

*Inside: A Socialist Night At the Movies*

PUBLISHED BY THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

# DEMOCRATIC Left

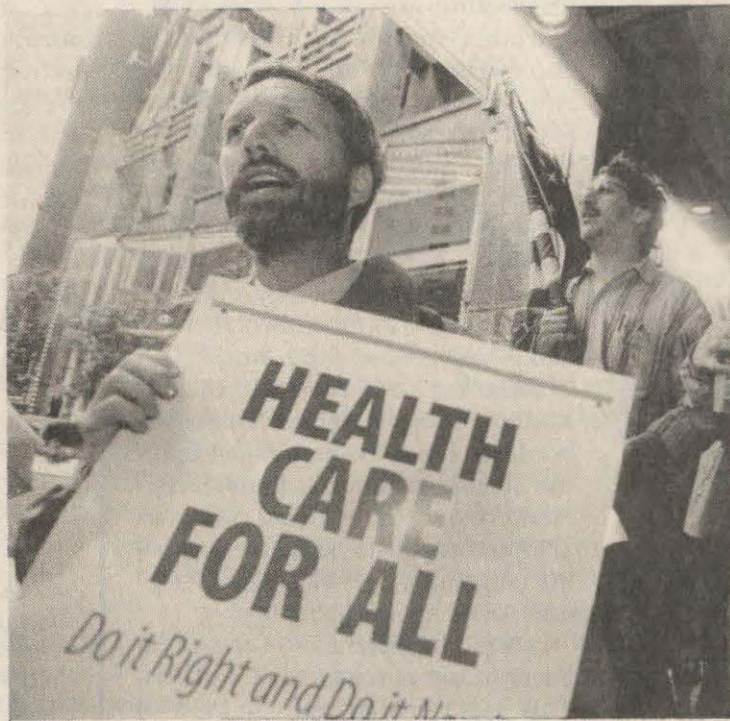
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Volume XXII Number 2

## Pressing Forward

### The Fight for National Health Care



*Susan Cowell on This Year's Congressional Battles*

*Theda Skocpol on the History of Health Care Activism*

*Single Payer Across the Nation: Reports from DSA Locals*



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## EDITORIAL

### CHIAPAS AND THE NEW INTERNATIONALISM

BY ALAN CHARNEY

It is too easy to understand the events in Mexico -- the indigenous people's uprising in Chiapas and its suppression by the military -- in the old way. It is our responsibility to comprehend this uprising in a wholly different manner than we are accustomed.

The Zapatista Liberation Army clearly rose up in response to the manifold injustices suffered by the indigenous people of southern Mexico. In this regard, it is a 1994 manifestation of a resistance to oppression stretching across five centuries and encompassing twenty Latin American nations.

The Zapatista Army has also assumed the mantle of a national liberation movement. It harks back to the Mexican Revolution of 1914 and links its cause with other liberation movements that have convulsed the continent for the last fifty years. In their manifesto, the Zapatistas correctly describe the current Mexican government as a one-party dictatorship serving the interests of transnational corporations and domestic elites.

As U.S. progressives, our first impulse may be to make common cause with the Zapatistas through prominent displays of international support. For some of our members, such displays are a fine and noble expression of socialist values. For others, there is always some discomfort in linking our organization to a distant armed movement whose political values are not yet totally clear. Still others may worry: "What do the Zapatistas have to do with the struggle for justice in the United States anyway?"

The globalization of capital should put this old discord to rest. Today, there is something called NAFTA -- a trade agreement among Mexico, the United States, and Canada that, in a fundamental way, makes indigenous farm workers in Chiapas the same economic citizens as auto workers in Detroit. This cross-border condition was not lost upon the Chiapas insurgents. In full recognition of our transnational commonality, the Zapatista began their uprising on January 1, 1994 -- the first day of NAFTA's implementation.

An immediate goal of the Zapatistas is the abrogation of NAFTA. That is our goal as well. In place of NAFTA we want a fair trade agreement based upon a North American Social Charter that would level up living standards in all three countries. Then, the indigenous people of southern Mexico will genuinely benefit from closer economic integration, as will auto workers in Detroit.

But NAFTA cannot be defeated in the United States alone. It must be brought down in all three nations. We have the same struggle with the same objective.

In DSA's draft Political Statement, we say that "the socialist value of international solidarity is no longer utopian, but a pressing necessity for any democratic reforms at home and abroad." Chiapas is a dramatic manifestation of this perspective, for the events in Chiapas have galvanized the social movements in Mexico, giving tremendous impetus to PRD candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' presidential campaign and giving the Mexican

*continued on page 23*

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# Round Two:

## *What the Single-Payer*

## *Movement Must Do*

## *During the Coming Months*

BY SUSAN COWELL

A historic opportunity for fundamental health care reform is slipping away. Substantially more members of Congress are co-sponsoring legislation that would *not* ensure health care to everyone -- that would, in fact, substantially worsen our health care system -- than there are supporting the single-payer and Clinton bills *combined*. Members of Congress went home over the holiday recess and heard mostly fear from those who have good insurance, from small businesses, and from the medical and insurance industries. While polls show continued broad backing for universal coverage, politicians are hearing primarily from those with something to lose. Support for real reform has eroded to the point that some Republicans, and even a few Democrats, feel politically secure declaring that there is no health care crisis.

It is not too late. The loss of momentum is real, but the health care crisis is real as well. Our job is to mobilize the forces who suffer from the status quo. The administration has been slow in getting its campaign in gear, and its own forces often seem divided and ill-informed. The sheer complexity of the Clinton plan adds to the confusion. Using free-market rhetoric to disguise what is in reality a comprehensive social insurance plan with real cost controls and substantial consumer protection misleads the supporters of national health care more than the opponents. Constant reminders of the administration's willingness to compromise only demoralizes activists further.

Although the opposition is divided, with fundamental splits within the provider, insurance, and business constituencies, they have an

easier task. All the opponents of reform have to do is spread doubt and fear. And they have enormous resources with which to do it.

Increasingly, the middle class and union members are afraid of losing what they have and are suspicious of government proposals. As attention shifts from the fear of the status quo to the fear of change, many are forgetting that the status quo means a continued erosion of benefits, rising cost-sharing, more employer-controlled managed care, stagnant wages, inevitable cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, and a lack of real health security for anyone.

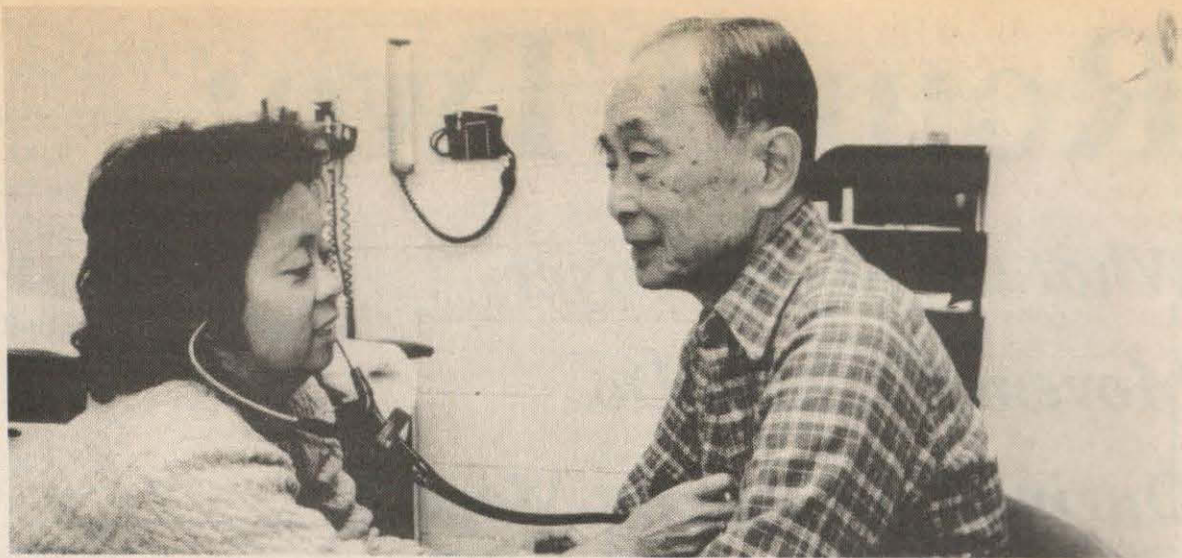
A more serious problem has been disarray on the left. The forces for health care reform have spent months debating whether the Clinton plan is good enough. Energy spent on armchair critiques, rather than active political mobilization, has helped to create a vacuum in which the opposition has been able to nurture public fears.

### **The Next Tasks for the Left**

But the left also brings strengths to the fight. Despite differences of tone and nuance within the single-payer camp, there is substantial unity over strategy, with very few groups seeking to defeat the Clinton plan outright. At the center now are five aspects of the Clinton plan that must not be compromised away -- universal coverage by 1998, comprehensive benefits, an employer mandate to pay for health care, cost controls (including premium caps and fee schedules), and the state single-payer option. These are substantially the same elements promoted by the AFL-CIO and other liberal groups.

