

What's Wrong with "Portside Monitor"?

For a while now, I've been receiving their daily quintuple aggregates from many sources without thinking much about them. The most peculiar bits approvingly report protests within Israel or anti-Israel protests on behalf of Palestinians in Western Europe without noticing that such anti-government protests couldn't possibly happen in neighboring Arab countries because the protesters would be quickly imprisoned, if not killed.

Typically again, *PM* reprints favorable news from Cuba, even when it seems incredible, such as the claim to have eradicated both syphilis and babies born with HIV. While the former would be impossible in any culture with prostitution catering to visitors, the latter really reflects not preventive medicine but the absence of psychotropic drugs requiring needles.

Another suspicious sign is *PM*'s glib approval of policies likely to increase American unemployment, which I regard as the major socio-economic problem of our time, their smug publicizing reflecting an inability to think something through to its likely consequences, especially about poor people who wouldn't read their handouts.

That made me realize the deeper problem with *PM*: **There's little thinking here and certainly no rethinking**, only paternal guidance toward correct positions depending upon certain unexamined "portside" or left biases—less preaching to the converted than massaging them. To no surprise, there are no surprises.

All this measures a thoughtless operation as essentially juvenile, even if it appeals to adults of limited mentality,

and is thus exploiting the limitations of its readers. Also people parading correct positions need not worry about the fates of those less fortunate.

I suppose there exists a "starboard" (or right-wing) aggregator that's comparably simple-minded, but it doesn't send me daily emails.

Nearly five decades ago I edited an anthology of social thought titled *Beyond Left & Right* and have since dismissed as retrograde writers pervading either of these epithets, whether to praise or blame. Still do, alas.