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You Don't Need a Weatherman...

Kevin Carson

January 18, 2006

Next Left Notes announces the revival of Students for a Democratic Society as a national organization. Apparently local chapters had already been around for a while, and only recently decided to resurrect the national structure.

One of the most promising political developments in recent American history, in my opinion, was the attempt of Murray Rothbard and Karl Hess 35-odd years ago to build an Old Right-New Left coalition against the corporate state. The libertarian socialist faction of SDS and the radical libertarian caucus of the YAF, together, were a big part of that effort. From the late 60s into the early 70s, Rothbard was writing for *Ramparts* and *Studies on the Left*, and quoting New Left historiography of corporate liberalism from the likes of Gabriel Kolko and James Weinstein. His journal *Left and Right* was created to explore issues of concern to that left-right coalition. And the first year's worth of *The Libertarian Forum* was full of all sorts of heady discussion in the same vein.

In a way, the friendly relations between the Libertarian Party's Badnarik and the Green Party's Cobb in 2004 seemed like a partial

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revival of that old coalition; the two were backslapping each other through the whole third party debate on C-SPAN, and Badnarik earlier praised the Greens for their decentralist values and their departure from conventional state socialism.

It would be a match made in heaven, as far as I'm concerned. My own general reaction to both parties is that the Greens are right about most of the things they object to: pollution, labor exploitation, concentration of capital, and the other evils of corporate rule. But free market libertarianism has the answers to what causes those evils, and how to address them. A coalition to achieve the ends of socialism through the means of (as Benjamin Tucker put it) "consistent Manchesterism" would be ideal. See, for example, this essay by Dan Sullivan: "Greens and Libertarians: The Yin and Yang of Our Political Future." For a brief summary of the kinds of anti-corporate radicalism Rothbard and his comrades were getting up to in those early issues of *Libertarian Forum*, and my ideas for an agenda based on the common ground between radical free marketers and libertarian socialists, you can check out my "Libertarian Forum: A Resource for UnCapitalists?" Here's another one on a possible Libertarian-Green alliance for tax reform.

We could do a hell of a lot worse than a common agenda to (for instance) get out of Iraq, repeal USA Patriot, declare a drug war armistice, radically scale back "intellectual property" [sic], eliminate corporate welfare, and raise the personal income tax exemption to \$30,000. As Tom Knapp put it a while back, dismantle big government by cutting welfare from the top down and taxes from the bottom up.

Addendum. I didn't get the original email, because yahoo groups messages aren't getting through to me for some reason (again), but Brad Spangler got the original tip from Jesse Walker's post to the LeftLibertarian email list; Jesse, in turn, got it from Bill Kauffman. For more on Rothbard's time on the Left, see "Rothbard's Time on the Left," by John Payne.