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Victory in South Africa



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an essay by Frances Fox Piven

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EDITORIAL

IN DEFENSE OF IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

BY ERIC VEGA AND DUANE CAMPBELL

Times are tough. In the midst of a deep recession in California and a prolonged economic restructuring across the nation, democratic forces are once again confronted by an anti-immigrant campaign. Throughout the world -- in Bosnia, Serbia, Rwanda, Somalia -- we are witnessing the intensification of narrow nationalism and economic dislocation. Huge groups of people are migrating from one society to another, trying to gain safety and food for their families.

In this country, rather than respond with understanding and solidarity to global economic crises, conservative groups have initiated a campaign to ban some children from school and to deny others health care, because they are immigrants or children of immigrants. Politicians in Texas, Florida, California and the Southwest have described immigrants as a "burden" and are irresponsibly using the media to manufacture stereotypes and the inaccurate image that Mexicans, Chinese, and others are taking advantage of taxpayers.

A California ballot proposition known as "Save Our State" (S.O.S.) now proposes to deny public education,

health care, and social services to all undocumented immigrants, and would require teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals to report anyone they suspect of being undocumented. This ugly initiative campaign has implications for the entire country; right-wing California ballot initiatives have a history of spreading to other states.

What is the context for this well-financed right-wing populist campaign that focuses anger on immigrants and people of color? The global economy is experiencing a major restructuring, largely directed by transnational corporations and the institutions that these corporations control. In many countries, "neoliberal" economic restructuring plans imposed by the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund have led to unemployment rates of over 40 percent. The impoverishment of the vast majority, in pursuit of profits for the minority, has pushed millions of people to migrate in search of food, jobs, and employment. *Global capitalism produces global migration.*

In the last decade the U.S. has experienced its largest immigration since the early 1900's. There are about 22 million immigrants in the U.S. today. Most are immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, and many have been here for decades. This new immigration has unalterably changed our labor force. At the same time, U.S. workers have suffered a decline in their real wages for over 20 years. Quality industrial jobs have moved to low-wage, anti-union areas, and to Mexico, Singapore, and other nations.

It is time for us to look closely at our most basic values. We hold a vision of a world that nurtures all of its children, enabling them to grow into healthy, productive democratic citizens. We must not let our fellow citizens be fooled into projecting their legitimate economic anxieties onto immigrants. DSA is committed to working with other progressive forces and with the Latino community to oppose all efforts to focus on immigrants and immigrant children as the cause of our social and economic crisis. **DL**

Eric Vega and Duane Campbell are, respectively, Co-Chair and Secretary of the DSA Latino Commission. This essay is adapted from a new DSA pamphlet on immigrants' rights. For more information, see page 11.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Welfare Reform and the Quandaries of the Left

BY FRANCES FOX PIVEN

In the course of the 1992 presidential campaign, the pollsters discovered that "ending welfare as we know it" touched a chord, and indeed was Bill Clinton's most popular campaign issue. Not surprisingly, welfare reform was placed high on the agenda of our new president, and a team of liberal policy experts newly arrived in Washington set to work to devise a plan broadly consistent with the promise of "two years and off to work."

But the talk was of something bigger and better than simply ending welfare. The Clinton administration promised a set of reforms that would provide education and training to recipients, guarantee health care and child care, strengthen child support enforcement, and generally "make work pay." Some of us felt skeptical from the outset toward a national program that would force poor mothers into a labor market in which there were already too many people chasing too few jobs at too low wages. Then, too, we reckoned up the potential costs of the promises at tens of billions of dollars, and simply didn't believe the promises would be kept. In any case, we didn't see the point of a policy that would force poor mothers to leave their children, and whatever nurturance and protection they were able to provide them, for jobs flipping burgers or mopping floors.

But reasonable people could and did disagree. After all, the existing welfare program was pretty awful: benefit levels were pitiful, bureaucratic procedures were demeaning, and none of this was getting better. It had in fact

been getting much worse. So why not trade work requirements for good services that would make it possible for mothers to work, and for the guarantee of a job that pays enough to bring a family above the poverty level?

