

*Economic
Justice: The American
Class System*

Declarations of
Independence.
Howard Zinn. 1990

In the summer of 1989, on the twentieth anniversary of the first human landing on the moon, I listened to a television discussion on space exploration. I heard a black woman poet, Maya Angelou, struggle, politely but with obvious frustration, against three famous male writers who spoke enthusiastically about spending more billions to send men to the moon and to Mars.

Against them, she seemed to be climbing the steepest mountain. She kept saying, Yes, I am excited, too, about exploring space, but where will we get money to help the poor people, black and white and Asian, here at home? The three men were perplexed by her stubborn refusal to join all the self-congratulation about the conquest of space.

In the summer of 1969 as preparations were made for landing men on the moon, a *New York Times* reporter wrote from Florida:

Within the shadow of the John F. Kennedy Space Center, the hungry people sit and watch. . . .

They sit and watch the early morning crush of cars filled with engineers and technicians move toward 'the Cape,' 18 miles north, in the feverish days before the moon launching on Wednesday morning.

"The irony is so apparent here," said Dr. Henry Jerkins, the county's only Negro doctor. "We're spending all this money to go to the moon and here, right here in Brevard, I treat malnourished children with prominent ribs and pot bellies."¹

In 1987 a full-page advertisement for Tiffany's, the famous jewelry store, appeared in the *New York Times*, with a photo of "the definitive sports watch in eighteen karat gold. Men's, \$9,800. Women's, \$7,800." Several months before, the *Times* carried a story, datelined East Hartford, Connecticut, with the following lead paragraph: "A 28-year-old man, described as despondent after a long period of unemployment, shot and killed his three young children today, then committed suicide with the same pistol."²

The unemployed man from East Hartford was not an oddity. In the year 1987 (according to a report of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives) one-fifth of the population in the United States—more than 50 million people—lived in families whose annual income averaged \$5,000 a year.

The success and failure of the United States of America lies in those stories. Staggering technological advance alongside poverty and hunger. A class of extremely rich people; another class of quite prosperous people (but nervous about the security of their situation); another class of men, women, and children living in desperation and misery within sight of colossal wealth. Who could be surprised that crime, violence, and drug addiction would accompany such contrasts? Or that psychic disorder, broken families, and alcoholism would accompany such insecurity?

We have a class system, unmistakably, in a country that promises "liberty and justice for all." Where is the *justice* of a society that has such extremes of luxury for some, misery for others? Or does the middle-class comfort with which most of us live in the United States prevent us from asking that question with genuine indignation?

Part of me holds on to the class anger that grew in me as a teenager when, watching the belongings of hardworking people put out on the street because they could not pay their rent, their eviction overseen by club-carrying policemen, I became conscious that something was terribly wrong.

My father had a fourth-grade education, my mother got as far as the seventh grade. They both worked very hard, but we lived in dirty buildings, roach-infested cold rooms, with no refrigerator, no shower,

no phone. I would come back from school in the winter's early dusk and find the house dark, no electricity, and the gas oven not working because the bills had not been paid. I did not believe it was the work of God, and after some thought I concluded that it was not an accident; it was systematic, recurring, man-made, and approved by the law.

The anger melts repeatedly as I enjoy the good things that this rich country supplies to two-thirds of its population, but the anger returns when I read that the U.S. Defense Department proposes to spend \$70 billion for still another war plane (a moral monster, called the Stealth Bomber) while the government cuts subsidies for public housing and 2 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands of children, have no place to live.

During the Reagan administration of the 1980s, the country's rich became richer and the poor, poorer. Reagan's attorney-general, Edwin Meese, said cheerfully he was not aware of people being hungry. Around the time he was saying this a Physicians Task Force reported that 15 million American families had an income of under \$10,000 a year, received no food stamps, and were chronically unable to get adequate food.³ A report by the Harvard School of Public Health in 1984 said that its researchers found that over 30,000 people had to beg for food to avoid starvation.

Since the end of World War II there has been a fanatic, almost insane willingness to spend billions on weapons, while millions of American families lack the basic necessities of life. The following story appeared in the *New York Times* in the summer of 1984:

An investigation of the Navy's newest and most technically advanced cruiser by the staff of the House Appropriations Committee has found the ship overweight, sluggish, and in possible danger of capsizing. . . . The *Ticonderoga* . . . cost \$1 billion. . . . The Reagan Administration plans to order between 18 and 24 of the ships in coming years.⁴

A few months before that report, a United Press International dispatch appeared in the press:

The Reagan Administration's budget includes welfare cuts for pregnant women and those who get aid under the program for the aged, the blind and the disabled, government officials said today. . . . The change could save \$1.5 million to \$3.5 million.⁵

In early 1990, as dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe made a "Soviet threat" extremely unlikely, President George Bush, in a speech to a local chamber of commerce, "warned that he would not support new domestic programs paid for with money taken from the military budget."⁶

When we read about people standing in long lines in Moscow hoping to buy food, the old arguments about socialism and capitalism don't seem useful any more. As we near the end of the twentieth century, it seems clear that neither the Soviet system nor the American system has been able to meet the fundamental needs of the entire population—to food, house, educate, and provide medical care. Perhaps we need to put aside that theoretical argument (an argument between two frozen bodies of thought, neither one fitting the complicated human situation of today's world) and just try to answer a few important questions.

What is economic justice? What are the proper goals of a good economic system? What is the reality of wealth, poverty, and class distinction in this country? And how do we get from this reality to something close to justice?

Rugged Individualism and Self-Help

Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." (Or as amended by women who gathered in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, at a women's rights convention: "that all men and women are created equal." Or as a possible children's convention might say: "that all children are created equal.")

A common reaction to Jefferson's phrase "created equal" is that it is just not so; people are endowed with different physical and mental capacities, and with different talents, drives, and energies. But this is a misreading of the Declaration of Independence. There is no period after the word "equal," but a comma, and the sentence goes on: "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, the first among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." In other words, people are equal not in their natural abilities but in their rights.

Jefferson said this was "self-evident," and I would think that most people would agree. But some *selves* do not think it evident at all. We know that Jefferson and the Founding Fathers, almost all of whom were very wealthy, did not really mean for that equality to be established

certainly not between slave and master, not between rich and poor. And when, eleven years after they adopted the Declaration, they wrote a constitution, it was designed to keep the distribution of wealth pretty much as it existed at the time—which was very unequal. But that is no reason for anyone to surrender those rights, any more than the ignoring of the racial equality demanded by the Fourteenth Amendment was reason for discarding that goal.

To say that people have an equal right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, means that if, in fact, there is inequality in those things, society has a responsibility to correct the situation and to ensure that equality.

Not everyone thinks so. One man whose thinking was close to that of the Reagan administration in the eighties (Charles Murray, *Losing Ground*) wrote enthusiastically about doing away with government aid to the poor: "It would leave the working-aged person with no recourse whatsoever except the job market, family members, friends, and public or private locally funded services."

It is a restatement of *laissez-faire*—let things take their natural course without government interference. If people manage to become prosperous, good. If they starve, or have no place to live, or no money to pay medical bills, they have only themselves to blame; it is not the responsibility of society. We mustn't make people dependent on government—it is bad for them, the argument goes. Better hunger than dependency, better sickness than dependency.

But dependency on government has never been bad for the rich. The pretense of the *laissez-faire* people is that only the poor are dependent on government, while the rich take care of themselves. This argument manages to ignore all of modern history, which shows a consistent record of *laissez-faire* for the poor, but enormous government intervention for the rich.

The great fortunes of the first modern millionaires depended on the generosity of governments. In the British colonies of North America, how did certain men obtain millions of acres of land? Certainly not by their own hard work, but by government grants. The British Crown gave one semifederal proprietor control of all of the land of Maryland. How did Captain John Evans of New York get an area of close to half a million acres? Simply because he was a friend of Governor Fletcher, who granted three-fourths of the land of New York to about thirty people.⁷

After the Revolutionary War, the new Constitution of the United

States was drafted by fifty-five men who were mostly wealthy slaveowners, lawyers, merchants, bondholders, and men of property. Their guiding philosophy was that of Alexander Hamilton, George Washington's closest adviser and the first secretary of the treasury. Hamilton wrote, "All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people. . . . Give therefore to the first class a distinct permanent share in the government."

The Founding Fathers, whether liberal like James Madison or conservative like Alexander Hamilton, felt the same way about the relationship of government and the wealthy classes. Madison and Hamilton collaborated on a series of articles (*The Federalist Papers*) to persuade voters in New York to ratify the new Constitution. In one of these articles (*Federalist #10*) Madison urged ratification on the grounds that the new government would be able to control class conflict, which came from "the various and unequal distribution of property." By creating a large republic of thirteen states, the Constitution would prevent a "majority faction" from creating trouble. "The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States."

What kind of trouble was Madison worried about? He was blunt. "A rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal distribution of property, or for any other improper or wicked project." Like the other makers of the Constitution, he wanted a government that would be able to control the rebellion of the poor, the kind of rebellion that had just taken place in western Massachusetts when farmers, unable to pay their debts, refused to let the courts take over their farms.

The Constitution set up a government that the rich could depend on to protect their property. The phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," which appeared in the Declaration of Independence, was dropped when the Constitution was adopted, and the new phrase, which became part of the Fifth Amendment and later the Fourteenth Amendment, was "life, liberty, or property."⁸

In 1987 the Mobil Oil Corporation celebrated the adoption of that phrase in ads appearing in eight major newspapers, reaching 50 million people:

Why was property so important as to be included with life and liberty as a fundamental right? Because the Framers saw it as one of the great natural

rights . . . to keep what one had earned or made—that ought to be forever secure from the tyranny of governments or any covetous majority.

