

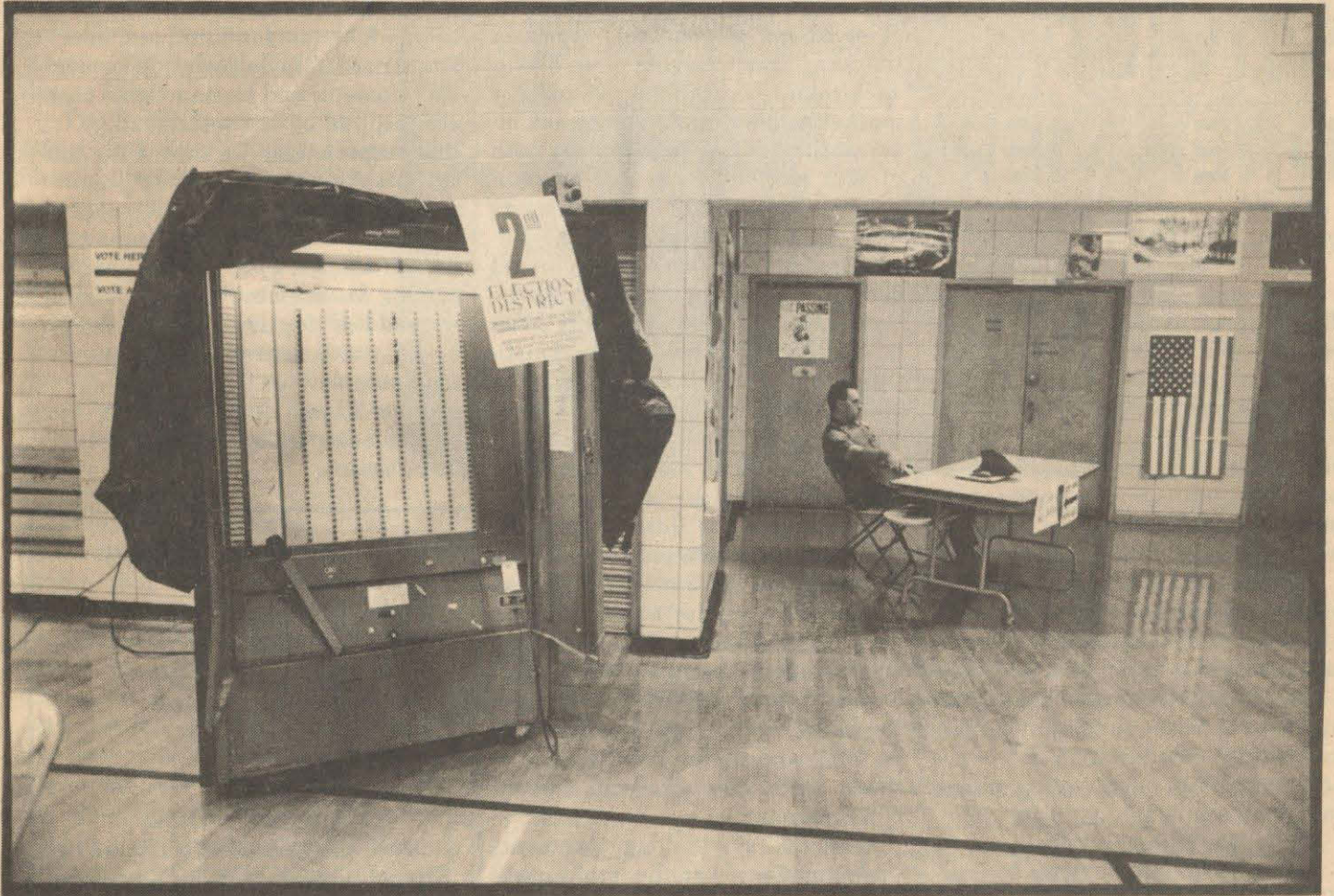
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EDITORIAL

SOVIET DREAMER

by Joanne Barkan

The coup in the Soviet Union fails. The train of history is back on the reform track -- for the moment. Republics of the former empire declare their independence. Ethnic and national rivalries heat up. The prospect of complete economic collapse is temporarily overshadowed by the even more immediate threat of a winter without enough food. So what to do?

In his infinite wisdom, Secretary of State James Baker has proclaimed Mexico to be a fine model for the reconstruction of the republics of the Soviet Union. After all, the Mexican regime managed to privatize some industries and wring some inflation out of the economy. What more can countries-in-a-mess aspire to?

"Socialism," someone blurts out.

Hey, who said that? Some lunatic? Well. . . it was Mikhail S. Gorbachev. On prime-time American television no less. During the Yeltsin-Gorbachev interview, Gorbachev declared that the failure of the Soviet communist model "induces me to turn to the experience of other countries all the more where a devotion to the socialist idea has led to very interesting results, both with regard to democracy and the development of the economy, of human rights."

Gorbachev was referring, of course, as he has many other times, to the

West European social democracies. In the Soviet Union, he'd like to see similar welfare state guarantees, active labor market policies, and government intervention in the economy for both growth and equity. In his heart of hearts, Gorby wants his country to look like Sweden in good times.

Dream on -- James Baker would certainly respond. And democratic socialists everywhere would have to admit that the economic resources and institutional mechanisms just don't exist now in the Soviet Union to reproduce a strong social democratic model. But that doesn't mean that Mexico is the answer.

Members of the Bush administration hope to curtail economic aid to the Soviet Union until a so-called free-market economy (or economies) has been set up. They don't seem to grasp the relevant facts here: if and when anyone figures out how to transform the Soviet economy, the transition will be long; and in the meantime, economic deprivation will ignite a political explosion.

Most West European governments understood early on the implications of this round of chaos in the East -- it spills right over their borders. So they argued for more aid to the Soviet Union all last winter and spring -- only to be blocked by George Bush. Since the coup, the West Europeans have decided to press harder and, if necessary, to act without the U.S. government.

Democratic socialists in the United States should agitate in whatever ways they can in favor of emergency aid to the Soviet Union. But that's not enough. We should push the notion that Gor-

batchev is correct to want those "interesting results" in democracy, economic development, and human rights that are inspired by the socialist idea. In this respect, he's in tune with the citizens of his country since polls consistently show widespread support among them for welfare state guarantees. If George Bush would stop exporting his models of misery, what's worked best for the West Europeans might -- with time and aid -- work for the East. ♦

Joanne Barkan is a member of the editorial boards of DEMOCRATIC LEFT and Dissent.

