

PERSPECTIVES

California's whiz kid pol runs head on into reality

By John Judis

IN 1976, GOVERNOR EDMUND G. "JERRY" BROWN JR. WON astonishingly easy victories over front-runner Jimmy Carter in the Maryland, New Jersey and California primaries. It was widely assumed that had he entered the race earlier, he would have won the nomination. In 1978, Brown came from behind to gain 61 percent of the vote against gubernatorial challenger Evelle Younger. Having fought the passage of Proposition 13 in the June primary, Brown was able to convince voters that he, not Younger, was the measure's most ardent proponent.

After 1978, both friends and enemies agreed that Jerry Brown was a political genius, singularly capable of operating in the murky waters of modern media campaigns, able to discern and speak to the public's mood, and able to substitute, when necessary, appropriate symbols for matters of substance. If Brown were to run for president in 1980, few doubted he would provide Carter with a formidable challenge.

But after a year of campaigning, Jerry Brown has been forced out of the presidential race. In New Hampshire and again in Wisconsin, he came in a distant third to Carter and Senator Edward Kennedy. The man on the white horse was sent back to California with his head on a platter.

Brown's ignominious defeat would be no more notable than that of Howard Baker or Robert Dole, except for one thing: intellectually, politically, and organizationally, Brown's campaign was far more interesting than that of his rivals. No candidate tested the limits of political discourse as severely as Brown did. And no other candidate, with the exception of John Anderson, assembled a more dedicated army of volunteers. The reasons for Brown's defeat therefore deserve some consideration.

In 1976, Brown was able to run a largely issueless, image campaign as the protest candidate against Carter. On a moment's notice, New Jersey's trade unionists and Democratic machine, Maryland's blacks and Jews, and California's Hispanics and beautiful people all flocked to Brown. Brown spoke vaguely in his campaign of an "era of limits." He prided himself on telling audiences what government could not do rather than what it could do. Like Carter, he positioned himself symbolically as an outsider against the posh corruption of official Washington.

In 1980, Brown faced a fundamentally different opposition: an incumbent president and incorrigible centrist, who had shifted rightward with the political drift of Congress, and America's best-known and seemingly most respected liberal. Brown could not hope to defeat Carter and Kennedy on the basis of his eccentric image and vague appeals.

Perspective and program.

Brown ran in 1980 with a distant political perspective and even program. This perspective was specially designed to weld together a new political coalition that would transcend traditional labor/business, urban/rural, liberal/conservative, and even hip/square cleavages. It was forged out of California's peculiar political climate that continues to foster a left and a right-wing counter-culture: Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda, on the one hand; Howard Jarvis and Ronald Reagan, on the other.

From Hayden and the anti-nuclear

movement and from his own limited experience on the new left (Brown helped organize California for Eugene McCarthy in 1968), Brown took his view of American expansion abroad and American energy policy. Brown's critique of

really talking about," Brown concluded in one New Hampshire speech, "is a reform of many of our basic structures—putting people before profit, quality before quantity, and taking care of our needs in America."

Brown's energy views were no less left-inspired. He unequivocally opposed nuclear power. He favored gasoline rationing well before Kennedy did. He seconded Representative John Conyers' proposal for an American energy corporation that would handle all foreign oil imports. He made mass transit, energy conservation (financed by utility profits) and solar energy his highest priorities. ("If we take the funds from the MX missile, we'll have \$120 billion to finance mass transit," Brown said in Madison.)

Brown also ventured into broader areas of the economy with a similar analysis. In New Hampshire, he called repeatedly for government controls on the flow of multinational capital. "You have to restructure the flow of private investment," he said, "to target those areas of America that need economic revitalization."

But Brown's left-wing side was balanced by another side. Hayden was counterposed to California finance director and Jack-in-the-Box king Richard Silberman and to Wall Street investment banker Francis H.M. Kelly. Deficit financing is an obnoxious means of raising federal revenues: it puts taxpayers in debt to banks and corporations that should have made the deficit unnecessary. But Brown swallowed the financial

different health plan, financed directly through progressive taxes, could reduce total healthcare costs.

