

200 Years Later  
The Revolution  
is 'Not over'

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Knight News Service

For those who prefer the traditional approach, the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, the government's official planning organization, is orchestrating a nationwide program of activities, including parades, re-enactments, restorations and cultural events.

That's the way you can observe the 1976 Bicentennial if you believe the American Revolution ended when the 13 colonies won their independence from England.

A counter group, the People's Bicentennial Commission, also based in Washington, is offering an alternative.

It holds that the revolution is not over and that the forces unleashed by the opening round almost 200 years ago are still at work, shaping, challenging and directing American life. It also believes that the throne of tyranny from which King George III was toppled is now occupied by the large corporations.

The PBC is asking Americans to mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence by organizing "citizen involvement programs" on government corruption, the windfall profits of the major oil companies, tax write-offs for the rich, impeachment and the corporate exploitation of the Bicentennial itself.

The PBC, which calls itself the largest national organization coordinating Bicentennial activities, is funded primarily by foundation grants and is directed by an aggregation of left-leaning dissidents spawned by the anti-war movement of the sixties. They draw \$50 a week and see themselves as radicals in the tradition of Thomas Paine and other early American revolutionaries.

You'd think this group of bearded men and bra-less

women would turn off the more conventional citizens. Surprisingly, however, they are sought out by local school boards, VFWs, Rotary Clubs, the YMCA and the Campfire Girls for help in planning Bi-centennial programs.

One reason why some establishment groups have turned to the PBC for guidance is the dismal performance turned in by the scandal-ridden government commission, created by President Johnson and later reorganized by President Nixon, who packed it with political loyalists and corporate executives.

The PBC counts its role in exposing the Nixon commission as one of its major contributions to Bicentennial.

Jeremy Rifkin, a 30-year-old former VISTA volunteer who heads the PBC, uncovered and released a mountain of Nixon commission documents and recommendations which showed what he calls a "Buy-centennial" attitude.

The politics of the commission came through in one document which called the Bicentennial "the greatest opportunity Nixon, the Republican Party and the government has as a beacon of light for reunification and light within the nation and the world."

Among the Nixon commission's suggestions were:

- Construction of a \$25 million bicentennial park in each state featuring a Bicentennial tower topped with a red, white and blue bubble dome.
- Distribution of Bicentennial bumper stickers, cufflinks and cigarette lighters, not to mention an official birthday cake by Sara Lee bakery and a "great American ice cream series" by Baskin-Robbins.
- Linking the Bicentenni-

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al to such enterprises as the Orange Bowl Parade, the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus and the McDonald hamburger chain, headed by Ray Kroc, a big contributor to the 1972 Nixon campaign.

Accused of incompetency, commercialization and politics, the 75-member commission was scrapped by Congress earlier this year, eight years and \$18 million after it was created.

In its place was created the ARBA, which is headed by former Secretary of the Navy John Warner.

Warner, a 47-year-old pipe-smoking Virginia lawyer, says he is determined to keep politics out of the ARBA. He is in the process of naming a new 11-member board and expects to have a 25-member advisory council by the end of July.

The immediate problem, as Warner sees it, is slaying a two-headed dragon—public disappointment in what the government's Bicentennial commission has accomplished thus far and the deeper malaise created by Watergate.

"I think the people are in despair about the state of their government," Warner said recently. "We're in one of the most tumultuous periods of our history as a consequence of Watergate and the impeachment proceedings."

Warner wants a "do-it-yourself" Bicentennial, with a minimum of government guidance and direction. The role of the ARBA, as he sees it, will be to stimulate and coordinate.

Rep. Henry Reuss, D-Wis., has charged that the ARBA is doing nothing to discourage the commercialization of the occasion.

Reuss called on the ARBA to repudiate a recent ad in Advertising Age inviting business executives to a Bicentennial Call-To-Action Conference, inviting them to "learn together firsthand

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John Warner



Jeremy Rifkin

what your company can do to support the Bicentennial celebration and how you can merchandise your participation to your customers and prospects . . ."

Rifkin believes "The Bicentennial is beginning to heat up. The large corporations have become very defensive about their role. The problem is that they—and I include the White House commission—don't have a good understanding of the American Revolution.

"We see the Bicentennial as a crucial event coming at a time of true national crisis. Not only is there Watergate, but the polls show that 69 per cent of the American people think government is run of, by and for big business interests."