

The Myth of the Socially Conservative Old Left

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Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

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[A little detour I got the urge to do following internal debates at Thermidor Mag and various recent bouts of Third Positionist communist apologetics.]

Pareto said that history is the graveyard of aristocracies. It is also the graveyard of right-wing political hopes.

Postcolonialisms, critical theories of race, of sex; reader-response theories; one-dimensional men, 888-dimensional men; dialectics of enlightenment, enlightenments of dialectic; queer deconstructionists and undeconstructed queers (we have too many of those) — what is a helpless observer to do, but yell “Damn you to hell, Christ-killing Jew”?

The vagaries of the biological process, though thankfully not condemning us to an infinitely malleable *tabula rasa*, alas do not imprint us with historical consciousness. The predestined losers of yesterday die, and to take their place, the predestined losers of today are birthed.

These poor sods (I among them), having to undergo the pain of being under the boot of New Lefts, New New Lefts, Lefts of Ever Ascending Novelty, have developed a few heuristics to make sense of where the current Newⁿ (for values of n) has left off from, and what trajectory it is following for the Newⁿ⁺¹ Left to pick up from.

So, a voice rises up:

“The *Old* Left didn’t raise a ruckus over no damned queers!”

Indeed, the Old Left *didn’t* raise a ruckus over no damned queers, by and large. Alas, it did for many other things no less destructive, and I don’t mean just economics.

Free Northerner gives a good summary of this oft-told story.

In come the Old Left, a movement of blue-collar workers just looking for that there *fair deal*. Economistic, its radicalism thoroughly filtered through a lens of historical materialism, its enemy the capitalist mode of production, its concern with exploitation and ultimately economic justice, not “social justice” in the modern sense. Blue-collar workers being who they are as a demographic, they wouldn’t raise a ruckus over no damned queers.

One thing led to another. The Old Left got coopted by New Dealers. “Coopted” meaning “Why smash capitalism when I can have gibsmedats?” Even in his “socialist analysis” of the New Deal, the shining light of the Socialist Party, Norman Thomas, had to concede it was “bold and radical” relative to what Hoover was doing.

Indeed, Nathaniel Weyl (son of the illustrious progressive Walter Weyl), who was then a CPUSA member, recounts how he got a nice job in Washington working for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration:

Frances Perkins, Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, came to the rescue with a letter of recommendation to Isador Lubin, the head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This came about because my mother and Madame Perkins were old friends. So I went to Washington, saw Dr. Lubin and was offered a job. Returning to my hotel, there was a message that Thomas Blaisdell of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration was trying to reach me. I made an appointment with Dr. Blaisdell, whom I remembered a bit vaguely as one of the younger Columbia professors somewhere in the social sciences. Tom Blaisdell offered me a job, adding that, if I wanted security of employment, I should go with Lubin; if I wanted to be part of the Roosevelt social revolution, I should choose AAA. Of course, I chose AAA. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration was engaged in subjecting all agricultural processing industries to minute federal regulation of prices and trade practices. In retrospect, the AAA probably did nothing to raise American farmers from the abyss. Farming recovered because of federal mortgage credit, devaluation of the dollar, government payments to farmers to withdraw arable land from cultivation, and in 1934 one of the worst droughts in the nation's history.

This Tom Blaisdell chap sounds interesting. What's his memo? Weyl proceeds to narrate right afterward about an encounter with a certain radical New Dealer, Gardiner "Pat" Jackson:

[Gardner Jackson] was perturbed about a meeting he had attended very early in the FDR administration of top insiders, at which someone had told him that the direction of the New Deal would be that of Italian fascism. One day, he took me aside and said out of the blue that he wanted to join the Communist Party. "Why tell me?" I asked. "Because I know you are a Communist," Pat replied. After the shock of this disagreeable surprise, I questioned him and discovered that Tom Blaisdell had insisted, probably on civil libertarian grounds, on his right to hire a Communist.

Ah, yes. The place was infested by pinkos peddling their wares. Hal Ware, more specifically.

In any event, as the Old Left is out to Make America Red Again, many of the demands of the working class set out in various socialist party planks were being met. But then the New Left enters the scene, and it declares: "Around blacks, *always* relax!" Soon, the proletariat gets the shaft, and the New Left erects a new base, to quote Free Northerner, "an alliance of academics, technocrats, white-collar bureaucrats (and their unions), and a bought-off underclass."

