

Inside: Michael Lighty on Socialist Vision and DSA's Mission

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Winning the Peace



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EDITORIAL

NAFTA AND OUR FUTURE

BY GINNY COUGHLIN

For the past year I've been travelling around the country talking to students about the campaign to defeat the North American Free Trade Agreement, and why this campaign is so important for the future of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

Aided by new production and communications technologies, corporations are locating factories all over the world and forcing workers to choose low wages, long hours, and horrendous working conditions -- or no job at all. NAFTA makes it easier for North American companies to move production facilities to areas with the cheapest labor and most lax environmental protection, forcing down wages and working conditions everywhere.

I've encouraged DSA Youth Section chapters to make the campaign against NAFTA a first step towards building an international movement to counter transnational corporate control over our lives with demands for popular democratic control.

For most of the past year I didn't think we could win the NAFTA battle. But as the scheduled vote in the House of Representatives draws

near, it looks as though we might succeed in defeating the agreement. Many congressional representatives, reacting mostly to widespread fear of job losses in the U.S., have decided recently to oppose NAFTA. President Clinton has acknowledged that he does not have the votes to pass it. Yet what appears to be a victory may not be.

A victory in Congress would be only a first step in the fight against NAFTA. Over the long haul, we'll be successful only insofar as we promote a truly progressive vision. We must demand a democratic, anti-racist, feminist alternative economic and social integration of North America. As things stand now, if NAFTA is defeated in Congress, it won't be this progressive vision that makes the headlines. The media will probably interpret a NAFTA defeat as a victory for old-fashioned protectionism -- or, worse, as a victory for the racist demands of Pat Buchanan and the far right of the Republican Party. If that happens, our victory in Congress will be a defeat for our movement.

But it need only be a temporary defeat. The struggle against international corporate control will not end with the vote on NAFTA. Transnational capital will steadily gain power, with or without NAFTA, and we will gradually lose our ability to make locally-based or nationally-based demands on corporations or governments.

Serious resistance to global capi-

tal's power can only come from a renewed and internationalized left. The left-wing anti-NAFTA movement, including progressive unions and environmental and community organizations, has taken small but significant steps toward the left's often-preached but rarely-practiced dream -- global solidarity. We must continue to work across borders with labor unions, environmentalists, students, Latino-led groups, and community organizations to build a grassroots movement to demand a democratic, equitable, and international future. DL

Ginny Coughlin is the DSA Youth Organizer.

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Is An Israeli Left Being Born?

A Survey of the Landscape After the Accords

BY ERIC LEE

In an article published in these pages a few months ago, I argued that "neither side" in the Middle East conflict "is in any hurry to reach a peace agreement." It turned out that both sides were actually in quite a hurry.

To emphasize the snail's pace at which the peace process then appeared to be moving, I came up with what seemed to be, at the time, a funny scenario. I suggested that the next excuse for delay might be local elections in Norway. What could be further removed from the Middle East than Norway?

It would turn out that Oslo was where the breakthrough finally came.

My predictive powers having been amply demonstrated, I have now been asked to write about recent developments in the peace process and especially the Israeli left's reaction. Considering my track record as a prophet, I hope readers will forgive me if I limit the discussion to what is actually happening, and not what will happen next.

All the obstacles I pointed to on the Israeli and Palestinian sides were really there; but they were all overcome. There is now genuine reason for optimism. There will be some difficult nego-

tiation ahead. There might even be a little war with Syria ahead of us. But the fact remains that the Middle East is finally resolving a conflict which has lasted for three generations.

This should be cause for celebration in the Israeli left and peace movement, and it is. Within days of the good news of an Israeli-PLO peace accord, Peace Now organized a very large demonstration in Tel Aviv's biggest square. The right answered with a series of violent clashes with the police in Jerusalem.

Since then, most of the left has been busy congratulating Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on their courage and initiative. I saw this right here at home the other day when Rabin paid a visit to our kibbutz factory. A spokesman for the kibbutz hailed Rabin as a "man of peace," and the prime minister was greeted with a standing ovation.

At any other time in 1993 such a reception at a left-wing kibbutz would not have been imaginable. When Rabin deported four hundred Hamas activists to Lebanon, he was widely criticized by the Israeli left. When he closed off the flow of Palestinian workers in an attempt to stop the wave of knife-wielding terror, he was



courtesy Peace Now

Tens of thousands came to a rally called by Peace Now in Tel Aviv in early September.

also attacked by the peace camp. Finally, when he launched "Operation Accountability" -- the recent air and artillery war against Lebanon -- even government ministers from the Meretz bloc (comprised of the socialist Mapam party and its two liberal partners) were outspoken in their condemnation of Rabin's brutality and inhumanity. Until early September, it was actually not a very good year between Rabin and the Israeli left.

In the wake of the accord with the PLO, the Israeli left has taken an attitude of forgive and

Do the accords mean that the need for an independent Israeli left has disappeared? Yes and no.

forget toward Rabin, choosing to rally behind him in the face of the danger of a Rightist *intifada*. Some commentators have taken the opportunity to ask what we need Meretz for at all. Labor seems to have stolen the Left's thunder.

