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# DEMOCRATIC Left



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Volume XX Number 1

DSA Is 10,000 and Strong!  
Convention Report Inside

## RELIGION AND SOCIALISM



— plus —

- ◆ *Mark Levinson on the Economy*
- ◆ *Joanne Barkan on Sweden*



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# A NEW LOOK!

BY MICHAEL LIGHTY

THIS ISSUE OF *DEMOCRATIC LEFT* reflects some changes, both big and small. We are bigger than ever, with a circulation of 14,000 copies.

In fact, Democratic Socialists of America is the largest socialist organization in the U.S. and that fastest growing organization on the left. DSA celebrated our membership growth and planned strategy for the next two years at our National Convention in Chicago in November, highlights of which begin on page 12.

This issue inaugurates a new design, cooked up by *Democratic Left's* production whiz, Ginny Coughlin, in consultation with the Editorial Committee. The two-column format is easier to read, creates more options for captions, photographs and illustrations, and we hope, signals a contemporary look.

We invite you to participate in *Democratic Left* by contributing to a new Letters to the Editor section. We would like to print short letters (no

more than 200 words) on articles and topics addressed in our pages. As the magazine grows, this dialogue between the Editorial Committee and readers, and among readers, will help *Democratic Left* meet the needs and interests of our diverse readership.

We want to make that readership even more diverse, but we need your help. Please check your local progressive bookstore to see if they carry *Democratic Left*; if not, urge them to do so and let us know. Show the magazine to your friends -- even if they do not want to join DSA, they can subscribe to the magazine. Yet, as much as we love subscribers, members have a special place in our data base (and hearts), so please use *Democratic Left* to recruit new DSA'ers.

Mark Levinson, chief economist for AFSCME District Council 37, argues in this issue, the recession is the most painful result of the failure of American political leaders to promote a high-skill, high-wage economy. Contrary to conservative dogma this kind of often unionized employment makes the most successful exports and makes the U.S. more competitive internationally. Instead of an industrial policy, expanded job creation based on government intervention and planning, and the overhaul of U.S. infrastructure, we are starting to fulfill the Republican economic vision: a small but hugely wealthy elite controlling a nation of mostly mini-

mum wage workers.

In short, capitalism has failed to deliver the goods for most Americans. We can do better. The 1992 elections have begun and more than ever the U.S. needs a strong socialist voice. DSA and *Democratic Left* will help push the debate and the programs necessary for America's revitalization. Taking our cue from DSA Honorary Chair Barbara Ehrenreich, we can remind folks that democratic socialists have always opposed communism and capitalism. One down, one to go. **DL**

*Michael Lighty is DSA's National Director and Managing Editor of Democratic Left.*

## DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Founding Editor

Michael Harrington (1928-1989)

Managing Editor

Michael Lighty

Production

Ginny Coughlin

Editorial Committee

Joanne Barkan, Mitth Horowitz

Sherri Levine, Neil McLaughlin

Maxine Phillips

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# Repairing the Republican Recession

## *A Democratic Socialist Response*

BY MARK LEVINSON

As the recession enters its eighteenth month George Bush has yet to enact an anti-recession policy. The President's inaction stands out even in comparison with this century's most conservative presidents. Herbert Hoover supported public jobs programs to end the Depression. In response to the 1981-82 recession, Ronald Reagan increased government spending (on the military) and approved a \$6 billion jobs program. In fact, every recession this century has elicited more of a response from government than the current recession has from George Bush. His spectacular drop in the polls -- his ratings have fallen forty points in ten months -- indicates that the American people expect something more from government.

It is only fitting that Bush sink with the economy. Ten years ago Republicans implemented their program of cutting taxes, reducing the welfare state, attacking labor, and withdrawing federal funds from states and cities. This program benefited the wealthiest in our society who, the theory went, would invest their new wealth, which would lead to economic growth, the benefits of which would trickle down to everyone. What in fact happened?

**Poverty Increased.** The economic growth of the 1980s had little effect on poverty. In 1990, 13.5 percent of all Americans, 33.6 million people, lived in poverty -- an increase of over 2 million from 1989. More than one in five children are poor. Black children under the age of six have a poverty rate of over 50 percent.

**Wages Fell.** Real hourly wage and salary earnings have declined by about 10 percent since



Ellen B. Neprist/Impact Visuals

the late 1970s, forcing families to work more hours just to maintain their standard of living.

**Investment Declined.** Compared to the previous business cycle in 1973-79 the pace of real net productive investment during the most recent 1979-89 business cycle declined by a quarter.

**The Safety Net Fell Apart.** In 1979, 19 percent of poor families with children were lifted out of poverty by government cash assistance. In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, only 10.5 percent of such families were lifted from poverty by cash assistance.

**State and Local Fiscal Crises Developed.** A decade of federal cutbacks, an explosion in health care costs and the national recession have left state and local budgets in the worst financial condition since the Depression. Unlike the federal government, state and local governments are required to balance their budgets. As the economy declines they are forced to raise taxes or cut spending. According to the Congressional Budget Office, state cuts in spending increased unemployment by one percentage point nationwide

**A Brooklyn storefront advertises the plight facing urban residents.**





Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

**Still waiting for the trickle-down effect. Job-hunters scan the classifieds in an unemployment insurance office.**

and much more in New York, California and New England where fiscal problems are most severe.

The withdrawal of federal funds from states and cities has resulted in a shift in who pays for services. The federal government cut taxes on the wealthy. States and localities have raised taxes on the poor and middle class. As Gerald McEntee, president of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), testified before Congress:

These shifts, from federal to state and local government and from the wealthy to the middle class, are responsible for much of the public anger and disgust of government. States and localities have increased taxes on the middle class. These taxes have not gone for the better services they want, but just to replace lost federal funds. The middle class feels like it is paying twice -- and it is.

The conventional wisdom is that the large budget deficit renders ineffective the traditional instruments of anti-recession fiscal policy -- increasing government expenditures. Supposedly to further increase the deficit would undermine confidence, raise interest rates, crowd out pri-

vate investment, and prolong the recession.

The problem with the conventional wisdom is that there is precious little evidence to support it. As the late Robert Lekachman used to point out, it would seem to anyone not befuddled by too much formal economic training that when factories are running at 77 percent of capacity and the economy is capable of producing \$200 billion additional Gross National Product there is room for both business and government increases in expenditure.

The obsession with the deficit is especially puzzling after the experience of the recovery from the deep 1981-82 Reagan recession in the face of, or perhaps led by, soaring budget deficits. In fact, the budget deficit today is smaller in relation to the size of the economy than it was during Reagan's first term. Then, with a larger deficit, the Administration jump-started the economy with tax cuts and an increase in military spending. The problem was not the resulting deficit, but the way it was created (that is, government spending was frittered away on the military rather than used for public investment).

Responding to criticism of Bush's do-nothing policy, an aide to the President stated, "The real question is... is there anybody else who can do better." The lesson from 1988, when Dukakis



thought he didn't have to stand for anything other than competence, is that the Democrats must answer that question. The Democrats need an alternative strategy that will provide immediate economic stimulus and address the underlying problems of our stagnating economy.

Some Democrats have begun to propose economic relief. But so far, Democratic proposals fall short of an alternative economic vision or even a program that would boost the economy out of recession.

For example, Democrats have proposed a variety of middle class tax cuts that would be paid for with either reductions in defense and domestic programs or increases in taxes on the wealthy. While middle class tax relief is a worthwhile objective, it would provide little, if any, stimulus to the economy. A portion of the tax cut would be saved and therefore would never enter the spending stream. In addition, a substantial portion of the tax cut would be spent on imports while relatively little defense spending is on imports. The net effect of a tax cut financed by cuts in military spending would be a reduction of spending and a decline in jobs and income.

A democratic left program for economic recovery should have the following elements:

**Jobs Programs.** The Democrats should commit themselves to the principle that every worker has a right to a job. There is no shortage of useful work that job creation programs could supply. Despite media reports on waste and abuse, public service employment, from the New Deal to the Local Public Works programs in the 1970s, resulted in impressive accomplishments. Sar Levitan and Frank Gallo point out that in the late 1970s alone, public service programs built or renovated more than 5,000 buildings, nearly 2,500 water or sewer facilities and 600 park or commercial sites.

**Public Investment.** The Economic Policy Institute has documented that since 1980 the share of the nation's economy being reinvested in education and training, children's programs, infrastructure and civilian research and development has dropped 40 percent. We rank behind all our competitors in every one of these categories. This does not include the costs of protecting the environment, housing the homeless, maintaining public health and other social needs. A massive public investment program would jump-start the economy, improve productivity throughout the economy and improve our quality of life.