Moreover, the fight for reform has taken on





Ken Martin/Impact Visuals

At a community health center operated by the Asian Pacific American community in Boston.

many fronts. First, some single-payer groups, especially grassroots organizations, are focusing on state initiatives. These activities can play an important role, both to pressure Congress to retain the state single-payer option and to prepare for state action if national health care passes. However, single payer at the state level is really only viable in the context of a national system that provides federal subsidies, mandates employer contributions, and establishes a federal floor on benefits. If the state efforts detract from the pressure on Congress, then they are not likely to produce real results.

Second, most national single-payer organizations are working through the Campaign for Health Security to apply single-payer principles to the health debate now taking place in Congress. Health reform is now in congressional committees, where the Clinton plan may be

cial interests can help weaken the credibility of the opposition. But unless the public understands that true security lies only in a national health care system that includes everyone, the opposition will have an easy job. One of the most important things advocates can do is to make sure that our actions do not inadvertently help the opposition by feeding fears of government regulation and rationing.

Part of this political education process involves exposing the weaknesses of conservative bills, such as the Cooper bill. The Cooper bill would have little public support if people understood that it proposes to: 1) tax employers who provide good benefits to subsidize vouchers for workers whose employers do not provide any benefits; 2) eliminate Medicaid and substitute vouchers toward an uncertain benefit; 3) *prohibit* states from enacting single-payer systems; and 4) leave an estimated twenty-five million people uninsured. Democrats and moderate Republicans who have co-sponsored the Cooper plan and other similar bills must be held accountable.

### *Single-payer supporters have a unique role to play in building a bloc in Congress that will hold fast to real reform.*

turned into something quite different. The Campaign's goal is to defend the good parts of the Clinton plan and to seek improvements. There are three essential tasks for advocates: to build mass demand for change, to attack the bad bills, particularly the "bipartisan" Cooper bill, and to lobby single-payer co-sponsors and other supporters of reform to build a bloc that will hold fast to the principles of real reform.

The toughest task is building mass support for health care reform. In the absence of sufficient financial resources, we must rely on a continuous campaign of education of our own constituents and the public. Exposing the spe-

#### **Squaring Off in Congress**

Another arena for the next stage of the struggle is lobbying. Single-payer supporters have a unique role to play in building a bloc in Congress that will hold fast to real reform. President Clinton has defined the parameters of our lobbying strategy by declaring in his State of the Union address that he will veto any reform bill that does not include universal coverage. He has set his bottom line fairly low, but has delineated it so clearly that he is likely to suffer political repercussions if he abandons it. Universal coverage may be a minimal bottom line, but even it will be unachievable with the kind of market reforms conservatives are advocating.



There will be few Republican votes for mandatory employer contributions. This will force Clinton to rely mainly on Democrats, which in turn will make the votes of liberal single-payer supporters essential.

Congressional liberals, most of them single-payer supporters, can force Clinton to meet a much higher bottom line. But to date their contribution has been scattershot and sometimes even counterproductive. The Campaign for Health Security has laid out a program around which single-payer supporters can unite to keep Clinton from moving right. That program offers single-payer supporters both a principled bottom line -- those five components of the Clinton plan that must not be traded away -- and a package of improving amendments.

Despite the conservative tenor of Congress, there may also be openings for real improvements, particularly if they don't require a lot more money. A package of amendments being developed by activists and members of Congress can provide a rallying point for progressives. Single-payer supporters in Congress need to keep their model of reform alive, but they also need to be clear and united around their own demands.

So far, many single-payer members of Congress lack a clear understanding of the fundamentals of health reform. A good example is the bipartisan attack on the "health alliances" that would be created under the Clinton plan. What makes the Clinton plan a form of social insurance is that nearly everyone would be included in these regional health alliances. The regional alliances will be created by government (and can be state agencies). They must be large (and can include the entire state) and governed by consumers and businesses. The alliances will have substantial powers to regulate the insurance industry and protect consumers. Of course, the single-payer option is preferable, but the Clinton plan creates an alternate system capable of serving many of the same goals as single payer.

Not surprisingly, conservatives, the insurance industry, doctors, and hospitals have all targeted the regional alliances, demanding



Jim West/Impact Visuals

broader opt-out provisions for employers, voluntary alliances, and drastically reduced regulatory powers. Yet, rather than defend the alliances from conservative attack, liberals have largely joined in the attack on alliances as "bureaucracy." They are, but they are just the kind of bureaucracy we need. It is the insurance industry that is the unnecessary bureaucracy!

Single payer advocates must be prepared to make these kinds of structural arguments. We understand the principles of a real social insurance system and we must bring that understanding into this debate.

Congress is an inherently conservative institution. President Clinton may someday be held accountable by the voters for a failure to produce health care reform, but individual members of Congress do not feel that they are at risk in the same way. Nearly all of them depend on contributions from many of the special interests currently benefiting from runaway costs in the health care system.

It is up to advocates to change that equation and hold members of Congress accountable. It will not be easy. But a very real crisis has given us a chance to forge an alliance of poor, working, and middle class Americans to significantly expand the role of government. We cannot lose this chance to advance our agenda. **DL**

*Susan Cowell is a Vice President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.*

**A community activist ties black ribbons at the site of Detroit's Lafayette Clinic on the first anniversary of its closing.**



# Has the Time Finally Arrived?

## *Painful Lessons from Past Battles for National Health Care*

BY THEDA SKOCPOL

**R**ight now, in the early 1990s, the time seems ripe for national health care reform. A belief that there are pressing problems about health care access and cost has come together with a sense of *political opportunities* to do something about those problems. This conjuncture of problems and politics has moved the issue of health insurance to the top of the national agenda.

The political scientist John Kingdon has observed that problems, political opportunities, and proposed solutions must come together before a breakthrough in public policy can occur. Clearly, this sort of alignment of forces is happening today around national health care reform -- but it's important to note that Kingdon's description applies to "near misses" as well as to successful policy breakthroughs. U.S. history has seen several such near misses for health care reform: during the late 1910s and during the 1930s and 1940s, health care advocates were hopeful that they could win major reforms, but each time their hopes were dashed.

Will the present period finally bring a major breakthrough, or is health care reform headed for another near miss? Let us take a small historical detour to see what happened in the past to reformers who were absolutely confident that "the time was ripe" for rational and progressive health care reforms. Then we will return to the present, and I will argue that the reformers in the 1990s should pay much more attention than most are doing so far to the requisites of political communication with

broad, democratic politics.

### **The Lessons of Past Defeats**

From 1916 through 1920, the American Association for Labor Legislation (AALL) campaigned for public "sickness insurance" to cover American workers and their dependents. The AALL was a small band of reform-minded professionals, mostly university professors, labor statisticians, and social workers. Reformers in the Progressive Era argued that sickness insurance -- to be funded jointly by contributions from business, wage earners, and government tax revenues -- would help to prevent poverty among wage earners. Health insurance would also promote economic and social "efficiency," because it would encourage employers, employees, and citizens alike to promote healthful conditions at work and in communities.

To the experts of the AALL, the case for the U.S. states to enact health insurance was so obviously rational and the worldwide course of "social progress" so clearly inevitable that they were hardly prepared for the spread of ideologically impassioned opposition to their legislative proposals. Yet there were plenty of potential opponents, among them physicians, private insurance companies, and commercial interests fearful of new taxes.

As the United States entered World War I, ideologues opposed to health insurance highlighted the bogey of German statism, using opposition to "bureaucracy" as an effective



rallying cry for the various forces potentially opposed to health insurance. Health insurance was labeled "un-American." What is more, the increasingly hysterical claims of the enemies of health insurance fell upon the ears of middle-class publics that were already skeptical about governmental efficiency and honesty, not to mention wary of new taxes. The cumbersome operations of U.S. governmental institutions -- which required reformers to move proposals state by state, through two legislative houses, past a myriad of obstacles -- allowed the opponents of health insurance plenty of time to build coalitions. By 1920, the AALL-sponsored campaigns for health insurance had been deflected altogether in most states and defeated in pitched battles in California and New York. The progress that had seemed so inevitable a few years earlier was stopped dead in its tracks.

During the 1930s and 1940s, efforts to promote public health insurance -- now for middle-class as well as working-class Americans -- were pursued by various groups of intellectuals and officials located in and around the various administrations of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. During and after World War II reformers' hopes shifted toward a comprehensive, national system of health insurance, modeled on contributory old-age insurance. It looked as if these hopes might be realized, particularly when Harry Truman featured this reform in his victorious bid for reelection in 1948.

Once again, reformist hopes were shattered. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, all proposals for public health insurance were strenuously opposed by the formidable American Medical Association, as well as by private insurance companies that had developed an interest in offering health insurance to the middle class. During and right after World War II, major industrial employers were encouraged by war-time controls and tax code provisions to start offering health insurance as a "fringe benefit" to workers. Thus, not only were industrial-

ists opposed to paying taxes for private health insurance; many of them also became committed to their nascent private systems of health benefits -- which had been used as bargaining chips in lieu of higher wages, and which did not seem so costly at that phase of history.

