the American left and some British comparisons

John Kenneth Galbraith

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Thomas Balogh
J. K. Galbraith

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Thomas Balogh

What is Hecuba to us and we to Hecuba, why should we weep for the eclipse of
the Democrats and read this analysis by
Professor Galbraith of the causes of their
downfall? The answer is simple, for all
the differences our basic problems are
similar; so is the reaction of many of our
leaders to the crushing duties, and presti-
gious postures of office. Who but Gal-
braith could, most brilliantly, wittily and
persuasively dissect the hidden weak-
nesses, and describe the palpable ones,
of a left wing movement caught in the
contortions of its inevitable tendency to
oligarchy. Foreign affairs, so dominant
there, were a secondary cause of weak-
ness here. We suffered from Vietnam
only by proxy; and had no war on our
hands in Africa. The European adven-
ture was no issue at the election; yet the
effects of Labour policies in the interna-
tional field must not be underestimated as
they weakened the will of the usually
keenest constituency level supporters and
workers.

Who would not instantly recognise the
aptness of Galbraith’s analysis of the
effects of the deferential contacts of pro-
gressive ministers with the military, high
civil and diplomatic service? The lure of
the establishment is far stronger here
than in Washington. Whitehall is nearer
to the City than New York is to
the American capital. The bureaucratic
truth beset us worse than the White House,
as minister spake to minister by his title
only. The “foreign secretary” is likely to
be more susceptible to conventional wis-
dom than George or Michael. In this as
in other matters both Democrats and
Labour had forgotten most of the lessons
of their previous office and learnt little.

Much the most important cause of our
eclipse, however, was the trend described
by Galbraith as “Democratic economists
yearning for respectability”. Although
they neither acknowledged nor were
grateful for it, “it became policy to be
nice, to the rich. Public ownership be-
came all but unmentionable” (page 28).
Here too we tended (as is evident from
Anthony Crosland, A social democratic
Britain, Fabian tract 404) to assert that
it would be perfectly possible to obtain
not merely a materially more prosperous
but socially more balanced society with-
in the framework of the market econo-
y; here too ministers were mesmer-
ised by the sound of the jingle of the
shillings in the workers’ pockets, fore-
swearing increased or even progressive
reforms of taxation. Slight but deft ad-
justments of the price mechanism would
suffice they proclaimed. The most im-
portant task was, and is, to speed up
economic progress; here was to be found
the fountain not only of a more affluent,
but also a nicer and more equal society.
They attacked Galbraith bitterly for sugges-
ting that economic growth might well be
malignant, that its cost in terms of
amenity, conservation and class relation-
ships might be too high for civilised
people. Anyone who is conscious of the
fact that, even at a high growth rate, it
would take Britain a generation to catch
up with the present day standards of the
US, and then considers the “amenity of
life” in large American cities, the state
of conservation of their natural beauties,
the provision of education and health
services and of social security to a grow-
ing number of unemployed and unem-
ployables, must wonder whether growth
is really the elixir.

In any case (and as I have myself tried
to argue in a recent Fabian pamphlet,
Labour and inflation, Fabian tract 403).
the social condition needed for growth in
a predominantly private sector economy,
may well prevent any socially desirable
action. The struggles of the Labour
cabinet to cut social services, and cut
them again and again in order to avoid
raising taxes, do not, pace Anthony Cros-
land, augur well for the future. Professor
Galbraith’s analysis in this respect is con-
clusive.

In Britain it was our failure to deal with
inflation that caused our defeat. Here
again Galbraith’s observations are bril-
lantly relevant to our own problems,
though in the US it was mainly the law
and order issue on which foindered the
old standing victorious alliance of the
northern working masses (and especially
the trade unions) with the middle classes,
and especially the socially aware. Here
the Labour administration, not entirely without its own acquiescence, if not connivance, was driven by the foreign exchange crisis to slow down social change, the struggle for greater equality. The shift to indirect taxation, the failure to use the public sector to assure a better distribution of income, all this bred a spirit of incomprehending resistance by the most powerful trade unions against a combined attack on the wage/price spiral. Without such concensus, expansion had to be given up. As Galbraith conclusively shows, direct controls are now needed where powerful corporations meet powerful trade unions. If they are allowed to bargain without supervision the community will suffer from price rises enforced by the bargain.

Yet, as the members of the unions will see to their cost, their gain will be nominal as the rest of the herd hurries after and overtakes them. Industrial action cannot improve the distribution of income. It can only worsen it and breed disappointment, if not misery. After a bout of inflation such as we and the Americans have experienced, a price stop would, of course, be inevitable in order to be able to sort out differentials and start again. The obvious ineptitudes of Nixon and Heath, par nobile fratum, are creating the conditions needed to reassert sanity. Unfortunately there is little sign as yet that the imposed pause in Democratic and Labour rule is being used for a severe re-examination of our mistakes. Galbraith’s call to arms against complacency and self justification is a good curtain raiser for the Fabian drive for intellectual rejuvenation within the Labour Party.
For 30 odd years I have been a reasonably active Democrat, and over all that time my relations with the party have varied from uneasy to unpleasant. In the late 'thirties, the party elders in Washington viewed the evangelical young Keynesians who were around town with distaste and even alarm. I was one. Later, when in charge of wartime price control, I was thought, along with Leon Henderson, to have caused the loss of a number of key congressional seats in 1942. (In politics one only loses key seats, never non-key seats.) I have always felt that the contention had merit. So did FDR, who a few months later dispensed with my services to general applause. He offered me a job in South Africa. In 1952 the people who were helping Adlai Stevenson on economic policy were felt by more reputable Democrats to be guiding him too far to the left, a view that was shared by Adlai himself. Again I was one. Later, during the Eisenhower years, I was chairman of the domestic policy committee of the Democratic advisory council. For the first time in party affairs, I found myself burdened by responsible position; accordingly, I was assailed by Leon Keyserling from left and right and Dean Acheson from the right. (Dean and I also clashed on foreign policy, for at the time he was persuaded that John Foster Dulles was being too soft on the communists.) In the early 'sixties, I found myself in disagreement with my old Keynesian allies over tax reduction. Such a reduction was required by what was now the new orthodoxy. I thought the money should be used for public needs. Nothing serves one so well in politics as the ability to change sides. Consistency is what freezes you to error. For several months in the late 'sixties, the Massachusetts state committee met only to consider my ejection from a highly symbolic party post. Fortunately the matter never came to a vote. Vietnam was by now the issue. Prior to the Chicago convention, a move to expunge me from the delegation for the same heresy did succeed. The first business before the delegation at Chicago was a resolution to remove me again, for meanwhile I had arrived back on. One could get the feeling of not being wanted.

The Democratic Party, not the Republican Party, not third parties, is where change occurs and thus where the action is. This follows, in turn, from the deepest political instinct of the American people, which is that the natural access to political influence by those with a grievance is through the Democrats. It is the party that is open to participation and responsive to pressure. This instinct, during the last century, brought the successive waves of poorer immigrants (Irish, Italians, Jews) into the Democratic Party. It brought the alliance with the unions. It is what, astonishingly, made Democrats of black Americans when they moved north to escape the rigour and repression of life under the Democrats in the South. It was what, in 1968, caused the young to rally to the city and party of Richard Daley, rather than to Miami Beach. Even the alienated, when they get alienated, get alienated from the Democrats, not the Republicans.

The difference between the two parties, a more considerable one than cliché commonly allows, is here. The Republicans on the whole enroll those who value what is or was. Their leaders accept change tactically or defensively and with an eye on the Democrats. The Democratic Party enrolls those who want change, usually for themselves. Leaders respond not with an eye to the Republicans, but with an eye to their followers; and sometimes they are slow to respond. In the last few years, quite a few members of the party have spend more time in regretting the unwise and importunate pressures of radicals and the young than in seeking to understand them. This pre-eminently was the mood of those who nominated Hubert Humphrey at Chicago in 1968 ("We won the nomination without the kids," one of his acolytes said afterward, "and we will win the election without them"). He was half right.

Its shortcomings, eccentricities and anachronisms notwithstanding, the Democratic Party has been the instrument of a remarkable amount of change from the days of the New Deal on. I would hope it can be so again. In any case, there isn't anything else.
Early last winter, about the time the Congress reassembled, I chanced to be relying for political wisdom on the *International Herald Tribune*, an excellent paper which saves you from the unimportant news and has an alarming collaboration of columnists. One day Joseph Alsop had an epistle from the Pentagon; the generals were conceiving a new missile gap and Joe was already several months pregnant. All the rest reflected on the poor condition of the Democratic Party. (None specified what that was, which was to evade a hard question. Here I have reference, broadly, to those who hold office under its entitlement and, as regards policy, to what was urged in the last election or now wins the support of a majority of the congressional party. Strictly from the administrative point of view, Paul Porter, the noted attorney, once said, the Democratic Party can be compared only to a house of casual pleasure run by the girls.) It was depressing. Most of the concern was with the leadership. Hubert was Hubert. Ted Kennedy had suffered a terrible misfortune which all regretted in the manner of the late Uriah Heep. (His political demise was, I thought, being celebrated a bit prematurely.) George McGovern was a sensible man, right on issues and notably so on the Vietnam war; but being right, he was therefore too unexciting. Harold Hughes hadn't yet surfaced. Ed Muskie was generally praised for making no waves, not annoying anyone; but a man can stand only so much of that kind of praise.

The position of the party in the House of Representatives was thought to be especially bad. John McCormack, the Pericles of progressive democracy in that not excessively august body, was held at 78 to be unappealing to the very young. They are getting hard to please. His cronies, who had been using his office to soften the impact of the impersonal state on their friends for a price, were thought to be unappealing to people of all ages. However, their operations had left the Democrats with no alternative this January but to re-elect old John in order to vindicate him and, generally speaking, show their appreciation. Carl Albert, the majority leader, was not considered a catalytic figure as, being a sensible man, he would not dream of regarding himself. Hale Boggs of Louisiana was not thought to be a man to capture the heart and mind of the masses in the ghetto. Members of the southern mandarinate in the house (the late Mendel Rivers of South Carolina, Jamie Whitten of Mississippi, William Colmer of the same precinct, Otto Passman of Louisiana) made Boggs look like the new Martin Luther King. Nor could anything be done about it. Tradition dictates that however incompetent, unpopular or generally lousy the Democratic congressional leadership, it must, like the union, be preserved. That is the American way. (In the Senate the party position is not perfect, but there a score or more of sensitive, energetic liberals make it much better.)

There was also a great deal of hand wringing over the debts of the Democrats from the last election, which the poets took seriously. No one else should. Most of this is owed to fat cats, some thick with lard, who put up the money with something more for themselves in mind than honest usury, if only a nice welcome at the White House. Humphrey lost and so did they. I was surprised, though, that none of my learned friends thought to dwell on the position of the Democrats in the great industrial states. These erstwhile strongholds (New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, as well as Ohio, Illinois and California) are all, without exception governed or anyhow administered by Republicans. It is impossible to think of a Democratic governor of distinction and there could be a reason. Everything considered, if the test of the success of a party is the quality and number of its office holders, the Democrats are not doing well.

The function of the columnists is to think for us, which is a great service and one that should be respected. Like others, however, they assign too much importance to a sudden dystrophy of the Democratic leadership. There is, I think, a deeper cause, which is that the Demo-
cratic Party, within a relatively short span of time, has lost its main purposes. It has become a defender of the status quo, a role in which it is incompetent and cannot possibly compete with the Republicans. Harry Truman pointed out many years ago that faced with a choice between two conservative parties, the voters will always opt for the real thing. History, in fact, has played a nasty trick on the Democrats. It has made politically commonplace all the major policies for which the party has stood in the last 30 years. The one important exception is its foreign policy, which it has made aggressively damaging. The men who occupy the positions of power and influence in the party (with some notable exceptions) are still deeply committed to these policies or deeply identified with their own past. So, to borrow General Westmoreland’s best word, they have become conservatives by attrition; not that many would admit it. Being a liberal is like being an episcopalian; if you have once been well and truly confirmed, you are allowed to consider yourself a communicant for life. You don’t have to practice.

In the 30 odd years since Roosevelt and the peacetime New Deal, the national Democratic Party has won elections on five major policies. And the spillover from these policies won a legion of local contests. The policies were: (1) Implementation of the new (or Keynesian) economics. This ensured, as all liberal Democrats believed, that the economic system worked. (2) The elaboration of the welfare state. This won the gratitude of all who, because of age, sex, dependency, illness, or the absence of a job, could not make a go of it in the economic system. (3) Support to the trade union movement. This got the unions. (4) A reasonably firm if highly gradualist approach to the elimination of racial inequality. This got the voting blacks. (5) A foreign and military policy which recognised our responsibilities as a superpower and more especially as a bulwark (as we called it) against international communism, and which armed ourselves and our allies accordingly, but which resisted the idea of solving delicate international problems by blowing everyone up. This appealed to the informed and substantial citizen. This was not the whole agenda. There was a heavy pay off to the farmers. Support to education played an increasing role. In later years there was the poverty programme and a mélange of efforts on behalf of the cities. But the five policies listed provided, I would think, some 90 per cent of the Democratic appeal, and they won a great many elections. All have now gone down the drain.