Not exactly. A few months ago Meretz's Cabinet members pushed hard, and openly, for Israel to begin direct talks with the PLO. Rabin scorned them, and Peres, surprisingly, backed Rabin. Later, Meretz leader Shulamith Aloni declared that if progress were not made in the peace talks, Meretz would leave the governing

coalition.

The point is that without Meretz, without its public and private pressure, Rabin and Peres would probably never have taken the step of talking with Arafat. The Labor Party doves who fought for the PLO recognition and the compromise on Gaza and Jericho fought as allies of Meretz. Alone, they were not able to get the Labor Party to move beyond the talk of "territorial compromise" and a "Jordanian option." Behind the scenes and in public as well, Meretz promoted the change in Israeli policy. This is exactly what Environment Minister Yosi Sarid declared when Meretz launched its 1992 election campaign: Meretz would lead the way for the Rabin government. Every leader of the Israeli right now says this is what happened. Rabin has abandoned his traditional position and adopted Meretz's line.

Does this mean that the need for an independent left has diminished or disappeared? Yes and no. Now that Labor has embraced what was once Mapam's (and later Meretz's) unique position of talking with Palestinians who recognize Israel and repudiate terror, it's arguable that there is no longer a need to build a left party in order to pressure Labor to make concessions. What was once Mapam's heresy is now Labor's policy.

On the other hand, it is not only the issue of peace that has separated Meretz (and Mapam in particular) from Labor. A whole range of issues -- economic, social, and cultural -- divide Israeli society, and on these the Labor Party and the Left do not always agree.

Israel's political formations will need to learn again how to talk about these issues. Since the 1967 Six Day War, Israeli politics has been sterile. Author Amos Oz has often pointed out that the constant discussion about borders has diverted attention from the real issues. No one has talked for a generation or more about the kind of society we want to have here in the Jewish homeland. The traditional left and right have largely disappeared in the debate over a solution to the Palestinian problem. And the ideological left has vanished without a trace.

This environment has left Israeli progressives groping for new strategies. In Haifa, Israel's third-largest city, Mapam has chosen to break with its liberal partners in Meretz and join in a first-ever electoral bloc with the mostly-Arab Communist party. (The Communists call themselves the "Democratic Front for Peace and Equality," and have a long tradition, never broken, of loyalty to the Leninist-Stalinist regimes.) No Israeli party has ever joined in a

coalition with the Communists, who have always been isolated.

Haifa's democratic socialists reached the conclusion that with peace almost at hand, class issues have become more important than those which once divided hawks and doves. The alliance between Jewish industrial workers and Haifa's poor Arab minority (about 10 percent of the city's population) is unprecedented in Israeli political history.

Upcoming municipal elections have highlighted the problematic nature of Israeli politics in the wake of the Oslo accord. In Tel Aviv, the Likud candidate is an outspoken supporter of the accord and a proponent of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The Labor candidate is a well-known hawk and a leader of the struggle to keep the Golan Heights in Israeli hands.

If one reads their advertisements in the newspapers, it is clear that the only difference between them is that the Likud supports an underground metro for the city while Labor is backing an above-ground light rail network. Both candidates are running advertisements with imaginary maps of future mass transit systems.

In a recent article for the daily newspaper *Hadashot*, Tel Aviv Mapam activist (and, when he lived in the U.S., an active DSA member) Alex Spinrad argued for the revival of ideological debate and class politics at the municipal level. Issues like unemployment, health care, education and mass transit should be the focal points of right-left confrontation. Spinrad, like many others in Mapam, has been critical of the Meretz bloc with its coalition between socialists and free-market liberals based upon support for peace with the Palestinians. Now it appears

that Meretz's time is past. Mapam leaders are already talking about a post-Meretz future for Israel's democratic left.

The emerging post-war reality has even managed to awaken the sleeping giant, Israel's powerful Histadrut trade union federation. After decades of slumber, some of the bureaucrats in the Histadrut's imposing Stalin-era headquarters have begun muttering demands to somehow be involved in the talks between Israel and the PLO. For a quarter century, the Histadrut has done practically nothing for Palestinian workers. It would be nice to have a revived trade union movement, and direct elections to the Histadrut leadership, scheduled to take place in a few months, will liven things up a bit.

What we have here is a peace movement congratulating the government and itself; a complete absence of class politics after a generation of siege warfare; an interesting experiment in one city in socialist-Stalinist coalition politics; and the possibility of an awakened labor movement.

What the shape of Israeli politics will be in the years to come -- we cannot know. But we are already seeing things that have never been seen before. Whatever will be, will be different. Finally, after decades of arguing about borders, we are going to have some real politics. We might even get a real left out of this too. **DL**

Eric Lee, a member of Kibbutz Ein Dor, is author of Saigon to Jerusalem: Conversations with Israel's Vietnam Veterans and Mole: Stalin and the Okhrana. He is a former member of Mapam's Central Committee.

♦ His song "Paper Moon," Yip Harburg said, was really about systemic mystification. His smash hit musical, *Finian's Rainbow*, was an attack not just on racism but on the fetish of commodities. His not-so-smash hit musical, *Flahooley*, dealt in farcical terms with capitalism's inherent tendency toward overproduction and underconsumption.

