

Correspondence

Henry Wallace

To the Editor: Joseph Capalbo's review of my book, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century; Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948*, in the June, 1974, issue of *Worldview* omits important qualifying statements in my analysis, and as a result simplifies and exaggerates my treatment of both liberalism and Wallace. While, for example, I criticize liberalism and Wallace from a socialist perspective, Capalbo's contention (which he implies I ignore) that "the struggle of the late 1940's was to define what liberalism meant" is a major thesis of my book, and one that I work out at great length in chapters 6-8. Secondly, I argue that social liberalism (as against the corporate variety) failed on its own terms, not in regard to any ideal socialist standard. Thus I contend that the New Deal did not overcome the Depression short of war, and that the national political majority that the New Deal created was, with the institutionalization of the war economy, channeled into narrow interest group politics and conservative trade unionism.

Wallace, I maintain (and this holds for his supporters), "had the courage of his very contradictory convictions and fought [in the early postwar period] against men who offered the nation something far worse." My major points are that the inner contradictions within the varieties of American liberalism, Wallace's own substantial flaws as a political leader, the objective conditions within the domestic political arena, and above all the effects of the war upon American capitalism made it virtually impossible for Wallace and the groups that supported him for peace and reform to make an effective struggle against the cold war and the national anti-Communist consensus.

Furthermore, Capalbo's argument

that "to lump Wallace and Truman together because they were not socialists does a disservice to Wallace" would be true if I really did that. Rather, one of my major theses is that the "Century of the Common Man" program that Wallace advocated during and after the war was "fundamentally different" from the "American Century" program of imperialist expansion and domestic reaction that largely triumphed under Truman. (I also, at some length, contrast the difference between Roosevelt and Truman.) In a footnote that has been widely quoted in reviews I state that "Wallace's commitment to capitalism as a system made him ultimately ineffective. To say that it made him indistinguishable from those who crushed him is to make a mockery of history."

Actually, most of the points Capalbo makes in defense of Wallace and in criticism of Truman (the role of "personality," the blunderings of Truman and his cronies, the definitions of social and corporate liberalism) are made in my book. Capalbo's comment, therefore, that "Whatever disappointment the Left has with liberals or liberalism, it is also a disappointment with America and Americans" I find both insulting and incredible. America is neither liberalism nor capitalism. To say that its culture and its people are completely indistinguishable from its economic system and its ruling class is, I believe, to take a very superficial view of history.

Capalbo concludes that "Henry Wallace is depicted by Markowitz as a deluded liberal who, by the end of his life, became a sad and pathetic figure recanting all he had earlier believed." While this is true to a considerable extent, I also argue that there was and is much that is vital in the "Century of the Common Man" program that Wallace articulated in the 1940's. But in spite of the contemporary atmosphere of détente, I doubt that it can be achieved within the context of present-day American capitalism or through the development of the largely utopian "progressive capitalism" that Wallace envisaged. Rather,

I think that its future (if it is to have one) lies in the struggle for socialism in America, in the union of "incremental" reforms with the development of economic and political power within America's diverse working class. To say that, however, is not to denigrate Wallace or the struggle he made, but rather to understand its limitations. Eventually, I believe, Wallace may come to be seen as a kind of American Robert Owen, possessed of great strengths and great flaws, and worthy of critical respect from all those who would build an egalitarian and cooperative society in America.

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On the Matter of Sir Herbert's Anarchism

To the Editors: I belatedly came across a review by Benjamin Barber of Sir Herbert Read's *Anarchy and Order* in the March, 1972, edition of *Worldview*. The inaccuracy of the review, and Mr. Barber's distorted presentation of Sir Herbert's thought, compel me to respond, albeit briefly, in an attempt to defend this man, the neglect of whose anarchist philosophy is partly due to unfavorable treatment by critics such as Mr. Barber. I do hope that the following will serve both to indicate the viability of Sir Herbert's anarchism and to point out Mr. Barber's failure to portray the thrust of Read's social thought properly.

1. To begin with, let one fact be set straight. *Anarchy and Order: Essays in Politics* was published by Faber and Faber in 1954 and by Beacon Press, with Howard Zinn's introduction, in 1971. Neither of these publishing dates is seventeen years after the author's death, as Mr. Barber states, for Sir Herbert died in the summer of 1968.

2. Mr. Barber claims that Read's pacifism is of little relevance to the rabidly ideological total wars of recent times, and that because Read's

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