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Why We Need a Second Party

... and How We Should Get It

by Harold Meyerson

Republicans should be nervous this election year, and it's the Democrats' fault that they're not.

The Gulf War notwithstanding, events are flowing in the liberals' direction. Although banished by economists, a deep recession refuses to disperse. Failed banks and S&Ls -- the wreckage of deregulation -- litter the landscape. Abortion, particularly if the Reagan-Bush Supreme Court repeals *Roe vs. Wade* next summer, threatens to snap the Republican coalition down the middle.

The economy is moving into its nineteenth year of stagnation: real wages continue their slow decline that began in 1973. For the first time, the percentage of young Americans attending college has shrunk, so unmanageable have costs become for middle-class families. The Cold War has ended with the Soviets the loser -- but with Germany and Japan the winners, as American living standards trail behind them. In June, a plurality of Americans (forty-seven percent, with thirty-two percent disagreeing) told a bipartisan team of pollsters that the nation was on the wrong track.

Racial Demagoguery

For American conservatives, the dissolution of the Soviet Union poses a fundamental crisis. Anti-communism was everything to the right: the glue that held its factions together, the club with which Republicans beat Democrats. It was the political basis for the defense-spending that propped up the economies of the South and



Presidential hopeful Tom Harkin is besieged by supporters and media.

California -- the modern GOP's electoral stronghold. With the Soviet Union gone, all that's left for the Republicans are the politics of racial demagoguery and periodic forays against Robert Mapplethorpe -- which is why Jesse Helms' senatorial campaigns, for all the embarrassment they may cause the GOP, remain the laboratory in which the party tests its themes.

And yet, just five months before the Iowa caucuses, no nationally known Democrat is running for president. Richard Gephardt and Albert Gore have counted themselves out; Mario Cuomo and Jesse Jackson are undecided. The Democrats' three main candidates -- Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, Iowa Senator Tom Harkin and Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey -- are estimable figures, but all come from small states. None is known to more than ten percent of the public, and none is considered sufficiently versed in foreign policy that the press sought their comments on the collapse

of the U.S.S.R.

The prevailing wisdom is that the Gulf War is at the bottom of all this -- the source of George Bush's presumed invincibility and the Democrats' renewed marginality. Would that it were only that.

Winning the Recession

"The Republicans have won the 1991 recession," a recent survey by Democratic pollsters Stanley Greenberg and Celinda Lake concludes. "Voters cannot identify a Democratic economic vision and have little confidence in the Democrats' performance on economic issues." This is an unprecedented development. A fundamental law of American politics -- that presidents are held responsible for the condition of the economy -- has been repealed, courtesy of Democratic ineptitude.

Consider what this means. George Bush has no domestic agenda. He can hardly bear to stay in the country for

two weeks at a time. He has just presided over one of the worst postwar recessions. Each new poll and focus group shows that the American public resents Bush's inattention to domestic affairs more and more. But voters prefer what they know to be a rotten status quo to the risk of Democratic rule. The conservative agenda is exhausted, but there's no credible liberal one to replace it.

Is there is a place the left can go besides the Democrats? Outside the electoral arena, the answer is, go all

'24 and '48, third-party movements conceived in weakness are one-shot debacles. The task of the left must to reconstruct the movements for social justice. The question of a party of the left -- to the degree that it can even be a question, given the American electoral system -- must await that reconstruction.

There is an analysis of the Democrats' decline over the past quarter-century that points to the revival of the Democrats and the left: it's not that they have oriented themselves

mid-'50s, both the rates of unionization and of working-class voting have been more than cut in half. What America lost was a politicized working class -- a class capable of keeping issues like health care on the national agenda, a class capable of maintaining organizations that could turn out tens of millions of votes. It was union membership, not Democratic machines, that racked up the Democrats' vote totals: since the mid-'60s, union household members have voted Democratic in presidential elections at a rate twelve



Donna Binder/Impact Visuals

United on the sidelines -- one-time Presidential hopefuls Senator Al Gore, Jesse Jackson, and Senator Paul Simon. Gore and Simon will not run; Jackson is still undecided.

over the place, and get thee there as quickly as possible: labor is still hemorrhaging, what's left of the civil rights movement is tottering, the environmentalists are in a doldrum. For precisely these reasons, however, there's even less of plausible alternative to the Democrats than there's been in decades. The forces that in themselves could comprise such a party are weak, and because they're weak, they're not likely to be in a bolting mood. To be sure, third party movements have arisen in moments of weakness as well as in moments of strength -- labor's leap to the LaFollette progressives in 1924 and the left's to the Henry Wallace version in 1948 come to mind -- but, as was the case in

too much around race and culture, but that they haven't oriented themselves enough around class. Thomas Edsall's right: race and cultural policies have certainly pushed key constituencies away from the Democrats. But it's hard to find Democratic economic policies that would have pulled them back. During the Democrats' quarter-century in the wilderness, they have watched passively as taxes descended more heavily on the middle class, American industry closed its doors, industrial unionism fell apart, homes and college and health care became unaffordable, and working-class voting dried up.

A central explanation of the change in American politics is that since the

to thirteen percent higher than their non-union counterparts.

The search for modern liberalism's original sin must look at labor's decline -- at the failure of Operation Dixie (labor's postwar attempt at unionizing the South) and the long, insular and disastrous tenure of George Meany as AFL-CIO president. Meany was indifferent, even contemptuous, towards labor's failure to organize: they had enough members, he insisted. Under Meany, labor politics became inside ball, a question of lobbying and campaign contributions.

The decline of unions has had three distinct, catastrophic effects on the Democratic Party, all of which would have swept over the Democrats had a

politics of racial and cultural liberalism never come along.

First, when unions decayed, there was no force capable of mobilizing the troops unions had once placed into campaigns. (To take one example, in 1944, there were 75,000 union volunteers canvassing in Michigan alone.) But politicians need to get their message out by whatever means possible, and when the bodies stopped coming, they began to rely more on mail, radio and television -- that is, on costly technology and deep pockets.

Second, the Democrats' capacity to reach out to new constituencies -- a task beyond the capacities of high-tech campaigning -- dried up, too. In the 1988 presidential elections, for instance, surveys undertaken by the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project showed Dukakis winning eighty-three percent of the Latino vote in Texas, and seventy-four percent in California -- but another study by political scientist Ruy Teixeira concluded that only twenty-three percent of eligible Latinos bothered to vote. That's a lot of non-swing votes the Democrats are forfeiting, chiefly by failing to have any machinery on the ground.

