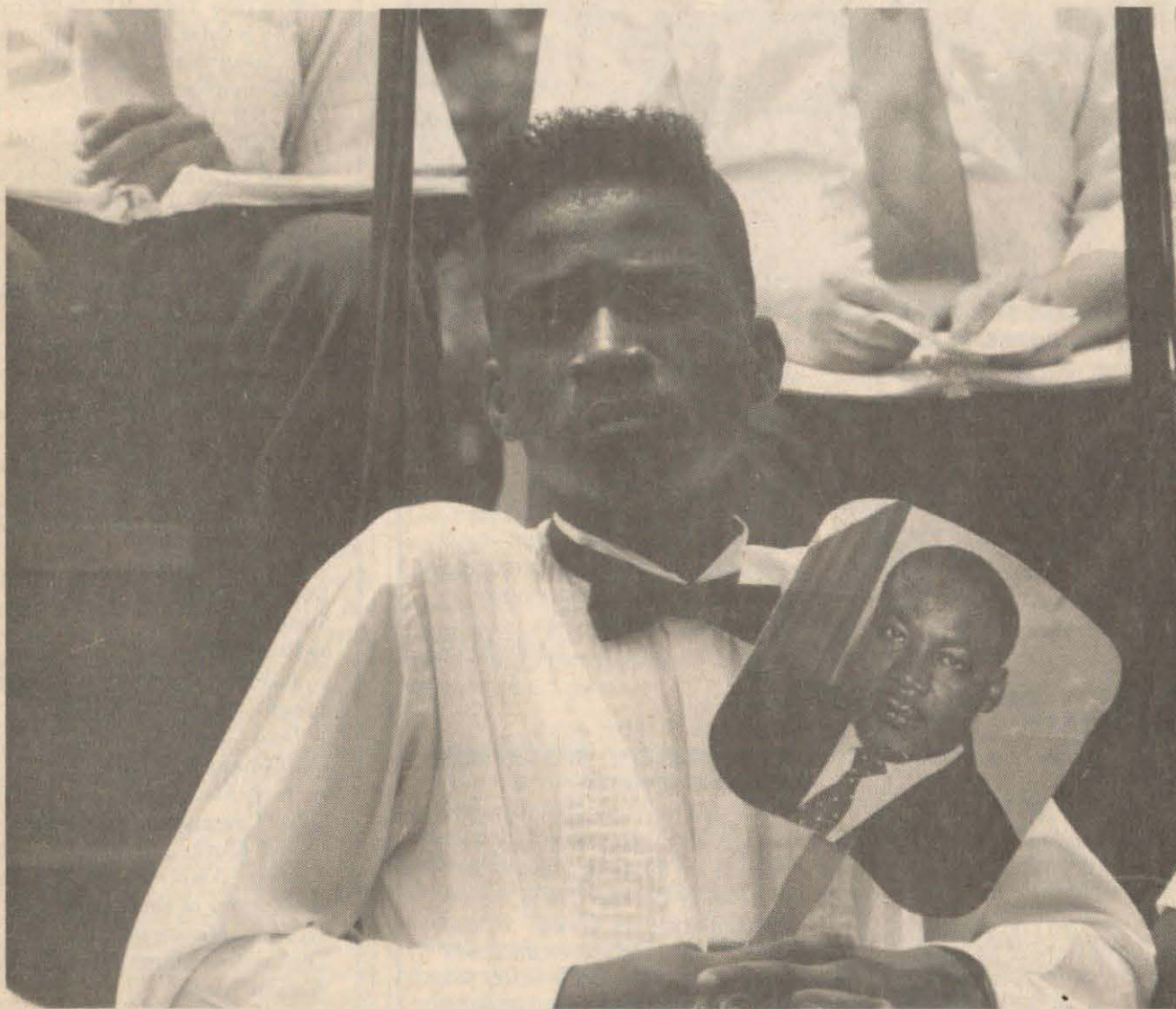


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# DEMOCRATIC Left

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# Racial Discourse in an Age Of Social Darwinism

by Jerry G. Watts

One of the major successes of the civil rights movement lay in its ability to both capture and focus the moral sensibilities of large segments of the American public. Equally important is the fact that the civil rights movement provided moral empowerment as well as a moral criteria with which many Americans not directly related to the movement could critically assess American race relations and our society at large. This latter achievement often goes underrecognized by those analysts of the civil rights movement who would have us believe that the movement brought to the attention of a moral public, an immoral but "hidden" southern racial condition. Americans had long been aware of southern racial mores and practices. Of course, the televised depictions of Bull Connor's brutal regime in Birmingham or Medgar Evers slain body in Jackson Mississippi did in some sense "force" white America to openly confront what it had long known but ignored. White Americans could have responded with an immobilizing despair or a self-serving and boundless guilt, yet many whites generated the will to act, to make amends where aspects of the American racial reality differed from the American's creed.

We can easily forget or underestimate the significance of the moral persuasiveness of the normative vision generated within the movement. Whites were led to believe that they should act in behalf of black civil rights and blacks were led to believe that there were sufficient numbers of white Americans of good will who wanted to see the racial reality altered. By concentrating its public gaze on racist laws, cultural practices, institutions, and demagogic public figures, the civil rights movement was



Tom McKitterick/Impact Visuals

Farrakhan's security guards at Yusef Hawkins funeral.

able to offer moral inclusion to anyone committed to the antiracist struggle. And because the movement was situated in a Christian moral discourse, the movement rhetorically reinforced the possibility for the moral/political conversion of its adversaries. This was important to those black southerners who sought to change the ideas of their white southern peers as well as to the white southerners seeking a way out of their racial cul-de-sac.

## Utopian Vision

Having shaped public discussions around a utopian moral vision of a racially egalitarian society, the civil rights movement can serve as a model for those of us interested in reinvigorating a progressive moral/political public discourse. Such discourse is significant to the degree that it inspires and shapes arguments, gives boundaries to disagreements, and aids us in expanding our arenas of moral concern or engaging in more sustained reflection. Since the civil rights movement placed American race relations on the popular menu and inspired many Americans to become

morally concerned about an issues they had long endured, it must be considered one of the most progressive social movements in American history. I say this even though the civil rights movement glossed over areas of feminism and economic empowerment.

The political dominance of the right during the past two decades is evidenced by the fact that the moral vision of the civil rights movement has not only been superseded but denounced as outright "unAmerican". The conservative rejection of the civil rights vision of an egalitarian, multiracial society usually takes one of three ideological forms, all of which are riddled with contradictions. First, the right not only morally rejects egalitarianism as being "unnatural," but it celebrates inequality as a functional necessity for, and a natural result of, a free society. Distorting long held American values, the right claims that freedom for the individual lies in her ability to differentiate herself from others. The only authentically American turf for realizing this differentiation (read individuality) is the capitalist marketplace. To the extent that affirma-



A girl on her way to commemorate the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner.

tive action violates the "natural" workings of the marketplace and grants status to groups as opposed to individuals, it is seen as fundamentally at odds with this American individualist ethos.

A second school of conservative thought would have us believe that the civil rights movement actually succeeded in generating a color-blind society. To the extent that it has, black opportunities for realizing the American dream are supposedly now primarily determined by personal characteristics. Blacks with ambition, discipline, and the requisite skills are those who get ahead. Proof of this apparently lies in the growth of a black professional and upper middle-class sector, a sector that has disproportionately benefited from the unAmerican affirmative action programs. Blacks who have remained poor are deemed lacking in the requisite character traits. They are often considered pathological and ultimately incapable of seizing the opportunities granted them by the successes of the civil rights movement. Tautologically, the proof of their pathology is often their mere existence in the ranks of the poor.

The third popular conservative position on the American race issue does not rest on claims for a color blind society. Seductively, it suggests that some blacks may well be victims of latent racial discrimination but that there is very little that a free society can do to remedy this situation without creating more enduring social problems and sacrificing some of our existent liberties. If after twenty-five years we have not been able to resolve the "race question" we have to realistically confront the possibility that the problem is unsolvable. This peculiarly pernicious argument has

been primarily advanced by the neoconservatives.

With these arguments as a major backdrop to the contemporary public discussion of race relations, we can begin to understand the demoralized and utterly ineffective status of traditional civil rights organizations. Organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League spend a great deal of time asserting that racism still exists in America. The mere invocation of the existence of racism has now taken the place of a political game plan. Even if the NAACP could convince the general white populace that racism still significantly determines life chances for black Americans, there is little reason to assume that the white American populace will think that anything can be done about it that has not already been tried and deemed a failure. Also, traditional civil rights organizations are no longer able to convince most black Americans that the United States government (read white America) cares about their plight. During the age of Reagan-Bush, it has been rather difficult to speak to black audiences about concern for racial equality! It is therefore not a coincidence that the ideologies which appear to be on the popular upswing in black America are those which assume that America functions in a racial neoSocial Darwinistic manner. It's "every race for itself." We "do for ourselves or we perish."

Black nationalism is experiencing a renaissance. For instance, contemporary mass appeals to reduce the phenomenal murder rate in the black community must be infused with black nationalist rhetoric. It is no longer potentially persuasive to proclaim that

killing is in and of itself bad. Today, one must couch an antikilling message within the logic of a desire to reduce black-on-black killing. Black-on-black killing is deemed racially self-destructive, that is, racially self-destructive in a competitive Social Darwinistic world. Many of us who also abhor black-on-white killing find it necessary to make a pragmatic peace with the black-on-black appeal simply because the problem is sufficiently grave.

## Farrakhan

Only by understanding the depth of the neoSocial Darwinistic underpinnings of contemporary black nationalism, can we accurately understand the return to prominence of a Louis Farrakhan. After all, Farrakhan not only preaches that whites have no desire to help black people but that it is only logical that they have no such desire. To the extent that white racism helps to preserve superior white living conditions, Farrakhan would consider racism quite understandable, if not rational for white people. But to the extent that he claims that only blacks should and can solve "black problems", he essentially mimics Reagan's neoSocial Darwinism which proclaimed that the state (read white Americans) should not be responsible for the black poor. After all, Reagan argued, the black poor are the responsibility of the black middle and upper middle classes. As wards of their ethnic group, Reagan essentially denied American citizenship status to the black poor -- a denial that Farrakhan has long presupposed. The irony of racial discourse in the Bush-Reagan era is that racial parochialisms generated within white conservative ranks are mimicked and hailed as radical by many within black community.

In this era of neoSocial Darwinistic racial discourse, America continually produces "leadership" that has little interest or skill at interracial strategizing. The prevailing black political logic frowns upon coalitions with whites, since whites are viewed either as competitors or indifferent to the real plight of blacks. The exception to this is Jesse Jackson's "rainbow" appeal. Yet, Jackson's appeal for white voters cannot be interpreted as substantive inter-

racial interaction. Despite Jackson's desire to market his campaigns as such, white voters for Jackson do not commune with his black voters. Voting is an individual phenomenon.

