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Clinton & Us

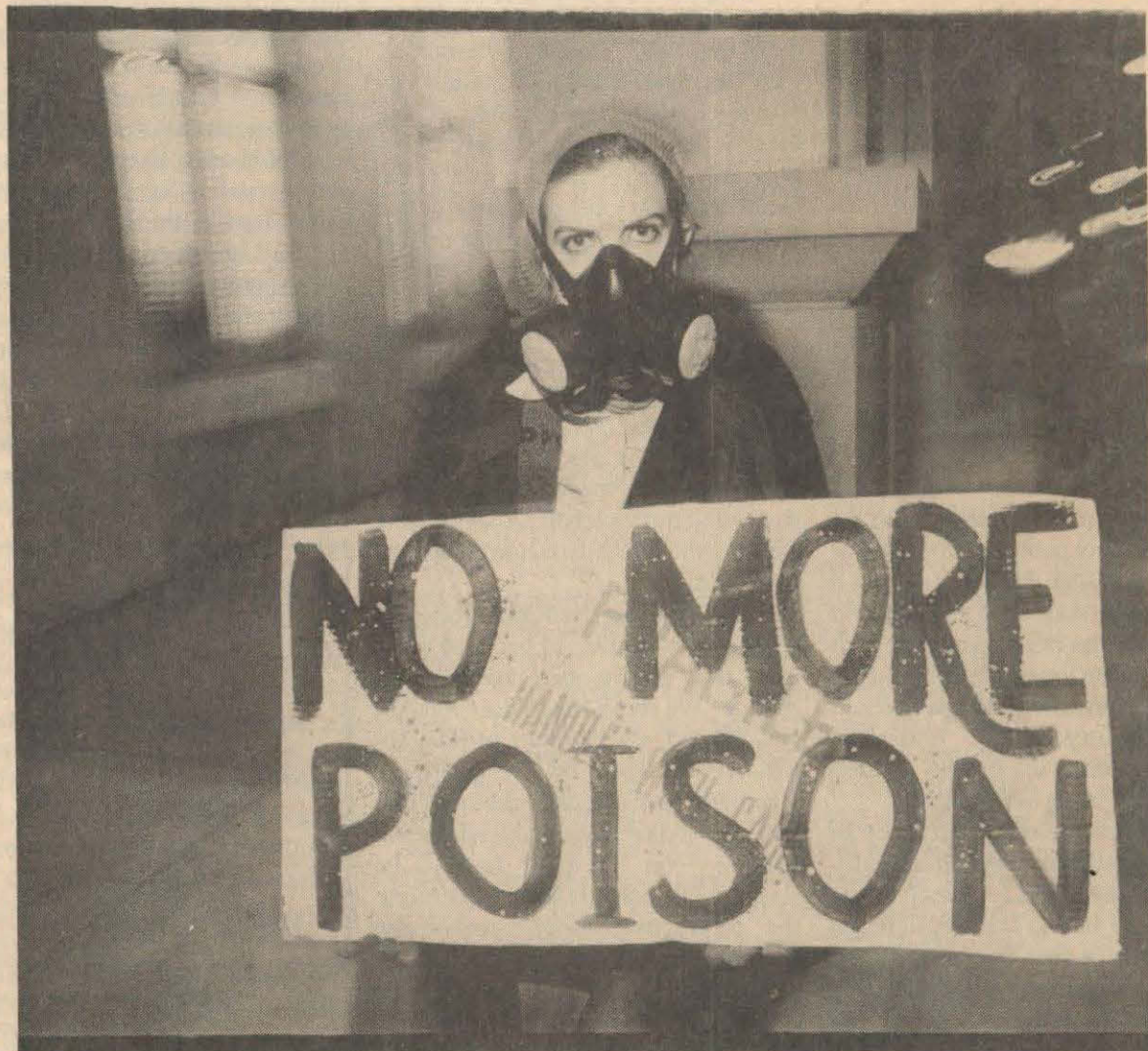
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The Eco-Socialist Challenge



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EDITORIAL

CLINTON & US

BY JACK CLARK

First, we celebrate.

Bill Clinton's election to the Presidency brings to an end the Reagan-Bush era. As Kevin Phillips predicted two years ago, in *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, the conservative coalition, which elected Richard Nixon in 1968 and has dominated Presidential politics ever since, has come to an end.

George Bush earned the humiliation heaped upon him by the American people. Inept in his handling of the economy, Bush proved singularly and consistently insensitive to the pain felt by tens of millions who continue to suffer falling incomes, insecure jobs, and worse. From beginning to end, he failed to offer any positive rationale for his own re-election. He insisted that if only we would wait long enough and slash taxes on the rich, and cut spending to benefit the lower classes sharply enough, the miraculous market would provide a bounty for all. This year, with the economy ill, people wanted more than the same old voodoo.

To compensate for being out of touch on pocketbook issues, Bush gathered unto himself and his party a vast assemblage of hate. The Republicans left no primitive fear unexploited, no reactionary sentiment unaided. We celebrate that America, men and women, black, white, Asian and Latino, North, South, East and West,

rejected the this hate-filled vision and heeded the call of a candidate who promised to appeal to what unites, not what divides.

Then, we organize.

Hopes were raised in this election. Organizers and radicals live for days like this. Defeat demoralizes; victories, even small and limited victories, energize the people. A big victory like this creates many openings for progressive politics. On health care, on jobs, on reproductive freedom, demands barely imaginable three months ago become rallying cries now.

What about the deficit? What about governing responsibly? We will hear repeatedly from the Democratic wise men (and I do mean men, though perhaps a few women have graduated into these ranks by now) that we all must sacrifice, that the new Democratic administration cannot be irresponsible.

So, finally we think and work and analyze, attempting to propose solutions that are at once credible and radical. We recall that before Reagan was elected, the outlines of Reaganism were shaped by "responsible" Democrats in Congress and the White House, heeding these same wise men. Spending on the poor had to be slashed; tax benefits had to accrue to the "productive" members of society; the military had to grow dramatically; Democrats had to distance themselves from "special interests" like labor and feminists. By 1978, these policies were in place.

The structural problems in the U.S. economy that bedeviled Jimmy Carter confront Bill Clinton. In failing to challenge the limits of conventional economic wisdom, Carter prepared the way for Reagan. Should Bill Clinton heed the counsel of the Democratic wise men and govern "responsibly," that assemblage of hate around Bush will be back in 1996 with a more charismatic leader.

All at once, we must be: enthusiastic partisans of Clinton's victory; organizers in the movements pressuring Clinton to deliver; critics of the caution the Administration is sure to show; policy experts proposing, to quote a Mike Harrington slogan, to push social progress that extra mile.

As exciting as it is demanding, that agenda defines what it means to be a serious socialist in America now.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Greens and Socialists Seek Harmonic Convergence

BY J. HUGHES

Environmentalists have had a rocky relationship with trade unionists and socialists. Environmental concerns often appear elitist and absurd to activists working for full employment and a more just society, particularly when they pit owls or fish against whole industries. On the other hand, trade unionists often seemed hopelessly short-sighted to environmentalists when they defend nuclear power, military spending, or the destruction of wilderness areas in the name of jobs. Fortunately, the global, free-market revolution of the eighties has forced these two movements to search for their common ground. What follows is a short history of this harmonic convergence of the red and green.

Eco-Socialism & Red-Green Dialogue

There has been a long, and now rapidly growing, dialogue between democratic socialists and environmentalists. From this dialogue and joint activism has emerged "eco-socialism." Back in the 70s, the Environmentalists for Full Employment began to argue for a common agenda between labor and ecologists, built around anti-toxics campaigns and worker-retraining funds. In 1980, Barry Commoner's Citizen's Party brought together proto-Greens around a socialist platform. In the eighties, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers pioneered alliances between unions and community environmental groups, leading to the founding of their important, two-year-old eco-socialist journal New Solutions.

On the academic side, the four-year-old journal Capitalism, Nature & Socialism, edited by James O'Connor, has spurred the growth of a coherent body of eco-socialist analysis and prescription, and is now translated into more than a dozen languages. Some of these insights include:

❖ "Environmentalism" often has a middle-class flavor and bias: advocating that people "buy Green" rather than engage in collective action, criticizing "consumerism" without attention to inequality, advocating "voluntary simplicity" without attention to "involuntary simplicity," and paying more attention to the Amazon than to toxics in the workplace.

❖ Ecological hazard disproportionately afflict people of color, workers, and the poor. The poor are disproportionately exposed to ecological hazards, both at work and in their communities, but their exposure is less often detected. When they discover ecological hazards, the poor have less power to stop them. Even if they are fully informed about their exposure to ecological hazards, and organize to stop them, working-class communities are often directly dependent on the polluters for their jobs and tax base. Local anti-toxics groups are also often hampered by a parochial "Not In My Back Yard" ("NIMBY") perspective. Nonetheless, organizations such as the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Wastes, which grew out of the Love Canal disaster, are networking with thousands of local community campaigns, and working to infuse them

with broader perspectives and strategies. Building alliances between middle-class environmentalist groups and local working-class groups is certainly one of the biggest challenges for eco-socialists.