Apart from foreign policy, which is in a class by itself, the greatest misfortune of the Democrats has been in economics. It was long the deepest Democratic conviction that, in contrast with the pre-Keynesian and pre-Cambrian policies of the Republicans, they could manage the economy. Principally required was a modern or Keynesian economic policy, essentially the regulation of the total demand for economic product by the deliberate adjustment of federal spending and taxation as well as of investment from borrowed funds. There is, in fact, little doubt that, by these methods, serious depression can be elided; but we now also know that it brings inflation. The single minded concentration on production also brings a very unequal array of productive blessings (numerous automobiles, terrible housing) and is itself the cause of a disenchancing array of new disorders, of which environmental damage is currently inspiring the most oratory; and on these problems, alas, the Democrats are not identified with solutions; and, to make matters worse, the Republicans have now adopted Keynes. Richard Nixon’s economists, some secondary distinctions between fiscal and monetary policy apart, are orthodox members of the Keynesian faith.

On the welfare state, the Republicans have moved ahead of the Democrats. For years whenever Democratic scholars (a subcaste to which undubitably I belonged) told themselves they needed new ideas, they invariably had in mind some new and compelling form of social security, something like unemployment compensation or old age insurance, that the voters would cherish and the Republicans
would reliably oppose. Actually the available ideas are far fewer than conservatives imagine; and the only important one in the last quarter century is the guaranteed minimum income. This makes money available to all who need it without a means test. Some part is given up as other income is earned, but in such fashion that a family never has less money as a result of a member getting a job. This idea unquestionably belongs to the Republicans. The guaranteed income, in a variant called the negative income tax, was first influentially broached by Professor Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago, once an adviser (so described anyhow) to Barry Goldwater. Except where monetary policy is involved, Professor Friedman, a man of highly independent mind, is not reliably wrong or even conservative. Liberal economists, most notably James Tobin, who was one of President Kennedy’s economic advisers, have improved the idea; but it was President Nixon who proposed it to Congress. Though the rate suggested ($1600 for a family of four) is derisory, the political authorship of the idea is not in doubt.

Organised labour is still in alliance with the Democrats. It can still hold the big battalions as they did for Hubert Humphrey. Apart from a few progressive internationalists, however, the leadership is geriatric and sometimes, as in the case of the miners, repellent. Many of the leaders are archaically hard line on communism, unapologetically for the Vietnam war and untroubled by the military power. In other words they are indifferent or hostile to what most concerns the younger party members. In Massachusetts the McCarthy-Kennedy Democrats have recently been organising to unseat Philip Philbin, an ancient time server from a district near Boston, who as number two man on the house armed services committee, faithfully followed because he could not anticipate every wish of the Pentagon and the late Mendel Rivers. A few months ago, I voiced general support for their enlightened effort. The first protest to arrive came from my friends in the state AFL-CIO. Philbin is right on labour.

Whatever the black community may be, it certainly isn’t Republican; but here too there are nasty problems. When the Democrats do not have the White House, the southerners in Congress are exceedingly visible. Without the presidency there is no chance of offsetting this effect with a strong legislative initiative on civil rights; and legislative gradualism, which is what the Democrats have offered in the past, has lost much of its appeal to the blacks. Not surprisingly the blacks want equality now, or soon, and there isn’t much sign of a Democratic formula for that. So all the Democrats have is attorney general John Mitchell. It is theologically indefensible for a Democrat to pray for his health on purely political grounds. But some do.

Foreign policy is, of course, the crowning blow. The Democrats were supposed to be expert, intelligent and responsible in foreign affairs. They managed to come up with the worst disaster since the civil war. The magnitude of the reaction to that disaster is still hard to appreciate, it is also hard to be other than proud. For the first time in modern history a great nation reacted to the unwisdom of a war in the middle of the war, not, as usually happens, after it is over; and, in effect it threw out the man who were responsible. However, the men responsible were Democrats or, more precisely, they had been given power by the Democrats, indeed the Democrats have been in office for every war since the skirmish with Spain. To those wars that were just or unavoidable, we now have to add the responsibility for one that no viable Democrat leader would now dream of defending.
2. the problem of economic policy

“I am convinced that the success of our economy, which is the world’s greatest story, has had a tremendous impact on our enemies as well as our friends.” (Hubert H. Humphrey, 26 April 1966).

Some years ago, in a considerable access of originality, Democratic presidential candidates stopped running against Herbert Hoover and the great depression. Possibly it was unwise, an impractical as well as uncustomed concession to the young, for no other issue ever served the party so well and to this day the polls show that the Democrats are thought better than the Republicans for putting down depression and unemployment. In the Roosevelt and Truman years the Democrats had a near monopoly of the notion that, by vigorous intervention in the economy (spending and a deficit when needed to overcome unemployment and sluggish performance, a surplus when inflation threatened) the economy could be made to work. The Republicans cooperated admirably on all public occasions by reverently demanding a balanced budget, which was the one course of action that by nature excluded an effective economic policy.

The Eisenhower years, when nothing terrible happened, partly redeemed the Republicans from Hoover. But during much of the fifties there was a persistent and damaging increase in industrial prices, and by the end of the decade unemployment was above 6 per cent and economic growth negligible. Kennedy ran in 1960 on the promise “to get this country moving again”, by which he meant a higher rate of economic expansion, a lower level of unemployment with, hopefully, a lesser rate of inflation. Remarkably enough as political promises go, he accomplished these things and added further to the reputation of the Democrats for good economic management.

It was a further tenet of the Democratic faith (and still is) that if unemployment was small and economic growth was adequate, the economic system worked. Fear of unemployment was the overwhelming psychic legacy of the great depression. Then upwards of a third of the working force was without jobs, and in the public and political mind, unemployment established itself as the one and transcendent domestic disaster. In principle the economic system was subject to tests of performance other than growth and jobs. In practice nothing else really counted. If the economic system worked, the system worked. In what he may well have considered an understatement, Lyndon Johnson summarised the Democratic achievement in his last economic report to the Congress. “The nation is now in its 95th month of continuous economic advance. Both in strength and length, this prosperity is without parallel in our history. We have steered clear of the business cycle recessions which for generations derailed us repeatedly from the path of growth and progress. This record demonstrates the vitality of a free economy and its capacity for steady growth. No longer do we view our economic life as a relentless tide of ups and downs. No longer do we fear that automation and technical progress will rob workers of jobs rather than help us to achieve greater abundance. No longer do we consider poverty and unemployment permanent landmarks of our economic scene.”

However, it is no longer only the Democrats who can command such miracles. The Republicans are in principle equally apt, as some Democrats concede. Arthur Okun, the last chairman of the council of economic advisors under the Democrats, recently observed that: “The bipartisan nature of our national commitment to full prosperity was clearly demonstrated in the initial months of the Nixon administration. This was the most significant and gratifying development in economic policy in 1969” (Arthur M. Okun. The political economy of prosperity. New York. W. W. Norton, 1970, p125). The Republicans have also discovered that the bipartisan commitment to prosperity has some significant but less gratifying features. On these, Lyndon Johnson, like other members of his party, was not so inclined to dwell.

The formula for ensuring “the vitality of a free economy” is to encourage more public and private spending when the
economy is slack, including more borrowing and investment from borrowed funds; when inflation is the problem, the process is reversed. The Republicans set particular store by raising interest rates to cut back on spending from borrowed funds, the tight money policy, but this is difference of method within the larger strategy.

The difficulty is that strong unions and powerful corporations can defeat the policy by raising wages and prices whenever the economy is close to full employment, and the prices so raised are passed along to the rest of the economy (to postal employees and airline controllers and civil servants generally) forcing compensatory wage increases even from the government itself. This is what has happened in recent months. Thus, while employment remains high, inflation continues. If the cutback in demand is big enough, there will come a point when prices cannot be raised. By this time, however, there will be a good deal of unemployment, with the result that the remedy will seem worse than the inflation that it cures, especially for those who, for the larger public good, are righteous- ly deprived of their jobs and stock market gains. The Republicans have lately been risking this remedy. So far they have managed to combine a modest reduction in growth and employment with the highest rate of inflation for 20 years.

Their economists continue to promise stability, but such promises have been made week by week and month by month for a year and a half. Even economists are expected some day to make good (only in foreign policy is one allowed to say that failure is success) and there has now been a tacit confession of failure. The tight money punishes with peculiar severity the smaller businessman, who must borrow money, while leaving comparatively untroubled the large corporation, which has its own resources and, in any case, is a favoured client of the banks. The housing industry is a particular casualty of the policy. These consequences forced some easing off, even while consumer prices were rising at a near record rate. The obvious solution is to intervene directly to limit the wage and price increases that are the causative factor. Under similar circumstances other industrial countries do so as have we in the past; but this encoun ters deep moral objections, it is a confession in effect that the free price system, the holy grail of all good Republicans and of all economists who yearn for respectability, no longer functions as it is supposed to do. It means that the corporations in conjunction with the unions have too much market power. This is a terrible thing for a good Republican or an economist who cherishes his reputa bility to have to believe. (A further and compelling objection for some economists is that it means conceding that the Galbraith line on these matters is right.)

In the early Kennedy-Johnson years, the Democrats experimented with some wage price restraints; the so called guideposts. They worked well for a time, but succumbed under the pressure of the Vietnam war. Since then Democrats have been almost as reluctant as Republicans to come to grips with the problem of inflation. Talk of wage and price control is frowned upon by the establishment. Democrats yearn to be reputable too. Gardner Ackley, who preceded Arthur Okun as head of the council of economic advisers and whom Hubert Humphrey recently named head of the economic policy committee of the new Democratic council, tolerantly told the Republicans last winter that he did not blame them for avoiding such action.

There are other economic problems that the Democrats have been reluctant to face: the Keynesian economy relies to a disconcerting degree on military expenditure, which, amounting to about half of all federal expenditure in recent years, provides a highly reliable flow of demand to the private economy. Meanwhile the taxes that support this expenditure are flexible; they rise when production, profits and other incomes rise and thus exercise a dampening effect and increase less rapidly or fall when production and incomes fall, thus releasing revenues for private spending. Liberal Democrats, over the years, have developed a singular faculty for closing their eyes to the
role so played by military outlays. It was the by-product of cold war necessity and purely an accident that it helped the economy. Civilian spending would do just as well and would be welcomed as an alternative by every decent citizen.

By now it is clear that we get military appropriations far more easily than civilian ones. A budget conscious congressman is (or was until recently) a man who wanted to cut back on non-military spending. Military spending is also the cover for extensive socialisation of technological development where that is too expensive or too risky for private enterprise to pay for itself. Atomic energy, the computer, modern air transport, all have been so aided, and a new and uncouth generation is pointing these things out. Yet, by and large, the political liturgy has not come abreast. In the cold war years Democrats, liberals especially, were required to praise the economic system on all occasions of public ceremony and celebration. It was how one proved he was a Keynesian and for the welfare state without being a communist. The old music continues. It is still a basic assumption that, subject to some tinkering, the system works. As long as it depends on big arms outlays for stabilisation and technical dynamic it does not work, and the oratory which so holds has a patently fraudulent sound.

The system is gravely deficient in two other respects. Its performance is highly uneven. In about half the economy, that half characterised by the large corporations or where needs of the large corporations are being served, production is efficient, men are well paid, for those that "belong" there is no poverty. In consequence our supply of automobiles, petroleum, highways, household appliances, detergents, gargles, space vehicles and weaponry is excellent. Outside the world of the large corporation the performance is far less reliable, or satisfactory. This is especially true of that part of the economy which makes urban life agreeable or even tolerable. Housing, surface transportation, hospital and health services, street cleaning, police services and the courts, other municipal services and education are provided with increasing relative, and often with increasing absolute, inefficiency. And poor productive performance in this part of the economy is matched by poor employment conditions. Jobs are poorly paid and, as in the case of public employees, vulnerable to inflation, furthermore income inequality is increasing. Thus, although national income and gross product continue to rise, they disguise an increasingly disparate performance within the economy, and it is from the disparity that the urban dweller and especially the urban ghetto dweller suffers. He has to live with the fact of the poor performance and the poor wages it pays. He cannot be told that the system works.

However, a heavy indirect price is also exacted where it does work, for the price of increasing production is unpleasant and even lethal surroundings. The air is less breathable, the water less potable, the countryside is invisible and the air waves unbelievable. These are the consequences of a single minded concentration on aggregate production as a social goal; and the organisations, the great corporations, that pursue this goal increasingly see the individual as someone to be accommodated to their interest, not the reverse. If he worries about the effects of automobiles on air pollution or highways on the cities, his doubts are something not to be respected, but to be overcome; similarly as regards weapons or any lingering supposition that cigarettes cause cancer. And if the government undertakes to regulate on behalf of the citizen, the corporations respond by regulating the regulators. Increasingly where the system does work, it does not exist for the individual. The individual and the government exist for the system.

So the old assumption of Democratic economic policy can no longer be sustained. The economic system does not work, and the reforms required to make it work (to make it work uniformly and for individuals, not the corporations) are far more fundamental than anything contemplated by the cheap and soft and easy going liberalism of these last years. This the party has not even begun to face.
3. the foreign policy disaster

There can be no doubt, foreign policy for the last 50 years has been the nemesis of the Democratic Party. Wars, just or unjust, have come with devastating reliability every time the Democrats have enjoyed power—the first world war with Wilson; the second world war with Roosevelt; the Korean war with Truman; the deepening involvement in Vietnam with Kennedy; and the full scale disaster there with Lyndon Johnson. The response of the voters has been equally reliable, ignoring all affirmations of the righteousness or the inevitability of the conflict, they have thrown the Democrats out.