Third, the declining number of unionists began to cost the Democrats elections. Michael Dukakis would have fought George Bush to a dead heat had the 1988 election taken place in a work force unionized at a rate of thirty-five percent -- the movement's post-war high -- rather than at 1988's seventeen percent. The difference between union and non-union voters is greater among whites than blacks, among men than women. In the 1984 Reagan-Mondale election, the eighty-nine percent of Southern white males who weren't union members voted seventy-seven percent for Reagan over twenty-three percent for Mondale. The eleven percent who were unionists voted fifty percent for Mondale over forty-nine percent for Reagan.

What does this do to the argument that the Democrats need to practice a politics that repudiates cultural liberalism? Do we really think that white male unionized Alabama postal workers are all that more liberal on women's

The search for modern liberalism's original sin must look at labor's decline.

rights than their non-union counterparts? There's a strong case that cultural conservatism is irrelevant to winning back white working-class Democrats at all. There were three instances in the '88 campaign when those votes swung over to Democratic candidates: first, to Richard Gephardt in the Iowa primary; second, to Albert Gore on "Super Tuesday" in the South; and third, in the last ten days of the general election, when Dukakis narrowed George Bush's lead from thirteen to eight points. In each instance, the conversions followed a dramatic shift in candidate rhetoric and theme -- not to cultural conservatism, but to economic populism.

Cultural Estrangement?

Besides, if gay rights, the ACLU and food stamps are the problem, how do we explain the voting patterns of the elderly? For the Democrats strongest support among white voters when considered by age comes from those over sixty-five. If the Democrats' position on questions of race and culture are all that matter, then we must believe that the oldest white voters are the least racist, that their fears of crime and violence are less than those of their younger counterparts', that their cultural estrangement from the new Democratic constituencies is less than their children's. Conversely, the Democrats are weakest among white voters aged eighteen to twenty-nine -- do we think they are the most racist, the least sympathetic to cultural variation?

The answer is that young white voters experience government as an agency that takes their tax money and gives it to someone else -- while they struggle to find the bucks to get through college, and give up on being able to buy a home. Worse than irrelevant, government is seen as a menace by this generation. Those sixty-five and over, meanwhile, are the only white

voters who have experienced government as something that works for them -- not just currently, with Social Security and Medicare, but throughout their lives, beginning with the job programs of the New Deal, and then through the GI college-loan program and federal mortgage assistance. Universal government programs may not make racists any less racist, or affirmative action any less divisive, but they do build a bottom-up Democratic coalition.

Democrats cannot wait for labor to rebuild itself; that requires Democrats to recapture state power to re-legalize organizing. They cannot wait for new universal programs to re-legitimate government; that requires winning the White House, too. The weight of the evidence suggests that the Democrats must uncouple government and liberalism from the perception that they are intended to benefit only select elements of the population. Whites only support liberalism where liberalism means something other than programs for blacks. The liberal image -- at least, the relative emphasis the party places on cultural and racial issues over economic questions -- must shift.

Ascendency of Business

But it isn't cultural liberalism that indentures the Democrats to many of the same groups that influence the Republicans; it's the growing ascendency of business and professional America over the majority that lives somewhere beneath the upper middle class. The Democrats' dependence on corporate PACs and affluent contributors constrains the party from moving forward on universal programs and progressive taxation: in 1988, congressional Democrats received \$31 million from business PACs and \$24 million from labor. And on no issue is this class imbalance more poisonous to the

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Daring To Be Ambitious

New York City DSA Organizes To Elect Progressive City Councilmembers

by Miriam Bensman

New York DSA embarked on its most ambitious electoral campaign effort ever this year and succeeded beyond our expectations. More than 100 local members were involved in an endorsement and action program that helped identify the progressives in a wide field of candidates, help make the crucial difference in several campaigns, and built our activist core.

The effort also raised our visibility in and increased our links to the progressive political community, and particularly built ties to progressive activists in communities of color. Indeed, I would argue that our electoral program, together with our excellent work in the Canadian Health Care tour, has brought the local to a new level of activism, effectiveness, sophistication, and engagement in New York City politics.

New York DSA and our comrades in other locals can learn a lot from what we did right, and what we didn't.

The first thing we did right was seize the opportunity--and it was extraordinary. A Supreme Court ruling had forced New York City to revise its charter; the new charter gave the City Council more power and added sixteen new seats in an attempt to give people of color better representation. That meant that the local elections, normally a dull parade of incompetent incumbents seeking re-election, were suddenly an open battlefield.

We perceived a reasonable chance to significantly bolster the handful of

isolated progressives on the council by electing insurgents in the open districts -- and perhaps by challenging a few incumbents.

The second thing we did right was dare to be ambitious: We decided to consider making endorsements in a dozen districts or more in the hope of defining who was progressive, independent, and likely to challenge the traditional power structure. We published special issues of our local newsletter to whip up enthusiasm; we held three Meet-the-Candidates events prior to our endorsement meeting; we became very involved in the Majority Coalition for a New New York, a progressive community and labor effort;

Other locals can learn a lot from what we did right -- and what we didn't.

and we encouraged our members to participate, particularly in five races where we could really have an impact.

It worked because, and despite, of a surreal situation: The council elections, held in an off-year with no top-of-the ticket candidates, became a pitched battle among political activists and professionals, to which the city's population was mostly oblivious. The news media, overwhelmed with covering fifty-one districts and 300 candidates, gave up trying. The daily newspapers barely attempted to cover most of the races, while the television and radio stations did even less (and then had the gall to wonder why the turnout on primary day was only about fifteen percent of the registered voters.)

Thus, our local newsletter provided information that was unavailable elsewhere. The newsletter served as a motivational tool for our membership and an excellent outreach vehicle. At the Majority Coalition endorsement meeting, voting members overwhelmed by the thick sheafs of information available could be seen flipping through our newsletters to bone up on candidates.

Similarly, the Meet-the-Candidates events each attracted about forty DSA members. Held in three neighborhoods where most of our members live, these events were models of civic involvement one seldom sees.

We made certain crucial decisions early on. The decision to endorse a slate of candidates arose in part from a new self-consciousness about the role that New York DSA has often played in city politics: Since DSA doesn't seek or dis-

pense patronage and doesn't have much to lose, our endorsements often carry a certain moral authority that few other multi-issue groups have.

Clearly, however, we couldn't make endorsements in all fifty-one districts -- just the research would be overwhelming. We decided to endorse only in those districts where excellent progressives were running, while making an extra effort to try to endorse in those districts where many of our members live.