❖Capitalism is not the root cause of ecological destruction, but contributes to it. Population growth or industrialization are not the causes of ecological hazards. The problem is not the numbers of people or the numbers of tools, but the kind of tools that people use and how they use them. The science that gives us the tools that increase our destructiveness also gives us the ability to study the effects of our actions. Ecology is the product of the scientific revolution, not of pre-industrial mysticism. Similarly, most eco-socialists reject the idea that capitalism causes environmental destruction. Pre-industrial peoples caused tremendous ecological damage from over-hunting and slash and burn agriculture, and non-capitalist societies such as Iraq and the Soviet Union have done as much or more damage to the environment than capitalist countries. Capitalism is, however, an obstacle to ecological protection since capitalist elites, like non-capitalist elites, have a vested interest in the industrial status quo, and therefore oppose collective efforts to solve environmental problems.

❖The disproportionate influence of corporate interests cancels out the influence of environmental organizations. Corporate influence in the media spreads disinformation about environmental threats, while corporate-funded think tanks churn out books on "green capitalism" and critiques of environmental science. Corporations underwrite environmental groups with "moderate" policies, and corporate elites sit on their boards. Even when citi-

The influence of corporate interests cancels out the influence of environmental organizations.

zens' organizations are strong enough to overcome the resistance of the corporations and wealthy to pass legislation, the government is often too weak to effectively monitor and enforce the laws that are passed, restricted both by inadequate funding and pro-business jurisprudence. When policies are imposed, they simply attempt to restrict pollutants, or enforce a "right to know" about them, rather than ban them altogether, and redesign industry and the production process. Corporate interests usually oppose banning and re-designing, both of which have been the only effective policy to

reduce and eliminate pollutants.

❖Only under democratic socialism is the desire for a high standard of living compatible with ecological protection. As long as workers think that they will pay for environmental protection with their jobs and taxes, they will be hostile to "elitist, owl-loving, tree-huggers." Eco-socialists, on the other hand, can combine economic and environmental policy in ways that promote a just and sustainable economy. A regressive gasoline tax may be made palatable if you know the income tax is being made even more progressive. The conflict between "jobs" and ecology can be resolved by industrial policy and a strong welfare state. The strong labor and social democratic movements in Northern Europe have enabled passage of the strongest environmental protections in the world. If the main obstacle to the implementation of ecological policy is the institutional power of the ruling class, it is the institutional power of the working class, mobilized through the socialist and labor movements, which can join with environmentalists to enact just and sustainable policies.

Globalizing the Eco-Socialist Project

The relative radicalism of the European socialists in environmental policy has often required prodding from Green parties, however. The Green parties began twelve years ago as the vehicle of the Baby Boom New Left, reflecting the 60s' interest in an anti-institutional politics of general liberation and personal authenticity. But almost immediately the Euro-Greens confronted the same conflicts between efficacy and anarchism that the Social Democrats faced back at the turn of the century. The Euro-Greens have also all been riven by faction fights between those willing to ally themselves with socialist parties, accept a couple of ministerial appointments, and work for a greener shade of pink, and those ideologues who don't want to compromise at all.

While Green ideologues may also be suspicious of the strengthening of transnational governments, environmental activists are increasingly converging with socialists on the need to transcend national sovereignty. In the Canada and the U.S., the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has welded together unions and environmentalists in a coalition insisting that enforced transnational worker and environmental protections be part of any liberalization of trade. At the Rio "Earth Summit" environmental activists strongly endorsed long-standing socialist proposals to



Piet van Lier/Impact Visuals

strengthen the United Nations to monitor and enforce environmental agreements, and empower it to collect taxes and fines to subsidize its work. As with European unification, the corporate elite would clearly prefer a New World Order with more free trade, and less democracy and environmental protection. The one transnational institution that George Bush showed enthusiasm for was the Multilateral Trading Organization (MTO) proposed to replace the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). The MTO was to be empowered to hold secret tribunals to rule on the permissibility of nations' "protectionist" environmental or worker safety regulations, with no democratic input at all.

Next Steps

Although Vice-President-elect Al Gore stops short of advocating strengthened world government, his proposed "Marshall Plan for the third world" is clearly informed by the work of the 80s' Commission on Environment and Development, headed up by Norway's socialist Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, and laid out in their book *Our Common Future*. For a long time to come, eco-socialists will be struggling to understand the concept of "sustainable development" proposed by the Brundtland Commission: a development path for both the developing and developed countries, that can bring the two to the same standard of living

without exhausting the eco-system. All eco-socialists agree that this will require a Marshall Plan to write off third world debt and transfer ecologically sustainable technologies to the Third World, while adopting these technologies in the North. There is still substantial disagreement among eco-socialists, however, over what level of sacrifice is required from the workers of the North for this project of global equalization and ecological protection. Can the "standard of living" of the North continue to rise slowly as we undergo a qualitative shift in expectations about the good life, with shorter work-weeks and more efficient technologies, while we help the developing countries catch up? Or do global resources make sustainable development more of a zero-sum game, less for us and more for them? If global eco-socialism does require that workers of the North make some sacrifice, how do eco-socialists run for office in the North? Addressing these questions points toward the possibility that in the 90s we can begin to build (in the words of Audrey McLaughlin, Leader of Canada's NDP) the New World Community that is required for both justice and ecological sustainability. DL

J. Hughes is editor of EcoSocialist Review, the journal of DSA's Environmental Commission, and a member of the National Political Committee.

Turning Our Kids Green

BY MAXINE PHILLIPS

We were sitting on the floor in our local children's museum. The crowd of three-and-a-half-year-olds had listened to a story about the rainforest. Now they were ready to explore the rest of the environmental exhibit. One child headed for a pile of rubber stamps. A museum volunteer offered to stamp her hand. "What's the special word we've been learning about?" the aide burred. The child thought hard: "Please?" she ventured. "Well, it's true that's the magic word," the aide said as she inked the stamp and applied it to the small hand, "But this is a special word, too. It's 'recycle.'"

In classrooms, museums, supermarkets, restaurants, and toy stores, our children are getting messages about environmentalism stamped on their hearts and minds. And they are sticking. A recent study sponsored by Environmental Research Associates, which keeps corporations up to date on consumer trends, found that of a thousand parents surveyed, 34 percent said that they shop differently now because of what they learned from their children; 17 percent have stopped buying products they used to buy because their children told them that the product or package is bad for the environment; and 20 percent buy a product because their children told them that it is better for the environment.

Kids' Money, Corporate Priorities

Children are a big market, and if you are suspicious of all the labels that say recycled, recyclable, and biodegradable, you have good reason. *Zillions*, the Consumers Union publication for young people, asked, "Earth-Friendly Products: Can the People Who Bring You All That Trash be Nice to Nature?" The article pointed out several examples of misleading claims by advertisers. For instance, many plastic containers labeled recyclable

may have a recyclable lid but a tub that's difficult to recycle. Juice boxes, which contain six layers of paper, plastic, and aluminum foil, are expensive to recycle, although some ads claimed that the boxes were as easy to recycle as newspapers. In a 1991 article covering the same territory for adults, *Consumer Reports* noted that when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency put out a consumers' handbook suggesting re-using and repairing items instead of buying new ones, choosing durables over disposables, and buying products with the least wasteful packaging, pressure form industries with major interests in household and disposable products (e.g., Procter and Gamble, Scott Paper Co., the Sweetheart Cup Co., and the Foodservice and Packaging Institute) caused the pamphlet to be withdrawn. Coors Brewing Company announced donations of small grants to local water-cleanup projects at the same time it was being assessed \$150,000 in penalties for violating Colorado's water-pollution laws.

Not surprisingly, corporations have decided that a little money spent in the schools goes a long way. Environmentalists in Mendocino County, California were incensed last month when Georgia-Pacific Corporation, which is under attack for alleged rainforest destruction and is involved in the timber wars of the American West, produced a play called "Tree Wishes" to which schoolchildren were bused for large assemblies. The play showed how happy the trees were to be cut down to provide books for children. The American Petroleum Institute has contributed money to create a coastal and off-shore oil curriculum for schools in the area. Betty Ball of the Mendocino Environmental Center attributes both efforts to the Wise Use Movement. This is a national coalition of resource extractive industries that has formed to fight the environmental movement.



Michael Williams, organizational director of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, which helps more than seven thousand grass-roots groups connect with each other, lamented the fact that many environmental groups don't have the resources to make an impact in the schools as they would like. On the other hand, he ticked off the names of large toxic-waste dumpers -- Laidlaw, Browning Ferris Industries, and Waste Management, Inc., for example -- that have funded school education programs in areas where they have facilities.

Williams also noted that children are engaged in hundreds of local efforts to stop dumping, decrease wasteful packaging, and otherwise save the planet. And why not? Comic books, children's magazines, games, toys, tapes, all tell them that they can help save the Earth.

The results often surprise adults. **Buzzworm:** The Environmental Journal checked with five groups that coordinate rainforest preservation programs and found that four of them received the majority of their funding from schoolchildren. Fifty checks from elementary schools may not equal one foundation grant, but the numbers speak of a lot of enthusiasm.

"Children are amazingly resourceful" at raising money, Daniel Katz, executive director of the Rainforest Alliance told me. "We have received tens of thousands of dollars from children all over the country." One group staged a Hop-A-Thon, garnering pledges for how long individuals could hop. Katz recalled that a few years ago his organization thought that time was too short to educate children because the rainforests would be gone by the time the children were old enough to do anything. "Then we realized how much children influence their parents."

