

## LOST CAUSES

(I tend to begin most of these pieces with “When.” When I was... When in the course... So here we go again.)

When I was about 10 or 12 years old, there was a radio program featuring a Mr. Keene who was a “tracer of lost persons.” Listeners would send in descriptions of people who had fallen out of sight, and Mr. Keene would track them down. For some time, I have been feeling like someone who is a clinger to lost causes. There was a time that I felt sure that all the causes I believe in will not only survive but will eventually thrive. They will be seen by the majority of people as right, correct, and the only way to go.

For the most part, these are political causes. And almost all of my friends agreed with me. Increase the minimum wage, establish a living wage for all workers, occupational safety, strengthen the labor movement, ban hand guns, eliminate the death penalty, make it easier for people to vote, liberalize immigration, strengthen civil rights and civil liberties, establish free higher education, more public housing, rent control, socialized medicine, why stop at socialized medicine—let’s have socialism.

I worked for a union when the government was pro-union; when a third of the labor force was unionized, when unions had power and were able to negotiate strong, innovative contracts. I worked for an agency that was Jewish and supported by unions. When its leadership spoke Yiddish and when there were 500,000 Jewish trade unionists. When we fought side by side with blacks and other minorities to eliminate racism and discrimination.