White political leaders shy away from openly entering into coalitions with blacks out of fear of losing their white constituency. As substantiation for their fears these leaders look at the demise of the post-New Deal Democratic party as the dominant party in presidential elections. They directly link this demise to the Democratic party's growing image association with blacks.

In a state of utter despair, many in the black community appear to grasp wildly for therapeutic life rafts. Any political activity that seems to bring "positive" attention to the community; defies the edicts or expectations of whites; or raises intrigue about the motives and behavior of whites will undoubtedly find an audience in the black community. As such, the black community rarely attempts to judge its political leaders on the basis of their tactical political successes. The utter resilience of an Al Sharpton in New York or Marion Barry in Washington, D. C. testifies to the fact that much of the black community has lost its ability and/or willingness to assess the efficacy of black political leadership. The inability to render measured assessments lies at the root of the uncritical celebration of black mayoral victories. Black mayors are celebrated because they win, not because of their achievements once in office. This is not to unilaterally find fault with black mayors, for most have inherited financially destitute cities. As such, even when willing, most black mayors have been unable to do much of a progressive nature for their black constituencies. Their inability to substantially alter black living conditions reinforces a sense of black political futility and isolation. In effect, the black community not only endures economic and political marginalization but suffers from a loss of political hope.

This crisis in political accountability and the demise of political hope also afflicts the white community. We need only remember the Reagan landslide victories to note that the crisis in accountability is a widespread American phenomenon. We are caught in a distressing paradox. In order for one to

engage in assessments of political effectiveness, one must believe in the possibility of political achievements. Progressive political achievement is so rare today that many Americans, if not most blacks, are not convinced of its possibility. Interracial progressive political achievements are rarer still. Many black Americans now define politically effective leaders as those individuals who are able to generate fear in or attention from white folks. Spectacles abound. Likewise, politically effective white leadership is increasingly defined as those leaders who are capable of bridling and ultimately denying the claims of blacks and other marginal groups. The sad

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*There are lessons to  
be learned from  
the civil rights  
movement.*

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fact is that white America may have as much to say over certifying black leadership today as it did in the days of Booker T. Washington. The only difference is that today, white America chooses black leaders via condemnation rather than endorsement. If white Americans criticize Farrakhan, then he must be good for black Americans; if Koch didn't like Sharpton than Sharpton must be doing something right. The external legitimization of internal ethnic leadership is a woeful indicator of a despairing political community. The converse is also true. An increasing number of white Americans rely on blacks to certify white leadership. In this scenario large numbers of whites appear to be attracted to precisely those white candidates who keep the greatest distance from blacks.

### **The Forgotten Poor**

Those of us who live in urban areas know that the lives of large numbers of black Americans are deemed utterly superfluous to American social well being. Jails are overcrowded; drug addiction is rampant; infant mortality is obscenely high; public education is a farce and violence is wanton. Generations are being sacrificed. Except for the fear of crime

and the spread of AIDS, the poor in our cities are endured much like the way one is forced to endure "bad" weather. George Bush and Mike Dukakis can run for the presidency without mention of this American tragedy. The state with the highest per capita income, Connecticut, is also home for three of America's poorest cities (New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford). We are now engaged in a bitter three-way gubernatorial race in which the plight of these cities is utterly ignored not only by the candidates and their respective parties, but by the media as well. Yet Connecticut is only a microcosm of the nation at-large.

The problem confronting democratic socialists at this historical moment is not simply to advocate and devise ways of moving beyond conservatism or establishmentarian welfare state liberalism. More immediately, we must recognize and confront the demise of popularly held multiracial egalitarian utopian visions, including those historically projected and protected by the liberal establishment. Before we can talk about a multiracial socialist society, we must struggle within the broader public arena, to culturally affirm the humanity of poor urban black people. In effect, we must help the black poor to earn the cultural right to exist as other than destitute. The fight involves nothing less than to rescue them from their Social Darwinistic designation as "naturally debased" and to earn for them the status of subjugated. There are lessons to be learned from the civil rights movement. We must at least take heart in the fact that a major reorientation in American values towards an oppressed group has occurred in our recent past. The task is to devise a utopian discourse that offers a critique of the status-quo without condemning -- and thus politically paralyzing -- those who now embrace it. In the meantime, we must not be surprised by the continued prominence of Farrakhans and Sharptons. For many of the black poor, they speak to a desperate reality that bourgeois democratic socialists like myself either ignore, refuse to confront, or feel powerless to alter.

*Jerry Watts, a member of DSA, is an Associate Professor of American Studies at Trinity College*

# Offyear Elections: Symbols Vs. Substance, Markets Vs. Democracy

by Harold Meyerson

Midway through 1990, the Democrats are approaching the offyear elections with a more representative cast of candidates than they have ever fielded before, with generally more conservative social policies, with no economic policy to speak of, with no clear presidential hopefuls in the vast terrain between Lloyd Bensten and Jesse Jackson, with a barely discernible national identity, and with a clear shot at another record low voter turnout.

The least surprising poll result of the last several months is that which shows all but a handful of respondents unable to state the achievements of the current Congress. The Democrats' inability to respond to the Moynihan tax reform proposal and the tax equity opportunity that it created revealed a party profoundly resistant to not merely to promptings of fairness but to political opportunity as well. "If they can't get behind a proposal like this," Moynihan commented, "I don't know who needs the Democratic party."

Come November, voters may confirm Moynihan's doubts. Though the out-of-power traditionally fares well in offyear elections, the Democrats do not appear likely to pick up many seats in either house of Congress, and may well lose a few in the Senate. The party without a theme has been unable to recruit prominent Democrats to oppose vulnerable Republican Senatorial incumbents -- or even run for open seats. Walter Mondale passed up a run at Minnesota's Rudy Boschwitz, and no one prominent filed for the open seat in Colorado or the almost-open seat held by Senator Dan Coats (Dan Quayle's appointed successor) in Indiana. By contrast, Republicans recruited such strong challengers as Representatives



Ann Richards, gubernatorial nominee from California.

Claudine Schneider and Lynn Martin to challenge Senators Claiborne Pell (RI) and Paul Simon (IL), respectively.

Still, it is among the Democrats more than the Republicans that 1990 may emerge as the year of women and minorities. With gubernatorial nominees such as Diane Feinstein in California and Ann Richards in Texas, gubernatorial hopefuls such as Evelyn Murphy in Massachusetts and former Martin Luther King-Lieutenant Andrew Young in Georgia, and with Harvey Gantt, the African-American former mayor of Charlotte and now the Democratic choice to oppose Jesse Helms, the Democratic class of 1990 may mark a breakthrough in terms of gender. I say "may" because the only one of these candidates I am giving better than a 50 percent chance is Feinstein.

## Symbols and Substance

Feinstein's strength in what many regard as the nation's most important contest -- arguably, as many as twenty House seats could swing from one party to another depending on the outcome of California's gubernatorial election in

this reapportionment year -- results from her embodiment of two very distinct kinds of aspiration and discontent. In a sense, she represents the party of the "outs" from both left and right. If women candidates are strong this year, it is not because the nation has succumbed to feminism, alas, but because they symbolize change, a challenge to the establishment that is clearly overstaying its welcome. Feinstein polled her highest support among liberals in June's California primary, despite the fact that her opponent, John Van de Kamp, was clearly more liberal than she: vivid symbols clearly outshone a rather modestly attractive substance. But Feinstein also espouses a tougher law-and-order politics -- the death penalty in particular -- than has been common among Democratic leaders at least in bicoastal zones of liberalism. In this, her strategy though not her manner, has some points of overlap with the summer's most controversial Democratic candidate, Massachusetts gubernatorial hopeful John Silber, a Reagan-Bush supporter who argues that only a turn to social conservatism can save the Democrats.

But the call of 1990 is also distinct

Tom Meckler/Impact Visuals

# Democracy Demands DC Statehood

by Richard Bruning

To understand the political powerlessness of District of Columbia residents, consider the following incident. In September, 1989 District activists and Democratic party officials lobbied the Senate to lift its prohibition against District-raised taxes being used to fund abortions for poor District women. Senate staffers ignored them. Said DSA member and elected D.C. Democratic State Committee member Ruth Jordan, "It gave me a sense of what it was like to be outside the political process without any ability to impact the policy decisions that affect your daily life." Ultimately, President Bush, placating his antichoice constituencies, vetoed the entire District budget twice until Congress capitulated. The ban remains.

The D.C. statehood movement, whose founders include D.C. Council member and National DSA Vice Chair Hilda Mason, contends that only statehood can guarantee District residents national representation and full and unreversible control over their political decisions.

Currently, the District's 630,000 residents, a larger population than at least three states, pay one billion dollars in federal taxes yet have no Senate representation and only a non-voting delegate in the House. Congress reviews the District's laws and budget and the President has veto power. Increasingly, local legislation has become a battle ground for national constituencies.

The State of New Columbia would be carved out of the existing District

with the federal government retaining exclusive jurisdiction over a reduced seat of government. Statehood would be achieved by a simple majority vote of Congress and a presidential signature. The statehood effort gained momentum in 1982 when a citizen-initiated Constitutional Convention drafted a state constitution that was ratified by the voters. After the failure of the D.C. Voting Rights Amendment, which would have given the District national representation without statehood, previous opponents, including D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy, shifted to a pro-statehood position.

The cause of New Columbia has been endorsed by the national Democratic party and its legislative leaders, Democratic Socialists of America, Americans for Democratic Action, and other progressive organizations. Supporters have usually raised the fairness issue denouncing "taxation without representation."

Recently, Jesse Jackson has become statehood's leading advocate. He has stressed the ideological implications of the issue. Saying, "DC statehood is not for D.C. only," Jackson has argued that two progressive senators and at least one representative would be a tremendous asset to the agendas of labor, feminist, and civil rights organizations. He has urged these constituencies to back New Columbia.

Not surprisingly, the opposition has taken an ideological and racial tinge. As Fauntroy noted, D.C. Statehood is opposed because of the four "toos": too urban, too black, too Democratic, and too liberal. In particular, two Democratic senators would severely hamper Republican attempts to regain control of that body.

Bush's position on Puerto Rican and District Statehood clearly illustrates the political dimension of this question. He favors the island's admission although its residents have never voted in favor of statehood nor do they pay federal taxes. However, the President opposes the District's admission despite pro-statehood votes, an already approved constitution, and a substantial payment of federal taxes.

Foes have also raised constitutional, economic, and governance concerns. They contend a constitutional amendment is needed to create New Columbia. Proponents believe admission should be the same as for the previous thirty-seven states. Opponents argue that the District, without a federal payment, would be economically untenable. Supporters contend the reimbursement for services rendered and revenues denied could continue and that the New Columbia could impose a now-prohibited commuter tax. Seizing on Mayor Marion Barry's legal difficulties, foes claim the district is not ready for self-governance. Their counterparts respond that an individual's plight should not hold the rights of others hostage.