Consumer Activism

It was the day that my children got a Discover the Rain Forest activity book in their McDonald's Happy Meal that my antennae went up. Even if you haven't downed a Happy Meal recently you're probably aware that McDonald's has done a lot to refurbish its image as corporate paper and plastic profligate. Consumer boycotts to protest polystyrene packaging hurt McDonald's public relations so much that the company worked out an agreement with the Environmental Defense Fund by which it is phasing in a program of waste reduction that has meant good-bye to the

styrofoam packaging and much other waste.

So why the rainforest book? Many rainforest activists are trying to raise consumer awareness that cheap beef is raised on grazing land that was once rainforest. Much of this beef is bought by fast food chains. They urge children to cut their consumption of fast food hamburgers. Other groups focus on alternative uses of rainforest land and development of

McDonald's continues to buy beef raised on lands that were once rainforests.

alternative industries. Thus, an organization called Cultural Survival urges consumers to "boycott" products that don't despoil the rainforest, such as Brazil nuts. Ben and Jerry's markets a confection called Rainforest Crunch.

Although it continues to buy beef raised on lands that were once rainforests, McDonald's has teamed up with corporate-backed environmental groups to appear to be conscious of rainforest destruction.

Williams points to the anti-polystyrene campaign as a good example of consumer activism. "It wouldn't have worked to have just passed a law forbidding the use of polystyrene," he believes.

Mothers and Others for Pesticide Limits, which as Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet recently spun off from the Natural Resources Defense Fund, led the fight to remove the pesticide Alar from apples, providing another close-to-the-bone success story for young apple juice and applesauce guzzlers.

Children are becoming like little thought police, wryly observes veteran organizer Steve Max. "They get so much information in school about saving the Earth that you don't dare use the wrong kind of container or forget to recycle cans." However, Max worries, that at least from what he's seen, there is "never a word on who's to blame."

What About the Workers?

There's also rarely any word on labor. As we wandered through the simulated rainforest in the children's museum that day of the rubber stamp, I read the text of the children's bestseller on which the exhibit was based (The Great Kapok Tree, by Lynne Cherry). A lone worker -- an indigenous person in some unnamed Latin American country -- sets out into the woods to chop trees. He is about to work but is



tired and falls asleep. In his dream, animals from the rainforest visit him and plead with him to save their environment. He wakes up and returns home, leaving the trees uncut. Certainly the story wouldn't have been as visually interesting if it had focused on an Anglo executive of a multinational being visited by ghosts of rainforests past, present, and future, but I did wonder what that worker was going to tell his hungry family.

A very good manual, For Our Kids' Sake: How to Protect Your Child Against Pesticides in Food, published by Mothers and Others, contains solid information on pesticides and twenty-six recommendations for pressuring the EPA to make our fruits and vegetables safer. No mention is made of the adults and children working in and living near those fields. This, despite an ongoing boycott of California table grapes by the United Farmworkers precisely over the issue of pesticides. There are other groups that work on this, M&O Outreach Director Betsy Lyden told me. Besides, she argued, if the acceptable pesticide level for children is reduced, farmworkers will have less exposure, too.

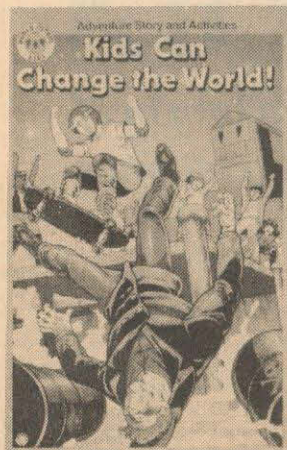
Members of my generation grew up thinking that only we could prevent forest fires

because only we started them. Children today have a wider range of information available to them and a broader sense of possibilities. When then-twelve-year-old Kory Johnson's mother spearheaded a successful campaign in Phoenix, Arizona, against a toxic waste incinerator, Kory started a group called Kids Against Pollution and now travels the country helping other young people get organized.

Our children have the energy and the optimism to change the world. They're getting information from all sides. And all sides can take advantage of their openness. Will their activism stop at green consumerism or can we help them, and ourselves, to make choices and engage in activities that link us to the global family? Will we let Corporate America divert them with talking trees and furry friends?

On vacation, Steve Max pulled into a roadside McDonald's. Eight-year-old Kimberly, who had learned the ecological 4 R's at natural history camp, looked around and announced that she wouldn't eat in a place that used such wasteful packaging. "We learned the four R's," she said: "Reduce, Re-Use Recycle, REFUSE. Daddy, we can refuse!" And so can we all. ■

Maxine Phillips is Managing Editor of Dissent.



McClanahan Book Company, Inc.

Working to Save Our Environment

The publications and networks listed below are a small sampling of organizations working to save our environment. Some have specific programs for children; others are useful for adults' self-education.

PUBLICATIONS

Boycott Action News appears as part of the Co-op America Quarterly magazine, 2100 M Street NW, Suite 403, Washington, DC 20037. Membership in Co-op America is \$25 per year.

Everyone's Backyard, published by the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, P.O. Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040. The Clearinghouse grew out of the Love Canal organizing. The newsletter goes to all who pay the \$25 membership fee.

50 Simple Things Kids Can Do To Save the Earth, Scholastic, Inc., 1991. This is available in many bookstores. It was originally put out by the Earthworks Group, 1400 Shattuck Avenue, #25, Berkeley, CA 94709.

P3, "The Earth-based Magazine for Kids," P.O. Box 52, Montgomery, VT 05470.

TLC, "truly loving care for our kids and our planet," is published by Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet. Keeps readers up-to-date on hazards to children and describes activities parents can do with their children. Newsletter is a benefit of family membership in the Natural Resources Defense Council, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011.

COMPUTER NETWORK

ECONET has a fifty-page printout of educational programs on the environment. If you can find an environmental group that subscribes, you can access it. If you want to subscribe yourself, write to 18 DeBoom Street, San Francisco, CA 94187. Cost is \$15 to join, \$10 monthly (includes one free hour of non-peak time) plus the cost of additional time in the network.

ORGANIZATIONS, PROJECTS, AND CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, Box 5558, Everett, WA 98201. Classrooms adopt a local stream and learn how to study its ecology.

Earth, Sea, and Sky, Box 40047, Portland, OR 97240, puts out an integrated curriculum on the environment.

Environmental Defense Fund, 257 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010, has targeted nine critical environmental issues of the 1990s, from the greenhouse effect to clean water.

The Rainforest Alliance, 270 Lafayette Street, Suite 512, New York, NY 10012 promotes "economically viable and socially desirable" alternatives to tropical deforestation. It offers six grassroots projects that people can support ranging from saving El Salvador's last rainforest to sea turtles in Nicaragua.

ON THE LEFT

by Harry Fleischman

ALASKA

Alaska DSA, which has over 40 members and active groups in Juneau and Fairbanks, has started a state-wide petition drive for a state single-payer health insurance system.

CALIFORNIA

DSA locals throughout the state worked hard to defeat Proposition 166, which would have mandated a pay-or-play health care system in the state. Sacramento DSA helped to organize a Campus Labor Institute at UC Davis on November 21. San Diego DSA held a forum last month entitled "Should Progressives Vote for Clinton?" DSA's next national convention will be held in Santa Monica in November 1993.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Three members of D.C. DSA were elected as at-large members of the D.C. Democratic State Committee -- Ruth Jordan, Joslyn Williams and Rick Powell. A fourth DSAer, Richard Rausch, was defeated. The Labor Day Washington Socialist featured articles on "The Clinton Administration and Labor," which discussed labor's hopes (anti-scab legislation) and fears (free trade agreements) for the next four years.

ILLINOIS

Chicago DSA has been working on Carol Moseley Braun's campaign for U.S. Senate, which has been endorsed by DSA's Political Action Committee. In October West Suburban DSA held a forum on national health insurance.

Speaker Dennis Temple, Democratic candidate for Congress in the 13th District, joined a panel of health care experts on next steps for health care reform. . . A panel discussion featuring Frederick Pohl, DSA member and prize-winning author of many science fiction novels, and Carl Davidson, director of Networking for Democracy, discussed "Electronic Democracy: Subversive Technology or Tool of Control?" September 23.

INDIANA

The Indiana DSA has received approval from the Debs Foundation to place a bronze plaque honoring Michael Harrington at the Eugene V. Debs Home/Museum in Terre Haute. . . Indianapolis DSA held a teach-in October 18 on "Poverty in America," which featured a video presentation of Michael Harrington's "New American Poverty."

KANSAS

DSAer James Phillips, Jr. won the Democratic primary for District Judge in Wichita despite red-baiting and race-baiting. Sadly, he narrowly lost the general election.

KENTUCKY

The Kentucky Socialist Banner reports that Kentucky's health care reform agenda is moving forward, with the governor, State Senator Benny Ray Bailey, and the Louisville Courier Journal all pressing for quick action. Central Kentucky DSA, along with Central Kentuckians for Health Security, have held public forums to move the debate forward. . . CKDSA is holding a series of events entitled "CKDSA Engages the Issues." The first dealt with Columbus.