♦ Which is to say, Yip Harburg -- lyricist of "Over the Rainbow" and all the other *Wizard of Oz* songs -- was not just a brilliant (and brilliantly funny) lyricist. He was an avowed socialist. And this is the story of his life and work.

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by Harold Meyerson (DSA Vice Chair and Dissent editor)
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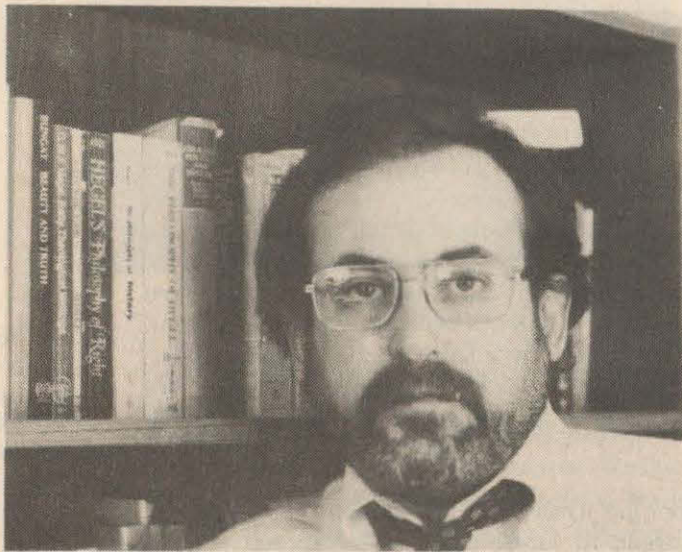
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The Arab World After the Handshake

A Talk with Mitchell Cohen



INTERVIEW BY JOANNE BARKAN

Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat clasps the hand of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin—and nerve endings throughout the Arab world (and elsewhere, too) throb. The old arrangements are collapsing. What can be said about new ones for the Arab nations? Democratic Left asked Professor Mitchell Cohen of the City University of New York to consider the significance of the Israeli-Palestinian accord for the Arab world. Cohen, a longtime DSA member, is co-editor of *Dissent* magazine and author of *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* and *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann* (forthcoming).

Joanne Barkan: The accord between Palestinians and Israelis comes at a moment of transition for the Arab world. Can you describe this context for us?

Mitchell Cohen: It's a moment of fluidity,

transition, and a great deal of uncertainty. While most Arab regimes have been stable for the past two and a half decades, many of the signposts of the past are gone, with a broadening but also a limiting of political options. The end of the Cold War in the Middle East has enormous ramifications simply because it was such an essential dimension of regional politics. Syria, Iraq, and the PLO lost Moscow as a resource and as a force they could play off of Washington. Soviet-American rivalry used Arab states against one another, but Arab states also used Moscow and Washington for their own purposes, for their rivalries within the region. This can no longer be done.

This has happened just as the ideological forces that dominated the Arab world since the early 1950s -- radical nationalism, Pan-Arabism -- have unravelled. This nationalism began to take hold with Nasser, had its ups and downs, but was punctured by Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War. With the defeat of radical nationalism in the region and the loss of the Soviet Union as an external player -- and I'll add, with the inability of Mubarak's pro-Western regime to address satisfactorily Egypt's disastrous economy -- there's a huge ideological void. That's one of the major reasons for the rise of radical Islamic groups.

Combine all these other factors -- together with the fact that Egypt, the Arab world's most important player, made peace with the Israelis back in 1979 -- and you begin to see why the overall situation in the Arab world is conducive to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. That you have a Labor Party government in Jerusalem committed to compromise is also crucial.

JB: What significance did the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have for the Arab world as a whole, up to the point of the accord?

MC: Israel played both symbolic and practical roles in Arab politics. When Israel was born in 1948, it was also a moment of transition in the Middle East, when the traditional imperial powers in the region, the British and French, were on their way out, and the Arabs were asserting their own independence. They considered Israel a foreign implant imposed by the West. This was false, but it was the symbolism that mattered.

On another level, Israel became a means by which Arab regimes distracted their citizens away from their own domestic problems. This was convenient because these regimes had no solutions to the problems. Israel became a type of lightning rod, the devilish, conspiring entity that could be blamed for every problem in the area. Peace between Israel and the Arabs will force the Arab world to confront many of its own difficult problems.

JB: Given that general context, let's look at some of the countries most directly affected by the move toward peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. What about Jordan?

MC: Jordan will be most immediately affected. First of all, there is considerable talk about a future Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. Also, one has to keep in mind that the population of Jordan proper is roughly 60 percent Palestinian. There's a new constellation emerging for King Hussein -- although one should recall that back in the early 1970s, the Jordanian King advocated a type of Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. Hussein has met secretly with the Israelis for years and is anxious to put an end to the conflict. Immediately after the PLO-Israeli agreement, Amman reached several accords with Jerusalem -- but for Jordan, the domestic picture is crucial.

