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ROTHBARD-ROCKWELL REPORT

AUGUST 1995

VOLUME VI, NUMBER 8

Classic Rothbard

“Fusionism”

by Murray N. Rothbard

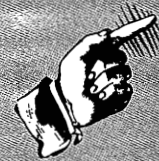
Fusionism” was originally a creation of the fertile mind of top *National Review* theoretician and editor Frank S. Meyer. It was a call for a unified conservative movement based on a fusing of the previously disparate and seemingly antithetical libertarian and traditionalist wings of the conservative movement. Frank, an old and valued friend and mentor of mine, was basically a libertarian, or a far better term, what we would now call a paleo-libertarian. He believed in reason and tradition, believed in individual liberty and the free market, hated the public school system with a purple passion, detested hippie irrationality, believed in an objective ethic, and championed decentralization and states’ rights (including those of the Old South) against federal tyranny. He was ardently in favor of, rather than opposed to, Christianity. (See my *Frank S. Meyer: The Fusionist as Libertarian*, 1981, Burlingame, CA: Center for Libertarian Studies, 1985.)

And strategically, Frank strongly opposed from within the Buckley-*National Review* policy of purging the conservative movement of all “extremist” groups: notably, the libertarians, the Birchers, and the Randians. Meyer had the gift of setting forth his own ideological

position with great strength and vigor, initiating ideological debates with other conservative thinkers, while at the same time trying to keep together all the factions within the broader movement and maintaining personal friendships with most of the clashing factions. Meyer foresaw that purging extremists would inevitably lead to a conservative movement shorn of all principle except respectability and a seat at the trough of government power.

But there was one great flaw in Meyer’s fusionism that proved to be fatal, and destructive of fusionism itself. In an era when many, if not most, conservative intellectuals were defectors from Communism, Frank took pride in being the top cadre Communist of all. A veteran Communist who got his start as organizer at the London School of Economics, Frank was a leading theoretician, a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party, USA, and head of the CP’s second leading cadre training school, the Workers’ School of Chicago. As a top defector, Frank was deeply committed to total destruction of the God That Failed, up to and including nuclear annihilation of the Soviet Union. Hence, Frank not only disagreed with the Old Right foreign policy of isolationism, his major interest was to reverse it, and he was the most pro-war of all the myriad war hawks of *National Review* and the conservative movement. Being militantly pro-war also meant being in favor of U.S. imperialism and of all-out military statism in the U.S.

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P.C. Watch

Good O’ Boys Roundup

The Treasury Department is investigating a meeting of white police held each spring in the hills of Tennessee, because of reports that BATF agents helped coordinate it.

The “Good O’ Boys Roundup,” attended by hundreds of state and federal cops, is targeted because someone sold t-shirts featuring a target over Martin Luther King, Jr.’s face, O.J. Simpson’s face inside a hangman’s noose, and white police standing over a black criminal spread-eagled on a car, with the caption, “Boyz on the Hood.” (*Washington Times*, 7/11/95)

Hey, Christians, Take This

Twenty years after its approval by leftist Pope Paul VI, a giant mosque has opened in Rome. Cardinals and other

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The Color of Crime

Joycelyn Elders, ex-Surgeon General, recently told the Youth Summit of the Alabama Southern Christian Leadership Conference, that "America's bright young people are in an ocean surrounded by the sharks of drugs and alcohol." We must "get into our canoes and go into the ocean to save the most valuable resource we have." Homicide is the largest single cause of death among young black men, virtually all killed by other young black men. "We're killing each other. We've got to stop." (*Birmingham News*, 7/2/95). Notice that, as usual, black on white crime—the vast majority of interracial crime—is not even deplored. We are only to worry about blacks killing blacks, or whites killing blacks, not blacks killing whites, which is only what they've got coming.

The Heart of Rock 'n Roll

Stephen Prouse, costume curator of the new Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, bragged to *Rolling Stone* magazine that all his dummies will have genitals. "It's a first in the field," said mannequin-maker Ralph Pucci, who tried to talk Prouse out of the move. But Prouse said, "rock and roll is about sex." There will be more than 90 dummies, each wearing the costume of a particular freak. The Axl Rose dummy is "instantly recognizable," says *Rolling Stone*, by, among other attributes, the "pierced hole in its nipple." (*Birmingham Post-Herald*, 6/20/95)

Huh?

When a client fired a lawyer for the wrong reason, a federal court in New York ruled that the lawyer could sue. The client, a businessman in Las Vegas, was told

by his advisors that it would be a mistake to have a "New York Jew" represent him in a certain matter, and he made the mistake of telling his lawyer.

