As a public service,

THE LAUCKS FOUNDATION —

from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace.

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Nuclear disarmament, says the Rev. Miles O'Brien Riley of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco, "is the moral issue of the day. Everything else is a footnote."

—NEWSWEEK/Jan. 11, 1982

THIS MAN'S FINGER IS ON 'THE BUTTON'?!

This question-and-answer exchange took place at President Reagan's press conference on Nov. 10, 1981:

Q—Mr. President, in your exchange with the editors—I happen to have the transcript—I'd like to read you what you said. You said, I could see, you said, where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button. Then, Secretary Haig last week talked of the possibility of a nuclear warning shot as part of NATO's contingency plans. I would like to ask you first, if you endorse still what you said to the editors and, second, if you believe that the nuclear warning shot should be a part of NATO's plans?

A—Well, I have not been a party to the contingency planning of NATO that has gone on now for approximately 30 years, and which I think has proven itself a deterrent to military action in Europe and for all this period of time.

What you've just quoted that I said there, the discussion was in the area of—and I suppose it's hypothetical where you're talking about is it possible to ever use a nuclear weapon without this spreading automatically to the exchange of the strategic weapons from nation to nation.

And I gave what I thought was something that was possible, that the grave difference between theater nuclear weapons—the artillery shells and so forth that both sides have—that I could see where both sides could still be deterred from going into the exchange of strategic weapons if there had been battlefield weapons troop-to-troop exchanged there.

I think there's high risk. There's no question of that. I think the thing we have to recognize, and why our goal must be to seek peace, is what someone said the other day: If war comes, is any nation—would the opponents, faced with inevitable defeat, take that defeat without turning to the ultimate weapon. And this is part of the danger and why we're going to pursue arms reductions as much as we can, and do what we can to insure peace. And I still believe that the only real insurance we have of that is deterrent power.

Q—Mr. President, should there be a nuclear warning shot? And I take it that you do endorse what you said in the context that you said it?

A—Well, I endorse only that I said it was offered as a possibility. And I think you'd have to still say that that possibility could take place. You could have a pessimistic outlook on it or an optimistic. And I always tend to be optimistic. Your other question though?

Q—The nuclear warning shot?

A—Oh. Well, that, there seems to be some confusion as to whether that is still a part of NATO strategy or not. And so far I've had no answer to that.

As Reagan says, one could be pessimistic or optimistic about the possibility of limited nuclear war. After reading his appallingly ignorant response to these questions, about what could well be the opening of World War III, I for one find that the President's naive optimism greatly augments my pessimism.

(Excerpt from GLOBAL REPORT of Richard Hudson, Center for War/Peace Studies, No. 12, January 1982)

The Crack-Up of the Soviet and U.S. Empires

Viewpoint

by Morton M. Kondracke

In a 1978 speech in Chicago, Ronald Reagan expressed what is probably his world view today. "There is an evil influence throughout the world," he said. "In every one of the far-flung trouble spots, dig deep enough and you'll find the Soviet Union stirring a witches' brew, furthering its own imperialistic ambitions. If the Soviet Union would simply go home, much of the bloodshed in the world today would cease."

Administration officials persistently draw attention to Soviet involvement, direct or indirect, wherever American interests are threatened. The latest instance was in Secretary of State Haig's speech to the Organization of American States, where he declared that "since 1978, Cuba, with the support of the Soviet Union, has embarked on a systematic campaign of increasing interference with its neighbors."

I do not deny for a moment that the Soviets meddle where and whenever they see an opportunity, and I am not about to launch into one of those arguments that local factors explain all disorder in the world, the conclusion usually being that if the U.S. would only stop supporting right-wing dictators and give more aid through international agencies, peace and harmony would prevail everywhere.

However, I think that the administration's preoccupation with the Soviets leads it and us to ignore the rise of barbarians in the world. I submit for discussion the proposition that both the U.S. and the Soviet empires are cracking up—for both internal and external reasons—and that the Goths are close to the gates at both Rome and Constantinople. Instead of merely railing at the Soviets, it's possible that we should be talking to them about how to prevent both our capitals from being sacked and how to save the world from a return to the Dark Ages.