NEW YORK

Nassau DSA met November 8 for post-election planning. . . New York City DSA will present the 1992 Paul DuBrul award to Ruth and Victor Sidel at a gala tribute at the Village Gate on Monday, December

7. Victor Sidel is a past president of the American Public Health Association. Ruth Sidel, a sociology professor at Hunter College, wrote Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America. . . New York DSA helped Bob Abrams win the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate and Jim Brennan's reelection drive for State Assembly. . . The local has nearly doubled in size in the last few years and become more active than ever.

OHIO

Bob Fittrakis, co-chair of DSA of Central Ohio, ran a strong campaign as the Democratic candidate for Congress in the 12th District. He pulled in 29 percent of the vote. Fittrakis was supported by NOW, NARAL, the state AFL-CIO, the Teamsters and Painters, and many other groups. This was just the latest electoral effort by Central Ohio DSA. In 1991, DSA member Mary Jo Kilroy was elected to the Columbus school board. In 1990, DSAer Tom Erney's aggressive grassroots campaign for U.S. Congress, spending only \$16,000, netted 41 percent of the vote against a 24-year incumbent.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh DSA was heavily involved in the Lynn Yeakel's campaign for U.S. Senate. . . The Allegheny Socialist reports that the National Religion and Socialism Commission met in Pittsburgh in late October. An outreach event there featured John Cort, author of Christian Socialism, and singer-songwriter Andrew Hammer with his "revolutionary Christian socialist" rock band The Noise. . . DSA joined with Pittsburgh labor and community leaders in backing the Teamsters and other unions in the fight against the Pittsburgh Press, which was forced to suspend its effort to publish with scab labor after 5,000 angry workers and community supporters surrounded the Press.

Willy Brandt Represented the Best of the Socialist Movement



BY BOGDAN DENITCH

Willy Brandt, 1913-1992

In the early thirties, a young German left-socialist adopted the underground name of Willy Brandt, a name he kept as he worked in the anti-Nazi movement after Hitler had come to power. This was the name by which he was to be increasingly well known. Willy Brandt, who died on October 8, 1992, was typical of the best that the mass socialist movement produced. He was a journalist, party activist, and intellectual. Brought up by a single-parent family and of working class origin, he was educated entirely by the social-democratic movement. After he was forced to flee a Germany in which the early concentration camps were filled with Communists, Socialists, and Trade Unionists, he lived in Norway until the Nazi invasion made him move on to Sweden. Thus his second major political experience was as a socialist journalist and writer in exile, making a home in the Scandinavian mass social-democratic movement: he even became a Norwegian citizen.

These experiences, which had made Willy Brandt far less parochial and more cosmopolitan than most socialist leaders, were to be used against him repeatedly in the politics of post-war West Germany. He had, after all, returned to a defeated Germany in a foreign uniform as part of the Norwegian military mission to a divided Berlin. His Christian Democratic opponents implied that he had been somehow unpatriotic to fight against his country from exile, even when his country had been ruled by

a monstrous genocidal tyranny. There was always a tension in the post-war German social-democratic movement between internationalism and the stress on national roots; Willy Brandt symbolized that duality.

Brandt became the vastly popular mayor of West Berlin, who ably organized the city's defiance against Soviet attempts to strangle this island of democracy within the territory of their most faithful satellite, East Germany. As a symbol of West Berlin's resistance, he represented the opposition of social-democracy to the expansion of Communist tyranny. On the other hand, Brandt was also the author of two major and radical departures for German social-democracy. He organized the "grand coalition," which brought the Social Democratic party into a governing partnership with the Christian Democrats and Liberals, thus making the SPD from that time forward a legitimate governing party in Germany. He also initiated and developed the policy of constructive engagement in Eastern Europe and with the Soviet Union known as *Ostpolitik*. He had the political courage to imagine a day when the cold war would be over and when Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would no longer be divided from the rest of Europe by a curtain which represented a political chasm.

The policy of constructive engagement involved great political risks in a West Germany that saw itself as the most loyal ally of the United States in the conflict between the two

superpowers. Moreover, in a West Germany with over twelve million bitter refugees from Eastern Europe, it took courage to renounce any aspirations to change the borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia. Brandt not only had the necessary courage, he was also capable of moral grandeur and nobility. He, who of all people did not need to do so, kneeled in contrition before the monument to the Warsaw ghetto. That was a gesture made for all of his German fellow citizens, who did need to kneel, but could not imagine doing so.

Willy Brandt was the first Social-Democratic Chancellor of the Federal German Republic, and helped develop his country into an advanced welfare state. He presided over a movement that was no longer even reformist, in the classic sense that it sought socialism albeit through the parliamentary road of gradual reforms. Since Bad Godesberg the German SPD had become a party committed to a mixed economy and an advanced welfare state; socialism was no longer a part of the program even as a distant promise. The SPD is, however, the most powerful defender of democracy and egalitarianism in Europe, and it has helped rebuild the Socialist International.

Brandt spent his last decades as the most important figure in the international democratic socialist movement. As its President, he led the expansion of the Socialist International

beyond its traditional European base by affiliating new parties from the South, from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. With the collapse of the world Communist movement, the International remains the only worldwide organization of labor, social-democratic, and reformist parties. Brandt and his two old comrades and close friends, Palme from Sweden and Kreisky from Austria, were the soul of a revived International. Together, they produced the "Brandt Commission Report," which focused the attention of the world community and the U.N. to the intolerable, growing gap between the industrialized North and an ever poorer South. This remains the highest priority in an increasingly unequal world.

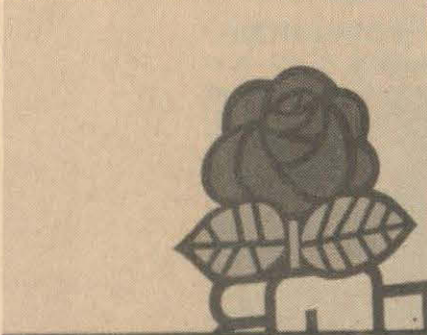
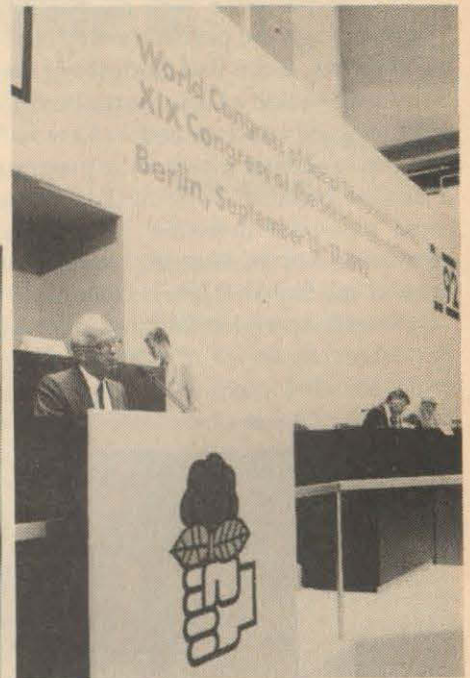
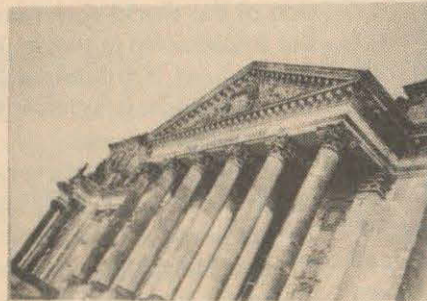
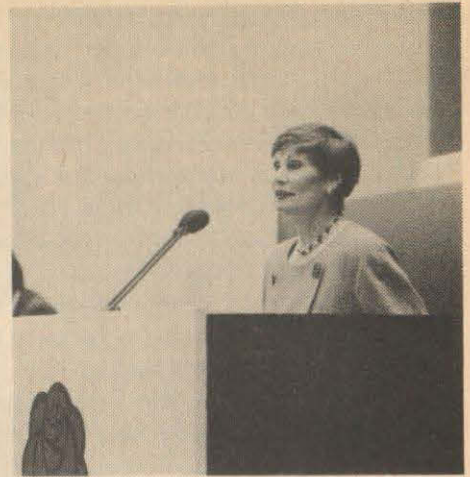
Willy Brandt was a good friend of DSA and helped it become an affiliate to the Socialist International. He was a personal friend of Michael Harrington, and remembered Michael at a mass meeting DSA organized during the Council of the Socialist International in New York in October 1990. As he then said of Michael Harrington, "We miss you, Michael, and need you now," democratic socialists throughout the world will say of Willy Brandt. He was flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone and represented the best of our movement. DL

Bogdan Denitch is a Vice-Chair of DSA and Chair of the International Affairs Committee.



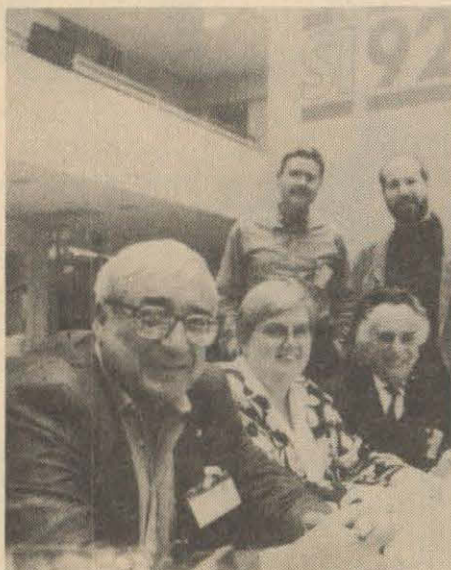
Willy Brandt and Michael Harrington at the Socialist International Congress, 1978

SI 92 BERLIN



In the high-drama setting of the German Reichstag, Socialist International parties met to elect new leadership and to confront the challenges of global economic integration, expand the struggle for peace and continue the demand for freedom throughout the world. Reflecting the diversity created during the sixteen year leadership of Willy Brandt, this Congress affirmed its commitment to north-south equality, sustainable development, and human rights. New parties, including the Party of the Democratic Left in Italy, joined the International.