Here we are today.

Now, to some extent, I think there prevails a certain confusion between the Old Left and American trade unionism, which are overlapping but distinct. Yes, the business unionism of Samuel Gompers, for instance, was immigration restrictionist. Mostly in relation to the chinks, though. The kikes, like Gompers himself, presented a more complex question. He still enthusiastically favored women's suffrage, regardless. 270,000+ workmen signed the petition, goy! At best, Gompers' attempt to position unionism as a "patriotic front" turned him into little more than a gullible buffoon for Trojan-horse "anti-communists" like Sidney Hook, the Deweyan social democrat, to whom, quoting Justice Holmes, liberalism meant that "in the free trade of ideas that the test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." It's *not* about rights or laissez-faire, fam! It's about that there exchange of ideas! Ideas like sodomite marriage and the Department of Education. Hook was among the LIBRUHL intellectuals acting for CIA fronts throughout the 50s and 60s to... fight communism, somehow. But more on our sacred right to free speech later. Or earlier.

In any event, the memory grows dimmer. It is now a popular opinion — and actually it has been around since various National Bolsheviks and Third Positionists like Francis Parker Yockey — that communism, as bad as it was, comrade, was still a blessing compared to the evils of Atlanticist American imperialist neoliberal globalist capitalist fascism. Never mind the Jewish bankers behind Bolshevism, goy! Never happened!

Social(ist?) Matter says: "Communism, fondly remembered, is really a longing for tradition!"

Vox Day speaks:

What conservatives fail to understand is that even straight-up communism, terrible as it is, is vastly preferable to neo-liberal globalism.

— Supreme Dark Lord (@voxday) August 1, 2017

A host of commentators are prepared to gush about the USSR's wonderful pronatalist policies.

Indeed, there's something of an Old Left nostalgia going in some alt-right segments. Paul Gottfried's *Strange Death of Marxism* tells the story of the demise of the blue-collar left almost with a somber and even mildly nostalgic tone, Gottfried having had many acquaintances on the radical left (like Paul Piccone). Rebel Media outright eulogized the Old Left. But even among far less cucked specimens (like Vox Day), for whom communism is that thing that's no longer a threat (Cold War's over, fags!), and for whom capitalism is little more than soulless wage-cuckoldry for impenetrable publicly traded companies staffed by radical middle management (in no small part thanks to the New Deal's helping hand), the desire for Old Left economic radicalism is rising, and a certain nostalgic tone of "Why can't we have the Old Left back? Back when the left was about telling bosses to shove it up their asses, and not

about racially integrating my gay bathhouses like it is now!” definitely exists. Giovanni Dannato has been calling for such a coalition of Old Left economics and alt-right identity politics for a while now: the “alt-center.”

But, as comforting as this view of an Old Left that was all about the family and expropriating porkies, it just wasn’t so. The New Left, though certainly less economic and with a greater focus on identity, were ultimately following through on the trends of the Old.

Anarchists are part of the Old Left, also. But their depravity is obvious. Galleianist bomb-throwers, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman on free love and sodomy, Johann Most’s lust for insurrectionary violence, nudist communes, it goes on.

Rather, it is the more milquetoast Marxist groups that are of interest here.

Our first exhibit is a publication by William Z. Foster, the General Secretary of the CPUSA from 1945 to 1957, ex-Wobbly and one of the most prominent American communists in general. It is titled *Toward a Soviet America* (1932). If that doesn’t sound bad enough already, the picture of what Soviet America shall be speaks for itself (here on the Negro Question):

The status of the American Negro is that of an oppressed national minority, and only a Soviet system can solve the question of such minorities. This it does, in addition to setting up real equality in the general political and social life, by establishing the right of self-determination for national minorities in those parts of the country where they constitute the bulk of the population. The constitution of the Soviet Union provides that, “Each united republic retains the right of free withdrawal from the Union.”

The Program of the Communist International declares for: “The recognition of the right of all nations, irrespective of race, to complete self-determination, that is, self-determination inclusive of the right to State separation.”

