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# DEMOCRATIC Left

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## SANDBOX SOCIALISM

Can We Pass the Torch?

by Maxine Phillips

Also: Juliet Schor, Stanley Aronowitz, and  
Frances Fox Piven on Full Employment

# Socialist Scholars Conference

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# FAMILY TIES

## Of Parents, Politics, and Progeny

by Maxine Phillips

**W**ill DSA lose not just one but two generations of activists to the new "baby boom?" It's no news that the generation in the 30 to 40-year-old age range is having babies and becoming less active in DSA, but when *Democratic Left* surveyed both new and experienced parents to find out what the organization could do to help them stay active, it found that parents are looking for more than child care during meetings. They want their children to become involved. The news is that if DSA doesn't appeal to parents *and* children, it risks losing both generations.

### Parent / Activists?

How do parents manage? "At first nothing changed," remembers Beth Cagan, who has been active in Cleveland since the beginning of the New American Movement (NAM — one of DSA's predecessor organizations) and before. "It was 1969 and there was a lot of focus on women and kids in the movement . . . But as the kids got older and our jobs more demanding, intense involvement was difficult. . . . At first we were very conscious of taking turns, being fair. But as time wore on, I'd say I tended to give in more and let Steve be active. It would have been too difficult for both of us to give so much time to politics."

Beth's story is echoed today by other DSA women. Although none of the women who answered the questionnaire had dropped out completely, most reported cutting back on their activism, especially if they have more than one child. Most of the men, too, reported lower levels of activity than in their pre-parenting lives. (Parents of older children recalled living with other adults and children in the early 1970s and thus being able to maintain activity. Group living did not seem to be an option in the 1980s.) Interestingly, respondents who are part-time parents because of divorce are able to stay active because they have blocks of time when they are not responsible for child care. Some lucky parents have extra

help. "The main reason we can stay active is that grandma lives with us and provides much love and help with the kids," says D.C. Executive Committee member Deborah Goldman, mother of Benjamin, four, and Joshua, one-and-a-half. Debbie's mother-in-law, Dorothy Healey, combined grandparenting and serving on DSA's National Executive Committee up until this year.

The Los Angeles local takes up a collection at meetings to reimburse parents for babysitting expenses, a practice that the D.C. local recently adopted. "We realized that most of the few kids in our local are pre-school age or babies and that providing child care at meetings wouldn't help for this age group," says Debbie Goldman. In Chicago, where there is a larger number of parents, the local provides child care at meetings, but cannot

afford individual babysitters. Former L.A. co-chair Jan Breidenbach, mother of two-year old Jesse, notes that her branch schedules its meetings on Sunday morning for brunch so that families can bring their children and the children can get to know each other. Boston tried having potluck dinners on Sunday nights before the regular monthly meetings, but since the program lasted until 10:00 and the children needed to be in bed by 8:30, most parents left after dinner. "Night meetings just don't work," emphasizes Julia Johnson, former chair of the Boston local and soon-to-be mother of a second child.

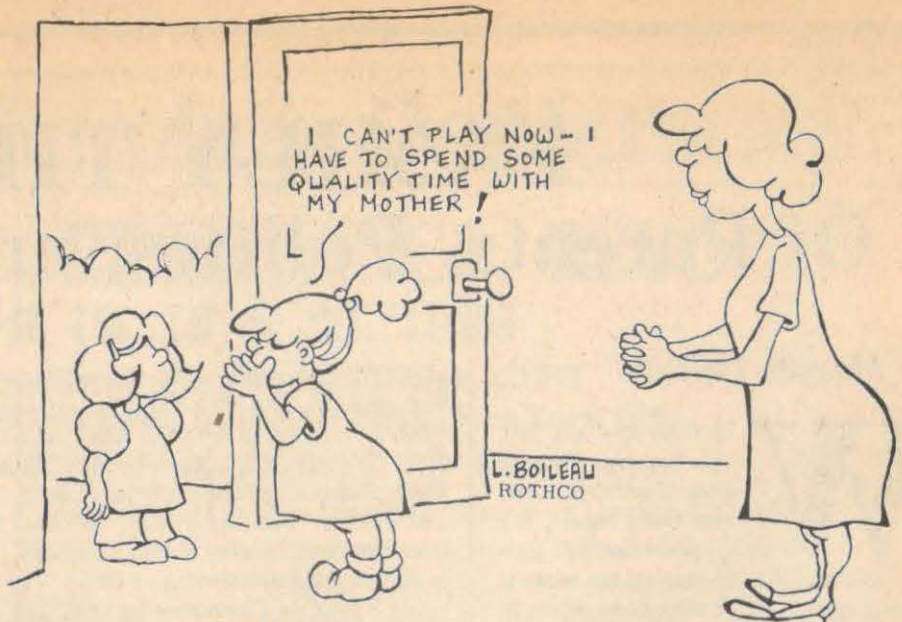
Still, before the children are old enough to have a set bedtime, many activists find child care at night meetings helpful. And if the number of children is small and members are willing to take turns caring for them, it doesn't have to be paid



Photo by Jim West

child care. Judy Johnson, who served as head of NAM's Parenting Task Force in the 1970s, remembers a rule in her local that whoever brought a child to a meeting would be free of responsibility for the child during the meeting time. Other members took half-hour child care shifts. For the parent, "it was very freeing and let you concentrate on the meeting."

Locals can also aid parents by involving them in work they can do at home, such as teaching a course in their living room or performing much-needed maintenance tasks that don't involve phone calls. Former DSA Program Director Holly Graff and husband Tom Simonds, former Chicago DSA staffperson, are now the parents of Keith, almost three, and nine-month-old twins, Tessa and Kevin. Although Holly and Tom were able to stay active nationally and locally with one child, having three means that their main political work is now done at home, where they are computerizing the Chicago local's mailing list. They are glad that the local provides child care at meetings, but what is most important to them at this point is to socialize with others in the local who share their parenting concerns. "We want to build ties for our children," says Holly.



### "Recruiting" the Kids

Veterans of the early years of the women's movement recall debates over what type of child care socialists should provide. They now note the lack of imagination shown at most meetings when it comes to setting up an atmosphere that children would like. "I've stopped taking my daughter to DSA events," says Judith Van Allen, mother of nine-year-old Adrian, and until her recent marriage, a single parent. "She was always bored." In contrast, at feminist events, the childcare programs attempted to integrate children with mural painting, evening sing alongs, or child-oriented political education.

Almost all the parents surveyed feel the need for social activities that bring parents and children together. Parents of small children appreciate help with babysitting expenses and sensitive scheduling of meetings, but parents of older children find that, as DSA Co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich wrote, "there are no DSA events or activities that children and teenagers can plug into directly." When her children were young she could take them to meetings and demonstrations. Now, at ages 13 and 15, they "see DSA as a drain on my time, with no particular benefits or meaning for them." DSA Political Director Jim Shoch's 14-year-old stepson, Toby, "thinks politics is pretty boring." Michael Harrington's 17-year-old son, Alec, is "sympathetic," his 14-year-old, Ted "indifferent."

Aside from a few locals that have brunch meetings to include children, there is no systematic attempt to bring children into a social network. According to Peg Strobel and Bill Barclay of the Chicago local, "what would be great is left cultural activities for kids." Peter and Marjorie Hickman, parents of four-year-old Karl,

two-year-old Joe, and two-month-old Kathryn Eleanore, suggest playgroups as a way for children to meet each other and for parents to "share concerns and maybe engage in some type of activities." Without such support, they don't see how they can stay active.