One afternoon in 1956 Adlai Stevenson was making the traditional pitch for the farm vote at the national ploughing match held that year near Newton, Iowa, on the prairie between the Skunk and the North Skunk rivers. He eloquently and brilliantly dramatised the misery of farmers and the certainty that the Democrats, if returned, would satisfy their every wish. It was a highly persuasive speech, the further details of which I have forgotten, although I was the author. When the campaign party moved on in late afternoon to Denver, I remained behind and, in the company of Donald Murphy, a sympathetic Iowa journalist, made the rounds of the assembled multitude (farm leaders, dirt farmers, barnyard philosophers), to sense the reaction. It was both favourable and devastatingly negative. None doubted that the Democrats were better for the farmer; none questioned that under the Democrats you got wars. The reply that is still sung on my mind: “My old lady still remembers like gottus outta Korea.” Ike did. He accepted a truce that Truman criticised as being the same bargain he could have had a year before. Harry S. Truman was criticising the wrong man.

There have been many explanations of the popularity of Eisenhower; the war hero, the quintessential American, the father figure, the man who fitted the relaxed and unexcited mood of the 'fifties. Mostly, I think, he ended the Korean war on terms that a Democrat would have feared to accept lest he be accused of appeasement. When he did, his reelection of 1956 became inevitable. If this is a fair interpretation of history, one could hardly be surprised at an adverse reaction to the Democrats when, ten years later, they got the country bogged down in yet another war in another country which, given the nature of cartography, seemed only a few miles south of Korea. If the Democrats suffered for the just wars, they could hardly expect to be rewarded politically for one that a large minority of voters, and eventually a majority, came to think unwise, unnecessary or positively foolish. (I am tempted to quote from a letter to President Kennedy from India in March 1962. “I worry about Indo-China...it is the political poison that is really at issue. The Korean war killed us in the early '50s; this involvement could kill us now. That is what the military and the state department will never see.”)

In past months Democrats who oppose the war have marvelled at the way President Nixon has been getting away with a policy in Vietnam which all must know is a terrible fraud. The policy assumes that we can give a manifestly incompetent, corrupt and unpopular government enough weapons to sustain itself against both the enemy and a great many of its own people. This was something that it barely did when propped up by 500,000 Americans and Ellsworth Bunker. It implies that the most vital and durable political force in the country, the National Liberation Front, will somehow accept exclusion from power.

Meanwhile the pace of withdrawal of the American forces is agonisingly slow. My friends do not realise, however, nor did I for some time, that people compare Richard Nixon’s policy not with a perfect one, but with what they had before. Between continued escalation under the Democrats with all its anxieties made deeper by President Johnson's oratory, and de-escalation under the Republicans, there is a difference as between night and day. Between fraudulent and well conceived de-escalation under the Republicans, the difference is not so much.
Thus the Vietnam adventure or misadventure was the culminating disaster of Democratic foreign policy. It does not explain why the Democrats, on many matters respected both by themselves and by others for their intelligence, got themselves into this mess. The sources of the error are worth understanding, especially if there is to be any improvement in the future. They are not simple; and while I do not belong to the school of historians which exculpates individuals on the grounds that it is impolite to assess blame, the sources of the mistakes somewhat transcend even the considerable personal responsibility of Lyndon Johnson and Dean Rusk. There is also the tendency for what is right in foreign policy at one time or place to be wrong at another time and place. This complication is less appreciated by critics on the left than might be wished.

The Democratic foreign policy disaster had its roots in its success following the second world war, and the conclusions, mostly false, that were drawn from that success. Responsibility rests also with the kind of leadership that was deemed necessary to exploit that success, and with the delegation of power that was made to it. A final cause of the disaster was the bureaucracy, military and civilian, that came into existence to conduct foreign policy.

The success was the management of Soviet pressure on Europe in the years from 1945 to 1952. In the mature view, one can conclude that the Soviet Union under Stalin, was then pursuing, with accustomed crudity, a militarily orthodox highly self-centred policy. It was seeking to ensure that its western marches (the invasion routes of the armies of Napoleon, William II and Adolf Hitler) would henceforth be covered by states that were safely subordinate to its authority and safely receptive to the presence (or return) of the Red Army, and, of course, it was concerned to ensure the reduction and neutralisation of German military power, which it had practical reason to respect. As pursued without subtlety by Stalin, however, accompanied by the communist revolution in China and orchestrated by communist rhetoric, it was easy to imagine that this policy implied much more, that it implied a plan in process for world revolution. Among men whose fear of their God is usefully reinforced by fear for their property, alarm over atheistic communism is easily encouraged. It can become paranoiac. There were many such in the United States at the time. Moreover, events in Europe in the late forties could have outrun Soviet policy. They did in Greece as very possibly also in Korea. In Greece communist pressure there in the years immediately following the war (and inspiring the so called Truman doctrine) was, it now appears, despite Soviet opposition not because of Soviet encouragement. Similarly the Chinese revolution was the work of Chinese, not Russians (Stalin, like some Americans, initially dismissed Mao as an agrarian reformer.)

Had Italy and France remained economically distraught, politically disorientated and militarily a vacuum in the years from 1946 on, their large and cohesive communist parties might have taken over, and without any particular encouragement from the Soviets. One of the errors of the period was in exaggerating the power of a superpower, American or Soviet, to control such events.

For better or worse (my own orthodox instinct is to think for better) this did not happen, and its failure to happen coincided with a vast and many pronged initiative by the Democratic administration in Washington; the Truman doctrine on behalf of Greece and Turkey in 1947, the Marshall plan in 1948 and numerous military steps leading to the rearming of Germany and the creation of NATO in 1949. Of these actions, the Marshall plan made the most profound and lasting impression. Here was free enterprise, supplemented by a sizeable infusion of capital, combined with sound American leadership. Something great could be expected. Expectations were justified; western Europe came back with marvellous speed. Whether it would have gone to the communists without the Marshall plan will never be known. The fact is that with the Marshall plan it did not.
Improved economic well being was accompanied by greater political stability. Support for violent solutions waned. This proved what liberal Democrats had always held, and wanted to believe, that sound economic policy made sound political sense. But, additionally, the European military forces, strengthened by American aid, and the NATO forces deployed across western Europe, helped guarantee internal tranquility as well as the frontiers. Conservatives like this kind of hard headed, unsentimental answer to the reds. There was something in this policy for everyone. Working so well, so brilliantly, in western Europe, it was natural to conclude that it would work everywhere. In 1950 the Korean war made the communist threat seem universal. So the European package (economic assistance, military support, collective resistance) became a universal answer.

With the policy of the late 'forties and early 'fifties went an equally precise view of the kind of men who should run it. Needed in addition to the professionals of the State Department and Pentagon, were successful lawyers and businessmen, preferably liberal Republicans. In part this was to win Republican support in the Congress. This was a matter of undoubted moment between 1946 and 1948 when the Republicans, reflecting the normal reaction of the American voter to war, even a widely approved and indubitably victorious one, had control of both houses. But even more, it was because nearly all liberal Democrats with experience of foreign policy were disqualified, or had disqualified themselves. The Roosevelt administration had been in the closest wartime association with the Soviets under Stalin; most of its members had taken the association very seriously. Some had been romantic. Now with Stalin the archenemy and the Soviet Union the international villain, those who had been so involved were not the sort of men to be entrusted with the new policy. It had better be someone whose intelligence was considerable, whose respectability was impeccable and whose anti-communist sympathies were beyond doubt. Of such men the business community and the bar, especially the New York legal establishment, had more than ample supply. Robert Lovett, Paul Hoffman, John J. McCloy, the Dulles brothers (who began under the Democrats), William Burden, William Foster, Paul Nitze and many others, were recruited. Quite a few continued under the Republicans. In time it came to be supposed, not the least by those involved, that they had an exclusive franchise on foreign policy.

When, during the late 'forties, Alger His was shot down just before completing his extremely daring traverse from the fashionable left wing establishment of the 'thirties to the cold war establishment of the 'forties, the disqualification of those who had been associated with foreign policy under FDR became nearly complete. Democrats were definitely suspect. Adlai Stevenson, who had played a minor role under Roosevelt, and Dean Acheson, who had compensated for a more important one by becoming the leading cold war strategist, had trouble proving their eligibility. Only Averell Harriman, who had encountered liberal criticism for his highly unsentimental view of Stalin during the second world war, occupied a position of major leadership in the two periods. Intellectual guidance was provided by a younger generation of officials, mostly non-political, whose military or Washington civilian service had kept them safely away from the Russians. Out of conviction or thoughtful observation of the fate of those who had associated themselves with the earlier policy, they were adequately anti-Soviet. The new guild of the day, the professional cold war strategists were led by men like Richard Bissell, Robert Richardson Bowie, Lincoln Gordon and Dean Rusk. (Some of these, in turn, were to pay professionally for a too rigid commitment to the policy which was then so successful. Richard Bissell was the manager of the Bay of Pigs affair and left public life not long thereafter; Robert Bowie was the creator of the so called multinational force, a design for giving western Europeans nuclear arms by having them participate in a fleet manned by men of various nationalities and equipped with nuclear weapons targeted on the Soviet Union.
When interest evaporated, he was left as the rather lonely defender of what erstwhile supporters were now pleased to dismiss as a somewhat ridiculous idea. Dean Rusk, faithful to the policy to the end, brought it to disaster, and his own reputation likewise, in Vietnam. They worked under the general protection of the liberal businessmen and the New York legal establishment and in close association with the professionals of the State Department and Pentagon. This was a portentous development. Out of the need to appeal to the Republicans on Capitol Hill (this was the bipartisan foreign policy), and the need to break with the Roosevelt office holders, foreign policy was delegated by the Democrats to the New York establishment, the new scholarly strategists and the professional soldiers and civil servants.

The same leadership continued when the Democrats returned in 1961. Instead of Stevenson, Harriman or Fulbright with their Democratic Party associations, Kennedy turned for secretary of state to Dean Rusk, now become a paramount figure in the establishment. The selection of Robert McNamara and Roswell Gilpatric for the department of defense (although neither was an enthusiastic cold warrior) affirmed further the continuing delegation of foreign policy to businessmen and the New York establishment. The influence of Chester Bowles in the State Department, an active Democrat who had held elective office, was quickly liquidated. Foreign policy was thus removed from the influence of party politics. All thought this good. Less celebrated was its not partial but total removal from the influence of men who had any personal stake in the future of the Democratic Party, the president apart. Historians will consider this a remarkably daring delegation of the policy which could, more than any other, destroy the party.

With the passage of time, Democratic senators and congressmen (and eventually something close to a majority in the Senate) came to oppose the Vietnam involvement. The less politically involved men in the executive branch, especially in the State Department, remained stalwart. It was not that the Democratic senators were either more or less intelligent than Secretary Rusk and his associates. (The one senior State Department officer with a long record of active participation in Democratic policies was George Ball. He opposed the war.) It was only that they were far more sensitive to what the war was doing to the country, to the Democratic Party and, reflecting an aptitude common to elective politicians, to their own political prospects. The divorce of foreign policy from party responsibility was greatly strengthened by the tendency of the policy (the superpower vision and the accompanying economic and military measures to arrest the progress of communism) to expand and empower the civilian and military bureaucracy. The bureaucratic consequences of seeking to be a superpower are of the highest importance and still only dimly perceived.

If one believes that through a combination of economic and military measures the country can greatly influence the course of events in other countries, and if one believes that in consequence of the communist threat one should do so, then a further consequence is certain. There will be a colossal bureaucracy, and this bureaucracy in turn will develop a life and purpose and policy of its own. “By its nature, bureaucracy . . . is unable to stop whatever it is doing except by drastic action applied from the outside.” (Vice-Admiral H. G. Rickover. Sub-committee of the committee on government operations of the House of Representatives. Admiral Rickover distinguishes public bureaucracy from private enterprise. It is not clear that large private bureaucracies are intrinsically more flexible.)

Specifically if it is believed that the economic and political development of Thailand can be greatly shaped by the United States and that the Thais are a natural bastion against communism and must, poor bastards, have their future shaped, there will have to be a mission to supervise the infusion of capital that (following the Marshall plan model) is essential
for development; and there will also have to be auditors to regulate the indigenous tendencies to larceny; and there will be men in Washington to recruit, serve and regulate this mission; and there will be technicians in the field to help guide the development of industry, education and agriculture, and more supervisors in Washington; and other men will be needed in the field to collect the military, political and economic intelligence on which the policy is based, and more men will be required in Washington to digest this information and revise it as necessary to fit the Washington view; and there will have to be other men in the field to watch for subversion and to frustrate it, and more men in Washington to select, guide, equip, and cover up for these spooks; and a military mission will be needed to supervise the distribution of arms with which the Thai government, in accordance with the policy, defends itself against communist incursion or insurrection and to train the local heroes in the use of these sophisticated arms.

This mission will be very, very large. So also will be the supporting and supervising bureaucracy in the Pentagon. Guiding the government of Thailand and guiding Washington on the guidance being provided to those that guide the Thais there will be a sizeable diplomatic staff.

Explaining the various purposes of the Americans to the local citizens and explaining them away to the American press will be a considerable information organisation. This also will be guided by men in Washington, who will be guided from the field. All this is now true of Thailand. It is only moderately less true of many other places. The price of being a superpower is a truly huge organisation. In 1939 the predecessor agencies of the department of defence had about 200,000 civilian employees. Last June 30 there were 1,341,587 on direct hire. Some 36,000 Americans now serve in foreign lands. Before the second world war all overseas work was accomplished by 2000 State Department officers and a handful from other agencies.