**Industrial Policy and Managed Trade.** We need a more active government role in setting strategic goals and building business-government-labor cooperation in pursuit of those goals.

America's trade policies must be brought in line with international reality. A blind allegiance to the principle of free trade has denied the U.S. the ability to protect itself from the targeted trade practices of other countries. At a minimum our government should provide temporary relief to industries under attack and support emerging industries in return for long-term investment commitments. The goal is that economic integration occur in the context of rising living standards around the globe.

**Aid to Cities and States.** As part of a longer term program to restore aid to states and cities, the federal government should immediately legislate an across the board increase in all federal grants to state and local governments. Francis Bator and Robert Solow point out that a 10 percent increase will yield hard-pressed states and cities about \$15 billion. The money would be spent quickly (thus providing a fiscal boost) on worthwhile projects like infrastructure.

**Peace Dividend.** One source of funds for public investments is the peace dividend. The U.S. currently spends almost \$300 billion a year on national defense. A study for the mainstream Brookings Institution ("The Post-Cold War Defense Program," by William Kaufmann and John Steinbruner) states that the test of the U.S. as a superpower "will be whether it can now arrive at a more realistic balance between its military and economic power." They conclude that in the next ten years American military spending can be cut in half without weakening national security.

**Tax Reform.** According to Citizens for Tax Justice, since 1977 the top 1 percent of the population has increased its after-tax income by an incredible 136 percent. The bottom 60 percent has lost income. If the tax system had not changed since 1977, then three-quarters of all families would pay lower federal taxes than they do now and the Treasury would collect \$76 billion more annually in taxes. Progressive tax reform would raise revenue for badly needed public investments and reduce inequality.

In the early 1980s, Reagan was fond of saying that tax cuts for the rich would lead to economic growth, close the budget gap, and eventually help the poor and middle class. That, of course, did not happen. The lesson of Reaganomics is not that it was wrong to pursue growth, but that Reagan's program did not lead to the growth we need. A democratic left program for growth needs an activist government willing to take responsibility for the direction of the economy. **DL**

*Mark Levinson is a member of DSA's National Political Committee and is an economist at AFSCME DC 37.*



# Sweden Remodels

## *Have the Swedes Tossed Out Social Democracy?*

BY JOANNE BARKAN

**I**t's September 1991. Our typical American foreign correspondent (most are men, so let's call ours Bob) is covering the Swedish parliamentary elections. He taps the following on his computer keyboard: "Along with communism, the Swedish socialist model has finally collapsed." Bob keeps on tapping: "Swedes, fed up with high taxes and a cradle-to-grave welfare system, have thrown out the long-governing Social Democrats (SAP), voting instead for conservative parties that will dismantle the system."

Well, Bob got it wrong -- once again. Swedes didn't vote for parties that promised to slash away at universal social service provision. And only a seriously self-destructive politician would have suggested such a program. The conservative parties pledged better services, greater variety, and lower taxes.

### *Savvy Conservatives*

Those parties also took care not to appear dismissive of equality -- a value most Swedes still hold. When the Social Democrats insisted that the mix of private and public services advocated by the conservatives would lead to a two-tier system of good private services for those who could pay and poor public services for everyone else, the conservatives had a response. They said their government would give equal subsidies to, for example, public and private schools, but parents wouldn't be allowed to add funds to private institutions. When savvy conservative candidate Carl Bildt (now Prime Minister) was asked how he'd cope with rising unemployment, he replied he would put more money into active labor market policies -- which just happen to be the jewel in the crown of the Social Democrats' model.

But the election results didn't favor the conservative bloc simply because voters found their

programs appealing. The SAP lost the election because it had alienated its own constituency.

Most SAP activists trace the party's defeat to a series of policies adopted during the late 1980s. And perhaps even more corrosive than the content of those policies, they argue, was the perception that leadership made decisions without sufficient grass-roots debate. The heaviest indictment goes to the tax reform designed in 1989. In order to overhaul the system, the SAP minority government had to compromise with the Liberal party. To the Social Democratic constituency, the final reform looked unacceptably regressive. Polls now correlate the party's steep slide in support with the tax reform imbroglio.

The list of troublesome policies goes on: economic measures that allowed firms to rake in profits without the usual Social Democratic mechanisms to channel surplus into investment or redistribute income; failure to make good on a 1988 campaign promise to raise paid parental leave to eighteen months and to institute a sixth week of paid vacation; tough austerity legislation (including a proposed strike ban) early in 1990 to cool down an overheated economy; and, finally, what appeared to be an overnight decision in October 1990 to apply immediately for membership in the European Community.

### *A Radically Different Game*

By spring 1991, party supporters felt disoriented. Where were the old familiar Social Democratic tunes -- equality and full employment? Why did those government folks on television sound so much like conservatives? SAP leaders claimed they had to move quickly on economic matters because both the Swedish and European economies were in turbulent transition. But not until the party revived its traditional themes during the election campaign did the hemorrhaging of support stop. Invoking social justice,





solidarity, and equality, the SAP recouped 10 percent of its lost constituency by election day. Yet the party won just 37.6 percent of the vote -- its worst showing since 1928.

Why did an experienced team like the SAP flounder around the field for the last few years? Very simply -- the opposition started playing a radically different game. To use some "old fashioned" but appropriate terminology here, the capitalists pulled out of the class compromise that has structured the Swedish model since the 1930s. Although the process doesn't have quite the drama of "collapse," the model is, in fact, being transformed.

This doesn't mean that Bob and his reporter colleagues have gotten the story straight. They consistently misdefine the model. The big changes have little to do with levels of taxation to finance welfare programs. It's the neocorporatist arrangement, which brought business, labor, and government together to shape economic life -- that's what's changed. To be more specific, the form of Swedish neocorporatism put in place in the mid 1950s -- the Rehn-Meidner model -- no longer functions.

This is not happy news. Rehn-Meidner can take much credit for making socialist values --

equality and solidarity -- realities in Swedish society after the Second World War.

The model rested on a solidaristic wage policy: equal pay for equal work throughout the economy regardless of whether a sluggish firm would have trouble keeping up or a dynamic firm wanted to pay more. This had remarkably far-reaching results. Inefficient firms shaped up or went under, boosting the efficiency of the entire economy; high productivity combined with pay equity allowed wages to rise overall but helped the lowest paid workers most -- so equality increased; fiscal policy channeled profits into investment and mopped up the "excess" to pay for high-quality public education and services.

### *The Grand Compromise*

When "Fordism" (mass-production manufacturing) was king, the labor confederation representing about 90 percent of the blue-collar workers (LO) took responsibility for all Swedes. The LO tailored the economy during centralized negotiations with the national employers organization. Employers had to give up wage flexibility, but in return they got wage restraint, qualified workers, and long periods of labor peace. Since the LO and the SAP had strong ties, the tripartite

**Wiping the slate clean? Swedish conservatives plan to spend public money on private schools.**



arrangement of business, labor, and government truly worked.

But things change. The Swedish scenario for the last fifteen years reads like this: The service sector -- both private and public -- expands; white-collar unions gain strength; competition for traditional manufactured goods intensifies; Fordist production declines; as capital becomes increasingly mobile around the globe, national governments -- including the Swedish one -- have less hold on macroeconomic policy; Swedish firms are more reluctant to borrow from sources like pension funds and demand higher profits for investment; when the European Community announces in 1985 the upcoming formation of a "single market," Swedes see a capital flight out of their country to the continent. Swedish businesses now want to be where the action is. Their presumed loyalty to the homeland turns out to be a myth.

### *Coming Undone*

Returning to government in 1982 (after a six-year hiatus), the SAP aims at full employment and keeping business happy. Profits soar. The national employers organization spies its chance to alter power relations in Sweden. It begins rejecting centralized wage negotiations. Employers hike up pay in enterprise-level bargaining when it suits them. Wage restraint falls apart. Inflation takes off. Public employees strike to keep up with what's going on in the private sector. The solidaristic wage policy becomes part of history.

As a final gesture, the national employers organization announces in 1991 its intention to resign from the boards of all public agencies and commissions. They make it clear that capital will no longer be hostage to social democracy. The Swedish neocorporatist arrangement is coming undone.