That phrase "covetous majority" goes back to Madison's feared majority wanting "an equal division of property, or . . . any other improper or wicked project."

The new government of the United States began immediately to give aid to the rich. Congress passed a Fugitive Slave Act to enforce the provision in the Constitution that persons "held to Service or Labor in one State" who escaped into another "shall be delivered up" to the owner.

"Why make the slaveowner dependent on the government?" a slave, holding to the conservative idea of rugged individualism, might ask. "You want your slave back? You're on your own."

The first Congress also adopted the economic program of Alexander Hamilton, which provided money for bankers setting up a national bank, subsidies to manufacturers in the form of tariffs, and a government guarantee for bondholders. To pay for all those subsidies to the rich, it began to exact taxes from poor farmers. When farmers in western Pennsylvania rebelled against this in 1794 (Whiskey Rebellion), the army was sent to enforce the laws.

This was only the beginning in the history of the United States of the long dependency of the rich on the government.⁹ In the decades before the Civil War, great fortunes were made because state legislatures gave special help to capitalists. The builders of railroads and canals, needing large sums of money, were not told Raise your own capital. They became dependents of the government, using their initial capital not to start construction, but to bribe legislators. In Wisconsin in 1856 the LaCrosse and Milwaukee Railroad got a million acres free, after distributing about \$900,000 in stocks and bonds to seventy-two state legislators and the governor.

Altogether, in the decade of the 1850s, state governments gave railroad speculators 25 million acres of public land, free of charge, along with millions of dollars in loans. During the Civil War, the national government gave a gift of over 100 million acres to various railroad capitalists.

The first transcontinental railroad was not built by laissez-faire. The railroad capitalists did it with government land and money. The great romantic story of the American railroads owes everything to government welfare. The Central Pacific, starting on the West Coast, got 9 million acres of free land and \$24 million in loans (after spending

\$200,000 in Washington for bribes). The Union Pacific, starting in Nebraska and going west, got 12 million acres of free land and \$27 million in government loans.¹⁰

And what did the government do for the 20,000 workers—war veterans and Irish immigrants—who laid five miles of track a day, who died by the hundreds in the heat and the cold? Did it give their families a bit of land as payment for their sacrifice? Did it give loans to the 10,000 Chinese and 3,000 Irish, who worked on the Central Pacific for \$1 or \$2 a day? No, because *that* would be welfare, a departure from the principle of *laissez-faire*.

The historical practice in the United States of aid to the rich and *laissez-faire* for the poor was particularly evident in the 1920s, when the secretary of the treasury was Andrew Mellon. One of the wealthiest men in America, he sat atop a vast empire of coal, coke, gas, oil, and aluminum. Mellon cut taxes for the very rich, whose high living gave the decade its name "The Jazz Age." Meanwhile, many millions of Americans lived in poverty, with no aid from the government.¹¹

When the nation's economy collapsed after the stock market crash of 1929, a third of the labor force lost their jobs. Hunger and homelessness spread all over the country, and the historian Charles Beard wrote an essay called "The Myth of Rugged American Individualism."¹² He noted the hypocrisy of those who said the poor should make it on their own. He recounted the ways in which the government had aided the business world: regulation of the railroads and donation of hundreds of millions of dollars to improve rivers and harbors and to build canals. Government also granted subsidies to the shipping business, built highways, and gave huge gifts to manufacturers (at the expense of consumers) through higher and higher tariffs.

Beard pointed to the use of the nation's military force to help business interests around the world, a most crass violation of the *laissez-faire* philosophy. In our time, the dependence of very rich corporations on the military power of the United States and on its secret interventions in other countries has become very clear. In 1954, the CIA organized the overthrow of the elected president of Guatemala to save the properties of the United Fruit Company. In 1973 the U.S. government worked with the IT&T Corporation to overthrow the elected socialist leader of Chile, Salvador Allende. Allende had not been friendly enough to the foreign corporations that exploited Chile's wealth for so long.

In 1946 a secret air force guideline (which became public knowledge when it was declassified in 1960) said that the aircraft companies would

go out of business unless the government made sure they got contracts. Since that time certain major aircraft companies have depended totally for their existence on government contracts: Lockheed, North America, and Aero-jet.

The giant businesses depend on the government to arrange tax schedules that will, in some cases, permit them to pay no taxes, in other cases, to pay a much smaller percentage of income than the average American family. For instance, five of the top twelve American military contractors in 1984, although they made substantial profits from their contracts, paid no federal income taxes. The average tax rate for those twelve contractors, who made \$19 billion in profits for 1981, 1982, and 1983, was 1.5 percent. Middle-class Americans paid 15 percent.¹³

All through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, landlords have depended on the government to suppress the protests of tenants (for instance, the antirent movement of the 1840s in the Hudson River Valley of New York) and to enforce evictions (as in the thousands of evictions during the Depression years). Employers have depended on local government's use of police and the federal government's use of soldiers to break strikes—as in the railway strikes of 1877, the eight-hour-day strikes of 1886, the Pullman rail boycott of 1894, the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, the Colorado coal strike of 1913, the auto and rubber and steel strikes of the 1930s, and hundreds more. If those employers were truly "rugged individualists," as they asked their workers to be, they would have rejected government aid.

Furthermore, employers with the money to hire lawyers and to influence judges have depended on the courts to declare strikes and boycotts illegal, to limit picketing, and to put strike leaders in jail (as when Eugene Debs, the leader of the Pullman strike and boycott of 1894, was jailed for six months because he would not call off the strike).

Through the nineteenth century, according to legal historian Morton Horwitz, the courts made clear their intention to protect the business interests. Mill owners were given the legal right to destroy other people's property by flood to carry on their business. The law of "eminent domain" was used to take farmers' land and give it to canal companies or railroad companies as subsidies. Judgments for damages against businessmen were taken out of the hands of juries, which were unpredictable, and given to judges. Horwitz concludes,

By the middle of the nineteenth century the legal system had been reshaped to the advantage of men of commerce and industry at the expense of farmers,

workers, consumers, and other less powerful groups within the society. . . . It actively promoted a legal redistribution of wealth against the weakest groups in the society.¹⁴

Yet when someone advocates "a legal redistribution of wealth" on behalf of the poor, the cry goes up against "government interference" and for "rugged individualism."

After the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment's phrase "life, liberty, or property," which turned out to be useless to protect the liberty of black people, was used in the courts to protect the property of corporations. Between 1890 and 1910, of the cases involving the Fourteenth Amendment that came before the Supreme Court, 19 were concerned with the lives and liberties of blacks and 288 dealt with the property rights of corporations.¹⁵

The working conditions in American industry during that much-praised time of speedy industrialization were horrible and also legal. (The Senate's Committee on Industrial Relations reported that in the year 1914 alone, 35,000 workers were killed in industrial accidents and 700,000 injured.) This led to thousands of strikes, and to demands for protective legislation.

But when the New York legislature passed a law limiting bakery workers to a ten-hour day, six-day week, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1905 declared this law unconstitutional, saying it violated "freedom of contract."¹⁶ It took the economic crisis of the 1930s and the turmoil it produced to get the Supreme Court to reverse its stand and approve a minimum wage law in Washington, D.C. The Court in 1937 decided that the freedom of contract was not as important as the freedom to be healthy.¹⁷

However, the Supreme Court has been careful to keep intact the present distribution of wealth and the benefits in health and education that come from that wealth. In 1973 it decided a case where poor people in Texas, seeing that much less money was allocated for the schools in a poor county than in a rich one, sued for the right of poor children to equal funds for their education. The Court turned down their plea, saying that these children (mostly Mexican-American) were not completely denied an education, but just denied an *equal* education, and education was not a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution.¹⁸

Clearly, the same would apply to the right to food and medical care, which, like education, are not specifically mentioned in the Constitution

as fundamental rights. One constitutional lawyer, however, has argued that the Fourteenth Amendment's requirement that no state can deprive any person of "life" ("life, liberty, or property") could be used to provide an equal right of the poor to food, medical care, a job. Professor Edward V. Sparer of the University of Pennsylvania Law School has said:

We guarantee income to farmers for not producing crops. We guarantee subsidies to railroads and to oil companies. It seems to me only reasonable that we should guarantee the subsidy of life to those who are starving and to those without shelter or medicine—reasonable not only on humanitarian grounds, but because there is a 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the laws.¹⁹

Most of the accumulation of wealth is strictly legal. And if any question comes up about the legality of corporate behavior, lawyers are available to straighten out any accuser. The columnist Russell Baker once wrote, "There are plenty of rich men who have no yachts and others who have no Picassos. . . . Every last one of them, however has a lawyer. . . . Having a lawyer is the very essence of richness. . . . What we have here is a class structure defined by degree of access to the law."²⁰

When the rich commit the truly grand larcenies, which become too flagrant to ignore, their lawyers work out deals with the government and no one goes to jail, as would happen to a petty thief. For instance, in 1977 the Federal Energy Administration found that the Gulf Oil Corporation had overstated by \$79 million its costs for crude oil obtained from foreign affiliates. It then passed on these false costs to consumers. The following year the administration announced that to avoid going into a court of law, Gulf would pay back \$42 million. Gulf cheerfully informed its stockholders that "the payments will not affect earnings since adequate provision was made in prior years."²¹ One wonders if a bank robber would be let off if he were to return half his loot.

Jimmy Carter was president at that time. It seemed that liberal Democrats did not behave terribly different from conservative Republicans where wealthy corporations were involved.