As Senator Edward Kennedy recently noted, statehood faces an uphill struggle, especially with a sitting Republican President. At a minimum, progressives should press the Democratic party's congressional leadership to honor its commitment and pass the statehood bills pending before Congress (SR-51, HR-51). Democracy at home demands no less. ●

*Richard Bruning, a member of DSA, is the chair of the DC Statehood party.*

in its relatively high percentage of business-oriented Democrats. Diane Feinstein, Evelyn Murphy, Andrew Young (whose program seems to be to extend the Atlanta building boom to the rest of

the state), and a number of their counterparts are far too pro-corporate to tap into any of the electorate's more populist leanings. There are a few semi-populist Democrats in the field this year

-- liberals, too -- but they are more likely to be found in the column of embattled incumbents. Three of them are Midwestern Senators: Iowa's Tom Harkin, Michigan's Carl Levin, and Illinois' Paul



Senator Paul Simon.

Simon. Harkin, who faces a particularly tough race against Representative Tom Tauke, has one distinct advantage: he is a prochoice candidate in a prochoice state. (In Iowa's gubernatorial primary, the support of NARAL proved crucial to the winner.) But in many other crucial contests, the Republicans, at the prompting of National Chair Lee Atwater, have backed down on their anti-abortion politics.

### Party Reversal

Indeed, 1990 is emerging as the year in which each party seems to be shedding its most unpopular social policies. If the Republicans are in full flight from the party's opposition to abortion and are sounding ever more like born-again environmentalists, many leading Democratic nominees (for Governor, in particular) are more willing to support the death penalty, prison construction, and higher police budgets than has been the case in recent decades. These issues have greater weight this year as the traditional dividing line issues of American politics -- the cold war and economic policy -- have either ended (in the first instance) or ceased to be the subject of debate (in the second).

The Democrats' success in these kinds of contests -- broadly speaking, in a politics of positioning of social issues with little in the way of economic content -- is by no means a given. In

particular, if the 1990 primaries are any guide, these elections will only accelerate the decline of voter turnout. The June California primary was closely watched by national pundits not only for the Feinstein/Van de Kamp primary, but also for its vote on a gas tax initiative, Proposition 111, whose passage was interpreted as a beginning of an end to the great tax revolt California initiated twelve years ago with Proposition 13. But in fact, about the same number of people voted against Proposition 13 -- and it lost two to one -- as voted for victorious Proposition 111. Only 4.9 million Californians voted in this June's primary -- the lowest figure since the 1960 primary, when the state's population stood at 15 million: half the population of today's 30 million. Turnout among all eligible adults stood at about 25 percent; among eligible Latinos, the exit polls suggest the figure is between 5 and 10 percent.

### Markets Vs. Democracy

Mainstream political scientists are quick to blame declining voter turnout on voter apathy, but that just begs the question: when it comes to both California and American government over the past decade, what's not to be apathetic about? California voter turnout peaked (in raw numbers) in 1978, the year of Proposition 13's enactment. Since that time, under the reign of Jarvis Gann in California and Gramm-Rudman in Washington, government has become largely incapable of improving people's lives. That is a task reserved for the market, which performs it in a wildly inegalitarian fashion. The market is about delivering the goods, about the distribution of resources. Politics is about symbols only -- and this is the foremost achievement of the Reagan age. The diminution of the electorate is both a rational reaction to the trivialization of government and a guarantee that, barring unforeseen circumstances, the market will continue to roll over government. Globally, as the mainstream media tells us, we may be witnessing the triumph of the market and democracy. But domestically, we are witnessing the triumph of the market, not with democracy, but over it.

Ironically, there are abundant indi-

cations that the public is ready for a renewal of government as intervenor, even though legislatures as such seem to have lost just about any legitimacy. Whenever term limits get on the ballot, they are likely to win (they did this June in San Francisco), and tax increases are beginning to pass at the ballot box so long as voters can target where the money will go. Whether the Democratic class of 1990 can or wants to pick up on this issue, and whether an earlier, more progressive class that is struggling for re-election can prevail, remains to be seen. ●

*Harold Meyerson, a member of DSA's National Political Committee, is executive editor of the LA Weekly.*

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# Grassroots Democracy in a Salvadoran Refugee Community

by Beth Cagan

In an article in *Foreign Affairs* last spring, Joaquin Villalobos, a leading member of the FMLN directorate, described the objectives of the guerrilla movement in El Salvador as "open, flexible, pluralistic, and democratic in both the economic and political spheres." "Participatory democracy permits self-management of the masses," Villalobos explained, while "electoral democracy confers legitimacy on the revolution, reaffirms its mass support, and allows the balanced participation of all sectors in exercising power."

These words are encouraging for those of us who still believe in the possibility of democratic socialism, but they must be evaluated in light of evidence about the actual conduct of the FMLN and its affiliated parties and grassroots organizations. Particularly in need of closer examination is the elusive concept of popular or participatory democracy. One important source of information about this concept is the self-governing communities of Salvadoran refugees, which are in sympathy with (although not formally tied to) the FMLN.

My husband Steve and I had the opportunity to study one of these communities, the refugee camp at Colomoncagua, Honduras, where 8400 Salvadoran refugees had lived for up to nine years until their repatriation this past winter. For two weeks last August, we lived with a refugee family, interviewing, observing, taperecording, and photographing without restriction. Since that visit, Steve returned to the camp in December for a one-month stay while the refugees were in the process of returning -- now as an intentional community -- to Morazan department in northern El Salvador. And in March, he was present for the dedication of the new settlement, named Ciudad Segund-Montes, after one of the slain Jesuit



Community sanitation: cleaning the latrines.

Steve Cagan

priests who had worked with the community. These experiences give us reason for optimism about the democratic future of a revolutionary El Salvador.

Before I discuss the reasons for this optimism, it's necessary to consider a drastically different perspective on this community. In March of 1989, reporter Mark Uhlig wrote in *The New York Times* that the refugees at Colomoncagua lived in fear of an FMLN-aligned clique that ruled with absolute authority, forcing them to work long hours without vacation and leaving little room for dissent or personal freedom. "It is like Orwell's *Animal Farm*," Uhlig quoted an unnamed diplomat as saying, "an inward-looking, suspicious society that has organized itself to survive, but it has lost its sanity." Understaffing in the U.N.-run camp, Uhlig claimed, allowed the "seeds of authority" of the refugee leadership to grow into a structure of "regimentation and orthodoxy that appears as inflexible as it is efficient."

Everybody we spoke to in the camp characterized Uhlig's article as a thinly-veiled presentation of the U.S. embassy line which dismissed the refugees as guerrilla collaborators. Uhlig spent just a few hours in Colomoncagua and relied on reports from the one international agency, Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), which had problems in the camp and was

expelled by the refugees in 1988. The other agencies -- Caritas (an international Catholic organization), Catholic Relief Services, the Mennonite Central Committee, and CEDEN (a Protestant Honduran organization) -- have a far more positive attitude toward the refugees and were conveniently ignored.

In a sense, though, Uhlig's harsh assessment of the refugee community provided a useful backdrop for our research. Mindful of the possibility that things were not what they seemed, we were particularly careful to test out assumptions, validate impressions, and otherwise seek independent verification for our interpretations and conclusions. We were also looking for an explanation -- beyond ideologically-motivated bias -- of Uhlig's seriously distorted view.

Part of the problem may be that Uhlig was unable to grasp the genuine unity of this community, a unity born out of the harsh conditions the refugees faced. Encircled by a hostile Honduran military, they were essentially held prisoner in the camp for nine years, subject to frequent patrols and attacks by Honduran soldiers, resulting in many deaths. While the U.N. and other agencies gave them material and technical assistance, they were continually faced with chronic shortages in basic necessities. For much of the time, they were under threat of forced relocation away from the border. These conditions forced the refugees to

develop a close-knit and well-organized social life -- and generated an understandable mistrust of anyone seen as connected with the U.S. embassy.

But it would be inaccurate to see the strong solidarity and organization merely as defensive, for the refugees were guided by a positive vision, rooted in liberation theology and revolutionary socialism, of a more communal, egalitarian way of life. Their exile was a kind of schooling that allowed them to develop themselves individually and collectively for that new life. As one refugee told us, "When we came here, 85 percent of us were illiterate and we had no skills. We knew only how to plant, and not very well at that. Also our cultural level was very low. Now we can ask, who among us would be good at doing this or that? This is the basis of self-governance." Another added, "Look at the kids -- they don't fight. They've learned how to live. We have an environment here that encourages them to live as brothers."

In their nine years in the camp at Colomoncagua, the refugees transformed themselves from illiterate, passive, and unschooled peasants into an articulate and confident community. With the assistance of the international agencies, the refugees set up schools, health clinics, day care centers, and an array of training and production workshops -- making shoes, clothing, hammocks, and tools, repairing agency vehicles, publishing a weekly camp newspaper, and running their own technical school. Seeing themselves as a model of social and economic development for the poor of their country, the community is confident that the essential features and benefits of their new life style can be

recreated in their homeland.

Perhaps the most impressive of the community's accomplishments is the system of governance they devised. Beginning with little experience in political participation of any kind, they were forced by sheer necessity to learn how to manage their own affairs and developed a unique, indigenous form of popular, participatory democracy.

Far from the inflexible structure of "regimentation and orthodoxy" that *The New York Times* portrayed, the system of governance in the camp evolved as the refugees experimented with different organizational forms, discussed their errors, and devised solutions. Originally, leadership was vested in elected coordinators responsible for all aspects of life in each sub-camp -- production, distribution, education, sanitation, nutrition, etc. Despite great strides forward, there was considerable dissatisfaction with inefficiencies, limited participation, and inequities -- between sub-camps and, to some extent, among individuals -- resulting in a two-month period of intense discussion and a fundamental restructuring of the camp during the summer of 1988.

Under this new, more complex system, decision-making was centralized, to promote the interests of the refuge as a whole, and at the same time authority was decentralized, to maximize participation. All leadership was collective rather than individual, and responsibilities were divided into different areas, so no one group -- or person -- ran the whole camp. Leaders at the neighborhood level were directly elected, and they selected members of sub-camp leadership bodies, who in turn appointed camp-wide work committees. It was

the assembly of these work committees which had the highest level of authority in the camp, and set policy for the refuge as a whole. Leaders served for two-year terms, but were subject to recall by the community at any time.

The balance achieved between the need for effective organization and the desire to maximize participation was impressive. Despite the pyramidal structure described above, the process in the camp cannot be understood as traditional "democratic centralism." Leadership was varied, visible, and accountable, participation was genuinely encouraged, and there was little if any distinction between leaders and the rest of the community. Meetings and discussions occurred all the time, giving people at the grassroots many opportunities to influence their leaders (and, of course, vice versa).

These accomplishments cannot be overstated. As former peasants, the refugees had little practice in self-management or even voicing their own opinions, and had to work hard to overcome their passivity and (bit of deferring to authority. As one man put it, "We used to sit at meetings like iguanas, nodding our heads but not saying anything. Now people have learned to propose things, to present their ideas. Now there is a lot more discussion."

Particularly impressive was the degree of participation by women in leadership bodies, in workplaces, and in public life in the camp more generally. By socializing much of women's traditional domestic work -- tortilla-making, childcare -- the refugees deliberately and effectively opened doors for women so they could become equal and important members of the community.