The SAP government made a valiant effort to get control of these events. But too much depended on international trends that allowed -- perhaps, in part, compelled -- Swedish capital to quit the old game. The Social Democrats did shift to the right on economic policy, but many party activists believe their leaders had few major policy options. If, for example, the rest of Europe deregulated financial markets, Sweden with its export economy eventually had to do the same. To be sure, the leadership made tactical errors, perhaps so many as to lose the election. But substantially different choices didn't exist this time around. In short, you can't have idiosyncratically left-wing social democracy in one country anymore.

But the Swedes will certainly have some form of social democracy in the future. They'll probably accommodate themselves to the high end of continental standards -- Germany, for example. While this may mean less equality and more unemployment than before, Sweden will still operate in a social democratic context.

SAP leaders and activists say they'll spend the next three years discussing new policies as well as trying to figure out how to capture more of the youth vote. They'll also have to recast their relationship with the LO. That marriage became uncharacteristically contentious during the 1990-91 austerity debates. With neocorporatism no longer working the way it did, both LO and SAP reluctantly admit that their ties will have to be loosened a bit.

Pollsters believe the SAP could be voted back into office before long. They base their prediction on some striking -- if not altogether cheering -- voting trend data. Swedish voters are starting to act like other Europeans -- more volatile and less class-bound. In the 1950s, just 7 percent switched parties from one election to the next, making Swedes the world's most stable electorate. From 1988 to 1991, 25 percent switched parties.

### *Juggling a Coalition*

The performance of the current conservative government could also boost the SAP back to power. Prime Minister Bildt is juggling an uneasy minority coalition of four parties whose constituencies and agendas don't always mesh. To pass legislation, he depends on the votes of a new right-wing populist group that most Swedes find distasteful. Worst of all, this government must wrestle with a serious recession, budget deficits, and rising unemployment. The ministers are auctioning off the finest companies in Sweden's small state-owned sector. But after that, who knows where they'll find money to keep their campaign promises.

When the Swedish Social Democrats do find their way back to power, they'll probably be operating within the confines of the European Community. Some worry that the SAP will have too little room in which to maneuver. But as one activist remarked to this writer, "Political change is always about using the margins -- who uses them and how. The left uses them differently from the right, and that's what makes the difference." **DL**

*Joanne Barkan is a freelance writer. Her post-election research in Sweden was made possible by a grant from the Swedish Information Service.*



# DSAAction

## Youth Section News

◆ Don't miss the 1992 **Winter Youth Conference** in New York City! The conference starts Friday night, February 14 and goes until Sunday afternoon, February 16. Speakers include U.S. Representative Major Owens, Barbara Ehrenreich, Irving Howe, José LaLuz, Hilda Mason and Dr. Victor Sidel. Limited free housing and transportation assistance will be available on a first come, first served basis . . .so reserve your place now! Call Tom Ellett, DSA Youth Organizer at (212) 962-0390 or send your \$20 pre-registration fee (checks payable to IDS Conference) to Youth Conference, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038. If you know of any young people who would like to be invited, please forward their names to Tom at the phone number above.

◆ Plans are underway for the 1992 **Campus/Labor Institute** at Purdue University, in Lafayette, Indiana, Saturday, March 14. Topics include: students organizing to oppose free trade, labor support on campus, building ties to trade unions, and careers in the labor movement. If you are interested in attending call Tom Ellett at (212) 962-0390.

◆ See the New Europe -- from a socialist point-of-view! Join the Youth Section Summer '92 Tour of London, Brussels and Prague. Call Tom Ellett for further information, (212) 962-0390.

## Commission Updates

◆ The next issue of the **Religion and Socialism Commission's** newsletter, *Religious Socialism*, will feature articles on misconceptions about the causes of the holocaust and a rekindling of compassion for the poor. For more information about the commission or for a subscription to *Religious Socialism* write P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0080.

◆ The **Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission** distributes action alerts regularly concerning lesbian/gay/bisexual rights around the world. To receive these action alerts contact the commission via electronic mail, Internet: DSA-LGB-request@midway.uchicago.edu; or 1608 N. Milwaukee #403, Chicago, IL 60647. Currently the commission is urging people to write to Argentine President Carlos Saul Menem to protest the Comunidad Homosexual Argentina's denial of legal recognition. Write Menem at Casa de Gobierno, Balcarce 50, 1064 Buenos Aires.

◆ The **Feminist Commission** has conducted a tremendously successful fundraising drive. For info, or to subscribe to the commission's newsletter, *Not Far Enough*, write: 5123 Fifth St., NW, Washington, DC 20011.

## Resources

◆ Now available in paperback: DSA Honorary Chair Barbara Ehrenreich's *The Worst Years of Our Lives*. Send \$12 (includes postage) to DSA, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038.

◆ DSA has new buttons! One says "Socialism and Democracy, DSA" with a handshake and rose; the other says "DSA" with a fist and rose. \$1.00 each. To order send check payable to DSA, 15 Dutch St., #500, NY, NY 10038. Specify which type of button(s). Locals and others who want to order bulk shipments call (212) 962-0390.

◆ The new issue of the *Health Care Activist* features articles about the AIDS crisis, women and health care, and an analysis of the Democratic presidential candidates' positions on health care. Use the *Health Care Activist* as an organizing tool! For bulk or individual copies call Ginny Coughlin at (212) 962-0390.

## Now On Video !

### Billy Bragg ✪ Pete Seeger

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# ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

## CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles DSA's Socialist Community School set up two fall courses: "Is Marxism Dead?" and five sessions on "Billions for Band-Aids: The Health Care Crisis in Los Angeles." Activists there participated in the Financial Democracy Campaign picket lines at BankAmerica branches in Torrance and Hollywood, protesting the impending merger of B of A and Security Pacific for its anti-consumer, anti-labor implications.

San Diego DSA held a forum on "U.S. Health Care: Time for Real Change!" Speakers included Gray Panthers leaders Genevieve LaFontaine and Artie Deutsch, and Health Access's Lillian Lasdon. Alan Sweedler, co-director of San Diego State University Institute for International Security and Conflict Resolution, spoke to San Diego DSA on "Recent Events in the Soviet Union -- The Collapse of Communism and the Future

of Socialism."

Northern California DSA welcomes long-time DSA'er and health care activist Michael PinCUS of San Francisco as the new Northern California DSA organizer. Thanks to fundraising efforts led by San Francisco DSA'er Bill Sennett, California DSA hopes to have two paid organizers by February.

Peninsula/Stanford DSA held its annual vegetarian holiday potluck, featuring a screening of "Democratic Socialism in a Post-Communist World," the outreach event of the 1991 National Convention with DSA Honorary Chair Cornel West, Nancy Riche (president of Canada's New Democratic Party), Jo-Ann Mort

(Communications Director, ACTWU) and U.S. Representative Bernie Sanders.

At its monthly membership meeting, Valley DSA discussed the DSA national convention, the savings and loan scandal and the David Duke phenomenon.

## ILLINOIS

Chicago DSA members participated in a Jobs with Justice forum on National Health Care. Speakers included DSA member Dr. Quentin Young, national president of Physicians for a National Health Program. In December, the local held a membership meeting to discuss decisions of the DSA National Convention and local implementation of those decisions.

## INDIANA

DSA activists from Indianapolis, Indiana University at Bloomington, Notre Dame University, and Purdue University met at the first ever Indiana DSA statewide meeting. Attendees discussed outreach strategies, campus organizing, and efforts to coordinate a statewide national health care campaign.

## Connecticut DSA'ers Start a Local

Just one year ago, three DSA Youth Section graduates decided to try to start a local in their home state of Connecticut. Less than one year later, Connecticut DSA was chartered as a local at the 1991 National Convention.

In just one year, Connecticut DSA can boast of many successes. Activists organized a forum on "Independent Politics in Connecticut and Beyond" with speakers such as DSA member David Montgomery and the NDP's Elaine Bernard. Connecticut DSA'ers marched with Jesse Jackson in the "Connecticut March to Rebuild America," a protest focusing attention on the plight of American cities. As part of the DSA Canadian Health Care Speakers Tour activists organized a radio interview, a hearing at the state legislature, a student meeting at Yale University and a labor reception. In November, the local sponsored a panel with U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders, newly-elected Hartford Mayor Cheryl Saxon-Perry and DSA Vice Chair Edwin Vargas Jr.

"There are people in Connecticut who are hungry for an organization that embodies their values and seeks to change the world," said Mike Phelan, a founder of Connecticut DSA.