To the extent that the U.S. and Soviet systems are in danger of failing from within, negotiation probably will not save the day. It is not our fault that the Soviet economy is a failure and that bureaucratic and ideological rigidity sap the vitality of the Soviet peoples, driving them by the millions to seek comfort in a vodka bottle. Nor are the Soviets responsible for our preoccupation with the pursuit of individual pleasure, for our conviction that everyone in society is entitled to everything he wants when he wants it, which has overstretched our economy and still left us personally unfulfilled. Neither the Soviet society nor ours will save itself for very long unless it reforms from within—and there are some hopeful signs here, not there—but negotiation could reduce the pressure of arms expenditures on each society and give it capital to invest in its own renewal.

Externally, the Reagan administration is obsessed with the menace of Soviet advance, but the evidence suggests that the Soviet empire is in retreat. Over the last 30 years, the Soviet has gained footholds in Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia and Yemen, but has lost China, Egypt and Somalia. They are bogged down in miserable warfare in Afghanistan, which must inspire restiveness among the captive Moslems in their empire. They face rebellion of a different kind in Poland, which surely inspires hope of escape among captive Eastern Europeans.

Our "empire," too, is in disarray, however. The West has lost Cuba and Vietnam to communism and Libya, Iraq and Iran to fanaticism. Unlike the Soviet Union, the U.S. no longer is willing to use force to keep its empire intact, and we are not inventive enough (as the Soviets seem to be in Poland) to use winter as an ally. So we are undeniably losing power and influence over others. Nicaragua is in danger of turning Communist and other nations in Central America may follow. The more we lose influence, the more allies in Europe and the Middle East are likely to look to themselves for protection and leadership, or to give in to despair.

The danger in all this is that the absence of a stable world system—even a tense bipolar one—opens the way for free-lance barbarians out of control of either superpower. Colonel Qadhafi clearly is one such character. Ayatollah Khomeini is another. Iraq's Saddam Hussein could be considered a third and others may be along shortly. If you think that my analogy to the fall of Rome and the onset of the Dark Ages is extreme, consider that one of these barbarians someday soon is going to come into possession of a nuclear device. But for Israel's bombing raid at Osirak this year, Iraq almost did. Suppose Khomeini had come to power in the 1990s, after the shah perhaps had acquired a nuclear capability. If Pakistan, as expected, has nuclear weapons in 1982 and an ally of the PLO or Qadhafi should seize power there, the world shortly would be faced with the threat of nuclear terrorism.

What is to be done, I can't exactly say. I do not advocate a trade whereby the Soviets invade Poland and we invade Cuba in order to put the U.S. and Soviet empires back together. But if Mr. Brezhnev and Mr. Reagan ever do have a meeting, they ought not limit their talks to classic East-West issues. Talking about the menace of Qadhafi surely is called for, and maybe an agreement even could be reached to do something about him. Most of all, the U.S. and the Soviet Union have an interest in inventing ways of controlling the spread of nuclear weapons. The two greatest empires on the face of the earth ought not to have to depend upon a little nation like Israel to protect the world from nuclear barbarism.

Mr. Kondracke is executive editor of the New Republic magazine.

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

THINKING IN PACKAGES

COULD OUR OPPONENTS BE LIKE OURSELVES?

THERE IS A grave problem which faces those of us who care about ideas. (Notice how I have gathered us all together in a noble little bunch.) It is something I have been paying attention to in a half-conscious way ever since I first started arguing with people, but it has only recently surfaced in all its silly array, probably because Ronald Reagan was elected president. It has to do not so much with ideas as with the way we relate to them. What I have noticed at long last, after years of doing all the wrong things, is embarrassing. It makes me think that everyone — every anarchist, libertarian, conservative, radical, and socialist — ought to take a vow of emotional poverty where ideas are concerned.

We have an investment in our ideas which has nothing to do with the particular worth of our ideas. Our ideas are like clan totems or old school ties. We tend to think that our ideas make us decent. If we have the right opinion about something, it means that we ourselves must be basically good folks; and the other side of this is that those who do not share our feelings on any particular subject are indecent, even perverse. Our ideas become tokens which we shove across the table at one another during conversations to show who we are. They are signals to people we often don't know very well, which we send through the space between us to let them know what to expect of us, and we are delighted when their response is approving: it means they are our sort. If they bat our tokens back at us with a cool stare or, more politely, through careful disagreement, our first impulse is often to assume that their motive for doing so must be base.

