

CULTURE

COUNTER CULTURE

POOR DEREK'S ALMANAC

by derek shearer

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A MARXIST to agree that an understanding of economic structure and behavior is important, if you're interested in changing America. It is remarkable how little the schools teach about the subject, even to the point of avoiding the term capitalism for some euphemism such as "the free enterprise system." You would think that capitalism, the name of our economic system, is somehow a dirty word or an ideologically loaded term.

Not calling things by their proper names usually leads to avoiding recognition of basic facts about the U.S. (For example in the military sphere, where the Strategic Air Command proclaims, "Peace is our Profession." And for years, Americans avoided the basic facts about their economic system.

Recently, however, this situation has begun to change significantly. Incisive books and articles on income, ownership, and work have appeared; an organization of radical economists has been founded; and many liberal economists and journalists have begun to concern themselves with basic economic issues.

This work—the understanding of how the American economy actually runs, the consequences, and the possibility of developing new economic structures—provides a base upon which we can build politically.

As a primer on wealth and income in the U.S., a new pamphlet published by the Cambridge Institute is your best bet. Compiled by Nancy Lyons and Letitia Upton, the 30-page booklet is entitled, *Basic Facts: Distribution of Personal Income and Wealth in the United States*. Copies cost \$1, plus 20¢ for mailing. (Write: Cambridge Institute, 1878 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.)

Another important demystifying work is the new book, *Myth of the Middle Class: Notes on Affluence and Equality* (Liveright), by Richard Parker. The author describes how at least one-third of the population lives in or near poverty, and how 35 million blue-collar workers (who think of themselves as middle-class) enjoy a precarious prosperity based on the installment plan. Parker's book is full of facts and examples useful for pamphlet and poster-making.

Two other slightly heavier books on wealth and income: *Rich Man, Poor Man* (Thomas Y. Crowell, \$3.95 paperback) by Herman P. Miller, an economic statistician in the U.S. Bureau of the Census; and *Wealth and Power in America* (Praeger, \$2.25 paperback) by Gabriel Kolko.

In addition to these sources, you should look at material on the dynamics of the American economy. Some of the best work is being done by members of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE), a four-year-old organization of over 1000 economists, economics writers, and community organizers.

For example, the August 1972 issue of URPE's journal, *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, is entirely devoted to articles on Nixon's New Economic Policy. A special Summer issue of the *Review* deals with women's role in the economy. There is also available a 1970 issue on "The Vietnam War and its Impact on the Economy," and a two volume collection of course outlines and suggested readings on such topics as economic history, racism, urban economics, etc.

URPE has chapters on most large campuses and in most areas of the country. Membership, which includes a subscription to the *Review*, costs \$15 a year. Individual copies of the *Review* are available, as well as copies of the "Readings in Political Economics." (Write: Union for Radical Political

Economics, 2503 Student Activities Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104.)

The single best introduction to the American economy that I know of is the collection of readings entitled *The Capitalist System* (Prentice Hall paperback), edited by Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich, and Thomas E. Weisskopf. The authors have all been members of the Harvard URPE chapter.

In addition to URPE, there are a few other organizations publishing useful information on economics. Taxation with Representation (Tax Experts Representing the Public Interest), a group based near Washington, D.C., promotes tax reform. The *Taxation with Representation Newsletter* reports on the activity of such groups as the "Tax Advocates," its affiliated public interest tax firm. The monthly newsletter costs \$15 a year—student subscriptions \$5. (Write: Taxation With Representation, 2369 North Taylor St., Arlington, Virginia, 22207.)

Every month the Labor Research Association publishes *Economic Notes*, an 8-10 page summary of economic events, compiled from business and government publications. The *Notes* is very informative, especially if you don't have the time or the inclination to keep up on daily and weekly publications. Subscriptions cost only \$2 a year. (Write: Labor Research Association, 80 East 11th St., New York, N.Y. 10003.)

Finally, there is the new Public Interest Economics Center at 1714 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, D.C. 20036. According to Byron Kennard, the Center's secretary, it acts as a resource on economic information and analysis for citizen groups around the country concerned with issues such as consumer protection, environmental defense, and racial and sexual equality. The Center's director, transportation economist Allen R. Ferguson, was active in the fight against the SST. Write

or call the Center for more information.

Of course, if you do a fair amount of reading each week, the best sources of up-to-date economic information are the *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week*. Written for businessmen and government officials, the reporting is straight-forward, in-depth, and usually free of the Chamber of Commerce cant which fills speeches and messages aimed at the general public.

