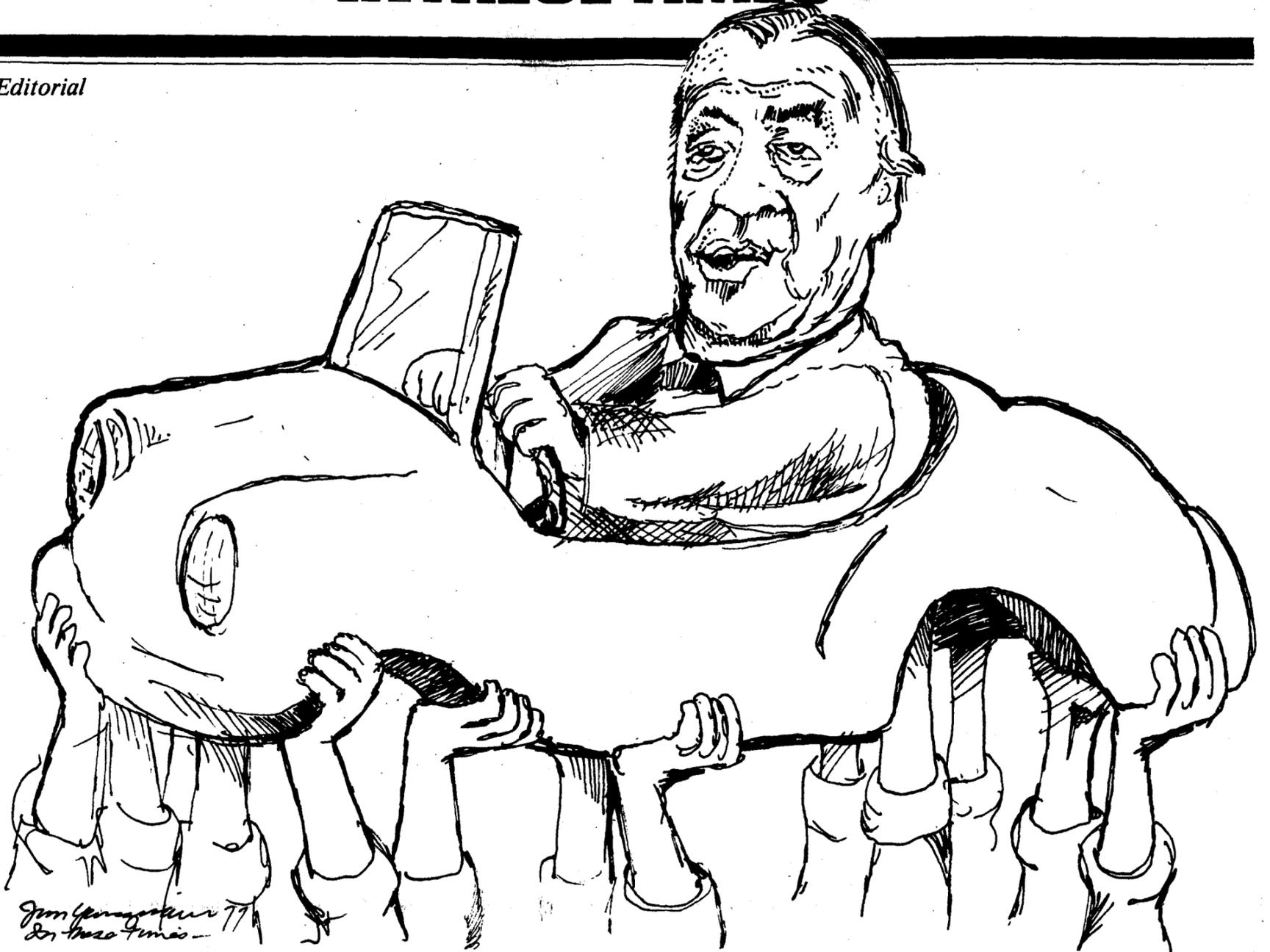


# IN THESE TIMES

Editorial



## What has it done for us lately?

In 1914 Henry Ford, 1st, instituted an eight-hour day on his assembly line in Detroit and paid a \$5-a-day wage to the workers in his plant. This was a startling innovation in an age when most industrial workers still worked a 55-hour week—in the steel industry, for example, the 12-hour day would still be prevalent for another nine years, until 1923—and when \$3 a day was “good” money for factory workers.

Widely billed as “Ford versus Marx” in the press, Ford instituted his reform to head off a union organizing drive at his plant and also to reduce the high rate of labor turnover that his new assembly line production had caused. It worked. From then on, Ford always had a ready supply of workers—and his company was the last of the major auto manufacturers to be unionized. Not until the bloody organizing drive of 1941 did the United Automobile Workers win a contract at Ford.