I believe, for example, that the arms race is suicidal and that it is almost certainly bound to end in such destruction as the world has never seen. I am putting this as mildly as I can. I also believe that to accept it as a tactical necessity means assuming something which is morally indefensible: the military use of civilian populations, and the willingness to hold them hostage to possible annihilation. I have noticed that people who disagree with me assume all sorts of things I not only have not said, but which I definitely do not believe. They assume that I believe the Soviet Union to be basically

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trustworthy and decent, not at all bad politically; they assume that I do not object to totalitarianism, and in fact have some sneaky attachment to it, and that I think of America as the world's greatest evil.

The problem is that people on my side of this life and death question do the same sort of thing. Because I agree with them, I tend to forgive them more easily for the moves which, coming from the other side, properly infuriate me. One problem I have always had with *Dr. Strangelove*, much as I enjoyed it, was the sickly consolation it gave to liberals with all of its easy targets. The assumption was that those crazy hawks enjoyed destruction, that they had a romance going with Armageddon. They — our ideological opponents — couldn't honestly believe that unless we met and overtook the Soviets weapons for weapon, we would be faced with a situation in which we might really be forced to accept the domination of a group of people who believe that the Gulag is the proper answer to dissent. They must have a darker reason, something to do with their being anal sorts. They must have had a dreadful relationship with their fathers, or they must have been sexually confused. They couldn't have an honestly different view of the world, a different reading of the same facts.

I disagree with a view of the world which can envision a situation in which our superior strength will force our enemies to back down; we wouldn't be cowed so easily, and it seems naive to suppose that they are that much unlike us. I not only disagree with that view. I think that if it does not kill me off, it will kill my children or grandchildren. Or it may keep them from being killed — at the expense of other people's children and grandchildren. Even if those who defend the arms race as a necessary evil were right in their predictions, I would have to oppose them.

But it is too easy, too self-satisfying, to assume that our own motives in this argument are pure while our opponents are indecent. They are wrong, I think; but to think that they are simply base (or even complicatedly base) involves us in doing several false things. We assume an ulterior motive, which handily keeps us from having to consider seriously the possibility that our opponents could be right. We assume that no other vision of the world could possibly have anything to recommend it, which keeps us from having to examine our own assumptions very closely. And we assume that our having the right idea, which is usually projected at people who already agree with us anyway, ought to gain us support, applause, and moral approval. We do this whether we are on the left or right. And by offering package deals we make it all easier for ourselves. A woman who knew that I opposed the war in Vietnam was shocked to learn that I opposed abortion, because in her package-deal way of thinking a person who opposed war must be in favor of abortion. The left is assumed by its enemies to be predictable, and so is the right. Both sides are right too often. Left and right *are* both pretty predictable, nearly tribal, and ideas and opinions are frequently waved around as signs of respectability within the tribe, as if language had nothing to do with exploring, or with moving towards a truth in a tentative way, or with being doubtful, or with taking a chance at the edge — which means being willing not only to be wrong, because the only thing at stake here is not whether an opinion falls into the true or false column, but also takes into account the possibility that your opponent is a human being as richly complicated and oddly formed as you are.

That does not make your opponent right. One must firmly believe that there are ideas beyond decent debate. Genocide and child molestation are closed issues, I think. It is wrong not to be passionate about the things we care for deeply. I feel as strongly about nuclear war as I do about abortion, and find it difficult to have much sympathy with defenders of capital punishment. If Matthew 25 is right and what is done to the least human being is done to Christ, then capital punishment, abortion, the notion of a war in which whole populations may be destroyed, and the idea that hunger is in some circumstances acceptable, are all under a terrible judgment. But to think of those whose disagreements with us are deep as indecent or base is to put ourselves under the same judgment. An idea must bear fruit; a Christian perception is meant to go out from itself. If we see it as a personal possession we are on the wrong track. As a possession it is something we have to get rid of.