The tendency, the inevitable tendency, of any large organisation, public or private, is to be authoritarian and exclusive. It pursues its purposes and minimises outside interference, and does so not because it is wicked but because that is the nature of the organisation. So it was and is here. A great civilian and military machine was created. Its task was to move against communism the world around. Its ineluctable tendency was, and remains, to take over. This machine was further protected in its exclusiveness; that is, in its freedom from political control and responsibility, by secrecy. If one is countering communist subversion in some foreign jurisdiction, one can plausibly ask for reticence. To debate these matters in Congress, even to allow politicians to know about the proceedings, is to expose one's hand to the other side. (If one is nurturing non-communist politicians, reticence is also in order considering the type of talent commonly available.) It may even seem necessary to be circumspect in the information one offers to the president. Leaks occur in the White House. "There are no secrets in Washington", President Kennedy once observed, "except things I need to know." The world wide war on communism, the superpower mystique, meant a large bureaucracy, a powerful bureaucracy, and a bureaucracy protected in the exercise of power from political scrutiny. The party in power, after 1960 the Democrats, was responsible only for the results.

The results were disaster. A bureaucracy is governed not by the truth but by its own truth. It defends its truth against the reality. Those who question its truth are discounted for eccentricity, ignored for ineffectiveness or excluded for unreliability. The truth of the superpower bureaucracy and the foreign policy establishment as it had developed to circa 1960 was of an all pervading communist conspiracy, based on Moscow and reaching out through regional offices in Berlin, Prague, Peking, Hanoi and elsewhere to probe and then press on any weak place in the frontier. It was a vision given expression in a hundred columns by Joseph Alsop and a dozen speeches by Dean Rusk. ("The central issue of the
[world] crisis is the announced determination to impose a world of coercion upon those not already subject to it. It is posed between the Sino-Soviet empire and all the rest, whether allied or neutral; and it is posed on every continent...

Dean Rusk. *Winds of Freedom*. Boston. The Beacon Press, 1962, p16). Its most precise form is found in the concept of the “truce line” by Walt Rostow. The Rostow truce line was the boundary dividing the communist from the non-communist world as it had become stabilised after the second world war. It could be accepted but it must be defended. The communists could be counted upon to test it, to try our intentions, and they must be left in no doubt. The Rostow truce line was, in many ways, the finest delineation of the bureaucratic truth. (“Soviet policy appears to be based on sustained and sophisticated study of particular areas of vulnerability [for instance northern Azerbaijan, Greece, Berlin, Indo China, South Korea] and particular types of vulnerability [for instance the geographical position of Berlin, the shortage of local defences against guerrilla warfare in Laos and South Vietnam].”

“We cannot rule out that in the future the communists will be prepared to assault directly the United States or other positions of evident strength within the free community. Therefore, it is a first charge on United States military policy to make such direct assault grossly unattractive and unprofitable. But a major lesson of post war history is that United States and allied policy must achieve, to the maximum degree possible, a closing off of areas of vulnerability, if we wish to minimise the number and effectiveness of communist probes. It is this lesson which requires that the United States and its allies develop a full spectrum of military strength, under sensitive and flexible control, capable of covering all regions of the free world, if we are to create a stable military environment and minimise the opportunity for communist intrusions. It is toward this objective that we have been working over the past three years.” W. W. Rostow. *View from the seventh floor*. New York, 1964. p27).

As Admiral Rickover observed, bureaucratic truth is rigid and unaccommodating. It is a battleship with heavy armour, much armament but no rudder. In those days it required reaction to seeming communist aggression; it could not allow for the possibility that a communist insurrection might arise from civil, not international causes; that there might be insurrection and revolt without communists; and that the revolt might be beyond the civil and military power of the United States to suppress. Most of all, it could not admit that a superpower might not, after all, have the power. Of course it could not hold that the communists were themselves plural and divisive and that with some of them we, at a minimum, needed to be friends. On all of these matters, bureaucratic truth, departing from truth, impelled the Democrats into deep trouble. The bureaucratic truth held that communists being visibly wicked and having no indigenous support, Castro could easily be ousted in 1961. The truth was that he had wide support. The result was disaster at the Bay of Pigs. Bureaucratic truth held that there being civil disorder in the Dominican Republic, communists must be the cause. Thus the massive military descent on that country to put things right. In truth is was a normal Latin American political brawl. The communists, not existing in any important way, had to be invented after the fact. Bureaucratic truth held that Vietnam was a case of external aggression stemming ultimately from Moscow, then Peking; and it held that the course of events in South Vietnam, no less than in Europe in 1948, could readily be influenced by American economic and military intervention. In fact, Vietnamese communism was an expression of intense nationalism; and the South Vietnamese countryside was beyond the reach of American economic and military power, however massively deployed; hence the long drawn out disaster in Vietnam.

Such was the record of bureaucracy in pursuit of its own truth. Had bureaucracy been rigorously checked and corrected by strong and sceptical political leadership, perhaps the results would have been different, but the Democrats
gave away the leadership too. Bureaucracies survive. So have the leaders to whom the power was delegated; but the Democratic Party, with the Bay of Pigs, the Dominican fiasco, and the durable and hence far more damaging disaster in Vietnam to show for its years in power, has not come off well. Nor, as one reflects, had it the right to expect otherwise. That something went wrong in Vietnam, as also in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, is not something that any deeply perpicious Democrat needs to be told. Less fully learned have been the conclusions to be drawn from these disasters (that in much of the world there is little that the United States can do and less that it should do, that a party must not delegate to the experts the power that can destroy it, that bureaucracy can be unwavering in its purposes, even when these are drastically opposed to the public interest) and not learned at all is the most important lesson of all, which is that we cannot risk a foreign policy that requires large and dangerous delegation to a large military and foreign policy establishment.

Edgar Hoover, many more. The most remarkable manifestation, however, is the ability to think of Senators John Stennis and Gaylord Nelson, and Representatives Allard Lowenstein, John Conyers, and the late Mendel Rivers, all members of the same political party. It is not only the political sages who are noteworthy in this respect, the ability of liberal Democrats to accept the incredible is even more remarkable.

The classical function of the political party is to unite men of broadly similar views who seek to undertake or influence the tasks of government. As often it brings together men of dissimilar views to effect a compromise. (Shared greed, as the late John Steinbeck averred, is nearly as beneficial an influence in the state as shared aspiration and rather more common.) It has never, however, been the function of a political party to bring together men of irreconcilable views, men of implacable hostility. That is what the Democratic Party now does, with the further consequence of according power to an intransigent minority which would not otherwise enjoy it. The Democratic Party encompasses the traditional southern white politicians who, with the passage of time, have come to see the primary purpose of politics as the assertion, in whatever semantic disguise, of traditional white supremacy, and the black citizens, North and South, who, like other minorities over the years have come to the Democratic Party because it seemed the best available instrument for advancing racial equality. Between those who are against racial equality and those they proclaim to be unequal, there is no ground for compromise. Almost as starkly, the Democratic Party joins those, again the southerners, to whom the crisis of the modern city is a matter of indifference and the urban legislators to whom, if they are serious politicians, this is central; and it joins the martial sons of the Confederacy with the most ardent opponents of the Vietnam war. Among the processors of standard political comment there is a cliché that to find such implacable hostility within the ambit of a single political party is, by some odd manifestation of national eccentricity, peculiarly

the politics of anachronism

Among the greatest curiosities of American politics are the outlandish things that are tolerated, even praised, because they exist. Vested intellectual interest plays a role. Political comment in the United States is a considerable industry employing a sizeable number of people supporting their loved ones and serving a substantial market. In the hands of some of its great practitioners (Novak, Sevareid, Crawford) it is highly automated and thus superbly predictable. To be so, however, its operatives must defend those features of the political system to which they are programmed. What exists they must believe to be normal and right, however odd. Chance, however logical, requires new thought. It is better dismissed as being motivated by men who do not fully respect the system. The examples of this ability to sanctify the irrational or the obsolete are legion: congressional procedures, the seniority system, the system of financing elections, I
American. This is nonsense. It is a device for keeping in power the most regressive part of the American political community.

Not for years have the Democrats functioned as a party for presidential elections. Large sections have defected routinely every four years, to Strom Thurmond, George Wallace or the Republicans. At the 1948 convention, the strains were already sufficient to provoke a walkout by southern delegates. The error in this tactic was soon seen. They needed the party more than the party needed them, and this was made evident on a small scale at Atlantic City in 1964 and then on a larger scale in Chicago in 1968, with the exclusion of the racially more intransigent southern delegations. Only in the Congress does the Democratic Party ever act as a national party. This is once every two years when the Democrats vote as a party to organise the two houses of Congress. In this ceremony the majority of the party (the modern wing which has long monopolised the presidential power) places itself under the control of the southern wing of the party. The control is exercised by the southern committee chairmen. Having thus empowered men whose beliefs are wholly at odds with the avowed convictions of the rest of the party, and who represent a small fraction of its total voting numbers, the party as a party then dissolves. The southern leaders form a coalition with conservative Republicans for the ensuing two years. The northern majority then fights the coalition for the same period.

Thus the one unified national accomplishment of the Democratic Party is to accord power to Richard B. Russell of Georgia, John Stennis of Mississippi, Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana, James O. Eastland of Mississippi, Russell B. Long of Louisiana, John L. McClellan of Arkansas, B. Everett Jordan of North Carolina, the late L. Mendel Rivers of South Carolina, William M. Colmer of Mississippi, Jamie L. Whitten of the same state, Wilbur D. Mills of Arkansas, Otto Passman of Louisiana, John L. McMillan of South Carolina and William R. Poage of Texas. All are key committee or sub-committee chairmen. By the grace of the majority with which they most devoutly disagree, these men enjoy an authority to which they could not, in any other circumstances, possibly aspire.

The composition of the Democratic Party was not always as wildly irrational as now. Like most obsolete arrangements it was made so by passage of time. Through the New Deal years, Negroes in the South were voiceless and politically destroyed, as they had been since the collapse of reconstruction. And northern Negroes rallied to the Democrats not on the issue of civil rights and equality, but because FDR had given them jobs and social security; and if gratitude did not inspire a sufficient sense of civic duty among black citizens, the northern Democratic bosses provided the requisite additional encouragement as in some cities, notably in Chicago, they still do. So there were no issues of civil rights and social and economic equality to induce irreconcilable hostility.

There were other grounds for agreement. Agriculture was still important; there was an element of populism in southern politics. Support for cotton, tobacco, peanuts, TVA and the textile industry could be won only by according reciprocal support of relief, welfare and even labour legislation sponsored by northern Democrats. It was an uneasy alliance, but in the main it was southerners (Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, Pat Harrison of Mississippi, James Byrnes of South Carolina, Lister Hill of Alabama) who guided the Roosevelt legislation through the Senate. It was also another southerner, Huey P. Long, who most ardently belaboured these gentlemen (and Roosevelt) for being too conservative.

Time has totally removed this community of interest. Agriculture has declined greatly in importance. Its present legislative needs are settled by a small legislative subsystem working with the department of agriculture of which most members of Congress are only casually aware. Northern support is rarely needed. If it intrudes, it is likely to ask inconvenient questions about payments to large
landowners or malnutrition in the southern countryside. Southern populism has disappeared. Few southern voters are available for welfare, labour or urban legislation.

Meanwhile, blacks in the South have started to vote. Northern blacks are conscious of their identity. They are no longer grateful for economic crumbs. Neither have they anything in common with those whose purpose is to deny the black community access to economic advantages and political power. Whites who depend on black votes must be even more careful in their association. Not only is the community of interest gone, but the two sides cannot be safely seen talking to each other.

The disappearance of the old southern leadership is, in fact, only a matter of a few years away. At the next convention, black or decently integrated delegations will present themselves from nearly all of the southern states and with a plausible claim to be seated. Northern delegations, under pressure from black members and voters, will seat them. This means that white politicians in the South who want to retain any influence in the party will have to come to terms with the black voters. This will be true in Congressional and Senate races, a coalition of black voters and their white allies will increasingly threaten the old guard. The recent discovery by Harry Byrd, Jr., that he could not be renominated as a Democrat in Virginia, once racially among the most regressive of states, is a highly encouraging sign of the times. In the absence of some crushing setback to black voting in the South, there will be many more such enlightened discoveries in the years ahead. Supporting and abetting this salutary trend are the Republicans. The southern strategy could not have been better timed to persuade Democratic segregationists that they have a spiritual home in the Republican Party. The inspired visibility of the Carswell and Taynworth nominations together with the foot dragging on school desegregation and voting rights have reinforced the effect. Bigotry is rarely combined with great political perception; the man who is susceptible to the slogans of white supremacy will also believe that John N. Mitchell can make him supreme. Increasingly blacks, especially in the North, are wondering if either of the parties or the system of which they are a part will ever serve their cause; but the Republicans are ensuring that, however inadequate the Democrats, none will think the Republicans any better.

