

CHAUTAUQUA

Something old, something new

The following is the text of *ITT* editor James Weinstein's First Anniversary Chautauqua speech.

In *These Times*' first anniversary Chautauqua is in some respects an attempt to revive a tradition of public debate and education that was popular in this country from the 1830s to the 1920s, but that died out largely as a result of the development of radio. In those 90 years every good sized city or town had its Chautauqua hall, which hosted speakers of many views on a wide range of political, social and even scientific subjects. The Chautauqua was a forum for new ideas, a place where major social issues were debated and where new scientific developments were explained. It played a major role in creating an informed and politically active citizenry.

The late period of the Chautauquas, the early 1900s, was also the time when a deeply rooted and widespread movement for socialism existed in the U.S., and when the question of socialism in American life was very much in the mainstream of political discussion and debate. We also would like to help revive that tradition.

Some may think that we hope or intend to recreate the specific organizational forms or politics of the socialist movement of pre-World War I days. But that is no more our purpose than it is to reestablish the network of Chautauqua that existed more than half a century ago. It is the essence of the movement, not the particular form or politics, that we want to revive. That essence was popular involvement in the working out of socialist principles and activity within the tradition of our American political culture.

The decline.

The tradition that saw socialism as the property of the American people, especially of the working class as a whole, died out, with the active assistance of the socialist left itself, in the mid-1920s. By the late 1930s, socialism itself had disappeared from American public life, even though socialist organizations and parties continued to exist, and one, the Communist party USA, enjoyed relative prosperity in the Depression decade. The irony was that the success of the Communist party only helped to accelerate the disappearance of public discussion and debate of socialism and socialist principles, and, eventually the disappearance of the possibility of socialism itself as an alternative to corporate capitalism.

Some see the 1930s as a Red Decade in which industrial unions were organized on a mass scale for the first time and in which the Communist party itself became a substantial organization, with extensive influence in the trade union movement and other areas of American life. Others see the same years as a time of great social and political conservatism. It seems to me that there is truth in both views, but that one thing is incontrovertible: whatever else happened in the 1930s it was the period in which socialism finally disappeared as a question that could be discussed outside the ranks of various organized socialist parties and their close followers.

Finally disappeared, that is, until this decade. In the 1970s we are entering a new period in American political history, one that has in it the potential for the reemergence of a genuinely popular, even a majority movement for socialism in the U.S. And one that of necessity will entail the remaking of the socialist left itself, the scrapping not only of the forms of party organization that are the legacy of 1919, but also the conception of the process of socialist transformation modeled on the Bolshevik experience that has become the underlying, often unconsci-

ous theory of virtually every socialist organization now in existence.

ITT's perspective.

Those of you who read the prepublication *Proposal for a Socialist Newspaper*, or who regularly read *ITT* editorials, know that the newspaper was created in the belief that we face a unique challenge and a unique opportunity.

The opportunity consists in the fact, or what we take to be a fact, that the crisis of corporate capitalism in the U.S. is deep and pervasive enough to have made millions of Americans lose faith in the business system as we know it. More Americans than at any time in our history see the corporations as having interests and programs contrary to the general good, and even as a major source, if not the only source, of our current social problems.

This is a vast potential constituency for socialism, and, by and large, one that cannot be won simply through struggles around particular reforms. People usually do come into social and political action on the basis of particular issues, but we believe that they will not any longer believe that the problems they face can be solved by piecemeal reform, but only as part of a process of basic changes in the social order.

Of course, most people are not yet socialists, but they are very much open to socialist principles and programs. And that is the challenge. Because while they are open to socialism the socialist left as it is now constituted, both organizationally and ideologically, is as self-contained and insulated from the emerging popular consciousness and forms of organization as it has ever been in this century.

The two stage theory.