The Quaker saint John Woolman opposed slaveholders and the men who were about to make the Revolutionary War. He thought that their decisions were profoundly wrong, and he let them know that. His life was a lived disagreement — but he always assumed that he was talking to a human being, one loved by God. Even where we believe that there is no room for debate, we must have compassion — which means *suffering with*, which means understanding how a person could arrive at the place where he is — and we must realize that we share the disease of the heart which allows people to wound one another in the name of truth. Erasmus once wrote about one aspect of this universal problem: "There is great obscurity in many matters, and man suffers from this almost congenital disease, that he will not give in once a controversy is started, and after he is warmed up he regards as absolutely true that which he began to sponsor quite casually."

The point is not to become less committed, or to assume that all ideas are of equal merit, but to be as clear as we can about our own motives, and to approach those who disagree with us the way Woolman did. We should not allow ourselves the luxury of thinking that our ideas have anything at all to do with our decency. We should realize that Matthew 25 applies to our judgments: the least of the brethren includes our opponents.

JOHN GARVEY

BEYOND REAGAN

by Alan Wolfe

America doesn't need a gross expansion of its present economic system, but rather a rebuilding of its political life.

A generation or so ago, American liberalism existed as a coherent outlook on the world. Liberals, overwhelmed by depression and war, developed a program for controlling both. Depressions, caused by business irresponsibility, would be eliminated by planning and programs of income redistribution. War, caused by greediness of nation states, would be limited through international cooperation and efforts at global humanitarianism. Unable to achieve these goals because of the deep political stalemate that had existed in the United States since 1938, liberals sublimated them into the quest for an expanding economy at home and a protective umbrella for the world at large. Since the first objective could only be obtained by winning business confidence and the second by courting the support of the national security establishment, American liberalism became fatally dependent on the very two forces it most needed to control.

Instead of eliminating depression and controlling war, the Democrats became the party of induced recession and cold war hostility. With the exception of a two-year period during the Johnson administration, the greater the power exercised by liberal Democrats in the postwar years, the further from the New Deal agenda America wandered. By the time of the Carter debacle, liberalism had turned into its opposite. With little save growth to hold it together, yet at a time when the economy simply would not deliver the growth that was needed, the Democratic party had little of coherence to say about America's malaise, and the people turned to the Republican alternative.

If liberalism had been destroyed by its faith in growth, the transformation of American conservatism—and thereby the Republican party—is even more startling. Before its love affair with expansion, America's conservative tradition put its faith in localism at home and isolationism abroad. Domestic policy, it was argued, was best carried out at the state and local level, where particular conditions would not be overrun by national uniformity. Inflation, conservatives suggested, was the great enemy of society, and the best check against inflation was small government on the one hand and vigorous economic competition on the other. Low taxes, the heart of the Republican program, implied few expensive ventures abroad, which sat well with the isolation of the Republican heartland. America would not bail out the world's poor, nor would it finance the world's money; at the same time, such postwar innovations as a peacetime draft, foreign troops, a professional spy network, and a permanent and expensive military establishment were also held to violate conservative principles. Embodied in the outlook of a man like Robert Taft, such conservatism seems as antique in the 1980s as the liberal humanitarianism of Chester Bowles or Henry Wallace.

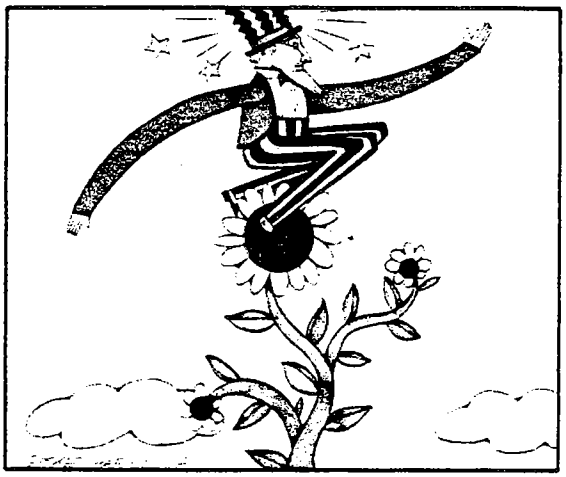
Heirs to growth priorities, the "conservatives" who came to power with Ronald Reagan, like the liberals who worked for Jimmy Carter, have come to stand for notions wildly antagonistic to their roots. American conservatives put their faith in a huge military apparatus and an interventionist foreign policy. In the name of traditional virtue, such conservatives would give a free hand to business practices that destroy neighborhoods, separate families, promote hedonism, encourage mobility, and plan obsolescence. Speaking on behalf of localism and community, the Republican party upholds the automobile, opposes energy conservation, prefers nuclear to solar power, undermines efforts at local planning, opposes attempts by communities to prevent factory closings, and sets off region against region in search for new sources of power. Claiming to represent a moral majority, the Republicans call for a de-emphasis on human rights and encourage dictators in the Third World. Pro-life, they support programs—from lifting regulations on smoking to removing pollution controls—that will produce an increase in death. Constitutionalists, the Republicans have become a party advocating the use of any and all means in the furtherance of what is proclaimed to be the