Jordan's relationship to the Palestinians per se has always been complicated. After the 1948-49 war, the West Bank, which was supposed to be part of a Palestinian state, was annexed by Jordan. Amman pursued a policy of subordinating it to the benefit of the East Bank until the territory was lost in the Six Day War. In "Black September" 1970, Hussein killed more Palestinians than Israel ever did in order to secure his rule. Hussein today is faced with a situation in which, with or without a confederation, the majority of people in his kingdom are Palestinians, and he is concerned about the future rule of his family, the Hashemites. This is complicated



by the fact that the King is ill.

Another matter to keep in mind is that he has to keep a watchful eye on Islamic fundamentalists in Jordan. Elections are due in November, and Hussein has manipulated some things to moderate their influence and strength.

JB: And Egypt?

MC: The Egyptian leaders undoubtedly feel that the accord demonstrates how justified Sadat was in making peace with Israel. One has to remember that after Egypt signed its peace treaty with Israel, Cairo was ostracized in the Arab world. In the past decade, regional politics -- and especially the Iran-Iraq War -- led to Cairo's return to the center of Arab politics. It's now evident, save to fanatics, that Sadat followed the smartest political path. There is one major caveat, however. Sadat hoped that peace with Israel would allow Egypt to address its catastrophic economic situation. But nobody has come up with an intelligent way to do this. Despite American aid, Egypt is in very dire straits, which is one reason why radical Islamic groups have been thriving. The Egyptian state is strong -- it rests primarily on the military -- but Egyptian society has mounting problems, and the government doesn't seem to be able to come up with a reasonable program to address them.

JB: What about Syria and, by extension, Lebanon?

MC: Syria has an immediate, direct issue with Israel. Israel sees the Golan Heights as a major security concern, and Damascus sees the

**PLO chair
Yasir Arafat**

Courtesy Americans for a Progressive Israel

Heights in terms of Arab honor and Syrian sovereignty. Assad is very astute and adroit. He understands changing relations of power. One of the things he's most fearful of is that after the Palestinian-Israeli accord, he could be out in the cold. He's angry at Arafat, but they've been hostile for a long time. However, because of the nature of his own political posture and the nature of his regime, Assad doesn't want it to appear that he's being dragged into an agreement in difficult circumstances. In the short run, he's a loser because of the PLO-Israeli accord. Yet I think that some type of agreement between the Israelis and the Syrians is very possible. And I base that in part on a story I can relate to you.

I interviewed Yitzhak Rabin about ten years ago. At one point, we began discussing his negotiations with Syria, through Kissinger, after the 1973 war. Rabin said that Assad was one of the biggest bastards he'd ever dealt with, but, nonetheless, virtually everything that Assad said he would do, he did. Throughout the last twenty years there's been almost no violence across the Israeli-Syrian frontier. Lebanon is another story. So this was Assad's way of telling the Israelis, "I am someone with whom you can deal, even if you don't find me a very pleasant person." There's no moral difference between him and Saddam Hussein, but there's a big political difference: Assad keeps agreements, and Saddam almost never does. I think Rabin understands all this clearly. But an Israeli-Syrian deal won't be easy.

Israeli-Lebanese relations will be a function of Israeli-Syrian relations. The Syrian army sits in Lebanon, and Beirut isn't going to do any-

thing that the Syrians don't want. There is, however, a wild card in Lebanon, which is the radical Islamic groups.

JB: And what about the Palestinians?

MC: The Palestinians have fit into the picture in different ways at different times. They have been greatly dependent on the Arab world, and it's often forgotten that the PLO was created in 1964, at an Arab League summit conference, largely at Nasser's behest. There's been a constant struggle by Palestinians to make independent decisions without being under the thumb of Arab governments -- this is one source of the long-term problems between Arafat and Assad, by the way.

The 1967 war was a watershed in this regard. The Arab states had boasted often that they would reclaim Palestine by force. But they were defeated, and very rapidly. This led to a reassertion of Palestinian nationalism, and within two years of the defeat, the PLO was taken over by Arafat, who represented a more independent Palestinian leadership.

The Palestinians have been a very potent symbol for Arab nationalism, and a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem at a time when radical Arabism has been punctured allows the Arab states to come to grips with Israel. But keep in mind that the problem hasn't been resolved yet. What you have is a number of very important first steps. There's still a long, very bumpy road to go. **DL**

Joanne Barkan, a New York writer, is executive editor of Dissent magazine.

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DSAAction

Women and Politics

International News: Mexico

◆ The DSA Women and Politics Project will be kicked off the weekend of December 11 with a forum on Women and Sustainable Development. It will be held in conjunction with the executive meeting of Socialist International Women in Washington, D.C. Speakers at the forum will include Birgitta Dahl and Audrey McLaughlin. Dahl is the Vice Chair of the UN Secretary General's High Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and the Former Minister of the Environment for Sweden. She is also a leader of the SI Committee on Environment and Development. McLaughlin is the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada and a leading Canadian spokesperson on women and the environment.

The executive committee of SI Women includes members of parliament from Denmark, Britain, Venezuela, Japan and Austria, cabinet members from Tunisia, Turkey and Senegal and leaders of women's organizations from other countries. The executive will meet on Saturday, December 11 in the U.S. Senate office buildings. Members of the executive will also be meeting with representatives of U.S. women's organizations and with DSA members.

