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**ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS**


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Francis Edgeworth (1845–1920), who believed that, on the contrary, “general happiness” is to be achieved through each individual’s pursuit of his own happiness. Edgeworth promoted the idea that *Homo oeconomicus* is motivated solely by the selfish desire to increase “maximally” his own welfare; using this assumption, he was able to express economic principles in mathematics. This view—and the mathematical approach that followed from it—is “more or less intact” in contemporary economics and has been little questioned; nevertheless, claims Sen, it is mistaken.

Edgeworth’s economic model, which held that individual self-interest would lead to market equilibrium (the point at which no person’s welfare can be materially improved without worsening the welfare of another) led later mathematical economists to analyze consumer demand as a function of “rational choice.” This analysis supposes that there is a “single relation” between a person’s real preferences and actual decisions. Utility fails to be maximized only when a consumer’s preferences are inconsistent (and thus irrational).

In all this, Sen suggests, there is something profoundly disturbing: the virtual neglect by economists of the role that altruism has played in public policy and private conduct. To the extent that different varieties of “commitment” and “principle” influence personal economic decisions, he argues, so far has the classical notion of economic man as a blindly consistent egoist—as a rational fool—artificially limited the range of academic analysis.

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**PRESS & TELEVISION**


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*Putting Dissent  
in Perspective*

“Soviet Dissidents and the American Press” by Peter Osnos, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Nov.-Dec. 1977), 200 Alton Pl., Marion, Ohio 43302.

The Soviet Union is grappling with social problems common to all industrial nations, but the only Soviet domestic issues heavily covered by Western newsmen are those raised by the dissident movement. Osnos, a former Moscow correspondent for the *Washington Post*, worries that “Americans hear so much about dissidents” that they can no longer see the Soviet scene in proper perspective.

Are the dissidents that important? Probably not. According to Osnos, this “small number of little-known private citizens” has helped to “highlight” Soviet repression as well as growing disaffection among ethnic minorities, liberal intellectuals, Marxist theorists, and religious groups. But it is a mistake, Osnos warns, to confuse the courage of a few with mass alienation.

Foreign correspondents and dissidents in Moscow are “mutually useful”: Reporters want to meet “real” Russians and get a good story of

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conflict. Dissidents want to get their views to the West (and thence, via Western radio broadcasts, back home); they also believe they will be treated less harshly by Soviet authorities if they have a Western following. But Osnos contends that excessive reliance on the dissident point of view gives Americans a distorted picture, "as oversimplified in a way as Soviet reports about the United States."

*White Newspapers'  
Southern Strategy*

"The Rhetorical Appeals of Whites to Blacks During Reconstruction" by Cal M. Logue, in *Communications Monographs* (Aug. 1977), 5205 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Va. 22041.

The Civil War disrupted the white political monopoly in the South—but more in form than in substance, argues Logue, director of the University of Georgia's Communications Division. In a survey of post-bellum newspapers and magazines, he finds that Southern publishers used a "verbal bribe and a rhetorical threat" to intimidate newly enfranchised blacks. Their object: to persuade former slaves (suddenly a majority of the electorate in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina) to vote for conservative whites or not at all.

During Reconstruction, white Southerners felt threatened not only by Northern carpetbaggers but also by the growing number of blacks elected to Congress and the state legislatures. Newspapers like the *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register* warned that "impressionable" blacks must be saved from "ravaging" Northerners who would "poison the minds and monopolize the ears" of freedmen. The *New Orleans Picayune* promised that whites would help blacks become "useful, orderly, industrious, well-behaved, and productive"—if blacks would voluntarily forfeit their newly won political rights.

Behind the newspapers' cajolery lay an ill-disguised threat. If blacks failed to conform to white expectations, then "woe to your race," as



From XIX Century magazine, Charleston, 1869.

*Post-bellum Southern editors mocked pliant black officials to amuse white readers. The Hon. Fortune Flanders (left) rails against a Northern carpetbagger: "He don't pay a tax eben on de carpet bag he fotch down yeah to fill up wid de pickens ob de sixteen office he hole."*