Just as ideological rallying cries against "German statism" brought together potential opponents of workingmen's health insurance during the late 1910s, the various forces ready to weigh in against Truman's plans for national health insurance were brought together in the late 1940s by cries of opposition to "communism" and "socialized medicine." The Cold War was emerging, and witch-hunts were launched against actually or allegedly pro-Communist public officials and labor union leaders. Reformers who thought they were furthering a logical extension of the New Deal and Social Security suddenly found themselves in an ideologically uncomfortable position -- appearing to support something un-American, even "subversive."

We see, in short, that both in the 1910s and in the 1930s and 1940s, experts and reformers relied upon rational analyses and arguments about how to solve problems of efficiency or access. Reformers were confident that time was on their side, and that public health insurance (of one sort or another) would "inevitably" be enacted in the United States. But each time, not only were there powerful opponents to health care reform but debates also quickly took a bitterly ideological turn. This tactic was not expected by the rationally minded experts and led to defeats for proposals that might have gained broad citizen support, had they been more calmly discussed -- or effectively dramatized -- in the national political process.

### Speaking to the Citizens of America

Could this painful sequence be repeated today? Once again, proponents of universal health care coverage may be becoming overly



Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals





complacent, assuming that rationality and logic will inevitably triumph. Many experts and politicians are placing their faith in technically complicated insider bargaining, overlooking how ideological and politically charged the debates about health care reform are likely once again to become.

Indeed, the debate is already being taken to the citizens of America. During the final year of his presidency, President Bush started sounding the fundamental conservative themes to shape public opinion. These themes continue to appear regularly in Republican speeches and in ads run in the media by insurance companies, medical groups, and conservative think tanks.

Advocates of both "managed competition" and mandates on employers to help pay for universal health insurance have been accused of "socialism," as conservatives ask why we Americans want to move toward governmental "controls" at a time when the rest of the world is moving away from them. "Governmental coercion" is opposed in conservative rhetoric to such ideals as consumer freedom and technological innovations to save lives. Conservative rhetoric is meant to frighten middle-class Americans -- especially those who still enjoy relatively good benefits through private insurance -- dissuading them from supporting *any* kind of comprehensive reform.

In short, during the 1990s, just as in the 1910s and 1940s, the opponents of any sort of universal health insurance have quickly undertaken to create ideological metaphors. They aim

to fuel fears of reform among the citizenry and bring together a coalition of stakeholders in the health economy as it is presently structured. Meanwhile, very little is being done by advocates of fundamental reform to create their own positive ideological metaphors for wide public dissemination. President Clinton has spoken passionately and effectively about the need for universal coverage, but he has not explained how his plan would work in ways that ordinary citizens can understand.

Proponents of single-payer national health insurance can and should make a series of straightforward arguments to the American people about how to address problems of social access to health care and cost containment.

◆ **Equality and universality.** First and foremost, it is easy to tell people that under national health insurance each individual will have rights as a citizen, rather than through the place he or she happens to be employed. The appeal of equal rights for all citizens can be readily dramatized. Imagine television commercials that feature an unemployed father taking an injured child to the hospital, pulling out the child's "Americare" card, and getting the help that is needed without any complicated forms to fill out.

◆ **Bureaucracy and simplicity.** Proponents of national health insurance can also turn rhetoric about bureaucracy to their advantage, pointing out that the present medical care system has a bewildering variety of rules and paperwork from hundreds of different private insurance companies. The average American citizen knows from experience that the bureaucratic rules and forms are getting more and more complex, as insurance companies regularly seek to manage and second-guess the care that doctors order. Advocates of managed competition cannot easily claim that their approaches would help this situation; they might well make it worse, especially at first. But supporters of national health insurance can make a credible claim to bureaucratic simplification, arguing that sometimes a greater role for government can actually cut down on rules and regulations.

◆ **Economic efficiency.** This is another goal that could be furthered by more, rather than less, comprehensive reform in national health insurance. Advertisements and speeches on behalf of single-payer national health insurance could tell Americans how nice it would be to move from job to job without worrying about the loss or diminution of health benefits for themselves or their families. And single-payer schemes promise to make the capping of health



care costs easier, because young and old, the middle-class and the poor, will all be in the same system. Uniform prices can be negotiated and enforced; administrative costs for health insurance will be cut back; and medical care providers will no longer have to deal with uncompensated patients dumped by insurers or other providers.

### Addressing the Ideological Dimensions

Today's reform-minded experts need to face the fact that, as in the past, U.S. political battles over health insurance will almost certainly have ideological as well as technical, and emotional as well as rational, dimensions. No matter what happens in the successive elections of the 1990s, it almost certainly will not be possible to rely on purely inside-the-beltway bargains to enact, defend, and build upon truly progressive changes in the American system of access to and financing of health care. Any initial changes will have to be well understood by many Americans, if political support for progress over the 1990s is to be sustained. The access and cost problems of the American health care system will not be solved all at once.

The challenge of painting a picture of positive changes through government remains for all those who hope that the time is finally ripe to

enact full health coverage in the United States. Along with members of Congress who hope to hammer out bargains for reform, health care experts who think about solutions for technical problems need to attend to fundamental processes of democratic communication. They need to explain to a democratic citizenry where they would like to go and why it is desirable to go there.

If reformers in the 1990s fail to paint an appealing picture of government-sponsored reform, conservatives will -- later in the 1990s, if not immediately in 1994 -- win yet another round in the overly protracted struggle to bring affordable and accessible to health care to all Americans. To avoid the fate of progressive health reformers in the past, today's advocates of universal inclusion and socially managed health costs will have to talk with the people of America. **DL**

*Theda Skocpol, professor of sociology at Harvard University, is the author of Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States (Belknap Press, 1992), a book that has received five scholarly awards. This essay is adapted from an article that appeared in the Fall 1993 issue of the Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law.*

## DSA Health Care Survey Results

Six hundred and seventy DSA members responded to the health care survey we mailed out in the fall. This feedback from the membership was crucial to the development of DSA's latest Resolution on Health Care Activism (which was printed in the January/February issue of *Democratic Left*), and this information also informs the ongoing work of DSA's Health Care Task Force.

1. Based on the overall Clinton health care reform plan, I think DSA should:

Oppose it	Support it	Critically support it
46%	36%	52%

(Total is greater than 100% because many respondents chose more than one option.)

2. If single payer supporters oppose the president's plan, then he will be forced to further water down his proposal and seek the votes of Republicans and conservative Democrats for piecemeal reform.

Agree	Disagree	No answer
45%	51%	4%

3. The single-payer movement must develop strategies that prevent a division between those who critically support and those who oppose the Clinton proposal.

Agree	Disagree	No answer
66%	27%	7%

4. The most effective strategy to win congressional passage of single-payer legislation is to:

choice a: 47% -- Oppose the president's plan and organize grassroots pressure to get more sponsors of and support on the floor for the American Health Security Act (S. 491/HR 1200) sponsored by Representatives McDermott and Conyers and by Senator Wellstone.

choice b: 48% -- Critically support the president's plan and seek to incorporate single-payer principles and approaches in committee hearings and amendments by organizing grassroots pressure that demands single payer.

To become a member of the DSA Health Care Task Force, write to David Glenn at the national office:  
180 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014.



# The Health Care Struggle: Reports from the Field

*The fight for national health insurance has been carried forward by hundreds of organizations, but it's no exaggeration to say that DSA has played a leading role. DSA activists throughout the country have worked countless hours — stuffing envelopes, organizing meetings, testifying before lawmakers, marching in the streets — to give the single-payer cause the visibility it has today. Below are three accounts from DSA locals:*

## ❖ Front Range DSA

Front Range (Colorado) DSA has made health care one of its main organizing issues. Nationally, the fight for a single-payer health system is the best means we have to relegitimize the role of accountable government, uphold social solidarity, and rebuild our public sphere.

Locally, our health care work has helped build DSA's reputation and presence. Our leadership role in building the local Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN) coalition has earned us the respect of the broad progressive community. (We were just invited by union activists, for example, to provide a co-chair for the Colorado Labor Party Advocates chapter.)

DSA activists played such a decisive role in turning out single-payer activists to the governor's town meetings on health care that the governor had to withdraw his "managed competition" proposal. Having a presence at the public meetings of elected officials has been the most effective strategy so far.

The spring, we will be supporting the Colorado single-payer bill and participating in UHCAN's petition drive (SPAN) for the Wellstone/Conyers/McDermott bills.

We urge all DSA members and locals to get involved in the struggle for universal health care. It is the most relevant issue for the furthering of our agenda and vision.

— Harris Gruman and Hunter Pyle

## ❖ Los Angeles DSA

California DSA members and activists are taking to the streets to gather signatures on a state-wide single-payer health care ballot initiative. 1.1 million signatures are needed by April 22 to qualify for the November 1994 ballot.