In many ways, despite the hardships, the refugee camp at Colomoncagua functioned as a utopian community. There was no money economy and there were no class distinctions. People worked and participated to the extent that they were able, and were all entitled to an equal share of the community's resources: food, shelter, firewood, schooling, health care, and so forth. There was strong social pressure to work hard and to contribute to the community, but rewards were not individual material ones. In the transition from

*Continued on page 23.*



A shoemaking workshop in the camp.

Steve Cagan

# DSACTION

## RESOURCES

\* Two new leaflets of DSA's New Members Packet are "Socialist Vision" by Irving Howe and "History of the Left" by Maurice Isserman. Other pieces are in preparation. Order copies by sending \$1.00 for twenty copies to the DSA office, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

\* *What Unions Are...And Are Not: Nine Misperceptions About Unions and the Labor Movement* is a new six-page brochure by DSA's American Solidarity Campaign. Excellent for use with community and civil rights activists, unionists, feminist groups, and academics. Send \$1.00 for twenty brochures to the DSA office.

\* Labeling the 1980's as "a decade of greed," Barbara Ehrenreich's *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed* (Pantheon), has been widely hailed in the daily press. Calling the book "a long, steady, appalling, funny look at our recent past," *New York Times Book Review* critic H. Jack Geiger says, "The best thing about *The Worst Years of Our Lives* is that it can serve as a kind of 'notes for next time.' It might even make us want to do something about the 1990s." Copies are available from the DSA office for only \$18.50, plus postage and handling.

## UPCOMING

\* Don't miss the 15th annual **Youth Section Summer Conference** August 17-19 at Allegheny College, Allegheny Pennsylvania. Panels on the state of the democratic left, race and racial politics, and strategy for socialist youth. For more information, call Dinah Leventhal at (212) 962-0390.

\* The Center for Popular Economics holds its 11th annual Summer Institute July 29-August 4, 1990, in Northamp-

ton, Massachusetts. For details, write the Center for Popular Economics, Box 785, Amherst, MA 01004.

\* **DSA's National Board Meeting** will take place November 9-11, 1990 at the Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco, California. The Board will analyze the current international and domestic situation, evaluate our efforts over the last year, and chart a course for future work. In addition to strategizing, workshops, and resolution sessions, there will be a Friday night public meeting featuring prominent DSAers. Look for more information soon.

\* Look for the DSA reception August 12 at this year's American Sociological Association meeting in Washington, DC.

## INTERNATIONAL

\* DSA Organizational Director Patrick Lacefield and DSA International Affairs Committee member Motl Zelmanowicz represented DSA at the Council meeting of the Socialist International held in Cairo, Egypt on May 22-23. The first such meeting in the Arab world, the session focussed on the need for peace in the Middle East and the rapidly evolving situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

On the Middle East, the SI noted that, despite constructive assistance from the United States and Egypt, much-needed direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians are still not in the cards -- largely due to the intransigence of the Likud party. The SI urged the observance of human rights in the Occupied Territories, condemned all terrorism, urged the amendment of the PLO charter to recognize Jewish self-determination, and praised the parties working for peace and negotiations within Israel.

The SI also reviewed reports on the situations in Bulgaria and Romania and admitted to membership in the SI newly-

reconstituted parties in the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. The PASOK party in Greece was also admitted to the SI.

The next council meeting of the Socialist International will be held in New York on October 8-9 to be co-hosted by the Democratic Socialists of America. This will be the first such meeting held in the United States and DSA will be planning activities around it for the couple hundred participants as well as for American socialists. The SI Council meeting will be preceded by a meeting of the Socialist International Women, co-hosted by the DSA Feminist Commission. Watch your Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* for more details.

## REPORTS

\* As of June 20, over 650 new members joined DSA through the organization's direct mail campaign -- that is better than a 1.3 percent return on the 51,000 piece mailing. And new members are still joining. DSA mailed to such lists as *Dissent*, *In These Times*, Center for Constitutional Rights, and the *Nation*, with a compelling letter by Ed Asner about the changes in Eastern Europe and the need for a democratic socialist center here in the United States.

DSA hopes to do regular direct mail campaigns so that we can continue to bring democratic socialism to people nationwide.

\* If you did not receive your most recent issue of **Socialist Forum**, the discussion bulletin, you are in good company. The post office lost all 1,000 pieces of the **Forum** (no, we are not making this up). The Institute for Democratic Socialism is in the process of trying to recover damages for the lost copies. It just so happens, however, that extra copies of the **Forum** were printed and a second mailing will take place at the end of June. Sorry for the inconvenience.

# ON THE LEFT

by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

## California

National Organizational Director Patrick Laceyfield spoke at the California State DSA retreat held south of San Francisco, as well as at DSA public meetings in San Diego and Los Angeles, at Santa Cruz DSA's annual May Day bash, and at the University of California-Santa Barbara in late April and early May.... Valley DSA viewed "The Rise and Fall of Charles Keating" at its May meeting. The local participated in a rally in front of the Van Nuys General Motors plant to back the United Auto Workers in the fight to keep GM Van Nuys open. A national boycott of GM products will be called if GM closes the plant...Leo Whitaker of Valley DSA organized the distribution of 1,800 copies of the "Left Democrat" at the California Democratic party convention in April. The leaflet stated DSA's perspective and was generally well received....San Francisco DSA joined Bill Bailey, veteran union activist since 1930, in a labor history walking tour of San Francisco's waterfront for reminiscences of the scenes and events that led to the 1934 General Strike.

## District of Columbia

DC/MD/NOVA DSA held an endorsement meeting in June. They voted to endorse Jim Nathanson for Ward 3, Harry Thomas for Ward 5, DSA Vice Chair Hilda Mason for an at-large city council seat; and Eleanor Holmes Norton for non-voting DC delegate. A labor brunch with DSA National Political Committee member and Amalgamated Clothing and Tex-

tile Workers Union (ACTWU) Education Director Jose La Luz is scheduled for June 26.

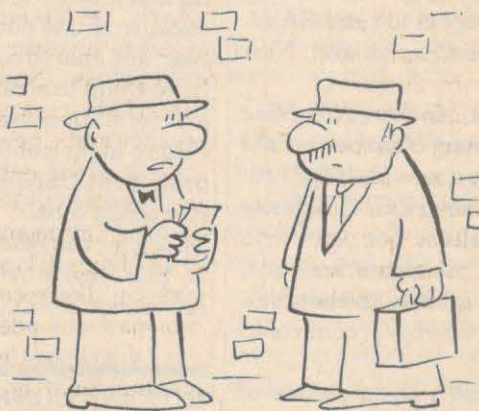
## Illinois

DSAer professor Leland Stauber of Southern Illinois University spoke June 24 at a meeting on "Market Socialism: Can the Best from Socialism be Combined with the Best from Capitalism?" under the auspices of Monthly Review, the Open University of the Left, and the New World Resource

port of Soweto. Speakers included DSAers Brian Mitchell of the UAW; Nomonde Ngubo, an international representative for the United Mine Workers; and Kathleen Devine, coordinator of Illinois Labor Network Against Apartheid.

## Iowa

The Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, and the local DSA jointly sponsored a health care workshop May 5, calling for universal health care. Professor



Baloo  
ROTHCO

"It's called my 'take-home pay,' but it doesn't really get me that far."

Center....Over fifty DSAers from Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin attended the Midwest conference on "Building the DSA agenda in the Heartland," May 4-5 in Chicago. Participants discussed international politics, socialist feminism, and domestic strategy....Chicago DSA will hold its annual membership convention on June 25. At that meeting the local will adopt new by-laws, elect officers, and set political priorities.... Chicago DSA is organizing its third annual summer study group entitled "Healthy Bodies, Healthy Planet: Socialist Approaches to Healthcare and Ecology." Chicago DSA's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission will march in the 1990 lesbian and gay Pride parade. The Danville UAW, Vermillion County Coalition of Labor Union Women, NAACP, YWCA, and the county AFL-CIO sponsored a rally May 12 in sup-

Martin Tracy of the University of Iowa pointed out that Canada's national health care was far superior to the U.S. system and that 23 percent of the U.S. health care dollars goes for administration, compared to 6 percent in Canada. DSA member and University of Iowa history professor Jeff Cox was also one of the speakers.

## Kentucky

Central Kentucky DSA held an April meeting in Lexington based on "Ideas for the 90s." On June 2 they held their annual retreat to plan programs and priorities for the upcoming year. "The Environment and the Kentucky Legislature: Is the Situation Hopeless?" was the title of the local's June meeting.

## Massachusetts

Boston DSA's Debs-Thomas-Bernstein dinner was held in May

with its awards given to three women who have demonstrated noteworthy service in the field of reproductive choice. The honorees were Nicki Nichols Gamble, executive director of the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts; Pam Nourse, executive director of Massachusetts Choice; and Helene Weitzenkorn, president of NOW's Massachusetts chapter. A June DSA forum focussed on electoral politics. Gretchen Kalonji, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of science, spoke to DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission on "Technology in the Service of the Anti-Apartheid Movement." Boston DSA's January fundraising pledge drive netted \$6,465. Planning by the Boston DSA Labor Committee is already underway for the second campus-labor institute, which will take place October 13.

#### *Michigan*

In the spring of 1970, students at Michigan State University in East Lansing built Tent City on an empty area of the campus dubbed People's Park. Twenty years later, eight shanties have been built in the same area, to highlight such causes as U.S. policy in El Salvador, the plight of the homeless (DSA's contribution), deforestation, and violence and injustice against women and children.

#### *Minnesota*

Thirty people attended a May meeting of the revitalized Twin Cities DSA local to plan work on affordable housing and health care....In January, when DSAer James Scheibel was inaugurated as the new mayor of St. Paul, he received a warm letter of congratulation from Hitoshi Motoshima, the mayor of Nagasaki, which has been St. Paul's sister city for thirty-five years. But just days later, Scheibel was sending back a tele-

gram of best wishes to Motoshima -- under grim circumstances. On January 18, as he left Nagasaki City Hall, Mayor Motoshima was shot in the back by an avowed right-wing terrorist because Motoshima had broken a sensitive Japanese taboo by saying that Emperor Hirohito bore some responsibility for World War Two. Motoshima is recovering and has invited Scheibel to visit Nagasaki this August.

#### *New York*

Ithaca DSA has launched a media project to monitor local coverage of city politics....Nassau DSA heard British Labour party activist Sean Sweeney and singer Andy Greenhouse at its memorial Day Barbecue. Nassau DSAer Paul Gutierrez, a longtime member of the board of the Long Island Progressive Coalition, died recently. He was a passionate defender of the rights of the people of Central America and a builder of the peaceful world we seek....The Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University's Tamiment Library dedicated a Pillar of Labor in memory of DSAer Seymour Posner, former chair of the NY Assembly Labor Committee and vice chair of the Workers Defense League.