For more information about these events, contact the DSA Feminist Commission at 5123 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC 20011.

◆ Incoming DSA National Director Alan Charney traveled to Mexico City during the weekend of October 16-17 to attend the nominating convention of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Cuahtémoc Cardenas was nominated as presidential candidate for the 1994 elections, which will be held in August. Cardenas is widely believed to have been the legitimate winner of Mexico's 1988 elections, which were allegedly stolen by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has dominated Mexican politics for over half a century.

Charney met with a number of the PRD's leaders at the convention, which was held in a sports arena and attended by over thirty thousand Mexican citizens. Charney reports that he was impressed by the diversity of the convention, which included poor rural Mexicans as well as urban leftists. Despite this diversity, there was a palpable sense of unity and purpose. The focus throughout the weekend was on the need for a radical democratization of Mexico's political structures -- specifically, on the need to break the PRI's long-standing domination. The PRD stresses that social and economic transformation of Mexico will only become possible after true democracy is established.

◆ Sacramento Conference on NAFTA and Human Rights

Sacramento DSA and the DSA Latino Commission held a successful conference on "NAFTA and Human Rights" October 20 and 21. Over four hundred people attended the event, which was held on the campus of California State University-Sacramento. Topics included labor rights in North America, U.S. press coverage of Mexico and Mexican-Americans, and the new immigration hysteria. Speakers included Arnaldo Garcia of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Eileen Rafael of the Center for Ethics and Economic Policy. There were also some oppositional voices -- Myles Frechette, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, addressed the conference with a pro-NAFTA message via videotape.

Meet DSA's New National Director



Steve Oliver

Alan Charney brings to DSA a broad range of skills and organizing experience and a vision of socialist renewal.

DSA has a new national director, Alan Charney. Hired by the National Political Committee in September, Charney began work on November 1. Charney replaces Michael Lighty, national director since mid-1990, who is moving to Oakland, California in order to be near his six-month-old daughter.

Charney brings a broad range of energy and experience to the job. After graduating from Columbia University in 1970, he became a leader of the New American Movement (NAM), which was one of DSA's predecessor organizations. He worked as a union organizer for several years, and then spent most of the 1980s as director of New York Citizen Action. The organization grew to a membership of 70,000 during his tenure and undertook campaigns on health care, toxic wastes, utility rates, and other grassroots issues.

Charney is "returning to the fold" after an absence from ideological left politics. Like many people, he suffered a crisis of political faith around the time the Cold War ended. "I went through a period of deep skepticism about the socialist project," he says. "But I emerged with a new sense of hope. With the Cold War behind us, all the old categories have been wiped out. Although we're starting from a low level of activity and organization, it's possible to envision that, with the proper energy and enthusiasm, we can help give birth to a viable new socialist project. In a certain sense the socialist vision is more urgent than ever: Under globalized capitalism, international solidarity isn't just a nice dream -- it's a necessity."

The experience of shepherding New York Citizen Action through its formative years

taught Charney both fundraising and mass organizing -- skills that he hopes to use in his work with DSA. "Ten years ago I couldn't have done this DSA job effectively. The Citizen Action years taught me that effective fundraising and effective organizing go hand in hand. If you sit around thinking 'If only we had the money...,' you've got it exactly wrong. When you have the organizational capacity to carry out a project well, then you also have the capacity to raise funds for it."

In 1989, during his period of political doubts, Charney decided to leave Citizen Action. "Call it a sort of left-wing midlife crisis." Since then he has worked as a political consultant to progressive candidates and non-profit organizations. He believes his work with progressive candidates both inside and outside the Democratic Party should provide him with a broad perspective on DSA's electoral work.

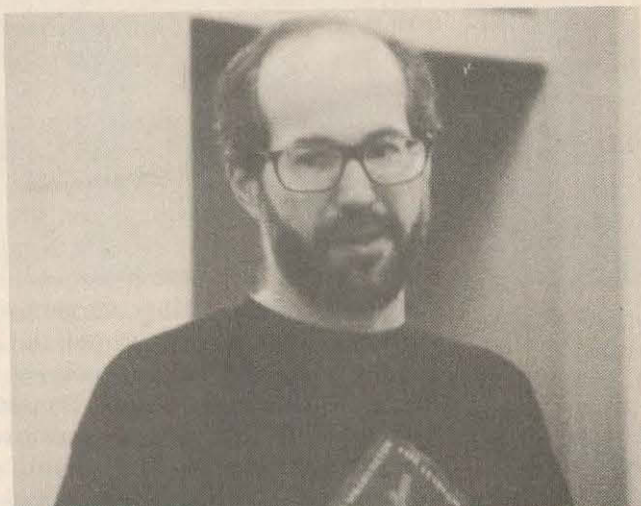
Charney lays great weight on the importance of building DSA as a multiracial organization. "We need to do whatever it takes to achieve diversity," he says. "We're in a new historical period, and it's no longer acceptable to organize different racial groups along different tracks."

