



## Review and Reflection

BY  
ROBERT CLANCY

FIFTY YEARS AGO there was a debate in New York on capitalism versus socialism. The protagonist of capitalism was Prof. E. R. A. Seligman a noted economist and representative of the "Establishment." Opposing him was the socialist Scott Nearing, an "outsider."

In recent times an Oxford debate on the free market took place. Participating were two Americans: Prof. J. K. Galbraith, influential Harvard professor, and William Buckley, controversial author, and politician. But this time the "Establishment" spokesman was against the free market and the "outsider" was for it. Thus have times changed.

Formerly "right wingers"—those who believed in the inviolability of private property, the lower classes in their "right" place and the role of government to maintain this system—seemed to be in control of the social order. "Left wingers" were the rebels who defied the "capitalists," demanded a share of the wealth and wanted government to expand its role so as to control the economy.

Since then the left has gained much of what it sought—and we have today what is called "the Liberal Establishment" with planners in the saddle. They have become tinged with conservatism themselves since they are the ones who are now running the show, and such people do not like change.

Meanwhile there has emerged a "New Left" and a "New Right" with the "Liberal Establishment" as the target of both.

The new alignments are curiously mixed up and are by no means so clearly marked off as the old-fashioned left and right. The New Left is composed largely of racial minorities, alienated intellectuals and college youth, the latter conspicuously from upper and upper-middle classes. The New Right has attracted some wealthy people, "little old ladies from Pasadena"—but chiefly and surprisingly, the "hard hat" element, the workers of the lower-middle classes.

Although much of the New Left claims to be non-violent, the more extreme elements believe that in violence lies the only way forward. Yet they are much vaguer than older Marxists as to what they want. Their liberal and socialist forebears do not recognize or sympathize with this new breed, whom one liberal has labelled "romantic anarchists."

The New Right objects to the pervasiveness of govern-

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mental regulation and taxation that the liberals have brought us. However, they are not forthright in just how they would do away with all this. They still want a strong government to put down dissenters and protestors, and a strong military force to keep the rest of the world inline. How this would reduce government is not explained.

Lower and lower-middle class college youths are not a significant component of the New Left, as they see college as a way to advance themselves in the world. The business community as a rule does not join with the New Right. It has grown accustomed to the pervasiveness of government and has become adapted, even dependent upon it.

In these confusing times and with this curious amalgam of left and right, what of the great mass of the people? What do the "silent majority" want? They tend to shuttle back and forth between left and right. Despite increasing similarities Democrats are still vaguely identified as "liberal" and Republicans as "conservative." More importantly, whenever there are troubles, the party in power grows less popular. Since there are serious economic troubles in America today and the Republicans are in office, they lost ground in the 1970 elections. One interesting exception was New York which usually goes liberal but which this time elected to the U.S. Senate a man running as a Conservative for a minority party of that name—James Buckley, brother of William. He had a good deal of "hard hat" support because of the "law and order" issue, but had to considerably tone down the Conservative attitude toward labour unions to win their votes—such are the peculiarities of left and right.

With the Great Depression, Americans got into the habit of asking the Government to step in and do more and more for them. Periodically they rebel against this. But when they put in a more conservative government the old economic troubles begin to show themselves again, so they go liberal again. Since no viable alternative has been presented to them, they keep waxing hot and cold, keep moving back and forth between the devil and the deep blue sea.

A clear and practical programme that would show how to solve economic problems without big increases in taxes and government could win the support of the people if presented properly and realistically. It could show the way out of the "left right, left right," syndrome.