

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL KKK

If one were to make a list of the three most useful general periodicals in the country, the *New Republic* would have to be on that list.

In the September 5 issue, for example, besides some fresh articles on Israel and the "fiasco" of election finance reforms, there is a look at the Ku Klux Klan by Phillip Finch, who has just finished a book on the radical right.

The KKK is the largest organized movement of anti-semitism and bigotry in the country. It is the closest thing we have to a major Nazi-like group. And it is not in good shape. There are about thirty different KKK groups in the country, and the highest estimate of their total national membership is about 8 thousand. The largest of these KKK groups, the Invisible Empire of the KKK (which claims 1800 members), went into legal bankruptcy last winter, lives from month to month on dues, and operates out of a small office next to a rural trailer park in Louisiana.

As a matter of fact, Finch suggests, the KKK groups are mainly kept alive by certain opponent groups -- such as the Progressive Labor Party, the Communist Workers Party and the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee -- which are themselves nourished by the existence of the KKK.

The well-publicized happening in Washington D.C. last November 27 was a prime example. One KKK group, the Knights of the KKK, announced that it was going to march in the nation's capital that day. On its Big Day, this KKK group was able to amass a total of 37 (thirty seven) members for the march. But groups such as the Progressive Labor Party amassed about five thousand people to protest the appearance of the KKK. The protesters made news, some of them burning police cars and breaking shop windows.

Earl Raab

"Support Your Local KKK"

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As a result, both the KKK and the anti-KKK demonstrators had a success. The demonstrators would not have been able to mount such a media event if they didn't have the KKK as a target. And the KKK would have just had a dismal and unnoted march by 37 people, if the demonstrators had not put on their show. As it was, that KKK group was reinvigorated, because it could announce that it was important enough to be attacked by five thousand enemies. It marched mainly *in order* to be attacked. On the basis of that success, the Invisible Empire of the KKK may now plan a rally in the Northeast, hoping that those groups will attack again and thus bolster *that* KKK group's dwindling membership.

Make no mistake. The fact that the KKK is in such bad shape doesn't mean that organized anti-semitism is no longer a possibility. But if it comes, it will not come in the outmoded guise of the KKK -- and certainly not in the outmoded and foreign guise of the Nazi uniform. We have to keep our eyes on the real dangers.

As a matter of fact, in today's world, the Jews have more to fear from groups like the Progressive Labor Party than from the KKK. The groups which typically spawn anti-KKK rallies such as the one last November, are not just anti-Israel, but hostile to American Jewry. They are also interested in setting up the kinds of societies in which Jews could not live as Jews.

Of course, those groups are not about to take over America either. But the sentiments they represent are at least as likely to be the basis of a future anti-semitism, as are the sentiments of the KKK. And -- while activist educational campaigns must continue to be mounted against all bigoted groups -- it would be as difficult, and even suicidal, for Jews to march with those groups against the KKK, as it would be for Jews to march with the KKK against those groups.