For a copy of the resolutions passed by the Socialist International Congress and by the Socialist International Women Conference, send \$10 to DSA, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, NY, NY 10038.



Pictured (clockwise from upper left): Pierre Mauroy, President, Socialist International; Audrey McLaughlin, Leader, New Democratic Party of Canada; Itzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel; Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway; Mikhail Gorbachev.

Left: the DSA delegation: Bogdan Denitch, Chair; Chris Riddiough, Vice-President, Socialist International Women; Motl Zelmanowicz; Jose LaLuz; Michael Lighty; not pictured: Jo-Ann Mort, Penny Schantz.

Photos: Fotograf Werner Weitzel

From the Desk of Willy Brandt

Unkel, September 14, 1992

Dear Friends,

Need I say how much I would like to have been with you today? But it was not to be and so I must send you my greetings in writing. Need I say how happy and proud I am that you are meeting in Berlin?

Any number of venues in the new democracies in the East would have been worthy meeting places. But why shouldn't I admit it? I was very moved when Felipe Gonzalez suggested Berlin. And why shouldn't I add that I felt that if it was to be Berlin, we should meet in the Reichstag: that place in Germany where war and peace in Europe has so often been at issue. The place where freedom and subjugation have so often been debated. A while ago I asked that the leadership of our International be placed in younger hands. I had been at its head for sixteen years and I felt that this was a long time. But after all, what are sixteen years in light of the centuries of tradition in which we stand? And yet in this short time this city, this country and this whole continent have changed.

In fact, the whole world is not the same world as it was in 1976 when I took up this office in Geneva. To secure peace was not our only aim, but it was our first priority. Peace between two blocs that were armed with nuclear weapons and which we thought were firmly entrenched. The peace without freedom could not be attained. Today, only one and a half decades later, we are no longer concerned about securing that peace: we are concerned about restoring peace at all in many places in this extensively liberated and yet so disturbed world.

The parties that have gathered together in our community are committed to their countries and their countries have a commitment to the world - to their part and to the whole. The fact that we have expanded beyond Europe and have become a truly world-wide and thus also diverse community, affords me - us - special satisfaction. However, the number of members we have and the number of those wishing to become members, are not values in themselves, but an obligation.

Whenever people are caused great suffering it concerns us all. Don't forget: if injustice is permitted to continue for long, this is opening the door to future injustices. Strengthening the United Nations has been one of our old and familiar goals. Now that progress is beginning to be made and the UN is gaining influence, if not power, it is worth making a great effort. Let us help to provide the United Nations with the means it needs to exert influence. Even after the start of the new era in 1989 and 1990 the world could not be only "good". However, now as at no other time in the past, a multitude of possibilities (both good and bad) are open to us. Nothing happens on its own - and few things last forever. So remember your strength and that all times call for their own answers. We must keep abreast of them if we are to achieve good.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped. I hope that your deliberations will be fruitful. May my successor be blessed with the strength and good fortune he deserves.

WILLY BRANDT
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

Organizing

Socialist Feminists to Meet in D.C.

Join DSA members and friends at the first socialist feminist conference to be held in recent years. Discussion will include formulation of a new agenda facing the last decade of the century with new women in office and the incoming Clinton Administration. The program will include panels on "Beyond the Year of the Women: Implications for a Feminist Agenda," "Sex vs. Sexuality: Drafting the Agenda," "Breaking Bread: Can We be Part of a Multi-Racial Women's Movement," and "Multi-Generational Perspectives on Socialist Feminism." Workshops will address leadership development skills and strategies for setting a socialist feminist agenda. For more information, contact the DSA Feminist Commission at (202) 829-6155 or send your registration fee with name and address to the commission at 5123 Fifth Street NW, Washington DC 20011-4040. Registration is \$25 before January 1.

Our First Hundred Days: DSA Sends Priority Messages to President-elect Clinton

DSA members across the country are responding to a "priority message campaign" directed toward President-elect Bill Clinton and the Democratic leadership in the U.S. House and Senate. The messages demand action to solve the health care crisis by adopting the single-payer system, to build affordable housing through a jobs program, to address the urban crisis through community development banks, and to guarantee reproductive rights by enacting the Freedom of Choice Act. This effort will be followed by a national postcard campaign urging Clinton's support for universal coverage, cost control, and comprehensive benefits through a single-payer health system. Thus begins the hard part: building a movement to demand our kind of change.

West Coast Socialist Scholars Conference Calls for Papers

With the 1992 Los Angeles uprising reflecting the pervasive disintegration of society after 12 years of reactionary government, and with the recent election of "new" Democrat Bill Clinton, it is imperative (once again) that the socialist movement respond with intellect and action. Please send proposals for papers or panel discussions concerning the relevance of a socialist perspective to emerging new majorities and to the vital issues of class, race, gender and ecology by January 15, 1993. Mail your proposals to: Socialist Community School, L.A. DSA, P.O. Box 77027-161, Pasadena, CA 91117-6921, or contact Katie Sheldon at 310-451-8934 for more information.

Results

Columbus DSAer Bob Fittrakis took 29 percent of the vote in his U.S. House race. His openly socialist campaign energized and brought together progressives from throughout Central Ohio. DSA activist Rachel Dewey achieved exciting things in a losing effort for a California state senate seat. She took 45 percent of the vote, while the incumbent won with 49; she spent \$12,000 to the incumbent's \$200,000. DSAer Beverly Stein, Oregon State Legislator in Portland, was re-elected strongly. Cleveland DSAer Terri Burgess managed a hugely successful re-election bid by Ohio state representative C.J. Prentiss, who won by 26,500 votes to 4100.

Resources

❖ **Your Money or Your Health**, by Neil Rolde. A penetrating look at America's Health Care Crisis, and a persuasive case for comprehensive reform, articulated with clarity and compassion by a seasoned state legislator. Available from Paragon House, 90 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011; phone: 212-620-2831. (\$23.95 cloth).

❖ **How to Resolve the Health Care Crisis**, by the editors of Consumer Reports. This comprehensive guide to the debate over health care reform provides data and analysis to support demands for universal coverage, quality care and cost control through a single-payer system. Available through the DSA office for \$5: 212-962-0390.

Building a Broader Environmental Movement

BY CHRISTINE R. RIDDIOUGH

The current wave of environmentalist activism contains an important but little-noticed division. The major national environmentalist organizations, on the one hand, and local "grassroots" groups on the other, tend to have quite different goals, constituencies and interests. These differences often reflect questions of race, class, and gender, and it is important for progressive activists to understand them.

Many of the national environmental organizations embrace a perspective that values nature for itself and for its use to human beings. These groups have often grown out of affluent communities that have the leisure and the resources to visit natural parks, to hunt and fish, and to enjoy the natural beauty of the world. Protecting wilderness and nature, from this perspective, is a spiritual necessity, an antidote to modern living.

National and grassroots environmental organizations have developed different priorities based on a scientific understanding of the interrelationship and interdependence among parts of the natural world. National groups with this perspective warn of the imminent doom of the planet because of our exploitation of nature and skyrocketing human population. Grassroots environmental groups, on the other

hand, are concerned with the ways in which environmental degradation affects their communities and families. Different perspectives and priorities are reflected in the constituencies of the organizations and in the issues they address. For many national organizations, the core constituencies are middle class, well-educated, and white. The leaders of these organizations are men. These are people for whom making "sacrifices" to protect the environment (putting a cover on their water heater or buying \$20 energy efficient light bulbs) is not much of a sacrifice at all. Their priorities tend to include concern over decreasing biodiversity, global warming, protection of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge and saving ancient forests. The African American Environmentalist Association have shown that the failure of the national groups to involve people of color in their organizations is an important reason why the issues of concern to people of color are not on the agenda of these groups.

In contrast, grassroots environmental groups tend to be more diverse in their memberships and leaderships. Many local activists are women and people of color. These groups tend to focus more on hazardous waste sites and the impact they might have on their neighborhoods, air pollution and what it does to

their kids in the schoolyard, and the occupational impacts of pollutants. Primarily in grassroots groups, people of color and feminists have in recent years challenged the national environmental movement to look beyond the issues of parks, recreation, and wildlife to a perspective that links environmental issues with a range of social and economic justice questions. In making this challenge, these new constituencies have also begun to raise issues and promote analysis that we as democratic socialists must consider in developing our agenda.

Energy, Environment and Social Justice

Among the policies proposed by many national environmental groups to move the U.S. away from its reliance on fossil fuels--and thus reduce the threat of global warming--are carbon taxes and energy efficiency programs. Each of these programs might encourage the use of alternatives to these fuels, but each of them, if considered in isolation from social justice concerns, would have potentially devastating impacts on some communities. Real solutions to the problem of fossil fuel reliance and global warming would enhance the quality of life for many in these communities.