Even though a contract between an attorney and a client is "terminable at will by the client," it cannot be "terminated for a discriminatory reason." (*Lawyers Weekly USA*, 6/5/95)

I'm Sorry for Your Sins

What's with the trend of repenting and apologizing for other people's sins, real and alleged? The latest practitioner is the Southern Baptist Convention, which condemned its slave-owning forebears and racist ancestors. It would have been far more impressive if they had lamented their own sins, but such is not the style.

By the way, isn't defaming our forefathers a violation of the commandment to honor our father and mother? They were undoubtedly sinners, like all of us, but we are still to reverence them. Spitting on the graves of our ancestors is hardly a Christian act.—L.H.R., Jr. ■

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Frank Meyer's devotion to the global crusade against Communism and the Soviet Union did not only poison the conservative movement's explicit foreign and military programs. For it lead Frank, even though personally strongly anti-socialist, to embrace warmly as comrades any wing of socialists who were defectors from or converts to anti-Communism. In short, Frank's strategic focus, The Enemy for him

and for the conservative movement, was not statism and socialism but

Communism. Hence, it was under Frank's theoretical and strategic aegis that the conservative movement rushed to welcome and honor any species of dangerous socialist so long as they were certifiably anti-Communist or anti-Soviet.

Under this capacious umbrella, every variety of Marxian socialist, whether right-wing Trotskyite, Menshevik, Lovestonite, or Social Democrat, was able to enter and infect the conservative movement. The invasion and conquest of the conserva-

tive movement by Truman-Humphrey social democrats calling themselves "neo-conservatives" happened after Frank's death; but the way had been paved for that conquest by the uncritical embrace of anti-Stalinist socialists that Meyer's theoretical and strategic vision had called for and orchestrated. And so tragically, Meyer's fusionist doctrine had paved the way for its own destruction; for the tough Marxist and Leninist-trained neocons were able, by paying lip service to such venerable conservative principles as the free market, to destroy Meyer's own conservative guiding principles and replace them by warmed-over social democracy in the guise of "neo-conservatism," "global democracy," "the Opportunity Society," "progressive conservatism," or whatever other slogan of the moment might prove opportune.

In opposing the old fusionism, I tried vainly to argue with conservatives that the Enemy was not Communism or the Soviet Union but statism and socialism, and that once one embraces that wider vision, it

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would become clear that the main enemy of both American liberty and traditional Americanism resided not in Moscow or Havana but in Washington, D.C.

The Main Menace: From Communism to Social Democracy

Whether or not I was right about the Soviet/Communist menace, and I still believe that I was, the course of human events has, thank goodness, now made that argument obsolete and antiquarian. The sudden and heart-warming death of Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe put an end to the Communist menace. We have stressed in these pages the enormous implications of this revolutionary event for our foreign and military policy, and for making viable, more than ever, the Old Right policy of "isolationism."

But another vital aspect of this new post-Communist world is that The Enemy of liberty and tradition is now revealed full-blown: social democracy. For social democracy in all of its guises is not only still with us and has proved longer-lived than its cousin, Communism, but now that Stalin and his heirs are out of the way, social democrats are trying to reach for total power. They have to be stopped, and one of the objectives of the new fusionism of the paleo-libertarian and conservative movement is indeed to put a stop to them.

At the end of World War II, at a moment in history when social democrats and Communists were allied, what is now called "the new

world order" was already prepared for us. The idea was that a new United Nations, the old League of Nations plus enforcement power, would function as an effective world government in the form of a condominium of the world's superpowers, those blessed with a permanent seat and a permanent veto on the Security Council; the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China. The United States, in short, was to run this world government in collaboration with its junior partner, the U.S.S.R. But the Cold War split the superpowers apart, and as a consequence the U.N. was reduced to the status of a debating society, and became an institution hated and reviled both by the conservatives and by social democrats. But now that Communism and the Cold War are ended, the U.N. is back, hailed as the governor of the new world order

by a conservative movement that has now been captured and ruled by the social democrat neo-cons.

Social democrats are all around us, and so it is all too easy to discern their reaction to the great problems of the post-Cold War era. Whether calling themselves neo-conservatives or neo-liberals, they stand four-square in favor of statism in every instance: that is, strongly opposed to isolationism and in favor of U.S. intervention and war, almost as a high prin-

ciple; and secondly, as bitter opponents of the ethnic nationalisms liberated at long last by the collapse of centralizing communism. Read a social democrat anywhere, and you will find hysterical attacks on nationalisms and national aspirations as against centralism everywhere, whether it be in Poland, Croatia,

Lithuania, the Ukraine, or the Russian Republic. And the great smear whether it be within the United States or against emerging Eastern European nations, is almost invariably to raise the specter of "anti-Semitism," to wield against nationalists or isolationists.