That, however, is no longer in the cards, if it ever was. As the administration's working group tallies up the costs of one variation after another of its welfare-to-work reforms, the services and jobs promises get scaled back, and the disciplinary aspects of the proposals loom larger. On the one hand, "two years and off to work" has been translated into what is effectively a lifetime limit on cash benefits, and the talk of guaranteeing a mother a job when she exhausts her two-year "transitional" welfare benefit has been whittled down to participation in a new WORK program. Moreover, the federal plan proposes to allow states to punish women for the birth of an additional child by excluding the additional child from benefits during the two-year stint. This sort of disciplinary program will cost money, and the administration is proposing to get it by cutting other programs for the poor. Not least important, lawful immigrants may become ineligible for cash benefits.

These proposals are alarming. But more alarming still is the impact of the administration's campaign to "end welfare as we know it" on the broader politics of welfare. Republicans and conservative Democrats are countering the administration plan with more punitive initiatives. And state politicians are clamoring to get on the welfare-bashing band-



Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals

In April, a neighborhood organization in Philadelphia marched to protest federal and state proposals to reduce welfare benefits.

wagon. Whatever one thinks of the Clinton proposals, reasonable people cannot disagree about the cruelty of these state-level developments. Even before the administration working group set to work, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Pennsylvania had excluded childless adults (who are not eligible for AFDC) from any state assistance if they were deemed "employable," with horrific consequences in increased homelessness, illness, and hunger. Now, with federal encouragement, Wisconsin and Florida have raced ahead to apply two-year cut-offs to AFDC families without the bother of training or public jobs programs, and Governor Weld of Massachusetts wants to "experiment" with a sixty-day cold-turkey cut-off. "Child exclusion" provisions have been adopted in California, Georgia, Wisconsin, New Jersey and Arkansas, and are being talked of elsewhere. Wisconsin, California, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma have introduced a scheme to reduce family grants if a child skips school, and Maryland does the same if a mother doesn't take a kid to a doctor on schedule. In sum, the states are reverting to a system of nineteenth-century disciplinary tutelage for poor women.

The administration must take a large share of the responsibility for this feeding frenzy. Americans are anxious and confused about growing poverty and social disorganization in their midst. It matters greatly how leaders talk to them about the poor, and what explanations they put forward about why people are in trouble. FDR, Kennedy, and Johnson were able to win expansions of the welfare state because they helped focus the nation's attention on the broad economic and social conditions that produce poverty, and that in turn made it possible to build public support for programs that

would ameliorate poverty. Clinton is doing the reverse. His speeches increasingly borrow from right-wing exhortations about family values and individual responsibility. This habit, along with his rhetoric about welfare reform, has helped to create a climate encouraging blatantly punitive policy innovations by the states. Moreover, the administration is recklessly approving these initiatives, ostensibly because it is committed to state experimentation. More likely, it is unwilling to jeopardize the right-wing support that it is earning from welfare bashing. In a word, the administration -- hamstrung as it is by its frantic pursuit of business favor, by its wobbly popular support, by the president's indiscretions, and by the politics of budget restraint that it inherited and confirmed -- has discovered that scapegoating poor women, many of whom are people of color, is an easy political strategy, even if it does pander to the worst strains in American culture.

So, what should the left do? Our quandary in the area of welfare is the quandary that the left always seems to confront when a presumably liberal administration is in office. The liberal president is after all better than his opposite, no matter how feeble or even pernicious his program. The next midterm election could well spell disaster. It follows that the left must rally to his support, or at least not make trouble for him, or else it must take the responsibility for making things worse. This is just the argument that was made after John Kennedy took office. Liberals worried that the escalating demands of the civil rights movement would cost the president and the Democrats in the midterm elections. In fact, the demands of the civil rights movement *did* eventually cost the Democrats, and heavily, as they lost not only the white South, but white working class votes

in the North as well. But then, the civil rights movement also won a large part of its agenda.

