

THE Ayn Rand LETTER®

Vol. IV, No. 3

January-February 1976

A LAST SURVEY

Part II

2. Today's political trend. There can be no doubt that this country is turning to the right. Observe the nationwide rejection of the various state bond issues, i.e., of government spending, in the last elections. This was another confirmation of my trust in the common sense of the American people, who have rejected statism every time they had a clear-cut opportunity to do so.

But the people are helpless without intellectual leadership. It is too late for cheap, shopworn slogans. The world is being destroyed by the wrong philosophy - and only the right philosophy, which provides a fully consistent stand, can save it.

To rush into politics on an intellectual shoestring, to posture as a champion of freedom, to get into power by cashing in on the people's hope and despair, then to offer them, for inspiration and guidance, nothing better than the old religion-family-tradition stuff - the stuff that has lost the world to communism - is so dark a betrayal that those guilty of it deserve what they get. They do not merely lose, they disillusion the people, they discredit the ideas of a free society and thus assist the victory of statism. So much for today's conservatives, "Libertarians," and sundry third- fourth- or tenth-party organizers.

3. The progress of Objectivism. On July 19, 1975, The New Republic published a cheap little column or editorial entitled "The Ayn Rand Factor." It began by stating: "I keep running across bits and pieces of Ayn Rand in Mr. Ford's speeches." This would be wonderful, and the world would be in a much, much better condition if this were true, but it is not true. The rest of the column was devoted to disproving its own contention.

An old smear technique consists in quoting an adversary's least significant statements, in order to make it appear that he has said nothing better. That column quoted President Ford on such stuff as: "over a period of 90 years we have erected a massive federal regulatory structure" and ascribed this remark to my influence. Anyone who has ever read anything I have written, knows that no Ayn Rand is needed to arrive at observations of that kind.

I am not an admirer of President Ford's speechwriters, but they have given him better material than that, notably some strong, clear-cut statements in support of individual rights, which I would be happy to take credit for, if I had any influence in the matter, which I do not have. Apparently, the columnist was

afraid to quote those statements and afraid to mention the essentials of my philosophy (such as individualism), so he engaged in a sort of compound misrepresentation of President Ford, of Alan Greenspan, and of me.

I laughed when I read that column, because the columnist's fear was obvious. I said to my friends: "If he thinks there's an 'Ayn Rand factor' around, let him think it." Today, I am beginning to wonder whether there might not be an "Ayn Rand factor" in the world, though not in the way he meant it.

A story in The New York Times (March 22, 1974) discussed a growing opposition to the welfare state in the Scandinavian countries. In Denmark "a party formed solely in opposition to the welfare state received nearly half a million votes in its first campaign and became the second largest in Parliament. A similar party, equally new, jolted Norwegian politics last September by capturing 108,000 votes and four parliamentary seats." The founder of that Norwegian party, Anders Lange, "claims American inspiration. 'You can say our principle is that of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman,' he explained. 'They are leaders in our economic philosophy.'"

I have virtually nothing in common with Mr. Friedman, whom I do not regard as an advocate of capitalism - but I could not resent that kind of confusion at that kind of distance, when much greater confusions exist in our own country, so the story pleased me.

A story on Margaret Thatcher, the new leader of the British Conservative party (The New York Times Magazine, June 1, 1975), stated that her "'think tank' of intellectuals" is studying and popularizing "the theories of" - and there followed a hodgepodge of so-called rightist names, ending on "Ayn Rand." I did not pay much attention to that story - but, later, I was told privately that my ideas actually do have an influence on Mrs. Thatcher's group.

The story that gave significance to the preceding ones appeared in The New York Times on December 15, 1975. It was a brief profile of Malcolm Fraser, the new Prime Minister of Australia, who defeated the welfare-statist Labor Party by the biggest landslide in Australian history. I was delighted with the results of that election, but as I reached for the profile, I couldn't help wondering what disappointing stuff I would have to read. Instead, I read the following:

"All of this [Mr. Fraser's activity] is directed to his single-minded pursuit of a conservative political philosophy that is best summarized by that of his favorite author, Ayn Rand. His favorite book is the Rand novel, 'Atlas Shrugged,' a saga of a welfare state run wild."

Dear readers, ideas do work, they do reach the minds of the wise and honest. No, I am not saying that Mr. Fraser is necessarily an Objectivist: a great many disagreements and/or errors are possible in the practical implementation of a philosophy. What is great about this story is the fact that Mr. Fraser stated openly that he agrees with Atlas Shrugged - and he not merely won an election, but won it by an unprecedented landslide. Apparently, the Australian people were ready to hear the truth, and Malcolm Fraser was able to convey it. No, this does not mean a guaranteed future of freedom for Australia. But it does mean a great opportunity (and the only kind of opportunity) to achieve it.