In short, on all crucial issues, social democrats stand against liberty and tradition, and in favor of statism and Big Government. They are more dangerous in the long run than the Communists not simply because they have endured, but also because their program and their rhetorical appeals are far more insidious, since they claim to combine socialism with the appealing virtues of "democracy" and freedom of inquiry.

For a long while they stubbornly refused to accept the libertarian lesson that economic freedom and civil liberties are of a piece; but now, in their second line of retreat, they give lip service to some sort of "market," suitably taxed, regulated, and hobbled by a massive welfare-warfare State. In short, there is little distinction between modern social democrats and the now-discredited "market socialists" of the 1930s who claimed to have solved the fatal flaw of socialism first pointed out by Ludwig von Mises; the impossibility of socialist planners calculating prices and costs, and therefore planning a functioning modern economy.

In the collectivist arsenal of the world of the 20th century there used to be various competing statist programs: among them, Communism, Fascism, Nazism, and Social Democracy. The Nazis and Fascists are long dead and buried; Communism is not quite fully buried but is still dead as a doornail. Only the most insidious remains: social democracy. Amidst a liberal culture captured by crazed leftist social programs, with a conservative movement lying supine before the social democrat neocons, only the paleo

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New Fusionists are rising up to thwart social democrat plans for total power, domestic and foreign.

But why are the regnant social democrats worried and trembling of the upsurge of the New Fusionism of paleo-conservatives and paleo-libertarians?—and believe me they are. It is obviously not because of our formal numbers or our limited access to funding. The reason is that the social democrats and their ilk know full well that we express the deepest albeit unarticulated beliefs of the mass of the American people.

Clever and cynical control of the opinion-molding media and of once-conservative money sources are what enable a remarkably small group of energetic social democrats to dominate the conservative movement and to battle, often successfully, for the levers of power in Washington. But they are vastly outnumbered if only the American people were clued in to what is going on, and that is why the social democrats fear our seemingly small movement. What we need to learn is how to mobilize the overwhelming support of the mass of Americans, and thus to undercut, or short-circuit, their domination by a small number of opinion-molding leaders.

The Litmus Test: Sidney Hook

If my characterization of necons and neo-liberals as essentially social democrats seems exaggerated, let us ponder the status of undoubtedly the most beloved figure among all these groups, as well as in the modern conservative movement: the late Sidney Hook. Long a fixture at the conservative Hoover Institution, Hook was everywhere, at every conservative intellectual gathering or organization, his every word and pronouncement hailed adoringly by all respectable folk from the AFL-CIO to the *New Republic* through *National Review* and points right. (Indeed the *New Republic*

has recently canonized Sidney in a worshipful elegy.) Sometimes it seemed that only Communists or thereabouts could possibly have a sour word to say for Hook.

What made Sidney Hook so universally beloved, so seemingly above the merest hint of criticism? Surely it was not his personality, which was neither particularly lovable nor charismatic. Indeed, in his enormously overpraised autobiography, *Out of Step*, Hook reveals himself as a petty, self-absorbed prig.

The book is filled with brusque and remarkably unperceptive dismissals of his old friends and acquaintances, none of whom seemed to be worthy of Hook's alleged wisdom and advice. Take, for example, Hook's portrayal of his long-time colleagues at *Partisan Review*, once the quasi-Trotskyite, modernist center of American literary and intellectual life. That chapter is typical of this dull, flat, and monotonic book. Every one of his old colleagues is depicted as an unintelligent, quasi-ignorant dolt, all of whom stubbornly failed to follow Hook's invariably wise counsel. Hook comes across as petty, peevish, narrow, and self-important, lacking either wit or insight, either into his friends or into the world at large.

Neither can Sidney's popularity be explained by the greatness or profundity of his intellectual contributions. In political philosophy, he was a simple-minded pragmatist and social democrat, solving all social problems with the fetish of "majority rule" and "democracy." Knowing the clichés of pragmatism and social democracy he mastered little else, whether of economics, esthet-

ics, history, or any other discipline.

What distinguished Sidney Hook was, first, that he was an ex-Communist, not since the 1930s like his colleagues, but way back, from the 1920s. In short, the older and precocious Hook was a Communist from his adolescence. Despite the

story in his self-serving memoir, he remained close to the CP for a long time, on into the late 1930s. Contrary to his grotesque title, Sidney all of his life was *In Step*, always being among the first to adopt the newest intellectual fashion. In that way, he showed himself to be a good "intellectual entrepreneur."

