

## *A Turn to the (New) Left?*

"Toward an Appropriate Politics" by Charles Siegel, in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Fall 1995), 10951 W. Pico Blvd., Third Floor, Los Angeles, Calif. 90064.

An air of exhaustion hangs over the Left these days. Siegel has a tonic he thinks would revive it: a return to certain themes of the New Left, which "wanted people to consume less, do more for themselves, and live as much as possible outside of the economic system."

During the 1980s, in reaction to the Reagan administration's efforts to curb the welfare state, the Left "retreated to older progressive ideas about social issues" and let the Right have the issue of empowerment, says Siegel, transportation chair of the Sierra Club and author of *The Preservationist Manifesto* (forthcoming). "The New Left of the 1960s wanted to break up bureaucracies to give people control over decisions that affect their lives. But now the Left just demands more bureaucratic social services"—and as a consequence, it has become increasingly irrelevant.

Most people, for example, see clearly that—with the landscape littered with broken families and both parents in most intact

families working—there exists a "parenting deficit" in America today. Yet the Left, Siegel says, "ignores this new problem" and pushes early-20th-century progressive measures (e.g., more money for day care and for schooling) in whose efficacy even it no longer really believes. Leftists back these programs to help children and working mothers cope but "have no vision at all of a better future," he asserts.

Conservatives, meanwhile, defend the traditional family but "cannot get at the root of the problem," Siegel argues, because of their belief in economic growth. They "promote the growth of a consumer economy that leaves people with no time for their families and that takes over most responsibilities of individuals."

If it would stop its outmoded demands for more government services and focus "on humanizing our society by limiting both big government and big business," Siegel believes, the Left "could dominate the political debate."

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### *How to Treat an Awakening Giant*

"A New China Strategy" by Kenneth Lieberthal, in *Foreign Affairs* (Nov.-Dec. 1995), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Its economy is surging, its military power is growing, and it is increasingly assertive in international affairs. China is finally claiming the role of a great power. Yet the United States, says Lieberthal, a professor of political science and business administration at the University of Michigan, has no coherent response.

Some American analysts hope that China will experience a Soviet-style meltdown leading to a more cooperative, democratic government. But it is far more likely, Lieberthal says, that a weakened China would cause even bigger problems for the world than a strong one: civil war, famine, migration, and possibly nuclear mischief. Other American analysts favor a policy of containment. But that, writes Lieberthal, would only divide Asia, strengthen China's nationalists and militarists, and reduce the region's prosperity.

The Clinton administration talks of "comprehensive engagement" with China, but that is just an empty phrase, Lieberthal charges. U.S. policy is ad hoc, uncoordinated, and driven by politics and emotion. Washington "thrashes China for human rights violations" with one hand while offering friendship with the other. Last year, the administration privately assured Beijing that it would not issue a visa to Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui, but then, yielding to pressure at home, did so anyway, thus humiliating the Chinese officials who had accepted Washington's assurances.

In Beijing, Lieberthal sees a volatile mixture of cockiness and insecurity. Rapid change has made China more difficult to govern. Deng Xiaoping, who has insisted on a "basically cooperative" relationship with the United States, is in his last days, and a succes-