

## **A WORD TO OUR READERS**

The purpose of this new magazine is suggested by its name: to dissent from the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States; to dissent from the support of the *status quo* now so noticeable on the part of many former radicals and socialists; to dissent from the terrible assumption that a new war is necessary or inevitable, and that the only way to defeat Stalinism is through atomic world suicide.

The accent of DISSENT will be radical. Its tradition will be the tradition of democratic socialism. We shall try to reassert the libertarian values of the socialist ideal, and at the same time, to discuss freely and honestly what in the socialist tradition remains alive and what needs to be discarded or modified.

DISSENT is not and does not propose to become a political party or group. On the contrary, its existence is based on an awareness that in America today there is no significant socialist movement and that, in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future. The editors and supporters of DISSENT are independent radicals bound together by common values and ideas, who are eager to assert those values and ideas, as well as to discuss freely their differences and problems.

DISSENT will attempt to:

- provide fresh and lively critical opinion on the issues of the day.
- bring together intellectual sentiment against the blight of conformism.
- defend democratic, humanist and radical values.
- attack all forms of totalitarianism, whether fascist or Stalinist.
- engage in a frank and friendly dialogue with liberal opinion.
- publish studies of American cultural life.
- encourage scholarly contributions in political and social thought.
- discuss and reevaluate socialist doctrines.

DISSENT will not have any editorial position or statements. Each writer will speak for himself. Our magazine will be open to a wide arc of opinion, excluding only Stalinists and totalitarian fellow-travellers on the

one hand, and those former radicals who have signed their peace with society as it is, on the other. We shall welcome any expression of lively and competent thought, or scholarly contributions touching upon our area of interest, even if these dissent from DISSENT.

But DISSENT would be meaningless if in dissenting it did not also affirm. We are united in the affirmation of a positive belief—the belief in socialism. Not the “socialism” of any splinter or faction or party, but rather the ethos and the faith in humanity that for more than 100 years have made men “socialists.” We share a belief in the dignity of the individual, we share a refusal to countenance one man’s gain at the expense of his brother, and we share an intellectual conviction that man can substantially control his condition if he understands it and wills to.

DISSENT is being published by a group of independent radicals who have raised the funds necessary to insure the honoring of the subscriptions we solicit. At a meeting held recently, fifty friends of the magazine discussed plans, elected an editorial board and a larger supervisory committee. Different emphases of opinion were heard at this conference, yet all agreed that the voice of DISSENT should be heard.

Without further ado, we present our first issue. It does not fulfill all of our hopes and aspirations—no first issue could. We particularly hope that in later issues there will be more articles of a discussion nature. But we think that this first issue provides a warrant of our seriousness and an indication of our purpose.

If you would like to see such a magazine thrive in America, you can join the friends of DISSENT in obtaining subscriptions from your friends, in contributing the funds—and the articles—required for its sustenance, and in spreading the word that there is a free voice of DISSENT.

THE EDITORS

## **Does It Hurt When You Laugh?**

The confusion of modern politics runs so deep, the breakdown of those traditional responses which held together a more or less “enlightened” public is so complete, that one no longer knows what feeling an event is likely to evoke among people of some political sophistication, *particularly* among people of political sophistication. For example. The American Committee for Cultural Freedom recently held a conference in New York on European-American relations, at which a large number of distinguished intellectuals tried to find out why Europe doesn’t love us. A few days earlier there had appeared in the *New York Times* a chapter of