New York City DSA and the Youth Section have organized a summer study group on the History of the American Left. Early sessions dealt with Debsian socialism, Norman Thomas, the Socialist party, and the Popular Front. Upcoming sessions include socialism and the black struggle, socialism and women's liberation, lessons from the new left, and socialism today and tomorrow. NYC DSA holds its annual Bastille Day picnic July 7 at the Chapin estate near Netcong, NJ. NYC DSA held an endorsement meeting in June...The Michael Harrington Center for Democratic Values and Social Change at Queens College was approved by

the City University Board of Trustees April 23. It will conduct public education forums and conferences, as well as produce publications that will reflect Harrington's political and social concerns.

#### *Ohio*

Cleveland DSA held a DSA general membership meeting in June with Terri Burgess, DSAer and member of the Northeast Ohio Healthcare Coalition executive board as one of the featured speakers. Sherri Levine, DSA's Political Education Director met with the Cleveland local's steering committee in May.

#### *Oregon*

DSA Organizational Director Patrick Lacefield visited DSA activists in Portland, including State Representative Bev Stein who is running for re-election to the State House. He also addressed a meeting of forty DSA members and friends at Willamette College in Salem.

#### *Pennsylvania*

Philadelphia DSA held a discussion on "Prospects for Philadelphia's Budget Crisis" in May, led by Councilman David Cohen. DSA's Urban Affairs committee will network with neighborhood and local activist organizations to create and then push for options for the city. DSAer Babette Joseph is seeking her fourth term to the State House of Representatives.

#### *Washington*

DSA Organizational Director Patrick Lacefield addressed a meeting of the Seattle local on "Eastern Europe and What It Means for Socialists" and spoke at the University of Washington on the crisis in El Salvador during an early May visit. He also was interviewed at the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* and did a local radio show.

# Staff Changes at the National Office

by Harry Fleischman

## Hail Michael and Dominic

With many DSA members, activity in DSA has led to assuming posts with America's unions. Now we find one union leader so impressed with the need for DSA's work and the exciting potentials in the years to come that he has reversed the trend to become DSA's organizational director.

A transplanted Californian, Michael Lighty, becomes the national organizational director of the Democratic Socialists of America July 1.

Lighty, who joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in 1980 and DSA when DSOC and the New American Movement merged in 1983, began doing campus organizing with the Youth Section chapter at Stanford University. During college, he served on the Youth Section's executive committee and did labor support work as well as antidraft, anti-intervention, and antiracism organizing.

Michael served as business agent for the National Association of Broadcast Engineers and Technicians (NABET), Local 15/San Francisco, Local 531 in Hollywood, and Local 15/New York. In this latter post, Michael supervised field and office staff of this union for freelance film and video technicians; administered the budget; negotiated contracts; organized productions; trained stewards; and made policy recommendations for the executive board.

Lighty was an organizer of the successful Harry Britt campaign for San Francisco Supervisor. Since coming to New York in 1988, Mike became chair of the New York DSA Labor Task Force.

His experience at the chapter and local levels, said Lighty, confirmed his perspective of DSA as a multilayered, multitendency educational and activist organization. We look forward to Michael Lighty's active role in the DSA national office and to working with him in the years ahead. Welcome, Michael!

Dominic Chan started June 1 as DSA's financial manager, replacing Gary

Lucek who held that post for over four years. Dominic, a graduate student in sociology at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, was active at school in the campaign for the right of teaching assistants to unionize. Dominic was anxious to leave the "ivory tower" of the academic world to fight instead for social and economic justice. While at Stony Brook, Dominic served as the treasurer of the Graduate Student Organization and the secretary of the Graduate Students Employees Union, Local 1188 of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). As a

## Michael Lighty becomes DSA's organizational director July 15.

campus activist, Dominic organized a rally for Jesse Jackson's presidential bid, as well as a rally to protest the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Dominic is now responsible for maintaining DSA's books, preparing financial reports for the National Political Committee and the Budget Committee, filing taxes and forms with the government and insurance companies, and much more. We are glad to have Dominic on board at DSA.

Michael and Dominic join Barbara Farrow, the administrative assistant, and Dinah Leventhal, the Youth Section organizer, at the national office.

## Farewell Patrick, Sherri, & Gary

It is with deep regret that DSA accepts the resignations of Patrick Lacefield as organization director and Sherri Levine as Publications and Political Education Director.

Patrick, a journalist and Democratic party and peace movement activist, has done a great job. He leaves the DSA national office now to write a book on El Salvador but we'll continue to have the benefit of his wisdom and experience.

DSA has been ably served by Lacefield as the United States representative to Socialist International meetings in Madrid, Guatemala, El Salva-

dor, and Egypt. He was a member of the SI's observer team for the March, 1989 presidential elections in El Salvador.

Patrick has been responsible for managing the budget and expanding DSA's financial base -- not an easy task for a socialist organization. Before coming on staff, Pat worked for nearly two years with the Catholic Church in El Salvador, administering a health care and rural development team of North Americans working with the Salvadoran Catholic Church.

Lacefield is co-author of *El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War*, and his writings have appeared in many magazines. Pat was national coordinator for the March 22, 1980 Washington mobilization against draft registration. We'll miss you Pat.

We will also miss Sherri Levine, our DSA educational director, who is leaving in August to go to New York University Law School. Sherri has done an outstanding job as editor of *Democratic Left*, administering the national office, organizing DSA's annual educational and organizing retreats, leading discussions for our national board meetings, and writing many of our brochures.

Sherri once served as a research assistant for the National Association of Working Women and as director of the Cleveland Abortion Rights Action League. While in Cleveland, Sherri served on the Youth Section executive committee and was active in the Cleveland DSA local. She got her BA in Women's Studies from Oberlin College in 1985. Again, all our thanks.

Gary Lucek, who began his tenure as DSA's financial manager in October of 1985, saw the organization through good times and bad. Gary not only maintained the books for the organization, but he computerized all of our accounts. A graduate of Columbia University, Gary helped organize several gay study groups over the past several years. His presence at the DSA office will certainly be missed. ●

Harry Fleischman, a member of DSA, wrote Norman Thomas: A Biography.

# Labor Commission Advances

by Jack Clark

Does it mean anything to be a socialist in the 1990s American labor movement? More than fifty socialists from varied levels of the labor movement gathered the weekend before May Day at the 4-H conference center in Chevy Chase, Maryland near Washington D.C. That question rose again and again in the weekend's proceedings. Many of the participants in the weekend long discussion sprinkled their comments with phrases such as "I don't know what it means to be a socialist any more." Yet, the participants passed a beautiful spring weekend engaged in intense discussions around just what socialists have to say about the labor movement and the world in the 1990s. By Sunday, with some visible enthusiasm, the group had resolved to rebuild DSA's Labor Commission through an improved publication, local labor groups in half a dozen cities, a national steering committee, an effort to add some life to DSA's American Solidarity Campaign, and plans for a larger Labor Commission meeting next year.

## Unions as Instruments of Change

Jose LaLuz, the education director for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and a member of DSA's National Political Committee, opened the conference on Friday night. Jose brilliantly laid out a vision of socialists' role in addressing a range of challenges. He addressed questions of union education and pedagogy, citing the need for educational methods that empower workers. The unions themselves must be constantly challenged to remain and be renewed as instruments of social change. The American working class is composed of groups from different cultures, and Jose recounted his own union's efforts to build a multicultural institution.

Jose's comments opened up a round



Greyhound workers rallied to protest the company's unfaithful negotiations.

of lively discussion, with a number of brothers and sisters discussing their own experiences. Probably the most moving contribution came from Gene Carroll of the United Mine Workers staff. Gene spoke of the Pittston strike and the role he was privileged to play in helping to organize support for the Pittston miners. "The response to the strike was an organizer's dream of solidarity," Gene noted. The political environment created by the Mine Workers protected the union. Unions from overseas lent support, the AFL-CIO stood solidly with strikers, and thousands of people trooped through Camp Solidarity. Even with all of that support and political mobilization, it is sobering to think how close we came to losing. Gene urged us to figure out how to translate the kind of political mobilization this strike generated for a broader labor political agenda, not just labor law reform but the role of workers and unions in society.

Saturday's agenda was packed with three major discussions: domestic policy; international solidarity; and innovative strike support strategies. Jack Metzgar of the Midwest Center for Labor Research and Roberta Lynch from Illinois American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31 led the discussion on domestic strategies. Jack focused his presentation on the lack of

money for decent social programs and for building the labor movement. He advocated a "soak the rich" tax program as a top priority for labor and its allies and backed up his proposal with data from Citizens for Tax Justice detailing just how much of a bananza Reaganomics was for the rich and corporations. The money is there for social programs; we just need a class-defined program to go get it, reminded Jack.

Roberta Lynch addressed some of the problems and contradictions facing the labor movement. The demands we, the left within labor, generally raise represent necessary conditions for a union resurgence, but our usual slogans are not sufficient. Union democracy, multicultural unions that practice racial solidarity, greater union education, more effective unions able to deliver real improvement in people's lives, better public relations and image; all of these represent a foundation, but they aren't enough, even taken together. Members face many tugs on their time and loyalties. Family obligations, particularly when most women are in the wage labor force, loom large. And in all sectors, unions face increasingly sophisticated managements working to co-opt members. Roberta proposed a four-point program for the unions to deal with this set of problems: 1) create a permanent internal organizing staff, supplement-

Mahmood Nadia/Impact Visuals



A UMWA worker during the strike.

ing the structure of staff representatives who are overloaded; 2) increase the use of the "one-on-one" programs to get union messages across; 3) target union education programs toward specific goals or legislative programs instead of vague education around "larger" issues that often leave members feeling powerless; and 4) foster greater interunion cooperation and solidarity.

## Socialists in Labor

In the wide-ranging discussion that followed these presentations, brothers and sisters raised issues from the nature of labor and socialist involvement in the Democratic party and electoral politics to national health care, from deindustrialization and the minimum wage to the problems of a new labor culture, from union staffing problems to how to bring legitimacy to labor's cause. Paul Baicich, a leader of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) Eastern strike, noted that being an individual socialist in the labor movement is meaningless. We can only function as socialists by functioning collectively. Part of that means understanding each other's issues. He stressed that he needs to be able to speak to Machinists about the problems of privati-

zation just as much as Roberta needs to be able to address public employees about the importance of the Eastern strike. By learning to do that better, we'll be better trade unionists and we'll start to function in the role in which socialists should be functioning: acting to increase the overall confidence of the working class in its ability to run society.

After lunch, the conference addressed the world. Specifically, Paul Garver and Don Stillman spoke about labor strategies for the new international economy. Paul, a long-time socialist labor activist on leave from an SEIU staff job to teach at the Rutgers labor education program, took on the impossible task of briefly summarizing labor's position in the new international economy. Remarkably, he did it well. Paul explained the four major strategies pursued by international capital: 1) the global assembly line; 2) the triad or trilateral approach; 3) the world city; and 4) flexible specialization. He went on to propose labor responses to three of the four: 1) an international labor human rights strategy; 2) transnational collective bargaining, including company councils and the right to strike in solidarity; and 3) immigrant rights.

