

# How To Commit Revolution

This is the first part of a two part article, the second part will be published next week. Reprinted from the Peninsula Observer, Palo Alto, Calif.

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by William Domhoff

(Editor's note: This is the revised text of a speech given to the Student Strike Rally at U.C. Santa Cruz on April 28. Domhoff, author of WHO RULES AMERICA and a professor at Santa Cruz, described himself as "just a consultant to some group of citizens within the community that feels a need to call upon its tax-supported knowledge factory to give advice on a particular activity or undertaking.")

Though the undertaking, committing revolution, might not win the approval of the U.C. Regents, Domhoff's employer, "every good professor" acts as a consultant. "I expect to get credit for it when I am considered for promotion and tenure," Domhoff declared.)

I am well aware that most of you aren't revolutionaries -- that you are mostly upper-middle-class people cutting loose from home by temporarily growing beards or indulging in exotic potions or getting all caught up in doing good things for your less fortunate brethren from the other side of the tracks.

I know that most of you think it is just a matter of a little more time, a little more education, and a little more good will before most of this country's social and economic problems are straightened out, and I suspect that many of you who are currently among the earnest and concerned are going to be somewhere else in a few years, as is that idealistic student group of past years, your parents.

But maybe some day you will wise up to the Square Deals, New Deals, Fair-Deals, New Frontiers, and other quasi-liberal gimmicks used to shore up and justify an overdeveloped, inhuman, and wasteful corporation capitalism as it gradually rose to power in the 20th century. Maybe someday a significant number of people, Left and Right, will learn that courage, integrity, and a casual style aren't enough to bring about meaningful, substantial changes, that moral anguish has to be translated into changes in the social structure which do more than make you feel all warm and good and guilt-free inside.

Maybe some day others of you, who are already on the right road, will learn that no matter how militant or violent or critical you may be, you are still not your own person and a revolutionary, as long as you merely try to get your leaders to pay attention and better understand, whether it be through letters or sit-ins or time bombs.

Maybe you will learn to ignore the leaders you are harassing and decide to replace them and their system with yourselves and your own system, and on that day you will become revolutionaries instead of militant supplicants appealing to the stuffy Father Figures for a little more welfare and social justice, and a little less war.

## ORDER OR PRIORITIES

There are three aspects, I think, to any good revolutionary program for corporate America. These aspects are closely intertwined, and all three must be developed alongside each other, but there is nonetheless a certain logic, a certain order of priorities, in the manner I present them.

First, you need a comprehensive overall analysis of the present-day American system. You've got to realize that the corporation capitalism of today is not the 19th-century individual capitalism that conservatives yearn for. Nor is it the plutonic paradise that liberals rave about and try to patch up. Nor is it the finance capitalism of the American Communists who are frozen in their analyses of another day.

Second, you need relatively detailed blueprints for a post-industrial America. You've got to show people concrete plans that improve their lot either spiritually or materially. There's no use scaring them

with shouts of socialism, which used to be enough of a plan, however, general, but which today only calls to mind images of Russia, deadening bureaucracy, and 1984.

And there's no use boring them with vague slogans about participation and vague abstractions about dehumanization. You've got to get down to where people live, and you've got to get them thinking in terms of a better America without the spectre of Russia, rightly or wrongly, driving any thought of risking social change out of their heads.

Third, and finally, you need a plan of attack, a program for taking power. For make no mistake about it -- before most people get involved in revolutionary activity they take a mental look way down the road. Maybe not all the way down the road, but a long way down. They want to know what they are getting into, and what their chances are, and whether there is really anything positive in sight that is worth the gamble.

I suspect that most people just don't fit the formula that seems to be prevalent in America: get people involved in anything -- rent strikes, anti-nuclear testing demonstrations, rat strikes, draft demonstrations, whatever, and gradually they will develop a revolutionary mentality. Ponder carefully about this activity for activity's sake. You need a plan of attack, not just some issues like peace or rats. And one thing more on this point: that plan has to come out of your analysis of the present socioeconomic system and out of your own life experience -- that is, out of the American experience, and not out of the experiences of Russia, or China, or Cuba, all of which have been different from each other, and are different from the U.S.A.

The world moves, even in America, and as it moves new realities arise and old theories become irrelevant. New methods become necessary. If you expect to be listened to, you will have to look around you afresh and build your own plan, abandoning all the sacred texts on What Is To Be Done.

## ANALYSIS COMES FIRST

The name of the system is corporation capitalism. Huge corporations have come to dominate the economy, reaping fabulous, unheard-of profits and avoiding their share of the taxes, and their owners and managers -- the corporate rich -- are more and more coming to dominate all aspects of American life, including government. Corporate rich foundations -- like Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie -- finance and direct cultural and intellectual innovations; corporate rich institutes and associations -- like the Council on Foreign Relations, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Rand Corporation -- do most of the economic, political, and military research and provide most of the necessary government experts and consultants.