When children are little, there are some ways to include them in political activity. Marshall Mayer, campus organizer for the Pro-Peace March, told us his son is looking forward to going on the march across the U.S.A. But as the children grow older, they're more interested in doing things with their friends. Beth and Steve Cagan's oldest daughter is in an anti-apartheid group in her high school, but Beth points out that she has little peer support "because we don't have political friends with kids our kids' ages. So they tend to feel like oddballs, charting new territory. . . ." At the same time, they want to develop their own views "but sometimes feel squelched by our knowledge and ideas . . . How do they rebel against rebels?" asks Beth.

On Long Island, Rosa and Benjamin Ehrenreich are active in Students Against Driving Drunk, which works to help students resist peer pressures to drink or use drugs. They both consider themselves leftwing, but, says Barbara, "One of the worst things now is that they don't know other kids who are political." Rosa, age 15, complains about kids who don't take issues seriously and has tried to meet her own needs through the debating society.

Larry Wittner, a founder and until this year the secretary of the Albany, N.Y. local, is pleased that his 14-year-old daughter, Julie, is political. Yet he worries that her activism may fade as she is swept up more in "teen culture." She doesn't have

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political friends at school, although at a Unitarian camp last summer she loved being with other young people who shared her views.

Indeed, when parents of older children talk about a left culture in which their children can meet others and learn about issues, they talk about camps run by church groups or progressives, but not about DSA activities. In Europe, many socialist parties offer events or organizations for children in the 8 to 16 age range. The DSA Youth Section, however, is limited to those age 16 and over, and in reality is geared to college young people. Thus it is easy for children of DSA activists never to be turned on to socialist politics.

### *"Do Lincoln Logs still exist?"*

For young children, playgroups would be good. As the children grow older, weekend retreats, picnics, games, cultural events, and other group activities could be fun and also teach values and organizing skills. After all, Holly Graff points out, the skills learned in putting on a rock concert are certainly transferable. Barbara Ehrenreich suggests that locals get children of members together and ask them what they would like to do.

### **Transmitting Values**

All the parents interviewed were pleased with their teenagers' values, even if the youngsters were not activists at this time. Pittsburgh activist Paul Garver, father of 20-year-old Michael, 19-year-old Adrian, and 15-year-old Christopher, believes that the need to rebel is so strong

among teenagers that any activity would "almost have to define itself in opposition to adults." His children have enjoyed a family camp that he, his wife Willy, and about 40 other adults (some of them DSA members) and children have participated in every summer for almost 20 years. Because peer relations are so important at this age, Paul believes that the best thing DSA could do for teenagers would be to sponsor weekends and camping trips where kids can socialize.

Judy Johnson questions whether the nitty gritty details of organizing can ever be made attractive to this age group. "Kids are so disenfranchised and have so little control over their own lives that they can't see activism directly affecting their lives," she believes. When her son Derek was younger, he organized a discussion on children's rights for the local. Today, at age 20, he's been active in a campaign to save the planetarium in their home town of Moss Point, Mississippi. Yet he sees activism as "a lot of work," says Judy.

The need to be able to talk to other parents and to share ideas about socialist childbearing is very strong. "DSA nationally needs to have more visible concern for and commitment to the issues that so many of its most active and formerly active members are now very concerned with — how capitalism impacts on children, parents, and families," says Andrea Gunderson, mother of 17-month-old Kirstin and once a member of the Chicago local's steering committee. "Questions of values and how you transmit them are burning issues," says Barbara Ehrenreich. "It's ridiculous that we don't have space for them. Why not have workshops at conventions? These needs can't be met in a private way."



Steve, Beth, Joanna, and Shauna Cagan (with Harry the dog).

NAM's Parenting Caucus had an informal newsletter and met at conventions. But it seems that no DSA local has a parents' group; nor is there a network of parents in different cities who communicate with each other. Parents in each local need to meet and determine what they want the most. Needs will vary from local to local depending on the children's ages. If such groups are to be organized, some of the initial energy might have to come from nonparents. Given the general exhaustion of parents, especially new ones, and unless there is a regular meeting space and ongoing opportunities for interaction, keeping a group going can be difficult.

Parents' groups are often highly motivated on certain issues. When asked if having children had changed their political interests, DSA parents cited education, day care, sex-role stereotyping, racism, the environment, and especially nuclear war, as taking on more importance. They are also concerned about the values of the mass culture. "Do Lincoln Logs still exist?" asks NEC member Harold Meyerson, father of four-year-old Miranda, as he decries Gobots, Transformers, and other war toys. Delores Delgado Campbell and Duane Campbell, parents of a six-year-old, try to counterbalance the violence on television and the "blatant U.S. attitude that the strong walk on the weak" but feel "much despair" about the attitudes of the larger society. They are active as co-chairs of the Latino and Anti-Racism Commissions, respectively, but report that their local has only one active member with children, so that no support network exists among parents.

*Continued on page 11*



Richard Healey and Debbie Goldman with Benjie and Josh.

# Full Employment: Beyond Zero-Sum

Full employment has long been the centerpiece of the Left's economic program. This focus has recently been challenged by a number of writers, both inside and outside DSA. Democratic Left asked Juliet Schor, Stanley Aronowitz, and Frances Fox Piven to continue and (hopefully) clarify the debate in our pages. Their comments follow. — Eds.

by Juliet B. Schor

**T**he struggle for full employment — long the central tenet of the Left in Western countries — has recently come under attack by a group of DSA members, most notably in the pages of *Socialist Review*. They have argued that full employment is no longer economically feasible, that it employs an outmoded work-oriented ideology, and that it is of limited value to women and people of color. In its place, they propose that our central economic demand should be the expansion of the welfare state.

I am in agreement with the political orientation and objectives of the critics. But I believe that their critique of full employment is misguided. Ironically, they have joined the ranks of neo-liberals and conservatives who say that Keynesian economics is discredited, and that employment for all is impossible in an era of global competition and technological change. The evidence suggests otherwise.

*"I believe the politics of redistribution will fail . . . because they will be divisive, not unifying."*

Secondly, their position fails to come to terms with the profound economic impact of sustained full employment, particularly for women and people of color. Where is the evidence that full employment does not substantially improve the economic status of these groups?

Finally, the political thrust of their solution — a zero-sum redistribution in a period of economic stagnation — is to divide precisely those constituencies the Left is



Photo by Steve Cagan

trying to unite. By contrast, a program which raises employment and output does just the reverse.

## Is It Possible?

Elsewhere, I have discussed the factors which determine the volume of employment in an economy, with particular attention to the issue of technological change (*Socialist Review* #81). The conclusions of that analysis were two. First, there have always been strong tendencies within capitalism to translate productivity growth into increased output and reduced hours. Second, the volume of employment is primarily a *political* and not economic

phenomenon. Either through incentives to the private sector or public expenditure itself, the state can always create full employment, if the political will exists.

Concretely, the view that we will experience widespread unemployment as a result of technological change flies in the face of the evidence. The U.S. is experiencing a dramatic *slowdown* in net investment, not an acceleration. Productivity growth continues to be below its earlier trend, indi-

cating a *lack* of technological change, not a surfeit. The automation of the office has been largely completed, yet the so-called "second industrial revolution" has not materialized. Indeed, Wassily Leontief and Fay Duchin, who initiated their research with the view that technological change was about to lead to widespread unemployment, have just released evidence to the twenty-first century indicating that technological change will create more jobs than it will destroy.