But Ford’s significance went far beyond his success in keeping out the union. His new mass production techniques revolutionized industrial production, and his brand of “welfare capitalism” was an effective, though not too benevolent, antidote to unionists and socialists for many years. Henry the First, his company and his industry epitomized the strength and vitality of American capitalism in the age of U.S. world predominance.

Last month, Henry Ford, 2nd (Henry 1st’s grandson) resigned as a trustee of his family’s foundation and complained that its staff often failed to appreciate the capitalist system that provided the money the foundation gives away. A few weeks later, on Feb. 12, he told the *New York Times* that the days of “high, wide and handsome” economic growth are probably over for the U.S., that big business has to come clean and admit its faults to the

public if it hopes to repair its “severely damaged credibility” with the public, and, indeed, that he believed that “the capitalistic system is on trial in the United States.”

In his view, the relatively high standard of living that Americans enjoy is a product of corporate capitalism. Even though the days of growth may be over, and though we may have to move backward in some areas where we have recently been “just outliving our means,” nevertheless, Americans should understand where the good things have come from and should be loyal to the system for what it has done in the past.

In rejecting Henry 2nd’s plea, there is no need to deny corporate capitalism’s real achievements in this country, or to question his personal integrity. American capitalism, despite its history of violence and brutality and the gross inequalities of its rewards, has been most successful in its own terms. And the United States, despite the exclusion of large sections of the population from meaningful participation in its political life, has the most highly developed democratic ideals and the fewest restrictions on democratic liberties among the world’s major powers. Henry 2nd, himself, has been among the more enlightened members of our ruling class. Indeed, at the age of 27, in 1944, when he took control of his family’s business, his first act was to oust Harry Bennett, a Ford executive who, even the *New York Times* admits, had “ruled by terror,” which, by the late 1930s, he needed to do to keep the union out.

But a social system must be measured by how it performs in the present and by what its potential is for the future. American capitalism, though it has created the capacity to produce an abundance that

few dared even to dream of a century ago, is unable to deliver on its promise.

Quite the opposite. In a society with a high percentage of unused capacity in manufacturing and constant worries about overproduction in agriculture, there is still the highest rate of unemployment in 40 years (higher by far than that of any European nation), constant deterioration of all public services—education, public health care, public transit, postal service—and, the final indignity in the face of under-utilized capacity, chronic inflation.

The best that Ford, or any of our enlightened corporate-liberal leaders can offer is that we have been “outliving our means,” and that we must be prepared to retrench and tighten our belts. “I’m very fearful that we might be headed down the socialistic road,” Henry 2nd said—adding that in his opinion “that would be bad.” But he offered little hope that the vast productive capacity that we now have—the ability to produce an abundance of manufactured and agricultural goods—can be utilized within the framework of the profit system. And indeed it cannot, though no one would deny that both the need and the technical capacity exist.

Six decades ago, and even during the 1930s, there was still room for the extension of profitable investment and for the expansion of the working class. American industry was predominant in the world, threatened only by Germany. Domestic markets still had great potential as large sectors of the population were being integrated more fully and directly into the capitalist market. The majority of blacks, for example, were still to be driven off the land where they live at a largely subsistence level. Today, in a world capitalist economy that is expanding more slowly, the U.S. has competitors wher-

ever it turns, while at home the vast expansion of consumer markets that characterized the post-World War II years has reached saturation.

More important, the working class itself has been transformed in the past sixty-odd years and no longer need adjust to depression or be satisfied by the struggle to organize itself. On the one hand, it is much more fully integrated into the market and has lost the capacity to go back to the farm or back home to Europe, as many workers could and did do in past depressions. Relatively few workers today are first generation immigrants; 93 percent of the population are now urban dwellers.

On the other hand, the working class is much more highly organized and is less divided along ethnic or sex lines. Blacks have been fully urbanized, are an important part of the workforce in all major manufacturing industries, and are a substantial part of the trade union movement. Women, also, are more and more fully engaged in the full-time work force. And the unions, which in Henry 1st’s day were still struggling to stabilize their existence, are a permanent feature in American life and increasingly reach into all areas of work, industrial and non-industrial.

All sectors of the population are in a strengthened position to assert their need for full employment and an expansion of production, not retrenchment. They have no place to go but to the politics required to get it. The corporations are proving that these needs cannot be met through the operation of their monopolized market. The only hope is to move toward what Henry 2nd fears—toward socialism through public control and democratic planning of the economy. ■

# Letters

## Workers of the world: block that kick

Editor:

When your newspaper came out, I thought I had seen the last of Irwin Silber. But in the latest issue of *ITT*, he reappears under the name Jack Russell.