In my view the Democrats will become better, but it would be well to hasten the process. There is black impatience to be reckoned with. The most immediate need is an attack on the congressional seniority system. This is the citadel of southern white power. It will be strongly defended by those who possess the power as well as by all who cherish the world's outstanding example of planned gerontocracy. But the way is also open to liberal Democrats to end this anachronism and make honest the relation of the party to its black members; and such a course has now been suggested by liberal members of the House of Representatives. The remedy is to vote with the Republicans (assuming that the Republicans need the vote) to allow them to organise the House of Representatives. Nothing is lost by exchanging conservative or reactionary Democrats for conservative or reactionary Republicans.

Once lost, the traditional southern power will never again be restored. Such an action, in turn, will speed reform in Congressional and Senatorial primaries in the South. The old leaders will have to face primaries without the prestige and power (and, in the case of a man like the late Mendel Rivers, the considerable military patronage) of their committee chairmanships. The admirable electoral process by which they are being removed from the scene (as their segregationist supporters go to the Republicans and as black and white southerners unite behind modern men) will be expedited. It will be better for the Democrats in at least one of the Houses to be a minority party that is half way modern than a majority party that empowers anachronism. This is not, for the Democrats, a way to lose the South (as will be said) but to keep it.
4. the matter of political style

"The choice between light and darkness, between health and sickness, between knowledge and ignorance is not one that we can ignore. The light that we generate can be the brightest hope of history. It can illuminate the way toward a better life for all." Lyndon B. Johnson, February 2, 1966. Among the many things that can damage a politician, none, imaginative larceny excepted, is so serious as being too long in office. It is why, in all well regulated societies, those who inhabit official positions are at suitable intervals peacefully or violently expelled and replaced by equally ordinary men who, however, are much superior from not having been previously in public position. In the United States, the Democrats have been in control of the executive for all but nine and a half of the last 37 years and for most of that time they have been, though nominally, in charge of the Congress as well. The consequent damage has been very great. This is not the corrupting effect of power. The ordinary legislator or appointive official in Washington does not have enough power to endanger even the most dangerously susceptible soul. Far, far more statesmen are corrupted each year by high proof whisky. In any case, the frustrated yearning for power can be as debilitating as its exercise. The damage from being in office comes from three other causes. These are the endemic tendency of the office holder to caution as exaggerated by his staff; the ghastly effect of long continued association with bureaucratic truth; and the temptation arising from recent Democratic policy, both foreign and domestic, to hyperbolic overpromising.

The impulse of the politician to guard his tongue, to hedge, evade and mumble, is as old as government itself; and it is addictive. With age the office holder does not tend to silence, which would be tolerable. Rather he resorts to one or another of the political surrogates for substance. The greatest of these is rhetoric. In the not remote past, a few gifted practitioners, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson at his best, have been able by sheer oratorical skill to make their audience overlook the fact that the real questions were being avoided. (They were also wise enough to ration these efforts.) Their example, in turn, has encouraged a legion of road company windbags to believe that a few memorable phrases (warnings against fearing fear itself; calls for crime, like Carthage, to be destroyed) would relieve them from the need to say anything. The Democratic Party is richly endowed with such men.

Competing with them are those who believe that an aspect of great moral earnestness is a surrogate for simple truth. Lyndon Johnson believed this deeply. Knowing that his reputation, if not for mendacity, was certainly for brilliant verisimilitude, he adopted a manner of deeply injured moral rectitude on all public occasions. This inspired real mistrust. Differing only in manner is Richard Nixon, who adds a further very personal touch by proclaiming, with great sincerity, his desire to be clear just before becoming wholly unclear.

Radio and especially television have profoundly reformed the ancient political instinct to non-speak. Error is no longer confined to the immediate audience by whom it may not be noticed, from which it may go no further or where it may be intercepted and corrected. Instead it goes more or less instantly to the world at large. The result is the prepared speech laboriously concerned with syntax, elaborately eliding thought, a variant of which is the candid, impromptu and relaxed interview in which the words and manner serve as a substitute for information. This is in the presence of television commentators who, since appearance and style are the requisites, are likely to be professionally unaware of the difference. These tendencies are further refined and deepened by the need of the modern politician, the issues being numerous and complex, to rely on staff. The staff assistants of a politician are compulsive writers of historic and even deathless prose; for them a safe substitute for content. Only the rarest staff member will encourage the latter; if he does and public retribution ensues, he is to blame. It is far safer to warn of the lurking dangers in an idea, however banal or benign.
Thus he combines an impression of wisdom and prudence with the maximum of self-protection.

Time confirms all of these tendencies. In consequence, the longer a man has been in office, the more cautious he becomes; and the longer a party has been in office, the more cautiously its style and mood. The caution communicates itself to the public increasingly as dullness or even dimness; the evasion, however disguised by rhetoric, moral purpose or soaring phrase comes over increasingly as crap. The man is chipped away, depersonalised, and becomes a parody of himself as a politician. Eventually he adds to the effect by extolling integrity. This is why the Democrats, having been long in office, are compulsive in their praise of integrity. It is a test.

Not quite all politicians are subject to this process. More than anything else it was, perhaps, the genius of President Kennedy that he understood the danger. (I recall his preparation for an early press conference as president. Answers to the anticipated questions on foreign policy had been prepared by the State Department. All advised evasion. Presently the president reacted in anger. "I can evade questions without help; what I need is answers.") Such exceptions are rare, however, and, in a party old to office, they are very rare indeed. Among the learned observers it was believed that Vice-President Agnew had struck a deep and responsive chord by his criticism of the political bias of the networks. There is another explanation. People responded with surprise and pleasure to a politician who seemed to have an opinion, even one of the vice-president’s opinions.

The longer men have been in office, the longer and more intimate also will have been their association with bureaucratic truth, and the more likely they will have confused this with truth. The bureaucratic truth will then also strike the ears of unconditioned listeners as nonsense and they will be repelled. This too is a price that Democrats have paid. Away from Washington in these last years, it has seemed odd that the fate of mankind was being settled in Saigon, Hué, Vientiane and Phnom Penh. One had to believe that whoever controlled the fate of mankind was eccentric in his choice of capitals, but this was the bureaucratic truth. In Washington it replaced the truth; to believe was to be informed, sophisticated, in. Away from Washington it was also difficult to believe that we were winning this war. One troublesome point was why each brilliant success (such as the Tet offensive) brought a request for more soldiers; but in Washington one saw men who had just been out to see "Westy". In addition, there was access through the bureaucracy at second, third or fourth hand to the latest intelligence information and the newest batch of captured documents. These affirmed the bureaucratic truth, which was that defeat, properly understood, was bringing us to the brink of victory. Away from Washington men might wonder whether, if we did not fight in Vietnam, we would really have to fight on the beaches in Hawaii. In a bureaucracy one respects what the leaders say. Away from Washington in past years, it was possible to wonder if democracy was best preserved by inviting the ultimate showdown with the communists and accepting 50 or 60 million casualties. To a man who has associated with Curtis LeMay or Nathan Twining, this showed only a willingness to look the world in the eye.

The most remarkable political phenomenon of our time, as I have said, was the revolt against the war in Vietnam and the associated, if less spectacular, insurrection against a military dominated foreign policy with no outcome except a steady accumulation of ever more massively destructive weapons against the eventual day of total annihilation. It did not begin in Washington, where men were best informed on war and the weapons race, but where association with bureaucracy had extensively professionalised attitudes towards death and nuclear destruction. They were part of the day’s work. The reaction came from the country, where the dulling effect of bureaucratic doctrine had not occurred, where war and nuclear annihilation still seemed
unpleasant. All who were associated with the political opposition to Vietnam noticed that Washington officialdom and its penumbra of lawyers, labour leaders and erstwhile liberals operating as corporation fixers, were the very last to react. There was much anger as to what the kids, the professors and eventually the country were up to. (In a speech at the National Press Club on 23 February 1966, McGeorge Bundy said that he believed it was "wholly wrong and a great error" to conclude from the debate going on in Congress and the universities that either Congress or the academic community was against the policies in Vietnam.) In this environment many legislators fell dangerously behind their constituents, and some later found themselves in an unseemly scramble to catch up. Washington Democrats (officials, lawyers, legislators, lobbyists) were the last of all to believe that Lyndon Johnson could be unhorsed on the issue of the war, or that those who were making the effort were more than quixotic or less than silly.

A bureaucracy is a continuing congregation of people who must act more or less as one. Its major test of truth is forthright; it is that on which those of influence can agree; and whatever it agrees on, the public is expected to accept and believe. This expectation is wildly optimistic but it is another mark of a too extended association with the bureaucracy when this is not recognised. Meeting in Washington early in 1970, the Democratic policy council produced what could well become a minor classic of this optimism. (I was absent from the meeting and hence can claim no credit.) Renciling the need to denounce the Vietnam war with the discomfort of those who, while in office, had been forced to defend it, the council resolved that "the strength of our economy, as our resources of human life and spirit, is drained by a war that has been prolonged unnecessarily." [Italics added.] That the public would believe that the war became unnecessary just when the Republicans came to power (this being the agreed truth) was assumed. Most others will think it improbable.

The impact of bureaucratic truth on the man too long in office is greatest in the case of military and foreign policy. Here the pseudosophistication derived from association with generals, diplomats and spooks, most radically divorces a man from reality. The domestic civilian bureaucracy being less monolithic and more closely in touch with the American public is more subject to the corrective influence of public opinion; but the domestic bureaucracy has also its peculiar truths. On economic policy, in recent years, it has been deeply committed to the homeopathy of economic expansion. Given growth and the price system, all else is good. Environmental problems are cosmetic, not systemic. Unemployment and inflation, however unpleasant for those immediately involved, are technical faults and certainly nothing to justify any interference with the free price system. Also a severe monetary policy, however unpleasant for the small business man or would be house owner who must borrow money, is something that should be tolerated for the common good. Association with these truths has again dulled the reactions of Democratic office holders. Of late there has been something of a rush in Congress to come abreast of popular concern over the environmental consequences of industrial expansion, and it was public opinion that forced the issue. Again there is still a general acquiescence in an economic policy that promises unemployment as a cure for inflation and arranged to get both. Wage and price restraints would lessen the dependence on tight money. In foreign policy, exposure to bureaucratic truth makes a man dangerous. In domestic policy it makes him obsolete and something of a bore.

Finally, there has been the highly adverse effect on Democratic-style of hyperbole. It is what British commentators have called "dawnism". In a society which is not without sorrow, there is a natural if adolescent tendency to hope that some new leader, some new victory, some new policy will bring the dawn of a new day. Men long in office play to such hopes. Among the Democrats the success of Keynesian and welfare state economic
policy encouraged such a tendency at home, while the Marshall plan and the superpower syndrome encouraged it on a world scale. The politician who responded, established himself as a man of vision. He was not afraid to think great thoughts. With the passage of time such thoughts cease to be a guide to intention. They become an advertisement of the capacity for unfettered thought of their author. Great vision then became a surrogate for great action or any action. In consequence, the Democratic oratorical style in the last ten years has run increasingly to dawnism. Lyndon Johnson was its greatest practitioner (An example heads this chapter.) Hubert Humphrey was an apt and energetic pupil. The promises of the Book of Revelation are modest, on the whole, compared with what these two men have pictured for this planet. They offered a new Marshall plan for Asia. Humphrey proposed another Marshall plan to rescue American cities. There was to be a special one for the Mekong and the two Vietnams. Poverty in the United States was not to be lessened; Johnson promised its extirpation as the result of an unconditional (sic) war. On education, racial equality, economic opportunity, housing nutrition and the Appalachian Plateau, the visions were almost equally boundless. Presently people who are promised everything resort to the obvious protection. They believe nothing.

This as regards the Democrats may well have happened. Richard Goodwin, the most original of observers of the American political scene, believes that Lyndon Johnson has brought dawnism to an end. As the Vietnam war increasingly monopolised the nation’s moral and physical resources and thus increasingly inactivated his administration, the president increasingly resorted to visions of the domestic and world nirvana that would come once peace was restored. The result, he suggests, was that people stopped believing public promises of any kind and now switch off the set whenever a politician starts offering any. This may be so. Certainly all who campaigned with Eugene McCarthy noticed how well voters reacted to his refusal to promise anything, including his own election. Certainly Democratic orators face an interesting problem in the months and years ahead. As part of the Johnson legacy, the more they promise the less will be expected of them.

In politics, the difference between style and substance is less than sometimes supposed, for the style of a politician is often a good index of his quality. Voters in primaries will do the Democratic Party a service if they react to style in the years ahead. They should watch closely any man who has been around a long while. If the personal experience which he praises has cultivated the habits of caution, evasion and use of wordy and effusive sincerity to cover evasion, he should be thrown out. The voter should also suspect all rhetoric. Hermann Goering once said that when he heard the word “culture”, he reached for his gun. There should be a similar if more peaceful reaction to the politician who is seen to be struggling for a deathless phrase. In a world where the most important task of the legislator is to regulate and curb the power of public and private organisation, nothing so disqualifies a legislator as susceptibility to bureaucratic truth. Any man who returns home to explain why we are in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos or Thailand, or the need for avoiding any action on inflation that endangers the free market, can also be safely put down as pretty far gone. Finally all who promise change must promise it in plain and matter of fact language; and any man who wills the ends must specify the means. That is to say, he must explain exactly where he will get the money and how he plans to mobilise the requisite political support. No more dawnism.
5. the way back

Remedy for the Democrats follows, not surprisingly, from the diagnosis. Some things are sufficiently obvious. If men suffer from having been too long in office, the answer is to end their suffering. Although in politics the one thing worse than the old fogey is the young fogey, neither is essential. In all primary elections there should be a general presumption against incumbents and it should be very strong in the case of those in whom deathless phrase making, other rhetorical devices for evasion, bureaucratic truth or dawdling can, however faintly, be detected. Where a Republican of evident candour and honest mind is opposing a Democrat who is far gone with these flaws, it will be a service to the Democrats to support this Republican.