Once, years ago, I said that the progress of my career reminded me of the progress of Howard Roark in The Fountainhead. Today, the progress of my philosophy is following the same pattern: "It was as if an underground stream flowed

through the [world] and broke out in sudden springs that shot to the surface at random, in unpredictable places." I do not know how many of these springs will remain and, eventually, grow into rivers, or how many will turn muddy and dry up. But in the case of these last, others will rise to take their place. Such is the history of the progress of innovations.

Now to turn from a world scale back to our own activities and to the present. The Objectivist Calendar in this Letter lists the kinds of activities that will be of interest to my readers - as far in advance as the information available permits.

I call your particular attention to Leonard Peikoff's lecture course on The Philosophy of Objectivism. This course does not start until September, but it is to be a memorable event. It will be a systematic presentation of my philosophy, from metaphysics through esthetics, intended for informed students of Objectivism, given by a teacher who has demonstrated a matchless ability to present ideas clearly and dramatically. Until or unless I write a comprehensive treatise on my philosophy, Dr. Peikoff's course is the only authorized presentation of the entire theoretical structure of Objectivism, i.e., the only one that I know of my own knowledge to be fully accurate.

I regret that the closing of the Letter will not permit me to present further excerpts from Dr. Peikoff's book The Ominous Parallels (to be published by Weybright & Talley, Inc.). I cannot tell you the book's publication date, because Dr. Peikoff has not yet completed the manuscript, but I have read it much further than the excerpts we have published - and my informal report to you is: Oh, boy! I thought I knew the subject, but that book has taught me something about the influence of philosophy on a country's culture.

The Objectivist Book Service will be closed eventually, but it will remain open for a while. If there are pamphlets or back issues which you wanted or intended to buy, now is the time to get them, because the stock will not be reprinted.

Among current books, I recommend to your attention a very interesting work, Steel Titan: The Life of Charles M. Schwab (Oxford University Press) by Robert Hessen. Dr. Hessen, a former contributor to The Objectivist, is a historian who teaches at Stanford University and is a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institute. Steel Titan is the first biography of Charles Schwab (1862-1939), who was one of the last great American industrialists. It is a comprehensive presentation, focused primarily on Schwab's business career, describing the struggles, the problems, and the achievements of the man who rose from day laborer to first president of U.S. Steel, and then to founder of Bethlehem Steel.

Schwab's life could be entitled "An American Tragedy" with much more justice than the trashy novel which bears that title. Reading Steel Titan, one sees, in microcosm, the tragedy of late-nineteenth-century America: unprecedented industrial achievements created in philosophical silence. Like most of his fellow industrialists, Schwab was a genius in production and a deaf-mute in philosophy - with the emphasis on "mute." He liked to make public speeches, but had no idea of the intellectual foundations or justification of business or of politics. This made him vulnerable to the most vicious charges and attacks of leftist intellectuals and politicians, who pursued him throughout his life. He did not know how to defend himself - and there were no effective voices to defend him.

This issue is not Dr. Hessen's theme: he has written a factual biography, meticulously researched and thoroughly documented, presenting Schwab's virtues

as well as his flaws, including his conventional, often unattractive, personal life. But the facts speak for themselves. I urge you not to miss Appendix B, which is subtitled "The Genealogy of an Historical Myth: The Armor Scandal of 1894." It offers a brief and devastating picture of how misrepresentations are perpetuated by American historians.

(The list price of Steel Titan is \$14.95; available from The Objectivist Book Service at \$13.50.)

In regard to our future activities, we have received so many letters urging us to continue publishing the Objectivist Calendar in some form that we are now considering the possibility of offering such a service. The tentative plan is to issue bulletins, for a nominal fee, on an irregular basis, as the news warrants. The news would cover activities such as lectures, courses, books, television and radio appearances, my views on political candidates, etc. If you would be interested in subscribing to such a service, please send a post card to that effect to Barbara Weiss, c/o The Ayn Rand Letter, 183 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. It is understood that such a post card does not represent any obligation on your part.

If you wish to keep in touch with us, please keep your name on our mailing list by notifying us (at the above address) of any future change in your address.

Thank you for the very nice letters you wrote me about the closing of this Letter. I truly appreciate your understanding.

With my best wishes to all of you, I will say good-bye and good premises -

Ayn Rand

Full refunds for the unexpired portion of all paid subscriptions to The Ayn Rand Letter will be mailed out to our readers by the end of February.