What about international competition? Can we have full employment and still compete in the world market? Ironically, it is precisely technological change which holds the key to international competitiveness, given sensible macroeconomic policy. In a high-growth, high-employment economy, technical change will be more rapid, enhancing our competitiveness. The more serious international question is whether or not we can gain some control over corporations' overseas investments. If multinationals continue to relocate their production outside the U.S., not only employment, but also incomes, tax revenues, and living standards in general will suffer. Clearly, restrictions on capital mobility must be a component of a full employment program.

Lastly there is the question of Keynesian macroeconomic policy. Critics of full employment have argued that Keynesian

measures to stimulate employment and growth through taxation, government expenditures, and easy credit are no longer effective. While Keynesian theory has certainly fallen onto hard times within academic circles, the evidence is that it is alive and well in the real world. The large deficits of the past few years have resulted in economic expansion and employment growth. While the pattern of growth has been dictated by the particular types of expenditures (military), it is quite clear that macroeconomic policy is capable of generating growth and employment. A look at Europe reveals the power of Keynesian policy; European governments have been practicing both restrictive budgetary and credit policies, and unemployment has risen steadily.

## Employment and Equality

The critics of full employment have contended that women and people of color have particular economic problems which will not be solved by full employment, and that full employment is therefore not appealing to these groups. It is certainly true that full employment is not a complete solution. But the conclusion that it is therefore not important or desirable is a *non sequitur*. The proper question, which has not been satisfactorily addressed by the critics is: What effect does full employment have on the economic status of these groups? Here I believe the record is quite clear.

To answer this question it is necessary to consider both the direct and indirect effects. The former are obvious. Unemployed workers are able to find jobs, which raises their incomes. In the case of Blacks and Latinos, the direct effects are quite significant, as a large component of their economic discrimination is attributable to lack of access to employment.

The indirect effects can be divided into those on absolute and those on relative status. With respect to the former, full employment increases the level of goods and services, and historically has raised both the potential and actual standard of living of nearly everyone. Furthermore, it raises the bargaining power and strength of workers, as a group, relative to employers. Not only does the pie grow, but the workers' relative slice increases as well. This is largely due to the fact that unemployment increases competition among workers, driving down wage rates.

To understand the effects on relative positions, one need only consider the segmentation of our economy. The relatively poorer economic status of women and people of color is largely due to the fact that

they are underrepresented in the higher-paid, unionized sector of the economy and overrepresented in lower-paid, dead-end jobs. In a full or high employment economy, these categories of jobs do not expand proportionately. Rather, as Arthur Okun has demonstrated, there are shifts to high-productivity, high-wage industries and jobs, what he calls "job upgrading." Manufacturing, transportation, and construction increase relative to government, agriculture, finance and household production. These shifts result in disproportionate increases in the employment of women and people of color in these industries. For example, George Perry has estimated that if the unemployment rate fell from 5 to 4%, women and youths would get *most* of the jobs. Work by Michael Reich and Richard Freeman indicates that declining unemployment increases the relative status of Blacks as well.

In addition to the direct benefits of increased access to primary jobs, there are positive effects in the secondary labor market. As workers in secondary jobs leave to take primary jobs, firms with secondary jobs are forced to raise wages to attract workers. Thus the wage differential between the two types of jobs falls.

The evidence is clear: for both women and people of color, full employment results in substantial gains in economic position, both absolutely and with respect to men and whites. This should come as no surprise to those who have examined the history of full employment struggles. The economic programs of people of color have always centered on full employment, the present being no exception. And major women's organizations, which are only more recently involved in economic policy, take similar positions.

Looking back over the long sweep of economic development in this country, the importance of a high-employment economy should be obvious. For it is largely in periods of labor shortage that people of color and women have improved their economic status. Northward migration and the

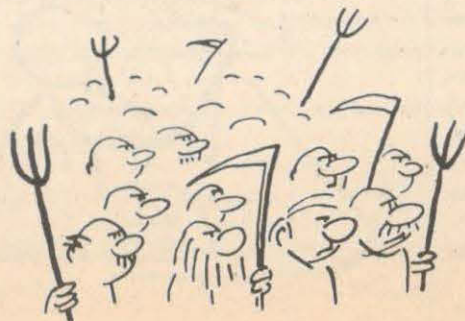
movement out of agriculture and domestic service into industry is a good example. The conditions of work during World War II are another.

None of this implies that full employment programs should not directly address issues of racism and sexism. Indeed, they should and readily can include specific provisions for the problems encountered by women and people of color. Government job creation schemes can vigorously implement affirmative action or include day care arrangements. They can include provisions for training. We can effect hours reductions and a blurring of the distinction between full- and part-time jobs, which will help us move toward a structure of joint parenting. We can put government workers to work rebuilding inner-city neighborhoods.

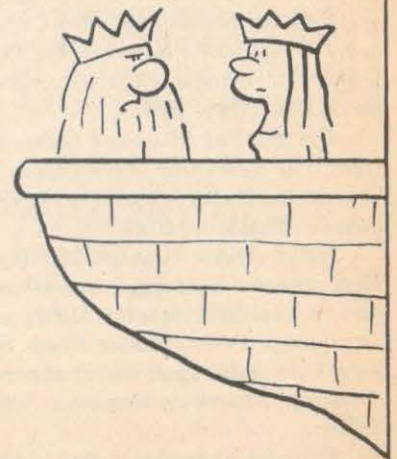
## The Welfare State

At times the debate over full employment has been posed in terms of support for employment versus social welfare expenditures. I think it is fair to say that participants of all views ultimately agree that the either-or dichotomy is a false one. As the success of European social democracy has so clearly shown us, full employment and a strong welfare state are complements. My own work on the welfare state, as well as that of Piven and Cloward, has stressed the role of social welfare payments in increasing workers' power *vis a vis* their employers. And at a most elementary level, it is clear that the funds to support welfare expenditures must come from the production of goods and services.

The strategic question is which politics — the politics of redistribution or the poli-



"I got them all jobs, and now they want salaries!"



Baloc  
ROTHCO

# An Empty Slogan

by Frances Fox Piven

I have been asked to keep my remarks brief, and so I can only make a few main points about the full employment debate within DSA.

First, I want to make clear what this debate is *not* about. There is no dispute that, all else being equal, working people are better off when unemployment levels drop, and for the familiar reasons that Schor gives: wage levels rise, and marginalized groups get access to employment. Moreover, there is no dispute about the sort of full employment measures advocated by Schor, including restrictions on capital mobility, government employment, reduced hours, rebuilding the inner cities, and so on.

But these arguments about the advantages of a full employment economy are not new, and neither is the idea that the Left should make the call for full employment the centerpiece of its strategy. But the results have been disappointing, to say the least. Full employment bills are introduced into the Congress, where the legislative process ensures that proclamations and little else are produced. Meanwhile, in the real world, unemployment rates remain high, until very recently higher than in any other industrialized western nation.

The problem is not that the government is in principle not capable of reducing unemployment. Of course it is, by measures such as Schor suggests, and by other measures as well. Everyone will have their wish list. The problem rather is one of political power. Schor and other full employment advocates think their program is

saved from the "utopianism" of which they accuse the post-industrialists because they are convinced that enunciating a full employment program is itself a major step toward building a majoritarian movement capable of realizing their agenda. Since so much of what is said about the advantages of full employment is familiar and unexceptional, I think it is this conviction about building a movement that animates the argument.