The "California Health Security Act" would cover all medical care, preventive and mental care, long term care, most prescription drugs, and some dental services. Negotiated rates, capping hospital and doctor fees, and instituting a state health care budget would provide these expanded health care services without increasing the current aggregate cost of health care in California. Eliminating health insurance companies and their bureaucratic waste will be key.

The California plan will only be viable if the federal legislation passed later this year allows states to set up single-payer systems. Clinton's plan currently does allow this, but he may be tempted to bargain this provision away.

This initiative meets the principles of the DSA Resolution on Health Care Reform while allowing DSA members to work in coalition with labor unions, health care providers, seniors, people with disabilities, and community activists. We have an opportunity to build our ranks at the same time we are actively committing ourselves to our priority of the last twenty years: progressive health care reform.

— Lynn Shaw

## ❖ Baltimore DSA

For over three years, Baltimore DSA's Health Care Committee has been involved in the fight for single-payer health care on both the state and the national level.

Its members participated in the health care ballot campaign, sponsored DSA's Canadian Health Care Tour in Maryland, tabled at community events and festivals, published health care literature and printed bumper stickers. Baltimore DSA created a speakers bureau whose members made presentations to community associations. DSA members and friends also packed a state-initiated health forum to ensure that the single-payer position triumphed.

Delegate Paul Pinsky (D-Prince Georges) has introduced single-payer legislation for Maryland in the last three legislative sessions. Baltimore DSA's Health Care Committee coordinated phone calls, letter writing campaigns, and testimony in support of the legislation.

In October 1993, Baltimore DSA, along with several other organizations, called for the formation of a state-wide single-payer coalition. As a result, the Maryland Universal Health Care Action Network (MD UHCAN) was formed. DSA members are extremely involved in UHCAN's leadership. In order to financially support the organization, Baltimore DSA held a major fund raiser in February with all of the profits going to UHCAN.

— Richard Bruning



# DSA Action

## DSA Youth Section Rallies for Democracy in Mexico

At its fifteenth annual Winter Conference, held in New York City March 4-6, the DSA Youth Section held a rally in front of the Mexican consulate to show solidarity with the rebellion in Chiapas and to demand fair and democratic procedures in Mexico's federal elections, which are scheduled for August. The conference also featured a lengthy discussion session with Barbara Ehrenreich on socialism's future, and workshops on national health care, the jobs crisis, multiculturalism and identity politics, and a variety of other topics.



Steve Oliver

### MOVING ON

DSA's national office moved on March 18 to bigger, brighter, and better-located quarters.

Our new address is:  
180 Varick Street  
New York, NY 10014

phone: 212/727-8610  
fax: 212/727-8616

## Letters to *Democratic Left*

### Euthanasia and Socialist Values

Dear Editors,

I am in agreement with the position taken by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels ("Euthanasia: Prospects and Perils," January/February 1994) that life-terminating decisions should not be put into the hands of physicians.

The ideological ties between health insurers and the American Medical Association are of long standing. Although there are exceptions, far too many physicians are influenced by the preference of insurers for "cost-effective" solutions to illnesses and accidents. Rather than stand as Horatios and St. Joans for their patients and against the insurers, most physicians have behaved spinelessly. They do not deserve the public's trust in matters affecting life and death.

Giving physicians the power to terminate life is not, at this time in our country's social development, an answer to the physical agony and

severe depression that bring many patients to seek death in the later stages of illness. It would be more humane to resist the insurers' influence and to try to relieve agony and morbid depression with everything in the medical and technical armamentarium. To relieve human beings of such agonies and depression by also "relieving" other ill human beings of their lives is not euthanasia but murder -- mass murder, in fact.

In short, the issue of euthanasia in our time is not a matter of humane treatment. The issue is the presence on the scene of an aggressive predatory entity that dehumanizes termination decisions by profiting enormously from them.

David Alman

Highland Park, New Jersey

Dear Editors,

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's "pro-life" apologia for the legal status

quo was simply out of place in a socialist publication.

A system without legalized euthanasia turns hospitals into medicalized Buchenwalds in which the terminally ill are denied autonomy in deciding the mode and timing of an already inevitable death.

Steinfels trots out the tired old "slippery slope" argument. She alleges, without anything but paranoia for support, that voluntary euthanasia leads "inevitably" to class-biased executions of poor people and racial minorities. But many, many precautions can (and must) be taken to ensure that euthanasia is forever entirely voluntary.

Forcing someone to endure a tortured, prolonged dying process to satisfy the values of religions she or he may very well reject is something I am not prepared to tolerate.

Adolph Rosenfeld

Edmonds, Washington



# ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

## ALASKA

Alaska DSA is being revitalized and reorganized on a statewide basis, with a new emphasis on coalition work. Among other issues, the local will be addressing the role of big oil companies in desecrating the environment and twisting the political economy of the state. Alaska has a long tradition of left politics; its first two delegates to the U.S. Congress were elected by the Miners' Party, a coalition of the Socialist Party and the Western Federation of Miners. Contact Alaska DSA at its new address: P.O. Box 70252, Fairbanks, AK 99707.

## CALIFORNIA

The homes of several Los Angeles DSA activists were seriously damaged in the January earthquake. Steve Tarzynski of Santa Monica, who chairs DSA's Health Care Task Force, has been featured in the *L.A. Weekly's* ongoing post-earthquake series about how race and class have affected local families' efforts to rebuild.

Los Angeles DSA has been active in a new coalition called the Los Angeles Committee for Cross-Border Solidarity. On February 25 this coalition sponsored a forum featuring striking Mexican workers, U.S. labor activists, and representatives of the Baja state Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

At its January meeting Valley DSA showed PBS' *The Great Depression*, featuring a sobering account of how "the establishment" pulled out all stops to defeat Upton Sinclair's

End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign in 1934.

San Diego DSA sponsored a bus trip to Tijuana in December to observe the environmental impact of maquiladora plants in Mexico and to meet with labor organizers at the Plasticos BajaCal plant. The local will hold a folk-singing festival April 30 to raise funds for the California single-payer Health Security Initiative.

## ILLINOIS

The Chicago DSA annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington Dinner on May 14 will honor Carol Travis of the United Auto Workers and Lou Pardo of the International Association of Machinists.

## INDIANA

The Central Indiana local is beginning to organize activist branches in Bloomington and Terre Haute. Call Brad Lorton at 317/293-2612 for more information.

## MASSACHUSETTS

Boston DSA held its Fifth Annual Victor Berger Holiday Party and Beertasting Fundraiser in December, with members drinking fondly to the memory of Victor Berger, brewer, newspaperman, and Socialist member of Congress.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

More than two hundred people gathered at the Opera House in Claremont, New Hampshire to pay final tribute to the late Earl Bourdon, who received the 1992 Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award from Boston DSA. Earl, in his 73 years, was an organizer for the Steel Workers, a leader of the National Council of Senior Citizens, an outspoken advocate of democratic socialism, and an adviser to Democratic presidential candidates trekking through New Hampshire.

When he married Honorine, his best man was Norman Thomas. His father, a boxing and wrestling promoter, was a Socialist candidate for governor of New Hampshire. After the ceremony at the Opera House, all were invited to a buffet at a senior citizens' housing complex built because of Earl's leadership. It was renamed the Earl Bourdon Senior Center.

## NEW YORK

New York City DSA conducted an all-day weekend meeting to analyze the Clinton administration's health care plan and to plan its activist response. The local has also continued its leadership role in the statewide labor/community coalitions for single-payer health insurance, lobbying key local members of Congress to keep them focused on the McDermott-Wellstone bills and the essential principles they embody. The local picketed an appearance by Senator D'Amato (for taking large health insurer PAC money) and has been circulating and sending "We Can't Afford to Get Sick" constituent post cards to him.

Jan Pierce, Vice President of the Communications Workers of America, was the featured speaker and recipient of the Paul Gutierrez Award for "contributions to human dignity" when the Long Island Progressive Coalition celebrated its fifteenth anniversary March 19 in Huntington.

Pleasant news from Ithaca: DSAer Ben Nichols was elected to his third term as mayor, and DSA activist John Efrogmson won a seat on the Ithaca Common Council.

Rochester DSA has been meeting with community organizations in support of single-payer health care. In late March the local will participate in series of panel discussions on the future of socialism with representatives of the Committees of Correspondence and other organizations.