Adam Smith's famous book *The Wealth of Nations*, published around the time of the American Revolution, is considered one of the bibles of capitalism. He spoke candidly on the class character of governments:

Laws and governments may be considered in this and indeed in every case as a combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods which would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor, who if not hindered by the government would soon reduce the others to an equality with themselves by open violence.²²

Around the same time, Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, an imaginative account of how government and laws came into existence, and concluded that

society and laws which gave new fetters to the weak and new forces to the rich, irretrievably destroyed natural liberty, established forever the law of property and of inequality, changed adroit usurpation into an irrevocable right, and for the profit of a few ambitious men henceforth subjected the entire human race to labor, servitude, and misery.

A roughly similar point was made in the 1980s, by a black taxi driver in Los Angeles, who was interviewed by a filmmaker about "democracy." The man laughed and said, "We have government by the dollar, of the dollar, for the dollar."²³

Surely we need to clear guilt from the air in the poorer districts of our cities (there are enough impurities there already) by asking: Why *shouldn't* people in need be dependent on the government, which presumably was set up exactly for the purpose of ensuring the well-being of its citizens? The words *promote the general welfare* do appear in the Preamble to the Constitution, even if ignored in the rest of it.

Indeed, is there such a thing in this complicated society of the twentieth century as true independence? Are we not all dependent on one another, and is that not a necessity of modern life? We all depend on the government for schools, garbage collection, protection against fire and theft, and many other things. Welfare is only one kind of dependency.

Talent and Need

Playwright and social critic George Bernard Shaw, in his book *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, after pointing out the evil effects of inequality in society (rebellion, resentment, envy, and violent conflict) wrote in favor of a simple equality of wealth.²⁴

Against him, there are those who argue that the poor have so little because they deserve so little and that wealth follows talent. That claim goes something like this: "If you have the right stuff, you'll be a success; if you don't have the stuff, you just won't make it, and that's the way it should be."²⁵

The economist Milton Friedman argues like that. He insists that in a capitalist system like the United States "the market" sees to it that people are paid "in accordance with product," in other words, according to how much they produce.²⁶ He seems to be living in a world of his own creation, far removed from this one. In his world, everything works beautifully by the laws of the market, and people get more if they produce more, less if they produce less.

But how do you measure this thing called *product* and decide who deserves more or less? Here is the executive whose corporation produces nuclear bombs or deodorants or plastic toys. Did *he* himself produce it or did a thousand workers produce it? How can you measure *his* contribution to the final product? Indeed, in our complex modern society, where things are produced by the participation of huge numbers of individuals, how can you measure the contribution of each one to the product?

Furthermore, if one corporation produces cigarettes, which are bad for people's health, and another produces antibiotics to cure people with infectious diseases, do you only care about the *quantity* of production in deciding the rightness of reward or should you be concerned with the *kind* of thing that is produced? Indeed, how can you measure contribution to product when these products are so vastly different? Why does the producer of jeweled dog collars deserve a hundred times as much as the producer of a single poem?

The United States is full of talented people, in many different fields, who have a difficult time making enough money to keep alive. Is the skilled machinist who is unemployed as a result of a layoff any less skilled than the one who is kept on? There are large numbers of artists—painters, musicians, writers, and actors—who have loads of talent but, because our government does not give out contracts to finance artistic performances as it gives out contracts to finance the performance of nuclear submarines, they cannot make a living. (In 1979 the average published author earned about \$4,775 from writing.)²⁷

While there are some talented people who make money, there are others equally talented who do not. It must be clear to anyone living in this country that there are many people with no talent—except the

talent to make money—who are very rich. In short, there is no logical relationship between talent and money.²⁸

Surely, all human beings deserve the fundamental requirements for living—housing, food, medical care, and education—regardless of their talents. Think of children, whose talents are not yet evident: are they to get food and medical care on the basis of their parents' talents? Is that fair?

And how are we to judge the monetary worth of this talent versus that other talent? Our capitalist society has made its decision on the basis of the *market*, meaning on the basis of what sells, not on the basis of logic or reason or morality. It has decided that the head of an advertising agency deserves ten times as much money as a skilled carpenter, and that a man who juggles papers as vice president of an aerospace company deserves a hundred times as much money as a gifted teacher of elementary school children.

The *market* has decided that housewives produce nothing; therefore, it pays them nothing. The welfare mother taking care of her children is, in fact, working. The wife who stays home with the children is giving her talent and energy to one of the most important jobs in society. But she has no rights to a share of society's wealth on the basis of her work. The market, and its supporters, have decided that.

As for incentives, talented people are not productive on the basis of money incentives. Indeed, when money determines what they do, their art may be distorted by what the market requires; the artists will draw what the lingerie company wants, not what he or she desires to do; the writer will produce advertising copy rather than a poem. Talented people exercise their talents for the pleasure of it and will be able to do this if only they can have their basic economic needs taken care of. Their incentive will not be money, but the satisfaction of doing what they are impelled to do and the respect of others for what they have done.

George Bernard Shaw discussed the issue of merit and talent:

Between persons of equal income there is no social distinction except the distinction of merit. Money is nothing: character, conduct, and capacity are everything. Instead of all the workers being levelled down to low wage standards and all the rich levelled up to fashionable income standards, everybody under a system of equal incomes would find her and his own natural level. There would be great people and ordinary people and little people, but the great would always be those who had done great things, and never the idiots whose mothers had spoiled them and whose fathers had left them

a hundred thousand a year; and the little would be persons of small minds and mean characters, and not poor persons who had never had a chance. That is why idiots are always in favor of inequality of income (their only chance of eminence), and the really great in favor of equality.²⁹

Shaw was arguing for equal incomes for all. This, of course, is a quite radical proposal. Like other radical proposals, it need not be taken literally; no one expects a program of exactly equal incomes to be put into effect even by the most revolutionary of governments. But the idea is shocking to us because we have been brought up in a society of such vastly different incomes that we cannot comprehend a different situation. There is a tendency to think that what we grew up with, what we have seen all our lives, is natural and inevitable. That any other way would be against human nature.

But we have very simple examples of where human beings have adjusted quickly to the idea of equal incomes. The family is the most obvious example: the members of the family get food, clothing, shelter, and medical care not on the basis of their work, their talent, or their contribution, but simply because they have the same basic needs. And no one would think of questioning that equality.

One might argue that a society of strangers is much different than a family. But we have the example of the Israeli kibbutz. People who have joined the kibbutz, even people who come from very competitive capitalist countries, yes, Americans, have adjusted quickly to the equality of the kibbutz, where people do different kinds of work, but all get the same benefits, their basic needs taken care of in the same way.

And while it may be thought that the jump from a family to a kibbutz is one thing, but the next jump to a nation makes the idea of egalitarianism impossible, one should consider the old factor of patriotism. Think of what power there is in patriotism and how that power has often been used for terrible purposes. Yet at the very time it was being used to carry on murderous wars, it revealed its power to unite the people of the country in egalitarian sacrifice.

During World War II, people left high-paying jobs to do civilian jobs that were necessary for the war. Or to go into the armed forces. If we put aside the class distinctions of officers and enlisted men, we can see that men, imbued with the idea they were fighting in a great moral cause, did not perform on the basis of their pay, but gave what they could, even their lives, for that cause.

In short, the capacity of human beings to give their talents, their

energies, and their all, not on the basis of monetary reward, but on the basis of some larger collective purpose, has been demonstrated again and again. That fact is encouraging to the idea of an equal distribution of wealth.³⁰

How Should Wealth Be Distributed?

There are variations on the theme of equal income. The Marxian idea was not to give everyone the same, but distribute the wealth of society according to *need*, because there are large families and small families, sick people and healthy people, children and old people, all with different needs to enjoy life. Marx did not see the possibility of doing this in the early stages of a socialist society, because production would not be developed enough, there would not be enough to go around. But:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished . . . after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!³¹

The argument has been made that the “needs” formula is not good for everything. Michael Walzer agrees that the formula is good for medical care and other things. But, he says, “Marx’s slogan doesn’t help at all with regard to the distribution of political power, honor and fame, leisure time, rare books, and sailboats.” And so he argues that there can be no one principle of distribution. “Equality requires a diversity of principles, which mirrors the diversity both of mankind and of social goods.”³²

This makes sense. But we don’t have to get into complicated arguments about *exactly* how all things will be distributed. It would be an enormous accomplishment to get agreement that the fundamental requirements of existence—food, housing, medical care, education, and work—be distributed according to need. It is shocking, it is irrational, it is unjust, that in a country as wealthy as the United States, any human

being living within its borders should not have these basic things. As of 1986, 37 million adults and children had no medical insurance. About 88 percent of these were working people or their families. Most of them did not earn enough to pay the high cost of individual medical insurance and many of them were not eligible for Medicaid (state medical payments for the poor) because they made just enough money to put them over the eligibility line.

For instance, a forty-one-year-old nurse’s assistant who had injured herself lifting a patient and couldn’t work was receiving \$500 a month in workmen’s compensation, not enough to pay for her own insurance and too much to qualify for Medicaid. Her medical bills piled up unpaid and she was being treated for depression at a community health clinic.³³

In 1989 the American Cancer Institute presented the results of a study that showed that lack of money results in higher rates of cancer, because it goes undetected for longer periods of time, and poor people do not get as good treatment as the rich.

The philosopher Robert Nozick has argued that *entitlement* should be the key to the way wealth is distributed. If, he says, someone has “holdings” (wealth, land, resources, and skills) that he has acquired “by legitimate means,” no one should take them away for any purpose, however desperate the need.

Does he mean that if I have a million dollars, which I got by legitimate means, then the government has no right to tax any of that to raise money to build homes for homeless people, or to provide medical insurance for the aged?