Connecticut DSA plans for 1992 include work on local and national electoral campaigns, socialist education, campus organizing, a summer youth project, and unemployed organizing.



## Students Organize Against Hate Crimes

The DSA Youth Section and the New Democratic Youth of Canada co-sponsored an International Day of Reflection on December 6 to remember the murders of fourteen women students at the University of Montréal and to teach others about socialist feminism. DSA campus chapters held candlelight vigils, rallies and take-back-the-night marches. DSA chapters participating in the International Day of Reflection were: Harvard University, Northern Illinois University, Oberlin College, Ohio University, Purdue University, State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, SUNY-Geneseo, and University of California at Davis.

DSA activists at Purdue worked in coalition with campus women's groups, lesbian/gay/bisexual groups and the student government to promote awareness of all types of hate crimes. They sponsored a screening of "The Life and Times of Harvey Milk," a candlelight vigil and a women's coffeehouse. "The most successful aspect of our Day of Reflection was that we educated people not just about violence against women, but about the whole issue of hate crimes," said Margaret Hirschberg of Purdue DSA.

SUNY-Albany DSA held a vigil with speakers and feminist music by DSA'er Andrew Hammer. "This was the first time many feminist students had heard about *socialist* feminism," said Jeff Lacher, SUNY-Albany DSA'er and Youth Section Chair. "It gave them a different idea of what DSA is about."

## MASSACHUSETTS

Howard Zinn, Boston University professor emeritus of history, spoke to Boston DSA on "The Future of the Socialist Idea." He discussed the aftermath of the fall of totalitarian regimes and Communist parties in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and what it means for democratic socialists. Boston DSA joined the Tax Equity Alliance of Massachusetts (TEAM) to push a referendum to institute corporate tax reporting in 1992. The Religion and Socialism Commission held a forum on health care and safety in the workplace with DSA'er Janet Wilder.

## NEW JERSEY

A three-lecture discussion series on "Labor Unions in Crisis: Impact on American Workers" was sponsored by Central New Jersey DSA. Speakers for the series included Jon Bloom of the Workers Defense League, Frank Darcy, President of the Essex County Central Labor Council and Susan Jennik of the Association for Union Democracy.

## NEW YORK

Nassau County DSA sponsored a talk by David Sprintzen, chair of the Long Island Progressive Coalition on "Dealing With Long Island's Social Crisis."

New York City DSA held a holiday brunch to celebrate the success of their recent city council electoral campaign. Several of the winning candidates they sup-

ported spoke at the brunch. DSA Vice Chair Steve Max spoke at a recent New York City DSA New Members Party. The local also sponsored a School for Democratic Socialism with DSA Vice Chair Jim Chapin.

DSA'er Ben Nichols won reelection as Mayor of Ithaca with the help of Ithaca DSA activists. The local recently held a meeting to discuss next steps for their health care project and a DSA National Convention update.

## OHIO

Columbus DSA helped to organize the successful come-from-behind campaign for local school board of Mary Jo Kilroy. DSA'er Bob Fittrakis was interviewed in *In These Times* about the campaign. Fittrakis has organized several other local progressive campaigns.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia DSA has introduced a Feminist Women's Monthly Brunch. The local sponsored an evening at the theater to see an adaptation of Studs Terkel's "Working," along with a pre-theater party.

Pittsburgh DSA held a potluck dinner and election of officers, along with a screening of U.S. Representative Bernie Sanders' speech to the United Electrical Workers convention.

## WASHINGTON

Seattle DSA was among the co-sponsors of "Aftermath of War," a forum on the health and environment disaster in the wake of the Gulf war. In December, the local met to discuss local and national election results.



# DSA Convention Meets To Map Out Future

## *Celebrates Doubling of Membership*

BY GINNY COUGHLIN

The 1991 DSA National Convention met at an unprecedented time in the history of American democratic socialism. Just as the world was declaring the death of socialism and the triumph of capitalism, DSA was celebrating its largest membership ever -- 10,000 members. Over 200 delegates and observers participated in what many called the best DSA convention ever. In the face of communism's collapse, it was a convention charged with fundamental and challenging questions about our vision of democratic socialism and the organizational mission of DSA.

The convention was hosted by Chicago DSA, and was attended by delegates and observers from all over the country and abroad. People came from as far away as Paris, Alaska, California, and Virginia; and as close as Minnesota, Indiana and Wisconsin.

Prior to the convention, over 100 delegates

and observers met for a one-day Leadership School to discuss our vision and organizational mission. Speakers included Harold Meyerson, editor of the *LA Weekly*; Joanne Barkan, author and member of the editorial boards of *Democratic Left* and *Dissent*; Todd Gitlin, author of *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*; Kurt Stand, DSA National Political Committee (NPC), and Penny Schantz, former Youth Section Organizer. NPC members Jack Clark of Boston DSA and Suzanne Crowell of DC/MD/NoVA DSA provided a closing to the day and later presented a summation of the Leadership School to the convention.

On Friday evening over 900 people attended an outreach event with riveting presentations by Cornel West, chair of Princeton's Afro-American Studies department and DSA Honorary Chair; Bernie Sanders, U.S. Congressman from Vermont; Nancy Riche, President of Canada's New Democratic Party; and Jo-Ann Mort, trade unionist and member of the DSA NPC.

The convention was called to order on Saturday morning by DSA Vice Chair Christine R. Riddiough. DSA National Director Michael Lighty then presented his State of the Organization, which was followed by local and Youth Section chapter reports. Many delegates and observers were pleased to hear the vast amount of organizing that locals are doing around health care, reproductive freedom, electoral politics, labor support and many other issues.

"I was impressed by the level of activity in many locals," said Craig Salins, a delegate from Seattle DSA. "Hearing about other DSA locals spurred me to reenergize our local."

The convention featured two major plenaries. The first focused on the sweeping international changes of the last few years and the persistent problems we face at home, including racism and a declining standard of living. Inter-

Delegates perform the "Wizard of Howe" skit. (l. to r.) Julia Fitzgerald, Terri Burgess, Dinah Leventhal, Sherri Levine.





Below: DSA Honorary Chair Cornel West speaks at the Convention outreach event.

Right: Cook County Commissioner Danny Davis welcomes delegates and observers to Chicago.



national presenters were DSA Vice Chair Bogdan Denitch and the NDP's Svend Robinson, the only openly-gay Member of Parliament in Canada. Domestic speakers were independent candidate for president Ron Daniels and trade unionist Roberta Lynch.

The second plenary presented a discussion of DSA's domestic agenda with DSA members Michael Dyson, Chicago Theological Seminary, Christine Riddiough, and Joseph Schwartz, NPC member and Temple University professor.

Saturday night featured a banquet dinner with a keynote address by Irving Howe, co-editor of *Dissent* and DSA Honorary Chair. Danny Davis, Cook County Commissioner and former candidate for mayor of Chicago, welcomed DSA to the Windy City. The evening was hosted by Chicago DSA Co-Chair Aimee Horton.

Political discussion at the convention centered around the future of DSA's health care project, the collapse of communism, and our domestic and international political priorities. Delegates debated and

## 10,000 Members and Growing

*The following is an excerpt from DSA National Director Michael Lighty's State of the Organization address at the 1991 National Convention.*

Thanks to our highly successful direct-mail efforts... we have doubled our membership since the 1989 convention in Baltimore. Though it may sound clichéd, our greatest asset is our members. I want to share with you some of the responses people sent to us and to Ed Asner, who signs the [direct mail] letter, when responding to the direct mail: "Thought you'd never ask!" and "finally someone has the courage to call themselves socialists -- Bravo!"

I want to share with you a taste of some excerpts from longer letters:

"I threw away the envelopes and contribution form, because I just can't give away money these days. I am a person with AIDS working part-time as a barber. Today I read your letter and found myself in near total agreement... your letter came in the nick of time... Enroll me in your, at worst, articulate efforts." -- R.H.

"I'm glad I didn't just pitch your letter in the recycle bin with the rest of

the junk mail without first reading it. I feel like perhaps DSA is the ray of hope we have been waiting for." -- A.A.