The Democrats have no choice but to accept, and then to make adequate, the guaranteed income; and they should reflect concurrently on the disastrous caution that allowed the Republicans to get this one first. They must stop evading the issue of inflation. Where strong unions bargain with strong corporations, there will have to be controls. This does not interfere with the market. It restrains sensibly by public action, prices that are otherwise fixed, with public damage, by private action. All candidates should be asked to declare themselves on the seniority system. It can no longer be the only national purpose of the Democratic Party to empower Jamie Whitten and his friends. If reform means voting for the Republicans in the House of Representatives, be it. An argument can be made for keeping the Democrats in control of the Senate to keep John Mitchell's friends off the Supreme Court and because it is cautiously liberal. There is no similar case for the House. With the end of southern rule, the Democratic Party can be unequivocal in its support of racial equality both North and South.

There must be such a party. It will have pinned on it responsibility for the impatience of the black community and resulting violence. It will have to face the likelihood that, up to a certain point, progress is as likely to beget impatience and extremism as to be a solvent for it. There is no other course. The liberal answer to extremism is still to remove its cause. It is the only hope for sustaining the coalition between blacks and white liberals in the South that is now taking shape. Nothing less will ensure or justify the loyalty of black support (and that of Spanish speaking and other minorities) in the North. Every effort must also be made to keep the unions in the party. As black workers become more numerous in the union ranks, this should become easier rather than more difficult; but no concessions can be made to backlash sentiment of white workers. Nor can the older AFL-CIO leaders be accommodated in their preference for candidates who were good in the days of FDR.

Racial equality, a phrase which comes too glibly to one's lips, means continuing and doing better the things on which equality depends; in providing full access to political life, education, employment, income, union membership, housing and the protection of law. Most of all, as a purely practical matter, it requires that the Democrats become an aggressively urban party devoted to making city life in the United States not merely tolerable, but safe, healthy, prosperous and pleasant. It is in the cities that the black and Spanish speaking minorities, in overwhelming numbers, live. Unless the cities are good, they cannot have a decent life.

The policy should also be attractive to the considerable number of whites who still survive in the cities. Two things are required. The first is that, having contemplated all of the other remedies for urban decay, we should now try using money. We must stop using sociology as a substitute for taxation. That ample funds for city services (for the schools, police, courts, sanitation, public transportation, parks, playgrounds, museums, public festivals) will make city life agreeable may not be clear, but financial starvation does make urban life intolerable; and good and amply financed amenities do make urban life quite tolerable for people of various races in other countries.

Modern city life is incredibly expensive. To make the necessary money available, Democrats must reject out of hand the
notion that Americans are overtaxed. They are not and will be less so when foreign policy is reduced to need. A strong urban policy must include large block grants from the federal government to the large cities. (None should go to the states, which are not in any similar need.) But the money should also be given on terms that require the cities to tax their own rich, and their own commuters more adequately than now. Before John Lindsay is given final credentials as a Democrat, he must be required to make rich New Yorkers complain more about their taxes and less about their services. It is nonsense to suppose that the world’s rich cannot pay for clean streets and police that protect their variously gotten gains. The second requirement of an urban policy is plain recognition that for the most urgently needed services of the city dweller, private enterprise does not work and never will work. This is true especially of housing construction; housing repair, rehabilitation, maintenance and management; and the provision of local, commuter and inter-urban transportation. For these services we now have an apologetic half-hearted socialism: rent control, rent supplements, ineffectual efforts to make landlords live up to minimum standards of decency, dreary public projects that provide shelter not homes, speeches by Nelson Rockefeller that serve, most inadequately, as a substitute for trains. The answer is to take on these tasks proudly; as the Dutch housing authorities build houses, as the Swiss run trains, as Toronto, London and Moscow run their mass transit and as we have long operated that fine old manifestation of domestic bolshevism, the TVA. The city is an intensely social institution, it should surprise no one that it can only be served on important matters by social action.

The Democratic Party must henceforth use the word socialism. It describes what is needed. If there is assumed to be something illicit or indecent about public ownership, it will not be done well; and the way will always be open for still more speeches calling upon private enterprise to rise to the challenge and thus postpone all remedy.

The remaining issue on which the Democrats must build their strength is common to both foreign and domestic policy. That is the recapture of power from organisation. In the field of foreign and military policy, we must recapture the authority that the superpower mystique gave to the defence establishment, the CIA, the defence industries and the professional foreign policy establishment. Similarly, at home, the mystique of an ever expanding production, reinforced by the beneficent doctrines of the market, led to a plenary grant of power to the producing organisations, the great corporations, to use air, water, land and space for whatever in their judgment most efficiently expanded output. Here too power must be retrieved. The remedy, however, lies not simply in the regulation of power, which misused, causes the public anguish. It requires that we remove the reasons for the delegation. It means a foreign policy that requires no such delegation to the Pentagon, a domestic policy that requires no such delegation to General Motors.

Democratic foreign policy must recognise that, henceforth, there is little the United States can do and little that it needs to do to influence political events in Asia, Africa or Latin America. We should strongly support collective resistance to armies marching across frontiers. We should participate in the humane flow of economic assistance from rich countries to the poor. The peace corps and technical assistance should be available without pressure. Beyond these, in the Third World we should do nothing. No military alliances, no military aid, no training missions, no other military missions, no counter insurgency operations, no clandestine support to friendly governments, no plots against those that are deemed unfriendly. None of this means that all will be excellent in our absence. There will be cruel misfortune and disaster. It is only that in consequence of our presence, any disaster we now know will most likely be made worse. If we resolve never again to intervene in Asia, Africa or South America, we must expect that some countries will go communist or what will be so described. This
on the basis of past experience may also be expected to happen if we do intervene. This likelihood must now be accepted. Democratic oratory now proclaims the unwisdom of trying to police the world. The corollary is that we accept what happens in the world. If we do not, then when some jungle or desert proclaims itself for Marx, Lenin or Mao Tse-Tung, there will be talk of the need to arrest the march of communism, or, in the absence of action, of another American defeat.

In foreign policy the Third World has been the area of primary disaster. On the whole, things have gone much better where Europe, Japan, the Soviet Union, even Israel and the Middle East are concerned. The reason is simple. There we have been dealing (with exceptions) with strong governments. The superpower mystique has been circumscribed by what other governments would accept. Both the power delegated to and exercised by the Pentagon and the CIA has been much less. So far as the clear and present communist danger is concerned and for doing something about it, there would be a better case for the Green Berets in Czechoslovakia than among the Meo tribes in the mountains of Indo-China. Happily the opportunity for such enlightened effort is much less. It seeks instead the vacuum in Indo-China.

Democrats must recognise, however, that much of our military effort in Europe and in relation more generally to the Soviet Union serves bureaucratic, not national purpose. Troop levels and deployment in Europe are still tied to the panic fears of 20 years ago when a march westward by the Red Army seemed imminent. The ABM, the new generation manned bomber and the nuclear aircraft carriers serve not the balance of terror, but the organisations that build and operate them. In addition, beyond the curtailment in spending, and thus in bureaucratic power, that is unilaterally possible here, are the further cuts that become possible (hopefully of weapons to the Middle East as well as strategic weapons) by agreement with the Soviet Union.

Once again the purpose of this policy is not only to save money, not only to reduce the dangers inherent in the arms race, but also and most urgently to redeem power from the military and associated bureaucracy.

The reduced foreign policy will, of course, make it possible to be rid of the draft. This now survives only because we wish to spare well to do taxpayers the full cost of sustaining the army that the present policy requires. So we impose on the young, not only the discomforts
and dangers, but also the pecuniary costs of that policy, in the form of compelled service at submarket pay scales. Not surprisingly, the policy is more popular with the old than the young.

Needless to say, the next Democratic administration, and all that follow, must keep the reduced foreign policy under firm political control. For a party to delegate to experts and members of the opposition the decisions that can destroy it, is wildly unwise. This Lyndon Johnson learned or, anyhow, experienced. There is great safety in having a foreign policy considered in terms of what the people will accept. Such reflection is a partial antidote to action on the basis of bureaucratic truth.

Matching the redemption of power from the military is the need to redeem it from the civil bureaucracy and the great corporations. That is the other half of the Democratic task. Part of the task obviously consists in protecting at all points the rights, immunities and liberties of the citizen in an increasingly organised world. This includes the department of justice. It is not my personal view that our liberties are in as much jeopardy as is commonly imagined. When Americans are enslaved, it will be by someone of greater demonstrated competence than the present Republican administration. A man who can be hurried up by Vice-President Agnew or John Mitchell did not have anything to say worth hearing. However, the Democrats must leave no doubt as to their determination to protect people from organisation and to protect privacy from the state.

The first step in redeeming power from private corporations consists in redeeming the public regulatory agencies from their control. The private management of the ICC, FDA and FCC, by the firms that nominally they regulate, is one of the most obnoxious scandals of our time; and people are deeply sensitive to the abuse. To rescue public agencies from private control, retire their time servers, reorganise them and give them true sovereignty for their task is thus a step of prime importance and high political yield.

As production ceases to be the goal, the question of who gets the product can no longer be elided, it can no longer be agreed that this problem is solved by everyone getting more. Income guarantees are part of the answer; so is more widely shared work; so is more employment in the civilian public services; so is a far, far better system of taxation to pay

Required is a consolidated regulatory body for all regulated industries. Like the courts, it would then be beyond the control of any single industry. Also it takes a large public bureaucracy to police powerful private bureaucracy. There is, however, a much more general delegation to the private corporation which raises the whole question of the purpose of the economic system. The question here is no longer how much, in crude terms, we produce; if this remains the objective, as all conservatives will argue, we cannot much improve on present arrangements; but that phase of our history has expired. The question now is what we produce and for whom and on what terms.

Present productive performance is highly uneven. It is ample or more than ample where the industry is technically powerful, has large public influence and large powers to persuade. It is poor in the public sector. It is equally bad or worse where the industry is technically weak or lacks public influence. Hence the need for balance, for vastly greater investment in urban services and for public ownership, if housing and transportation are to be tolerable. Balance also requires control of excess, however, of automobiles for urban use, of highway construction, of new gadgetry which promises more public sorrow than private good, of disposable packaging material that is now a patina over all the land. In the past we operated on the rule that all production was good. Henceforth we must assume that any item will be subject to public discussion and action. This, it will be held, will be damaging to efficiency. That can be conceded, but crude efficiency, which is to say maximum production regardless, is no longer the goal. It is only the defence of those who do not want any interference.
for those services. The essence of such a tax system is the principle that a buck is a buck; that however a man may enrich himself, whether by wages, salaries, capital gains, inheritance, gift, oil or, for that matter, theft, he pay the same tax on the same enrichment; and this tax, needless to say, must be stoutly progressive and thus deliberately egalitarian in its effect. Again it will be argued that such taxation will be damaging to incentives and thus to productivity; but productivity means production and production is no longer the goal. It will again be evident how admirably the commitment to production serves the status quo; and how wise conservatives are to defend it; but not Democrats.

The terms on which production proceeds are, of course, those that minimise the damage to environment; that provide for orderly and agreeable use of space; Socialism also raises its head here. I am persuaded that the answer to effective urban and ex-urban land management is greatly increased use of public ownership of land; prohibit the disposal of waste in the air or surrounding waters, outlaw damaging productive agents and damaging consumer goods. Again it will be argued that such restriction is deeply inefficient. Nothing is cheaper than to dump waste in the nearest river or to march the highways and power lines across the countryside regardless.

Once again it will be seen how appeal to productivity reinforces the conservative stand. Once again the Democrats will have to face up to the question of whether they are the conservative party. If not, there isn't much choice.

**last word**

We have come full circle. A generation ago Keynes gave the Democratic Party its all purpose weapon against depression and unemployment. The government intervened actively in the economy to ensure high and steadily rising production. Now the question is whether that production will suffocate us, or as a more practical matter, leave western man locked in the ultimate traffic jam. Similarly on foreign policy, having brought the United States out of isolation, the Democrats must now bring it out of the hands of an interventionist bureaucracy which automatically defends its own power by appealing to an obsessive fear of communism. As always, the solutions look unpleasantly radical. They are the solutions that the Democrats, in the years of the new economics, almost completely abandoned. One could not fight on all fronts and Democratic economists by now yearned for respectability. So it became policy to be nice to the rich. Public ownership became all but unmentionable. Above all, the system worked. A thousand speeches a year proclaimed the affection of the party for progressive private enterprise and its distaste for regulating, interfering, hamstringing or otherwise messing into the business of this beneficent institution. Similarly on foreign policy, the military was sacrosanct and the essence of Dean Rusk's policy was to subordinate foreign policy to military need. Thus the Democrats in their oratory and their platforms were at pains to forswear all of the lines of action that the present situation requires.