Beyond these periodical sources, it might be worthwhile to check out a few new books in political economics: for example, *Economic Concentration* (Harcourt Brace Janovich) by John M. Blair, former chief economist of

the Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly. Blair was the man-behind-the-scenes in Sen. Kefauver's famous hearings on monopoly in the Fifties. His is one of the definitive works on monopoly and the possibilities for decentralization created by new technologies. Robert Heilbroner, one of the more lucid political economists writing today, has a new book of essays entitled *Between Capitalism and Socialism* (Vintage paperback). Also worth a look: *Modern Capitalism and Other Essays* by Paul M. Sweezy and *The Dynamics of U.S. Capitalism* by Sweezy and Harry Magdoff (Monthly Review Press).

Most of the Sweezy and Magdoff

essays appeared first in the magazine *Monthly Review*, which they edit. This independent socialist journal has been appearing since 1949, and if you are not familiar with it, you should pick up a copy. (Subscriptions \$7 a year, *Monthly Review*, 116 W. 14th St., New York, N.Y. 10011.) For over two decades now, MR has kept up a sophisticated, yet unshrill, analysis of economic issues from a socialist perspective. ●

News of political work, including publications, films, slide shows, etc., should be addressed to Derek Shearer, RAMPARTS Magazine, 2054 University Ave., Berkeley, California 94704.

THE LATE NIGHT SHOW FROM MUNICH: A REVIEW

by peter collier

THE TWENTIETH OLYMPIAD WAS to be an international celebration of peace. The good people of Munich were determined to stage these games so scrupulously that lingering memories of Berlin, 1936, when Hitler's soldier-athletes had tried to emblazon the swastika over the interlocked Olympic rings, would be effaced forever. Then it had been Teutonic gods of war that were being supplicated; but now, thirty-six years later, it was to be the milder dieties of Mt. Olympus, as thousands of the world's greatest athletes gathered in gentle Bavarian surroundings to return the Olympic ideal to German soil. Although competing in futuristic, computerized surroundings, they were to be the very incarnation to an ancient drama: defying gravity, venturing into the unpredictable environment of water, and challenging the iron law of physics with nothing more than grit, muscle and grace, they contended not as nation against nation, or even man against man, but as man against himself, each athlete pushing himself to the breaking point to discover hidden truths about his own and others' humanity.

This—or something like it—was the

message of the American Broadcasting Company, which had outbid the other networks to gain rights to the games. It was a message given out repeatedly and in dozens of ways, by several different voices, and from a variety of camera angles and speeds (including commercials with grainy footage of pseudo-athletes in a mime of competition) during the more than sixty hours the Olympics were on the air, not to speak of the weeks when they were still a coming attraction. This would be a modern epic, and it would unfold in unprecedented detail before the wondering eyes of millions of Americans to whom it otherwise would not have been available. For if Munich was to be a showcase for the greatest athletic competition of all time, it was also to be sportscasting's finest hour. For weeks before the nations had even assembled at Olympic Village, ABC was boasting how it would match their verve and daring with an equally dazzling technology and reportage. (The network was a little like the U.S. team itself—so certain of success that it took along three employees whose only job would be to make up daily press releases in Munich showing the ABC landslide in the previous night's Nielsen ratings.)

ABC goes to Munich. It was a collision of the ridiculous with the sublime. But such contrasts between those who compete and those who capitalized on them had long since become an enduring feature of this event. The Games had over the years become a sort of moveable host inhabited by

growing numbers of parasites. For what seemed like an eternity, 85-year-old millionaire Avery Brundage and the gerontocracy sitting on the International Olympic Committee had capriciously controlled the fortunes of young athletes like jaded Renaissance princes. And for all that had been said about the attempt to make the Berlin Games a eugenics laboratory for the Third Reich, Hitler was hardly the last to inject politics into the Olympics. Especially since the Soviets had burst dramatically into the international sports scene in the fifties, the Games had become a sort of dumb show for the Cold War.

Miraculously, however, the athletes managed every four years somehow to keep some small part of themselves and their art immune from these forces; they managed to retain a vestige of purity and magnanimity although surrounded by cynicisms. Thus it was possible to look forward to the beginning at the Munich Olympiad believing that the Games still had a sort of mystery at their core, and that indeed it was one place where an individual's will and adrenalin might for a brief moment overcome the political world which routinely uses athletes as shabbily as everyone else. In addition, ABC had spent millions of dollars and thousands of man-hours in Munich. Perhaps the network would seize this unparalleled opportunity to cut through all the petty nationalism and breathe some sanity into what had become far closer to the bread and circuses of Rome than the Greek ideal.