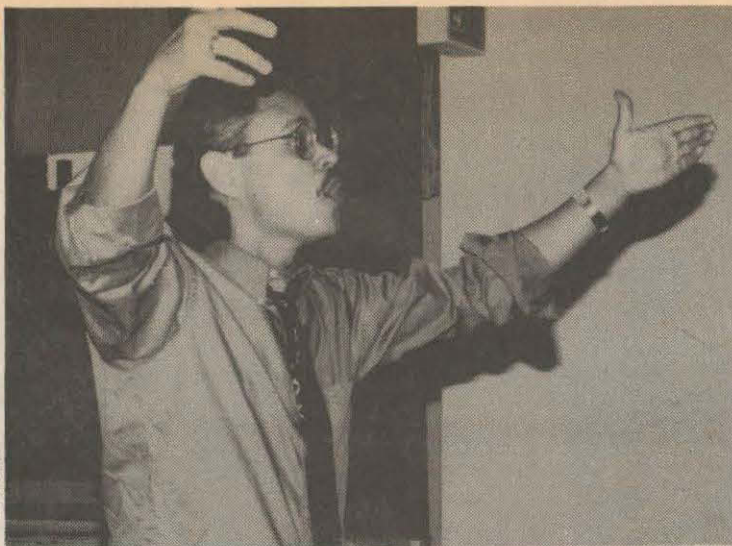
"We have been DSA for years but did not know it. It is the only thing that makes sense. It is more Christian than any other view. I've been an active Presbyterian for fifty years. I want to get more involved." -- V.S.

"I agree with every line of your knowledgeable letter. I will be ninety years old next week. I heard Eugene Debs make the speech that landed him in jail. I have been a socialist ever since." -- E.A.

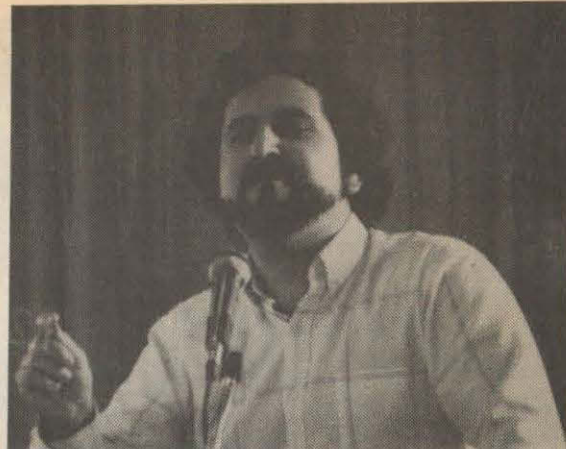
"I am now seventy-five years old, and want to make my last days productive to help this world we live in, but you have to admit it is discouraging. I am making copies of your January 1991 letter and giving them to friends..." -- C.L.

"For as long as I can remember I have considered myself a socialist. I am active in the Democratic Party and the trade union movement. I have been searching for a democratic socialist organization... Thanks for asking me to join... I am almost nineteen." -- D.W.





Eric Ebel

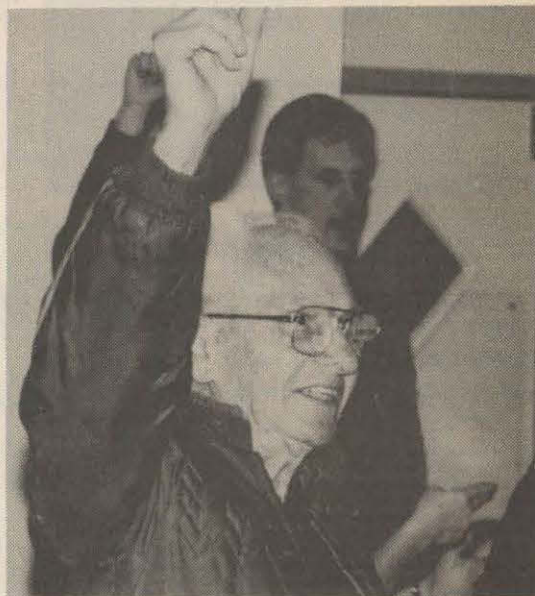


Eric Ebel

Clockwise starting with top left: José LaLuz gives his closing speech; Joseph Schwartz speaks at a Convention plenary; Marin DSA delegate, Meyer Baylin joins in singing "The Internationale;" Nancy Riche, NDP President, speaks at the outreach event.



Tom Elliott



Eric Ebel

approved many resolutions, including a statement of our international perspectives, a blueprint for our health care organizing over the next two years, proposals for fighting racism, an electoral politics project, a media system reform task force, proposals to make DSA events more accessible to deaf people and the differently abled, and reaffirmations of our commitment to reproductive freedom, feminism, and gay rights.

The Convention elected DSA's leadership for 1991-1993, reelecting the Honorary Chairs and adding Harold Meyerson to the slate of Vice Chairs. Delegates also elected a new NPC.

Delegates and observers got a chance to engage in small-group organizing sessions focusing on several areas of work, including reproductive freedom, the urban crisis, membership recruitment/leadership development, and the 1992 presidential campaign.

The Anti-Racism Commission held a very successful outreach event with Ron Daniels, while the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission also held a well-attended outreach meeting with Svend Robinson.

But the convention wasn't all serious work. A troupe of DSA'ers presented a creative and

humorous skit on our vision of socialism called "The Wizard of Howe." Amy Bachrach, chair of New York City DSA, starred as Joanne (Dorothy), who was searching for the true meaning of socialism. Harold Meyerson starred as the Wizard of Howe, who gave Joanne and her friends articles from *Dissent* as answers to their questions.

Delegates and observers left the convention with a renewed commitment to their activism and a better sense of the mission and vision of DSA. "I enjoyed myself more at this convention than at any other DSA convention," said Claire Kaplan, at-large delegate and co-chair of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission.

José LaLuz, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), gave an inspiring and challenging closing presentation. He urged convention participants to build a more multicultural movement. "This whole question of what socialism means is not about winning a victory here or there or prevailing in a certain century. It's about transforming the very culture in which we live." DL



# Discovering the Spiritual

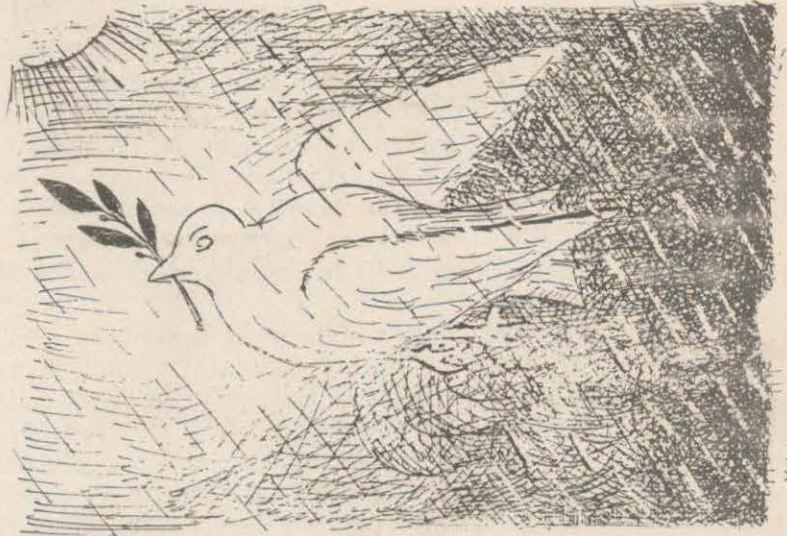
## An Introduction to the Literature of Religion and Socialism

BY GARY DORRIEN

For a movement that has long grown accustomed to isolation, defeat, and misunderstanding, American democratic socialism is nonetheless currently mired in an unprecedented crisis of identity and political strategy. The death of socialism is routinely proclaimed on all sides, leaving its remaining democratic proponents struggling to explain -- if only to themselves -- why it remains worthwhile to call themselves socialists. In their search for an answer, the history and literature of religious socialism could prove, for at least three reasons, to be instructive.

The first is that religious socialists have had to cope with isolation, prejudice and misunderstanding from both within and without for most of their history. For more than a century, socialism's leading proponents joined the chorus of forward-looking intellectual pundits who proclaimed the death of religion. Socialism would obliterate the remaining popular desire for spiritual meaning left over from modernity's half-finished revolutions, it was claimed. In the face of this endlessly repeated assurance from their friends and enemies, religious socialists continually reminded themselves that their essential task was not to be successful, but to remain faithful to an unrealized, but attainable social vision. Their example is instructive to the democratic left today.