What does *legitimate* mean? Does it mean *legal*? Then the money accumulated by corporations through tax breaks obtained by paying lobbyists to get the right laws passed or paying accountants to make the best use of those laws is legitimate and government has no right to tax that to pay for Medicare. If *legitimate* means moral, we could argue that none of the great fortunes came about morally, certainly not without the exploitation of labor. Then, using Nozick’s principle, the way would be wide open, to distribute those fortunes in whatever way they would be useful to people in need.³⁴

If we traced the holdings of the rich back in history (Rockefeller, Morgan, Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Mellon, Astor, and Frick) we would encounter shrewdness, managerial ability, luck, ruthlessness, and violence. In Carl Sandburg’s poem “*The People, Yes*” we find the following exchange:

"Get off this estate."
 "What for?"
 "Because it's mine."
 "Where did you get it?"
 "From my father."
 "Where did he get it?"
 "From his father."
 "And where did he get it?"
 "He fought for it."
 "Well, I'll fight you for it."³³

Truth is it shouldn't matter how the rich got that way. If people have fundamental needs that are matters of life and death, why should we not, by taxation, take from people who will not suffer as a result of the taking, to meet those needs?

There seems to be no reasonable relationship between how hard someone works and that person's income. There are people who do no work and are poor, and people who do no work and are rich. There are hard workers among people who earn \$100,000 a year and hard workers among people who earn \$15,000 a year. How is one to measure the work done by a cleaning woman and the work done by the corporate executive whose office she cleans? In our culture, by definition, someone who makes a lot of money is working hard. That's a nice circular definition—it saves us the job of really examining what people do.

Farmers work hard and the market pays them so little they desperately need government help to survive. Housewives work hard and the market pays them nothing. Students can work hard too, but because we measure work by money earned, that doesn't count at all. The thought that people get paid according to their contribution to society does not stand up to more than a moment of examination. Among the lowest paid of workers are teachers, social workers, and nurses. Among the highest paid are the executives of corporations that make weapons.

I once put a question to a class of about 400 students: On what basis do people get paid in American society? What determines their income? Is it intelligence, hard work, or contribution to society? There was a lively, argumentative discussion, in which some students pointed to their parents as proof that hard work or contribution to society or special talent had resulted in prosperity—and others were skeptical. Finally, I asked for a show of hands of those who would claim that, in general, leaving room for exceptions, Americans got paid according to

their intelligence. Three or four hands were raised. Hard work? A similar response. Contribution to society? Again, just a few hands raised. Then I asked who believed it was "none of the above." Almost everyone raised his hand. It took only a little reflection, apparently, for these young people to see that the way income is distributed today does not follow any rational or just principle.

Coercion

Those who oppose distributing wealth on the basis of need often say they do not want the government to interfere in people's lives, which they call "coercion." But are people who lack the basic resources of society free from interference with their lives? Do they not face continuous interference from policemen, social workers, landlords, loan sharks, and employers? Are these not the people *most* vulnerable to interference with their lives? Perhaps the concern is only about interference in the lives of the rich, who might be taxed to redistribute wealth.

In fact, certain necessities of life can be provided with virtually no government interference. Retired workers get social security checks in the mail each month. That's hardly an intrusion on their liberty. The Social Security system seems to operate efficiently with a minimum of bureaucracy. If medical care were free, there would be much less interference in peoples' lives than with the present hodgepodge system. If college education were free of all the financial rigmarole connected with federal loans—if there were a civilian bill of rights for education as there was a GI Bill after World War II—there would be less interference than there is now.

The economist Milton Friedman worries about coercion.³⁵ No one should be compelled to share their greater wealth with someone else, he says. And he gives us examples. It is always interesting to see a scholar choose examples. Friedman chooses two. First, he says, let's imagine four Robinson Crusoes marooned on four neighboring islands, and one of them finds his island full of good stuff and the others are barely surviving. "Would the other three be justified in joining forces and compelling him to share his wealth with them? Many a reader will be tempted to say yes."

Of course. Especially if the survival of the other three is at stake, or they will be living in a miserable state, hungry, sick, and unhappy. Friedman doesn't like the reader's response to this example. So he moves

to another one, saying to the reader: "But before yielding to this temptation, consider precisely the same situation in different guise." (Let's see if this will be *precisely* the same situation.) "Suppose you and three friends are walking along the street and you happen to spy and retrieve a \$20 bill on the pavement. It would be generous of you, of course, if you were to divide it equally with them, or at least blow them to a drink. But suppose you do not. Would the other three be justified in joining forces and compelling you to share the \$20 equally with them? I suspect most readers will be tempted to say no."

Friedman has moved his example from the issue of survival or quality of life to the issue of a few dollars or a drink! And so he entices his reader to say no, such coercion is unjustified. As it is, in that case.

But why doesn't he give an example that will accurately reflect the serious question under discussion? Why doesn't he ask if the lawyer Roy Cohn (who made \$100,000 a year in salary and perhaps a million dollars a year in "expenses" and whose contribution to society seems to have been more negative than positive³⁷) should have been "coerced" (taxed) into giving up half of his phony expenses and half of his overblown salary? That tax money could then be used so that old people living in Cohn's city could live in their own apartments, with the help of various paid social workers, rather than having to live in an institution where there is not enough help to push their wheelchairs down to the dining room.

Let's grant Roy Cohn was extraordinary, but not alone in his use of the tax system to retain a luxurious life-style. We could ask the same question about more ordinary wealthy taxpayers. A report of the House Ways and Means Committee in 1989 showed that in the period 1979-1987 (the last two years of the Carter administration and the first six years of the Reagan administration), the poorest fifth of the population had their family income decrease by 9.8 percent (the report said this change was affected by the fact that "more jobs now pay poverty level wages or below"—so it is not simply a matter of people on welfare). In the same period, the wealthiest fifth of the population *increased* their family income by 15.6 percent.³⁸

Now would it be coercion for the government to tax that rich fifth by the amount of its gain and contribute this to the lowest fifth? Well, all taxation is coercion, so the real question is when is it just and when is it unjust? To pretend that leaving alone the present disparities in wealth increases our freedom hardly makes sense, unless you interpret the "our" to mean only the wealthiest portion of society.

Is the working class free from coercion under the capitalist system? Friedman describes our "complex enterprise and money-exchange economy" as one in which "individuals are effectively free to enter or not to enter into any particular exchange" and the employee "is protected from coercion by the employer because of other employers for whom he can work."³⁹

Is this a realistic picture of the work situation for most people in the United States? Perhaps it describes high-level professionals who have a choice of employers. It does not describe secretaries, factory workers, waiters, or even teachers and social workers and certainly not most people in the arts. Most people who work for a living have zero or limited choice of their employers. The permanent body of unemployed people ensures that employers have the upper hand; whatever freedom there is seems to be unevenly distributed.⁴⁰

Incentives and the Profit Motive

One of the ways in which the corporate rich protect their incomes is to warn all of us that if they are taxed more heavily, (to give help to poorer people), they will lose their incentive to produce. The motive of high profit, they say, is necessary to keep the economy going.

It is an interesting argument, because it is usually coupled with the statement that if we help the poor they will have no incentive to work. In other words, monetary incentives will make the rich work harder and the poor work less. Frances Piven and Barbara Ehrenreich, writing about the welfare state, respond to this kind of thinking by asking, Do the poor and the rich have different human natures?⁴¹

In the early years of the Reagan administration when tax cuts for corporations were proposed, presumably to stimulate business, some enterprising reporter dug up Department of Commerce figures showing that from 1970 to 1983 periods of lower corporate taxes did not at all result in higher capital investment, but, in fact, much lower investment.⁴²

Japan in the 1970s and 1980s came to be admired throughout the world as a model of industrial efficiency and productive growth. Yet according to economist Robert Kuttner, Japan had the highest effective rates (that is the real rate paid, rather than the one called for by law) of corporate income tax—40 percent of corporate profits, compared to less than 15 percent in the United States.⁴³

The issue of incentives is complicated. Different groups of people in

the economy respond differently to money incentives, and individuals respond differently also. There are undoubtedly some kinds of economic activity that will go on or not go on depending on the rate of profit. But others will go on, so long as there is *some* profit, because it is not easy to move capital from one enterprise to another.

Certainly, some of the most useful things done in society are done by people whose monetary incentives are very low: teachers, social workers, nurses, musicians, actors, and writers. There are many people who do their work because they love it. And the quality of their work will not change because their salaries go up or down. However, they must be given some *minimum* economic reward, enough to allow them to survive, in order for them to continue their work.

How about doctors? If doctors who now make \$100,000 a year would only make \$60,000 a year, would the quality of their work get worse? Surely doctors do their best because of the motivation that brought them into medicine in the first place—the enormous satisfaction in making people well. Those who entered the profession to become rich are probably not the best in their field. The fortunes that some doctors make distort their interest—perhaps induce them to do unnecessary but expensive surgery or to spend their time doing cosmetic surgery for the rich instead of life-saving medicine for the general population.

What is usually missed in discussions on incentives is that there are all sorts of incentives other than *money* to bring out the best work in people: the respect and admiration of others and an increased self-respect and self-satisfaction. George Bernard Shaw pointed out that while there are menial and unsatisfying jobs that are not admired and don't give a feeling of great accomplishment, people will do them with the proper incentive of *freedom*—that is, people asked to do such necessary jobs should perhaps be given a twenty-hour week as incentive.

A good society will use incentives—money and time, for example—in all sorts of imaginative ways to bring out the best in people and get the most accomplished for society. But to reward the rich with the incentive of high profits, no matter what work they do or what contribution they make to society, and to punish the poor by withholding the necessities of life (a disincentive, to force them to work) is both unjust and inefficient.

It is true that the profit motive, in the history of capitalist development, has stimulated great industrial progress. Karl Marx, even while he looked forward to the disappearance of capitalism, acknowledged that it had brought the greatest increase in the productive forces of

society, that it was a “progressive” stage in history. And it produced many useful, worthwhile things.