Accordingly, the right of self-determination will apply to Negroes in the American Soviet system. In the so-called Black Belt of the South, where the Negroes are in the majority, they will have the fullest right to govern themselves and also such white minorities as may live in this section. The same principle will apply to all the colonial and semi-colonial peoples now dominated by American imperialism in Cuba, the Philippines, Central and South America, etc.

Black nationalism before it was cool.

Right afterwards, Foster also declares his support for granting citizenship to all illegals: “And logically, foreign-born workers, now denied the right to vote and ruthlessly deported, will enjoy the fullest rights of citizenship.”

That the socialist movement had an overrepresentation of immigrants is known, and acknowledged by John Reed in 1918, lamenting the state of the movement: “With the exception of the Jewish workers, other foreigners, and a devoted sprinkling of Americans, the Socialist party is made up largely of petty bourgeois, for the most part occupied in electing Aldermen and Assemblymen to office, where they turn into time-serving politicians and in explaining that Socialism does not mean Free Love. The composition of the English-speaking branches is: little shop-keepers, clerks, doctors, lawyers, farmers (in the Middle West), a few teachers, some skilled workers, and a handful of intellectuals.”

Foster cites the “liberated Russian woman” and endorses the end of “bourgeois sex hypocrisy and prudery”:

The Russian woman is also free in her sex life. When married life becomes unwelcome for a couple they are not barbarously compelled to live together. Divorce is to be had for the asking by one or both parties. The woman’s children are recognized as legitimate by the State and society, whether born in official wedlock or not. The free American woman, like her Russian sister, will eventually scorn the whole fabric of bourgeois sex hypocrisy and prudery.

As for the schools, they must be enriched by *the dia-leck-tick*:

Among the elementary measures the American Soviet government will adopt to further the cultural revolution are the following; the schools, colleges and universities will be coordinated and grouped under the National Department of Education and its state and local branches. The studies will be revolutionized, being cleansed of religious, patriotic and other features of the bourgeois ideology. The students will be taught on the basis of Marxian dialectical materialism, internationalism and the general ethics of the new Socialist society. Present obsolete methods of teaching will be superseded by a scientific pedagogy.

Foster’s is among the most egregious, hence why I cite it first.

21 years later, another portrait of Soviet America would be written, this time by James P. Cannon, the leading American Trotskyist. His vision is a little more conservative. He acknowledges the theoretical possibility of housewives, but... come on, now, it’s \$CURRENT_YEAR:

Every man can have his little house as he has it now, and his little wife spending her whole time cooking and cleaning for him—providing he can find that kind of a wife. But he will not be able to buy such service, and he’ll be rather stupid to ask for it. Most likely his enlightened sweetheart will tell him: “Wake up, Bud; we’re living under socialism. You’ve been reading that ancient history again and you’ve a nostalgia for the past. You’ve got to break yourself of that habit. I’m studying medicine, and I have no time to be sweeping up dust. Call up the Community Housecleaning Service.”

While waiting 8 years in line for the Community Housecleaning Service to arrive, you might however be interested in the black battalions of the revolution:

The Negroes will very probably be among the best revolutionists. And why shouldn't they be? They have nothing to lose but their poverty and discrimination, and a whole world of prosperity, freedom, and equality to gain. You can bet your boots the Negroes will join the revolution to fight for that—once it becomes clear to them that it cannot be gained except by revolution. The black battalions of the revolution will be a mighty power—and great will be their reward in the victory.

Furthermore, a 1931 editorial by Cannon in the Trotskyist journal *The Militant* had a proto-intersectional approach: “Communism cannot be other than the mortal enemy of these devastating prejudices, and the Communist party is charged with an irreconcilable struggle against them. In no small degree the party of the proletariat is to be judged by the vigor, and also by the wisdom, with which it conducts this struggle. And it is self-evident that the Negro question takes first place within it. Communist ideas, Communist teaching and practise must break down the artificial wall which bourgeois prejudice has reared between the races; the Communists must be the heralds of a genuine solidarity between the exploited workers of the white race and the doubly exploited Negroes.”

The commitment to black self-determination is restated in a CPUSA organizational manual from 1935, following the Comintern resolution on said issue.