*"The record of full employment as a movement building goal has been dismal."*

The general line of reasoning is familiar. If we hit on the right program, a program which would benefit large numbers of people, and then proclaim it loudly, a mass constituency will appear. In fact, in one way or another, we have been trying to do that for a long time. But this rather Hegelian way of thinking about mass movements short circuits all of the difficult strategic issues on which popular political action depends.

For beginners, people can be in favor of all sorts of programs, but if they see no way of achieving them, these preferences will lack salience or credibility, and people will not act on them. A Left program thus has to be evaluated not only in terms of its desirability in principle to large numbers of people, but whether it will seem attainable to these people, and whether the program lends itself to very concrete popular activities through which goals acquire believability and urgency. That means the

tics of employment — will be most successful. In my view it will be the latter. In my earlier piece, and the discussion which followed it (*Socialist Review* #81 and 84), I argued that the ideology of post-industrialism is utopian. Due to space limitations, I must refer the reader to those pieces, and merely note here that the politics of redistribution do not solve what I believe to be the major problem of the Left in this country today — the divisions amongst our constituencies.

Indeed, on this ground, I believe the politics of redistribution will fail, irrespective of their intent, because they will be divisive, not unifying. This is particularly true in a period of economic hardship. They lead us to play a zero-sum game; that is, they aim to redistribute a given level of resources. By contrast, an employment-based politics provides a strategy for increasing the well-being of almost everyone, at the same time that it raises the relative status of the groups at the bottom. We are not limited in our ability to create jobs, but we are limited by the income which is generated from a given level of employment. Full employment therefore provides a basis for creating the unity that we so desperately need.

*Juliet B. Schor is co-author of The Economic Report of the People (South End Press), and is an assistant professor of economics at Harvard University. She wishes to thank Joe Conason, Michael Albert, and Sam Bowles for helpful discussions about these ideas.*

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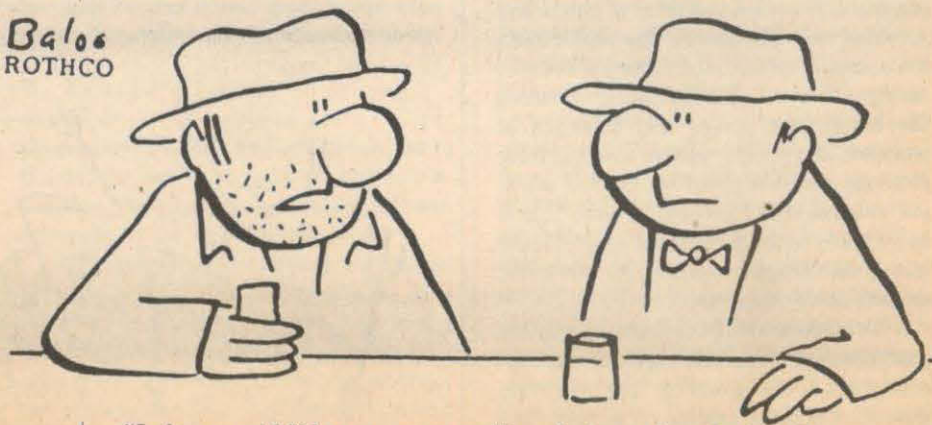
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Baloo  
ROTHCO



"I always said I'd never go on welfare, but my boss insisted."



program has to be capable of translation into very specific demands, which activate groups to act against very specific targets. Mass movements of ordinary people grow by the accumulation of experience and effort in local struggles in thousands of communities. The record of full employment as a movement building goal has been dismal because it does not provide strategic opportunities for this kind of local action. Legislative initiatives in Washington attract small bands of reformers, but little else.

There is another problem with a strategy that makes full employment the focal program of the Left. No matter what we intend by our full employment slogan, the meaning of full employment is likely to be determined more by the dominant right wing program to reorganize the American economy *in the name of full employment*. After all, the business-right rhetoric is also about jobs and growth, but with the twist that Americans are going to have to knuckle under to the newly harsh conditions imposed by international competition if they are to keep jobs and investment in this country. That argument has proved overwhelmingly persuasive, and it justifies a range of business initiatives against workers and the poor, from two-tier wage contracts to coercive workfare programs. In short, even if programmatic slogans were sufficient to the task of movement building, the effect of the full employment slogan in the current context may well be to strengthen the right wing mobilization.

## An Alternative

As I have written elsewhere, I think a Left politics organized around the immediate defense of welfare state programs, but including an agenda to reform and expand the programs, has large movement building possibilities. Of course, the term "welfare state" has fallen on hard times, and in any case has always been unpopular in the United States. Nevertheless, opinion polls consistently show strong and growing support for the income security and service programs which constitute the welfare state, including the most benighted means-tested programs. The business mobilization has successfully reduced popular economic expectations, but in political arenas, expectations appear to be far less constrained. How else can we explain the inability of the Reagan administration to implement most of its program for slashing the welfare state?

Just as important, because the income support and service programs are organizationally decentralized, defense of the welfare state is more readily translated into local action by existing local groups — the

elderly, the unemployed, students, agency employees, AFDC recipients. The programs themselves are visible local targets, readily accessible in tens of thousands of communities. Nor is it correct to think of this sort of protest as a movement of marginals; enormous numbers now rely directly on welfare state programs, both as recipients and as welfare state workers (who outnumber union members in the United States). Moreover, because the income security provided by welfare state programs has become critical to the ability of workers to defend their wages and working conditions, there is also the possibility of even broader coalition building.

Full employment advocates seem to shrink from this sort of political mobilization, and even go so far as to reiterate the essentially right wing views that most Americans are offended by welfare state programs, and in any case, as a nation we can no longer afford them. I think this is because they are fixed on a model of power as rooted in workplace organization, and attached also to the visionary possibilities of social transformation the Left has always associated with worker power. If anything is "utopian" at this particular juncture in American development, it is continued attachment to the model of workplace power developed on the eve of industrialization. Moreover, a reformed and expanded welfare state may itself contain visionary possibilities. Not least, it makes it possible to

contemplate a society where the brutal discipline of wage work is relaxed, and where the worth of human endeavor is no longer measured exclusively by the market. ●

*Frances Fox Piven is professor of political science at the CUNY Graduate Center. Her latest book, co-authored with Richard Cloward, is The New Class War. This article reflects work she is doing in collaboration with Fred Block, Richard Cloward, and Barbara Ehrenreich.*

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# Crackpot Realism

by Stanley Aronowitz

**R**onald Reagan is a true legatee of the New Deal. Like Roosevelt he has adopted a Keynesian economic policy, only instead of authorizing hole digging he has advocated an arms buildup; like the New Deal, he has adopted a full employment policy, only by other means in addition to direct government contracts to employers. Reagan has created almost 9 million jobs through granting extensive tax breaks to business, promoting service industries as the solution to mass unemployment among industrial workers. Like the New Deal, Reagan's is also a contract state, a monetarist state and a welfare state. The differences with the old New Deal are substantial, but should not obscure the unity of their purpose: to stabilize capitalism through the appearance of full employment, while simultaneously providing direct subsidies to business.