But it has also had the most terrible human consequences. In 1984 a company making an intrauterine birth control device—the Dalkon Shield—came before a court in Minneapolis to make a monetary settlement for complaints from women who had been badly injured internally by the device. According to the judge, addressing the company officials:

Under your direction your company has in fact continued to allow women, tens of thousands of them, to wear this device—a deadly depth charge in their wombs, ready to explode at any time. . . . The only conceivable reasons you have not recalled this product are that it would hurt your balance sheet.”

The drive for profit is ruthless. Because its chief motive is making money, it may not matter *how* it makes this money, what it produces, and what happens to human beings in the process. The capitalist drive for profit is based on what has been called “rational self-interest,” and the idea is that if everyone pursues their rational self-interest, the economy will grow and the world will be a better place.

However, as one economist said, “If . . . it pays to pollute a lake, then rational self-interested agents will pollute. If crime is a rational response to poverty wages, we can expect crime to rise.”⁴⁴ Certainly, the most terrible violence, and the proliferation of dangerous drugs, including tobacco and alcohol, are provoked by the profit motive.

In the year 1989 the new American president, George Bush, announced a “war” on drugs. He was talking about the illegal traffic in cocaine and similar substances. He did not speak of tobacco, which brings immense profits to certain huge corporations and which is far more murderous than cocaine. Indeed, American tobacco companies, not content with poisoning people in this country, sought and received government help to push tobacco onto foreign markets, especially in Third World countries. All under the guise of “free trade.”

The slogan *free trade* recalled the “open-door policies” of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Western countries forced China to accept their products and when England fought the Opium War to compel the Chinese to allow British companies to bring opium into China. In 1989 the United States was putting pressure on Thailand, which banned tobacco, to accept American tobacco exports. But there

was a strong dissenting voice from Dr. C. Everett Koop, who was leaving his job as surgeon general of the United States, in obvious disagreement with many government policies. Koop told a public hearing in Washington:

Years from now, I'm afraid that our nation will look back on this application of free trade policy and find it scandalous, as the rest of the world does now. . . . At a time when we are pleading with foreign governments to stop the export of cocaine, it is the height of hypocrisy for the United States to export tobacco.⁴⁶

Koop ended his testimony with devastating statistics. "Last year, in the United States, 2000 people died from cocaine. In the same year, cigarettes killed 390,000 people."

The reckless drive for profit also produces toxic chemicals that cause cancer. They pollute our rivers, poison our air, and dirty our oceans.⁴⁷ Enormous numbers of fish are dying. Birds are dying. The rush of the automobile industry for profits (why do we need 100 million vehicles in a country of 250 million people?) has loaded the air with chlorofluorocarbons and produced the greenhouse effect, which may have catastrophic effects on the entire world in the next generation. Profits also stimulate the war industries, producing nuclear and other weapons.

Those who want government to stop interfering with "the market," with corporate profit, or with poverty should look back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to what happened before the labor laws were passed. I have described in *A People's History of the United States* the conditions in American cities at the end of the Civil War:

The cities to which the soldiers returned were death traps of typhus, tuberculosis, hunger, and fire. In New York, 100,000 people lived in the cellars of the slums; 12,000 women worked in houses of prostitution to keep from starving; the garbage, lying two feet deep in the streets, was alive with rats. In Philadelphia, while the rich got fresh water from the Schuylkill River, everyone else drank from the Delaware, into which 13 million gallons of sewage were dumped every day. In the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, the tenements fell so fast, one after another, that people said it sounded like an earthquake.

Between the Civil War and World War I, the profit system produced remarkable results in the industrialization of the country. It also pro-

duced inhuman living conditions. The sweatshops of New York, where the new waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe went to work, were described by the poet Edwin Markham in 1907:

In unaired rooms, mothers and fathers sew by day and by night. . . . And the children are called in from play to drive and drudge beside their elders. . . . Is it not a cruel civilization that allows little shoulders to strain under these grown-up responsibilities, while in the same city, a pet cur is jeweled and pampered and aired on a fine lady's velvet lap on the beautiful boulevards?⁴⁸

With profit the motive, 500 garment factories sprang up in New York. A woman described the conditions of work in those days of laissez-faire, saying there were

dangerously broken stairways . . . windows few and so dirty. . . . The wooden floors that were swept once a year. . . . Hardly any other light but the gas jets burning by day and by night . . . the filthy, malodorous lavatory in the dark hall. No fresh drinking water . . . mice and roaches. . . .

During the winter months . . . how we suffered from the cold. In the summer we suffered from the heat. . . .

In these disease-breeding holes we, the youngsters, together with the men and women, toiled from seventy and eighty hours a week! Saturdays and Sundays included! . . . A sign would go up on Saturday afternoon: "If you don't come in on Sunday, you need not come in on Monday." . . . We wept, for after all, we were only children.⁴⁹

One wonders how those children would have responded to the bland claim that they lived in "capitalism and freedom," that they were, as Milton Friedman described the system, "protected from coercion by the employer because of other employers for whom he can work."

Was it not the profit motive that caused the employers of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company of New York City, in the year 1911, to keep the doors locked during working hours so that the company could keep track of its employees? On March 25 of that year a fire broke out, and with the doors locked, the workers on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors were trapped. They burned to death or jumped from windows; 146 of them, mostly women, died.

In the year 1904 approximately 27,000 workers were killed on the job, in manufacturing, mining, railroads, and agriculture. The need to save

money and to increase profits, led one employer to substitute lead powder for talcum to mark the designs in his embroidery factory. A report of the New York State Factory Commission in 1912 told of the effect of this on one employee:

Sadie had been a very strong, healthy girl, good appetite and color; she began to be unable to eat. . . . Her hands and feet swelled, she lost the use of one hand, her teeth and gums were blue. When she finally had to stop work, after being treated for months for stomach trouble, her physician advised her to go to a hospital. There the examination revealed the fact that she had lead poisoning.

The conditions of that time produced bitter criticism of the profit system, of capitalism. The idea of socialism had not yet been corrupted by Soviet Russia. Socialism was the dream of many—Eugene Debs, Upton Sinclair, Jack London, Helen Keller, and more than 100,000 who joined the Socialist party. There were over 1,000 socialist officeholders in over 300 towns and cities. Perhaps a million people read the socialist newspapers.

Jack London turned from his popular adventure stories to write a political novel, *The Iron Heel*. Through his characters, he comments on the economic system: "Let us not destroy those wonderful machines that produce efficiently and cheaply. Let us control them. Let us profit by their efficiency and cheapness. Let us run them for ourselves. That, gentlemen, is socialism."

The great worldwide interest in socialism—which continues, despite the way the original dream has been distorted in a number of countries around the world—is due, I believe, to what people have seen happen in capitalism—that the profit motive has had some terrible human consequences. People turned to socialism because of the belief that human beings—once their essential needs are taken care of—can be motivated to work and create by considerations other than monetary profit: self-respect, the respect of others, compassion for others, and community spirit.

Moving Toward Justice

The American economic system is enormously productive, but shamefully wasteful and unjust. The contrasts between rich and poor, the

flaunted luxury of the very wealthy alongside decaying cities, the pressure on everyone to make lots of money—there must be a connection between all that and the great number of violent crimes in this country, the frighteningly widespread use of drugs, the alcoholism, the mental illness, and the broken families.

The odds are stacked heavily against the poor—black and white. There was a study in the 1970s by the Carnegie Foundation, on the futures of American children. Looking at two children, both with average IQs but with different backgrounds, the researchers found that one of them, the son of a lawyer in the top tenth of the income structure, was four times as likely to enter college as the other, son of a custodian in the bottom tenth. He was twelve times as likely to complete college, and twenty-seven times as likely to end up in the top tenth of income at middle age.⁵⁰

We need fresh thinking, new approaches. The old formulas for socialism have been discredited by the experience of "socialism" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But the standard praise of capitalism is not warranted by the human results of the American system. On the other hand, the mixed socialist and capitalist economies of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and New Zealand have succeeded in achieving a certain degree of economic justice, a high standard of living available, without too much inequality, to the entire population.⁵¹

We need to start figuring out the arrangements, the principles, the practices, and the forms of production and distribution that will give our economic system both efficiency and justice, thinking boldly and bypassing the old ideologies. Economics is very complicated, even for economists. You can tell that by how often they are surprised by a sudden turn of events—the stock market collapses, the dollar plunges or rises, foreign trade diminishes or increases. And how, when they are interviewed on television to give the public their wisdom, they speak glibly but seem as mystified as everyone else.

It is up to the public to say to the technicians—the economists, the planners, and the managers—what the public wants done and what principles to follow. Let the experts figure out *how* to do it and have the public check up constantly on their suggestions. The people of the nation will need to reach some consensus (we will not get unanimity, because there are powerful interests opposed to change) on certain goals.

What might these goals be?

A real "war on poverty" is required (that was the phrase used by the

government in the sixties, but it was a minor skirmish). The objective should be to make sure that every man, woman, and child in the United States has adequate food, decent housing, free medical care, a free college education if they want it and can't afford it. We need a real war on pollution: to clean up the air, the rivers, the lakes, and the beaches in a few years, in time for the next generation to enjoy the fresh beauty of nature.

There should be useful work guaranteed for everyone who wants to work. And every kind of work, however unskilled or however unwanted by "the market" (I am thinking of dishwashers, janitors, poets, painters, musicians, actors, and housewives among others) should be paid close to the average wage of working people in the country.

All these things can be done, because this country is brimming over with natural and human resources that have been either unemployed or badly employed. There are enormous parts of the national wealth—millions of people, hundreds of billions of dollars—used for absurd purposes, to produce stupid luxuries or vicious weapons.