As my example suggests, I think the usual cautionary posture is exactly wrong, because it leads us to forfeit the political opportunities that a liberal administration sometimes creates. Those opportunities cannot be realized with loyal support. They can only be realized through conflict, and the threat of defections that conflict generates. Loyal popular constituencies are politically dead constituencies. Not having the resources of well-organized interest groups, nor the threat of exit, they have little impact. I think a liberal administration is a great asset for the left, but not for the obvious reasons of access and influence. Rather, a liberal administration is vulnerable to the conflicts the left can sometimes help generate, because it is vulnerable to the constituencies that the left can help arouse, and to the cleavages and defections that can ensue. Most of the reforms won from the bottom in American history have been ceded in the effort to avert conflicts and the defections they threaten.

It follows that if we want to affect the welfare debate, we have to try to threaten conflict. Clinton needs the support of organized women, of the social welfare community, of minorities, and of organized labor. All of these groups are already uneasy about the administration's welfare reform package. True, they each have somewhat different reasons: Catholics and social welfare groups (and some right-to-lifers too) oppose child exclusion provisions; labor opposes work programs that undermine union jobs; women's organizations and child care groups are ready to rally for better child care provisions. Every piece of major legislation is a package, and the parts often depend on each other, so the bill can sometimes be defeated by this sort of disparate opposition. (Just look at what is happening to the Clinton health care proposals.)

We intellectuals on the left don't bring big resources to this sort of fight. We have only words, arguments. Words and arguments -- and there are indeed many good arguments -- might help spur the opposition of organized groups. Of course, we should make reasoned arguments about the likely consequences of the reforms for mother-headed families, and for low-wage workers generally. I think we should make angry and denunciatory arguments as well, and name names. Clinton is largely re-



Catherine Smith/Impact Visuals

Registering for benefits at a welfare office in Harlem.

sponsible for the spectacle of state welfare repression parading as reform, and he should be blamed. So should Moynihan, who wants to be the leader in welfare reform and has pushed for early consideration of the welfare package (although for a moment he seemed to hesitate at the prospect of actually eliminating income supports when the time limits are exceeded). Moreover, as Moynihan confronts the fall election he is eagerly soliciting the support of prominent New York women, and so far getting it, including the support of women on the left, who have given themselves too cheaply. Without Moynihan's support in the Senate Finance Committee, the package cannot pass. And so should the policy experts be named, the David Ellwoods and Mary Joe Banes, whose published work directly contradicts the twisted politics of welfare bashing as welfare reform in which they have eagerly become entangled.

Who knows? It might be a time when our words and arguments matter more than they usually do. This is, after all, more than anything else an effort to define welfare recipients as the big American problem. To the extent that Clinton succeeds, he will suppress the hope, the indignation, and the protest that one might expect from the bottom of American society when a liberal president takes office. In short, while we obviously cannot outshout the president, our words and arguments may gain force because they help articulate and legitimate currents of political protest that have not yet emerged.

Frances Fox Piven is a Vice Chair of DSA. Her book Regulating the Poor, written with Richard Cloward, has just been published in an updated edition by Vintage Books.

Is Black a Political Color?

A Personal Essay

On the New South Africa

BY BILL BATSON

In order for the oppressed to truly liberate themselves, they must also liberate the oppressor. It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors.

-- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

With malice toward none; with charity for all. . .
-- Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

After the Revolution has won, the Revolution begins.
-- Frantz Fanon

I was afraid when I went to South Africa. I actually called a friend and asked him to take possession of my books and papers if I didn't return. I was so twisted when I arrived on May 6 that I forgot to kiss the ground. Isn't that what I was supposed to do as an African American son of the diaspora on my first trip back to the motherland?

Well, as my nine short days there would soon prove, many of the scripts I carried around in my head didn't apply. South Africa was revealed as a nation more at peace with itself than many could believe -- a land miraculously transformed from villain into role model, full of that elusive democratic spirit that our lame-duck democracy pretends to monopolize.