Full employment is, of course, not possible under capitalism. It violates the principle that a substantial segment of the active population must wait in reserve lest the system's expansion be thwarted by labor shortages or, alternatively, wages rise and profits decline. Since the end of WWII the progressive wing of market liberalism has advocated full employment policies, mainly in two forms: policies that promote economic growth in the expectation that growth will result in increased jobs; and direct government job-creating activities such as public works and public services (or contracts to the private sector to provide these services).

By far the favored side has been programs to increase the G.N.P. by stimulating private investment and increasing public expenditures. Reagan's brand of military Keynesianism, which appears to contravene welfare state assumptions, is *fundamentally* continuous with the liberal variant and, indeed, has produced whatever growth the economy has sustained over the past five years. The trouble with the contract state, in both military and non-military variants, is that it is blind to the aggressive investment policies of large corporations that stress labor-saving technologies. Such is the dominant tendency in military investment, and increas-

ingly in services as well (the only deterrent to massive automation in many service sectors are the low wages offered by employers and accepted by workers). The relationship between investment and job creation proposed in Keynes' growth model is that productivity is held constant, an assumption that no longer may be made. If productivity exceeds economic growth, a net decrease of jobs may result. Further, if investment takes the primary form of labor-saving technologies, the stimulating role of government may actually work against full employment.

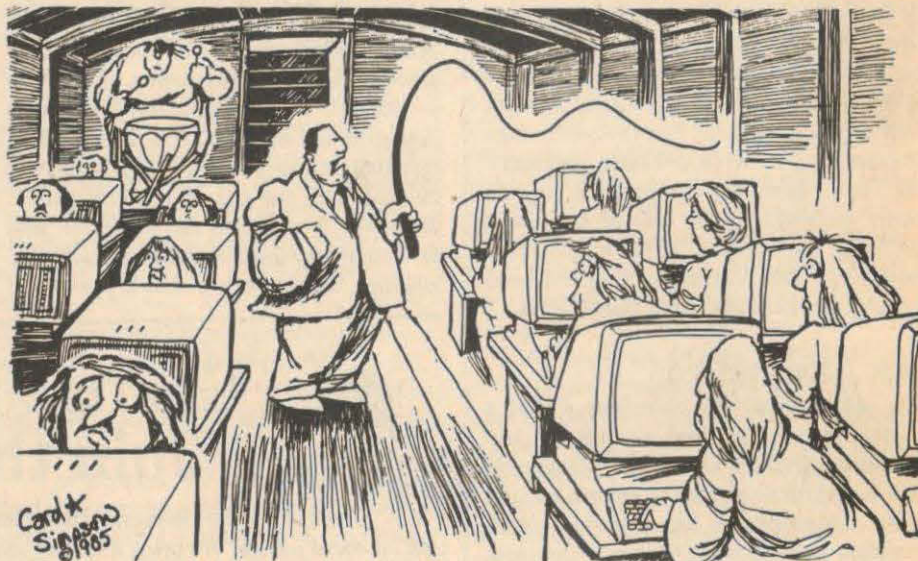
The second full employment emphasis is job creation through direct government spending. In the late 1960s such programs

corps and community development activities were semi-skilled or unskilled.

In short, direct job creation has always confronted nearly insurmountable obstacles from entrenched interests such as craft unions, professional associations and administrators. And perhaps these groups are right in suspecting that public service jobs, paying less than union wages, undermine their hard-won standards (even though racism is surely another motivation for union opposition to construction jobs under public aegis).

Labor and the Left should abandon reliance on "full employment" in favor of such policies as work-sharing. Reducing the workweek, workday, and workyear (through longer vacations, sabbaticals and the like) will not prevent joblessness, but it would create jobs. Of course, it would have to be accompanied by severe restrictions on overtime or else the longer workday would be restored through the back door.

The shorter workday/week would reduce so-called "part-time" work because



Keystroke! ... Keystroke! ... Keystroke!

as Neighborhood Youth Corps and Public Service Careers (usually paraprofessionals in health, education and welfare) actually produced a million jobs, typically entry level, temporary, low paying, and subordinate. These jobs were nowhere jobs, though a minority landed permanent posts. In only a few instances was the government prepared to provide genuine education and long-term training. Anti-poverty programs were always careful not to tread on the prerogatives of professionals, either with respect to performance or pay. Similarly, in the miniscule programs that were geared to manual labor, in most cases, governments made sure that workers in these projects never learned enough to challenge unionized skilled trades. Conservation

this kind of employment would now approach full-time status. Further, we should advocate a guaranteed income plan to supplant public assistance, a demeaning program that is used to hold labor in reserve. Guaranteed income at a level adequate to support self and household would raise living standards for the whole population because employers would be required to raise wages in order to attract labor to boring, meaningless jobs. Work-sharing might also revolutionize the workplace. Either we would approach the capitalist dream of the nearly automatic factory, in which case people would have the time to learn, play, and "work" on their own projects, or a new system of sharing the most onerous jobs would have to be

invented to guarantee that the dung is shoveled. In either case, humans would benefit.

Naturally, if full employment is not possible then we would have a basic alteration of the work-ethic. We might choose to distinguish "work" (that which we perform for ourselves) and "labor" (that which we perform for others). Self-managed work would insure continuity with the past and the labor process would be diminished. Is this impractical, utopian, and socialist? Yes. But the cockeyed realism of "full employment" is far less practical and is deeply conservative. Conservative not only because it has been successfully coopted by the right, but also because it reinforces the bourgeois ideal that dignity derives only from a job. ●

*Stanley Aronowitz is professor of sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center and author of numerous books and articles on labor.*

## Kids

*Continued from page 5*

## Our Future

Child care, activities for children, support and discussion groups for parents — all these are lacking in most locals, and even small efforts in these areas would be welcomed by parents. But another theme — an unexpected one — emerges from conversations with activists. Barbara Ehrenreich, for example, worries that more people today believe that one can't be a parent and continue political work. She refers to a "cult of motherhood," observing that few of her friends carry on with paid work and political work once they become mothers. In the early 1970s "no one thought you were terrible if you put a one-year-old in day care." Life seemed less privatized. Today, she says, she hears more often of people having in-home child care, usually provided by women from South and Central America who receive the minimum wage.

Holly Graff puts this concern another way. "If the political climate were different, there wouldn't be as many children," she believes. After all, "some people of our generation chose to delay having children because of politics." If people were still excited by politics, they might have one child, but they might not be having others so closely spaced. She agrees that it is a complex issue in which the biological time clock plays a part, but is convinced that if DSA took issues of importance to parents more seriously, the interest of these people could

be rekindled. When there is a possibility of change, activism no longer seems dull. "In South Africa, there's no problem about participation of children in politics," she argues.

When the next surge of activism comes, DSA will be grappling less with the malaise that now preoccupies so many active members, parents and nonparents, and has caused many others to become less active. In the meantime, a parenting constituency exists in DSA that cuts across class, race, and gender lines. Without responding to the needs of parents and chil-

dren, the possibility of attracting the younger generation is slim. DSA parents, with the help of nonparents, must end their isolation. ●

*Maxine Phillips, former executive director of DSA and former managing editor of Democratic Left, is currently managing editor of Dissent. She wishes to thank Joanne Barkan for her advice and editorial help, as well as all the parents who took time from their crowded lives to share their thoughts.*

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# LETTERS

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## Not All Wrong

*To the Editors:*

Ronald Aronson's otherwise excellent article on terrorism (one of the best critical articles I've seen in DL) still begs a couple of questions. First, his acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the state in the minds of most people fails to question that legitimacy. As socialists, we should in our moral analysis (not for purposes of real-world politics) deny the legitimacy of any state that doesn't represent the majority of its people and conform to humane standards in its relation to internal minorities and the world around it.