To find out who to consider, we drew on one of our richest resources: our many members and friends in the labor, feminist, gay and lesbian rights, and civil rights movements, and in reform politics. Indeed, one benefit is that we had a chance to ask

our friends in high places for something other than money, and we found them happy to oblige.

While we generally wanted to endorse candidates with progressive positions on a broad range of issues, we were particularly interested in their views on the city's budget crisis, health care, and housing problems, and rising racial tensions. Two other endorsement criteria were long-time community activism and the empowerment of women, people of color, and lesbians and gays.

As a result, the thirteen faces pictured in the endorsement issue of our newsletter included seven women and six men; six African Americans, five whites, one Chinese and one Latino; eight insurgents and five incumbents. That enhanced our credibility with many activists, although as always in politics, our choices sometimes angered our friends.

In a hotly contested race in Greenwich Village that divided many long-time allies in the progressive community, we picked Tom Duane, a progressive white gay man with along history of community activism, over Liz Abzug, a progressive white lesbian. We judged her lack of activism in the community to be her fatal flaw.

Our endorsements behind us, we turned to activism. We decided to direct our firepower where it could most make a difference: principally in the five new districts without incumbents -- although we also devoted significant resources to helping a DSA'er, Craig Miller, challenge a long-time incumbent who had switched districts. We got on the phones, calling members that had been to the endorsement meetings or who had indicated interest earlier. We also sent postcards to almost all our members just before the primary, reminding them to vote for our candidate.

In the end, some twenty DSA members were involved in the campaign of Guillermo Linares, a Dominican school board president running in an open seat in Manhattan. Members carried his petitions, coordinated volunteers, phonebanked, organized a fundraising party, and worked on

election day. Contrary to the predictions of the political pundits, he won the primary by a 300-vote margin.

A number of members played a crucial role turning the tide in a corner of the district for Una Clarke, a Jamaican child care worker and union activist who won the primary in her Brooklyn district by thirty-four votes.

Of the thirteen people we endorsed, eight won the primary and will probably win the general election. (Democratic primaries virtually guarantee election in most of New York City.) Four won open seats, two incumbents won, two didn't face primaries, and a fifth, surprisingly lost. All of the challengers we backed -- including Miller -- lost, though several put in good showings. Add it all up, and the Council will probably have ten to twelve fairly independent members.

What could we have done better?

We could have been quicker to get started. Our endorsement process was not completed until the end of the crucial petitioning period, the first hurdle for getting on the ballot. We also should have been more systematic in tapping our network for information. There were a few really excellent candidates we should have endorsed but didn't hear about until too late, which lost us an opportunity to make valuable contacts for the future. We also weren't always aware just how controversial some of our endorsements would be within the progressive

community or our members.

In one case, we didn't have information we should have weighed -- either because we might have made a different decision, or at least given our friends the sense that we took their points of view seriously. In another, our members who lived in a district mostly favored the other candidate, which severely hampered our ability to be effective.

Our task now is to keep on fighting in the general election -- and then to figure out how best to capitalize on our success to build our membership and our political engagement. In fact, we are already talking about how to help unseat U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato. ♦

Miriam Bensman is a freelance writer and a member of the New York City DSA local.



Tom Duane, soon to be New York's first openly gay City Councilmember.

ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

DSA Canadian Health Care Speakers Tour

The question popped up over and over again, "How much do you *really* pay when you go to the doctor?"

Americans seem to find the Canadian health care system difficult to believe: universal coverage with no payment at the time of service -- while costing less than the U.S. system. It was only after hearing it from Canadian health professionals, trade unionists, and members of parliament that people really began to understand the benefits of the Canadian system.

The DSA Health Care Speakers Tour featured twenty Canadians speaking in twenty-four U.S. cities to trade unionists, senior activists, students, women's groups, health care providers, members of Congress, and local legislators.

Another question repeatedly asked during the tour was, "How do you pay for it all?" The answer is simple. A universal, single-payer system, like that of Canada, will insure everyone and cost less than our current system. The bulk of that savings comes from eliminating insurance industry red tape and profits.

"The administration of your system costs about five times as much as ours does," Dr. Mimi Divinsky said in an interview with National Public Radio during the Speakers Tour.

The Canadian speakers explained that their health care system was the result of years of hard work by the New Democratic Party (NDP), the labour movement, and progressive doctors organizations such as the Medical Reform Group of Ontario. The NDP, a democratic socialist party,

is DSA's sister party and a member of the Socialist International.

"Now, no party -- left or right -- can touch the health care system. That's how popular it is," said MP Chris Axworthy at a public meeting in New York.

"Even our Conservative federal minister of health admits that ninety percent of Canadians support our health system," said trade unionist Julie Davis at a labor breakfast in Washington, D.C.

The Speakers Tour educated and inspired DSA'ers and other health care activists, giving them invaluable organizing tools. The Speakers Tour was a tremendous success, thanks to the expertise of our Canadian speakers and to the relentless organizing of DSA local and Youth Section activists across the country. Through the Tour, DSA added a significant voice to the fight for universal, single-payer health insurance -- helping to push it to the top of the agenda, both locally and nationally. The following is a wrap-up of the Tour:

In the keynote of the Tour, Audrey McLaughlin, Leader of the NDP, met with members of Congress, trade unionists, and media in Washington, D.C. DSA, AFSCME, and the American Solidarity Campaign organized a Congressional breakfast, press luncheon and labor reception for McLaughlin. They also set up meetings with House Majority Whip David Bonior, Congressman Marty Russo, UMW President Richard Trumka, and AFSCME President Gerald McEntee.

Los Angeles DSA organized a whirlwind of public events, media interviews and receptions. Deborah McPherson, President of the



Dr. Haresh Kirpalani answers questions at a City Hall hearing in New York.

Tom Mocktchenko/Impact Visuals

TOUR SITES

East Coast

New York City, Hartford, New Haven, Baltimore, Princeton, New Brunswick, Trenton, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Camden, Atlanta

Midwest

Columbus, Cleveland, Oberlin, Black Lake, MI, Chicago, DeKalb, IL, Lebanon, IL, Lafayette, IN, St. Louis

West Coast

Sacramento, Los Angeles Area, San Francisco, Bay Area, San Diego

For a list of speakers see page 10.

British Columbia Nurses' Association, Ken Georgetti, President of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, and William Roberts, Member of Alberta's Legislative Assembly spoke at a forum attended by 175 people and a UCLA event attended by 150 people. The speakers were interviewed by the *LA Weekly*, Santa Monica TV, and radio host Phil Ansell, a DSA'er.