Carbon taxes would be imposed on energy based on the carbon content of the fuel. Coal and oil would be subject to high taxes, while wind energy would have very little tax placed on it. Ultimately this tax, though imposed on the utility or oil company, would be passed along to the consumer. Like sales taxes, carbon taxes are regressive--low income people would pay a larger proportion of their income in taxes than upper income people. Although tax credits for lower income families might offset the regressivity, there are no guarantees that these and similar proposals would be locked in with the carbon tax. For low income people, the cure proposed by the national environmental groups might well be worse than the illness.

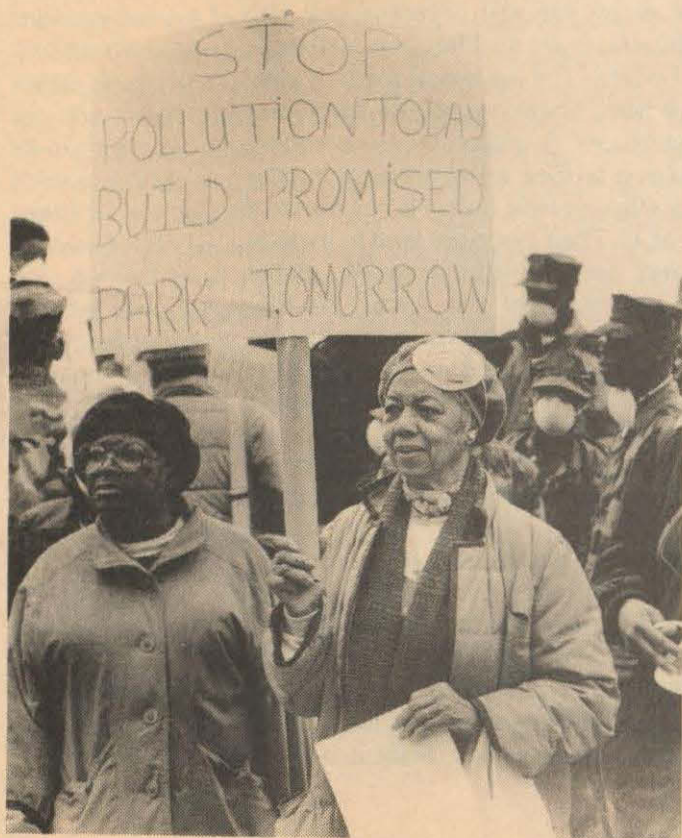
Investing in energy efficiency programs is a more attractive partial solution to the problems of U.S. reliance on fossil fuel. The most exciting program of this kind is that of Osage, Iowa, where the municipal utility has provided free to customers, a range of programs to encourage energy efficiency. In proposing individualistic solutions as a way to increase energy efficiency, many environmental groups put the goal out of reach for low income people. They ignore one of the strengths of the Osage program: The utility is municipally owned and its energy efficiency services are provided to customers as part of its overall mission.

So far, national environmental organizations have only begun to address this intersection of issues. Much more can and must be done. In the case of energy, alternatives to the carbon tax must be found or else those taxes must be made progressive. They must be linked to programs that make energy efficiency measures, mass transit and job retraining an integral and accessible solution for all people.

Ecofeminism, Women and the Environment

Just as people of color are challenging the environmental movement to address social justice issues, so too are a new generation of ecofeminists. This ecofeminism addresses the relationship of women to nature as it has developed historically, the relationship of women to power, and the connections between them.

The issues that national environmental groups address often ignore concerns of women, while the solutions proposed may conflict with women's rights. For example, population programs have historically been run by men, and have concentrated on providing birth control to women in developing countries. For many in the population movement,



David Vitis/Impact Visuals

limiting population size is primarily about limiting women's fertility, but for women the decision to have children is complex, involving not only reproductive choices, but poverty, education and health. Studies have shown that the single strongest correlating factor in family size is the educational status of women--the more access women have to education, the fewer children they are likely to have. Yet few of the population programs have begun to deal with the poverty and oppression that limit women's opportunities. Until women make the policies and run the programs, they cannot be successful, because they won't address the real issues that affect women's lives.

Closely related to the population question is that of resource depletion. In making decisions about these issues, the focus of most international agencies focus on men. Yet, in Africa, women are responsible for producing 70 percent of the continent's food; in Peru, 86 percent; and in the world as a whole, women produce about half the food. Most agricultural advisors, however, are men, and most of the people they advise are also men. Women receive less than 1 percent of UN aid. In policy-making positions in the United Nations and in individual nation states, women have little voice. At the UN "Earth Summit" in Rio in June, very few nations were represented by women. Eco-feminist organizations such as the Women's Environment and Development Organization have begun to put these questions on the agenda. They have shown that unless women's role in the economy of third world and industrialized countries is acknowledged, until women are empowered in development and environment programs, change cannot happen.

Eco-Socialist-Feminism: Sustainable Development for the Future

Democratic socialists can learn from the environmental movement among people of color and from ecofeminists. An eco-socialist-feminist policy based on the work of those movements would recognize that environmental protection without environmental justice simply reinforces our society's class, race, and gender inequalities. It would acknowledge that policies at the local and the international level have to be made and carried out by the people affected or those policies will fail.

The sustainable development policies put forward by the Brundtland Commission are a first step in that direction. That commission, established by the United Nations and chaired



Kirk Annaples/Impact Visuals

by Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, linked environmental protection to economic analysis and showed the connection between poverty and environmental degradation. Its concept of development is broader than simple economic growth; it includes educational attainment, nutritional status, and access to liberty. Its emphasis on sustainability connects its perspectives to those of ecologists who are concerned about the connection between humans and other living creatures. It recognized that human beings are a part of the world and not simply the masters of it; our development as human beings depends on a careful marshalling of the world's resources.

The next step in this effort is to link the principles of sustainable development with eco-feminist perspectives on women, nature, and empowerment. Unless sustainable development policies are developed and implemented by those whom they affect, the policies will fail. By speaking out on these issues, DSA can begin to promote a new agenda for progressive environmentalists. **DL**

Christine Riddiough is Chair of the DSA Feminist Commission, a member of the National Political Committee, and a Vice-President of Socialist International Women.

DSA Commissions

■ **African American Commission**

Cornel West, *chair*
Shakoor Aljuwani, *convenor*
Lynne Mosely, *convenor*
(212) 962-0390
newsletter: *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*
P.O. Box 162394
Sacramento CA 95816
subscription: \$15/year

■ **Anti-Racism Commission**

Duane Campbell, *chair*
P.O. Box 162394
Sacramento CA 95816
newsletter: *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*
membership: \$15/year
(includes subscription)

■ **Environmental Commission**

Mark Schaeffer, *convenor*
J. Hughes, *newsletter editor*
c/o Chicago DSA
1608 N. Milwaukee, 4th floor
Chicago IL 60607
(312)752-3562
newsletter: *EcoSocialist Review*
subscription: \$8/year

■ **Feminist Commission**

Christine R. Riddiough, *chair*
Lisa Foley, *vice chair*
5123 Fifth Street, NW
Washington DC 20011
newsletter: *Not Far Enough*
subscription: \$10/year

■ **Labor Commission**

Gene Vanderport, *convenor*
Box 300A RR4
Danville IL 61832

■ **Latino Commission**

Tomasa Gonzalez, *co-chair*
José LaLuz, *co-chair*
Duane Campbell, *secretary*
P.O. Box 162394
Sacramento CA 95816
newsletter: *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*
membership: \$15/year
(includes subscription)

■ **Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission**

R.J. Hinde, *co-chair*
Claire Kaplan, *co-chair*
c/o Chicago DSA
1608 N. Milwaukee, 4th floor
Chicago IL 60607
(312)752-3562
membership: \$15/year
newsletter: *Socialism and Sexuality*
subscription: \$8/year

■ **Religion & Socialism Commission**

Rev. Judith Deutsch, *co-chair*
Andrew Hammer, *co-chair*
Jack Spooner, *newsletter editor*
P.O. Box 80
Camp Hill PA 17001
membership: \$12/year
(includes newsletter)
newsletter: *Religious Socialism*
subscription: \$7.50/year

West Harlem

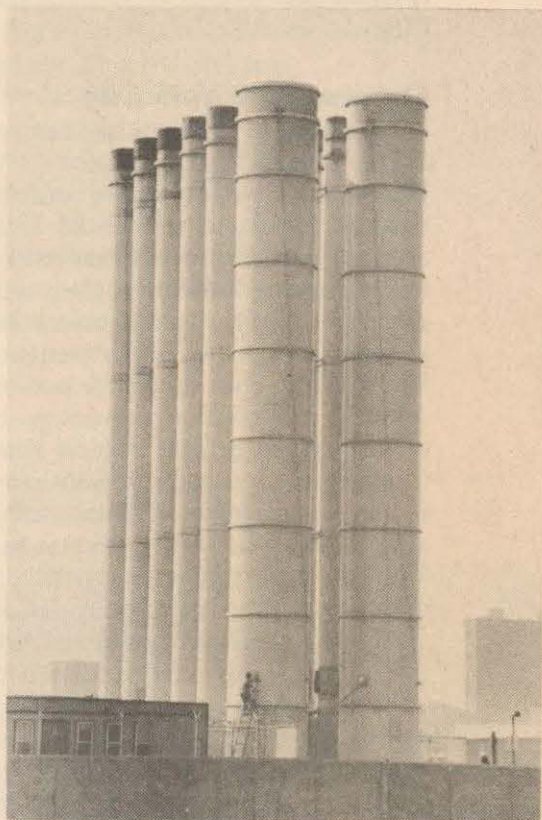
Environmental Action

Fighting for Justice

BY JILL GREENBERG

The environmental concerns of people of color living in urban America are much closer to home than those of traditional environmental organizations in the U.S. Within their communities, African-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans and other people of color are overburdened by environmental hazards, lead pollution, and deteriorating open space from sewage treatment plants, landfills, illegal dump sites and factories belching tons of toxics into the air. Yet, according to a recent Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ) report, a prevalent public perception exists that people of color are uninterested in the environment and are not active in addressing these issues. As a result, they are generally excluded from participating in the decision-making process where their immediate environment is concerned. So activists from Harlem to Los Angeles, and West Dallas to the South Bronx and Detroit are empowering racial and ethnic communities by fighting back with skills gained during years of labor, civil rights and self-determination battles--using political action, education and litigation.