Another major goal for Charney is building DSA's youth section. He's found the enthusiasm and dedication of youth section leaders encouraging. "Polling trends show that first-year college students are moving decidedly to the left," says Charney. "There's a spreading base for our politics, and there's reason to hope that the current youth section leadership has the strengths to flourish in this environment." **DL**

-- David Glenn

Socialist Vision and DSA's Mission

As he prepares to leave after over three years on the job, DSA National Director Michael Lighty reflects on the state of the movement.



BY MICHAEL LIGHTY

A year ago we helped to change what's possible in American politics. Bill Clinton's election represented an end to the stifling reign of a conservatism running out of gas at the end of the Cold War. DSA seized that opportunity to send two thousand messages to the new president and to congressional leaders, demanding action on reproductive rights, the North American Free Trade Agreement, labor law reform, gays in the military, and national health care reform. No other organization in the United States presented such a comprehensive agenda to the Democratic leadership.

A year later, we've been disappointed on many issues, we've seen only ambiguous progress on health care, and yet we remain convinced that our agenda provides the best way to confront the post-Cold War world. Every day we see that in a global economy corporate profit-making requires "down-sizing," moving production to low-wage areas, and limiting environmental regulation. We live in a world where the hatreds of nationalism and racism burn through the social fabrics of nations and neighborhoods. In this world women experience the brunt of these hardships -- women work under the most hazardous conditions for the lowest wages, and suffer rape and other forms of degradation. Instead of superpower

confrontation, civil wars and "nation-building" define international relations.

This new troubled world needs a socialist vision and perspective, and we are working to build a movement that addresses that need with effective political action. We must also articulate *why* we are socialists. During three years as national director of DSA, I met hundreds of activists around the country and with socialists around the world who feel passionately about certain issues, and who can connect these issues into a coherent analysis, but who also share a vision of human possibility that goes beyond any single issue. What makes us socialists is our values and vision. Our moral stance rejects domination in any form, and particularly the oppression of women, cultural and economic. We contribute not only hard work but an analytical understanding of the capitalist system. These are not my profound, unique insights; just the opposite. They come from people's experiences of what keeps us involved and committed to socialism.

Confronting the Market's Flaws

DSA must do some of what other activists do, but we must do it differently. At the heart of our difference is a critique of the market. We have been too busy figuring out the mechanics of using the market in a socialist economy and

too timid in criticizing the effects of the capitalist market. Some who call themselves social democrats say that democracy depends upon a market economy. We argue that democracy depends on opening up economic decision-making to popular control, that the social dominance of a market controlled by powerful private interests undermines democracy. Fundamental to the socialist vision is the belief that ordinary people should make the economic decisions that govern their lives. This vision of a radical democracy contrasts sharply with a narrow attempt to reconcile state regulation and corporate prerogatives.

Looking for new efficiencies in social policy through private market mechanisms often compounds inequality. For example, we reject the application of market mechanisms to reform health care, since it is the market that distributes care according to wealth. Moreover, the market distributes other social goods (housing, food, education) and social evils (pollution and unsafe workplaces) according to income, and this, too, undermines well-being. The struggle for national health care assumes that activist government can solve social problems and meet human needs. In other words, popular, democratic government is better than the market.

Our critique of the market also includes a

and financial elites grows? Even if some of these problems are cyclical or (in the case of Eastern Europe) a result of the transition from command economies, we still face the quandary that technological advances, increasing capital mobility, and the expansion of the low-wage service sector mean increasing inequality, fewer jobs, and lower salaries for most people. Without strong unions, these problems intensify. As the AFL-CIO recognized at their recent convention, not even restoring the rights of unions to organize, not even creating meaningful power at the bargaining table will be enough to overcome structural problems. We must redefine work; specifically, we'll need a shorter work week to create more jobs.

As socialists, we must go even further, and fight for expanded public investment and job creation. Capital is not committed to a high-wage, job-expanding economic development strategy, and so the burden falls upon popularly controlled governmental and community institutions. But we also question the assumption that a job defines one's life work. Productivity advances and shifts in employment opportunities can create new possibilities for leisure, for personal and social development. Life choices for the vast majority can change only if productive investment is managed democratically for the benefit of all. This sounds utopian, and it is. But that's what socialism needs -- both a program to address the immediate crisis and some utopian imagination.

Anti-Racism and DSA's Work

Ours is a multiracial vision that requires a truly multicultural movement and organization. We need to fulfill this commitment politically and organizationally. Among other things, we must address the collapse of Democratic liberalism in our cities. Regrettably, activists committed to economic justice and social renewal have not yet forged progressive movements to respond to the corporate elites that have seized power from "rainbow" constituencies.

I am convinced that the "Breaking Bread" model (dialogue and organizing around a historical and political analysis rooted in Cornel West's "politics of conversion") can work for us. This approach links racism to sexism, homophobia, and economic injustice, and confronts these oppressions in order to change the way we talk about experiences, live our lives, and build political alliances.

This effort goes beyond the paradigm of black-white relations in order to create a truly

Our vision of a radical democracy contrasts sharply with a narrow attempt to reconcile state regulation and corporate prerogatives.

vision of how market relations distort human relations. The commodification of culture, the determination of self-worth and social value according to what you own is the opposite of socialist values. We should promote a moral vision of equality and justice that enables people to experience intellectual and emotional freedom, rather than the empty freedom to "shop till you drop" -- if you have the money.