Don Stillman, the Director of International Affairs for the United Automobile Workers (UAW), recounted some of the successful work that had been done in campaigns like the one to free Moses Mayekiso, led by the UAW. Efforts like that campaign and the Shell boycott offer the opportunity for lots of rank-and-file activity. Don also stressed that international solidarity must be seen as a two-way street. In two recent UAW organizing drives in the South, intervention by West German and French unions helped assure union victories. Don's emphasis here echoed earlier remarks by Jose and others on that theme.

Questions and comments from the conference participants were particularly good and highly focused during this discussion. Someone asked about current transnational collective bargaining agreements. Don pointed out that the U.S.-Canada Chrysler pact fell apart because of differences in the national economies of the two countries. Stan Gacek, the director of international affairs for the United Food and Com-

mmercial Workers told the story of the successful multinational union campaign through the IUF (the food workers international secretariat) that forced Coca-Cola to bargain with workers in Guatemala. Stan also urged that we should press American labor to make the Third World debt crisis a priority issue. The AFL-CIO supports the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) position that there has to be a multinational institution to buy the debt, but we haven't done anything to advance that position.

Mark Levinson, a member of DSA's National Political Committee, raised a question about the sensitivity of using trade policy to enforce labor rights in Third World countries. Paul noted that there are sensitivities and problems. The U.S. violates labor law itself, so there is an element of hypocrisy in the U.S. administration using trade sanctions to protect workers' rights. The use of these sanctions for blatantly political purposes such as punishing Nicaragua has also caused problems. Many in the Third World doubt that we're sincere in wanting these countries to develop. Don cited some specific cases of U.S. unions working with their counterparts in Korea and Malaysia on issues of trade sanctions. Jo-Ann Mort, the Communications Director of ACTWU pointed out that Japanese firms are opening up lots of low-wage, high-tech shops, particularly in the South, to compete with firms like Xerox (which has an ACTWU contract). We need to stress that this is bad for workers but also bad for the US economy.

## Beyond the Picket Line

After a very brief break, exhausted conferees came back for a discussion on non-traditional forms of labor support. Dot Benz of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and a DSA Youth Section leader, gave some background on labor support as a DSA youth section priority and spoke about the campus-labor institutes as a method of building greater student awareness of labor struggles. Joe Uehlein of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department talked about the corporate campaign strategy to move labor struggles "beyond the picket line." He reviewed a few key recent struggles, including



the OCAW fight against BASF and the Eastern and Pittston struggles. Joe stressed that power analysis is the key to corporate campaign strategy. We need to be creative and non-traditional in devising these strategies. It is also important to avoid threatening existing labor leadership with these tactics, Joe reminded us.

Tim Sears of the Carpenters Union and a leader of the DSA Labor Commission reviewed some of the experiences of the Washington, D.C. labor group in

### The Right to Strike

Today, the right to strike -- an economic freedom without which unions and their workers would be powerless -- is in jeopardy. Over the last decade alone, tens of thousands of workers have lost their jobs simply because they went on strike or were locked out.

Among industrialized nations, only the United States, England, and South Africa give employers the power to permanently replace striking workers. In 1938, the Supreme Court, in the Mackay decision, ruled that although workers had the right to strike, employers could hire permanent replacements.

Representative William Clay (D-MO) and Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) have introduced H.R. 3936 and S. 2112, respectively. H.R. 3936/S. 2112 would restore the protection undermined by the Mackay decision. It would prohibit employers from hiring permanent replacement workers during a strike or lockout and it would prohibit employers from discriminating against striking workers who return to their jobs once a dispute is over.

The DSA Labor Commission has made support of this legislation a top priority. Contact the DSA office (15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038) for antiscab brochures and petitions. And contact your Senators and Representatives and ask them to cosponsor and support S. 2112 or H.R. 3936.

supporting the Eastern strikers by raising money and building picket line support. Both Machinist Union officials and the AFL-CIO were very concerned about the RICO suit that Lorenzo filed just prior to the strike. Concerted action to block airports, overbook airlines, and other means of harassing Eastern and Continentals could result in enormous fines against the union for "racketeering." This has been an enormous problem for unions (Joe and Tim both pointed out that the lack of a RICO suit was perhaps a decisive difference between the Pittston and Eastern situations). There's also a potential opening here for DSA and its allies, because as Tim pointed out, non-union organizations cannot be held liable under RICO.

### Future Work

On Sunday morning, the group faced the task of pulling all the discussion together and taking next steps to organize a Labor Commission which can function. Mike Schippiani and I facilitated the discussion.

An interim steering committee consisting of labor members of the DSA National Political Committee plus Tim Sears, Penny Schantz, Paul Baicich, Carl Shier and Michael Schippiani was established. Michael Schippiani was designated the convener. The Commission also adopted a plan of action for the upcoming year, including activity around antiscab legislation and health care and the development of local Labor Commissions in several cities across the country. See the accompanying box for the interim program.

The weekend's discussion was packed with information and analysis far beyond what this report can accurately convey. Even amid considerable uncertainty in the world situation, there was also a sense of purpose. Informally and in full session, people addressed the question of the survival of the American socialist movement, particularly after Michael Harrington's death. Many felt strongly that the success of the Labor Commission will help determine DSA's future. Given the weekend's tone and substance, many felt cause for optimism.

Again and again at conference end, people turned to each other and ex-

### DSA Labor Commission Interim Program

- \* Build activity for the anti-scab legislation (see box) and national health care legislation.
- \* Increase the labor and youth activity around the country.
- \* Build toward a larger meeting of the Labor Commission in one year.
- \* Build local labor groups and sponsor events in several cities.
- \* Implement the following communication strategy:

1) *Labor Voice* will continue as a more sophisticated vehicle of analysis and perspective and will be structured to include articles on critical issues for organized labor in the 1990s; strategies for a domestic and international agenda; and non-traditional support strategies.

2) An internal mailing system will be created to facilitate regular communication with those involved in the Commission activities.

3) A pamphlet on the DSA Commission's perspectives and strategies will be developed.

pressed what had distinguished the gathering. "Such good people, such serious people, that's what made this so special." Indeed. Long ago, Italian socialist Ignazio Silone persuasively argued that the moral choices one faces in life could be reduced to one's choices of comrades. The choice to struggle together to define new meanings for the labor movement and for American socialism distinguish us. The weekend before May Day near Washington marked a new beginning for us in that struggle which will last beyond our lifetimes. ●

*Jack Clark, a DSA National Political Committee member, works for the Massachusetts Secretary of Labor.*

(To obtain a full report on the Labor Commission Retreat, send \$1.00 to the DSA office, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.)

# Books and Literature Available through the DSA Office

	DSA Price
Socialism: Past and Future by Michael Harrington.	\$19.00
Remaking Love: The Feminization of Sex, by Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, & Gloria Jacobs. Published at \$15.95.	\$ 12.00
The Long-Distance Runner, by Michael Harrington. An autobiography that spans the past two decades. Published at \$19.95	\$17.00
Fear of Falling: The Inner life of the Middle Class, by Barbara Ehrenreich. Examines the attitudes held by the middle class.	\$19.00
The New American Poverty, by Michael Harrington. Paperback.	\$7.00
Why Americans Don't Vote by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. Paperback.	\$9.00
The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State by Fred Block, Richard Cloward, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Frances Fox Piven. Paperback.	\$7.00
A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography by Irving Howe. Paperback.	\$7.00
Socialism and America by Irving Howe. Debs, the Thirties, & American exceptionalism.	\$5.00
The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism by Cornel West. Paperback.	\$18.00
The Next Left: The History of a Future by Michael Harrington. Paperback.	\$ 8.00
The Socialist Debate by Bogdan Denitch	\$20.00
The End of the Cold War: European Unity, Socialism, and the Shift in Global Power by Bogdan Denitch	\$10.00
The Worst Years of Our Lives: Notes from a Decade of Greed by Barbara Ehrenreich	\$18.50

## Pamphlets

A Socialist Perspective on the Politics of Poverty by Michael Harrington, with contributions by Barbara Ehrenreich, William Julius Wilson, and Mark Levinson. Special bulk rate: \$.20/copy for orders of 20 or more.	\$1.00
Democratic Promise: Ideas for Turning America in a Progressive Direction. Articles by Robert Kuttner, Michael Harrington, & William Julius Wilson, among others.	\$.50
Socialist-Feminist Reader. 200 pages.	\$10.00
Toward A Socialist Theory of Racism by Cornel West.	\$1.50
First Steps Toward a New Civilization.	\$1.00
Toward a Democratic Socialism: Theory, Strategy, and Vision by Joseph Schwartz. DSA's theory and practice in an historical context.	\$1.00
The Black Church and Marxism by James Cone.	\$.50
Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Liberation and Socialism.	\$1.00
The Question of Socialism by Michael Harrington and Alec Nove.	\$2.00
The Politics of the Housing Crisis by Peter Dreier.	\$.50
#2 Democracy & Productivity in the Future	_____

American Economy by Lou Ferleger and Jay R. Mandle.	\$1.50
#3 The Common Good: Stalemate or Reconstruction by Gar Alperovitz.	\$1.50
#4 Gentrification, Strategic Initiatives, and the Left by Robert Beauregard.	\$1.50

## Publications/Products

Democratic Left, DSA's bimonthly periodical. \$8.00/one year subscription. Most current and back issues available in quantity.	\$.50
Labor Voice, the Publication of the DSA Labor Commission. Most recent issue available.	\$.50
Religious Socialism, the publication of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission. One year subscription.	\$5.00
Not Far Enough, the newsletter of the DSA Feminist Commission. One year subscription included with annual Commission dues.	\$10.00
Nuestra Lucha/Our Struggle, the newsletter of the DSA Latino, Anti-Racism, and Afro-American Commissions.	\$.50
The Activist, DSA Youth Section newsletter.	\$.50
DSA buttons. Two styles: plain fist-and-rose and fist-and-rose held by black and white clasped hands. \$1 each.	\$1.00
Solidarity bumpersticker	\$1.50
Socialist Forum, DSA's discussion bulletin.	\$1.50
Video: New American Poverty by Michael Harrington. 60 minutes.	\$25.00
Video: Towards a New Socialism by Michael Harrington. 60 minutes.	\$25.00
Fist-and-Rose Tee-Shirts. Sm., med., lg., & extra-lg. in tan, white & silver. 100% cotton.	\$10.00

TOTAL

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Free Literature

We are Democratic Socialists with a Vision of the Future.	_____
Where We Stand, a position statement of DSA.	_____
What Socialism Is...And Is Not.	_____
Socialism Informs the Best of Our Politics, a pamphlet written by Michael Harrington.	_____
A Better World in Birth, the statement of the DSA Youth Section.	_____
For A More Livable World, the brochure of the Religion and Socialism Commission.	_____
Socialist Vision by Irving Howe	_____
History of the Left by Maurice Isserman	_____
Nine Myths about Labor	_____

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# Western Ambivalence and the Revolutions of Eastern Europe

by Andrei S. Markovits

Last year was a turning point in European politics. If revolution means the fundamental reorganization of power relations between citizens and the state; profound regime changes affecting all aspects of politics and economics; the emergence of national sovereignty and autonomy following the virtual collapse of an alien occupier; and a complete redefinition of private and public in everyday life, then 1989 will enter history as having contributed something more original to the history of revolutions than being merely the bicentennial of its French version. One characteristic of most revolutions is that virtually no one ever predicts them. The revolutions of 1989, as with most other revolutions, caught people unaware.

