



THIRSTY BOOTS No. 10 is published by John D. Berry, 302 Malden Avenue East, #3, Seattle, Washington 98112, USA. It is composed utterly on stencil by the aforementioned and is destined--if I manage to finish it and get it through the relevant mails in time--for the December, 1980, mailing of ANZAPA. If you need any further explanation, you're probably not getting this.

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Nobody pointed it out to me (at least as far as I've read --the October mailing arrived only yesterday), but the title I so neatly and cavalierly gave to my contribution to the last mailing was not, in fact, the title of my former ANZAPAZINE at all. FREE AND EASY WANDERING was the title I gave to a column that I wrote for John Bangsund--once or twice about six years ago--and because he received both my first column and an inquiry about joining ANZAPA at the same time, John went ahead and published my column as a separate publication for ANZAPA (and as a supplement to PHILOSOPHICAL GAS for those on his mailing list outside of the apa; I think he actually had a mailing list in those days). When I sat down to do my first contribution deliberately intended for ANZAPA, however, I chose another name, the one that you see above, and for the rest of my career in this august group THIRSTY BOOTS was my fanzine. It went through about nine issues (don't tell me if I'm wrong; the last issue I can find is numbered nine, but it seems as though there ought to be another), and perhaps with luck it'll get that far again this time around.

It's a dark and stormy night in Seattle. At the moment there's only a steady drizzle puddling outside my window, and the sound of someone hammering slowly, rhythmically, on something in the vacant lot nextdoor--maybe driving stakes into the heart of an old pickup truck, or murdering a small animal --but earlier this evening it was pouring and blowing and thoroughly wet. That was about the moment that I got out of

thirsty boots--2

the bus down on Broadway, on my way home from work, with a five-block walk ahead of me. I huddled in a doorway until a lull in the storm, then slogged my way home. I like Seattle's rain, and it seems to like me; at least, this evening it appeared to be showing its affection, rather like a huge dog licking you with a gigantic wet tongue. Or perhaps doing something else to you.

Earlier today I had a glittering torrent of ideas rushing through my head, ideas for this very fanzine and what I would say to you all, especially to John Bangsund, whose fanzine I was reading happily over lunch. But my enthusiasm was engendered by an excess of caffeine and the perverse mental prolixity that comes over me toward the end of my lunch hour and at other times when it is entirely impossible to spend an hour or so writing what comes into my head. Now that I have that leisure, that flaming inspiration has guttered and my mind is like a pond that nobody has bothered to toss a pebble into. But there's another reason weighing me down (and churning my metaphors like a runaway Cuisinart), a reason that also explains why I turned to Bangsund's fanzine with such hopeful anticipation when I turned away from the New York Times I had been reading. For today is November 5, 1980, the day after the presidential election. I was reading the post-mortem and the wrap-up of results from around the country, and I was not happy.

Nobody was. Well, somebody must have been, but that somebody wasn't around the spots I hang out. Faces I saw looked shocked, and feet moved sluggishly. People would have bewildered conversations punctuated by sighs and exclamations of "Ronald Reagan!" "Know any good countries to move to?" asked the woman who is art director for a local alternative weekly. My boss, a German immigrant who came to this country in the late Sixties, said that he'd never been so dejected after an election; it made him feel sick.

And I was going to give you my condolences on your election! Maybe commiseration is the word I want.

I don't know how the American election was covered in the Australian press. The bare fact of Ronald Reagan elected president of the United States is appalling enough, but what adds weight to it is the sweeping victory of reactionary Republicans across the country that accompanied his election. There is no reason for an elected president's party to have a majority in Congress in the American system, and one of the mitigating factors in a Reagan presidency should have been that he would be faced with a Democratic majority in Congress --which is not to say that it would necessarily be a liberal or progressive majority, but at least one that through party loyalty would tend to oppose him--but according to today's election results the Republicans have taken control of the Senate for the first time in 25 years, and they have knocked out many of the most powerful liberal senators to do it. George McGovern, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1972, was defeated yesterday; in Washington state, Warren Magnuson, the senior member of the US Senate, a New Deal Democrat who came into Congress under Roosevelt, the only heavy in the seniority system to provide a liberal counter to the old reactionary Southern hawks, was beaten by a conservative Republican

thirsty boots--3

named Slade Gorton. It goes on. One bright spot locally is that Mike Lowry, my Congressman and a consistent supporter of Indian fishing rights, Defense Department accountability, and social programs, survived a challenge by a well-heeled "New Right" Republican. The Democratic party is certainly no bunch of heroes, but the kind of politician I want to support is seldom found among the Republicans. It does happen occasionally, though: another bright spot was that a Republican defeated Bert Cole, Washington's Commissioner of Public Lands; Cole has held the office for 24 years, and in that time he has done such things as grant oil drilling leases on state land with no environmental impact statement (directly across a river from a wildlife refuge) and try to cut down the only stand of virgin timber left on any of the islands in Puget Sound, acts that at least in his campaign propaganda the challenger deplored. The last positive development was that a state-wide initiative that would have banned Hanford, Washington, from being the nation's nuclear waste dump did pass with a sizable majority. It'll be challenged in court, no doubt, but its intent is clear.

On the other hand, here in Seattle, a booming metropolis where rents have skyrocketed and until this summer we didn't even have an ordinance requiring a landlord to have a godd reason for evicting you, an initiative that would have established rent control went down to ignominious defeat.

When it came right down to it and I stood in the voting booth last night, not long before the polls closed here, I couldn't do it. I had been going to grit my teeth and vote for Jimmy Carter just to keep Reagan out of the White House-- or do as much as my one vote would do toward that--when it looked as though the election would be a close one, but by the time I got to the polls I knew it was over; indeed, though I didn't believe it, I had heard someone say that Carter had already conceded. So I voted for Barry Commoner, of the Citizens' Party, who understands the stranglehold the giant corporations have on this country (and most others) and has some idea of how suicidal our whole concept of economy and society is. I felt better voting for him.

That's right, I already knew the results of the election. The television computers had already given it to Reagan, based on overwhelming returns from the East Coast, and Carter had really made his concession speech by ten o'clock Eastern time --over an hour before the polls closed on the West Coast. In Oregon and Washington, people just turned away from the polls or didn't bother to go. You can imagine the impact it had on local Democratic candidates that those people might have voted for. There are a lot of angry people on the West Coast today. There's been resentment for years of the networks calling the shots early and influencing our elections in the West, but there is a particular ire reserved for Carter and his sheer stupidity and selfishness in conceding while his fellow candidates were still trying to get out the vote.

I have a feeling that something may change in the American system of presidential election. On top of all this, the primaries have so proliferated that the major parties' nominees were chosen long before most people had any chance to express an opinion. Which is part of how we got stuck with a contest

thirsty boots--4

between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, with a side show of John Anderson.

There's only a limited amount that can be accomplished through elections, especially national elections, but what can be lost has by and large been lost in this one, and it's depressing. I don't think of the electoral system as the best way of governing ourselves, but it's what's there, and I believe pragmatically in using whatever tool comes to hand. Elections can be a tool; their outcome sometimes seems remote, but it does affect us, whether directly or indirectly. The effect is much more obvious in something like the local rent control initiative, but even in electing a president the effect is there: Ronald Reagan is likely to veto environmental legislation that Jimmy Carter would have signed, and God knows who Reagan is liable to appoint if a Supreme Court vacancy occurs during his administration. I tend to put emphasis on local elections, if only because the electorate is smaller and your vote proportionately larger--and, too, because it's closer to home and tends to get neglected.

But still. Ronald Reagan?

A postscript, December 6, 1980: What has been especially infuriating during the month since the election is the hysterical way in which politicians and journalists have leapt on the bandwagon of the New Right. It isn't, after all, as if Reagan or his supporters won a sweeping mandate from all the people. Although he won an absolute majority of those voting, roughly half the eligible voters stayed home. The reasons for voting for Reagan varied greatly, most of them being disgust with Carter and a general wish for change rather than support of Reagan or the conservative Republican platform. But you wouldn't know that from the hysteria. Supposed "liberals" are rushing to enact conservative legislation and programs before the new government takes office--rather than trying to block it as much as possible in the remaining time. Now that is depressing.

It may be changing, though. Congress passed an inadequate but still sweeping Alaska lands bill because whatever the next session of Congress might come up with would undoubtedly be much worse; and a headline I saw the other day said that the adjournment of this session had been held up by those who wouldn't accept curtailments of civil rights in some of the legislation that was being railroaded through at the last minute.

Personally, I find myself paying much closer attention to the best of the leftist press, giving thought to subscribing to certain journals that I'll need as sources of information and analysis during a Reagan presidency; and I intend to rejoin the American Civil Liberties Union when I have a spare twenty-five bucks.

It's the tail-end of a Saturday afternoon in winter, clear skies but a light dusting of snow on the ground. The late sunlight is red on the tops of buildings, but the streets are dark and cold. The light is dying, for the night, for the season, but whatever we do, it'll come back again.

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