How can we expect to base economic growth -- let alone a meaningful life -- on jobs and mass consumption at a time when unemployment in European countries averages above 10 percent; standards of living for working people are declining in sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and throughout the Americas; and the share of wealth belonging to corporate

multiracial understanding and program. In many cases, the issues confronting different communities -- African-Americans, Korean-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Chicanos, Native Americans -- are similar. But their histories and experiences vary. The purpose of *Breaking Bread* is to explore common issues from unique perspectives in order to devise solutions to the urban crisis that transcend narrow nationalisms, while holding the promise of real social and economic justice.

Developing DSA From the Ground Up

DSA is building the movement from the ground up with strong local organizations. We have an active presence in new places -- for example, Boulder, Colorado, where Front Range DSA is leading the fight for single-payer national health care. Other locals are organizing labor, Latino/a, and environmental activists around a pro-democracy and workers' rights approach to global economic integration. International solidarity is no longer a mere slogan or theory -- it is by the only way to challenge global capitalism. Sacramento DSA has put together a conference on immigration and NAFTA, Rochester DSA participated in a trinational action in Niagara Falls against NAFTA, and the DSA Latino Commission has established strong ties to the Party of the Democratic revolution (PRD) in Mexico.

Some of DSA's best anti-NAFTA work has been done by youth section activists. By linking labor and environmental networks with students committed to building sustained political alliances, DSA has filled an important niche. When the Youth Section organized a tour to the Matamoros *maquiladoras* region in Mexico, the value of international solidarity became tangible. Although many activists and policy-makers visit *maquiladoras*, DSA Youth Section activists have been uniquely able to articulate to other young people an alternative vision of economic integration based on human rights and democracy, as well as the right to organize unions and win higher minimum wages. Given the negative attitude toward government among many young radicals (and among Americans in general), we can use NAFTA to press the point that a democratic state is necessary to constrain corporate power.

Big city locals like New York City and Boston take on their corporate elites by playing pivotal roles in local campaigns and organizing



Marilyn Anderson/Impact Visuals

Members of Rochester DSA participate in an anti-NAFTA action in Niagara Falls in October.

educational discussions. They do all this without paid staff. When it had a part-time organizer, Los Angeles DSA initiated the first West Coast Socialist Scholars Conference. They are maintaining the project with strong voluntary leadership. We can, in fact, be most proud of the commitment of volunteers throughout DSA to sustain our activity. Insofar as DSA exists on the ground, it is because of volunteer leadership and organizing.

A moral vision sustains us, but we also need skills and, eventually, paid staff, to realize our mission to make socialism relevant to American politics. Local activism on the streets, however, is not sufficient; neglecting our intellectual work or the utopian imagination would be fatal.

Can we be all things? Yes, but not without more resources. At the 1991 convention I proposed a goal of twenty thousand members nationally, and paid staff in at least six major cities, by the end of the 1990s. We have laid some groundwork, but we need to take the next steps: more direct mail recruitment, a plan to target locals for leadership development and skills building, expanded local fundraising, integrating youth section activists into the larger life of the organization, sponsoring educational conferences to bring together policy-makers and socialist thinkers, and integrating national projects with local activity. These are concrete ways to build the new institutions we need to confront of our new world. We know what's at stake: nothing less than the shape of our future. **DL**

I would like to thank the many DSA leaders and members who helped to make the past three and a half years so enjoyable and rewarding. -- ML

ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

CALIFORNIA

The activists in Los Angeles DSA have been working extremely hard on arrangements for the DSA National Convention, to be held November 11-14. In particular, they have been preparing the November 12 Breaking Bread event featuring Cornel West and a number of Southern California activists of color, and the November 13 Debs-Thomas Dinner, which will honor Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union leader Maria Elena Durazo, Los Angeles City Council member Jackie Goldberg, and longtime activist Donna Wilkinson. Bravo for all of L.A.'s efforts!

Sacramento DSA helped organize a September 24 protest at which California Governor Pete Wilson was confronted about his proposed anti-immigrant legislation. The local also helped to organize a major anti-NAFTA rally in Sacramento and put together an October conference entitled "NAFTA and Human Rights" (see page 9).

San Diego DSA held a fundraiser October 16 featuring folk singers Peggy Watson, Sam Hinton, Ross Hinton, and Ernie McCray. Proceeds were donated to the campaign to defeat the state's school voucher initiative. The local has also been a participant in the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, an organization that raises funds and logistical support for Mexican trade union organizers.

COLORADO

The education committee of

Front Range DSA sponsored a successful forum on progressive city government on October 6. Forty people attended to hear discussions of the experience of Burlington, Vermont. Speakers included two activists from Burlington -- City Council member Jane Knodell and housing activist Ted Wimpe. In August, Front Range DSAers were a major presence at a town meeting held by U.S. Representative David Skaggs; they challenged him aggressively about his pro-NAFTA stance. The local has also been active in the campaign for a state single-payer health care system in Colorado.