Alan Wolfe is professor of sociology at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and the author of several books. This article is adapted from his new book, America's Impasse: Political Stagnation and Economic Growth from Truman to Reagan *(Pantheon).*

national interest. Conservatives who will not conserve, the men who came to power in 1980 are as replete with contradictions as those they were so determined to replace. It took liberals a generation to discredit themselves. Now that everything happens faster, it should take conservatives a decade.

Insofar as the Republican vision can be boiled down to its essentials, it consists of the following interrelated prescriptions: greater freedom for the private sector; a preference for state and local governments over the federal government when public intervention cannot be avoided; the passage of legislation such as tax cuts designed to be of direct benefit to corporations to stimulate the economy; and an intensified campaign to give the United States strategic superiority over the Soviet Union.

Yet each of these is beset with contradictions. In spite of an evident public sympathy for taking government off the backs of the economy, there is not much lifting that can be done. America has one of the lowest rates of government intervention in any of the advanced capitalist societies, and while the economics of Milton Friedman is wonderful stuff for appealing to frustration and anger, it is hardly a guide to economic conduct in a society where profits and markets are secured by an active state. The Republican party enters the 1980s divided between genuine Friedmanites and conservative nationalists who would, in the name of efficiency and protection, *increase* the role of government. It is not hard to imagine the latter gaining the upper hand as austerity makes itself felt.



Similarly, the conservative preference for state and local (rather than federal) control, often expressed in theory, too easily becomes no control as land, resources, and brains are turned over to the private sector. That a state or community will be able to control a corporation of vastly greater size is unlikely. When a commitment to increased military expenditure is added to the formula, the prospects for localism dim even more. Ronald Reagan may like to bemoan the fact that Washington has grown too big, but his own program is devoted to making it bigger. He who wants a powerful America must accept a big national government.

The mainstay of Reagan's economic policy is budget and tax cuts designed to favor business expansion. Aside from the fact that corporate taxes plummeted during the Democratic years, there is every indication that further tax cuts will not produce substantial economic stimulation. The reality is that large corporations choose to invest their funds in safe places, and if past experience is any guide, corporations would take their windfall and, when not using it to buy other companies, would invest it overseas where the rate of return is higher. President Reagan faces the choice of giving up his plans for military superiority or seeking an increase in taxes to pay for it.

The final, and least conservative, idea in the conservative program is the call for strategic superiority over the Soviet Union. Here again Reagan has borrowed from the Democrats, and here again Democratic efforts in the past have failed. Aside from the probability that the Soviet Union will meet every attempt by the United States to destablize parity, or that an attempt by the United States to escalate the arms race will court strong opposition in Western Europe, there is the further problem that Reagan's military program will wreck the American economy. Spending unlimited sums on capital-intensive, energy-guzzling, inflation-producing, and unproductive boondoggles is not likely to encourage confidence in the dollar abroad. Remilitarization in an age of austerity is a program headed for disaster.

There was a time when liberalism faced contradictions as divisive as these. Planners who lacked the authority to plan, advocates of social justice who rewarded the beneficiaries of injustice, peaceful men who fought a war to prove it, internationalists wrapped in parochial garb, and global humanitarians who offered counterrevolution to the world's poor, American liberals necessarily threw themselves into the pursuit of economic growth out of the manifest contradictions in their vision.