Secondly, and related to this, what are we to make of the people of democratic states, like Israel and the US, who support those states' terroristic, imperialist, and genocidal policies? By a large majority, the people of Israel are unwilling to countenance the creation of a Palestinian state. It's thus not outrageous for Palestinian guerrillas to consider them, and not only their government, as enemies. The same could be said of the Nicaraguan people, who unfortunately cling to a naive belief that the majority of Americans sympathize with their revolution, and that it's just the nasty "ruling circles" who want it terminated. If democracy means anything, it means collective responsibility.

For all that, I agree that terrorism (defined as violence targeted on non-combatants for the purpose of intimidation) is wrong. But I can also have some gut sympathy for the desperation of the terrorist. Emma Goldman defended Leon Czolgosz not for assassinating President McKinley, but for his motivation, and for the distortions ("corruption," in Aronson's terms) wreaked on his consciousness by life in a repressive, exploitative society. No, terrorists aren't right. But they aren't all

wrong, either.

*Chris Nielsen  
Portland, OR*

## No Context

*To the Editors:*

The latest issue of *Democratic Left* has a discussion of terrorism by Ronald Aronson, Holly Sklar, and Michael Walzer, with special reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sklar and Aronson recognize that terrorism occurs in a context of oppression, but Walzer does not. Readers of *Democratic Left* may be unaware of Walzer's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here is some useful background. In the summer of 1982, as Israeli tanks rolled toward Beirut, Walzer wrote the following in *The New Republic*:

"It is not possible to live side by side with an armed irredentist and terrorist movement. Once again the PLO has proved itself to be an organization bent on suicide . . . it provoked an attack . . . One can defeat the PLO's militia, seize its training camps, kill or capture its fighting members, destroy its Russian equipment; all this is, from an Israeli standpoint, eminently worthwhile" (July 5, 1982).

"It is simply untrue that the PLO is vital to the cause of peace. What peace requires, instead, is the end of the PLO" (August 16, 1982).

"I certainly welcome the political defeat of the PLO, and I believe that the limited military operation required to inflict that defeat can be defended under the theory of just war" (Sept. 6, 1982).

Walzer's views are the views of Israeli rejectionism, and this accounts for his tough stance on PLO terrorism and his endorsement of the far greater violence of Begin and Sharon.

*John Farley  
Eugene, OR*

# ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

## COMING EVENTS

The Annual Socialist Scholars Conference will be held April 18-20 at the Boro of Manhattan Community College, CUNY. Taking the theme, on this one-hundredth anniversary of Haymarket, of "Rebellion, Resistance, Revolt," it will feature numerous workshops by "the usual suspects and hundreds more." For more information, write to CUNY Democratic Socialist Club, Rm. 901, 33 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

May 2-4 are the dates for the "New Directions" conference in Washington, D.C. that will bring together rank-and-file Democrats who want to uphold the Democrats' oldest traditions by moving in new directions. For more information, write to New Direction, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, N.Y. 10038-3705.

## NATIONAL ROUNDUP

### California

Chico DSA presented a video presentation on "Breaking Ground-Life in the New El Salvador" at its December meeting . . . The local has formed a study group to investigate links between U.S. corporations and South Africa's apartheid government . . . San Diego DSA is defending academic freedom at San Diego State University, countering plans by Accuracy in Academia and Young Americans for Freedom to "monitor" lectures by left wing professors and "expose" them for "inaccuracy." Letters by Chris Senden, Lily Arviso and Robert Wilkins, DSA students, and by Professor Prescott Nichols, in *The Daily Aztec*, blasted authoritarian censorship.

### Georgia

State Senator Julian Bond, a DSA member, is running for Congress, seeking the Democratic seat now held by Wyche Fowler, who is running for the U.S. Senate. The race pits him against, among others, John Lewis, the Atlanta City

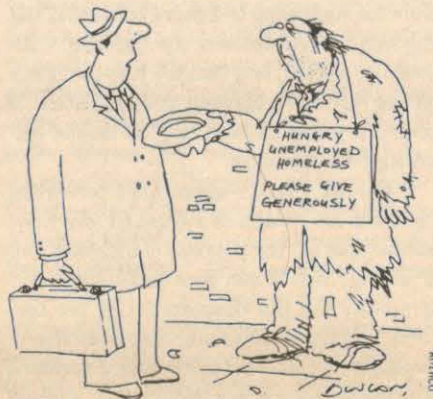
Council member who was once head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

### Illinois

DSA Co-chair Michael Harrington will receive the 1986 Norman Thomas-Eugene V. Debs Award at the May 10 Chicago dinner, which will also mark the centennial of the Haymarket Affair. The dinner will commemorate 100 years of labor organizing and social activism in Chicago . . . Chicago DSA will focus on the court-ordered special elections in March in seven remapped city wards and on the State Senate bid of Miguel Del Valle for the 5th District. . . . An annual retreat was held by Chicago DSA on February 9 to plan activities for the coming year . . . Many DSAers, including Roberta Lynch, Steve Cullen, Paul Booth, Nancy Shier, Hank Scheff and Bob Lawson, were involved in AFSCME's successful contract with the City of Chicago, which included an historic breakthrough on the issue of comparable worth.

### Iowa

The Iowa City AFL-CIO and DSA cosponsored a precaucus meeting to discuss ways to make the left presence most effective at the neighborhood Democratic caucuses February 10. The proposals included a Bill of Rights for Working People and an Educational Opportunity Act . . . DSA and the University of Iowa Democrats introduced a resolution at the Johnson County Democratic Committee calling for a tuition freeze at the state universities.



"But if I do give, how can I be sure the money will actually get to you?"

### Kentucky

Cornel West, DSA NEC member and author of *Prophecy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, spoke at Central Kentucky DSA in Lexington February 20. . . . A DSA contingent marched in the January 19th Martin Luther King Birthday March and Rally, attended by 2,800 people . . . CKDSA members Kimberly Burris, Flo Estes, and Norma and Walt Mansfield have been accepted by Witness for Peace to go to Nicaragua in March as part of a delegation from the Southeastern United States.

### Maryland

Baltimore DSAer Norman Thomas is planning to run for sheriff in the next election . . . The December local meeting planned proposals for local activity, including efforts to create a student DSA.

### Massachusetts

The Boston Institute for Democratic Socialism held a forum in February with Howard Zinn of Boston University and Theresa Amott of Wellesley College on "Resurgence of Radical Activism: Renaissance or Repression?" . . . DSA cosponsored a Candidates' Night February 26 for those candidates running for Tip O'Neill's seat. Among those scheduled to speak were Tom Gallagher, George Bachrach and Mel King . . . A socialist community paper, the *Somerville Community News*, played a major role in defeating the reelection bid of Assessor John Howe, who had harassed activists researching tax inequities and corrupt assessing practices by punitive tax increases and searches for building code violations.

### Michigan

Newly-elected Detroit DSA officers include Chair Roger Robinson, Treasurer Kathy Callahan, Recording Secretary Jim Jacobs and Membership Secretary Marianna Wells . . . In January, Tony Rothschild showed his slides of the Soviet Union, followed by Ron Aronson who led a discussion on "Anti-Sovietism in the Left."