Just as Silber used to see the twilight of capitalism in every film, Russell sees the class struggle writ large in sports. For Russell, the football audience can conveniently be divided into the working class and professional/managerial types. The former like defense; the later offense. He even divides teams into working class and capitalist.

He reasons: the working class, being dumb bastards, are only interested in smashing things; therefore, they like the defense. Our rulers, who are interested in planning, like the offense.

Most football fans like both. If Russell wants to understand why Pittsburgh's defense was given great publicity, while their offense was given little, he should look at their relative statistics.

On cities: Oakland, the working class town, has a team known for its offense; San Francisco, sophisticated managerial town, has a team known primarily for its defense.

You need a new sports columnist.

—Robbie Keith  
Oakland, Calif.

## Better alternatives to schlock rock

Editor:

Re your article "Alternative networks give public a chance" (*ITT*, Feb. 9), it gives a distorted view of the non-commercial radio field. Specifically, your view of National Public Radio. As a former employee of one of NPR's backbone stations, and a former All Things Considered reporter, I can justify the fact that people in my position refer to the network as National Bullshit Radio, or Mushroom Public Radio. NPR has a reputation as a network that presents a liberal image, that questions the status quo, that reports the unreported. For those of us who know it, however, NPR is a censorer and a distorter. The alternative they present is like Jimmy Carter's pardon: it's great for some cases, but for the majority of Americans, it's meaningless.

Certainly, NPR is some sort of alternative. It is 600 percent better than most radio in the country. That is simply because most radio in the country stinks. There are much better examples of alternatives to schlock rock and middle of the road mush music. The stations of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters are examples to be checked out closely. These stations are listener-supported, meaning more of a no-strings attached situation, more open to disenfranchised elements of

society, and sometimes, worker-controlled or community controlled. And real, every-day people community controlled, not Rockefeller Foundation, corporate executive, college communication department head community controlled.

The progressive developments in NPR, in large part, are changes forced by the NFCB activists. Much of the best programming on radio today is put out by such people. NPR may have more listeners, but that is because they are less controversial. Much of their programming could fit onto any commercial station, if commercial breaks were given in the shows.

—Ed Schoenfeld  
Oakland, Calif.

## A sickening dish

Editor:

Don Rosg's recent article on Richard Daley's legacy is an example of the worst tendencies in left journalism. Those tendencies may be summarized in this recipe:

Put in a large bowl one city, state, or nation in which the working class wields little or no power.

Stir in the word "totalitarian" or, better yet, "fascist" as descriptive of class rule in said city, state, or nation. (Season with empirical data if any are at hand.)

Add stale references to "public apathy" and, if the cook is so inclined, some phrases that suggest how backward the masses are, or how willing they are to tolerate what is so manifestly intolerable.

Sprinkle with sentences hinting darkly at the impending doom of human freedom, and the plight of those few who still love it.

Place in standing file at room temperature.

When moldy, or when the situation warrants rigorous analysis, remove from file and serve to left audience.

This is a traditional offering on occasions when the failure of the left to generate any sustained movement seems to require explanation. It nourishes the souls as well as the bodies of the redeemed, because it ascribes the abject powerlessness of the masses to their sinful refusal to combine in a "class alliance" against corruption and tyranny, and accounts for the failure of the left by reference to the sins of the masses.

It gives me indigestion.

—J.L. Leavitt  
Chicago

## Didn't go far enough!

Editor:

An article written by Barbara Ehrenreich "Will national health insurance insure anyone better health?" (*ITT*, Jan. 19) did not go far enough.

Certainly, it is difficult to believe that any meaningful NHI would involve private insurance companies. In fact, private participation would cause the whole affair to be a calamity. NHI has to be completely federalized, from the doctors on down to the pharmaceutical companies. I think that it is this latter

point that Ehrenreich fails to emphasize. Not only can NHI not be run by private insurance companies, but the tax monies used to finance the program (the same taxes which come predominantly from the poor) cannot be used to pay private doctors. Otherwise, it would be the same old case of the capitalist rip-off found in all phases of American society.

Tax dollars go to subsidize private business—one very major case being the war industries. If NHI is to be truly national, the monies used to finance it must be for the payment of public workers used to carry it out. Private medicine is the precise reason why costs are so high. Publicly salaried employees effectively would put a cap on the system. As it is proposed now, no one would really know how much is needed for the program, for it would be determined by how much profit the greedy capitalists want; that would be determined by their whim.

NO PRIVATE MEDICINE!

—Jeremy Horne  
Tallahassee, Fla.