Now that power has shifted to the right, so have the inconsistencies of growth politics. Localists seeking national and world power, fiscal conservatives sponsoring expensive government programs, tax-cutters who want to waste public funds, and isolationists seeking to recreate a world in their image. American conservatives have already begun to mimic the liberal quest for economic and imperial expansion as the solution to their equally paralyzing absurdities. The 1980 election was something of a great transformation, but it was a realignment over economic means, not political

ends. Growth politics is as popular as ever, but its center of gravity is in the process of shifting from one party to the other.

During the long boom that began in 1945 and crested in 1968, liberal Democrats, unable to unify themselves, chose growth rather than programs that contained political consistency. Similarly, in the downswing of the long postwar wave, American politics will be dominated by splits within conservative ranks over the best course of economic management. Growth, which became for liberals a magic formula for overcoming the suspicion in elite circles that they were too radical, enables Republicans to overcome the suspicion among the voters that they are too reactionary. But whoever inherits power in America inherits as well the contradictions of growth politics. Only by invoking the spirit of Franklin Roosevelt and by practicing growth politics more than the Democrats were willing to do could Ronald Reagan gain power in 1980.

There are only two issues at work in American politics most of the time: economic growth and military strength. When the Democrats, as in 1960, were able to convince the electorate that they could best achieve these objectives, they were the dominant party. Now that, in the 1980s, the Republicans have made the more compelling case that they should be trusted to accomplish them, they are becoming the dominant party. In the upswing of the postwar growth wave, liberals believed in expansion and conservatives urged caution; in the downswing, conservatives talk of unleashing the economy and liberals worry about the cost. Nothing illustrates the political bankruptcy of American society better than this reversal of roles. Liberalism and conservatism have been stripped of political vision, as both, in their day, sought in growth and expansion an easy alternative to political choice and controversy. Rather than pose the hard options needed to take America out of its impasse, both parties and dominant sets of ideas engage in an increasingly bitter and futile debate over how best to achieve objectives that can no longer, in the world that actually exists, be achieved.

The so-called conservative transformation of American politics begun in 1980, therefore, is more properly understood as another chapter in a long-running saga of seduction and betrayal. Now it will be Republicans who will suffer the pain of being torn between a political system that demands growth to function and an economy that can no longer provide it. Unless the Republican party restructures the economy and cuts back military spending—and there is little evidence that it would ever contemplate either move—America's impasse will deepen the more intense the effort to resolve it. For America needs not a gross expansion of an already flawed economic system, but a rebuilding of its rapidly deteriorating political life.

For all the talk of a conservative mandate in 1980, Ronald Reagan received a smaller proportion of the eligible vote in that year than Jimmy Carter did in 1976. If trends continue at their present rate, the largest political grouping in America will soon be the nonpolitical. A system that cannot make political choices cannot command political allegiance. Americans who live with an economy that must throw people out of work in order to control inflation should not be surprised that they have a political system that must disenfranchise its citizens in order to choose its leaders. Much talk is heard in the 1980s of the need for a program of economic revitalization. Yet, as was true also in the 1940s, economic direction must come from the political system, and American politics are stagnant. America needs a program of political revitalization before its economy will begin to work again.

Reagan's "conservatives," like Carter's "liberals," have come to stand for notions wildly antagonistic to their roots.

Political revitalization and a new approach to domestic policy go hand in hand. Voting turnout in poor and minority communities is so low that a significant portion of the American population can no longer be said to be citizens in even the most minimal sense of the term. One wonders who is fooling whom. It is obviously possible in a middle class democracy for a national consensus to develop that will punish the poor; by themselves, the poor are unable to obtain benefits through the legislative process. Yet the social costs of a policy of middle class self-interest are incalculable. The fear of crime, like the fear of inflation, undermines the possibility of trust that makes social life possible. The losses of productivity suffered because of the existence of a permanent underclass hurt everyone. No country can aspire to world leadership, as America insists on doing, when it is incapable of maximizing the energy and intelligence of its entire citizenry. Can America move beyond a politics of middle class self-interest to develop a program that would rebuild its domestic spirit? Only, in my view, if the question of class is reintroduced into political discourse and, in the process, redefined.