In a recent book, Dr. Robert D. Bullard, a professor of sociology at the University of California, Riverside, describes the environmental equity movement, which addresses issues like toxics and workplace hazards that disproportionately impact lower income communities and communities of color, as an extension of the social justice movement. Institutionalized discrimination in government practices, zoning and land-use policies, along with economically regressive environmental policies is seen as leading to distributional inequities in the siting of facilities. This is environmental racism. In a recent issue of *E Magazine* (May/June 1992), Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr., CRJ's executive director, described environmental racism as "racial discrimination in environ-



F.M. Kearney/Impact Visuals.

mental policy-making and the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of people of color communities for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership in the environmental movement."

Clear-cut evidence of environmental racism has been documented. For example, according to the U.S. General Accounting Office, in eight Southern states, African-Americans made up the majority of the community in three of the four communities where commercial landfills were located and at least 26 percent of the population in each community had income below the poverty level. The United Church of Christ's Commission on Racial Justice's landmark study, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States," concluded that three out of every five Latino- and African-Americans were living in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites.

Predictably, there is a disturbing correlation between environmental abuses and respiratory health problems in communities of color and low-income communities. This trend doesn't appear to be abating. Last year asthma was the fifth leading cause of death in Harlem, the second most common cause of hospitalization for adults in Harlem, and the leading cause of childhood hospital admissions in New York City.

Focus on New York City

Historically, Harlem has had some of the highest levels of air pollution in Manhattan because multiple sources are concentrated in a densely populated residential area. Odors abound from a notorious ten-block-long municipal sewage treatment plant with serious design flaws, a garbage transfer station, a major arterial highway, and a crematorium that was recently shut down for non-compliance with city air pollution ordinances. In fact, out of six city bus garages in New York, five are located in Harlem and on a daily basis spew out noxious diesel fumes. Compounding the situation is excessive noise pollution from nearby highway and commuter rail traffic, and no access to an adjacent scenic riverside park.

West Harlem Environmental Action (WHE Act) was founded in the mid-1980s in response to the problems surrounding the malodorous sewage treatment plant on the Hudson River in Harlem. Twenty years ago the project for additional sewage treatment capacity on Manhattan's West Side was originally slated to be constructed further south along the Hudson River near the 79th Street Boat Basin and adjacent to a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood. However, organized community opposition ultimately led to a different political decision. . . .to push the site upriver to West Harlem. According to Peggy Shepard, a co-founder of WHE Act and a Democratic district leader in Harlem (her recent run for NY State Assembly was enthusiastically endorsed by the NY DSA local and many of us actively participated in her campaign from the only reform club in Harlem), this is a textbook case of environmental racism. Despite the \$1.3 billion spent to build the plant, which began operating six years ago, this major capital project provided almost no jobs to the Harlem or Northern Manhattan communities.

Shepard and another co-founder, activist Vernice Miller, have been instrumental in educating Harlem residents in the on-going struggle, lobbying government agencies, and

organizing demonstrations to get media attention. Plus they have had several well-deserved successes when fighting city hall. Community opposition to the sewage plant has resulted in a \$50 million commitment from New York City to correct design flaws. The local environmental protection agency, under state mandate, will soon begin an extensive plant-based and community-based air quality monitoring program to determine the extent and type of air pollutants affecting West Harlem residents.

In June of this year WHE Act, the Natural Resources Defense Council, community organizations and individuals joined together to file a lawsuit in State Supreme Court to fight the sewage odors and the plant's overcapacity problems, attempt to force NYC to comply with its commitment to repair the treatment plant, and guarantee their right to breathe clean air. Shepard stressed that a legal commitment was needed and "the only way to get it is through the courts." The community's anger over the severe odor problem is exacerbated by the fact that a huge commercial and residential development planned for the upper West Side of Manhattan by the developer, Donald Trump, is scheduled to hook up to this plant, which is now operating at overcapacity. The New York City Planning Commission unanimously approved the plan for development (the papers called it a "love-fest") and took City environmental officials' word that the treatment facility in Harlem could easily accommodate the flow from this mammoth site.

So, while West Harlem struggles to build affordable housing, luxury developments a few miles to the south threaten Harlem's economic renewal and dump even more sewage into a severely-taxed plant.

Looking Towards the Future

In September 1991 a series of hearings was convened by the New York State Assembly to explore the effects of environmental policies, practices and conditions on low-income communities and communities of color across New York State. During the hearings, community activists, who have lived their lives as victims of environmental degradation and benign neglect, identified poor planning and lax enforcement as directly contributing to the severe deterioration in their communities.

At the conclusion of the hearings, the State Assembly issued a series of recommendations to be acted upon. These included: 1) establish a Task Force on Environmental Equity, 2) add a survey of the socioeconomic character and

the current environmental burden of the host community to the State's siting and permitting process, 3) research on health and safety impacts of environmental burdens in communities of color should become a priority of state and local agencies, 4) national environmental organizations and State government should provide training grants within communities of color to establish activist environmental action groups, and 5) an environmental education curriculum must be developed to encourage adolescents of color to consider careers in environmental service.

The following legislative initiatives have been proposed by Sam Sue, a staff attorney of the Charter Rights Project of the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest "to redress the overconcentration of hazardous waste facilities in minority and low-income communities:"

- halt any more future sitings of hazardous facilities in oversaturated communities.

An overall Saturation Index is needed;

- consider alternative sites in non-saturated, more well-to-do communities; otherwise equitable distribution will never be achieved;

- provide residents of an area that contains the site of a proposed facility with a substantive role in the earliest stages of the planning process.

Meanwhile at the federal level, EPA must assess the distributional effects of the environmental policy making process, calculate human health impacts posed by all types of environmental hazards, and appoint experts in environmental equity at decision-making levels within the agency. This is a first step.

Environmental danger has always been an unequal opportunity employer. Workers, women, people of color, and the poor have long been disproportionately exposed to hazardous substances and various forms of pollution. These ecological inequities are part of a more general pattern of inequity in income and political power that market economies generate.

DL

Jill F. Greenberg, a DSA member and environmental health scientist, is a doctoral student in public health at Columbia University.

Resources for Organizing and Education

Local and Regional Groups

West Harlem Environmental Action (WHE Act)
529 West 145 Street, #1E
New York, NY 10031
Peggy Shepard/Vernice Miller
(212) 234-5096

Labor/Community Strategy Center
14540 Haynes Street
Van Nuys, CA 91411
Eric Mann (818) 781-4800

SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP)
1114 Seventh Street, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Richard Moore (505) 247-8832

People for Community Recovery
13116 S. Ellis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60627
Cheryl Johnson (312) 468-1645

National Groups

Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste
P.O. Box 926
Arlington, VA 22216
Lois Gibbs (202) 276-2020

United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1950
New York, NY 10115
Charles Lee, Director of Research
(212) 870-2077

El Puente Toxic Avengers
211 South 4th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11211
Louis-Garden Acosta/Jose Morales
(718) 387-0404

Citizens for a Better Environment
942 Market Street, Suite 505
San Francisco, CA 94102
Michael E. Belliveau (415) 788-0690

Books and Reports

Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality. Robert D. Bullard, Westview Press, 1990.

L.A.'s Lethal Air: New Strategies for Policy, Organizing and Action. Eric Mann with the WATCHDOG Organizing Committee, A Labor/Community Strategy Center Book, Los Angeles, 1991.

Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites. United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987.

Proceedings of the Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards. Bryant, B. and P. Mohai, eds., Westview Press, 1992

The Times, They Are A-Changin' Again?

BY MAURICE ISSERMAN

When John F. Kennedy was elected president in November 1960, he brought to a close nearly a decade of conservative Republican rule in Washington, D.C. Exuding "vigor" while avoiding specifics, the youthful Kennedy had run on the promise of "getting America moving again." In his inaugural address in January 1961, he declared that "the torch" of leadership had been passed to a "new generation."

In November 1992, Bill Clinton was swept into the White House running on equally vague promises of "change." Clinton's campaign quite consciously harkened back to the themes and issues of the Kennedy years, particularly in its use of old television footage showing Clinton as a boy shaking hands with Kennedy on the White House lawn. All of which raises some interesting questions about politics in the 1990s. Is this the return of Camelot? Can we expect a new wave of social idealism similar to the one that swept up the baby boom generation of the 1960s? Have Americans been granted another chance to refashion new frontiers and a great society, this time armed with the knowledge of past mistakes and tragedies?