"We made an important contribution to a front-page issue," said Steve Tarzynski of LA DSA. "The Tour influenced a lot of activists, trade unionists and public policy makers."

In the East Bay, DSA'ers put together a wide range of events, from a legislative hearing to a reception for doctors and medical school students. Dr. Rosana Pellizzari of the Medical Reform Group, Peter Cameron, President of the British



Martha Tabor

NDP Leader Audrey McLaughlin and DSA National Director Michael Lighty meet with the press at a Washington, D.C. luncheon.

Columbia Health Sciences Association and Roberts spoke before a standing-room-only crowd at a public forum in Oakland. In addition, the speakers were interviewed by the editorial boards of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner*.

Sacramento DSA'ers organized legislative hearings which were broadcast on cable TV, press interviews, a public forum at Sacramento State University, and a reception. San Diego DSA organized a meeting with health care workers and a public forum at San Diego State University.

Columbus DSA sponsored an event which was broadcast on DSA'er Bob Fittrakis's cable TV show, "From the Democratic Left."

In Cleveland, the speakers were featured on several radio talk shows. Kathleen Connors, President of Canada's National Federation of Nurses' Unions and Judy Wasylycia-Leis, Member of Manitoba's Legislative Assembly, addressed the Coalition of Labor

Union Women while Wayne Samuelson, Political Education Director of the Ontario Federation of Labour, spoke to the Building Trades Council. The Oberlin DSA chapter held a public meeting with the speakers.

At the UAW Educational Retreat Center in Black Lake, Michigan, 300 trade union activists gave a standing ovation to Dr. Gordon Guyatt of the Medical Reform Group and Wasylycia-Leis.

Chicago DSA held a labor breakfast meeting, addressed by Don Aitken, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour, Guyatt, and Wasylycia-Leis at AFSCME District 31. A DSA public event featured the Canadian speakers as well as DSA'er and Physicians For a National Health Program (PNHP) President, Dr. Quentin Young.

Purdue University DSA organized a labor event. McKendree College DSA and Northern Illinois University DSA both organized student forums.



Tom McKitterick/Impact Visuals

Trade unionist Dick Martin explains the history of Canadian health care.

St. Louis DSA organized public forums at St. Louis University School of Community Health and Washington University. Don Aitken appeared on a cable TV show, "Labor Vision." Aitken was also interviewed by several radio shows and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

New York City DSA sponsored a series of events over a span of five days. Events included a reception for physicians and providers, a meeting with the general executive board of ACTWU, a labor breakfast with Jobs With Justice, and a City Hall meeting with DSA'er Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messenger. The speakers met with the editorial boards of the *New York Times* and *Business Week*.

"We helped to energize and educate the health care activists in the city," said DSA'er Steve Oliver. "Because of the Tour several public officials have announced that single-payer health care reform will be at the top of their agendas."

Dr. Haresh Kirpalani of the Medical Reform Group, Nancy Riche, President of the New Democratic Party, and MP Chris Axworthy spoke to a packed crowd of trade unionists in Hartford, Connecticut and met with students at Yale University.

In Philadelphia, Barbara Beyers, President of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and Guyatt spoke to 125 trade unionists at a labor luncheon hosted by Henry Nicholas, President of 1199-

AFSCME. Philly DSA'ers also organized a health care activists conference, a senior activists event attended by U.S. Congressman Bob Borski, a forum for health care professionals co-sponsored by Physicians For A National Health Program, and labor events in Camden and at the Rutgers University Labor Education Center.

Central New Jersey DSA sponsored a meeting at Princeton University that was attended by over 100 students and faculty and by the president of the university.

Baltimore DSA held a meeting at Johns Hopkins University and public event attended by over 100 people. The speakers met with the Baltimore City Council, Citizen Action, trade unionists and community health professionals.

DC/MD/NOVA DSA sponsored a labor breakfast with Julie Davis, Secretary-Treasurer of the Ontario Federation of Labour. In addition they organized a series of events and meetings with the speakers and Congressman John Conyers, and the staff of Congressman Bernie Sanders.

The grand finale of the DSA Canadian Speakers Tour will be a reception with Dr. Michael Rachlis, co-founder of the Medical Reform Group of Ontario, at the American Public Health Association National Meeting in Atlanta. (Wednesday, Nov. 13, 6-7:30 p.m. American Hotel, International Boulevard, Carnegie Way and Spring Street.) ♦

DSA Health Care Tour: *Canadian Speakers*

Don Aitken President, Alberta Federation of Labour
Chris Axworthy, Federal MP, Saskatchewan
Barbara Beyers President, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Peter Cameron President, British Columbia Health Sciences Association
Kathleen Connors President, National Federation of Nurses' Unions
Julie Davis Secretary-Treasurer, Ontario Federation of Labour
Dr. Mimi Divinsky Medical Reform Group of Ontario
Ken Georgetti President, British Columbia Federation of Labour
Dr. Gordon Guyatt Medical Reform Group of Ontario
Dr. Haresh Kirpalani Medical Reform Group of Ontario
Eugene Kostyra Regional Director,

Canadian Union of Public Employees
Richard Martin Executive Vice-President, Canadian Labour Congress
Audrey McLaughlin Leader, New Democratic Party
Dr. Rosana Pellizzari Medical Reform Group of Ontario
Nancy Riche Executive Vice-President, Canadian Labour Congress and President, New Democratic Party
William Roberts Member, Legislative Assembly of Alberta
Wayne Samuelson Political Education Director, Ontario Federation of Labour
Judy Wasylcia-Leis Member, Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Dr. Don Woodside Medical Reform Group of Ontario

DSAction

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

The DSA National Office in New York City has an immediate opening for a part time **Financial/Office Manager**. The Comptroller handles DSA's accounting and book-keeping, oversees all financial transactions, and helps develop the annual budget. Salary will be prorated based on \$18,000/year plus health benefits and three weeks vacation. Hours are flexible. Women, people of color, lesbians and gay men are encouraged to apply. Send letter and resume to DSA, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038, Attn: Dom.

California DSA is seeking **two organizers** for north and south of state. \$1,000 per month. For more information call Duane Campbell in Sacramento (916) 361-9072 or Steve Tarzynski in Los Angeles (213) 419-3324.