Growth politics in postwar America were premised on the assumption that the working class would slowly be transformed into middle class citizens, an assumption that held up so long as the growth took place. Many domestic programs were couched in universal language; instead of being targeted specifically at the poor, they became part of a general quest for a better life for all. (In the process, such programs also became open-ended, inflationary, and self-contradictory.) America's middle class, all the while thinking that it was helping the poor, financed out of its tax dollars the costs of urban development and pro-growth reconstruction. Now that the growth has stopped, the demands of growth politics compel the middle class to put the blame on the poor for higher taxes and domestic programs that could not, from the start, reach their objectives. The result of this situation is a politics of resentment that feeds conservative fury.

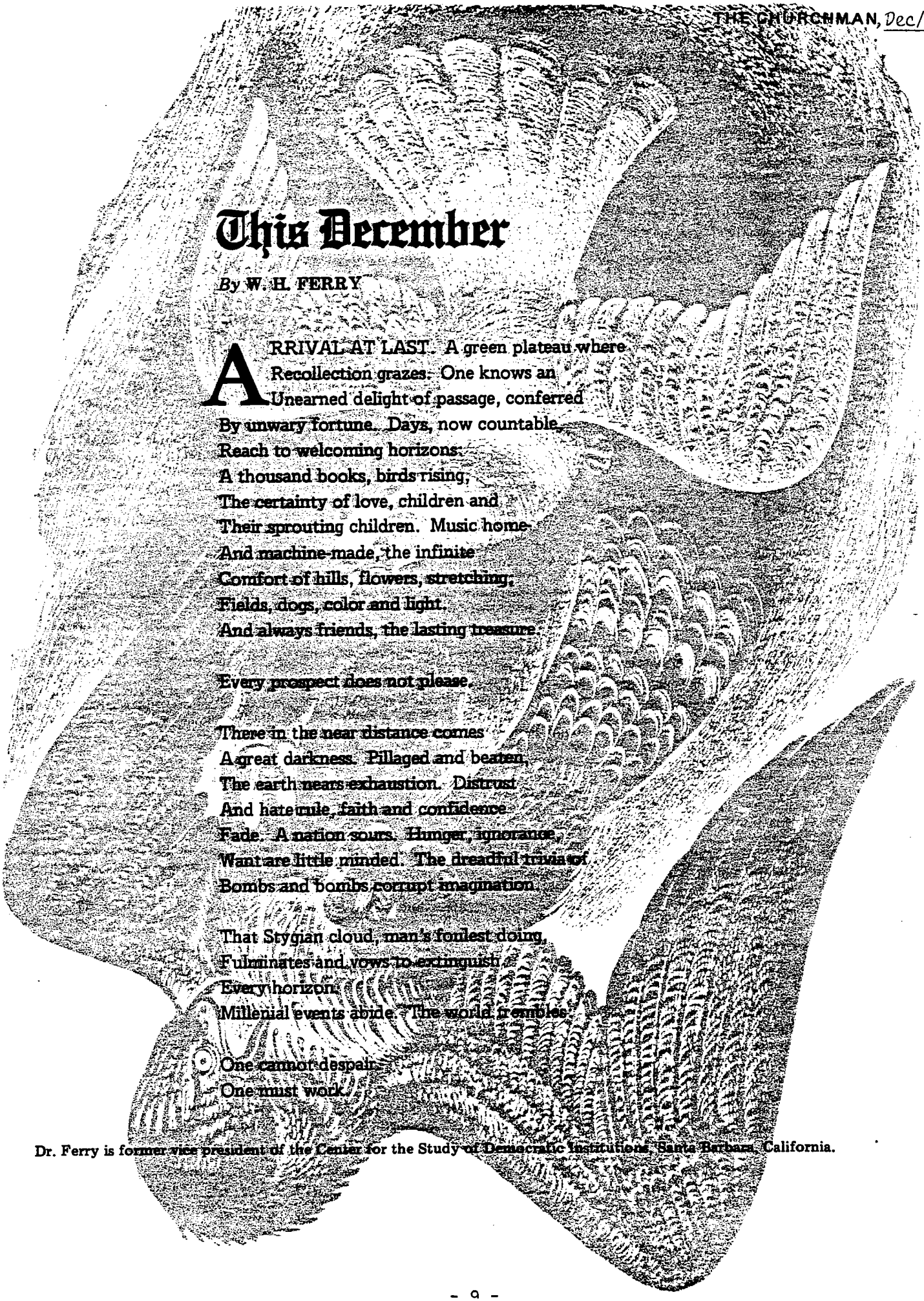
Yet in a slow-growth economy, middle and lower income Americans begin to have more in common economically, even if they are driven further apart ideologically. Stagflation increases the size of the working class by undermining middle class security. No displaced middle class person wishes to be informed that he or she is now once again a member of the working class, yet the major hope for political revitalization in America rests on the notion that all those who work for a living in an insecure economy have in common an interest in guaranteeing their economic security.