Brown even spoke at times on behalf of "supply-side economics." His program for reindustrialization included new investment tax credits, new limitations on the taxation of stock earnings, and public bonds sold to finance private development.

Brown expected this mixture of left-liberalism and conservatism, along with his reputation as a friend of women, minorities and labor, to win him broad support in the primaries, as it did in the 1978 gubernatorial race. But what worked against the faceless conservative Evelle Younger did not work against Carter and Kennedy.

A man for no seasons.

Brown's advocacy of spending cuts to balance the budget made him *persona non grata* among many liberals and with labor. Among unions, only the Farmworkers and the Service Employees International Union (whose president is an old friend of Brown's father) endorsed him. At the same time, Brown showed no signs of winning over conservative voters who, noting Brown's views on abortion, unions, and nuclear power, rallied to more dependable Republican standards.

In addition, Brown, the reputed king of media politics, found himself with an image problem. In 1976, voters had found his bachelor austerity appealing. In 1980, New Hampshire voters found his romance with Linda Ronstadt and his California retinue to be indications of frightful abnormality. "Is your brother queer or a swinger?" one caller to a radio interview asked Brown's sister.

Wisconsin voters also spoke of Brown as a "flake" or a "moonbeam." "He's got lots of ideas, he's very idealistic, but it doesn't mean anything as far as reality is concerned," one middle-class black commented after Brown had spoken at a Milwaukee church.

Brown added fuel to this fire, beginning with his April 1979 safari to Africa with Linda Ronstadt and ending with his bizarre televised speech to Wisconsin voters, directed by Francis Ford Coppola and later dubbed "Apocalypse II."

In Wisconsin, Brown's failure to win either traditional democratic constituencies or the conservative right was most apparent. In one wire service poll, Brown got an abysmal 9 percent of the black vote and only 10 percent of the blue-collar and labor votes. Among Democrats who thought of themselves as "moderates" he got 11 percent of the vote and among conservatives he got 14 percent.

New left constituents.

But Brown did strike a responsive chord among middle-class students and liberal professionals concerned about the environment. They made up the bulk of Brown's volunteer campaign staff and most of his vote.

Students in particular like Brown not only for his opposition to the draft and nuclear power, but for what they sensed as his opposition to capitalist irrationality and vulgar commercialism. They applauded wildly when he called for "getting out of this mounting debt and waste and false packaging and excessive advertising of things we do not need." They seconded his calls for sacrifice, discipline, and an "ethic of stewardship." And they accepted the metaphorical unity between Brown's environmentalism and his call for a balanced budget: both, as Brown explained it, were ways of preventing the destruction of the future for the sake of the present.

Like the middle-class followers of John Anderson, the students and liberal professionals were not fazed by Brown's apparent rejection of traditional economic liberalism. In New Hampshire, I asked one college student Brown supporter whether she didn't think Brown was pitching his campaign toward the middle class and ignoring the poor. She said she didn't know, but later came up to me somewhat miffed and said, "I thought about what you asked, and I decided that I am middle class and I am

Continued on page 20.

Jerry Brown rejected traditional Democratic liberalism and espoused both right-wing and left-wing views, but offered no practical alternatives to meet working people's needs.



Tom Greensfelder

Carter's foreign and defense policy was deeper than that of any other candidate. "We have a leader," Brown told a New Hampshire audience, "who is telling us that our problem in America is military weakness in spite of the fact that we have enough military hardware to drop 15 tons of dynamite on the head of every living person."