RESOURCES

◆ The new issue of *Socialist Forum*, DSA's discussion bulletin, is hot off the presses! This special issue contains the initial thoughts of DSA'ers on our vision of democratic socialism and the mission of DSA. Writers include Joanne Barkan, Dick Flacks, Todd Gitlin, Christine Riddiough, Rosemary Ruether and Michael Walzer. Ideas discussed include: the collapse of communism, market socialism, social movements, and electoral politics. For your copy send \$5 (includes postage) to DSA, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038.

◆ Activists of color and anti-racism activists: subscribe to *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*, the newsletter of DSA's Anti-Racism, Latino/a, and African American Commissions. For information write to DSA, P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816.

GOINGS ON

◆ Atlanta area DSA'ers and APHA members take note: The grand finale of the DSA Canadian Speakers Tour will be a reception with Dr. Michael Rachlis, co-founder of the Medical Reform Group of Ontario. It will take place at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Wednesday, November 13, 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the American Hotel, International Boulevard, Carnegie Way and Spring Street. Dr. Rachlis is a leading progressive analyst and critic of Canada's health care system.

ACTIVIST ALERT

◆ Would you like to be more active in DSA local politics? Call Ginny Coughlin, DSA's Local Liaison for information about the DSA Local nearest you, or for information about setting a up a Local in your area. (212) 962-0390.

◆ Are you a health care activist? If so, you should be part of the DSA Health Care Task Force. Receive the newsletter of the Task Force, *Health Care Activist*. For information, write to the DSA Health Care Task Force, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038.

DSA National Convention

OUTREACH EVENT:

**Democratic Socialism In
A Post-Communist World**
with

Cornel West

Democratic Socialists of America Honorary Chair

Bernie Sanders

U.S. Congressman from Vermont

Nancy Riche

President, Canada's New Democratic Party

Jo-Ann Mort

Communications Director, ACTWU

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8 ♦ 7:30 P.M.

MUNDELEIN COLLEGE ♦ SKY AUDITORIUM ♦ 6363 N. SHERIDAN ♦ CHICAGO

This forum is part of the National Convention of the Democratic Socialists of America. The Convention will run from 9:30 a.m. Sat., Nov. 9 to 12:30 p.m. Mon., Nov. 11 at Chicago's Allerton Hotel, 701 N. Michigan. Leadership School: Fri., Nov. 8. Observers are welcome! \$15 per day for observers (includes materials).

Meyerson *from page 5*

general welfare -- and to the Democrats positions and prospects -- than on trade. For most Americans, the way the government handles the trade question in the new international economy will determine whether their living standards rise or fall.

Yet, congressional Democrats are embracing the Bush Administration's Free Trade Agreement with Mexico, a document whose premises are those of a laissez-faire fantasyland. As Richard Rothstein has noted, no one would think California's economy would benefit if Mississippi could suddenly slash its minimum wage to one dollar an hour -- but when we relocate California factories just across the Mexican border, it's supposed to generate a huge Mexican market for our advanced post-industrial products. Taking their lead from the wizards of the economics profession, the Democrats have neglected to consider forgiving the Mexican debt or conditioning free trade on raising Mexican wages and standards. The Democrats have acquiesced in administration policies of leveling down.

Progressive Nationalism

Nor is it only the Democrats who are inattentive to the policies of a progressive economic nationalism. So is the American left. The New Left bequeathed to both liberalism and the left an abhorrence of nationalism. But there's nationalism and then there's nationalism. The right's version of nationalism was bound up in anti-communist, anti-socialist, anti-Third World militarism, and it served the right, come election time, as a way to impugn the liberals' patriotism. It is now time for a left-wing nationalism -- a policy that defends workers here and abroad, and that challenges the corporate "one-worldism" that has masked the loss of two million industrial jobs in the last decade.

In particular, both the liberal and left communities need to examine some of the "third-worldist" assumptions that shakily underpin the support for

global "free trade." In recent weeks, Southwest Voter, the leading Latino voter registration organization, has held conferences in San Antonio and Los Angeles, at which they've documented how free trade in the form of maquiladoras has lowered Mexican-American incomes in cities like El Paso, and how it's likely to lower them on both sides of the border in the years ahead. Both the Canadian NDP and the Mexican PRD participated in Southwest Voters' conferences, as they will in the DSA convention. The appearances -- and, more important, the policies -- suggest the basis for a continental left, devoted to the promotion of social standards across borders.

What's Next?

In 1992, the Democrats are going to have to suffer the consequences of their own transition. They will be asked to abandon or modify policies that have alienated the votes they need to bring the Reagan Age to its overdue end. In some instances, these sacrifices -- downplaying Affirmative Action, for instance -- may cost nearly as many votes as they gain; in others -- in the case of basic civil rights -- they are not only politically counterproductive, but morally impermissible. In the end, though, the Democrats probably can't win without de-emphasizing some of their cultural liberalism. (If you check leading Democrats' positions on capital punishment, you'll note this has already begun.)

The tougher question is, what do the Democrats and the left wish to become? Many of the economic and political forces to which the Democrats are subject -- the shrinking electorate, their upper-class funders, the rise of ethnic politics and the decline of the unions -- impede their transformation to an internationalized New Deal party. Democrats have forgotten how to heed questions of class and to speak in the name of the nation. They'd do well to remember. The alternative is political oblivion.

As for the American left, oblivion is a state with which it has become far too accustomed, even comfortable. (A function, perhaps, of the relegation of much of the left to the academy: ten-

ure is the great insulator against one's own marginality.) It's not a sentence in perpetuity -- but revival requires rebuilding working class institutions and reinventing a cross-racial solidarity, daunting challenges both. In a sense, the left's charge resembles but goes beyond that facing the Democrats. With capitalism's obliteration of borders, the left must learn to espouse both a new globalism and a new nationalism.

It's on this murky but not un-navigable terrain that a new left must arise. ♦

Harold Meyerson is a member of the DSA National Political Committee. Portions of this article first appeared in LA Weekly.

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Turning Rage Into Action

Commentary on the Clarence Thomas Hearings

by Suzanne Crowell

In the ten days between Anita Hill's press conference and the Senate vote to confirm Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court, what the Washington Post called the "feminist roar" was heard and then silenced. The surge of rage that felt like power on October 8 was strangled in the throat of those who voiced it within the week, and it is hard, looking back, to imagine that we thought it would be any other way.

Anita Hill and the feminist movement lost the war for public opinion because they needed allies and opportunities that never materialized. They needed forthright defenders on the Senate Judiciary Committee; they needed forthright condemnation of sexual harassment by recognizable black leadership; and they needed equal access to the media, all of which they lacked and had no hope of getting.