# DSA Locals and Organizing Committees

## Northeast

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- ALBANY** Local, Mark Schaeffer, 518-463-5611  
399 State Street, Albany NY 12210
- BALTIMORE** Local, Laila Atallah, 301-467-9424  
1443 Gorsuch Avenue, Baltimore MD 21218
- BOSTON** Local, Glenn Kulbako, staff, 617-354-5078  
11 Garden Street, Cambridge MA 02138
- CENTRAL NJ** Local, William Volonte, 201-642-0885  
PO Box 2029, Princeton NJ 08543
- CENTRAL PA** Local, Curt Sanders, 717-328-5124  
115 Loudon Road, Mercersburg PA 17236
- CONNECTICUT** Local, Mike Phelan, 203-397-5412  
194 Alden Avenue, New Haven CT 06515
- DC/MD/NORTHERN VA** Local, Bill Mosley, 202-483-3299  
P.O. Box 33345, Washington DC 20033
- ITHACA** Local, Kevin Heubusch, 607-256-5341  
108 Terrace Place #3, Ithaca NY 14850
- NASSAU COUNTY NY** Local, Mark Finkel, 516-538-8246  
662 Howard Avenue, West Hempstead NY 11552
- NEW YORK CITY** Local, Julia Fitzgerald, 212-962-1079  
15 Dutch Street #500, New York NY 10038
- NORTHERN NJ** Local, Rhon Baiman, 201-378-7917  
121 Reynolds Place, South Orange NJ 07079
- PHILADELPHIA** Local, Lisa Holgash, 215-248-9013  
125 East Mount Airy Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119
- PITTSBURGH** Local, Bill Wekselman  
P.O. Box 5122, Pittsburgh PA 15206
- READING-BERKS PA** Local, Bob Millar, 215-944-0991  
RD4, Box 4482A, Fleetwood PA 19522
- ROCHESTER**, John Roberts, 716-442-0751  
109 Linden Street, Rochester NY 14620
- SUFFOLK COUNTY NY** Local, Hugh Cleland, 516-751-0340  
528 Pond Path, Setauket NY 11733

## Midwest

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- ANN ARBOR** Local, Eric Ebel, 313-662-4497  
P.O. Box 7211, Ann Arbor MI 48107
- ATHENS OH** O.C., Paul Burke, 614 594-7927  
4 Pine Place, Athens OH 45701
- CARBONDALE IL** O.C., E.G. Hughes, 618-549-1409  
P.O. Box 2201, Carbondale IL 67902
- CENTRAL INDIANA** Local, Brad Lorton 317-293-2612  
6446 Whitehaven Road #1028, Indianapolis, IN 46254
- CENTRAL OHIO** Local, George Boas, 614-297-0710  
44 Brunson Avenue, Columbus OH 43203
- CHICAGO** Local, Maggie Shreve, 312-384-0327  
1608 N. Milwaukee Ave., 4th floor, Chicago IL 60647
- CLEVELAND** Local, Terri Burgess, 216-476-8560  
11316 Dale Avenue, Cleveland OH 44111
- DANE COUNTY WI** O.C., Todd Anderson, 608-271-4793  
P.O. Box 9038, Madison WI 53715
- DANVILLE IL** O.C., Brian Mitchell, 217-431-8251  
208 Brentwood, Tilton IL 61833
- DETROIT** Local, Roger Robinson, 313-822-4639  
653 Pemberton, Grosse Pointe Park MI 48230
- IOWA CITY** Local, Jeff Cox, 319-338-4551  
112 S. Dodge, Iowa City IA 52242

- KENT OH** O.C., Eric Hensal, 216-677-9789  
134 East Oak Street, Kent OH 44240
- MAHONING VALLEY OH** O.C., Allan Curry, 216-534-9327  
117 Caroline Avenue, Hubbard OH 44425
- MILWAUKEE** O.C., Tom Sobottke, 414-367-5893  
162 Hill Court, Hartland WI 53029
- ST. LOUIS** Local, Dave Rathke, 314-773-0605  
3323 Magnolia, St. Louis MO 63118
- TWIN CITIES** Local, Dan Frankot, 612-224-8262  
695 Ottawa Avenue, Saint Paul MN 55107
- WICHITA** O.C., Jim Phillips, 316-681-1469  
2330 North Oliver Street #219, Wichita KS 67220

## South

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- ARKANSAS** O.C., Jason Murphy, 501-661-0984  
512 North Oak, Little Rock AR 72205
- AUSTIN** Local, Dick Fralin, 512-820-0257  
2409 West Eighth Street, Austin TX 78703
- CENTRAL KENTUCKY** Local, Ann Patterson, 606-268-2983  
P.O. Box 1190, Lexington KY 40589
- CHARLOTTESVILLE** Local, Claire Kaplan, 804 295-8884  
Route 1 Box 1250, Troy VA 22974
- HOUSTON** Local, Elroy Sullivan, 713-667-2726  
3322 Durhill, Houston TX 77025
- RICHMOND** O.C., Irene Ries, 804-276-8271  
P.O. Box 5011, Richmond VA 23220

## West

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- ALASKA** Local, Niilo Koponen, 907-479-9466 (fax)  
P.O. Box 70252, Fairbanks AK 99707
- ALBUQUERQUE** Local, Gerry Bradley, 505-881-4687  
6008 Ponderosa NE, Albuquerque NM 87110
- EAST BAY CA** Local, Dean Ferguson, 510-763-8054  
150 17th Street #404, Oakland CA 94612
- EUGENE OR** O.C., Jean Hanna  
2316 #3 Patterson Drive, Eugene, OR 97405
- FRONT RANGE CO** Local, Harris Gruman, 303-444-9049  
3075 Broadway #D, Boulder CO 80304
- LOS ANGELES** Local, Steve Tarzynski, 310-451-8934  
1102 North Brand Blvd. #20, Glendale CA 91202
- MARIN COUNTY CA** Local, Mark Wittenberg, 415-388-6396  
215 Throckmorton Avenue #2, Mill Valley CA 94941
- PALO ALTO** Local, Carolyn Curtis, 415-364-6124  
69 Lloyd Drive, Atherton CA 94027
- SACRAMENTO VALLEY** Local, Duane Campbell,  
916-361-9072  
P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento CA 95816
- SAN DIEGO** Local, Virginia Franco, 619-276-6023  
5122 Gardena Avenue, San Diego CA 92110
- SAN FRANCISCO** Local, Michael Pincus, 415-695-0111  
1095 Hampshire, San Francisco CA 94110
- SEATTLE** Local, Craig Salins, 206-784-9695  
6221 Greenwood Avenue North, Seattle WA 98103
- SONOMA COUNTY CA** Local, David Walls, 707-823-7403  
943 McFarlane Avenue, Sebastopol CA 95472



# A Socialist Night at the Oscars

## *Films with Special Meaning for DSA Members*

COMPILED BY MIKE HANDLEMAN

**O**n March 21, "Hollywood" -- the United States' most successful global industry -- celebrated what it considers its best. But what do we socialists think are the best movies? Democratic Left asked a variety of DSA leaders about the movies that have "spoken" to them as people of the left -- movies that resonate with their basic values and political ideas. Here are selections from their responses:

### ◆ Shakoor Aljuwani

New York City DSA; Manhattan Voter Participation Project.

In spite of an incredibly busy schedule as a community organizer, a father, and a grandfather, I still find time to go to the movies. Whether it's trash or a classic, foreign or domestic, I'm there, buttered popcorn in hand.

*Malcolm X* by Spike Lee has to be one of my all-time favorite films. Brother Spike Lee courageously took on the daunting task of cinematically telling the story of the meteoric rise of Malcolm X from small-time criminal to one of the most important leaders that the African-American people have produced. Spike was attacked from all sides (even worse, from the left) as he produced a monumental classic, filming from Harlem to Mecca.

### ◆ Joanne Barkan

New York City DSA; Executive Editor of Dissent.

*Nuit de Varennes*, directed by Etторе Scola: Louis XVI of France and

Marie Antoinette flee Paris in the middle of the night. A carriage pursues them, carrying (among others) Tom Paine, the aging Casanova, a prominent French historian, an Italian diva, and a lady-in-waiting to the French queen. The result of this quirky (and, historically, almost plausible) premise is a film about no less than revolution, democracy, class divisions, the making and writing of history, love, desire, aging, and art.

### ◆ Paul Berman

New York City DSA; Contributing Writer, The New Yorker.

My subversive heart dictates that the greatest movie ever made is *The Mouse That Roared*, starring Peter Sellers in several roles, each more distinguished than the last. *Mouse* is a blow against pomposity, grandiosity, authority, modernity, sobriety, the military and several other -ities that are as bad as any -ism you can mention.

### ◆ Paul Buhle

Providence DSA; editor of Popular Culture in America.

When Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., slandered the Hollywood blacklistees as "film hacks," he determinedly obscured some of the best movies of an age. Here are only two: *From This Day Forward* (1946), screenplay by Hugo Butler, from Tom Bell's novel *All Brides Are Beautiful*, about a GI returning to his working-class neighborhood after the war; and *Body and Soul* (1947), written by Abraham Polonsky, simply the best boxing film ever made.

### ◆ Hugh Cleland

Suffolk County DSA; Professor Emeritus, State University of New York.

Of the movies that have meant the most to me as a socialist, the one most available (on cassette) is *Reds*, which is as much about the American radical movements and Greenwich Village as it is about Russia. Harder to see but worth hunting for are three



16mm films available through university or union libraries: *Union Maids*, by DSAer Julia Reichert, *Debs*, and *With Babies and Banners*.