For American conservatives, there is a wonderfully perfect arrangement. It is to have two conservative parties. Numerous Democrats share this preference. Men who have been long in office see no reason to reject the policies that, in mere being underestimated as a political force, they believe to have kept them there; and in the Congress political longevity is not the only avenue to leadership, but it is the only one that is absolutely reliable. Democratic candidates have always been tempted by the doctrine that, since the left had no alternative, the smart strategy was to bid for the conservatives or anyhow the middle. Some of the men immediate around Humphrey in the last campaign were ardent exponents of this doctrine. Against this is the Averell Harriman doctrine which holds that liberals, when they have no place else to go, do nothing. Thus they ensure the defeat of any Democrat who woos conservatives. The Harriman doctrine is sound, but not always influential.
Nice as it would be to have two conservative parties, it won't do. There will always be nervous people who will feel that problems should be tackled even though the only available remedies (taxing the rich, nationalising industries, regulating private enterprise, limiting consumption, redeeming power and policy from military and civilian bureaucracy) are outrageously radical. The function of the Democratic Party, in this century at least, has, in fact, been to embrace solutions even when, as in the case of Wilson's new freedom, Roosevelt's New Deal or the Kennedy-Johnson civil rights legislation, it outraged not only Republicans but the Democratic establishment as well.

If the Democratic Party does not render this function, at whatever cost in respectable outrage and respectable heart disease, it has no purpose at all. The play will pass to those that do espouse solutions, or in frustration espouse violence as a substitute. It may not immediately win elections with a radical economic policy; for radical is how it will seem, how it will be described and, in the sense that it deals with causes, what it will be.

For a while longer, in accordance with American tradition, the more fortunate or sanguine will imagine that these problems (inequality, unequal economic performance, dependence on military spending and subordination to military power, industrial arrogance and environmental damage) will yield to hot air, or like Marx's state, given time, wither away.

If something drastic must be done, let there be an affirmation of the ultimate workability of the system, a warning of the dangers of violence and, if things are really urgent, a call for a day of prayer; but in the end reality imposes itself. The system is not working. Violence is a threat, not a solution. The only answer lies in political action to get a system that does work. To this conclusion, if only because there is no alternative conclusion, people will be forced to come.

Such is the Democratic opportunity. Oddly, I do not think the prospect entirely bleak.
6. the political left: some British comparisons

The British Labour Party and the liberal left in the United States (those recently celebrated by the peculiar eloquence of the vice-president as the "Rad-c-libs") have one indubitable characteristic in common; both are out of office. Beyond that comparisons become more disputable and, on some matters, to one side or the other, odious. The political left in Britain is roughly co-terminous with a political party. In the United States it is a part of a party which for historical reasons (as well as for no reasons at all) includes nominally its most implacable political enemies, the ante bellum and even pre-historic southern wing. These Democrats are united only in laying claim to the same party name. (A new moderate generation of southern Democrats seeking election with black votes is emerging.) In the North liberals share party participation with those whose political interest is ethnic or habitual or devoted to scraping together a modest livelihood. The Labour Party proudly calls itself socialist without, always, insisting too strenuously on the associated socialism. In the United States even if a measure can reasonably be described as socialist, it is thought better not to arouse the resulting storm. Socialism remains synonymous with political extremism.

foreign policy

Although the defeat of the Wilson government is variously explained, foreign policy was not central to its failure. I did not much applaud Labour policy in these last years. The natural alliance of a Labour and socialist government on Vietnam was not with the supporters of the war in the United States, whatever the convenience. It was with those in the United States who were opposing this cruel and deeply foolish mistake. Beyond any special relationship between governments, is the special relationship of shared conviction. When they are in conflict it is better that the second should triumph.

I am persuaded, moreover, that the question of the Common Market (which has so dominated Labour Party discussion of foreign policy for so many years) is not real. At issue are varying estimates of cost and varying rates of prospective economic growth, combined with political considerations of such subjectivity as to defeat hope even of clear disagreement. The statistical wisdom does not exist to say which of the economic projections is right, but one can know that a rational economic policy, as opposed to the stop/go sequence inherent in post-Keynesian fiscal and monetary management, could do much more for growth and growth itself may not be quite so central an objective as once imagined. A passion for the Common Market is for socialists who have mastered the theory of international trade, through John Stuart Mill, politics through the federalist papers. (I speak here only of Britain. I do not comment on the political value of the market for relations between France and Germany.) They have not seen that the multinational corporation has already accomplished for itself at least, nearly all of what the Common Market can accomplish; and they have not seen that, in failing to provide a fiscal system that can support the socialisation of technology on the American or Soviet scale (for it is from the state that support for major innovation now comes) the market fails, even by their own standards, at a most crucial point. It is, I think, presumptuous to suppose that only supporters of the market are good Europeans.

My personal doubts, however, about these socialist eccentricities did not, I gather, bulk large in the mind of the British voter. Clearly they were not decisive in the recent election. In the United States, by contrast, foreign policy has been critical in the recent fortunes of the Democratic Party and the liberal left. It was the Vietnam war which returned Lyndon Johnson to Texas and Dean Rusk to Georgia, and which defeated Hubert Humphrey in 1968. Were it not for foreign policy, liberal Democrats would now be in power in Washington.

This does not mean that American liberals were uniquely to blame in the matter of Vietnam. This is a view that has on occasion been advanced in Bri-
tain by some of the professional Washington watchers. It is not wholly sustained by the facts. The Vietnam involvement, and disaster, was a response to the controlling cold war doctrine of the omnipotent and centrally directed communist conspiracy. This view of the world dominated American foreign policy from the late 'forties on; it remains the controlling doctrine in the Pentagon and on the far right. One older wing of American liberal opinion championed this doctrine, and provided considerable intellectual gloss for the cold warriors; but its fortress was the military and civilian bureaucracy and the New York foreign policy establishment. These had dominated American foreign policy from the Marshall plan on. The liberal error was not in wanting to get into Vietnam, but in too blithely delegating foreign policy to those who did. Moreover, it was the liberals who led the revolt against the war and who eventually brought the northern wing of the Democratic party into powerful opposition, not only to the conflict, but to the old mechanistic anti-communism as well. This was not, I would add, a negligible achievement. In the past, when the drums have sounded, political opposition (and very often political reason) has collapsed. This did not happen in the United States in the 'sixties. The country took a second look. It is no small thing for a great power to turn its foreign policy around in the middle of a war. The war did, however, give Richard Nixon the presidency. Perhaps it was right that it should. Under the usual parliamentary rules, governments that make mistakes of the magnitude of the Vietnam war are not meant to remain in office.

**Defence Policy**

At a slightly different level of policy, however, there are possible parallels between the British position and ours. In both the United States and Britain in the last quarter century I believe that the left has been excessively susceptible to the military mystique. This is a very great danger. When out of office Britain and the United States the left has a lively idealism in the field of international affairs. Peace, reconciliation, arms reduction, collective security, peaceful co-existence, economic development; all these are code words that identify the British socialist and the American liberal on matters of foreign policy. In the last quarter century, however, when men who have been associated with such ideas have come to office in Britain or the United States, they have shown an overpowering and often obscene urge to erase their past. Where unions, social insurance, even civil rights are involved, they keep the faith; where arms, disarmament, ships or missiles are concerned, there is a licence to desert. They become tough minded; they want to show that they can be on fraternal terms with the soldiers; they are the kind of man who can appreciate higher military strategy, however suicidal or insane; they point thoughtfully to the need for larger, not smaller military budgets. Their apostasy invariably gets them a good press. They are described as surprisingly sensible in light of their past views.

Do I exaggerate? Not much. In Britain the Labour government repeatedly defended military spending which profoundly burdened the budget and the balance of payments, and which subsequently, under conditions of yet greater stringency, they then found unnecessary.

So it was with the Singapore presence of military necessity required it until the balance of payments could no longer sustain it. Then it went without damage. So it was with the F-111, the swing-wing aerial dinosaur. The RAF could not exist without it until the economy could no longer afford it. Thereafter both the RAF and Britain survived. So it was, evidently, with British strength on the Rhine. It was vital until it had to be reduced. It will be said that pressure on these matters came from Washington—from the Pentagon. Well I am speaking of susceptibility to the military mystique, whatever its source, just because it is American does not, automatically, make it righteous! There are more important things for a British socialist than to be well received by the secretary of defence.
Until recently American liberalism has been even more susceptible to the military mystique. The urge on arriving in Washington to see things in the stern practical light of the professional military man was, at least until recently, overwhelming. Perhaps ours was a peculiarly susceptible generation; we had all rejoiced in the military excitements of the second world war. Fate made all of us amateur soldiers. The late John Strachey (who himself was not immune) once remarked that nothing so rejoices a middle-aged intellectual as to consort with professional warriors in camaraderie and on terms of reciprocal respect. In any case, in the future let us be clear; what is worth believing when one is out of office is worth believing when in, and military matters are not an exception. Military questions are the make or break issues of our civilisation, they can also decide the fate of Labour or liberal administrations. In charge here, of all places, must be men who retain in office the full courage of their civilian convictions.

In the United States in the last two years a younger generation of legislators, such as Senators Proxmire, McGovern, Nelson, Kennedy and Representatives Reuss, Rosenthal, Harrington, have been asserting themselves much more confidently and critically on military indulgence, extravagance and strategic fantasy. It is a very hopeful sign, but it is only a beginning. I do not believe in unilateral disarmament, but I do believe in disarmament—without negotiation in the large area where only military indulgence is involved, and with negotiation where the balance of terror is involved. Military bureaucracies like all organisations, will seek to perpetuate and enlarge themselves. This will include the defeat of negotiation by saddling it with impossible conditions and safeguards. The power of the military bureaucracy, certain in the United States, can be regulated only by the strongest political power. It must be a good deal stronger and more reliable than in the recent past.

The parallels between the American and the British experience are very much closer in the field of economics than in military matters. Subject only to secondary differences we are making the same mistakes, evading the same truths and suffering the same resulting misfortune.

**economic policy**

The age of Keynesian economics is now over; the macro-economic revolution in fiscal and monetary management which we owe to Keynes has run foul of the micro-economic revolution in trade union and corporate power. In consequence there is no way within the Keynesian modalities to reconcile adequately high employment with reasonably stable prices. It is possible to combine a politically unacceptable level of unemployment with a socially damaging rate of inflation. This is now being accomplished in the United States, and with no great effort; Richard Nixon has inadequate economists! Save in their relentless predictions of lower prices and more jobs, however, they are *not* bad in any inspired way.

The reason for the Keynesian failure is that at any near approach to full employment, unions can seek and win wage increases much in excess of productivity gains. They can do so because, in the market that sustains such a level of employment, corporations can retrieve the wage increase and something more. They have won the market power that protects them from precisely this risk. Then public employees (for very good reasons now the most militant of workers in both the US and Britain) must act to remain abreast. Their employer cannot, so easily, pass on the cost; but eventually government too has to yield, and it has also to become part of the inflationary process.

Only an intolerable level of unemployment (and idle plant capacity) arrests the inflationary process, and the threat of such unemployment is sufficient to cause government to ease fiscal and monetary restraint, lest the lesser evil of much inflation and moderate unemployment give way to the greater evil of greater unemployment and slightly less inflation. This
is how matters stand in both the United States and Britain. Conservatives in both countries have a recourse; they think that because they uphold free enterprise, free enterprise will surely uphold them. Socialists and liberals do not have even that comfort.

Other secondary differences in the position of the left in the two countries are not altogether slight. In the United States the unions, some ritual protest to the contrary, will probably accept wage and price control in preference to the alternatives. (I use the hard words here; I doubt that we make the policy more acceptable by using such euphemisms as "guide posts", "wage price restraints", or even "incomes policy"). Our unions must, of course, be assured that the control is real and fair, that is, that it will stabilise living costs and allow for productivity gains. Given this, however, they will, in my view, go along. Nor is the political community averse. Knowing that Nixon would not necessarily welcome the help, the Democrats in Congress have authorised controls. In the United States most influential opposition comes, in fact, from the economic establishment.

A diminishing, but still large, number of those who speak and write on economic matters continue to protect their vested interest in what they have always taught or believed. They have always taught and believed that markets (including those where prices are fixed by corporations and wages established as between strong unions and strong employers) are sacrosanct. They have also always taught and believed that, with John Maynard Keynes, economists' work was done; no difficult problems remained. No task in economic management arose that could not be resolved by properly learned gentlemen, suitably equipped with figures and charts, discussing taxation, expenditure and interest rates around a large well polished table. In Britain the situation is different; both the economists and the unions are hostile. (For a most valuable treatment of this subject with which, in virtually all respects, I agree, see Thomas Balogh's excellent pamphlet, Labour and inflation, Fabian tract 403, 1970.)

The fact remains, however, there can be no economic policy tolerable to the left that does not involve wage and price controls. Without such controls there can be no visible policy that combines adequate employment with reasonable price stability; and there can be no attempt to achieve this result, which does not disemploy the most vulnerable workers and punish (through high interest rates and refused loans) the most vulnerable businessmen and the neediest consumers and would be house owners. It is too bad that this is so; whoever arranged things with such atrocious disrespect for socialist or liberal convenience is open to grave criticism. But so it is.

A reputation for political and economic prescience can still be cultivated by explaining how difficult a wage and price policy is to administer, and this reputation can be greatly reinforced by citing the number of countries that have tried and abandoned it. No one admires his own wisdom so much as the man who says, “I would be for controls, but no one has yet proved to me that they will work”. Were I so disposed, I could excel at this exercise. I have fixed more prices and received more abuse for doing so, than any man alive or dead. But any idiot can expiate on the problem of controls; it is just that there are no alternatives. The control need not be comprehensive once the structure of inflationary expectation is broken. Micro-economic change has only defeated Keynesian policy where strong unions and strong corporations are involved. In the United States only a few hundred unions and around a thousand corporations need to be touched. Moreover, perfect stability is not the goal; one seeks to eliminate only the gross movements inherent in private price and wage fixing. Another reason for past failure is that most efforts have incorporated the hope that they might be temporary. We shall only have a workable system of permanent controls when we recognise that they are forever.