Ironically, now that its economy is failing to deliver both the goods and its promises, perhaps its political system can be made to work. I am not *advocating* austerity. Given the fact that the Third World insists on some control over its resources, and that other capitalist countries have gained economically, America will be accepting a smaller proportion of the world's product. With its tax base declining, there will be less revenue available to finance public programs, meaning that choices will have to be made. The major question on the political agenda is whether the American people will have their public policies dictated to them in the name of fiscal austerity or creatively fashioned by them in the name of revitalized democracy. The only alternative to an economic austerity program, as economist Lenny Goldberg pointed out (see "Surviving the Politics of Austerity," *Working Papers*, November/December 1980) is to raise political issues: who benefits from particular programs and why? Less economics, in a word, suggests the possibility of more politics; for every aspect of uncontrolled growth brought under popular control, political capacity expands.

In the world that currently exists, those who offer the American people the vision of growth as it was—whether in the form of Reaganism, traditional cold war liberalism, or social democracy—offer not only the human and social bankruptcy that comes with it, but an illusion that will undermine public faith in those who make the promise. Growth in community and an expansion of people's capacities seem more realistic objectives than a mad and divisive scramble over increasingly fewer crumbs. Rather than austerity, which is increasingly the practice of dominant coalitions—although they dream of growth—I am calling for a commitment to human and social growth with all the zeal that Americans once displayed for an expansion of the gross national product. Americans, in a word, should recognize the fantastic opportunity that has been presented to them by the collapse of expansion and empire and use the opportunity to rebuild their depleted social existence. Less satiated consumers, they may find themselves more satisfied citizens.

With both political parties in the United States practicing growth politics in a no-growth economy, the American political system has become highly unstable. America's impasse was caused not by growth but by the political price paid to achieve it. The United States no longer has a liberal tradition, nor does it possess a conservative one. Since 1946 politics in America has been about growth, and when there is no growth, there are no politics.

The path out of impasse lies neither in the search for a Holy Grail of prosperity nor along the road of eliminating citizenship in order to pay for continued business investment. In an age of austerity, economics seems more relevant than politics, as people are told to sacrifice their security, their neighborhoods, their regions, and their ideals for the sake of an increasing rate of return. The irony is that, under conditions of austerity, politics *must* be made to triumph over economics, for it is only through a revitalization of the collective energy of all the people that a way can be found out of the impasse. America can only realize its capacity to make itself whole again by encouraging the social ideals of all, not the economic appetites of a few. ■



This December

By W. H. FERRY

ARRIVAL AT LAST. A green plateau where
Recollection grazes. One knows an
Unearned delight of passage, conferred
By unwary fortune. Days, now countable,
Reach to welcoming horizons:
A thousand books, birds rising,
The certainty of love, children and
Their sprouting children. Music home-
And machine-made, the infinite
Comfort of hills, flowers, stretching,
Fields, dogs, color and light.
And always friends, the lasting treasure.

Every prospect does not please.

There in the near distance comes
A great darkness. Pillaged and beaten,
The earth nears exhaustion. Distrust
And hate rule, faith and confidence
Fade. A nation sours. Hunger, ignorance,
Want are little minded. The dreadful trivia of
Bombs and bombs corrupt imagination.

That Stygian cloud, man's fonlest doing,
Fulminates and vows to extinguish
Every horizon.
Millenial events abide. The world trembles.

One cannot despair.
One must work.

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