Elayne Kalberman

OBJECTIVIST CALENDAR

As we announced in our last Calendar, Miss Rand will be speaking at The Ford Hall Forum in Boston on Sunday, April 11. The Forum has asked us to make the following statement: They will not accept new memberships after March 15, and memberships will not be sold at the door on the night of Miss Rand's lecture. The Forum has arranged to provide a second room, near Alumni Hall, to handle the overflow crowd;

people seated in this room will not be able to see Miss Rand, but they will be able to hear her lecture and the question-and-answer period.

Beginning Tuesday, September 14, Leonard Peikoff will offer a twelve-lecture course in New York City on The Philosophy of Objectivism. The lectures will be given on Tuesday evenings, at 7:30 P.M., from September 14 through December 21 (omitting October 19, November 2 and November 30). Place: Statler Hilton Hotel, Broadway and 33rd Street. Brochures, including registration forms, will be sent next July to individuals in the New York Metropolitan area who are now on our mailing list. Further information can be obtained, after July, from Flora Reekstin, P.O. Box 533, Richmond Hill, N.Y. 11418.

Next year, tapes of the lectures will be made available in other cities to groups of ten persons or more, on a rental basis. Inquiries may be sent, late this fall, to Barbara Weiss, P.O. Box 95, Murray Hill Station, New York, N.Y. 10016.

The following taped lecture courses are currently available to groups of ten persons or more, on a rental basis. Leonard Peikoff's Founders of Western Philosophy: Thales to Hume (12 lectures), Modern Philosophy: Kant to the Present (12 lectures), Introduction to Logic (10 lectures). Allan Blumenthal's Music: Theory, History and Performance (12 lectures). For further information, contact Barbara Weiss, P.O. Box 95, Murray Hill Station, New York, N.Y. 10016.

The following starting dates have been scheduled for taped lecture courses. Leonard Peikoff's Modern Philosophy: Kant to the Present. West Lafayette, Ind., February 8 (contact Richard Matula, 317-463-3646, eves.); Indianapolis, March 6 (Richard Matula, 317-259-1902, eves. except Tues.). Dr. Peikoff's Founders of Western Philosophy: Thales to Hume. Calgary, Alberta, Canada, February 23 (Al Kincius, 403-264-5254). Allan Blumenthal's Music: Theory, History and Performance. Montreal, February 25 (Ferial Balassiano, 514-739-2631 or 514-935-8666); Lafayette, Cal., February 29 (Raymond Cole, 415-284-4193).

Joan Mitchell Blumenthal is planning to resume her Monday evening Life Drawing Classes in New York City on April 5. Those interested should contact her through Dr. Blumenthal's office at (212) PL 2-2162 after March 1.

A full-color reproduction of The Conductor, a painting by Joan Mitchell Blumenthal, is available from Sures Art Enterprises, Ltd. The painting portrays a young musician in casual dress, prepared for rehearsal. The background is dark; strong, warm light emphasizes his profile, hands, and baton. For information about The Conductor and other reproductions, write to SAE, Ltd., P.O. Box 207, Silver Spring, Md. 20907.

We have been asked to announce that Dr. George Reisman is planning to offer a nine-lecture course on Inflation and Price Controls, tentatively scheduled to begin in New York City in late March or early April. For information about the course, and about possible tape rentals in other cities, write to Dr. Reisman at 420 East 72nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.

We have been asked to announce that on Thursday, March 25, Dr. Allan Gotthelf will lecture in Toronto on "Love and Metaphysics: Aristotelian vs. Platonic." For further information, contact Walter Huebscher at (416) 484-4487 (eves. and wkends.).

We have been asked to announce that on Sunday, March 28, Robert Bleiberg, Editor of Barron's magazine, will give a lecture at Hunter College under the auspices of Hunter College Students of Objectivism. His subject is the financial crisis of New York City and New York State. Time: 7:30 P.M. Place: East Student Lounge, Hunter College, Lexington Avenue between 68th and 69th Streets, New York City. For further information, contact Ron Hickman at (212) 744-6972 (eves.).

The Objectivist Book Service has sold almost all of its stock of books. Therefore, please do not send orders for books - with the exception of the current Steel Titan. The Book Service can still fill orders for pamphlets or for back issues of The Objectivist Newsletter, The Objectivist, or The Ayn Rand Letter.

If you wish to remain on our mailing list, please let us know of any future change in your address. When informing us of a new address, please be sure to include your old address and zip code.

B.W.