### New York

Albany DSA joined the state conference of the Coalition Against Apartheid and Racism, which called for divestment by New York State of securities held by its pension and other funds in companies

doing business with South Africa . . . A February meeting of progressive groups in the Capitol District planned participation in the May 2-4 New Directions Conference in Washington. Speakers included State Senator Franz Leichter, Assemblyman Jim Brennan, and Jo-Ann Mort, Conference Coordinator . . . Ithaca DSA met in January to discuss "Socialism and South Africa" and to elect new officers . . . DSAer Ethel Nichols was reelected to the Tompkins County Board of Representatives . . . New York State DSA met in Larchmont in January and voted to back the SUNY United University Professions in their long-stalled negotiations with the state government.

#### Ohio

Black Swamp DSA met in January to plan for the March 9 March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. and DSA activities on Central America . . . Former South African resident Vernon Domingo spoke to the local at Bowling Green State University on events in South Africa . . . Sheri Lee, NOW national Vice President of Action and Lee Levin, Executive Director of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, spoke in Toledo to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision on abortion.

#### Oregon

Portland DSA's annual convention was held January 26 to elect a new steering committee and plan the year's activities . . . At the local's annual auction, members and friends raised over \$800 and consumed two cases of French wine and 10 trays of goodies. The highest bid was for a poster bearing the printed text of the Communist Manifesto which, from afar, showed the image of Karl Marx. Beverly Stein, organizational secretary of DSA's Anti-Racism Commission, gave the welcome speech for the Portland Rainbow Coalition to an audience of some 1,500 who turned out to hear Jesse Jackson.

#### Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania DSA and the Red Rose School of Democratic Socialism are conducting a mini-course on "The Economic Recovery and the Future of U.S. Capitalism" . . . Peggy A. Sanders, a new DSA member, lost an election but won an appointment to the East Pennsboro School Board . . . Central Pennsylvania DSA became internation-

ally known in October when a series of articles appeared in the Dutch religion and socialism magazine, *Tijd & Taak*, one of which described chairperson Jack Spooner's biography and Christian Socialist perspectives . . . Philadelphia DSAer Russ Kleinbach has prepared a slide show on his recent trip to Nicaragua and the local's Peace Committee has prepared a position paper on Nicaragua. Both are available for meetings through the DSA office . . . Reading DSA's First Annual Maurer-Stump Award Dinner was a solid success and a fine tribute to the honorees: Darlington Hoopes and Mark L. Brown . . . In January, the local's Socialist Study Group discussed "AM-WAY: Cult of Free Enterprise."

#### Texas

Houston DSA held three discussions in January and February on "The Socialist Parties of Mexico," "Mike Harrington's Economic Proposals for a New Civilization," and "The Pistachios: A Long-Term Socialist Economic Program."

## DSA COMMISSIONS

Much of the issue work that is carried on by DSA has its origins in the commissions that form part of its structure. To join a commission requires that you be a DSA member and pay additional dues. Write to the following commissions for more information, membership, or subscriptions.

- DSA Feminist Commission dues are \$5 per year. Members receive *Not Far Enough*, a newsletter; and *Women Organizing*, a bulletin. Write to Jerry Flieger, 8104 E. Jefferson, 808C, Detroit, MI 48214

- Dues for the DSA Labor Commission are 1 percent of monthly wages for members; \$15 per year for associate members. Both receive *DSA Labor Notes*. For details write Roger Robinson, 1974 Trowbridge, Hamtramck, MI 48212

- Dues for the DSA Anti-Racism and Latino Commission are \$6 per year. Members receive *Our Struggle: Nuestra Lucha* and mailings. Write to Duane Campbell, 2827 Catania Way, Sacramento, CA 95826.

- Dues for the Religion and Socialism Commission are \$5, which includes a sub to *Religious Socialism*, 45 Thornton St., Roxbury, MA 02119.

## YOUTH CONFERENCE

Columbia University was the site of the 1986 DSA Winter Youth Conference. Entitled "Working Together: Moving Beyond Single-Issue Politics," the gathering ran from February 14-16th. Delegations came from as far as Minnesota and North Carolina, and for most of the 210 students from more than 40 schools, the conference seemed to provide an exciting start to what should be a very active spring in student politics.

Major speakers included Jack Sheinkman, Hon. David Dinkins, Maggie Kuhn, Barbara Ehrenreich, Bogdan Denitch, and Cornel West. Hulbert James and Michael Harrington delivered the closing addresses. Throughout the weekend Youth Section activists planned their continued work on anti-apartheid organizing, reproductive rights, and the "University in Society" project, being organized in conjunction with the United States Students Association.

## IN MEMORIAM

Los Angeles DSA member Dan Schelly died December 9, 1985, after a long and debilitating illness. He was 69.

A lifelong socialist, first in his native Chicago and then in Los Angeles, Dan was Los Angeles DSOC's first member. He lent the benefit of his knowledge and experience to any number of DSOC's fledgling socialists.

Dan was a passionate democrat. We remember him for his unflinching opposition to totalitarianism and authoritarianism of right and left, as well as for his quiet humor. Our condolences go to his widow, Sara, and to his sister and brother-in-law Ruth and Sam Class — staunch socialists all.

As we went to press, we learned of the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. The socialist movement, and the world, have suffered a tremendous loss. We mourn Olof Palme and rededicate ourselves to his vision of a socialist world in which peace is the path to justice for all of humanity.

# REVIEWS

## A Gentle Jeremiad

by Maurice Isserman

**SOCIALISM AND AMERICA** by Irving Howe. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985, \$17.95, hardcover.

Judging from one or two reviews I have seen of Irving Howe's *Socialism and America* in radical publications, some critics seem to regard it a mark of Revolutionary Virtue to be hard on Howe. Personally, I have been rather soft on Irving Howe ever since the time I came across an old letter of his while doing research in the Max Shachtman archives at New York University. The letter, dated June 1969, was written at the height of the Vietnam War. Howe was responding to an invitation from an ex-radical-soon-to-become-conservative-labor-apparatchik to co-sponsor a conference on the New Left Threat to Academic Freedom. Howe declined:

The desperation of the students is one I try to understand; and I share at least some of its motivations. That the tactics of the New Left segment of the students are appalling I haven't exactly been negligent in saying publicly. But I say that from premises radically different from those of [two soon-to-be-doyens-of-neo-conservatism], and I fear, you — I say it because I am against the war, because I fear their tactics are self-defeating (I also give the students — who represent far more than the New Left — a lot of credit for getting opposition to the war going . . .)

A small incident, to be sure, but a telling one. Howe could easily have pleaded the press of other responsibilities — his teaching, his writing, the editing of *Dissent* — as reason enough to decline, and let it go at that. And yet when push came to shove, as we used to say in the sixties, Howe chose to reaffirm his opposition to the war and, carefully distinguishing between motives which he shared and tactics which he abhorred, defend the students against the kind of general denunciation promoted by his old political associates. It was a principled gesture, and one that Howe made no mention of in his recently published autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*.

On occasion Howe still finds himself the target of ill-will left over from the sixties: one of the reviewers of *Socialism in America* took him to task for being "notoriously hostile" to the New Left, among a multitude of other failings. Such is the price he has had to pay for many years of active engagement on the Left, and for a deliberately provocative polemical style, honed in the alcoves of City College cafeteria in the thirties. Looking back at the old disputes, it seems to me that Howe was right more often than not, and that his critics — out of confusion or malice — have too often addressed themselves to the style rather than the substance of his ideas. But as Howe himself has acknowledged, he was not entirely without blame: "Perhaps I should not have gotten so emotionally entangled in disputes with the New Left," he wrote in his autobiography. "But I did . . . I overreacted, becoming at



Author Irving Howe.

times harsh and strident. I told myself that I was one of the few people who took the New Left seriously enough to keep arguing with it. Cold comfort."