Our view of the present situation and of the process of development for a popular movement for socialism in the U.S. requires the abandonment of the central political/ideological premise of the post-1919 left: the two stage theory of revolutionary development. That theory posits a working class that is not ready for socialist principles and programs, and that can be mobilized and educated only by agitation and organization that is limited to immediate issues. In this view, any attempt to raise the question of socialism, even in the context of movements around a particular issue, is sectarian. Socialism is the property not of the working class, which is either not ready or too corrupt to understand it, but of the elect—the party and its close followers. At some distant and ever-receding time in the future, according to this theory, a crisis of such dimensions will occur that then socialism can somehow be introduced as the solution. The working class will then follow its "vanguard" to the promised land.

This, of course, was not the politics of the socialist movement in the West before the Russian Revolution. Pre-1919 socialists, in every liberal capitalist country in Europe and the U.S., assumed that all workers could understand the necessity for socialism. And, because the working class was a major part of the population, that socialism could be the basis of a popular politics.

But in Russia, which was still an overwhelmingly agrarian and pre-industrial society, the working class made up only a tiny portion of the population, and the society had few bourgeois democratic rights and no liberal democratic tradition. The revolutionary issue in Russia was not socialism, but bourgeois democratic revolution, then, under their auspices, a social-



James Weinstein at work.

Kathy Richland

ist revolution. Their success, and their subsequent forty-year domination of the world socialist movement imposed that theory, appropriate for pre-industrial societies, on the American left.

A different reality.

But our reality is as different from czarist Russia as two societies can be. The American working class is the overwhelming majority of the American population. It is as highly educated and articulate, as diversely skilled as any in the world. Even without the help of a socialist party it is already honeycombed with anti-corporate and proto-socialist consciousness.

The diversity that characterizes the American working class (and the working classes of all the more advanced industrial nations) is consistent with the best in the American political tradition of federalism. The problem, particularly right now, is how to create, or to help create a unity of purpose and principle within a working class that has a wide range of particular interests, many of which will necessarily remain in conflict with other sectors of the class so long as corporate capitalism prevails, and some of which will carry over into socialism.

In our view the existing reality requires above all else the discussion, clarification and dissemination of socialist principles—as publicly and as widely as possible—and the development of a program of social goals that we can begin to implement through organization and legislation now. In short, socialism must become an integral part of all the various existing social movements for reform, just as socialists must be a part of all the existing

social and political movements in which working people are active.

If the discussion, clarification and dissemination of socialist principles and of a program of social goals is essential in beginning to create unity within the working class, then a popular socialist newspaper is indispensable. Indeed, if a serious movement on the left is to develop, there is a need for a diversity of popular socialist publications—just as there was at the height of the old Socialist party in the years just before World War I, when some 323 socialist daily, weekly and monthly publications reached two to three million regular readers.

In These Times was intended to be a modest, but important beginning toward the goal of a full-scale socialist press. Our goal is to reach a readership of over 100,000 as quickly as possible. In our first year we have taken only the first, but probably the most difficult steps. We have achieved a circulation of over 11,000—9,000 subscribers and 2,000 direct sales—which is still very small. But our readers are widely distributed among social and political activists in virtually every movement in which working people are active. This meeting today is both a celebration of that achievement, an indication of the range of our concerns and interests and an attempt to take us into our second year with added momentum and support. We hope that you will participate actively and critically in today's proceedings and come out of this Chautauqua determined to help us double or triple our circulation and improve the quality of our paper in 1978.

EEOC changes

Continued from page 3.

two to clear up the backlog and go easy on the systemic focus.

If serious systemic work is initiated, the EEOC can also expect to get dragged into court more often by business.

Because of the internal reorganization of the EEOC, the Carter administration is apparently amenable to consolidating much of the government's civil rights machinery under its auspices. Carter is considering a major reorganization package, formulated by a special OMB task force, that would phase in EEOC control over the Equal Pay Act, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, the

Age Discrimination Act and other laws during the next two years. The package, which can be altered by Carter, can also be vetoed by either house of Congress.