A very good reason for wage and price control is that not otherwise can we preserve a civilised balance between the pub-
ic and the private sectors of the economy. If monetary and fiscal policy are carrying (even though ineffectively) the whole burden of inflation control in an inflationary context, then the public sector will always be subject to recurrent attack. It is the part of total expenditure to which chancellors and budget directors have access. Moreover, borrowing by states, cities or local authorities will be vulnerable to tightening money rates, whereas the capital expenditures of large corporations from earnings are not. Here I sense another parallel; neither in the United States nor Britain is the vulnerability of the public sector to neo-Keynesian policy sufficiently appreciated on the left. In the depression years, when expansion was sought, the instruments were increased public expenditure and lower money rates; Keynesian policy thus favoured the public sector. In an age of chronic inflation, by contrast, the policy strongly favours the private sector.

An American coming even briefly to England cannot but sense how much better British socialism, as compared with American liberalism, has supported the public sector since the second world war. One could argue that, in consequence of the better balance between public and private services, the British standard of living is, in its general yield of satisfaction, now higher than that of the United States. Few things to me are so discouraging as the reluctance of the American left to face up to the costs of modern government. The modern metropolis, in particular, is an incredibly expensive thing. Unless its price is paid, modern urban life is not even tolerable, much less agreeable. For instance, I have long thought that there are few problems in New York City which would not be solved by doubling the city budget. There are none which will be solved by the present liberal device which is to use sociology as a substitute for higher taxes. No matter how well we understand Harlem, its problems will only be solved by better housing, more police, better street cleaning, better schools, better parks, better and better supervised recreation, more day nurseries and all the rest; and all this will cost money. On the other hand, the British left (and to be fair also the British right) is a geological age in advance of the United States in this field. In both countries, however, we must recognise that an excessive reliance on orthodox post-Keynesian policies in an age of inflation makes the public sector particularly vulnerable. With economic growth and urbanisation, the public sector, not private consumption, becomes essential to civilised survival. This is a truth that we must avow, about which we must never be apologetic. Thus we cannot be sanguine about an economic policy which makes the public sector subordinate to the exigencies of economic stabilisation.

In both the United States and Britain the left has much unfinished business on economic policy. In both countries we have conservative governments. Both are deeply vulnerable on their economic policy: yours on the inflation it cannot control, ours on the genius with which it is combining both inflation and depression. Both are aided immeasurably, however, by the reluctance of the left to face fully the alternative. In the United States, at least, there has been nothing quite like it since the early 'thirties. Then the Republicans were deeply vulnerable on the issue of depression. The obvious answer was to spend whatever was necessary to put the unemployed in work, and accept whatever consequences this might have for exchange rates and the gold standard.

These policies liberal Democrats could not face, for they were impressed by the stern warnings of the economic establishment. What was most needed was, economically, most wicked. So liberals, or most of them, called for a strong defence of the dollar, strict economy in government and a balanced budget. That was FDR's policy before coming to office. Herbert Hoover should have been more grateful than he was to his opposition. Although Congress has authorised controls, Nixon is profiting from the unwillingness of the American left to face fully their need. Like Hoover, he too should be grateful.
Modern industrial society achieves its not inconsiderable technical performance by massive organisation and by imposing the needs and values of organisation upon the society. It persuades its participants to accept its goals and its work disciplines. It persuades the public to accept its products, to believe that the things it produces are the *sine qua non* of contentment and happiness. It exists in close association with the equally massive bureaucracies of the modern state. All of this adds up to the industrial life style: an acceptance of the goals of organisation, of the need to maximise income and consumption in accordance with its persuasion, and of a public bureaucracy that reflects the interests and serves the needs of organisation. The older left in both Britain and America has accepted this life style. It has sought to remedy defects in the functioning of the industrial system, in the level of output and the efficiency at which it operates, to a degree in the way it distributes its income, ineffectively in its predisposition to inflation. It has supported it with the educational establishment, technical research and public facilities that it required. Where, as in the case of Rolls Royce or Lockheed, it encounters financial difficulty it goes along in the rescue operation. It has not, in the past, expressed doubt about either the purposes or the disciplines of the system itself. Until recently in the United States the left has accepted the highly symbiotic relationship of the industrial system with the Pentagon. Increasingly, however, doubts are being expressed, especially, but not uniquely, in the United States.

The most frequently asked questions concern the effect on the environment. Most people are still hoping that this is an essentially regulatory and cosmic problem; one that better industrial zoning, better control of industrial effluent, better design of the internal combustion engine, the internalising of external diseconomies will solve; do these things, and we can continue to emphasise economic growth as before. Others, however, are sensing a larger problem; namely whether the established purposes of the industrial system, in particular its preoccupations with steadily increasing consumption, can be indefinitely sustained. Moreover, the purposes of the system are being questioned in a more specific way by younger people, by many, though not all, of the university generation that the industrial system has itself called into being. They no longer automatically accept its values. They question its working disciplines; the notion that you work hard and competitively five days a week or more to maximise consumption on the other two. Somewhat selectively (more on clothing than electronics) they have come to reject the persuasion which sustains its consumption. To all this the reaction of the older left is varied; from efforts at aging fraternity, to condescending sympathy, to open contempt. Mostly it is assumed that, given a few years, the young will return to normal. Procreation and production of a family is thought a great remedy. Then they will measure success by pecuniary achievement; they will maximise their income and consumption as all right thinking people were meant to do. Meanwhile, one can build policy on the unions and the older proletariat which, happily, has no such aberrations.

Such dismissal is, I believe, a major error. The massive industrial and associated public bureaucracy which we have artificialised in the last half century will be the next great concern of the left both in Britain and the United States. The problems it poses are new but they are also real. We must recognise that modern industrial organisation pursues purposes that are its own. In the past, broadly speaking, the left has facilitated, humanised and, on occasion, restrained these purposes. Increasingly now it must call them into question. Certainly it must maintain sympathetic communication with those who do. Specifically, it must ask if environmental damage to air, water and countryside is merely a technical fault of the system, or if it is inherent in industrial growth and thus in industrial purpose. I think the latter, thus I believe that the left must balance the need for more private consumption against the claims of public amenity. The right is certainly not going to do so.
left must also ask if the seeming indifference and impersonality of great industrial bureaucracy is not also inherent in great organisation. The left must surely begin to wonder about the urgency of consumption which depends as much as does ours on persuasion—or advertising—are we to be endlessly a party to this exercise in illusion? It must ask whether, merely because something can be invented, we must necessarily have it. Is the case for technological progress so strong that we must have even that which makes life more unpleasant? (The bearing of this on supersonic travel will be evident.) We must inquire increasingly about the curious uneasiness of our blessings in a society that emphasises growth; the uneasiness as between the automobile industry, which has high virulence in persuasion, and industries like housing or mass transport where the persuasive power is low. We can no longer evade these problems by saying that they reflect consumer choice. They do not. They reflect the degree of persuasion exercised by the producer's own interest. All of this adds up to questions about a life style itself, about a life style that emphasises increased consumption, that accepts that it will be producer influenced if not producer guided, that accepts the maximisation of income to maximise such consumption; and which accepts whatever organisation of whatever impersonality or even arrogance serves this result.

I am a poorly reformed Calvinist. I have been disturbed in the last couple of years at how easily student distress, whatever its origins, comes to focus on the oldest of student grievances, which is the need to work. On the whole I applaud man's emancipation from physical toil; his liberation from mental effort seems to me premature. I also have serious misgivings on the matter of drugs. Perhaps the serious ones expand consciousness; it is my impression that they serve mostly to dull it. Hemingway and his generation thought they had found in alcohol a deeper form of self release, a more profound form of self expression. I never believed that either. I think it was merely an improved excuse for getting drunk.

However, we must respect the instinct of a younger generation when it raises questions, which an older generation of radicals does not wish to face, about the purposes of the economic system. Indeed, perhaps some of the aberrations of the young are a reaction, not only to the purposes of economic society, but to the unwillingness of an older generation to face the evidence of its own eyes. I do not doubt that the need to face the purposes of the economic system is more urgent in the United States than in Britain, but let me warn against the oldest of the British devices for evading thought on such matters. That is to say: "I can see how this kind of problem bugs the Americans but, of course, we are a good deal less rich than they are". I do not think that the question of life style (of artificially stimulated and competitive consumption, of strenuous maximisation of income to maintain it, of massive organisation which commands this behaviour) can any longer be evaded in any western industrial country. There is no better way for the present left to become obsolete than to suppose, as now, that its only function is to facilitate and moderate the industrial process but never ask to what end.

Some will think I am asking one of those fine gaseous questions by which second rate academicians seek to achieve a reputation for heavy thought. I am not. The problem is intensely practical. Economic growth is increasing in response to wants, which those that benefit from the growth themselves stimulate, and the costs, increasingly, are borne by the community. The further price is the size and impersonality of the organisation that, without doubt, is the efficient technical engine of this growth. Questions have scarcely been asked about the nature of an economy—its working hours, policy on technical innovation, industrial organisation, income distribution, employment policy—that no longer emphasises growth.

If questions about such growth are too philosophical for American liberals or British socialists then there are few questions they can ask.
8. the office holding mind

The political left in Britain and the United States share one indubitable fact of life: both are out of office; but in the past decade both, in their different manifestations, have been much in office. This, in turn, causes them to have another characteristic in common. That is the office holding mind. In both our countries there is well recognised romanticism about the public proposals of people who never expect power. They rebuild cities, reform the young, abolish drugs, end crime, establish world government with a celerity that is never revealed by those who have experience of having to do it. On the whole, however, I think the practical realism (the ability to see grave political obstacles to all needed action) of those who have held office, or hope for it again, is much worse. The absence of power corrupts; the experience of power and the hope of power emasculate. In the United States the foreign policy of the last administration was so catastrophic that those associated with it are out of public life for the foreseeable future. The mark of Vietnam is deeper than that of Cain or of Munich.

In domestic policy, however, we still suffer from the office holding mood. I have mentioned its effect on economic policy, on keeping liberals from facing the realities of the post-Keynesian world, but it is worse in the caution that it induces on taxation for urgent purposes and to redistribute income. (I am persuaded that the time has come when we must turn in taxation to the principle that a quid is a quid and a buck is a buck. Instead of protecting and rationalising wealth that accrues through inheritance, or capital gains, or a dozen other privileged revenues, let all enrichment from whatever source be taxed at the same progressive rate for the same amount.) This caution on taxation deeply inhibits efforts to restore the cities. Also it is the office holding mind that tells why the big weapons firms, already in de facto public ownership, cannot be nationalised; and why J. Edgar Hoover cannot be put permanently out to pasture. Certainly such men know why there can be no questioning of the system or the process by which wants are cultivated to justify its expansion. I would not wish to speculate on whether the Labour Party, having been so recently in power, is also suffering from the office holding syndrome. Let me content myself with saying that it is a danger.

The solution is for a political party always to have two kinds of people among its members. There must be those whose ambition is to be in office. None should apologise for that desire; to govern is what political parties are for. But there must also be people who belong to a political party for another purpose. That is, simply, to press it into new parts of the political spectrum. They must not be deterred by the likelihood that they will cause grave uneasiness to those who are seeking office. They must not be deterred if, on occasion, they damage the pursuit of office. Even the most plausible of reforms, on first being broached, look dangerously impractical—and seem so to voters. They become commonplace, then banal, then a basic human right, only by discussion. It is the business of those who do not expect to hold office to initiate that discussion. It cannot be left to those who are subject to the office holding mood. The great innovative tasks of the Fabian Society would never have been performed by men and women whose ears were attuned to what voters early in this century expected to hear and whose eyes were fixed on ministerial office.

Perhaps you will think these remarks self serving; singularly I am a man who does not expect to hold office. But that is not so. Rather it is that I have held office and know how much we are to be mistrusted.
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Enquiries about membership should be sent to the General Secretary, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1; telephone 01-930 3077.

John Kenneth Galbraith is the Paul M. Warburg, Professor of Economics at Harvard, who is, however, teaching for a year at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was born in Canada and educated there and in the United States. He was in charge of wartime price control in Washington during the second world war, was on the campaign staff of Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and 1956, and served during the Kennedy administration as ambassador to India where he wrote Ambassador’s Journal. He was an early and influential supporter of Eugene McCarthy, and seconded his nomination at the Democratic convention in Chicago. He is the author of many books including The affluent society, his best known book in the United Kingdom.

Already well known as an economist, essayist and novelist, J. K. Galbraith began experimenting three years ago with the political tract. His How to get out of Vietnam (1968) and How to control the military (1969) are widely credited with changing and shaping ideas on two problems of great importance not only to his fellow Americans but the world. The NCLC Publishing Society published How to control the military last year with an introduction by Nobel Peace prize winner, the Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker. Copies are available (price 40p) from 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1.

The majority of the present text is adapted from his third pamphlet Who needs the Democrats? and what it takes to be needed? published in America in 1970. The second part of the pamphlet, which gives some British comparisons, is based upon a lecture he gave before a Fabian audience in London in November 1970.

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