

Bicentennial's Goals Set By People's Commission

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 — Jeremy Rifkin puffed thoughtfully on his pipe as he rocked in one of two squeaky and tattered leather chairs in his poster-cluttered office.

He apparently pondered how he might most convincingly explain to a visitor that despite all its new-left trappings, his People's Bicentennial Commission is basically conservative while its Government counterpart, with its Establishment appearance, does not conform to the ideals upon which the nation was founded.

It is difficult to draw a convincing case for the conservativeness of the People's Commission, for not only do its members dress like new left and at times talk like the new left, but they also recently moved politically like the new left in making public certain embarrassing documents from the private files of the Government's commission.

Those documents gave details of attempts to politicize and commercialize the upcoming celebration of the nation's 200th anniversary.

"The bicentennial should not be a time for a grandiose display of chauvinism but rather a time for the reaffirmation of the principles of democracy and equity for all, which serve as the foundation upon which this nation was built," Mr. Rifkin said during an interview.

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Opponents Called Tories

"Instead," he continued, "the Government group, whose members would have been labeled Tories during the American Revolution, plans to have a jamboree for its corporate mogul friends and others that control the institutions that try to manipulate our lives."

Mr. Rifkin, who is 28 years old, said the philosophy of his commission was a mix of the principals of democracy of Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Payne as espoused by the

late Saul Alinsky during the 1950's and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the 1960's.

"We felt the bicentennial era would provide a good atmosphere to counter the negative aspects of the American experience," he said.

Since the release of the file of the Government commission other evaluations of the commission have been made. One, by the staff of the House Judiciary Committee, said that "as presently structured, the commission will not be able to provide the country with a proper commemoration by 1976."

And last Thursday, President Nixon sent legislation to Congress that would dismantle the commission, and in its place create a seven-member administration answerable to him.

These and other damaging criticisms of the Government commission have bolstered the popularity and support of Mr. Rifkin's commission, which he said was started in late 1971 without knowledge of the existence of the Government group.

Joined by Colleague

Mr. Rifkin was joined during the interview by Edward Schwartz, the former president of the National Student Association, who is head of the Philadelphia operations for the Peoples' Commission.

"As I see it, the new left's primary failure was the exclusion of the blue-collar working class," Mr. Schwartz said.

"We hope to show this group that it, too, suffers the inadequacies of the system in its present mode of operation."

"We must get them to see the need for redistribution of the wealth so you won't have situations like we have now wherein large corporations like Lockheed can get Government assistance to prevent bankruptcy while school systems in many areas can't get funds for teacher pay increases," he said.

"We must likewise show them the inequity in a system that allows many corporations and wealthy people to pay no tax while the middle and low income wage earner is taxed a sizable portion of his income," he continued.