The reshuffling of the EEOC is thus a tentative step towards making civil rights legislation a concrete reality for millions of women and minority workers. "If we don't have to always fight just to have the minimum laws enforced," concludes Blunt, "we can then look at expanding those laws and moving into other areas like our fair employment program and equal pay for equal worth, an expanded definition of equal pay. It opens up space to begin doing other things."

LIFE IN THE U.S.

SPORTS

Sex roles hinder coed sports

By Anne Gibbons

Children have a sense of their physical potential at a very early age; they delight in moving, whether it be running, climbing, jumping, rolling or being upside-down. But as they grow older, this natural love of movement is socialized into ways of being physical that are clearly sex-defined.

Four and five year old boys, usually dressed comfortably in t-shirts and dungarees, know how to swing a baseball bat, run bases, throw a ball forcefully. Girls of this age rarely do the same.

I once listened to six year old girls discussing swimming class. They discussed their need to diet and look presentable, and whether to wear a tank suit or a bikini. Some were actually reluctant to get their suits wet. No comparable discussion would be held by boys.

Both boys and girls love warm-up exercises to music. They enjoy moving freely in a situation where they can be conscious of only what their own bodies are doing and feeling. But when this same activity is called "dance"—which it certainly is a form of—it becomes an embarrassing experience for the large majority of boys—who aren't supposed to like "dance." They complain, act silly and participate reluctantly.

Generally, boys are more capable than girls in team sports because they are more comfortable with being aggressive and competitive. Such behavior has been supported and reinforced for them. They've learned there is a value in organizing a game, sticking to arbitrary rules and playing continuously for long periods of time. Personal disputes and slight injuries rarely interrupt the flow of a game

they're involved in.

This kind of "know-how" about sports and seriousness about playing does not come naturally to most girls. Given an opportunity to organize any small game, they often create something that resembles no particular sport. It might be interesting, but is not likely to be physically challenging.

Girls generally lack a sense of their own power. They don't realize they can work harder, play more aggressively, jump higher. Enduring pain for the sake of organized physical effort isn't necessarily important to them. They may have a healthier attitude toward competition than some of the boys who are obsessed with winning at all costs, but, unfortunately, this can be at the expense of playing seriously. Girls are more likely than boys to say "after all, it's only a game."

These different ways of perceiving athletic activity have nothing to do with physical differences, which are slight before puberty. They aren't based on body type, natural ability or physical strength, which vary more among people of the same sex than they do between the sexes. Social pressures push children into sex roles and sex-defined attitudes towards physical activity.

As more opportunities for girls open up in team sports, and as a wider range of sports such as yoga, martial arts, running and gymnastics become popular, new possibilities may be opening up for boys and girls. Both could learn a variety of movement skills and activities. As boys and girls practice and play together, it will become obvious that individual physical differences, personal preferences and access to facilities far out-



Girls generally lack a sense of their own power and don't realize they can work harder, play more aggressively, jump higher. Only through doing can these lessons be learned.

Jane Velnick

weigh sexual differences in determining how well someone plays a particular sport.

But to enable boys and girls to explore their full physical potential, conscious efforts have to be made to counteract influences that define "male" and "female" roles. Such influences begin at very early ages.

The way children are dressed, handled and spoken to, the kind of toys they receive (dolls for girls, bats and balls for boys), the way they are taught to express feelings ("a big boy doesn't cry when he's hurt"), as well as the actual physical training they receive, all shape their attitudes toward sport and play.

Those interested in non-sexist approaches to sport must insist that schools and communities provide equal opportunities for boys and girls in all athletic programs.

And, most importantly, parents, family and friends must encourage both boys and girls to approach physical activity with the same joy, enthusiasm and abandon.

A non-sexist home environment will not solve the problem—not so long as the media and other social pressures push sex roles and sex-differentiated sports—but it can sow the seeds for a more hopeful future.

The natural joy children experience in moving can be a positive force in their lives if it isn't shifted by social pressures for girls to be fragile and graceful and boys to be athletically competitive regardless of physical potential and personal preference.

Anne Gibbons teaches physical education in an elementary school in New York City.

SELF DEFENSE

Personal intervention can make a difference

BY JOAN LESTER

ON THURSDAY, NOV. 10, I WAS WALKING BY the subway station at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn, N. Y., at 10 p.m. I saw a man and a woman coming out of the subway; the woman looked as if she was struggling against the man, who had his arm around her. I asked, "Is everything all right?" He answered, "This is my woman."

I was uneasy. They were going in the direction opposite from mine, so I turned around and followed them. The man kept looking back at me.

After a third of a block, I said to the woman, "Are you OK?" She grimaced and shook her head no. The man was holding her tightly. He looked at me and said, "If you say anything, I'll kill you."

I saw three men approaching about half a block away or a little closer. I yelled, "This woman needs help. Help this woman."

They began to run toward us, the attacker released the woman who ran over in my direction, and suddenly one of the running men pulled out a gun, aimed it at the attacker and said, "I'm a policeman." A second man pulled out a walkie-talkie, they had the attacker against a wall, and in a minute or two one or more police cars were on the scene, and the attacker was hustled into a police car.

Meanwhile the woman had run to me, shaking and sobbing, saying, "Thank you, thank you." I held her and I said (which I find one of the most amazing parts of the whole event, in retrospect), "You are my sister."

In a few minutes the plainclothesmen came over and took her name, of which I have no memory, her age (27), and her address (somewhere in the Village). Before they took her with them I asked them to show us their ID to prove they really were cops, and asked for a woman counselor for her.

She said that she had come off the subway and the man had grabbed her from behind. He had a knife and had cut her ear and was forcing her to go with him. (Where? We were one block from Pros-

pect Park, so perhaps that was where he was going.) The first thing the police said when they came over to us was, "We are pretty sure this is the guy who did one hundred rapes in Brooklyn."

Among the many amazing things that occurred during that 20 or 25 minute episode was the fact that the cops spoke not one word directly to me. They didn't thank me for intervening, they didn't take my name as a witness, they did not acknowledge me, although I had my arm around the woman as they were asking her to tell what had happened, but they did respond by showing their police badges when I asked them to.

It was suddenly over when they took her away to their car, and I was left alone on the street, my heart pounding violently.

I am writing about this for several reasons. First, people should know about a case where intervention *did* work. The woman was probably saved from rape, other physical injury or murder. I was not hurt, and the attacker was captured.

Although it was incredible luck that two plainclothesmen were walking by at the exact instant that I yelled, I think the attacker was preparing to run anyway, as soon as I yelled. He seemed to release the woman as soon as I yelled, and he did not move toward me. Also, the third man who was approaching told me that as soon as he heard me yelling he prepared to act by pointing his umbrella so the metal tip was directly out.

The attacker might not have been

caught if the plainclothesmen weren't there, but probably the woman would have been released, and I would not have been hurt. I would act the same way again in a similar situation, although I had moments of terror thinking about the experience in the days since it happened.

Second, the woman involved helped to save herself by struggling continuously against her attacker. Her struggling gave me the clue as to what was going on. Resistance was effective.

Third, women should know what happened since it occurred at a place and time that many would consider relatively 'safe': a busy, well-lit subway station and intersection at 10 p.m.

Fourth, although the police were technically efficient (i.e., they accomplished their task of responding quickly and well and capturing someone who was in the act of a violent crime), they were completely unsympathetic and unresponsive to the emotion of the woman involved. She was crying and shaking as they asked her to relate the events that had just taken place, and to give her personal data.

They did not utter one "personal" word to her, such as "I know you must be feeling..." They were completely impersonal. And they did not acknowledge the fact that a citizen had jeopardized herself to intervene in the crime, nor did they know that a crime had been committed against me (a direct threat on my life), since they didn't ask me anything.