## Attica is still with us

Editor:

On Dec. 30, 1976, New York Gov. Hugh Carey pardoned seven Attica inditees and commuted the sentence of Dacajeweah (John Hill). He ordered that disciplinary proceedings be dropped against the ten correctional officers and ten state troopers.

Many of those who identify with our courageous struggle were elated at the prospect of Dacajeweah's release.

On Jan. 13, Dacajeweah appeared before the New York State Parole Board. And on Jan. 18 it was official that he had been hit with two more years (parole denied for another two years).

The Parole Board explained their denial of his release as the result of protest from various communities unfavorable towards his release.

The Commissioner of Parole had apprised legal counsel for Dacajeweah that the New York State Parole Board was pleased with the interview they conducted with him.

Once again, the forces of reaction and retaliation are escalating their campaign, and Dacajeweah remains the Scapegoat of Attica.

The Attica struggle is not over, though many would like for it to be. As long as one of the 62 Attica Inditees' case is open, there must be people to be supportive. We need Dacajeweah out here with us on the outside.

Currently, two concrete things can be done. Letters, telegrams, petitions, etc. should be sent to both Gov. Hugh Carey and to the Chairman of the New York State Parole Board.

- Gov. Hugh Carey  
The Capitol  
Albany, N.Y. 12224
- Edwin Hammock  
Chairman, N.Y. State Parole Board  
State Office Campus Bldg. #2  
Albany, N.Y. 12226

—Akil Al-Jundi  
New York City

## Sweezy and Magdoff quit as IN THESE TIMES sponsors

Editor:

During the formative stages of what eventually turned out to be *IN THESE TIMES*, we were asked if we would sign a statement of support. We were glad to do so, not because we necessarily agreed with the new paper's editorial or political stands, but because the left press in the United States is woefully small and it seemed to us that only good could come from the founding of a new independent socialist newspaper under the direction of people whose competence and dedication were well known to us. We did not then understand, however, that our names would be included on the paper's masthead among a list of permanent sponsors, and we would not have agreed to this course if we had been consulted. Now that the paper has been coming out for more than two months, it is clear to us that the fact of our being listed as sponsors has been the source of considerable misinterpretation and confusion. Quite a few *Monthly Review* readers have written asking us just what it means, whether we endorse editorial policies espoused by *IN THESE TIMES*, etc. In view of the plausible interpretation that we are somehow involved in making decisions on the paper's coverage and editorial policy, and since we do not participate in any such activity, we ask that you remove our names from the sponsor list. At the same time, we wish you success in spreading the word on socialism.

—Paul M. Sweezy  
—Harry Magdoff  
Editors, *Monthly Review*

## A Chinese Stalin?

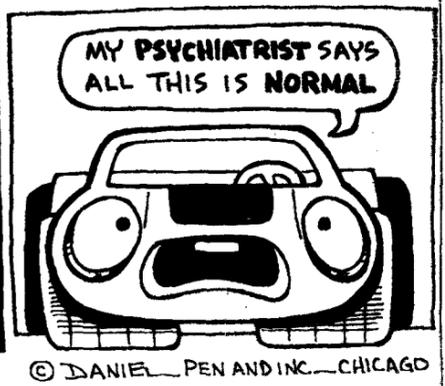
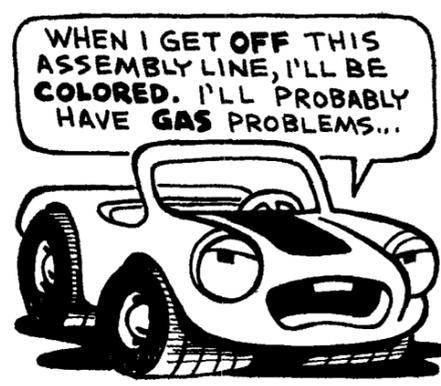
Editor:

Your editorial "China shakes the Maoists" (*ITT*, Jan. 26) takes an historical relativist position regarding the virtues of the Maoist regime and its recent developments. I am not so sanguine.

In many respects, Mao's historical role can be compared with Lenin's. Could it also be that, unwittingly yet logically, he paved the way for a Chinese Stalin? Let us hope that such a development will never eventuate; nevertheless, we should keep this in mind while watching the evolution of the situation in the near future.

—Joyce Goodman  
Ithaca, N.Y.

**Editor's note:** In the Lincoln feature of Feb. 9., several paragraphs were printed out of order. The correct order is: From the end of column 1, p. 13, go to line 11, column 3. Read to end of page. Go back to top of column 2, read through line 10 of column 3, and continue on page 14. Also, Carl Schulz is of course Carl Schurz, the great German-American Republican leader.



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