Communist, Hegelian, Deweyite, Trotskyite, defender

of World War II, anti-Communist after the war, *Partisan Review*nik, and finally extreme right-wing social democrat, Hook veered and tacked with the intellectual fashions, and on into the "left" fringes of neo-conservatism and the conservative movement. More honest than his colleagues, he referred to himself candidly until the end as a Marxist and as a socialist. It is a measure of the intellectual and political degeneration of the modern conservative movement that Sidney put no one off by his lifelong avowal of Marxism.

Thus, Sidney Hook, the Nestor of social democracy, was in his own unimpressive person the living embodiment of what the conservative movement has become: i.e., the disastrous subordination of every cherished principle to the slogan of "anti-Communism," and hence the permanent embrace of war and statism. One's attitude toward Sidney Hook, only recently deceased, therefore provides a convenient litmus test on whether someone is a genu-

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ine conservative, a paleo, or some form of neo. Needless to say, all the New Fusionists are anti-Hook to the core.

It is important to consider a final point on Hook and modern conservatism. In his odious book of the early Cold War, *Heresy Yes, Conspiracy No*, Hook set forth a theoretical justification for an assault upon civil liberties and academic freedom. Heresy is OK and deserves the right to dissent, maintained Hook, but "conspiracy"

is subversive and evil and has no rights, and therefore it is legitimate and necessary for government to crack down upon them.

Note that this is a crack-down upon speech, press, and teaching, and not upon actions such as concrete plots to overthrow the State. The overt use of this doctrine by Hook and the social democrats was to enable purges of Communists. But what was overlooked at the time was Hook's general theory of "conspiracy" which included, not simply Communists, but anyone whose mind, according to Hook, was enthralled to some sort of external cadre, some organization external to the person or to the university where he teaches. Such a theory could just as readily be used, e.g., to bar Jesuits from teaching as it would Communists.

All this fits with an important insight of paleocon political theorist and historian Professor Paul Gottfried: that the social-democrat/neocon assault on free speech and free press "absolutism," and their insistence instead on the importance of "democratic values," constitutes an agenda for eventually using the power of the State to restrict or prohibit speech or expression that neocons hold to be "undemocratic."

This category could and would

Ask not for whom the neocon bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

be indefinitely expanded to include: real or alleged Communists, leftists, fascists, neo-Nazis, secessionists, "hate thought" criminals, and eventually... paleo-conservatives and paleo-libertarians. God knows which individuals and groups might eventually come under the "undemocratic" rubric, and therefore become subject to neocon/social democrat crack-down. To paraphrase an old leftist-interventionist slogan of the 1930s and 1940s:

ask not for whom the neocon bell tolls; it tolls for thee.■

The late Murray N. Rothbard wrote the article from which this is extracted in January 1991, in the course of celebrating the "New Fusionism" of paleo-conservatives and paleo-libertarians in the John Randolph Club. It is just a taste of the forthcoming 1,000-page Rothbard Reader. Watch this space. Ed.

National Review Displaced?

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr.

People sometimes wonder why the *RRR* is so tough on the neoconservatives. But despite all claims, we are not brothers under the skin, but adversaries to the bone. We oppose the welfare state they want to guide and direct. We oppose the taxes they want to shift around from group to group. We oppose the wars in which they want to send American kids to die. We oppose the international government

they are erecting in the form of the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, Nafta, Gatt, and the G7.

Most of all, we oppose their version of political correctness, which requires us to be somewhere to the Right of Bill Clinton but definitely to the Left of Pat Buchanan. And under neoconservative political doctrine, we are never allowed to long for a return to the past, and certainly not to the pre-New Deal era. The neocons are ardent New Dealers and Roosevelt worshippers to a man.

Our opposition doesn't surprise them, of course. The reason the neocons decided to pitch their tents in the Republican Party was to channel the alleged extremism of the average Republican voter into a respectable social-democratic framework. That is why they turn their guns Right as well as Left. The party line they seek to enforce emanates from Manhattan and Washington, D.C., and practically nowhere else.

Lacking numbers and authentic grassroots support, the neocons exercise their power and influence not only through spending and scheming, but through constant public agitation. They thrive by being the sole voice of "conservatism" on the op-ed pages and in the magazine racks.

Despite their magazines and respectability, however, the neocons have lacked a weekly on the order of the *New Republic* (which they pretend to disagree with). That is the purpose of the *Standard*, a national weekly lavishly funded by soft-porn merchant Rupert Murdoch (who is also Newt Gingrich's *padron*), and the large neoconservative foundations originally set up by Old Right donors.

The first issue of the *Standard* is not due until the fall, but it's not too early to start despising it. The magazine is edited by William Kristol, the liberal media's favorite conservative. Working at the behest of his father and his sponsors, Bill