



Learning from the Sixties: Memoir of an Organizer

John Maher

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This memoir by a leading New Left organizer poses tough questions, provides some answers born from front-line experience, and challenges readers to do what it takes to save our country.

Noam Chomsky praises the book for its "very valuable insights, from the perspective of a leading and effective participant, into the highly significant popular movements of the past half century, their successes and failures, the lessons to be learned, the prospects for the future." Working families in America face foreclosures and joblessness unparalleled since the Great Depression. This crisis has been compounded by a feeble response from the government and the rise of an angry right. How did this happen? How should progressives respond? What lessons might the past hold? Learning from the Sixties offers some insightful and hard-won answers. John Maher came of age in the 1960s and has been in the thick of things ever since: as an organizer, a factory worker, a schoolteacher, and an educator. In Learning from the Sixties, he traces his progress from a privileged background in Houston, Texas, to volunteering as an anti-war activist to becoming a leader of the New Left. Along the way he amassed a 2,000-page FBI file and a place on the FBI's list of the top forty leaders of "the opposition."

Maher gives us an honest and clear-eyed perspective on what truly happened at many of the events that marked that decade of tumult--from Vietnam Summer to the streets of Chicago after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr., to the demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and beyond. Later, based on those formative organizing experiences, Maher helped build Neighbor to Neighbor, a working-class-led organization that continues to have a major impact on Massachusetts politics. Says Jim McGovern, U.S. congressman from Worcester, Massachusetts, "It is a great example of what needs to be done around the country, now more than ever."

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