Corporate profit, not social need, has determined what shall be produced. Huge amounts of steel, concrete, and human labor have gone into the building of skyscrapers in every city, which are used for banks, insurance companies, offices, or luxury apartments. Those ingredients could have gone into the building of homes in every city, for families in desperate need of a good place to live, except for the profit motive of builders.

That's where society comes in—through the federal government or local government or independent housing authorities—who will pay the builders and then, if necessary, subsidize the rents, so that we have no more homeless people or slum tenements in this country.

This will require an almost total turnaround in priorities and a measure of national and local planning. The money is there (\$300 billion a year for useless or wrongly used weapons), but it needs to be used to subsidize the establishment of a decent standard of living for every person and the turning of our cities and countrysides into beautiful places.

Such subsidies are not something new in this country. We already do this with our military establishment. We subsidize everything in the military—the buildings, the weapons, the transport systems, and the personnel—and pay for it with public funds. We plan for what is needed and it all comes out of the national budget, paid for by taxes. We have a kind of socialism for military needs and capitalism for civilian needs.

Our nation experimented with a sort of "socialism" in the thirties when, desperately trying to escape economic disaster, the government planned and subsidized activities that the market, that is the profit seekers of the business world, would not pay for. The government paid young people to plant trees and build roads. It paid men to clean up parks and streets. It paid artists to paint murals on public buildings all over the country. It subsidized theater people, who put on exciting plays, and writers, who wrote beautiful guidebooks for the states.⁵²

That kind of planning, the use of public funds for good purposes, did not diminish our liberties. Democracy was enhanced by bringing large numbers of people into useful service, by making the work of artists available to people who never could afford them.

There is no need to do away with private business or with profit or with competition. They can all play their part in an organized national economy that has a certain critical measure of planning and large areas of free enterprise.

At some point the planning would need to become global, because it is impossible to confine economic justice within national boundaries. The enormous disparity between the richest and the poorest countries cannot continue if we care about justice. It was estimated in the mid-1980s that in every year 15 million children around the world died of malnutrition or sickness.⁵³

It will take a massive redistribution of resources to do away with this situation. The international organizations have so far been dominated by the national interests of the superpowers. The World Bank, for instance, has granted loans to Third World countries on condition that they use it to grow cash crops, to sell abroad and thus make money to pay off their foreign debts. The result has been less food grown for the consumption of their own people and mass starvation.⁵⁴

In 1974 U.S. food aid was cut off to Bangladesh and other countries. By that summer Bangladesh could not pay for any more food because the price of wheat had tripled. It had contracted to buy 230,000 tons of wheat from the United States. The wheat was ready and the ships were ready to load it, but Bangladesh had run out of money and the wheat was not sent. A few months later there was famine and mass starvation in Bangladesh. The economist Emma Rothschild comments: "United States officials observed these commercial proceedings, but the Government chose not to intervene in the workings of free enterprise."⁵⁵ It seems clear that, if justice is to be done, the rigid ideological insistence on "free enterprise," the fears of planning, of socialism, of

interfering with the market, will have to be replaced by a willingness to plan, to experiment, and to take care of people's needs outside the money system.

President Reagan, early in his administration, was part of a "North-South Summit" of twenty-three nations meeting in Mexico to discuss the problems of poor nations. Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes related an exchange between Reagan and the leader of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere:

Mr. Reagan . . . still insists that private enterprise do the job from scratch, which is not possible. When Reagan said that the problems of agriculture and food production could be solved only by private enterprise, Nyerere immediately shot back: "But Mr. President, you have the most heavily subsidized agriculture in the world. . . . It is an agriculture propped up by state interventionism, so what are you talking about?"⁵⁶

The fear of the United States of socialist planning, the insistence that Third World nations depend on private enterprise, was reemphasized by President George Bush almost as soon as he took office in early 1989. Clearly, there is much resistance, among powerful interests devoted to making money, to the kinds of bold steps needed to bring about justice inside nations and in the world. Citizens of the various countries, rich and poor, will have to organize themselves as a force to turn the national and world priorities toward equality and economic democracy.

Reason, Representation, or Struggle?

In 1971 Harvard University philosopher John Rawls wrote *A Theory of Justice*, which led to years of discussion among political philosophers.⁵⁷ Rawls believes there is too much inequality, and he has worked out an elaborate philosophical argument for a just distribution of wealth.

He omits, however, one crucial problem: the real world of harsh conflict that surrounds every issue of economic justice. That real world is one of class difference and class conflict. A reasoned argument is not enough to persuade a billion-dollar corporation.

The establishment tries very hard to shut that out of public consciousness. During the 1988 presidential campaign candidate George Bush said, "I must say that I've been disturbed, as I've witnessed my opponent's campaign over the several past weeks, at the increasing appeals to class conflict. In my view, there is no place in American public life

for philosophies that divide Americans one from another on class lines and that excite conflict among them."⁵⁸

Confronting that real world of class conflict requires two things. First, we need to get a consensus of agreement among *most* people on the goal of basic equality. A minority of affluent, powerful opponents will oppose this. This is a class society and there will be class conflict. But if we can get a consensus among *most* people, they might organize themselves in such a way as to win that conflict.⁵⁹

The consensus will be on the principle of equality. I'm not speaking of perfect equality; it's impractical and worrisome to many people to paint a picture of a perfect *leveling* of the situation. I mean equal access for every human being on earth to the fundamental necessities of existence: food, housing, medical care, education, civil liberties, useful work, and respect, with these things distributed according to need. And beyond that, a reasonable equality in income, using small differences as incentives when needed.⁶⁰

Getting that consensus is not easy in a society where the dominant ideology is shaped by the people who have the wealth and the power to overwhelm the mass media and the educational system with their ideas. It will be necessary (this essay is such an attempt) to show the falseness of that ideology, with all its arguments against a radical reorganizing of society: the glorification of the present system ("the market . . . the profit motive . . . the money incentive . . . entitlement to wealth"), the putting down of the poor and less financially successful people ("they're lazy . . . they're not intelligent . . . they deserve what they get"), and the use of scare words ("socialism . . . communism").

In fact, we are not impossibly far from having such a consensus. During the 1988 presidential campaign, a *New York Times*/CBS News poll reported:

Three-fourths of the public favors spending more for education and anti-drug programs. More than two-thirds favor more spending for the homeless, and half favor spending increases for daycare. But fewer than one-fifth of those surveyed want to spend more on military programs.⁶¹

One of the things said most often about the United States is that there is very little class consciousness. But there is strong evidence that this view is mistaken. Back in 1964 the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan asked people, "Is the government run by a few big interests looking out for themselves?" About 26 percent of those

polled answered yes. But by 1972, 53 percent answered yes. And long after the war was over, in 1984, the year that Ronald Reagan was reelected president, a poll by the Harris organization showed that 74 percent of the public believed "a small group of insiders run the country."⁶²

Truth is, *class consciousness* is a slippery term, making it hard to decide whether American workers are class conscious. Most blue-collar and white-collar workers certainly know that there are employers and workers, rich and poor, powerful and powerless and that "a small group of insiders run the country." They have not translated this consciousness into the formation of a working-class party such as in England, France, Italy, Spain, etc. They have suffered many defeats at the hands of the employer class. But the fact that there is consciousness of their situation creates a basis for future action.

For his book *Working*, Studs Terkel spent three years interviewing hundreds of people: farmers, miners, receptionists, telephone operators, actors, truck drivers, garbage men, mechanics, janitors, policemen, welders, cabdrivers, hotel clerks, bank tellers, secretaries, supermarket workers, athletes, musicians, teachers, nurses, carpenters, and firemen. He found pride in work, but also "a scarcely concealed discontent" and, compared to his interviews of workers in the thirties, more people who said, "the system stinks."⁶³

It seems that very many people understand the existence of injustice and the need for change. But they consider themselves helpless, and this is probably the greatest obstacle to social change.

History comes in handy in this situation. People can learn from the history of social struggle (a history that is largely omitted in the traditional learning that takes place in our schools and in the society) how seemingly powerless people were able to bring about changes in their own situation and changes in public policy. The history of the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the women's movement, and the labor movement can inspire people to create new movements for change.

History does show us how hard it is to challenge those in authority, those with great wealth and great power. It shows how many battles have been lost in class conflict in this country. But we also learn that at certain times in history, surprising, unpredicted victories became possible when ordinary people organized, risked, sacrificed, and persisted.

Those victories for social justice did not come through the normal workings of the political system. It is useful, even necessary, to work

through the regular channels as far as they can take you. But they have never taken us very far. The very poor seem to understand that. In 1969 a Senate committee was investigating hunger in the South. A black woman was on the stand and Senator Ellender of Louisiana was questioning her. She suddenly said to him, "I want to ask you a few questions."

SENATOR: Don't get smart with me!

WOMAN: How come you can't do anything for us?

SENATOR: We just make the laws.

WOMAN: What good is the laws?

SENATOR: It is up to the Executive Branch to enforce them. There are three branches of government, Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and . . .

WOMAN (INTERRUPTING): You got all those branches of government to go through before something gets done. No wonder we starving!

However, the establishment of representative government, voting for Congress and for the president, created the possibility (although the political system itself would be controlled by money) of a legislative response to public pressure. And it was such pressure—coming out of social struggle—that brought about whatever economic reforms we see now in our economic system. Indeed, there is no country in the world that can match the United States in the number and intensity of labor struggles.

Take the eight-hour day. It was achieved for most workers, not through the legislative process, but through many years of bitter struggle. Hundreds of thousands of workers won the eight-hour day by going on strike long before it was enacted into law in the 1930s. In the year 1886 when the labor movement decided to make its big push to reduce the working day to eight hours, there were 1,400 strikes, involving 500,000 workers.