Brown's foreign policy views recalled those of William Appleman Williams' *The Great Evasion*: the U.S., Brown charged, was using foreign adventures to divert itself from economic reconstruction at home. Brown denounced the abandonment of SALT II and the proposed increases in defense spending; he opposed aiding "two-bit dictators" like Pakistan's General Zia. "What we're

community and the right wing's view that budget deficits are the primary or even sole cause of inflation, entirely ignoring the corporations' predilection for passing on increased costs and padding their profits through price increases.

Brown also accepted the view that the way to balance the budget was through "across-the-board" spending cuts, ignoring the possibility of closing tax loopholes, increasing the progressivity of the tax rolls, and aiming cuts primarily at the military budget and corporate subsidies.

Brown followed a similar reactionary tack when he criticized Kennedy's national health insurance proposal. He would correctly cite its inflationary impact, but would never point out that a

LIFE IN THE U.S.

INTELLIGENCE



Undercover agents known as the "beards" posed after-hours in the L.A. office of the FBI, under portraits of Mitchell, Nixon and Hoover. Payne is at far right.

"Hippy agent" found FBI more dangerous than suspects

By Jeff Cohen

HIS REDDISH HAIR HUNG inches below his shoulders. He wore patched-up jeans, tie-dyed or stars & stripes t-shirts, Indian beads, and never went anywhere without his stash of pot.

He was also a veteran of anti-Nixon anti-war street skirmishes. He was so savagely beaten during the 1972 Republican convention by a team of 10 Miami policemen (one cop repeatedly jammed his nightstick into Payne's rectum), that he required several operations.

But there was one thing that separated Cril Payne from the legion of freaks and radicals with whom he marched, shared joints and crash pads: Payne was a full-time agent for the FBI. Not an informant, but an agent.

Altogether, Payne spent two and a half years as an undercover "radical" for the FBI, the subject of his newly-released book *Deep Cover* (Newsweek Books, \$11.95).

Patriotism motivated Payne to enter the FBI in 1969 after graduating from law school in Texas. Reared in small-town Texas, he signed up "to serve" in the FBI after the Army rejected him for medical reasons.

In late 1970, Payne was among the first agents to grow his hair and go undercover for the Bureau, an operation that was apparently kept secret from FBI head J. Edgar Hoover, whose strict dress and moral code would not countenance "hippy agents"—no matter how effective as infiltrators. Hoover repeatedly proclaimed that the FBI had no long-haired hippies and never would. After Hoover's death in 1972, the FBI initiated Operation "Deep Cover," which sent Payne and other select agents not just undercover—but underground—in what became a seven-year futile search for the elusive Weatherman group.

FBI mythology.

The Bureau's theory was that anti-war leaders conspired and planned violent confrontations with police at pre-demonstration meetings. Payne, who attended these meetings in connection with the 1972 Miami protests, found that no matter what precautions and plans had been pursued by leaders like Rennie Davis or David Dellinger to insure a peaceful march, they had no more control over the conduct of marchers than the Who does over its rock'n'roll audience. And as Payne painfully discovered in Miami, the violence was more often than not provoked by frustrated cops itching for a long-haired head to drum on.

But old ideas did not easily fade among Bureau officials, and Payne had to learn for himself that the radicals he had been assigned to spy on were not monsters.

In Los Angeles in early 1972 the FBI set up "fronts"—the November Committee, composed entirely of five long-haired FBI agents with Payne as one of the leaders. Its ostensible purpose was to provide housing in L.A. and transportation for protesters planning to converge from around the country on the Republican convention, then scheduled for San Diego. When the convention was shifted to Miami, the November Committee assisted in transporting protesters there—a service it advertised in anti-war meetings and in radical papers.

The FBI's scheme worked to perfection with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). At the request of VVAW leaders, four members of the November Committee traveled in the Vietnam Vets' caravan from L.A. to the Miami Republican convention. It was a harrowing experience for all involved—the caravan was continually stopped and searched by cops, and was even fired upon by a sniper in Louisiana.