Far from focusing purely on class, a 1928 pamphlet by Hungarian Jewish communist John Pepper (who would ultimately be executed in 1938 by the NKVD in the USSR) declared that: “The American working class cannot free itself from capitalist exploitation without freeing the Negro race from white oppression.” Furthermore, he calls for an explicit struggle against “white chauvinism” (a plank later officially adopted by the USA).

The CPUSA's foreign policy front from 1933 to 1939, the American League Against War and Fascism (which had members of the Roosevelt cabinet in it, like Eliot Janeway), cemented the “popular front” strategy, calling upon “the working class, the ruined and exploited farmers, the oppressed Negro people, the sections of the middle class bankrupted by the crisis, the groups of intellectuals of all occupations, men, women and youth, together, to organize their invincible force in discipline battalions for the decisive struggle to defeat imperialist war.” Nothing archetypally New Leftist about this.

Indeed, the way the communists called for “struggles against American imperialism by oppressed peoples” (at the time, in their view, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans, etc.) is quite reminiscent of the stereotypically New Left admiration for Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh for the same reasons. Third Worldism was already a present element in the Old Left.

But while riding on the Old Left train of purely-materialistic-class-liberation-I-swear-mate, we'll take a stop to examine their views on women's lib.

One of the many dead variants of Marxism is that of De Leonism, a sort of hybrid of revolutionary syndicalism as a means for state socialism. Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party which carries on his mantle, have always held on pure to their “revolutionary industrial unionist” vision. What did Comrade De Leon think of divorce?

He thought it was groovy (with a dose of Rousseauist noble savagery, too):

By degrees, the socialist position is being made good; its prognostics are being realized. The changing laws on divorce are the beam which denotes the current’s steady direction. Quite such a beam is the report of the British Royal Commission recommending positively drastic changes in the existing laws on divorce. Leaving aside the minute considerations of details that rather tends to confuse than enlighten, the recommendations of the Royal Commission ”beginning with the placing of husband and wife on an equality of duty in the matter of chastity” look to the restoration of conjugal relations to where the same stood in the pre-class-rule tribal days. Then, marriage lasted as long as it had the consent of both the parties, and it ended when the consent ended.

The 1887 Platform of the Socialist Labor Party, among its social demands, listed lastly (but by no means least): “Uniform national marriage laws. Divorce to be granted upon mutual consent, and upon providing for the care of the children.” Among its political demands, the fourth: “Direct vote and secret ballots in all elections. Universal and equal right of suffrage without regard to color, creed or sex. Election days to be legal holidays. The principle of minority representation to be introduced.”

(It’s quite impressive to note how much of the platform, other than some of the more kooky direct-democratic proposals, has been instated in the United States today. *America Is A Communist Country*.)

Eugene V. Debs, the most successful third-party socialist candidate for POTUS in American history, declared in 1909 that IT’S THE CURRENT YEAR (or THE CURRENT CENTURY, anyway), therefore: “I am glad to align myself with a party that declares for absolute equality between the sexes. Anything less than this is too narrow for twentieth century civilization, and too small for a man who has a right conception of manhood. I declare my faith that man, like water, cannot rise higher than his source. I am no greater than my mother. I have no rights or powers that do not belong to my sisters, everywhere.” He had earlier, in 1894, called the women’s movement “one of the most far-reaching and of transcendent importance.”

It was certainly of transcendent importance in getting the demon rum out of men’s systems. But of course it was normal for Debs to jump on board with the women’s movement. Such respectable, upstanding and pious ladies as Frances Willard of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union had smuggled in the suffrage issue through the backdoor of eradicating bars and saloons. Willard liked the euphemism “Home Protection” (p.22):

Of the right of women to the ballot I say nothing. All persons of intelligence, whose prejudices have not become indurated beyond the power of logic's sledge-hammer to break them, have been convinced already. For the rest there is no cure save one – the death cure – which comes soon or late and will open more eyes than it closes. Of the Republic's right to woman's ballot I might say much. Well did two leaders of public thought set forth that right when Joseph Cook declared that "woman's vote would be to the voices in our great cities what the lightning is to oak"; and when Richard S. Storrs said: "If women want the suffrage they will be sure to have it, and I don't know but when it comes it will turn out to be precious amethyst that drives drunkenness out of politics"?