The period between 1877 and 1914 saw a series of bitter labor struggles take place throughout the country in rebellion against intolerable working conditions and starvation wages. In 1877 there was a wave of railroad strikes in the east, suppressed finally by state militia and federal troops at the cost of a hundred lives.

In 1894 the Pullman Strike tied up the nation's railroads until it was crushed by court injunctions and soldiers. In 1892 and again in 1902 there were strikes in the steel industry. In 1913–1914 there was the long, violent strike in the coal country of southern Colorado. The workers were

almost always defeated by the power of the corporation, with the collaboration of the government.

In 1912, however, came a rare labor victory, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in the strike of mostly immigrant textile workers, many of them women, against the powerful American Woolen Company. Strikers were beaten, jailed, and killed. Their children went hungry. But they organized mass picketing, chains of 7,000 and 10,000 men and women in endless picket lines. The company finally surrendered and agreed to give higher wages and overtime pay.

In the 1880s and 1890s farmers all over the United States, pushed to the wall by banks, railroads, and merchants, organized a vast network of alliances that became the Populist Movement, involving in one way or another several million farm families, north and south. They elected candidates to state legislatures and to Congress.

In response to these movements and out of the desire of the establishment to make its control more secure, certain reforms took place in the twentieth century. Congress passed laws to regulate the railroads. It set up a Federal Trade Commission supposedly to control the growth of monopolies. There was a constitutional amendment to enable the rich to be taxed more heavily through a graduate income tax. A number of states passed laws regulating wages and hours and providing for safety inspection of factories and compensation for injured workmen.

In the 1930s, in the midst of economic crisis, the country was in turmoil. There were general strikes tying up San Francisco and Minneapolis; riots of the unemployed; organizations of tenants all over the country stopping evictions; and massive strikes in the steel, rubber, and auto industries. There were more than 500 sit-down strikes in 1937 alone.⁶⁴

The reform legislation of the New Deal—unemployment compensation, Social Security, work programs, minimum wages—was very much a reaction, not only to the economic situation, but to that wave of strikes and the threat of growing radicalism in the country. It is clear that the passage of the National Labor Relations Act, which for the first time gave trade unions legal standing and an official machinery for dealing with work grievances, was a response to the widespread disruption of labor struggles, an attempt to pacify the class conflict in the workplace.⁶⁵

Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, in their book *Poor People's Movements*, look at the workers' movements of the thirties and explain the last-minute decision to support the National Labor Relations Act:

Roosevelt and his advisors had originally thought of labor concessions primarily in terms of unemployment relief and insurance, old age pensions, and wages and hours protections. But rank-and-file agitation set new terms, and the terms would have to be met if labor was to be kept in line.⁶⁶

Under the Social Security Act of 1935 the program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was created. But the states made it difficult for families to get this help. It was not until a disruptive, threatening welfare rights movement developed in the 1960s that AFDC began to give significant help to desperately poor families, most of them consisting of single mothers taking care of their children.⁶⁷

Americans often point with pride to the high standard of living of the working class—the families that own their own homes, a car, and a television and can afford to go away on vacation. All of this—the eight-hour day, a fairly decent wage, and vacations with pay—did not come about through the natural workings of the market, or through the kindness of government. It came about through the direct action of workers themselves in their labor struggles or through the response of state and national governments to the threat of labor militancy.

None of this has been sufficient to bring about economic justice in this country of wealth and poverty, gigantic production and colossal waste, glittering luxury and miserable slums. If we are going to make the radical changes to produce a situation we can call economic justice, much more will be required. People will have to organize and struggle, to protest, to strike, to boycott, to engage in politics, to go outside of politics and engage in civil disobedience, to act out (as blacks did when they simply went into places where they were excluded) the equalization of wealth.

Only when wealth is equalized (at least roughly) will liberty be equalized. And only then will justice be possible in this country. Only then can we finally make real the promise of the Declaration of Independence, to give all men—and women and children—the equal right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

34. There is an eighteen-page summary of the antiwar movement in Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (Harper & Row, 1971). The quote from the leaflet is in my files, *Wisconsin Historical Society*. Also see Nancy Zarouli and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?* (Doubleday, 1984).
35. For the background of this speech, see David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* (William Morrow, 1986), 552-553.
36. The facts about conscription during the Vietnam War come from Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance* (Random House, 1978).
37. Philip Supina's letter is in my files.
38. The details on draft evaders, deserters, exiles, less-than-honorable discharges, etc. can be found in Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*. They report 500,000 "desertion incidents," which is probably a multiple of the number of permanent desertions.
39. *Boston Globe*, Apr. 3, 1972.
40. *New York Times*, June 3, 1973.
41. *New York Times*, 1980.
42. Elinor Langer, "The Oakland Seven," *The Atlantic* (Oct. 1969).
43. There are more details on this trial in Howard Zinn, "The Camden Trial," *Liberation* (June 1973).
44. Much of the material on jury nullification comes from an article by Professor Alan W. Schefflin of the Georgetown University Law Center, "Jury Nullification: The Right to Say No," *Southern California Law Review* 45 (no. 1).
45. Quoted in Sidney Hook, *The Paradoxes of Freedom*, from *The Life and Writings of B. R. Curtis* (Little Brown, 1879).
46. Quoted by Schefflin, "Jury Nullification."
47. Roscoe Pound, "Law in Books and Law in Action," *American Law Review* (1910), quoted by Schefflin, "Jury Nullification."
48. Jessica Mitford, *The Trial of Dr. Spock* (Vintage, 1969).
49. *Boston Globe*, Sept. 8, 1968.
50. The Catonsville Nine case was officially *U.S. v. Moylan* (1969). Quoted by Schefflin, "Jury Nullification."
51. *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 1987.
52. Film, *The Holy Outlaw*, produced by Lee Lockwood for *NET Journal*, public television, 1970.
53. *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel Edition, Beacon Press, 1971), 564.
54. Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1978).
55. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and the Rights of Man* (Little, Brown, 1951).

CHAPTER SEVEN *Economic Justice: The American Class System*

1. *New York Times*, July 13, 1969.
2. *New York Times*, May 16, 1986.
3. *Boston Globe*, Feb. 26, 1985. This Physicians Task Force on Hunger had spent two years traveling to fourteen states and going into hundreds of homes, and made their estimates on the basis of their observations along with official reports from the Census

Bureau and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They said their estimate was a conservative one.

4. *New York Times*, Aug. 17, 1984.
5. UPI dispatch, Apr. 3, 1984.
6. *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 1990.
7. For more information on the class distinctions of early America, see Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Illinois University Press, 1990), "Inequality."
8. It should be pointed out that the word *property* was defined by John Locke more broadly a century before the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. He said that people leave the state of nature and join in society "for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general Name, Property." *Two Treatises of Government*. But that broader definition of the word was not used in the Constitution or later in the courts of the United States. C. B. Macpherson in his essay "A Political Theory of Property" suggests that the definition of the word be expanded to give not just corporations but individuals "a right of access to the means of labor" and that in some future society of abundance property will also mean "a right to a share in political power to control the uses of the amassed capital and the natural resources of the society, and beyond that, a right to a kind of society, a set of power relations throughout the society, essential to a fully human life." He says that "up to now, property has been a matter of a right to a *material* revenue. With the conquest of scarcity that is now foreseen, property must become rather a right to an *immaterial* revenue, a revenue of enjoyment of the quality of life." *Democratic Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1973), 139.
9. Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought*, shows how the state of Pennsylvania played an important role in the development of its economy in the years between the Revolution and the Civil War. Frank Bourgin, *The Great Challenge: The Myth of Laissez-Faire in the Early Republic* (Braziller, 1989), shows in detail how the strong hand of government was involved in the economy.
10. For the relations between government and the wealthy, there are a number of good sources. Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (Macmillan, 1935), shows how the Constitution responded to the needs of the upper classes. Thomas Cochran and William Miller, *The Age of Enterprise* (Macmillan, 1942), deal with government aid to business in the nineteenth century, as does Gustavus Myers, *History of the Great American Fortunes* (Modern Library, 1936).
11. Harvey O'Connor, *Mellon's Millions* (John Day, 1933).
12. *Harper's Magazine*, 1931.
13. *New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1984.
14. Morton Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law* (Harvard University Press, 1977).
15. Philosopher Morris Cohen in the 1920s lectured at Cornell University on property and sovereignty: "The extent of the power over the life of others which the legal order confers on those called owners is not fully appreciated by those who think of the law as merely protecting men in their possession. Property law does more. It determines what men shall acquire. Thus, protecting the property rights of a landlord means giving him the right to collect rent, protecting the property of a railroad or a public-service corporation means giving it the right to make certain charges." Morris Cohen, "Property and Sovereignty," *Cornell Law Quarterly* (1927), reprinted in Virginia Held, ed., *Property, Profits, and Economic Justice* (Wadsworth, 1980).
16. *Lochner v. New York*, 198 U.S. 45 (1905).
17. *West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parrish*, 300 U.S. 379 (1937).