Historic Christian and Jewish socialism also offer the left a decentralized, cooperative understanding of socialism that pre-dates Marxism and rejects the authoritarian versions of socialism that Marxism produced. At a time when the democratic left is struggling to reconceptualize socialism as decentralized, pluralistic economic democracy, the religious precedents for this understanding of socialism are worth recalling. They include the Anglican socialist tradition of F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, the Christian Socialist Union, and the Church Socialist League, which -- though it was ridiculed by Marx --



Valery

rightly rejected nationalization strategies, promoted worker and community ownership, and insisted that socialism required moral commitments to freedom and equality. In the twentieth century, such figures as Bishop Charles Gore and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, belonged to this tradition. Temple developed an extended argument for decentralized economic democracy in his classic work, *Christianity and the Social Order*, published in 1942. The previous year, in *The Hope of a New World*, he proposed that worker ownership could be attained through an excess-profits tax on major company earnings, to be paid in the form of shares to mutual funds controlled by workers. Four decades later an elaboration of this proposal would be called the Meidner Plan for Economic Democracy.

The case for a cooperativist understanding of socialism was amplified throughout the first half of the twentieth century by numerous Social Gospel, Roman Catholic, Christian Marxist, and Jewish socialists, most notably in such works as Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1910), Paul Tillich's *The Socialist Decision* (1933), Reinhold Niebuhr's *Reflections on the End of an Era* (1934), and Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia* (1949). In the United States, only the Social Gospel tradition produced a powerful social movement. Though this movement was often derided (sometimes justly) for its moralism, the



movement's outstanding proponent -- Rauschenbusch -- unfailingly insisted that "idealists alone have never carried through any great social change . . . . For a definite historical victory a great truth must depend on the class which makes that truth its own and fights for it." The distinctive themes and character of historic Christian socialism have been brought forward more recently in such works as Jurgen Moltmann's *Religion, Revolution and the Future* (1969) and *Creating a Just Future* (1989), Johannes Metz's *Faith in History and Society* (1980), Arthur McGovern's *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* (1980) and Ronald Preston's *The Future of Christian Ethics* (1987). A panoramic recounting of the modern Christian socialist tradition can be found in John C. Cort's *Christian Socialism: An Informal History* (1988), which contains especially valuable treatments of Roman Catholic socialism in France and Germany.

The history and theory of modern Christian socialism are further elaborated in my recent books, *The Democratic Socialist Vision* (1987) and *Reconstructing the Common Good* (1990). The latter book argues, in particular, that the racial, gender, and ecological limitations of Christian socialism need to be overcome in a theological praxis that appropriates African American, feminist, Third World liberationist, and environmentalist perspectives. The emergence of these perspectives in the past generation marks a transformation of religious socialism and represents the third -- and most important -- contribution that modern religious socialism can make to a renewed democratic left.

Democratic socialism has been defined and led through most of its history by white middle-class Eurocentric males. The task of reconceptualizing democratic socialism in the light of other perspectives can gain much from contemporary religious socialism, which includes a rich variety of African American, feminist, liberationist, and environmentalist theologies. The roots of African American liberationist theology are presented in James Cone's *God of the Oppressed* (1975), in Philip S. Foner's anthology, *Black Socialist Preacher* (1983), and in Gayraud Wilmore's *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (1983). I assume that no reader of *Democratic Left* is unaware of Cornel West's major contributions to this tradition, which include *Prophesy Deliverance* (1982), *Prophetic* (1988), and *The Ethical Dimensions of Marxist Thought* (1991). The varieties of African American liberationism are anthologized in the Wilmore/Cone reader, *Black Theology* (1979) and are helpfully delineated in Dwight Hopkins' study, *Black Theology USA and South Africa* (1989).

Feminist theology has become a project of such considerable diversity and size that no generalization about it is worth much any longer. Though it has become conventional to distinguish among feminism's liberal, socialist, and cultural (or "gender" or radical) perspectives, religious feminists are often difficult to place in this schematism. Many place themselves somewhere between Mary Daly's separatist radicalism and Rosemary Radford Ruether's communitarian socialism. The recent emergence of "womanist" literature has further complicated conventional schematisms. Among those works that present feminist visions of democratic socialism, the key texts thus far are Ruether's *Liberation Theology* (1972) and *Sexism and God-Talk* (1983), Sheila Collins' *A Different Heaven and Earth* (1974), Carter Heyward's *Our Passion for Justice* (1984), Dorothee Solle's *To Work and to Love* (1984), and Beverly Harrison's *Making the Connections* (1985). Black feminist or womanist perspectives on the intersection of race, gender, and class are presented in Jacquelyn Grant's *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus* (1989) and Delores Williams' forthcoming *Introduction to Womanist Theology*.

Though the literature of Jewish liberation theology is not extensive, Marc Ellis' *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (1987) and Otto Maduro's reader, *Judaism, Christianity and Liberation* (1991), make a strong beginning.

Third World liberation theology begins with Gustavo Gutierrez's epochal *Theology of Liberation* (1973) and is carried forward in such foundational texts as Gutierrez's *The Power of the Poor in History* (1983), José Miguez Bonino's *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (1975) and Juan Luis Segundo's *The Liberation of Theology* (1976). These works belong to Latin American liberationism's first phase (running from the mid 1960s to the late 1970s), in which the movement was heavily dependent on Marxist theory and especially influenced by Frankian-style theories of economic dependency. A second, more indigenous and multicausal form of liberationist analysis was inaugurated in the '80s by such works as Gutierrez's *We Drink From Our Own Wells* (1984) and Leonardo Boff's *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (1986). Third World liberation theology is also an African and Asian phenomenon, represented in such works as Allan Boesak's *Farewell to Innocence* (1977), John Pobee's *Toward an African Theology* (1979), Gwinyai Muzorewa's *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (1985), Itumeleng Mosala's *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (1989), Kazoh Kitamori's *Theology*



# Religion and Socialism Around the World

At the 1977 convention of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), one of the predecessors to DSA along with the New American Movement (NAM), a caucus of religious members formed a committee and began a newsletter, *Religious Socialism*. Now called the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission, it has members of every religious faith: Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Unitarian, etc. And the Commission continues to publish *Religious Socialism*.

Most recently the Religion and Socialism Commission sponsored an international conference in Washington, DC; founded a committee to enhance communication among religious socialists in the Americas; and translated its literature into Spanish. Members are organizing several panels for the upcoming Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City.

Since 1983, the Religion and Socialism Commission has been sending delegates to the Congresses of the International League for Religious Socialism (ILRS). The ILRS dates from 1929 and despite the name consists mainly of Christian organizations, some of which go back to the first decade of this century. The British affiliate, the Christian Socialist Movement, which is affiliated with the Labour Party, can trace its ancestry back to a movement organized in 1848, the year that Marx and Engels published the Communist Manifesto.

ILRS affiliates consist mainly of Protestant Chris-

tians in northern Europe. Their members tend to belong to political parties affiliated with the Socialist International (SI), and the ILRS has applied for associate membership in the SI. Despite its name, the ILRS has only one affiliate whose members include non-Christians and that is DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission. -- *John Cort*

"The Integrity of Creation" was the theme of the most recent Representative Assembly of the International League for Religious Socialism, held in Bentveld, the Netherlands. Attending the conference were three dozen representatives from eleven nations -- England, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Members of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission represented the U.S. Conference representatives discussed the impact of free trade on workers and the environment, worldwide working conditions and aid to developing countries, in particular East European countries. Members of the ILRS Board are currently preparing a provisional statement on the "Integrity of Creation," based on the discussion at this assembly. -- *Judy Deutsch*

*John Cort is the author of Christian Socialism: An Informal History. Judy Deutsch is co-chair of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission.*

*of the Pain of God* (1965) and C.S. Song's *Third-Eye Theology* (1979).

The last and least-developed form of contemporary religious socialism is also the project that might conceivably make the strongest appeal to common ground among the movement's multiple perspectives. Religious proponents of ecological socialism come from Buddhist, Jewish, Native American, Christian, neo-pagan, and other traditions. All of them conceptualize socialism, however, on the basis of the one reality that cannot be relativized away on historical, cultural, or postmodern grounds: the environmental good. Democratic socialism has always eloquently rejected the commodification of labor under capitalism. It has rarely faced up to the consequences of capitalism's commodification of nature. Many environmental theorists and activists are predisposed against socialism for this reason. Such important works as Theodore Roszak's *Where the Wasteland Ends* (1975), Char-

les Birch and John Cobb's *The Liberation of Life* (1981), and Cobb and Herman Daly's *For the Common Good* (1989) resort to euphemisms about "community economics" and tend to associate socialism with state ownership. Though much of the existing literature on green philosophy and spirituality seems implicitly socialist, the elaboration of an explicitly socialist praxis of green or ecological spirituality remains for the future.