As for the future, Bell Telephone is undertaking a pilot project in which it will run a high school in a Detroit ghetto, and Larry Rockefeller has suggested that

every corporation in New York "adopt" a city block and help make sure that its residents are healthy, happy, and nonriotous. Adopt-a-block may never happen, and corporations may not run many high schools any time soon, but such instances are symbolic of where we are probably headed -- corporate feudalism, cradle to grave dependency on some aspect or another of a corporate structure run by a privileged few who use its enormous rewards to finance their own private schools, maintain their own exclusive clubs, and ride to the hounds on their vast farm lands.

For even agriculture is being corporatized at an amazing rate. Family farmers are in a state of panic as the corporate rich and their corporations use tax loopholes to gobble up this last remaining bastion of 19th-century America.

Much work on this analysis of corporation capitalism, or feudalism, has been done, but more needs to be done. It is a scandal, or, rather, a sign of corporate rich dominance of the universities, that so little social stratification research concerns the social upper class of big businessmen, that so little political sociology research concerns the power elite that is the operating arm of the corporate rich -- indeed, that so much of social science in general concerns itself with the workers, the poor, and other countries, namely with things of interest to the corporate rich.

If you want to know anything about the American power structure you have to piece together the hints of journalists, read the few books by the handful of Leftists who are academic outcasts, follow the research reports of two excellent student groups,\* and listen to and read Dan Smoot.

Dan Smoot? Yes, Dan Smoot. Properly translated, he has a better view of the American power structure than most American political scientists, who of course merely laugh at him. He may not use the same labels I would for the men in charge (he thinks David Rockefeller & Co. are communists or dupes), but at least he knows who's running the show.

It is truly a commentary on American academia that he and one journalist -- Establishment journalist Joseph Kraft -- have done the only work on the all-important Council on Foreign Relations, one of the most influential policy-forming associations of the corporate rich.

While the professors are laughing at Dan Smoot and equating the business community with the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Smoot is keeping up with the activities of the richest, most powerful, the most internationally oriented of American big businessmen, the vanguard of corporate feudalism.

## FIRST REVOLUTIONARY ACT

This really brings you to your first revolutionary act. Research one thing and one thing only--the American power structure. Withdraw your libido from 12th-century Antarctica, historical criticism of Viking poetry, and other such niceties, and get to where you are: here, America, the 20th century.

Just turning the spotlight on the power elite is a revolutionary act, although only Act One. Ideas and analysis are powerful, and they shake people up. The problem of would-be American revolutionaries has not been an overemphasis on ideas, but the use of old ones, wrong ones, and transplanted ones. That is why C. Wright Mills grabbed American students and parts of American academia. He had new,

relevant ideas and facts about the here and now--he exploded old cliches and slogans, and I think he created more radicals with his work than any hundred Oakland or Los Angeles policemen with their billy clubs.

A good analysis is essential in developing a program for taking power because it tells you what you can and cannot expect, what you can and cannot do, and what you should and should not advocate. Let me give four examples:

1. Corporation capitalism, if it can continue to corporatize the "underdeveloped" world and displace small businessmen and realtors in the cities, may have a lot more room for reforms. In fact, if creature comfort is enough, it may come to satisfy most of its members. Be that as it may, and I doubt if it can solve its problems in a humanly tolerable way, the important point is that no American revolutionary could find himself shocked because the corporate rich agree to nationwide health insurance or guaranteed annual incomes, or pull out of one of their military adventures.

And don't get your hopes up for any imminent collapse. Better to be surprised by a sudden turn that hastens your time schedule than to be disappointed once again by the flexibility of the corporate rich. This means that you should rely on your own program, not depression or war, to challenge the system and to bring about change, and that you should have a flexible, hang-loose attitude toward the future. Predictions of the inevitability of anything, whether collapse or socialism, fall a little flat and leave us a little jaded after comparing earlier predictions with the experience of the 20th century.

2. Corporation capitalism seems to be very much dependent on overseas sales and investments, probably much more so than it is on the military spending necessary to defend and extend the Free World empire. And even if some economists would dispute that, I think it is 100 per cent safe to say that most members of the corporate rich are convinced that this overseas empire is essential--and that is what affects their political and economic and military behavior. Thus, the corporate rich fear--indeed, have utter horror of--isolationism, and that suggests that you revolutionaries should agree with the conservatives about the need for isolationism.

3. The American corporate rich have at their command unprecedented, almost unbelievable firepower and snooping power. This makes it questionable whether or not a violent revolutionary movement has a chance of getting off the ground. It also makes it doubtful whether or not a secret little Leninist-type party can remain secret and unpenetrated for long. In short a nonviolent and open party may be dictated to you as your only choice by the given fact of the corporate leaders' military and surveillance capability, just as a violent and closed party was dictated by the Russian situation.

4. The differences between present-day corporation capitalism and 19th-century individual capitalism must be emphasized again and again if you are to reach those currently making up the New Right. Those people protest corporation capitalism and its need for big government and overseas spending in the name of small business, small government, competition, the marketplace--all those things destroyed or distorted by the corporate system.

You must agree with the New Right that these things have happened and then be able to explain to them how and why they have happened, not due to the communists or labor, or liberal professors, but due to the growing corporatization of the society and the needs of these corporations.