The lessons learned from this episode are not new, although that makes them no less disheartening. One lesson retaught is that race and sex are still a volatile mix in American society, the chemistry of which can explode in any direction in any given set of circumstances. Accused of a sexual offense, Thomas reached back to a shield he heretofore eschewed: his race. He invoked the powerful imagery of the Southern lynch mob, and the image was left unanswered, twisting in the wind as each set of Thomas's witnesses embellished its details. That no man was ever lynched for an offense against an African American woman, of course, was left unsaid.

Class was the other unspoken factor at work. The rage was voiced by women positioned to be heard — women who had tried in the last twenty years to compete with men as equals for power and recognition on the job. They

not only knew intimately the humiliation visited upon women in the workplace; they also believed it their right to have it ended.

Women in general, however, are trained to think otherwise; first, that they must have prompted their tormentors by some manner of dress or decorum, and are therefore to blame, or second, that in any case they ought to be able to "handle" it. Usually only those whose expectations are raised by education, union activity, or a serendipitous rebellion reject these assumptions wholesale. In fact, it is astonishing that as many women rejected the male-oriented explanations as could be heard in that one week.

The political fallout appears grave for the Democrats. Nine voted with the Republicans, including Chuck Robb, chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and Sam Nunn, the senior party leader on defense policy. The Democrats on the committee did not have a flawed strategy for the hearings; they had no strategy at all. The White House conveyed the results of its porno research on a specially-installed hotline direct to the Russell Building, where it was used by Hatch within the hour. The Democrats never even caucused.

While much of the potentially Democratic electorate will soon forget what happened here, they will long remember the ineptitude of the Democratic leadership in handling the issue, and they will remember it because it fits a picture they already have in their minds' eye. This is the party that took months to discover its base was unemployed; that appears to stand by and watch as urban America is dismembered in a delayed reaction to the Reagan budget cuts; and that seems hard to put to run someone for president that the populace has ever heard of.

In the Thomas case, the Democrats appeased no one — not the women, not the blacks, not men, not the editorial writers. In the meantime, the women who have been the backbone of Democratic Party organizing and fundraising are furious. Talk of a third party percolates the mainstream like never before. Those who believe it unwise to launch a third party cannot continue to talk only of its impracticality, however. They must offer an alternative vision and strategy that promises to link independent political efforts in an alliance that shares a social democratic vision, at the least, and demands the allegiance of those who are elected with its energy.

As the immediate feminist wave ebbs, it remains to be seen whether it hit a new high-water mark. The pain experienced by millions of women watching Anita Hill savaged by the likes of Alan Simpson, Orrin Hatch, and Arlen Specter was not empowering. While the issue of sexual harassment was aired at a new level, the apparent lessons are murky. It is hard to contend that Anita Hill did the country a service by provoking this debate unless you believe her; if you believe her, you are left concluding that her experience is an object lesson in why the cost of complaint is higher than most women want to pay.

Whether Anita Hill will prove to be, as Jesse Jackson said, "the Rosa Parks of sexual harassment" rests on the ability of feminist activists to universalize her experience, most likely without her help, and convert the rage she unleashed into concrete political activity. It has not been a coalition-building week. ♦

Suzanne Crowell is a member of the DSA Washington, D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia local and the National Political Committee.

A Tale of Two Ideologies

Examining America's Contempt For Politics

by Guy Molyneux

WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS by E.J. Dionne, Simon & Schuster, 1991, New York.

Notwithstanding its title, *Why Americans Hate Politics* is not a book about Americans' widely-noted alienation from politics. Rather, E.J. Dionne takes today's "trivial and even stupid" politics as his point of departure, and asks: How have we come to this sorry state? Many others have looked to process -- television advertising, PACs, soundbites -- for the answer. Dionne follows another path quite rightly, suggesting that the fault lies not in our procedures, but in our politics. More specifically, he argues that the two dominant ideologies of our time, liberalism and conservatism, are both fatally compromised as guides forward for the nation.

Looking primarily through the prism of intellectual history, Dionne brilliantly sketches the development of contemporary liberalism and conservatism. One of the nation's finest political journalists, he writes in a style both lively and graceful -- no mean feat considering his material. He has a particularly keen eye for irony, nicely displayed in his discussion of Jimmy Carter and liberalism, a relationship of unacknowledged mutual dependence that ends in mutual destruction. He is also consistently respectful and fair in discussing these two sets of ideas, even as he develops devastating critiques.

Liberalism Torn Asunder

Dionne sees a liberalism brought down in large measure by self-inflicted wounds, torn asunder and then publicly defined -- to its great disadvantage -- by the issues of race, gender, and U.S. foreign policy. He points convincingly to an anti-democratic strain in 1960s liberalism, including a dangerous indifference to who was paying the costs of social engineering. This is a liberalism with a distinctly minoritarian perspective, with predictable electoral consequences, and it lives on today. I suspect readers of this magazine will feel, as I did, that Dionne is tougher on liberals than on conservatives. But that's only because he expects more from liberals, in whom he still places his

hopes for the future. That Dionne clearly shares liberal values, regarding race, gender, and U.S. foreign policy, should force us to take his powerful criticism all the more seriously.

Conservatism was of course politically far more successful over this period, but Dionne criticizes its cynical attacks on government, and sees it today as intellectually exhausted and hamstrung by tensions between its internal factions. There is a symmetry to the critiques, rooted in an essentially communitarian perspective. Both camps subordinate the needs of community to other priorities: economic freedom for conservatives, cultural tolerance for liberals. Dionne tells us that this happened because the ideologies were hijacked:

What is striking about the political events of the 1960s is that they allowed both of the nation's dominant ideologies, and both parties, to become vehicles for upper-middle-class interests . . . While [they] argued about morality, anticommunism, imperialism, and abstract rights, a large chunk of the electorate was confined to the sidelines, wondering why the nation's political discussion had become so distant from their concerns.

The resulting debate poses a series of "false choices," responsibility vs. compassion, sexual equality vs. support for families, that leave many Americans out. We are left with a symbolic and often deeply cynical politics, which has little or nothing to do with solving the nation's real problems. Some may feel Dionne overstates the amount of common ground available on these issues, especially race, but no one can doubt either the counterproductive nature of the debate over them, or the extent to which they have pushed many vital issues relevant to people's lives off the agenda.

