a bit naive and unsophisticated.

All in all, however, this is a good, tightly-written, basic text to recommend to friends who are interested in a justification for *philosophical* anarchism.

Recommended Reading

Sunday December 6 was "Karl Hess Day" in the nation's media. On that same day, two major articles on Karl, both substantial, well-written, and sympathetic, appeared in the nation's press. These were Tony Lang, "Karl Hess Is Aflame With the Idea that Every Man Can Run His Own Life", *Washington Post* magazine section, with a picture of Karl on the front cover; and James Boyd, "From Far Right to Far Left-and Farther", *New York Sunday Times Magazine*. The Boyd article is particularly good, as Jim is sympathetic to the libertarian cause and knowledgeable about the movement. The Boyd article also twice mentions the *Libertarian Forum* as the leading libertarian publication! Both articles play up Karl's quintessential (and lifelong) instinctive libertarianism, and both gloss over his current flirtations with communalist, syndicalist, and anti-capitalist heresies.

The libertarian movement is also discussed in "The New Right", *Newsweek*, Dec. 7. Noting that Jim Buckley had most of the student activists in his camp this fall, *Newsweek* goes on to speak of the division among rightist youth between "libertarians" and "traditionalists". Also, the word "libertarianism" has been mentioned in several previous issues of the *New York Times*, with articles on its new "Op-Ed" page by libertarian rightist journalist Jeffrey St. John.

Hey, could it be that libertarianism is going to be the new fad to replace Women's Lib, as the latter nears the inevitable end of its run in the media?

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