Riding in it, the FBI agents discovered that they had been fed another myth by superiors. "The Bureau characterized

VVAW as the most violent group in the anti-war movement," Payne told *IN THESE TIMES*. "It was the unanimous opinion of the four agents who'd traveled with them for many days that the Vietnam Vets were deeply committed to ending the war, not to senseless violence."

The hippy agents of the November Committee felt more threatened by their superiors than by the activists they were assigned to infiltrate. The Agent-in-Charge of the L.A. FBI office was cut from the Hoover mold, didn't like the idea of hippy agents, and threatened to deny knowledge of them if they ever got into trouble.

But the rebelliousness of their radical associates had already rubbed off on "The Beards," as the agents called themselves. Late one night they sneaked into the office of the Agent-in-Charge, where they posed for photos below the grinning portraits of Mitchell, Nixon and Hoover. The pictures would document their existence as long-haired agents should they ever need them.

Deep cover.

When Operation Deep Cover began in

late 1972, Payne volunteered to go underground. He'd heard much about the Weatherman group—often in hushed tones—during his two years undercover.

With other prospective Deep Cover agents, Payne was sent to Quantico Marine Base in Virginia—"Hoover University"—for a week-long in-service training. Most of the agents were experienced as undercover radicals and had been immersed in the drug culture, smoking dope with their counter-culture targets almost daily for months. Most were veterans of Miami, and the In-Service training was like a reunion. Between lectures on Weatherman, drug abuse, and FBI procedure, the long-haired students would sneak away into the wooded grounds to pass joints and hash pipes.

For six months after the special training, Payne journeyed into the underground, living out of his FBI-purchased and equipped "psychedelic van." He moved through the suspected Weatherman support network in Seattle, Vancouver and Slocan Valley, British Columbia. Ultimately, he located and befriended supporters of the underground—those who helped deserters and draft resisters get into Canada with false identities—but also none of them had Weatherman sympathies. After six months and growing disillusionment, Payne had not located one Weatherman fugitive.

While underground, Payne began having second thoughts about the hunt. "When I figured out that none of my targets posed any real threat to America and the whole operation was basically an exercise in salvaging Bureau pride, I had to get out."

"I wrote the book to help the public understand exactly how abuses occurred in the past so that there will be a call for a meaningful charter strictly defining what is proper or improper Bureau conduct," Payne said to *IN THESE TIMES*. "Without a strong charter, rookie agents are asked to join a game without benefit of the rules."

The FBI has never operated under a written charter. Payne is critical of the Carter administration's proposed charter—whose strongest supporter in the Senate, ironically enough, is Ted Kennedy. The charter is so weak that FBI officials and agents applauded when it was first presented to them, while the ACLU and other groups that originally called for a charter are now lobbying to kill the proposal.

According to Payne, the one current safeguard aimed at exposing and deterring intelligence abuse—the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)—has also become a "joke" in the hands of the FBI. Payne tells how in preparing his book, he tried to acquire his own personnel file through an FOIA request. It took over a year of haggling for him to see any documents, but most files on the Weatherman operation had been destroyed.

"Now Bill Webster, the FBI director, wants the teeth taken out of the FOIA," Payne says. "The Bureau never complied with it anyway—whenever somebody requested an embarrassing document, they classified it "secret," and that was that."

"Up until the FOIA, the Bureau didn't destroy anything. We kept everything for years. After the Act passed, every agent had to spend some time *on-the-clock* reviewing files and shredding them."

Jeff Cohen is the research associate of the Citizens' Commission on Police Repression and a freelance journalist in L.A.

RADICAL HISTORY FORUM

April 25, 7 PM sharp!

A COLD WAR II SPECIAL!

- Nora Sayre talks about *Cold War I Cinema*
- Screening of "I Was a Communist for the FBI" (1951) with Frank Lovejoy
- Screening of "My Son John" (1952) with Robert Walker, Helen Hayes & Van Heflin

ADMISSION: \$4.00
PLACE: John Jay College
445 W. 59th St., NYC