Dionne thus gives us a framework for understanding an apparent paradox of contemporary politics: sharp polarization alongside widespread apathy and withdrawal from public life. But Dionne's picture is less useful in understanding the other great paradox of our time: sharp

partisan conflict at a time when the parties are closer together than any other time since the 1920s. So intent is he on seeing the "false choices" that he understates what we might call the "false consensus": namely, the rule of the marketplace. Liberalism in this era did not have even what Richard Hofstadter calls the "social democratic tinge" it had during the New Deal; less and less did it protect working people's economic interests or speak the language of class solidarity. It is worth recalling that in policy terms 1978 was as conservative a year as 1981, and Democrats completely controlled the federal government.

Impoverished Politics

This makes sense when we remember Dionne's analysis of who dominated the coalitions; a politics divided over cultural differences within the upper middle class, will be united around the interests of the upper middle class. So, when Dionne summarized the predicament of what he calls the "great American middle" -- "In liberalism it saw a creed that demeaned its values; in conservatism it was a doctrine that shortchanged its interests" -- I would argue he hasn't got it quite right. Instead, we might say that many working- and middle-class people, seeing no one defending their interests, voted their values (which were indeed demeaned by liberals).

In a sense then, Dionne provides the latest chapter in an old American story: the absence of a social democratic tradition, the almost unconscious acceptance of free market assumptions, and the resulting impoverishment of political debate. The less discussed part of that story is the absence of a true (Tory) conservatism in America. Dionne has trouble locating any genuine communitarianism because the two great communitarian traditions have never existed in America.

This is where I have my one real disagreement with Dionne: his discussion of conservatism. He explores the intellectual debates between libertarians and traditionalists, but fails to appreciate that conservatism as a political force has never taken tradition seriously. Ronald Reagan's personal hypocrisy -- divorced, never attending church, conspicuous consumption -- was really American conservatism's great lie. When tradition confronts the market, the market always wins.

Sham Agenda

Consider the Business Roundtable and the Moral Majority, and who saw more of their agenda realized. If you have any doubt, take a look at the U.S. tax code, and then watch a little MTV. Of course, liberals were often as taken in by the sham agenda as were the movement conservatives: Norman Lear was probably as surprised as

Dionne provides the latest chapter in an old American story -- the absence of a social democratic tradition.

Kevin Phillips to find out they never really meant it (if he's figured it out yet). Trade unionists, one suspects, were less taken aback by Republicans' real priorities.

This is why I find it hard to share Dionne's optimistic

view that we are moving beyond the false choices toward a new consensus. Republicans, more anti-political than truly "conservative," are quite happy with a debased and discredited politics. Only liberals need government, and thus, politics. For Dionne, politics is about solving problems, "the search for remedy," but in the real world, Republicans don't seem to agree. He is encouraged by a respectful review of the liberal *American Prospect* in Bill Buckley's *National Review*; I would be more impressed to see business leaders support extended unemployment benefits.

No, my guess is that American business and its political allies will once again have to be saved from themselves . . . by liberals (in one of history's great tragic roles, alongside Lear and Oedipus). Educational reform, infrastructure investment, retraining programs, universal health care -- all the things Dionne wants to see will meet fierce opposition from a business class which, in the end, will find its international competitive position restored. Only then will we have consensus. This should not surprise us: the liberal "consensus" with which Dionne begins his tale was itself the outcome of fierce struggle in the 1930s and 1940s.

Look To the Future

Whatever my disagreements with his diagnosis or prognosis, Dionne's prescriptions are right on the mark. Liberals increasingly obsessed with process -- campaign reform, "none of the above" voting options, the reverse frank, registration reform -- are well advised to follow him in looking to political substance for answers. We must also show respect for values, especially work, and strive to bridge the cultural divides exploited so well by conservatives.

Most of all, we must heed Dionne when he tells us to look to the future: "if liberals and conservatives spend all their time refighting the meaning of the liberal 1960s and conservative 1980s, we will waste the 1990s." Today some Democrats insist we apologize for the 1960s, while liberals insist "we made no mistakes;" both miss the point. At the very heart of the idea of America lies the notion of a fresh start, of leaving one's past behind, whether in the Old World or Back East. It's time -- long past time, actually -- for a new politics in America.

DSA member Guy Molyneux is a senior fellow at the Commonwealth Institute and studies politics at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

SOCIALISTS WIN STATE POWER ... AGAIN

DSA's sister organization in Canada, the New Democratic Party, recently won the provincial governments in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. In British Columbia, NDP candidates won fifty-one of seventy-five seats. NDP candidates did even better in Saskatchewan, winning fifty-five out of sixty-six seats. More than fifty percent of the Saskatchewan NDP candidates were farmers. The downfall of the Tories in that province was their "now-discredited privatization policy" according to the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. Last year the NDP won the provincial governments in Ontario and the Yukon -- meaning that the NDP now represents more than half of the population in Canada. Congratulations to our comrades up north!

ANYTHING FROM SWEDEN

Don't miss the November/December issue of *Utne Reader*. It features an article by journalist E.J. Dionne as well as a pictorial landscape of American politics. DSA is at the edge of a red blurb and green sea on the map -- somewhere between freedom and equality. We are surrounded by Jesse Jackson, Paul Wellstone, and Alexander Cockburn. What do we read, according to *Utne Reader*? "In *These Times* and anything from Sweden." In the same issue, don't miss DSA Honorary Chair Barbara Ehrenreich's response to the question: "How to beat Bush in '92?"

MAC NEIL/LEHRER ON SOCIALISM

Public television newscaster Robin Mac Neil was recently caught discussing democratic socialism with Zbigniew Brzezinski:

Robin Mac Neil: Since democratic socialism and Marxism shared some common tenets, at least early in the development of both, does the collapse of the Communist version discredit socialism, or does it give it a fresh legitimacy now that the taint with Communism is going to be removed?

Zbigniew Brzezinski: I think it emphasizes the importance of the connection between socialism and democracy. . . minimum standards of well being, some collective responses to injustices, but in a setting of free choice, of democratic alternatives. . . If we eliminate the Manichean, the utopian elements in Communism, we have social democracy and that I think is a viable alternative. *Mac Neil*: Is it likely to make socialism any more respectable in the U.S., where it has never had, at least after the nineteenth century, grown very strong roots? *Brzezinski*: I would think not in the short run because. . . inevitably, the failures of Communism rub off negatively against even social democracy. In the longer run, I do suspect that we also come to realize that the failure of Communism doesn't mean sanctifying the notion of capitalism, . . . that social responsibility, that concern for the poor that joint collective, democratic action by society to alleviate injustice and inequality has some justification.

Hmm. . . sounds like democratic socialism.

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