INDIANA

Central Indiana DSA has been active in a number of struggles, including support for imprisoned American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier, the United Farm Worker grape boycott, and the fight against NAFTA. Activists from the local traveled to Terre Haute for the Debs Foundation's annual Debs Dinner on November 6. This year's dinner honorees were DSAers Ed Asner and Dolores Huerta.

ILLINOIS

Chicago DSA helped to organize this year's Midwest Radical Scholars Conference, which was held October 29-31. Speakers included DSA Vice Chair Bogdan Denitch and Central Ohio DSA activist Bob Fitrakis. Members of the local also traveled to Indiana for the Debs dinner November 6.

Members of the West Suburban branch of Chicago DSA continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the locked-out members of the Allied Industrial Workers at the A.E. Staley plant in Decatur. They have walked the picket lines, organized donations of food and clothing, and helped to educate other Chicago activists about the struggle.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston DSA held a membership meeting November 7 to discuss DSA's mission and other themes for their delegates to consider at the National Convention. Members of the local are considering establishing a support/discussion group for socialist parents and families.

And the local finally achieved a long-awaited triumph this summer: After several years of near misses, Boston DSA's team (the DSOX) captured the Boston Independent Softball League title. The championship game's score was DSA 6, Peace Action 3.

NEW YORK

New York City DSA has launched an Environmental Task Force, which plans to address the siting of hazardous facilities in the city's poorest communities, especially communities of color. The task force will work to educate city activists about the potential environmental effects of NAFTA.

The local has also launched two very successful weekly educational courses. DSA Vice Chair Jim Chapin is leading a course entitled "Introduction to Democratic Socialism," and leaders of the local's task force on economics are teaching "The Economics of Socialism."

Ithaca DSA activists worked for the re-election campaign of Mayor Ben Nichols, a DSA member. They also hosted DSA Youth Organizer Ginny Coughlin October 27, and participated in an anti-NAFTA rally November 5.

Rochester DSA has been very active in the city's Coalition for Affordable Health Care. Two of the eight board members of the coalition are DSAers. They report that Rochester's unique health care system, which is often touted by managed competition fans, is hardly a model for us: sixty thousand people in the county remain uninsured.

Activists from Rochester DSA and Ithaca DSA also participated in a trinational anti-NAFTA action at Niagara Falls in October (see page 13).

OHIO

Leaders of Athens DSA host a biweekly cable-access television show called *The Democratic Socialist Review*. The local is also doing support work for the United Mine Workers and the A.E. Staley strikers in Illinois and fighting a proposed medical waste incinerator.

On October 20 an anti-NAFTA rally was held in front of the Mercer County courthouse in Celina, a small town in northwest Ohio. The rally, which included large numbers of trade unionists, was organized in part by DSAers Cheryl Davis and Roger Wilson, both Celina residents.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia DSA held a membership retreat November 7 at which they discussed health care, NAFTA, and DSA's mission. The local was active in the movement opposed Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell's proposed revisions to the city charter, which would serve to restrict the rights of city unions.

VIRGINIA

Our newest local is Charlottesville DSA. In September they held their first annual Labor Day Bar-B-Q and Sing-Along. The local will co-sponsor a lecture series at the University of Virginia entitled "Building Community: Race, Gender, and Cultural Difference."

And there's a new DSA organizing committee in Richmond. This group, which has been meeting regularly, participated in an anti-NAFTA rally at an AT&T production facility on October 21.

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Jimmy Higgins Reports



SAME LOOT, IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK

Roughly a year ago, you may recall, the mass media went into one of their occasional bursts of socialist (or at least populist) fury, and the airwaves were suddenly full of denunciations of U.S. corporate executives' astronomical salaries. Did any of this public outrage have any effect? Well, yes and no. Corporations are still rewarding their leaders with salaries over fifty times greater than those of the average worker, but they're *hiding* these salaries better. In fiscal year 1993, the two hundred largest U.S. corporations allocated a record 9.11 percent of their shares outstanding to "management stock option programs." So while executive salaries themselves may not be rising so quickly, CEO's have still found a way to put extra butter on their bread.

THE GULAG OF TIJUANA

On September 21 some U.S. trade unionists got a frightening first-hand glimpse into the true human rights situation in Mexico. A busload of rank-and-file

members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) traveled to Tijuana that day to observe labor and environmental conditions. While parked in front of a *maquiladora* plant, Plasticos Baja Cal, their bus was boarded by Mexican immigration officials, who detained the workers for over three hours. The officials at first refused to say why they were detaining the delegation, but finally said that traveling to Mexico in order to "discuss internal working conditions with the Mexican workers" was illegal. They later relented, saying that the delegation's mission was not illegal -- merely "irregular." And they let slip that they were acting at the behest of the managers of the *maquiladora* plant.

FRANK BACK IN THE TANK?

Earlier this year we celebrated when an administrative law judge refused to allow notorious union-buster Frank Lorenzo to launch a new airline, citing Lorenzo's historic "pattern of non-compliance." But the victory isn't quite sealed yet -- Lorenzo, the Butcher of Continental and Eastern, is now appealing the decision. Write to Transportation Secretary Federico Pena (400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC 20590), and urge him to uphold the judge's recommendation.

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