

For Carter and Ford - Read Capitalism (pt.2)

Arch-reactionary Barry Goldwater, who was for all-out war in Vietnam in 1964 when Johnson was still regarded as a “dove”, is supporting Ford. This is taken as an indication of how far to the “right” Republican sentiments have moved. The lines of demarcation between so-called “liberal” and “conservative” are entirely imaginary. Those who fondly regard themselves as liberal regard Carter as a liberal, and the conservatives think he is one of them. The balancing trick of appearing to be all things to all men is the essence of the capitalist politician.

"All the polls indicate that people vote on the candidate's personality rather than his policies. They want to know how steady his finger would be on the button. . . ." (Sunday Times 22nd August 1976)

Since differences in their policies need to be searched for with a large magnifying glass, “personality” becomes the only means of telling t'other from the which. There is no conception as yet in the minds of the American working class, of a world without “the button”. This lack of any penetration beyond the reformist spectrum is something they share with their fellow sufferers throughout the world.

Running Walter

Carter's running mate, Senator Walter Mondale, is reported as saying:

"in the whole range of human problems I've dealt with in my 12 years in the Senate — hunger, housing, labour, Indian education, migrant workers, children, ageing — I keep getting back to one thing; the strength of the family."

A nice piece of side-stepping, but what about the problems? The choice of running mate is a shabby bit of expediency aimed at “balancing the ticket” (vote-catching). Mondale is rated a liberal, and this has focussed attention on spending. Are people opposed to spending as such or only to wasteful government spending? Do people want less government or better government? “The opinion polls show total ideological confusion”. (Guardian, 17th July 1976.) The opinion pollsters ask only a limited range of questions, designed to sound out what is popularly expected of capitalism. Workers are not asked to consider and discuss the nature and extent of waste under capitalism, or the desirability of a world run democratically, without government.

In 1967 Mondale made a speech supporting Johnson's Vietnam policy. Four years later, he told an interviewer that it was

"a painful speech . . . I think the worst mistake I've made in public life is to be a slow learner on Vietnam. This has been the most tragic mistake this country has ever made . . . and I share part of that blame, and the record is there, I'm not proud of it." (Guardian, 17th July 1976)

Mondale supports capitalism but pukes at its most brutal outcome. Here is no condemnation of war, but a slow learner realizing a tragic mistake. Any capitalist politician in power, who refused to endorse a war involving “national interests” would be forced out. The Labour Party in Britain has spawned many “slow learners” about war, who have rallied to the flag when the time came.

The Black vote

Carter is wooing the votes of America's black workers with promises to put “more than one” black in the cabinet. There are the traditional “black jobs” in the echelons of administration, and black Congressmen, but there has yet to be a black man in the government. The Democratic convention of 1964 in Atlantic City, which nominated Johnson, had an all-white segregationist delegation from

Mississippi. This year a new image is being put over. Andrew Young, an influential black Congressman, is working to get Carter the black vote. If it were a solution of problems for people to be the same colour as those in power, then white workers would have had all their problems solved long ago. So would the black workers living under black dictatorships in Africa. Incidentally, it is fear of Russian "infiltration" in Africa that prompts Ford to send Kissinger to put pressure on the South African government to help bring about majority rule in Rhodesia. Kissinger is obviously thick-skinned enough to ignore America's own brutal record of racism. America has its own style of apartheid and ghetto living. Though not backed by legislation, the effect is the same.

Issue

Senator Moss of Utah, who is chairman of the Senate Committee investigating alleged fraud and abuse in the Medicaid programme for the poor, sent out a team of snoopers who made more than two hundred visits during four months in eight cities. (Investigating fraud is a form of waste peculiar to capitalism.) They found that patients usually get substandard care whether they need attention or not. Cases were reported of patients in need of care going untreated and X-rays being taken without film in the machines. In Los Angeles a woman who handed in a mixture of a soapy water was told her "urine sample" was normal.

Medicaid was started in 1965 to provide medical facilities for 20,000,000 poor Americans. Eligibility varies from place to place. In New York, you need a family of four and an income of less than \$5,000 a year. Some doctors are making more than \$100,000 out of fiddles. More than half the delegates at the Republican convention were in the \$30,000 income bracket.

Ford and Carter and (if capitalism remains) those who succeed them, will be promoting more reforms to sort out the mess produced by past reforms in the vain attempt to reduce the running expenses of capitalism. The poor and their problems will still be here.

Issue — What Issue?

The governor of California, Edmund (Jerry) Brown Junior, who was a rival candidate to Carter for the nomination, is to give Carter all the help he can. Governor Brown, a former Jesuit Seminarian, says that Catholic misgivings about Carter are "overblown and inaccurate". Asked if he would run again in 1980 Brown said:

"I'm not even sure I'll run for Governor again. I may even retire to the monastery to figure out what this is all about."

As both Carter and Ford are bible-belters, God is put in a difficult position rather like that of wartime, with both sides praying for victory. In his "infinite wisdom", he has the consolation of knowing it will make no difference either way. Farcical though the whole thing is, it is too tragic to be funny.

As Socialists, we often observe when an election takes place in the UK that the "manifestos" of all parties other than the SPGB are so closely similar that if the names were blanked out they would be virtually indistinguishable. Although we have been dealing with the American Presidential election, capitalism and its absurdities are so similar all over the world, we could change the names and be dealing with almost any other country.

How much longer we will have to live in the suffocating atmosphere produced by a politically ignorant working class is the real question of our times. Socialists, however, have good grounds for optimism. Nothing demonstrates the bankruptcy of our opponents better than an election, and we have the only workable answer to their system of chaos and misery.

Socialism will be a classless world community, democratically administered without leaders, Presidents, or governments. Production will be geared to meeting human need, on the basis of free access. The privileged private or state property institutions of capitalism will make way for communal interest and cooperation. Money, wages and profits will be no more. Thus, every "issue" being bandied about during the Presidential election campaign will disappear, never to be seen again.

Harry Baldwin
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