In his most recent book, *Socialism and America*, Howe has fashioned an uncharacteristically gentle jeremiad. His purpose, he announces in the preface, is to explore the question "why did American socialism thrive at some moments and decline at others?" As always when he examines the Left, he finds much to be critical of. But the tone of the book is at once elegiac and, paradoxically, optimistic. In part this is because the bulk of the book concerns a subject, the history of the Socialist Party in the eras of Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas, towards which Howe feels a kind of sad affection. But I also got the feeling, especially in a short chapter devoted to the history of the Communist Party in the 1930s, that Howe has come to feel that the old disputes are finally worth burying, and that the Left should be getting on with the task of extricating itself from its present slough of despond.

Contrary to those who maintain that socialism failed to take root in the United States because it was an "alien" ideology, Howe argues that socialism's greatest weakness was that it proved all too American in outlook. The Socialist Party reached its greatest strength under the leadership of Eugene Debs, attracting more than a hundred thousand members and the support of nearly a million voters in 1912. Yet even then the movement carried within itself a fatal sectarian streak:

That sectarianism, profoundly native in flavor, had a major source, I believe, in the many branches of American Protestantism. The tradition of moral testimony, sometimes moral absolutism — with its tendency to reduce human existence to blunt compartments of good and evil, its frequent readiness to set the claims of conscience above the bonds of community —

could turn out to be in deep tension with a democratic polity requiring compromise and entailing imperfection.

Under Debs the Socialist Party "teetered uneasily, ambivalently, between moral protest and political action." The balancing act came to an end with the First World War, when the Socialist Party chose to denounce American intervention, and paid the subsequent price in repression and marginalization, with its leaders imprisoned and its followers dispersed (Howe cites the example of the Oklahoma SP, with 12,000 members in 1912. In 1917-18 the state's SP organization was demolished, and no significant radical movement ever grew up in its place.) Given this history, Howe wonders whether a "less brave and more clever" strategy might have served the SP better in the long run:

Knowing the difficulties of building a socialist movement in America, I cannot bring myself simply to declare, in grand Debsian style: Let the devil do his damndest, we will speak out in full voice. For the devil did — and the socialists paid a heavy price. Yet I also see the force of the opposing argument, that to have abandoned principle would have made the organization into an agency preserved after its purpose had been denied.

There are some problems with Howe's argument; it's difficult to imagine what strategy Socialists *could* have pursued in 1917, short of complete capitulation to the war hysteria of the time, that would have allowed them to preserve the party. Even had they been prepared to swallow that bitter pill, it's unlikely they would have prospered in the aftermath of the war. The American Federation of Labor lent full and uncritical support to the war effort, but did not exactly thrive in the reactionary post-war climate, notwithstanding Samuel Gompers' complete immunity to the moralistic ills of the Protestant reform tradition. I too mourn the loss of those Oklahoma Socialists, but don't think there was much Debs could have done to have passed them on to DSA unscathed.

Nevertheless, I think the problem Howe points to has been a real and continuing one for American radicals. The claims of "conscience" cannot always be reconciled with the requirements of practical politics. Once again, during the New Deal, the SP found itself "teetering" between moral protest and political action. In the midst of the greatest upsurge of working class militancy in this century, the SP squandered its political opportunities through a doctrinal insistence that Franklin Roosevelt was merely "tweedle-dee" to the Republicans' "tweedle-dum." Howe argues that the SP's insistence on running hopeless socialist campaigns against New Deal Democrats created an "impossible situation" for its trade union members like Walter and Victor Reuther: "They had to choose between their unions and their party." This was not a situation like 1917 where the SP was doomed regardless of its policies, and where radical intransigence at least allowed them to preserve their honor. Howe is quite persuasive in arguing that the SP could have bent and should have bent to a policy of critical support for the New Deal, and that part of the responsibilities of genuine radicalism is to develop the ability to apply radical criticism to one's own movement's received truths, changing those truths when circumstances so demand.

Which brings me to a section of *Socialism and America* that really caused me to sit up and take notice. "The irony of it all, a bitter enough irony," Howe writes in introducing a short chapter on American Communism in the 1930s:

is that the most promising approach of the American left, one that apparently came closest to recognizing native realities, derives from the very movement that has done the most to discredit and besmirch the whole idea of the left . . . If ever we are to see a resurgent democratic left in America, it will have more to learn tactically from the Popular Front initiated by the

Stalinists than from those political ancestors whose integrity we admire.

It should be obvious from this paragraph that Howe has not retreated an inch from his anti-Stalinist convictions; his insistence that genuine socialism can only be built by democratic means and upon a democratic basis remains as firm as ever. But the acknowledgement that there was more to the history of American Communism than simple obedience to orders from Moscow (though, in his view and mine, that remains a crucial part of the story) is rather breath-taking, coming as it does from the co-author of *The Communist Party, A Critical History*. He still refers to the Popular Front as a "brilliant masquerade," as he did in his earlier history of the CP. But where once Howe portrayed all Communist cadre as "malleable objects," subordinated to a totalitarian movement, and capable of "little more than a series of predictable and rigidly stereotyped responses," he now writes:

The most interesting group of party members consisted of people with some standing and experience who, almost against their will and perhaps to their own surprise, came to value the Popular Front as both a shrewd maneuver and more than that — indeed, may even have come to believe that, for America at least, this was the way radicals should go. . . . We may doubt that many of them went so far as to recognize that the Popular Front really signified a break from classical Leninism and even, perhaps, the start of an adaptation to the special circumstances of American life. But most changes of thought occur hesitantly, and language always lags behind impulse and feeling.

Some people have found themselves summoned before the guardians of orthodoxy in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* for less daring revisions of the conventional historical judgement on the CP than this. To be sure, Howe doesn't say he's changed his mind in any fundamental respect about the CP's history, but as we all know, most changes of thought do occur hesitantly, and language does lag behind impulse.

One of Howe's trademarks over the years has been his insistence that the Left needs to learn to live in an *imperfect present*, that is, it has to recognize that real change is always brought about by movements which are more complex, less pure than idealism or abstract theories might lead it to believe. I read *Socialism and America* as an acknowledgement that the Left should also learn to live with an *imperfect past*, that the virtues it should emulate and the sins it should avoid are not the exclusive property of one or another political movement or tradition. And that acknowledgement on Howe's part reflects a certain cautious optimism which runs as a thread throughout the book, a belief that the old hard, fast, and nasty divisions that have done so much damage to the Left over the years might, just possibly, be overcome. Returning once again to the troubling dilemma of the potential conflict between conscience and practicality, Howe writes:

It's not a matter of choosing between the roles of moral witness and political actor. It's a matter of finding ways through which to link properly the utopian moralism of the protester with the political realism of the activist; to ensure that the voice of high rectitude will reinforce and give breadth to the daily murmur of the reformer; to adapt to the realities of the American political system without succumbing to a small-souled pragmatism or a hermetic moralism . . . Whether some such alliance of forces or union of impulses might still be created in America is very much a question. I do not know, but think it a project worthy of serious people. ●

*Maurice Isserman teaches American history at Smith College and is the author of Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War.*

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