The last thing John Kennedy had in mind when he took office in 1961 was presiding over the era of political, social and cultural upheaval that followed. But circumstances not of Kennedy's making and beyond his control got the country "moving again" in ways he had not intended, and ultimately swept his administration leftward toward an alliance with the civil rights movement, and a declaration of a "war

on poverty." (Other circumstances, more under his control but beyond the scope of this essay, carried Kennedy ever deeper into the Vietnam war, an adventure that would taint the legacy of both the Kennedy and the Johnson presidencies.)

The Republican defeat in 1960 enlarged the political space available for movements for peace and social justice. The Kennedy style -- brash, can-do, optimistic -- much more than the Kennedy substance, helped legitimize a questioning of the old assumptions and prejudices of American politics. Forces unleashed by Kennedy's election had their own impact on his presidency. By 1963, the Freedom Rides, the publication of *The Other America*, the Birmingham protests and the March on Washington remade John Kennedy into a different and significantly better leader than he had been when he took the oath of office in 1961.

What about Bill Clinton's presidency? Clinton, like Kennedy, enters the White House as a cautious politician, not a crusader with a bold agenda for social change. Despite the domestic emphasis of his campaign ("jobs, jobs, jobs"), his proposals for reversing the decline of American manufacturing and stemming the social hemorrhage in the cities are distinctly underwhelming. His ties with the Democratic Leadership Conference, his criticisms of federal welfare programs, and his coolness toward unions and other traditional Democratic constituencies suggest an administration that, left to its own devices, is unlikely to have much interest in shaking up the status quo. Moreover, Clinton (unlike Kennedy) in-

herits a country in serious economic trouble. No rising tide is likely to lift all boats, including the poor and people of color, in this economy. The legacy of the Reagan-Bush deficit will hang around the new president's neck (as it was, in part, designed to), discouraging any new and expensive social experiments. Both inclination and circumstance will push Clinton toward policies of managing austerity rather than building the New Jerusalem.

And yet. . . Bill Clinton "is no John Kennedy" -- which is to Clinton's credit. Clinton's formative political experiences were in the late 1960s. He was stirred by the example of the civil rights movement, and active in the anti-war movement. He gained his first practical political experience in the McGovern campaign of 1972. He resisted what must have been tremendous pressures to repudiate or explain away his opposition to the Vietnam war. Despite the self-serving nonsense propagated by the Bush campaign, Bill Clinton is by no means a "Sixties radical" wolf in sheep's clothing. But unlike Kennedy, and for that matter unlike any other American president in the twentieth century, Clinton knows what it means to stand outside the halls of power armed with nothing more than a picket sign and a social conscience. He's been the victim of red-baiting and Sixties-bashing. Those are salutary experiences for a president of the United States to have had.

What does all this mean for the prospects of the American left, particularly for democratic socialists? Historically the fortunes of the Left have been tied to those of liberal Democrats, in the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the 1960s. When they do well, we do well; when they fall from power, we get it in the neck. Even under Jimmy Carter's presidency, an era which

only looks "liberal" in comparison with the twelve years that followed, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), one of DSA's predecessor organizations, was able to triple its membership, and play an important role in influencing the debate within the Democratic party.

Just because the prospects for the Left as a whole are likely to improve in the next few years doesn't guarantee that any particular group, including the one that publishes this newsletter, will automatically be the beneficiary. The last dozen years have taken their toll on the energy, commitment, and political imagination of all of us. We may not be able to rise to the occasion. Old habits of thought, old quarrels, old disappointments, could keep DSA sidelined in the new era. Writing just after the 1960 election, a young socialist named Michael Harrington argued: "We do not see any inevitable, pre-ordained march to socialism. We do see in this America of 1960 that there are people and movements whose practical concerns take them in the direction of, if not yet to the consciousness of, democratic socialism." The practical concerns of millions of Americans in the 1990s -- health care, jobs, housing, the environment, child care, education, safe and decent neighborhoods -- are beyond the power of that great panacea of the moment, the "free market," to contend with. At the start of the Clinton presidency, there is the potential, if no guarantee, that the Left can again play a significant role in American political life. DL

Maurice Isserman, a newly elected member of the Boston DSA executive committee, is writing a biography of Michael Harrington.

APOLOGY

The DEMOCRATIC LEFT Editorial Committee regrets the publication of a greeting ad from the "youth section stodgy social democratic caucus" in the September/October issue. We apologize for its inappropriate reference to Rosa Luxemburg, and we are sorry for any offense the ad may have caused. The ad's ill-advised humor derived from a long-standing, absurd charge by Trotskyite organizations that DSA "killed" Rosa Luxemburg. In fact, Rosa Luxemburg is a hero of the socialist movement and some DSA members have named children in her honor.

CLASSIFIEDS

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE AMERICAN LEFT, now in PAPERBACK, 970pp, dozens of entries on and/or by DSA'ers. \$29.95 from University of Illinois Press. Ask your bookstore to stock it! Hardcover from Garland Press.

ACTIVISTS wanted to organize low income neighborhoods nationwide. Fight for housing, health, education. Contact ACORN, 522 8th St. SE, Washington, DC 20003 (202) 547-9292.

Classified advertising rates are \$2 per line, \$50 per column inch. Payment in advance. There is a 20% discount if ad(s) run two or more times. We reserve the right to reject ads.

MEET OTHER LEFT SINGLES through *Concerned Singles Newsletter*. Men and women who care about peace, social justice, and racial equality. National and international membership. All ages. Since 1984. Free Sample: Box 555-D, Stockbridge, MA 01262.

COMMUNITY JOBS, socially responsible job opportunities. Subscribe to the only nationwide listing covering organizing, disarmament, labor, environment, and more. \$3.50/sample. \$12/6 issues. Box D61516 P St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

DEATH ROW INMATE 15 yrs needs friends, Ron Spivey, Box 3877G4104, Jackson, GA 30233

Jimmy Higgins Reports



Housing for Seniors

DSAer Earl Bourdon, president of the New Hampshire Association for the Elderly, successfully fought for a court settlement that sets aside \$1.6 million to provide subsidies enabling lower-income elderly to live in an attractive senior housing facility, called Webster-at-Rye. The housing facility, a non-profit philanthropic corporation, was established strictly to serve the elderly poor, but until Bourdon's suit its management had been charging high rents and refusing to admit state Medicaid recipients.

Workers' Travel

As you plan your next vacation or business travel, keep the Michigan Injured Workers in mind! The MIW, breaking new ground in progressive fundraising, has launched its own travel agency. They can find competitive rates for travelers anywhere in the U.S. -- and 5 percent of the gross will go to support families of injured Michigan workers. Give them a try: contact the MIW, c/o Avia Travel, 3379 Fort Street, Wyandotte, MI 48192. Phone 313 282-4667 or 800 487-2838.

Farewell: "George Bush has the experience, and with me, the future." -- Dan Quayle

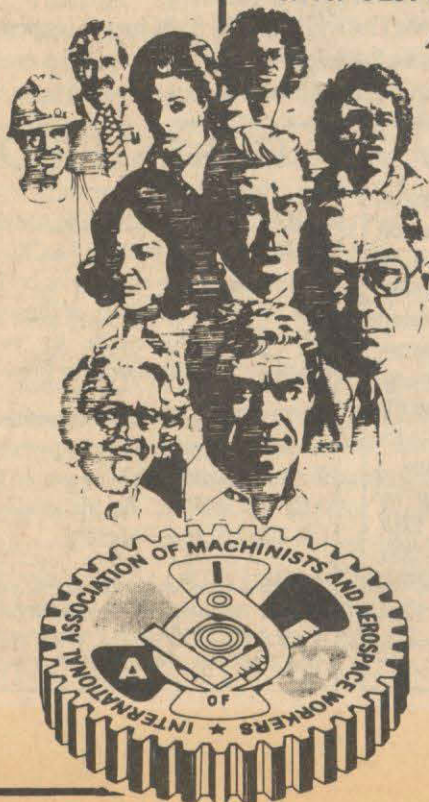
Costs Shifted to Workers

Johnson and Higgins Employee Benefit Services, a consulting firm, reports that health providers are shifting costs to smaller employers as large firms have employed aggressive cost-containment strategies. In 1991 the cost of traditional medical plans rose an average 17.3 percent, but the average increase was only 9.6 percent for firms with more than 1,000 employees. This is a handy reminder of 1) the unscrupulousness of health providers, and 2) the principle that costs will be shifted, not contained, unless we're all under a single plan.

Lending Racism

The Boston Federal Reserve released a major study documenting racial discrimination in mortgage lending. The study examined records in much greater detail than any previous study, and concluded that even when loan applicants are identical in every economic respect, including credit history, people of color are still roughly 60 percent more likely to be rejected than white applicants. Federal regulatory agencies have a dismal record of enforcing the Community Reinvestment Act, the 1977 law designed to combat such bias. Here's hoping that this new Fed report will knock some sense into the regulators' heads. . .

continuing the bonds of friendship, trust and understanding with DSA and *Democratic Left* for dignity, justice and equality for all Americans.



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