

Inside the Bell

May Day

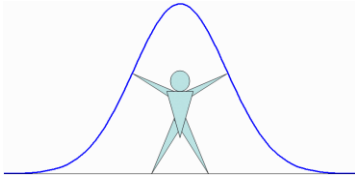
Yesterday was the first of May, May Day, or, in some parts of the world, International Workers Day. International Workers Day is a national holiday in over 80 countries. It “is a celebration of the international labour movement and left-wing movements.”^(wikipedia.org) Yesterday was also a colossal failure. Most of the local media seemed surprised that anything was happening.

In New York City 41 events were scheduled, fifteen of which had permits.^(occupywallst.org) Over 100 organizations endorsed the scheduled events and almost 50 percent of them are easily identified with organized labor unions. The rest include organizations such as the Freedom Socialist Party, International Socialist Organization and Jersey City Peace Movement. Most of the participants appeared to be young people while the organizers seemed to be somewhat older. It appears to me that most of the participants were there for the thrill and experience and not deeply committed to whatever cause was promoted. The demonstrators seem to embrace grudgingly the anti-government, anti-capitalist agenda. While, when asked directly, they complain about their student loan debt, most understand that they have that debt because they chose to attend the most prestigious schools they could because, someday, they want to be members of the very system they protest. My gut feeling is the participants were unwitting tools of a larger agenda.

Many of the planned events of the day echoed similar events from the 1960's. I have a theory as to why yesterday's events wanted to recapture the flavor of 50 years ago. The events of the '60's were initiated by disaffected youth with socialist ideals and deep commitment to their cause. While they generated considerable violence and committed criminal acts, including murder, they largely failed in their attempt to overthrow the current governmental and capitalist system.

I don't think they've given up. The 1960's radicals are aging and risk not seeing their goals attained in their lifetimes. They're working, largely unseen, to organize the current unrest. The current movement seems to be searching unsuccessfully for a social issue that would inflame and unify the protesters. Without a unifying issue, such as the Viet Nam war, they will fail again.

However, if they've experienced failure for fifty years what makes anyone think they're going to give up because yesterday was another failure? We have a long election year summer ahead of us. Their figurehead leader is in danger of losing reelection. History tells us they're not going away. I suspect they will redouble their efforts. If the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago were any indication, I would recommend that residents of the Charlotte area avoid the areas around



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the Time Warner Cable Arena and the Bank of America Stadium during the first week of September.

Unfortunately, as the students disperse to their homes and the failure to motivate large numbers of people builds, the frustration of the few actual, violent radicals also will also build. These few, as in Seattle and San Francisco yesterday, can cause considerable damage. If the majority, you and me, can continue to marginalize these radicals this summer, and defeat their supporters in government in November, we may be able to send the radicals back into their holes for the next 50 years.

Russ

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