Though caught unprepared like everyone else, most democratic socialists rejoiced in these events of liberation. Yet, while our "democratic" side did so with no holds barred, our "socialist" side reacted a good deal more ambivalently. It is to this ambivalence that I would like to speak in this essay.

## Nationalism

Foremost among the reasons for this ambivalence is the left's perennial problems with nationalism. One of the most consistent Achilles heels of the past century of left political and strategic thinking is the left's inadequate understanding of nationalism as a major force in the creation of collective identity. Hailing from the cosmopolitanism of the early socialists, as well as from Marx's correct assessment that modernization entailed an increasingly internationalized exploitation of labor by capital, leftist intellectuals concluded that progressive politics had to be by definition international. Above all, in-



Antigovernment demonstration in University Square, Romania.

ternational seemed always to mean anti-national. Whereas the left has always viewed identities derived from the realm of production as progressive, identities stemming from areas of geography and culture were at best suspect if not a *prior* reactionary. Only in the context of Third World liberation movements, especially in opposition to the United States, did some socialists accord nationalism progressive credentials. Whenever conflicts arose that involved the Soviet Union as a repressor, many leftists either remained silent or sided with the Soviets. To their credit, most democratic socialists rallied to the cause of the oppressed, though, even in this case, rarely in support of slighted national identities but rather in protest against injured civil rights and infringed political autonomy.

The Western left not only miscalculated the power of nationalism in the events of 1989, but socialists have yet to address it devoid of old clichés. This is not to say that the left should now wholeheartedly embrace all forms of nationalism, regardless of its political content. It is merely to argue that it behooves us to analyze each and every nationalism with the great care that such a complex phenomenon deserves before we arrive at wholesale rejections confirming our initial prejudices.

Such careful scrutiny would show us that Polish nationalism -- to take one example -- comes in a variety of frequently contradictory shapes, even within the motley and increasingly porous Solidarity movement, let alone within Polish society as a whole. If we cross the border into the Soviet Union, we note that a good part of the Ukrainian national movement is characterized by an active defense of the Jews against the anti-Semitism of the Russian nationalists. This is not to say the Ukrainians have metamorphosed into philoSemites. It is merely to point to the fluidity and complexity of each situation. Above all, it would be a costly strategic error for democratic socialists to judge today's emerging nationalisms by simply placing them into the categories of their problematic predecessors of the interwar period. There certainly exist some similarities, but the differences are much larger. Nationalism and its politics will manifest itself differently in these urban, literate, and industrial societies than it did in its semi-feudal and agrarian predecessors nearly half a century ago.

## The Socialist Project

Another part of our ambivalence stems from our (perhaps understandable) reluctance to fundamentally re-

Larry Boyd/Impact Visuals

# Unification: Fears and Hopes

The impending unification of Germany fills us simultaneously with worries and hopes. Our worries are anchored in both historical and contemporary events. At the heart of our historical fears lies Auschwitz, which to many of us will remain the century's most lasting trauma. Although we understand intellectually that neither postwar German republic significantly resembles its ill-fated Weimar predecessor, we still worry about democracy's staying power on German soil. Even without monocolored semifeudal aristocrats, belligerent business elites, and a revanchist middle class yearning to avenge the humiliation of 1918, we have yet to accept the image of a reasonably tolerant and pluralist Germany. For many Americans and Europeans, *democratic* and *German* still seem incongruous.

Fears based on contemporary developments add to our apprehension. Unification will create a big Ger-

many. Large countries have a tendency to throw their weight around. Their very existence can intimidate neighbors and define international relations. (We should be particularly sensitive to this given American hegemony in our hemisphere.) Not only will a united Germany alter power relations in Europe vis-a-vis a weakening Soviet Union; it will soon hardly be appropriate to speak of Europe's "Big Four" -- West Germany, Britain, France, and Italy. The new Germany's economic output will be nearly the size of Britain's and France's combined. Since political clout seldom lags far behind economic strength, a united Germany will most likely become the first among lesser equals in the changing political economy of the "common European house."

History's burden, however, also fills us with hope. In order to prove to the world and to themselves that Germans can be democratic and peaceful, politics on both sides of the crumbled wall has been shaped to avoid the errors of Ger-

many's heinous past. Peace, disarmament, economic justice, and political pluralism have mobilized millions of Germans. Policies implementing these values have become inextricable parts of German public life. Liberal democracy -- taken for granted in other parts of Europe -- is consciously nurtured and jealously guarded by all major players in state and society.

Add to this the opportunities for a rejuvenated left unencumbered by cold war anticommunism or the albatross of Leninism, and the potential for progressive politics on German soil seems real. We may yet see Germany as a leader in the struggle for social progress and economic justice in an increasingly integrated Europe. But even if Germany again fails to assume such a positive role, the institutionalization of liberal democracy in that part of the world is worthy of our confidence. Europe will not move toward disaster. ●

— by Andrei Markovits

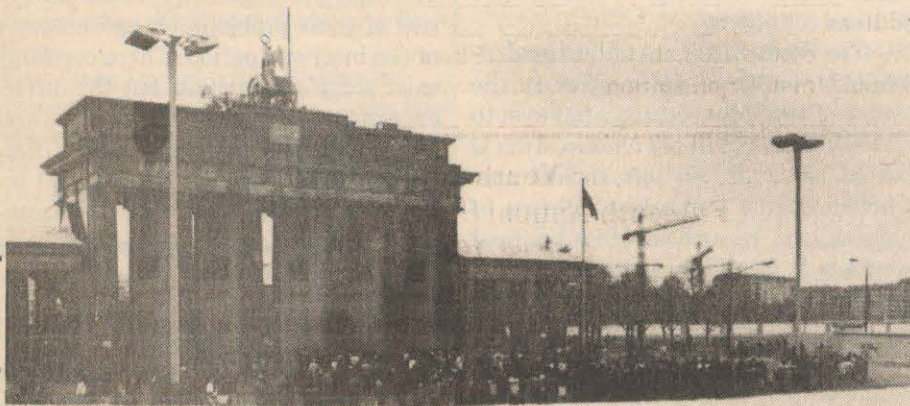
examine the socialist project. On the one hand we perceive Leninism's collapse as an opportunity for the Western left, since -- maybe for the first time since the 1920's -- words such as "left" and "socialist" will not be tainted by concepts such as "dictatorship," "forced collectivization," "concentration camps," and "Soviet power." Democratic socialists may yet see the day when our name

is not an automatic disadvantage. On the other hand, we still pass the buck far too frequently by trying to exonerate socialism from any of the problems besetting the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for nearly half a century. Socialists do have some very valid explanations for the crisis, ranging from the region's underdevelopment to Stalin's megalomania; from American imperi-

alism to the exigencies of the capitalist world market; from failed agricultural policies to the horrendous costs incurred in the battle against Nazi Germany. While all of the above is true, there may also be at least something amiss with the socialist project itself. This necessary self-evaluation has been left in the hands of conservatives, who are having a field day denouncing all of socialism as an abject failure. This opportunity must be seized to re-evaluate socialism's goals and methods in light of the tremendous societal changes occurring in Eastern and Western Europe.

We can only do so if we are humble and open vis-a-vis the people involved in these transformations. We cannot "enlighten" Czech citizens enjoying an independent judiciary for the first time in fifty years by lecturing them -- as some visiting American leftists have done -- on the inherently repressive nature of court rooms and robed judges.

Birgit Pohl/Impact Visuals



The Brandenburg Gate became a new crossing point in Berlin in December of 1989.

East Europeans have suffered sufficient Soviet arrogance and are presently witnessing its Western counterpart in the form of IMF guidelines and other capitalist constraints for them to be lectured by Western leftists on the appropriate cannons of progress and justice.

In addition to bringing a much-belated and well-deserved liberal democracy to most of Europe -- a major feat in and of itself -- 1989 may also be the year in which a new socialist politics, devoid of its Leninist burdens, might be given a chance, first in Western Europe and later on the continent's Eastern part. With Western social democracy improving material conditions and the Eastern left expanding democracy, there might come the day when the word "socialist" will conjure up positive images in Eastern Europe, instead of the dreaded ones with which it is associated at the present. The politics of a democratic left are more relevant today than perhaps at any time since the establishment of the postwar order. While it is understandable that the first free elections in a number of East European countries yielded ignominious defeats for all parties of the left -- including social democratic ones -- this need not remain the case for an indefinite future. As liberal democracy in Eastern Europe becomes more firmly established with the passage of time, so, too, can one expect the (re)emergence of democratic socialism as a viable and much-needed model for politics and society.

It is quite obvious that the immense problems bequeathed by the Leninist-Stalinist legacy to Eastern Europe will not be resolved in a satisfactory manner for a majority of the citizenry by the current capitalist rush. If anything, this reliance on capitalism in its crudest manifestations will lead to new problems which will necessitate collectivist solutions. Democratic socialism in substance, if not in name, may prove the only acceptable progressive answer to a populace hateful of communism and, in due course, wary of capitalism. Leninism's grand failure may yet prove socialism's great opportunity.

*Andrei Markovits, a DSA member, teaches at Harvard University's Center for European Studies.*

## Democratic Socialists of America National Political Committee Resolution on Cuba

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) calls for the immediate establishment of normal political, cultural, and economic relations between the governments of Cuba and the United States. We call for a unilateral U.S. withdrawal from Guantanamo, an end of the economic blockade, and an end to covert operations in Cuba.

DSA calls for the immediate release of political prisoners and an end to the present increase of repression in Cuba. As democratic socialists we support the right to free associations, the building of independent parties, social movements and trade unions with the right to strike, and free elections in Cuba. These are things we support everywhere. This requires the end of the Communist party's monopoly of power and the domination of Cuban society by a "maximum leader" and the military. We hope that the Cuban people will join in the wave of democratic upheavals from below, that are transforming communist authoritarian states.

Articles in *Democratic Left* and a piece on Cuba in Spanish should be used to communicate this view. This position should also be communicated to the Socialist International. The International Affairs Committee of the National Political Committee should follow up on future events in Cuba, and the Hispanic Commission should develop contacts with democratic and socialist forces in the U.S. Cuban community.

### Change the USA! Join the DSA!

Members of the Democratic Socialists of America work in every day-to-day struggle for social justice. We bring a strategy for building alliances among all the movements for social change. And we bring a vision of a society that can satisfy the demands for dignity and justice -- a socialist society. Join DSA.