### ◆ Karen Marie Gibson

Rochester DSA; Co-chair, DSA Youth Section

As a socialist, one of my favorite movies is 1975's *Rollerball*, starring James Caan. The movie is set in the future, when all nations have gone bankrupt and "even corporate wars are a thing of the past." The world is run by a corporate board and its executives; "rollerball" is the rollerderby-type sport created by the corporations to entertain the masses' need for spectacle and conflict. Caan's character, a rollerball hero whose personal popularity threatens the corporate board, goes into rebellion. Much of the movie is silly, and, as in most mainstream films of "struggle," there is only one individual hero, no movement. But it is worthwhile viewing, both in the context of the seventies (I was six years old in 1975) and in light of where we are going almost twenty years later.

### ◆ Todd Gitlin

East Bay DSA; author of *The Murder of Albert Einstein*.

I don't like judging films strictly by their values and ideas, and when I am moved by a film it's not "as a socialist" or "as a person of the left" but as a whole person; but since you asked, rather than rummage through my list of all-time favorites, I'll settle on this year's *Schindler's List*, which made me feel more deeply human. I say this not because it is the "definitive Holocaust film," whatever that would be, but because it throws open the question of goodness, and beautifully (that is, mysteriously) renders both the glory of a man's choice and the limits of what one man's goodness can accomplish.

### ◆ Harris Gruman

Front Range DSA; professor, University of Colorado at Boulder.

No film did more for me as a democratic socialist than the political thriller *A Very British Coup* (aired on

PBS in 1988). Left-wing British Channel Four created the ultimate DSA fantasy romp: a labor socialist is elected prime minister of England on a radical platform. A riveting plot brings the hopes and fears of our politics to dramatic life as the regime of our dreams wrestles with class struggle, IMF austerity, and U.S. strong-arming. Through intelligence, wit, and high production values, *British Coup* entertains and inspires; every local should see it.

### ◆ Jerry Monaco

Editorial Assistant, *Dissent* magazine.

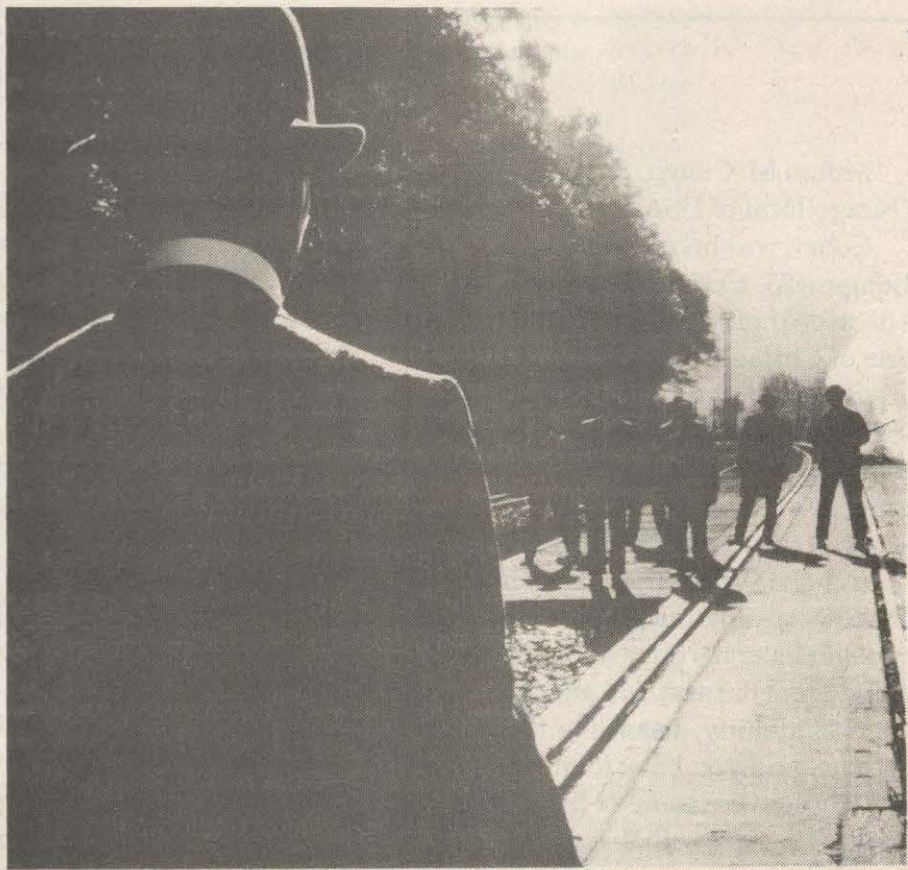
This is what Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers's movies taught me: Sophistication, romance, wit, and the playfulness of art are not the monopoly of the few, but belong to us all. They taught me about the existence of style and grace, and gave me a sense that this was something we should all participate in. This is essential to my utopian vision. Though these movies themselves might be defined as "politically regressive" or "fetishized

commodities," they are also fairy tales that helped create my childhood longing for a better life.

### ◆ Jo-Ann Mort

DSA Vice Chair; Director of Communications, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union.

I would recommend *Faraway, So Close*, by German filmmaker Wim Wenders. This film, a sequel to *Wings of Desire*, examines life in unified Berlin through the eyes of angels, two of whom have the curse of becoming human. The film moves like a Rilke poem, not only because of the allusion to angels, but in lyrical moments that resemble literature as much as anything I've seen on screen. Angels and humans alike, Berliners are adrift in their new identity. One incredible scene shows a newspaper floating down the river, with a headline exclaiming the passing of Willy Brandt. The main character whispers "Farewell, Comrade," as the newsprint floats by, and one is left wishing for a world that included Brandt and his clear vision of where we go next.



A scene from John Sayles's *Matewan* (1987).

Gramercy Releasing



### ◆ Judith Nedrow

D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA.

*The Grapes of Wrath*: This movie is as relevant now as when it was made in that it points out the discrepancies in wages and opportunities for people. It shows the importance of people organizing to force a redistribution of goods and services. It portrays so well what people had to go through during the Depression, and it is especially poignant now when the situation of homeless people has grown so bleak.

### ◆ Julia Reichert

At-Large DSA member, Yellow Springs, Ohio; director of *Union Maids*, *Seeing Red*, and *Emma and Elvis*.

Okay, I wanted to name *Battle of Algiers*, *Salt of the Earth*, *Z*, *Battle of Chile*, or even *Matewan*. But truth be told, I kept coming back to *The Way We Were* and *Casablanca*. I know this sounds terribly retro. But both capture aspects of the radical spirit -- the emotional side of commitment to radical ideas. In *The Way We Were*, we

watch a woman blazing with that interior fire that separates radicals from all others. In *Casablanca*, we see a man who's gone dead inside reawakened from cynicism and reclaim his humanity. Yes, in both there is a great love story involved. But it is the edgy intersection of love and politics that compels our attention and turns these into great movies.

### ◆ Chris Riddiough

DSA Vice Chair; *Union of Concerned Scientists*

*Norma Rae*: This was a terrific movie both because it was fun and exciting to watch and because it showed a progressive perspective. I especially liked the fact that this movie showed a woman as the protagonist/organizer of the union effort. The movie also showed unions in a positive light (something not often done in Hollywood). I'm still waiting, however, for the movie that will show gay and lesbian activists as part of the progressive movement, as activists and organizers (come to think of it, there just aren't that man

positive films with gay and lesbian characters out there to begin with.)

### ◆ Jack Spooner

DSA Commission on Religion and Socialism.

The film *Reds*, by Warren Beatty, "spoke" to me evoking a feeling of hope for a revolution of considerable historical significance and promise, yet left me distressed because of its obvious foreshadowing of the eventual and soon-to-be-recognized grand fraud the Russian Revolution perpetrated on humanity and the socialist vision.

### ◆ Steve Tarzynski

Los Angeles DSA; physician.

*1900* shows class struggle and class war, and how the left can be an organic force in society, really coming from the grass roots and being part of people's lives in a way that I saw with my own relatives in Italy. *Germinal*, based on the book by Emile Zola, is a film that will soon be released in this country. It is probably one of the best films I've ever seen.

## IN MEMORY OF MILTON M. COHEN 1915-1994

Milton M. Cohen, a progressive whose sixty years of activism took him from the shores of Spain to the Chicago local of DSA, died in Oregon on New Year's Day.

Cohen was born and raised in Chicago, and was recruited to fight in Spain with the Lincoln Brigades at the age of 23. Cohen's ship was torpedoed as it arrived, and his was the only lifeboat to make it safely to shore. After a year of combat, Cohen returned home to work as an organizer for the Communist Party on the South Side of Chicago, working on anti-segregation campaigns in coalition with the NAACP.

Cohen left the Party in the 1960s, and in the early 1970s became a founding member of the New American Movement, which in 1982 merged with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee to form DSA. In 1982 and 1983 he was a major force in Harold Washington's successful bid to become Chicago's first African-American mayor. He served as the co-chair of Chicago DSA for several years, and in 1991 he and his wife Sue received the local's Debs-Thomas Award.