18. *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (411 U.S. 1) 1973. Two years earlier, a court in California (*Serrano v. Priest*) had ruled that the accident of school district wealth was not a legitimate basis for fixing the limits of a child's education.
19. *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1969.
20. *New York Times*, May 27, 1969.
21. *New York Times*, July 28, 1978.
22. This appears in a speech by Adam Smith made in the 1760s, reprinted in F. L. Meek, ed. *Lectures on Jurisprudence: Adam Smith* (Oxford University Press, 1978)
23. Canadian television film *Struggle for Democracy*, Public Broadcasting Corporation.
24. Quoted from Thomas Malthus, *On Population*, in an article by John Hess, "Malthus, Then and Now," *The Nation*, Apr. 18, 1987. Hess notes that Malthus is still admired by conservatives. He takes note of Gertrude Himmelfarb, who, in her introduction to a new edition of Malthus's book, talks about the benefits of the Poor Law, adopted in England in 1834, which ended home relief but set up workhouses for the poor that were "so appalling as to discourage even the most determined malingerers, and the sexes being separated so as to prevent the population increase Malthus had warned against."
25. Conservative writer Irving Kristol argued this way in his article "About Equality," *Commentary*, Nov. 1972. Michael Walzer tackles his argument in an essay "In Defense of Equality," *Radical Principles* (Basic Books, 1980).
26. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
27. This is from a survey conducted by Columbia University's Center for the Social Sciences. *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1986.
28. Walzer, *Radical Principles*, 240, says, "In a capitalist world money is the universal medium of exchange; it enables the men and women who possess it to purchase virtually every other sort of social good. . . . Now isn't it odd, and morally implausible and unsatisfying, that all these things should be distributed to people with a talent for making money?"
29. George Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, (Brentano's, 1928), 71.
30. A. M. Honore, of Oxford University, in his essay "Property, Title, and Redistribution," points to the many older societies in which property was communal in various degrees. The ways include family or clan ownership, public ownership, rotating individual use, individual ownership coupled with compulsory sharing, etc. He cites these to show there is "nothing unnatural" about these departures from the "private property" idea that many people in capitalist society take to be "natural." Virginia Held, ed., *Property, Profits, and Economic Justice*.
31. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875).
32. Walzer, *Radical Principles*, 242-243.
33. These data are from a study by the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a private group that analyzes government data. *New York Times*, July 30, 1989.
34. Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974) does introduce a "principle of rectification" (p. 231). He acknowledges that past injustices may have led to a certain present distribution of wealth. He then says, "These issues are very complex and are best left to a full treatment of the principle of rectification." And then in the two concluding sentences of his chapter on distributive justice, he seems to suddenly throw over the whole truckload of arguments he has given against transfer payments to the poor:

In the absence of such a treatment applied to a particular society, one *cannot* use the analysis and theory presented here to condemn any particular scheme of transfer payments, unless it is clear that no considerations of rectification of injustice could apply to justify it. Although to introduce socialism as the punishment for our sins would be to go too far, past injustices might be so great as to make necessary in the short run a more extensive state in order to rectify them.

This is a surprising retreat from his entitlement theory, but he then goes on as if this were an aside. In the very next chapter, discussing equality of opportunity, he worries that if you are going to increase opportunity for people who haven't had much, you will have to take away something [he means taxes, I suppose] from those who have been "more favored with opportunity." He says, "But holdings to which these people are entitled may not be seized [a scare word like *seized* helps Nozick's argument more than a word like *taxed*] even to provide equality of opportunity for others," p. 235.

35. Quoted by Virginia Held, ed., *Property, Profits, and Economic Justice* (Wadsworth, 1980).
36. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (University of Chicago Press, 1981).
37. *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 1986. In its feature story on the death of Roy Cohn, who had been counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin when McCarthy was on his famous hunt for Communists in government, the *Times* said,

A lifelong bachelor, he lived extremely well. To avoid high taxes, he drew a comparatively low salary of \$100,000 a year from his law firm, which compensated him further, and regally, by giving him a rent-free Manhattan apartment, paying part of the rent on his Greenwich home, supplying him with the use of a chauffeured Rolls-Royce and other fine cars and paying all his bills at expensive restaurants such as Le Cirque, "21" and many others. These expenses were said to run to \$1 million a year.

38. *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1989.
39. Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 14-15. His argument here is dissected neatly by Macpherson, *Democratic Theory*, 143-156.
40. Macpherson criticizes Friedman, saying, "What distinguishes the capitalist economy from the simple exchange economy is the separation of labour and capital, that is, the existence of a labour force without its own sufficient capital and therefore without a choice as to whether to put its labour in the market or not" *Democratic Theory*, 146.
41. This and other interesting points appear in an unpublished paper by Frances Piven and Barbara Ehrenreich, "Toward a Just and Adequate Welfare State."
42. *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1983.
43. Robert Kuttner, "A Myth for Modern Times," *Boston Observer* (Oct. 1984).
44. U.S. District Judge Miles Lord, quoted in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 18, 1984. Those who might cite this as an example of true justice in our courts should know that Judge Lord, after making these statements, was put under investigation by a panel of his colleagues and later resigned.
45. Professor Andrew Schotter, of New York University, author of *Free Market Economics*, quoted in the *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1984.
46. Alexander Cockburn, "Getting Opium to the Masses: The Political Economy of Addiction," *The Nation*, Oct. 30, 1989.
47. An Associated Press dispatch of Oct. 24, 1981:

All parts of the world's oceans are polluted and face the possibility of irreversible damage within 25 years according to scientists at an ocean pollution conference here.

John Vandermeulen of the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, summarizing the conclusions of the weeklong conference, said, "There exists no longer any virgin, contaminant-free nook or corner in the marine environment, including the high Arctic and the sediments of the deep oceans."

48. *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, Jan. 1907.
49. Quoted by Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (Harper & Row, 1971), 317-318.
50. Richard de Lone, *Small Futures* (Carnegie Foundation, 1979).
51. See the chapter on European social welfare programs in Harrell Rodgers, *The Cost of Human Neglect* (M. E. Sharpe, 1982).
52. Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers Project 1935-1943* (Little, Brown, 1972).
53. See Kai Nielsen, "Global Justice, Capitalism, and the Third World," *The Journal of Applied Philosophy* (1984), reprinted in Tibor R. Machan, ed., *The Main Debate* (Random House, 1987).
54. Between 1970 and 1982, according to the World Bank, the foreign debt of sub-Saharan Africa increased from \$5.7 billion to \$51.3 billion. An official of the British relief organization Oxfam was critical of the World Bank for putting pressure on these nations to use their resources for cash crops for export instead of for food for their own people. *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1984.
55. Op-ed piece, *New York Times*, Jan. 10, 1977.
56. *Boston Globe*, Dec. 27, 1981.
57. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971).
58. *Washington Post*, Oct. 30, 1988.
59. John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Summer 1985), tries to clarify the points he made in his book. He says his intention was practical, that his conception of justice is supposed to serve as a basis of "informed and willing agreement between citizens viewed as free and equal persons." He talks about "public agreement in judgment on due reflection . . . free agreement, reconciliation through public reason . . . social cooperation on the basis of mutual respect . . . given a desire for free and uncoerced agreement, a public understanding." Through all this, there is no indication that such an understanding can only be reached "free and uncoerced" among that majority of the population that constitutes the lower and middle classes and has a pressing need for economic justice. There is no recognition that conflict and struggle are inevitable in the attempt to achieve justice, even if we try to moderate that conflict as much as possible, to shorten that struggle by reaching "a public understanding" among a large enough part of the population to overwhelm the resistance of the rich and powerful.
60. Alec Nove, professor of economics at the University of Glasgow, in his book *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, (George Allen & Unwin, 1983), has tried to work out a common sense approach to a socialist economy. He believes *scale* is important—that is, small enterprises wherever possible. He also thinks no one need get paid more than two or three times anyone else. He says, "We should envisage the degree of inequality which is necessary to elicit the necessary effort by free human beings. . . . There seems no good reason to make some individuals many times richer than others in order to obtain the necessary incentive effect," pp. 215-216.

61. *New York Times*, July 12, 1988.

62. Reeve Vanneman and Lynn Cannon, *The American Perception of Class* (Temple University Press, 1987) make an important distinction. They say it is true that the working class in the United States has been unsuccessful in forming its own political party or in making any radical changes in the economic structure of the country. But, they insist, this is not proof of the lack of class consciousness. What it does prove is the lack of strength of American workers against the enormous power of the capitalist class. After a great deal of research into the self-perceptions of American workers, the authors found "impressive evidence documenting the class consciousness of American workers was already on the record."

63. Studs Terkel, *Working* (Pantheon, 1972), xi, xxii.

64. For an account of the early popular actions in the New Deal period see Maurice Hallgren, *Seeds of Revolt* (Knopf, 1934). For the strikes of the New Deal period, see Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years* (Houghton Mifflin, 1969).

65. See the discussion of this in Peter Irons, *The New Deal Lawyers* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

66. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (Pantheon, 1977).

67. *Ibid.*, 264-359.

CHAPTER EIGHT *Free Speech*

1. Much of my data on the Alien and Sedition Acts and the colorful accusations surrounding them come from John C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom* (Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1952).
2. See Leonard Levy, *Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History* (Harper & Row, 1963).
3. James Morton Smith, "Political Suppression of Seditious Criticism: A Connecticut Case Study," *The Historian*.
4. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom*, 74.
5. *Ibid.*, 104.
6. For an analysis of the early interpretations of the First Amendment, see Levy, *Freedom of Speech and Press*.
7. Levy, *Freedom of Speech and Press*, 243-244.
8. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 4 (Beacon Press, 1962), 161.
9. *New York Times v. U.S.* 403 U.S. 713 (1971).
10. We should note that when Thomas Jefferson became president in 1801, although the Sedition Act had expired, prosecutions of critics of government for seditious libel continued. Jefferson had written to Madison back in 1788 that he accepted the common law interpretation of freedom of speech as meaning no prior restraint, and that people should be held accountable for "false facts." For Jefferson's attitude to civil liberties, read Leonard Levy, *Jefferson and Civil Liberties* (Quadrangle, 1973), although Levy offended many lovers of Jefferson by his critique.
11. Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence* (Knopf, 1974).
12. Snapp pointed out that former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former CIA head William Colby, and other former CIA men of high rank were not prosecuted for