One of these woman voices was militant labor radical Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (of Irish descent), who in 1916 declared: "The majority of our workers are foreigners, one or two generations removed, and with their European home-ties and American environment, internationalism becomes the logical patriotism of a heterogeneous population. America – not as a melting-pot, that produces a jingoistic, mercenary, one-mold type, but as a giant loom weaving into a mighty whole the sons, the poetry, the traditions, and the customs of all races, until a beautiful human fabric, with each thread intact, comes forth – would stretch forth a myriad hands of brotherhood to the four quarters of the globe."

Don't want a melting pot, white man? There's something better!

Now, besides birth control and suffrage, to be expected from a red broad, Gurley Flynn was a pioneer in American "civil liberties" – a codeword for communist subversion (apologies to any free-speech advocates reading this).

In 1939, she exhorts: "Capitalist reaction is intent upon depriving the Communists of their civil rights as the preparation for an attack on the economic standards and civil rights of the trade unions, of the working class, of all who oppose American involvement in the imperialist war. Immediate and powerful defense of the civil rights of the Communists is, therefore, of the utmost urgency for the entire labor movement and all who stand for progress and peace."

This "utmost urgency" would be accomplished by an alliance of labor militants with useful liberal idiots.

The early years of the ACLU were closely intertwined with reds. Besides Roger Baldwin's own admiration for the Soviets, founding members of its immediate precursor, the National Civil Liberties Bureau (NCLB), included Socialist Party maverick Norman Thomas and pacifist/feminist Crystal Eastman. The NCLB would provide the initial funding for and closely cooperate with Gurley Flynn's Workers Defense Union (WDU), an organization dedicated to protecting so-called "victims of capitalist class tyranny."

Pinko historian M.A. Trasciatti writes of the WDU's breadth:

With delegates from over 170 labor, socialist, and radical organizations, the WDU may have been the one truly broad ideological “united front” created by the American Left. Groups as diverse as the International Association of Machinists, United Hebrew Trades, Teachers’ Union, Consumers League of the Bronx, Socialist Party, Communist Party, Italian Bakers Federation, and the New York Vegetarian Society counted among its affiliates.

Freedom of speech and civil liberties — nothing more than a tool to undermine the legal controls that local governments may need to impose to protect the moral integrity of their communities. You start by defending the commies. You move on to defend the Nazis. The Nazis get really excited: “That there ACLU helpin’ us to name the Jew!” But, soon, the Nazi is struck by a horrific realization: “Wait, if I’m allowed to march... *so are the faggots and trannies!*” But of course. That was the intent all along.

The most conspicuous example of Old Left molding between class and identity, as a harbinger of things to come, is that of the black CPUSA theorist Harry Haywood.

In 1928 and 1930, two resolutions were passed by the Comintern on the Negro Question. In both of them, the idea of the American negroes as a separate nation with the right to self-determine and with a mission to specifically fight for social as opposed to simply economic rights, was affirmed. Even further, the Comintern resolution accepted the Negro Question as part of a broader “World Problem” of the struggle of negroes against capitalist imperialism worldwide. [Texts reproduced here.](#)

In 1948, Haywood’s book *Negro Liberation* (see Ch VII, “[The Negro Nation](#)”) would set the foundation for black nationalism, and for the modern contradictory school of left-wing identity politics where race is simultaneously held to be of paramount importance and dismissed as a groundless social construct all the same. Haywood does not conceive of the Negro Question as primarily economic, but following the Comintern 20 years earlier, a *national* question. To be sure, it follows the Marxist-Leninist analysis of nationality [pioneered by Stalin in 1913.](#) But it went beyond in actively treating black culture as an autonomous element rather than a mere superstructure to a capitalist base, and specifically argued that self-government and democratic institutions were the proximate goal of the black struggle, and not proletarian class dictatorship as a more standard Leninist would say.

Well, that is enough to prove the point. The transition from Old to New Left was neither a simple substitution, nor a radical disjunction. The social radicalism and identitarianism were all present as seeds in the Old Left. The materialist approach to nationality was immanentized into an independent variable of its own, and from there theories of various interlocking modes of non-class oppression could trivially emerge.

Nonetheless, Old Left economics and right-wing identitarianism will probably be a great combination for getting the genetically pacified white man’s juices flowing, so it’ll be fun to watch how the right gets history to rhyme by reinventing the square wheel, if it even gets that far.

