

WORLDVIEW

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 11

November 1977



AROUND WASHINGTON

NEW DIRECTIONS: WASHINGTON'S FOREIGN POLICY LOBBY. "New Directions," says one of its brochures, "will lobby in Washington—in Congress, at the White House, among the departments and regulatory agencies. It will carry its message in the media and to related organizations. It will attempt to influence the non-governmental shapers of national policy—corporations, banks, universities, and trade associations. It will organize people in local communities to respond to local manifestations of global injustice or irresponsibility. And, when necessary, it will take its case to court."

Modeling itself on the successful domestic affairs citizens lobby Common Cause (which, after seven years, has 250,000 members), New Directions began its work in October, 1976, and is well on its way to becoming a vocal voice in the Capital.

After a year New Directions has a membership of about 7,500 and funds (in non-tax-exempt dollars) of about \$400,000. An "alert bank" containing thousands of additional names can be called upon for mobilizing citizen action.

Russell Peterson, former governor of Delaware and chairman of the President's Commission on Environmental Quality (1973-76), is president of the new lobby. He was alerted to the group's formation last year by World Bank President Robert McNamara.

New Directions has set its sights high: 50,000 members within three years. This would enable the organization to be supported financially by membership dues and would relieve Peterson of the need to approach foundations and other benefactors.

Peterson stated in an interview: "The reason people got together to form New Directions is that they were frustrated working in research and educational areas. Now they want to see something happen."

Like most lobbying organizations, New Directions does have a tax-exempt educational arm. But the thrust of the group's expanding efforts will be political action on behalf of a few chosen causes, the final decision to be made by its governing board.

"We want to build a large citizen organization around the country that will become involved in studying world problems and help us select the specific issues on which to work," Peterson stated. "Most important is that we focus on specific issues so that we can make an impact on the Congress. We

want to influence congressmen and senators on how they vote on critical world issues. It's the grass roots political action that is the heart of New Directions. We back that up with lobbying on the Hill."

Peterson says the long-term objective is "to ally with citizen groups in other countries"—a start at building a transnational peoples lobby, it seems.

At present New Directions has three priorities. First, a safe energy policy through ending reliance on plutonium. Second, reducing arms sales. And third, helping the poorest nations meet their basic human needs. A full-time lobbyist is now working on each issue. A monthly newspaper, *Citizen Force*, keeps members abreast of goings on.

In addition New Directions has five task forces, headed by prominent figures, that deal with broader issues—such as reduction of the risk of war and violence, human rights, and institutional change.

The organization is becoming, in effect, the umbrella staff that lobbies on behalf of a coalition of liberal, humanistic organizations, most of which are prohibited from lobbying on their own. Many of these organizations are represented, in a way, by senior staff members who serve on the New Directions governing board—for instance, James P. Grant (Overseas Development Council), Harry Hollins (Institute for World Order), Richard Barnet (Institute for Policy Studies), and Harlan Cleveland (Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies).

POLITICKS. Thomas B. Morgan's attempt to take over *The Nation*—originally thought successful—failed early this year. Since then Morgan has put together a new biweekly called *Politicks and Other Human Interests*, which began publication last month.

Morgan is a former editor of *The Village Voice*, who prides himself at having been in the forefront of the "new journalism" back in the 1950's and 1960's. He has been close to real politics for some time—not only as an activist reporter but as press aide to Governor Adlai Stevenson at the 1960 Democratic Convention and from 1969-73 as press secretary to Mayor John Lindsay of New York.

Politicks is shaping up as a high quality, hard-hitting, provocative magazine. Its size and tabloid-format are similar to that of *The New York Review of Books*. Advance subscriptions totaled about 25,000, and an additional number are earmarked for newsstand sale. Morgan thinks the time might be right to lure some readers from such established publications as *The New Republic*, *Esquire*, and *The Nation*.

Morgan has been successful in signing up a number of excellent writers and columnists—among them Alan Baron (who made news himself last year when George McGovern let him go from his staff for working against Carter's nomination), who will be writing on the Washington scene, and Ronald Steel, now returning to journalism, who will be contributing a column on foreign policy.

—MAB