Cohen touched the lives of many of the DSA activists with whom he worked. Steve Tarzynski, the chair of DSA's Health Care Task Force, vividly recalls a NAM gathering in Wisconsin in the 1970s at which Cohen told stories of his days in Spain. Several young activists there asked whether Cohen's life in the Carter era didn't seem flat and dull after the intensity of the 1930s. He replied, "The 1930s was the time that formed my political identity, just as the 1960s was the period for you. Those memories will always be with me. But life goes on, and you have to move on. You'll be crippled if you linger too much in the past."

"Those were some of the wisest words I ever heard," Tarzynski says. "I often think of that evening as I struggle to cope with these grim political times. Maintaining a commitment to radical politics over a lifetime is a great challenge, and Milt was a great inspiration to me."



# Thinking in Common:

## Forty Years of *Dissent*

BY MAURICE ISSERMAN

To mark the fortieth anniversary of *Dissent*, we asked historian and DSA member Maurice Isserman to reflect on the magazine's history and influence.

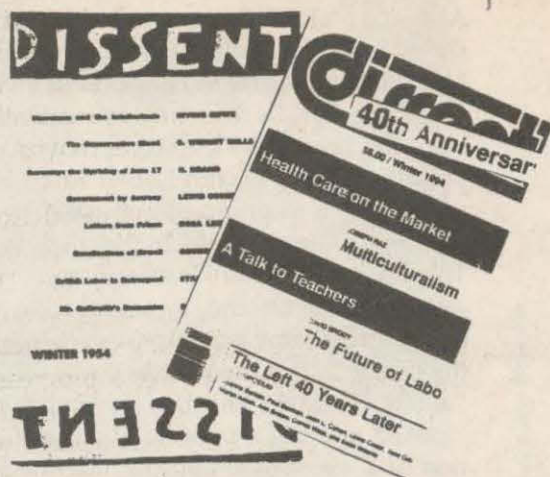
"When intellectuals can do nothing else," *Dissent* founder Irving Howe remarked on the occasion of the journal's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1979, "they start a magazine." It was among Howe's virtues that he could view his own life's work with a degree of self-deprecating detachment, without lapsing into despair, cynicism, or -- what he regarded as the most sordid of fates -- the neoconservatism that befell some of his former colleagues. Howe proved that a healthy sense of irony could secure a radical perspective. "[S]tarting a magazine," he went on, "is also doing something: at the very least it is thinking in common. And thinking in common can have unforeseen results."

Volume I, Number 1 of *Dissent* appeared on a few newsstands forty years ago this spring in what was certainly an inauspicious season for a new radical magazine. The Korean War had ended the previous summer after three years of futile bloodletting, but peace was not at hand; no one knew if the next flare-up in the Cold War might lead to World War Three. Socialist sentiments of any variety, however democratic their intent or pedigree, were regarded by the political and intellectual powers-that-be as at best naïve and at worst the opening wedge for Soviet conquest. (When the first issue of *Dissent* appeared, a reviewer in *Commentary* magazine commented that had Howe and his colleagues had their way over the past decade, the Soviet

secret police "would be comfortably established today in Rome, Paris, and London -- at least.")

The editors of *Dissent*, for the most part veterans of the anti-Stalinist left of the 1930s and 1940s, were not intimidated by the blustering of McCarthyites or those liberals and former radicals who had capitulated to the McCarthyite consensus. Instead they stubbornly continued to insist on the relevance of democratic socialist ideas and values. Still, they found it much easier to explain in the first issue just what it was their new magazine was not proposing to do than what it hoped to accomplish, denying any intention of organizing a "political party or group": "On the contrary, [*Dissent's*] existence is based on an awareness that in America today there is no significant socialist movement and that, in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future." *Dissent's* early issues were filled with gloomy, trenchant articles analyzing what had gone wrong with American radicalism over the past three decades -- a critique that did not spare the mistakes of their own sectarian past along with those of their Communist rivals.

And yet the political will of *Dissent's* editors was not paralyzed by introspection, nostalgia, or regret. They were scornful of those who sought accommodation with the prevailing conservative climate; the failures of the left did not validate the success of the right. Intellectual rigor was no mandate for political fatigue. "The weapon of criticism is undoubtedly inadequate," Harold Rosenberg wrote in the fall of 1956 (Volume III, Number 4). "Who on that account would choose to surrender it?" And by its third year of publication, *Dissent* found





grounds for renewed optimism in the power of political action as well as political criticism, as it celebrated the first stirrings of what would become the insurgent movements of the 1960s.

Lawrence Reddick, a black historian at Alabama State College, noted in *Dissent* in the spring of 1956 (Volume III, Number 2) that Montgomery, Alabama had suddenly "become one of the world's most interesting cities." The black bus boycotters in that city, led by a young preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr., were providing "a magnificent case study of the circumstances under which the philosophy of Thoreau and Gandhi can triumph" in their campaign for an end to segregation on city buses. In the same issue, Irving Howe ventured the prediction, subsequently borne out, that in "a few decades" the bus boycott would be "looked upon as a political and social innovation of a magnitude approaching the first sit-down strikes of the 1930s."

A year later, in the summer of 1957 (Volume IV, Number 3), novelist Norman Mailer brilliantly anticipated the politics of the sixties (and the cultural wars that remain a feature of American politics even today) in "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster." Fusing the insights of the Beat generation writers with energies unleashed by the gathering struggle for black equality, Mailer predicted the onset of a cultural and political upheaval that would not end until it had made "a profound shift into the psychology, the sexuality, and the moral imagination of every White alive. . . . A time of violence, new hysteria, confusion and rebellion will then be likely to replace the time of conformity."

Not all *Dissent's* editors were comfortable with the implications of Mailer's apocalyptic eschatology. But, schooled as they were in the

more austere categories of traditional Marxist class analysis and political strategy, they proved in the 1950s and early 1960s remarkably open to new voices and perspectives on the left.

*Dissent's* youngest editor, Michael Walzer, reported in 1960 (Volume VII, Numbers 2 and 4) on the mood he found on southern black college campuses following the sit-ins in the spring of 1960. Black students, he contended, were reinventing what it meant to be a radical in America. For too long American intellectuals had viewed politics through an "apocalyptic haze" in which "every spark of enthusiasm in their hearts and every utopian dream in their heads" was put aside for fear it would somehow open the door to Stalinism or Nazism. "We have been warned that a step outside the realm of conventional politics. . . is a step toward totalitarianism." In contrast, Walzer believed the civil rights movement had validated a politics of "resistance" against the threat posed by "mass society, garrison state, totalitarianism." Anticipating by two years the analysis that SDS founder Tom Hayden would express in the Port Huron Statement, and by four years the sentiments that Free Speech Movement leader Mario Savio would voice on the steps of Berkeley's Sproul Hall, Walzer declared, "When consent becomes a platitude and a myth, resistance is the proper activity of citizens."

*Dissent's* positive attitude toward the New Left in the early-to-mid-1960s is worth dwelling on because recent commentators from both the left and the right have been promoting some myths on the subject. Alexander Cockburn, writing in *The Nation* (September 20, 1993), contended that "Howe and his circle were at all times utterly marginal, at least in any positive sense, to the important struggles of the 1960s,"

# DISSENT

TWENTY YEARS AFTER THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

## ARMAGEDDON

by ALEXANDER DONAT

ROY FINCH The Peace Movement Today

EDGAR Z. FRIEDBERG The Image of the Adolescent Minority

REN E. SELIGMAN Whose Taxes, Whose Economy?

IRVING HOWE A Revival of Radicalism?

GEORGE LICHTHEIM Does Public Ownership Still Matter?

STANLEY DIAMOND Modern Africa: The Pains of Birth

MEYER SCHAPIRO On David Skovslev

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# DISSENT

STANLEY PLASTRIK

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A Firsthand Report from Santiago

WALTER LAQUEUR

## Zionism, the Marxist Critique, and the Left

STANLEY HOFFMANN

## War Crimes: Politics & Law

CZESLAW MILOSZ

## Science Fiction & the Antichrist

IRVING HOWE

## Lukacs and Solzhenitsyn

EUGENE KELLER

## Social Priorities, Economic Policy, and the State

PAUL GOODMAN

## Sub-Language as Social Badge

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# Dissent

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LEGAL: UNDELETED STATE

## CULTURE IN AN AGE OF MONEY

WILLIAM HILLS The Money Years	TOM BITLIN Television Politics
JOSS CHILLEN Gritz Architecture	JANA BERGHEIM Pillagers
JEAN WILENTZ The Televangelists	JOSEPHINE HENDON Successo Alvarez
JOBERT REICH The New Entrepreneurs	WILLIAM ADAMS Screen Wars
STEPHEN JAY GOULD Drugs	ERMAN SCHWARTZ Civil Rights Law

## A MULTITUDE OF CHANGE

ABRAHAM BRUNBERG, GAVRIIL POPOV, IRVING HOWE



because they offered nothing but destructive criticism of the New Left. Ronald Radosh, writing in *Partisan Review* (Fall 1993), applauds Howe for the very thing that Cockburn deplors. Radosh argues that Howe "hit fiercely" at the "anti-Americanism [and] crude Marxism" of the New Left. Radosh then notes, regretfully, that Howe's attitude in recent years seemed to soften; he sought to "reconcile with those very elements of the New Left that had for so many years wanted nothing to do with him."

