

Radical Education Project

REP is an effort by activists and intellectuals to develop a research, education, and publication center designed to strengthen the movement toward a new left in America.

REP invites the participation of all people who identify with the forces of radical democracy in America and abroad. We seek everyone who can make a contribution to the intellectual and educational work of research, speculation, writing, and speaking which is a necessary precondition to effective politics.

REP sees three central needs, and from them it defines three objectives:

1. The need for competent research on the issues of left program and theory. It is no recent revelation that the theoretical framework of the left needs development in terms of the contemporary character of imperialism, capitalism, mass culture, technology, abundance, and in terms of the experience of socialist revolutions and American reforms. Nor is it a new discovery that the left is starved for the hard data, documentation and concrete proposals necessary for effective political action. REP seeks fact and theory and program.
2. The need to educate the student activists who are now drawn toward the radical movement on "single issues" such as Vietnam or poverty, or on "gut reaction" against the whole of American society. Unless action is supported by education youthful recruits are soon lost. A chief job of the student movement is to provide activists with the intellectual equipment and tools of society analysis necessary to sustain radical value commitment once away from the campus. REP seeks to develop needed educational resources.
3. The need to extend the movement beyond students and the most dispossessed. While we can lament the obvious fact that a politically significant left does not exist in America, it is clear that to build such requires striking roots in the professions, among university faculties, in the arts and in many of the "mass organizations" like churches, unions, etc. Not only must the radical sympathies that lie in these diverse social locations be mobilized, but these people must be included and engaged in developing a radical program for the transformation of the particular conditions of their own life and work. REP will try to broaden the scope of the movement.

The narrowness of the movement prevents it from describing tasks which can define for a teacher radical work, as a teacher, for a researcher or a doctor or lawyer, or artist or writer, radical work that draws on his particular talents and affects his particular part of society. The consequence is that most people support occasional protests and otherwise withdraw into cynicism.

We believe that radicals must make their politics manifest in their daily life and work. There is no politically neutral activity. The use of one's talents, the direction of one's energies has effect. The greatest moral and political challenge facing leftists is how both to live in America, to work in the institutions which provide income and status-and yet to change America. We don't have simple answers. And we approach this problem humbly, as one which affects and torments all of us.

REP seeks to create a framework in which people can create for themselves radical vocations which both affirm their individual talents and training and infuse their work with a moral and political purpose.

Our Politics:

REP does not start with a political line. It recognizes that ideology, theory, is essential for a political movement. But ideology is not an intellectual overlay. It must develop organically out of the interaction between political experience and continual analysis. REP hopes to contribute to this process by encouraging analysis, by checking old theory against current fact and experience, and by distilling from experience new theory and new implications for action. We seek clarity of values, precision in social criticism, concreteness in projecting both Utopian alternatives and immediate reforms. We seek, by using all the tools of intellect and intuition, a view of the dynamics of history and social change which points to the forms of human intervention which can transform the present into a future fit for man.

While we do not start with a prepackaged ideology, we do begin with political convictions. Formulations are tentative, if only to avoid retreat to the slogans and cliches that have too long dominated the left and impeded self-analysis. Yet, the need for continual refinement of analysis does not imply permanent agnosticism, the postponement of assertion or the retreat from action.

We identify with a community and vision of democratic radicalism, humanistic, committed to individual freedom and the general welfare. There are beliefs shared by this community:

- that the great promise of American abundance is perverted and thwarted by the functioning of contemporary capitalism.
- that privilege, exploitation, inequality as components of class division of labor are no longer necessary, if they ever were, as conditions for abundance.
- that the possibility of still greater wealth for some Americans cannot justify a political economy based on the exploitation of other countries and the continued poverty and oppression of their populations.
- that the forms of democracy cannot be judged in the abstract apart from the actual freedom and humanness which they allow and the actual accountability of the holders of power to those affected by the decisions of power.
- that in America, where formal democracy is highly developed, the important decisions governing the course of social development and the quality of individual life and opportunity are not democratically made or accountable.
- that America is held in political and moral stalemate not only by sheer economic and political force, but also by a deadening ideology of national chauvinism, celebrating the American Way of Life, the American Dream, the American Century.
- that anti-communism is a central element in this ideological manipulation of belief, of what is true, what is good, what is possible, what is necessary. It provides the cover to "rationalize" the most brutal applications of military and economic power.

- that violent revolution is to be recognized and deplored for its high human cost; but that where the oppressed lack political power violent overthrow may be the necessary, though not sufficient, precondition to economic and political freedom.
- that issues such as the war in Vietnam or the oppression of the American underclass cry out for action. The work for long-term research, education, organization, theory, does not relieve the obligation for immediate, passionate protest.

These statements are certainly no catechism. They do begin to define a political perspective. If your disagreements are marginal-questions of qualifiers, semantics, omissions, implications, emphases-then we consider you a colleague and associate. We invite your participation in REP and in the collective work of clarifying belief and infusing action with analysis. If your disagreements are central and substantive, then we consider you audience and antagonist. We invite your participation in political debate.

REP is non-exclusionist. We reject the rhetoric of anti-communism and the myth of human affairs as a morality play between the forces of good and evil, capitalist freedom and communist slavery. We are open to all those who would feel comfortable in our company. Our criteria of judgment in matters of politics and belief will be facts, argument and values. The Scope of REP: The REP staff has prepared a prospectus for the project which describes in detail the range of subject matter which we see as relevant and for which we are recruiting competence. If you are interested in the project, we will send you this prospectus. Here we want simply to indicate the scope of our concern.

1. Values and Utopias: The foundation of a movement is its moral position, its aspiration, its assertion of the possible and the desirable. The value issues of democracy, individual freedom, and general welfare in industrial society and in revolutionary ferment are complex, but that does not make them less important. Political judgments are ultimately value judgments. But more than clarity about values in the abstract, we need to develop concrete models of the structure of institutions and social relations that would embody our shared ideals-the nature of work and income, the control of production, the political institutions necessary for participatory democracy, education, family life, etc.
2. Analysis of Myths and Realities: The major part of REP work, and the major intellectual and educational need of the movement, is the analysis of what exists, of the myths through which people understand or misunderstand reality, and of the contradictions between myth and reality which provide leverage for change. Special studies will be organized on:
 - the American Ideology (pluralism, corporatism, anti-communism, etc.)
 - the world reality: international political economy, western Europe, the third world, global conditions and issues.
 - problems and structures of the national political economy.
 - cultural institutions in tension.
 - mass media and the arts.
3. Strategies for Change: The movement must analyze not only the targets of change and the forces of motion in society, but also how to orient and develop its own resources in terms of those forces. REP projects five types of studies in this area:

- an analysis of social movements and revolution, both in America and elsewhere, in terms of their relevance to the contemporary situation.
- articulation and debate between various theoretical conceptions of political strategy.
- analysis of the movement itself and identifications of current strategic issues.
- an analysis of agents to reform and potential agents of change in America.

Finally we will try to identify the current issues of struggle in America and make concrete proposals relevant to the immediate aspirations of those in struggle, but which would expose the institutional blocks to significant change. Such issues requiring specific analysis and proposals include (besides the War and poverty): university education, urban planning and renewal, automation and employment, income, welfare, collective bargaining, economic development, etc.-

We are seeking people who have interests and competence in these areas to work with REP.