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### Youth Section Fifteenth Annual Summer Conference August 16-19, 1990

Allegheny College, Meadville, PA

Speakers: Manning Marable, Millie Jeffrey, Irving Howe,  
Barbara Ehrenreich\*, and Cornel West\*  
Call 212-962-0390 for more information.

\*Invited.

# REVIEWS

## Contradictions Facing Women Today

by Lillian B. Rubin

**ON HER OWN: GROWING UP IN THE SHADOW OF THE AMERICAN DREAM** by Ruth Sidel, Viking, 1990, 276 pp.

The "New American Dreamers," the "Neotraditionalists," and the "Outsiders" -- these are the categories Ruth Sidel develops in this moving account of the hopes and dreams of the young women in America today. These three groups, she tells us, emerged in roughly equal numbers from her interviews with young women across the nation.

Intuitively, these labels make sense; their meanings are immediately apparent. We all know them: our students, daughters, and friends who tell us with supreme confidence that they'll have it all -- a full-fledged successful career and a husband who will share equally in the tasks of caring for the household and raising the children; the more conventional moderns who may also have career ambitions but whose dreams are focused more traditionally on marriage and motherhood; and those who, perhaps because they were born into poverty and deprivation, perhaps because they find themselves trapped by, as Sidel writes, "a life they never intended," have difficulty envisioning a future at all.

As I turned the pages of this book, I found myself nodding my head in affirmation repeatedly. "Yes," I kept thinking. "This is the reality of women's lives today; this matches what I see among my students, what I hear from the young women I have interviewed over the years." But at the same time, another voice made itself heard: "Wait a minute; it's not that clear at all." For, as the author herself notes: "Some young women seemed to belong to more than one group -- to identify, for example, with both the New American Dreamers and the Neotraditionalists or with the Outsiders and the New American Dreamers. This overlap was sometimes due to the women's ambivalence about goals and priorities; at other times, wishful thinking came to the fore during an interview otherwise grounded in day-to-day reality."

In fact, what is striking about the young women of this era is that, despite the class differences which, of course, mean great differences in life chances, their dreams are not so disparate. True, at first the Outsiders may wave off questions about the future with a gesture of despair while the New American Dreamers, speaking with the optimism of the privileged, imagine a future filled with bright promise and dreams-come-true. But as soon as Sidel probes beneath such easy, superficial responses, we see that no matter what their dreams, women in all these groups are caught in the conflict-



Hazel Hankin/Impact Visuals

ing messages of our time.

Yes, the New American Dreamers and the Neotraditionalists generally tend to be more privileged than the Outsiders. But, as Sidel so poignantly shows, the issues and conflicts that will dominate their lives are much the same. While the feminist movement has wrought enormous changes in the consciousness of women -- young and old, rich and poor -- there are powerful countervailing forces in society that continue to make their mark. Vanna White, the sex kitten, lives alongside Steffi Graf, the cool, accomplished athlete. Magazine advertisements show us women in the board room on one page and "the new traditionalist" on the next, an ad that features a woman smiling happily as she stands with one child clinging to her skirt and another in her arms.

But it's not the conflicting cultural commandments alone that are responsible for the contradictions and ambivalence that fill the lives of young women today. For, as Sidel so powerfully documents, at the same time that women are encouraged to reach for the moon, the institutions and the social relationships within which they will live out their lives -- whether the family or the world of work -- remain mired in traditional ways. The gendered division of labor in both work and family life is alive and well and, except for a few of the most privileged, this is the reality young women will have to deal with as they wind their way into the adult world.

What we come to understand as we turn the pages of this book, then, is that change and stability live side-by-side in an uneasy accommodation. If we turn the prism one way, we hear tales of remarkable change in the dreams, aspirations, and self-conception of the young women of this era. Looked at from another perspective, however, this is the story of



extraordinary stability, of a society that has failed to keep pace with the needs of its people. And those very citizens whose needs are ignored are so blinded by our individualist ethic -- by the notion that anyone can make it in America if they only have the will and the wit -- that they assume it is their personal failing when life and dream fail to mesh.

In chapter after chapter Sidel lays out the contradictions with which women's lives are encumbered -- the social ambivalence about their role and status, the encouragement to dream the big dream alongside the institutional realities within which their lives are embedded. Sex? Yes, women have been freed to experience their sexuality in new ways. But the double standard still lives, and the girl who violates the norms of the day is still reviled as a slut.

Intimacy? Yes, men now say they want a woman who is an equal, an independent woman who can share with them the economic burdens of family life. But equality and independence have their limits, and they're only acceptable if they're covered over with "sugar and spice and everything nice." As for the women, no matter what group they fall into, most have fantasies about a man in their lives while they also insist that "you can't rely on a man" and believe that if they are to achieve the good life they dream of, they had better be prepared to do it on their own.

Work? Yes, most women, even the most conservative of the Neotraditionalist, expect to be in the labor force. But married or single, they usually will occupy the low-salaried jobs that have traditionally been defined as woman's work. And even those in the high-paid professions will earn substantially less than their male counterparts. In 1987, for example, male professionals earned \$36,098 compared to \$24,565 for women in the same job category, Sidel tells us.

Children? Yes, for most young women the dream includes motherhood. But, Sidel asks, "How can you be an active participant in the world of work while providing the primary nurturing for your children? And how can you do it in a society that has provided few supports to help parents nurture their children?" Indeed, for Sidel, as for the women, young and old, whom she interviewed, a crucial question is: Who will care for the children? And in an important and impassioned chapter on the subject, she reminds us forcefully that the paucity of decent child care facilities in America is, or ought to be, one of our great national scandals.

Finally, Sidel leaves us with questions about what will happen to these young women when they find that the future isn't theirs, when their dreams of affluence aren't fulfilled, when the lack of adequate child care leaves them racked with

anxiety about their children's welfare and weighed down with guilt when they go off to work every day. Presently they speak in the language of individualism and expect little or nothing in the way of support from their government. But what will happen when, with expectations raised so high, they come up against the realities they are certain to face?

Sidel subscribes to the wisdom, that says that in such circumstances people fall to blaming themselves. But this is a generation we have never before beheld -- young women who, despite their conflicts, remain fiercely attached to their notions of independence and achievement, women who, while resisting the feminist label, have internalized many parts of the feminist agenda as their own. It is at least equally plausible, therefore, that they will write a new scenario, one that calls upon our society to assume greater responsibility for the needs of its citizens, that insists that we attend to the needs of family life with more than the empty rhetoric that is now so common -- one that demands, in essence, the caring society that Sidel so eloquently proposes. ●

*Lillian B. Rubin is a Karen Horney Professor of Interpretive Sociology at Queens College, City University of New York.*

## GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

*Continued from page 10.*

an assisted refugee camp to an independent resettlement community, these utopian features are diminishing. The community is beginning to merge with the economy of the region and institute a system of wages, although a portion of resources will still be allocated directly to those who cannot support themselves. And the governance structure is undergoing further transformation toward a more direct representative system, with the population electing a general assembly which then names an executive body to carry out day to day administrative tasks.

One thing that makes this community so successful undoubtedly is its homogeneity; those who did not share the egalitarian, collectivist ethos left the camp -- about fifty families in all. After the community's return to El Salvador, a few more families decided to leave, but only about seven families have actually left to date. This, perhaps, is the best empirical test of whether community solidarity was enforced or genuine, a kind of voting with their feet. As the community grows and divisions emerge, its ability to maintain a democratic form and spirit will be tested further.

These people face enormous obstacles in their determination to further develop their model. They were able to negotiate their return to El Salvador as an intact community only through great determination, since the Cristiani government sees them as a political threat. International attention, support, and pressure is enormously important. For this reason, and because of their intense pride in what they have accomplished, visitors are welcomed and valued. ●

*Beth Cagan, a DSAer, teaches sociology at Cleveland State University.*

*(A campaign to provide the community with assistance has been set up by Voices on the Border, P.O. Box 53081, Temple Heights Station, Washington, DC 20009.)*



# Democratic Left Labor Day Issue 1990

## Ads and Greetings Rate Sheet/Order Form



The Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* will again be devoted to coverage of the American Labor Struggle. And again we are conducting our labor day ad campaign. This annual campaign aims to raise money for the journal and provides an excellent opportunity for you to join with unions, progressive organizations, and the spokespersons of the American labor movement in supporting a new agenda for America's working class. *Democratic Left* welcomes advertisements and personal greetings from individuals, organizations, institutions, and progressive businesses. Deadline: **Wednesday, August 1, 1990** Make checks payable to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), 15 Dutch Street, New York, NY 10038-3705. Payments must accompany your order. For more information, call (212) 962-0390.

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_____ Full page (7"w x 10"h)	\$1200	\$1100
_____ Half page (7"w x 4 3/4"h)	\$ 600	\$ 550
_____ Quarter page (3 1/2"w x 4 3/4"h)	\$ 325	\$ 275
_____ Eighth page (3 1/2"w x 2 3/8"h)	\$ 175	\$ 150
_____ Sixteenth page (3 1/2"w x 1 3/16"h)	\$ 85	\$ 75

### Personal Message/Greeting

	Rate
_____ Square Box, 15 words	\$50
_____ Name in boldface	\$30
_____ Name only	\$25

## JANIE HIGGINS

**WHY JUST "GETTING BY" IS GETTING HARDER.** Recent government figures indicate that only 34 percent of jobless Americans are receiving unemployment insurance. That compares to 90 percent in Great Britain, 72 percent in France, and 68 percent in Sweden and Germany. And not only that. Britain, France and Germany boast benefits that last at least twelve months. In the U.S., it's six. This is during a supposed "expansion." What happens if, as even many conservatives predict, we slip into a recession in 1991 or 1992?

**THE DRUG CRISIS.** No, not that crisis. Between 1981 and 1988 prescription drug prices went up 88 percent while the cost-of-living rose 28 percent. At the same time, taxes paid by American pharmaceutical firms fell by 27 percent. One hundred dollars worth of drugs in Italy costs \$339 in the U.S. and \$75 in France.

**TRUMP QUOTE.** "I like George Bush very much and support him and always will. But I disagree with him when he talks about a kinder, gentler America. I think if this nation gets any kinder or gentler it's literally going to seek to

exist."--Donald Trump.

**OOPS.** The National Endowment for Democracy, headed by former Jeanne Kirkpatrick aide Carl Gershman and funded by you and me through our taxes, recently was blasted by United Auto Workers President Owen Bieber. "I was outraged to learn," he wrote, "that units of the NED have provided funding for the UNO political party in Nicaragua to buy fifty four-wheel drive vehicles made in India. In addition, U.S. taxpayer funds have been used to buy another forty-three vehicles made by Toyota and Isuzu." Pointing out that currently 50,000 autoworkers are on indefinite layoff, Bieber also noted that India and Japan have been cited by the U.S. trade Representative for "pervasive unfair trading practices." He closed the letter by questioning NED funding of programs taking Latin American business leaders to study the antilabor model in Taiwan, NED funding of right-wing student groups opposed to the Mitterrand government in France, and funding for a far-right think tank that opposed former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias.