

A Modest Proposal:**KING AND REUTHER FOR '64!**

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For a long time, we of the anti-Communist Left have been politically dispossessed. There is no home for us in either of the big national parties. There never was. Every few years, a few of our breed will allow themselves to be carried away by momentary enthusiasm for a liberal Democratic candidate—who betrays their best hopes soon after his inauguration. Thus, our habitual withdrawal from electoral activity. It seemed to us through all these bleak years that no political act could be less significant than voting in an election whose outcome would too largely depend upon which ad agency might manage to establish marginal differentiation, or the illusion of difference, between two ideologically indistinguishable candidates.

In these circumstances, while cherishing the right not to vote, there was still much a man of socialist and humanist views could do. Fortunately, politics is not circumscribed by the ballot box. Intellectuals, concerned with the well being of society, always have an obligation to think, talk, write, criticize, stir the populace up. For many of the most articulate, this magazine became a forum in which they undertook, often painfully, to recast, clarify and express their political ideas. From the

columns of *DISSENT*, one also lent support to those bravely engaged in direct action for securing rights long overdue, which no government agency would grant. And we could extend a comradely arm to heroes abroad who sought to throw off the yoke of tyranny or to establish their independence of colonial domination.

This activity, though cramped and limited, was peculiarly satisfying. Up to a point, given the intellectual exhaustion and ideological disenchantment that prevailed, it literally sustained many of our contributors and readers. It strikes us now, for the first time in ten years, that the moment may be ripe for a re-entry into conventional politics. This is why the undersigned feel that it would be desirable to initiate and support a third party ticket in 1964—call it socialist, liberal, independent—with, say, Martin Luther King for President and Walter Reuther for Vice-President.

The time is now

Why now? Why men like King and Reuther? *Now*, first of all, because of the tremendous upsurge of the Negro people, who demand more rapid and profound social change than either of

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ern economists, of whatever theoretical persuasion. To imply that this is a communist idea, is, among other things, simply inaccurate.

10. It may be instructive for Mr. McCord to learn that the distinguished Indian diplomat, K. N. Panikkar, characterizes the C.P.P. in Ghana as a "bourgeois nationalist party." Ghana has gone out of its way to attract and protect Western investment. The British High Commission in Ghana stated last time that the new investment Act is a model for other developing countries seeking to attract capital: "The investment law meets every test I have ever encountered for encouraging and protecting investors." It is a view shared in official Washington.

Nigeria's investment policy is no more "reasonable" than Ghana's—both are flexible and friendly. No new African nation has shown any serious inclination to "confiscate" foreign enterprises, but McCord's bland attitude toward colonialism does reveal the shallowness of his understanding of its economic and psychological aftermath in Africa, and helps illuminate the slant of his thinking.

11. Finally, I must confess that I am unmoved by McCord's plea against the "self-fulfilling prophecy that tyranny in Africa is inevitable." No one has made this prophecy except a few newspaper reporters and journalistic observers. For a man so loose with his facts, and promiscuous with his concepts, it is absurd for him to invoke the spirit of Camus, who was a man of utmost scrupulosity, an Algerian, and a fierce and honorable anti-colonialist.

Let McCord and others like him address their concern for freedom to their own countries, about which they are presumably better informed.

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the major parties dares attempt. *Now*, even more importantly, because the question of civil rights forces upon the nation other issues too long ignored: unemployment and automation. These are interlocking problems; the Negro cannot enter an economic and social system in dissolution. With a sudden and dramatic urgency, he requires us to face the duty of transforming that system. And *now*, finally, because all these issues are indissolubly linked to foreign policy and because the United States is woefully unprepared for the peace that threatens to descend upon us. We are in deep crisis with unabated arms production. Cutting back is likely to exacerbate all

the troubles that have beset us since 1929. If we are to extend the reach of our democracy, including for the first time in history all American citizens; if we are to overcome the widespread poverty which shamefully survives and is fed by unemployment; we need to plan not only for automation but also for peace. But an economy without discrimination, without unemployment *and* without a gigantic arms industry seems far beyond the ken of either Democrats or Republicans.

Only a third party can bring such a vision within the range of democratic discussion and debate. Only a third party can push President Kennedy,

who is almost certain to be re-elected, in the direction of international economic planning, toward the total emancipation of Negroes and other underprivileged Americans, toward the creation of an environment in which creative leisure could be the lot of Everyman. Like the Socialists in 1932, the leaders of such a party might well provide the next Administration with a program for social change.

Civil Rights stands at the center of a broader American struggle, and Martin Luther King is its brilliant symbol. How fitting that he should be a Negro leader of Negroes. But how sad if his cause were restricted to Americans with dark skin—who could never attain their full stature short of a general commitment to the welfare of their fellow Americans, and indeed, to mankind at large. We therefore deem the notion of a Negro party not only to be narrow and offensive, but self-defeating as well. King's techniques, his whole outlook, are those of the universalist. He has necessarily been identified with Negro liberation; there is nothing to prevent that movement from being broadened to embrace a vision of the good, peaceful, abundant and fraternal life for everyone.

Organizing the Ticket

Today one vital component is lacking in the civil rights struggle, namely political representation. The Negro, like all those voiceless ones in our depressed third of a nation, is effectively disenfranchised—whether or not he is

legally entitled to vote. Embittered by the Republocrats' failure to meet his elementary needs, the Negro begins to see some merit in separatism, a position enthusiastically endorsed by the Black Muslims, the Communist party—and the American Nazi party. We need today a political party with a program that includes but transcends the struggle for equal rights, a party that can accommodate Negroes *and* whites with a conscience—like Walter Reuther, our most intelligent and enlightened, and at present, most frustrated labor leader. Despite his regrettable absorption during the last decade and a half with the bureaucratic imperatives of union organization, Reuther still represents the best sentiments of American labor. He has participated in the drive for civil rights; he has worked with the peace movement. Perhaps his involvement in independent political activity would arouse other unionists from their slumbers.

King and Reuther could not win the election. Yet the good they would do as candidates is incalculable.

We therefore put forward this proposal to the left and liberal public, as an idea to be considered and a possibility to be acted upon. How such a ticket might be set up, what organizational forms would be required, it is of course premature to say. It would have meaning only if large elements of the labor movement, the intellectual community and the Negro movement were to accept it.

King and Reuther in '64!