The vision of a cooperative commonwealth, if held with any degree of expectation, must be held as a faith. Religious socialism presents to the larger democratic left a crucial insistence on the limiting realities of human egotism and languages of faith for social vision that are attainable but not seen. DL

*DSA member Gary Dorrien's Reconstructing the Common Good will be published in paperback this winter. His latest book, The Neoconservative Mind, will be published later this year.*



# What It Means To Be A Religious Socialist

## *DSA Members Talk About Their Spirituality*



### *Rosemary Radford Ruether*

I am a socialist because I believe that human societies should be economically just and politically participatory. Human societies should accept, as a foundational principle, the right of all their members to access to basic human needs; adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and employment. They should affirm the dignity of each human person and their right to be participants in the decisions that shape their lives. I claim this socialist vision of society as a religious mandate, because I believe that the divine call to metanoia (conversion) and redemption of creation coincides with these socialist principles of a just, participatory society. The redemption of creation means committing ourselves to the fullness of human development in community, the overcoming of violent, exploitative and competitive social relations, and the building of societies based on the principles of mutuality and cooperation.

*Rosemary Radford Ruether is the Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary and Northwestern University. She is the author or editor of twenty-three books on religion and social justice.*

### *Juanita Webster*

I was born into a very devout Protestant family and later converted to Catholicism during my teenage years. My conversion was the result of a very profound religious experience. But then I found that Catholicism became more and more restrictive in terms of my growing feminist concerns and political awareness. Upon becoming a socialist, I found a political way to express my feminist and religious yearnings -- through an adherence to faith, more than to dogma or to the Catholic Church as an institution. As socialists, we are all groping to understand the world -- especially today because of the profound changes that are taking place throughout the world. I find that my faith and my socialism are the guiding lights for me.

I have chosen to become deeply involved in the Harlem community where religious faith is a profound staying power for African Americans. As a religious person and as a socialist, I am committed to finding ways of empowering people who are struggling, both in my community and around the world.

Finally, I would encourage any of my fellow DSA members who would like to explore their spiritual lives to look into the Religion and Socialism Commission.

*Juanita Webster is a member of DSA's National Political Committee, New York City DSA, the Religion and Socialism Commission, the Feminist Commission, and the African American Commission.*



## Terri Burgess

*"For this is the one thing the priests do not know, with their one God and one Truth: that there is no such thing as a true tale. Truth has many faces and the truth is like the old road to Avalon; it depends on your own will, and your own thoughts, whither the road will take you. . . " — Morgaine of the Fairies, Mists of Avalon*

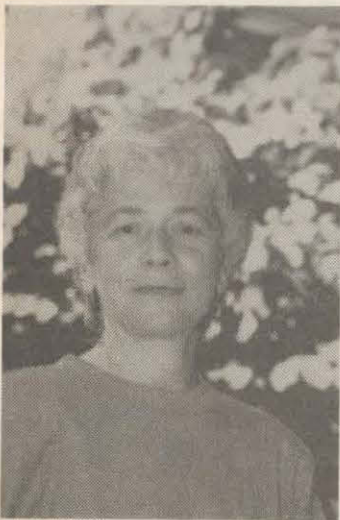


As many DSA'ers can give testament to, based on their experience with sectarians, any belief system which inherently requires that its identified Truth be true for everyone necessarily sets the stage for conflict. The place where I have found I can maintain this view and participate in a community of worship is within the liberal religious tradition of Unitarian Universalism. Many UU congregations offer familiar trappings (i.e. church, steeple, minister), but the people who make up these congregations vary from identifying themselves as pagans to Christians.

Unitarian Universalism takes an approach to worship and spirituality which respects the full spectrum of religious tradition, and looks to the values each represents. In many ways it is like DSA in that membership is not premised on the acceptance of a Line, or a designated Truth. Rather, it nurtures a spirit of exploration and growth grounded in shared principles.

My involvement with a local UU church grew largely out of an identified need to pay attention to the spiritual roots of my politics. Unlike the political arena, religious community is a space where folks can talk about things like love, healing, joy, and wonder. The structure and community provided by my church strengthens me for our work to achieve a socialist vision.

*Terri Burgess, vice chair of the DSA Youth Section, teaches a peace and justice curriculum to seventh-graders as part of her church's religious education program.*



## Athena Calogeras

I am a *Franciscan* socialist whose roots dig deep into the Middle Ages.

In the early thirteenth century, Francis and Clare of Assisi, and the women and men who joined them, refused the unjust socio-economic relations formed and practiced by the up-and-coming commune in central Italy. They worked out their own Christian alternative. Literally and figuratively they walked out of the city and took up home among lepers and others considered non-persons by the commune's power-brokers. Those initial Franciscans proclaimed God alone as good and understood the earth's "goods" as a right to be enjoyed by all their brothers and sisters. They lived lives of service, not of appropriation.

You can understand, then, that as a member of the Franciscan movement, I most naturally and appropriately gravitated towards democratic socialism, and joined, several years ago, DSA in Chicago. I contend today not as did my foresters and brothers with the dregs of feudalism and the burgeoning monied class that judged and dealt with women and men in terms of economic advantage, but with an advanced capitalist system that does the same.

Since I refuse that reality as unconscionable, I have to do something about working for another. In the past few years I have been working along with my friends in DSA and Franciscans for Socialism for a national health program. When that happens, we will move on to the next struggle! That is part of my Franciscan family politics.

*Athena Calogeras is a member of Franciscans for Socialism and Chicago DSA. She is the editor of Haversack magazine.*





## Phil Ansell

I have always been a Jewish radical. The Jewish experience of slavery and liberation has been very important for me. Traditional Jewish concepts of justice -- such as showing hospitality to strangers and not reaping the corners of one's fields -- have deeply informed my development as a socialist. During my initial encounter with Marxism as a college student, I rejected my religious roots on the grounds that religion was "false consciousness." I have subsequently rejected the notion that spirituality is inherently oppressive, while of course still recognizing that religion can play an oppressive ideological role. I now feel that spirituality is an integral part of being human and that spiritual fulfillment is central to human liberation.

In my own life, Judaism contributes significantly to my values, outlook, and sense of purpose, particularly through the sabbath which offers me a weekly opportunity to take a step back and see the big picture. In my daily work as a union organizer, it helps me keep my eye on the prize.

*Phil Ansell is Field Representative at Service Employees International Union Local 535 in Los Angeles.*

## Maxine Phillips

I came to democratic socialism because of the strong sense of justice and hope that my religion gave me. I've stayed a democratic socialist because it's still the only secular vision that inspires me. However, I find that my religious beliefs and experiences in religious organizations have been helpful in sustaining that secular commitment. Briefly, they have given me a sense of

+ *Perspective* As a part of a tradition that traces back at least 2,000 years, I have some perspective when we talk about ideas that may or may not be exhausted after a few hundred years and leaders and members who become exhausted after a few years.

+ *Patience* As a member of a Protestant denomination, I see the problems of sectarianism and factionalism writ large -- and coped with in varying degrees of success. Breaking the communion bread with people I don't want to invite to dinner has a carry-over effect to committee meetings and organizing work with people further up or down the political spectrum from me.

+ *Perseverance* These are dismal times, and a sense of hope, of a journey whose end we may never see, is necessary to sustain political commitments. In times like these, it is the writings of the older prophets -- Micah rather than Marx -- that are more uplifting.

+ *Power and Powerlessness* Because socialism in the United States has not built alternative institutions, it is in the church that I find a community of shared values against the dominant culture. That community keeps me from seeking in socialism all that it is unable to give and saves me retreat into the isolation of political sectarianism or the often enforced isolation of the nuclear family.

*Maxine Phillips is a former executive director of DSA and is managing editor of Dissent. She is active in Judson Memorial Church where she currently co-chairs the Sunday School committee.*





## Dorothee Benz



Leslie Warren

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus drew two conclusions. First, he said, *whenever you helped one of the least of my sisters or brothers, you helped me*. Translation: all people are of equal and divine worth. Second, he said, *whenever you did not help one of them, you did not help me*. Translation: it is more than a good deed to care for those in need; it is an obligation. Naturally, these two points suggest to me the principles of socialism: the vision of freedom, equality and solidarity, and the insistence that we have an obligation to build it into a reality.