Howe and other editors of *Dissent* did have many critical things to say about the New Left. But up until mid-1965, the magazine was in fact consistently and warmly supportive of the New Left. The spring 1965 issue (Volume XII, Number 2)

contained two glowing reports on Berkeley's Free Speech Movement and a report from SDS leaders Todd Gitlin and Paul Potter on recent developments in the New Left.

But *Dissent's* attempt to promote an alliance of generations on the left was not destined to prosper. Already Irving Howe had tangled in public forums with Tom Hayden over the direction in which the New Left was heading. And then, in the Summer 1965 issue (Volume XII, Number 3), Howe contributed an essay entitled "New Styles in 'Leftism'" in which he condemned the New Left's hostility to political liberalism and its infatuation with Third World revolutionary models. He expressed himself with his usual caustic wit and, in doing so, made many enemies among younger readers. The essay clearly marked a turning point in relations between *Dissent* and the New Left, for Howe pulled no punches. But read carefully, Howe's essay can also be understood as a critique of his own generation's failure to reach out and to provide attractive political models for young activists. Since the early 1960s, Howe noted, the civil rights movement had served "as a training school for experienced, gifted, courageous people who have learned how to lead, how to sacrifice, how to work, but have no place in which to enlarge upon their gifts."

Howe was infuriated by the tactics and rhetoric of many young activists. But he never gave in to the temptation to write them off as enemies. In the preface to a collection of essays from *Dissent* entitled *Beyond the New Left*, published in 1970 at the peak of campus confronta-



Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

tions, Howe declared, "[The New Left] contains precious resources of energy and idealism, and this energy and idealism ought to be thrust into the mainstream of American politics." When Howe recruited former New Leftists as editors and writers for *Dissent* in the 1980s, he was not doing so, as Radosh implies, because he was suddenly abandoning his democratic values. Rather, he was marching along the same road he'd been on for thirty years and more, reaching out to others, even those he'd disagreed with in the past, in order to build a left.

In recent years, *Dissent* has been strengthened by its recruitment of new writers and new perspectives, while suffering the loss of some of its stalwarts, most notably Michael Harrington in 1989 and Howe himself last spring. It has valuable resources at its command, including a loyal community of readers and an honorable political tradition. I wish I could say that the magazine's future is bright and that it will survive to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary and beyond. But these are, of course, difficult years for left-wing magazines, as they are for the left as a whole. *Dissent's* best hope is to retain that freshness of perspective and openness to new radical currents that its founding generation brought to it in the 1950s.

*Maurice Isserman is the author of If I Had A Hammer. . . The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left, upon which this essay is partially based. He is currently writing a biography of Michael Harrington.*

***Dissent***  
founding  
editor  
Irving Howe  
(1920-1993).



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A stunningly thorough and useful directory.  
Simon and Schuster, 1993, 432 pages, softcover, \$18.00.

**Reclaiming Our Future: An Agenda for American Labor**

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Westview Press, 1989, 268 pages, softcover, \$9.00.

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**A Margin of Hope** by Irving Howe  
The classic memoir by DSA's late Honorary Chair.  
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***Socialism and America*** by Irving Howe

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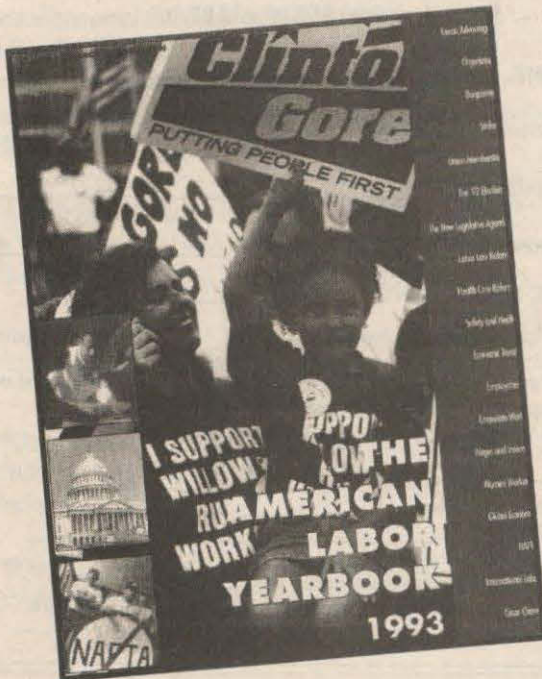
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continued from page two

people the confidence that they can defeat the one-party dictatorship of the PRI. A PRD victory in August would surely mean the renegotiation of NAFTA, which would accelerate post-NAFTA opposition in the U.S.

Is there any clearer indication that we are living in a new era? We have moved beyond the old conception of international "support" and have begun to articulate a new internationalism, in which the struggles against injustice in other nations are directly linked to similar struggles in our nation. In this sense, the Zapatistas are not only workers and peasants with whom we share socialist ideals. They are our next door neighbors.

*Alan Charney is National Director of DSA.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Democratic Left* readers interested in discussing the issues of biology and ethics raised in the January/February issue, contact: Steve Weiner, 549 B Street #3, Ashland, OR 97520.

National Conference of the Bertha Capen Reynolds Society,  
an organization of progressive workers in social welfare.  
July 8, 9, 10 in Seattle  
Call for info: Linda 206/789-5702

## ❖ Excerpts from a Resolution on Chiapas

*Passed by the DSA National Political Committee, 23 January 1994.*

The PRI (Party of the Institutional Revolution) government of Mexico is a corrupt, undemocratic, authoritarian regime. It interferes with the organization of free trade unions, uses fraud to control electoral processes, and abuses the human rights of its citizens, particularly members of indigenous communities.

Student, labor, and environmental groups, along with DSA, opposed NAFTA. Now we must continue to oppose the destructive implementation of the NAFTA accords. Many thousands of U.S. workers, Canadian workers, and Mexican workers will face economic ruin as more corporations move their production to low-wage areas in pursuit of an exploitable work force and a non-union environment. The working people of Mexico, the U.S., and Canada must support each other in their common struggle against transnational corporations and the governments they dominate.

Be it therefore resolved that the Democratic Socialists of America joins with indigenous people, the solidarity movements, and Mexican working people's organizations, along with Bishop Samuel Ruiz, to demand:

1. that the Mexican government respect the human rights and dignity of the non-combatant indigenous people in the area of conflict,
2. that the PRI government recognize the Zapatista Liberation Army as a belligerent force under the Geneva Conventions,
3. that the PRI permit internationally recognized human rights observers into the areas of conflict, the jails, the hospitals, to report on the allegations of human rights abuses,
4. that the procedures for the August 1994 Presidential elections be conducted in a free, fair and open manner with the presence of impartial international observers,
5. and that DSA calls on President Clinton and Secretary of State Christopher to certify that no U.S. aid money or equipment is used in the violation of human rights of indigenous people in Chiapas.

Should these conditions not be met, DSA will join with others to support democratic forces in Mexico in bringing pressure to bear on the PRI government through whatever economic means make sense, including a possible boycott of tourism in Mexico.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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

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# Jimmy Higgins Reports



## THE BURGER SOCIETY

Leaders of DSA's Commission on Religion and Socialism might want to have a word with Michael Bauman, professor of theology at Michigan's far-right Hillsdale College. In a lecture on "Morality and the Marketplace," Bauman made an argument that reads like a sophomoric parody of right-wing social policy:

"Far more than any government program has or could, the businesses Ray Kroc and Dave Thomas established -- McDonald's and Wendy's -- aid the poor as consumers by providing affordable, enjoyable meals. . . [and] aid the poor as workers by providing all-important entry-level jobs [that teach] punctuality, deference, and teamwork. . ."

## CLOSE THE HOLES

The National Labor Committee reports that the U.S. embargo against Haiti, intended to help restore the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has been severely compromised by loopholes exempting U.S.-owned maquiladora plants there. The loophole means that over fifty U.S. compa-

nies continue to import from Haiti and to benefit from the rock-bottom wages maintained by the authoritarian regime there. Softballs, fishing lures, and pajamas are among the items being imported. Write to the White House (Washington, D.C. 20500) and demand that the loophole be closed and that the administration steadfastly support the democratic forces in Haiti.

## TASTELESS BRITISH PUN OF THE MONTH

You've probably read that Britain's Conservative Party has been suffering a wave of sex scandals, including a tryst between a Tory MP and his young research assistant, who turned out to be a frequenter of Socialist Workers Party meetings. You may not have heard that a Labour MP named Tony Banks thoughtfully proposed one day in February that a condom machine be installed in the House of Commons.

"I realize that the installation would come rather too late for some Tory MPs," he said. "The more circumspect among us would welcome the installation. Alternatively, of course, we could seek some advice from Lorena Bobbitt, who has a very direct way of dealing with members."

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