Elsewhere, Jesus commented that the greatest commandment was to love God, *and the second is just as important, to love your neighbor like yourself*. What I love about the gospel is Jesus's constant consciousness-raising about just who all is your neighbor. He talked with women, Samaritan women no less, not to mention an adulteress, ate with tax collectors, honored children and healed lepers. The lesson seems pretty clear: those defined as outcast or powerless (people with AIDS, for example) are God's children, our neighbors, and must be treated as such. To me, again, this is what I understand socialism to be.

The fact that the institutional church has for centuries mostly helped prop up an inequitable status quo should not deter one from valuing the teachings of Christ as a radical ethic of liberation (the baby/bath water thing).

*Dorothee Benz is a member of DSA's National Political Committee; a lifelong member of the United Methodist Church; the Director of Communications for ILGWU Local 23-25; and a free-lance writer.*

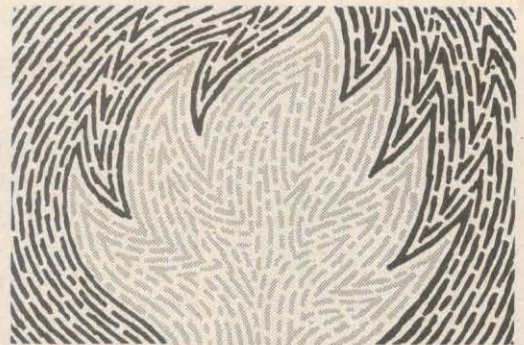
## Andrew Hammer

Christian scriptures call us to act for the most complete tenets of socialism to be employed as practice in our daily life; in the community as well as in ourselves. The society of the apostles is communal in practically every sense, indeed stating that "all things were held in common," and that "money was distributed to each one according to their need." The Apostle Paul even outlines what could be viewed as a precursor to a progressive tax system in the Second Letter to the Corinthians.

My faith informs my socialism when it comes to the use and distribution of power; seeking consensus over hierarchy, and remembering that analysis must never eclipse compassion in our minds at the expense of many more hearts; hearts which must be included if we are to have a democratic future.

I maintain faith in the socialist ideal as correct not only because of an empirical social or economic analysis, but also because of my belief that this is the way Christ would have us live; I am brought to the vision that we call socialism by the depths of my spirit, as others have been, from Saint-Simon to Berdyaev; from Norman Thomas to Tony Benn. It therefore is the moral and spiritual demands of human freedom, that lead me to embrace socialism as a pathway to peace and justice.

*Andrew Hammer is co-chair of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission and a member of the Youth Section Coordinating Committee.*





## Haven Abraham Pérez

I grew up in a strict Christian fundamentalist family. We went to church three or four times a week. In the 1940s, my grandfather moved from New York to Los Angeles, joining a small community of Puerto Rican families. There he became a Pentecostal minister. Because I was the oldest and loudest in my family, I was trained to be next in line to my grandfather.

I began to consider myself a Christian socialist when I was in high school. I realized that in order to live my faith, I have to act in the world, responding to God's demand that I love all people. Although I am trained as a Pentecostal minister, I now consider myself an Episcopalian. I will live the faith and commitment taught to me by my family and community, not as a minister but as a social activist. My Christian fundamentalist background taught me that love and compassion are not asked of me, but are demanded of me. I express that demand through the struggle for democratic socialism.

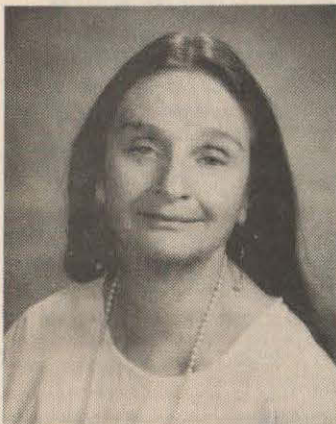
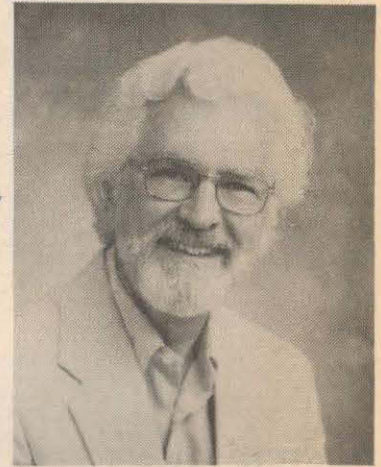
*Haven Pérez is a DSA Youth Section activist in Los Angeles.*

## Jack Spooner

When considering religion and socialism I perceive the strength of one as the need of the other. Religion is the application of one's faith in the transcendent, however believed, however practiced. My faith is Christ-centered, practiced as a Lutheran. Socialism is a humanly conceived and crafted manner of economic and political conduct.

Religion is a universal phenomenon, a manifestation of humankind's most ancient and strongest urges to find purpose in and reason for being, to penetrate the unknowable, and to seek truths providing form and structure for living. But more, religion as a spiritual base of personal identity and awareness is both a motivation force and a stimulus for seeking change in the human condition. Socialism brings to the religious visions born of political, economic, and social analysis and experience. It provides political, economic, and social theory around which like-minded comrades organize. Socialism points to the organization of political life wherein the peace and justice of a righteous God can be made manifest for all persons, even as its manifestation will always be imperfect. My Christian faith has matured as I have participated in dialogue with both religious and non-religious socialists in the U.S. and abroad. My respect for the faith of others than Christian has deepened my conviction that socialism cannot bring into fruition its ideals without the participation of the religious of the world. A task as weighty for the religious as for socialism.

*Jack Spooner is secretary-treasurer of DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission and the editor of Religious Socialism.*



## Judy Deutsch

Being a religious socialist helps me to know that I am part of a worldwide community of people who -- whether or not we belong to a religious institution, and whether we are theist, atheist, agnostic, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Moslem -- all hold the binding belief that we must live as equal partners, sharing power with (and not over) other people. And more and more, we have expanded this belief to include also the need for our living as partners with the non-human members of the interacting whole of existence. We see ourselves as members of at least a global community in which we have a close, spiritual affinity for, and relationship with the other parts.

At least those of us in the western hemisphere and in western and eastern Europe honor both economic and political democracy as the best ways we know for nations to operate. And we recognize that nations without economic democracy cannot achieve political democracy. Many of us whose backgrounds are Jewish and Christian have been motivated by the Hebrew Scriptures describing the prophets as speaking for God as they decry the wealth that some people have while others are in need, and by the gospels depicting Jesus as sharing his material goods, as well as his spiritual resources with others.

I find a strong affinity between religious socialism and my religious association which includes among its principles: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equality and compassion in human relations; the use of the democratic process; justice for all, and respect for the interdependent web of existence.

*Judy Deutsch, co-chair of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission, is a Unitarian Universalist minister.*



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# Jimmy Higgins Reports

## GOP RUNNING SCARED

It seems the defeat of former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh by Democrat Harris Wofford got the attention of Republican senators. Just days after the election they introduced a plan to cover those Americans without health insurance, with only one missing detail -- how to pay for it. The price tag is \$150 billion over five years. To contain costs the Republicans propose to "regulate" health insurance premiums. The S&L crisis is only the latest example of GOP regulation, so we can't wait to see what they'd do to health care.

In other GOP health care news, Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and some high-level friends have proposed a "Health Care Smart Card" that entitles the holder to . . . computerized health care records! Of course, in Canada, health care cards entitle the holder to, well, health care.

## BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES

Here's the latest S&L horror story: Producers of the movie "Lethal Weapon III" are cashing in on the foreclosed properties of bankrupt S&Ls. They are using several unfinished homes for a scene in which the homes will be blown up. A fitting finale to the scandal.

## LABOR'S LEAD PARACHUTE

The golden parachute craze made its way to Pan Am Airways which must pay \$1.1 million in severance to two top-level executives, including Russell L. Ray Jr. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that one of Ray's first duties at the now closed airline was to force \$43 million in wage and benefit concessions from Pan Am's five unions. Those concessions included the elimination of contractual severance pay for the workers. On December 4, one day after the unions agreed to the concessions, the airline shut down and Mr. Ray took off with his golden parachute.

## WHO IS JIMMY HIGGINS?

"Jimmy Higgins Reports" has been a part of *Democratic Left* since its founding in 1973, but Jimmy's origins go back much further. He's the archetypical socialist and trade union rank-and-filer, first named by Ben Hanford, Eugene Debs' running mate, in 1904. He's the one who does the behind-the-scenes work to build a movement. In 1982, *Democratic Left* updated Jimmy with his feminist counterpart, Janie Higgins.



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