I did not arrive as part of any official delegation. Like millions, I had watched the events between Mandela's release and this year's elections unfold on CNN: Bomb blasts, the four white supremacists executed for insurrection,

the serpentine lines of black people voting for themselves and for all those who had died along the way (I distinctly remember the woman who pledged to go to the cemetery and tell her husband's bones that she had voted), and the extraordinary image of Nelson Mandela doing a one-man "Toyi-Toyi" upon the news of his mandate.

While I had organized demonstrations in 1987 around CBS's complicity in the murder of the youth activist Godfrey Dhlomo by South African security forces and a youth rally in 1990 to welcome Mandela to Boston, I had usually assumed the role of spectator, a political position assumed by millions of Americans starving for an authentic democratic event. So, when a cheap ticket and an invitation were offered, I leapt.

What I found in South Africa will leave mark on my soul that will never be erased. I expected fear and hate; I found love and reconciliation. I expected black and white; I found non-racialism. I must admit like almost all Americans, I drew my images of Africa from the back pages of *National Geographic*, *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*, and Tarzan movies -- in my case supplemented by Walter Rodney and Frantz Fanon, and warped by the omnipresent CNN.

Expecting squalor everywhere, a nation of shantytowns, with a few outposts of luxury a la Sun City, I was heartened to see a physical and structural strength, even in places like Soweto,

that belied the media's depictions. Apparently, Americans are shocked even to find a modern airport upon landing in Africa.

Joburg, as the locals call Johannesburg, could be the sixth borough of New York City. It's an English-speaking, caffeine-fueled metropolis that struck me as more familiar than any foreign place should be. Staying in a district called Berea, I had an immediate affinity with the people I encountered that went way beyond pigmentation.

We met on a common ground of shared culture, and when I say this I am acknowledging both denominators: higher and lower. While many European countries seemed to hold firm to the sanctions movement, American culture, notoriously stupid and contagious, as the late Kurt Cobain ironically observed, crossed the international picket line. We shared the basest aspects of American consumer culture. All I had to do was light up a Marlboro and evidence working knowledge of Snoop Doggy Dogg to make a new friend.

On a higher plane, I found South Africans as a whole to be more politically sophisticated than the average American. It's a country of activists. In South Africa, Jim Hightower's maxim rings true -- there was nothing in the middle of the road except a yellow line and a dead armadillo. People were forced, by struggle and the realities of the oppressive apartheid system, to choose sides.

My itinerary brought me from the hectic Joburg to the Union Building in Pretoria for the inaugural of Nelson Mandela, through the East Villagesque district known as Rockey Street, to

Robben Island off of Cape Town, where Nelson Mandela served 20 of his 27 years as a political prisoner. (Talk about head spins: Robben Island is being turned into a peace institute.)

I met filmmakers, prostitutes, heads of state, playwrights, a former prison guard of Mandela, business people and priests. I "jolloed" -- the South African word for "partied" -- primarily with a Black filmmaker named Karlo Matabane, an Asian media worker named Cassim Shariff, and a synthetic organic chemist settler named Madi Pearce. I know that when they read this they'll object to my racially categorizing them -- except maybe for Karlo, who closely identifies with the Black Consciousness movement founded by Steven Biko -- but as Cornel West says, "Race matters."

While much of the urban "new South Africa" is truly a "Coffee Society*" -- hyperbolic, indefatigable and high-strung -- sobriety is setting in. Euphoria is replaced by a subtle cynicism. And I fear, with the increased introduction of American media products, the patience that produced a one-hundred-year-old political movement might be eroded by the attention span deficiency of consumerism and crass commercialism. (Recently, a retailer put a new twist on the Pan African Congress's slogan by offering as a jingle: "One settler, one hi-fi!") However, I am comforted by Madi, who says that people will be prepared for the best because "no government could surpass the standard of in-

*The name of a bar in Joburg's Yeoville, a long-integrated community mirroring two of the neighborhoods in the U.S. where I have lived longest: Teaneck, New Jersey, and Crown Heights, New York.

April 27: Rural farmworkers line up to vote in the Eastern Transvaal.





Nelson Mandela on the campaign trail on April 21.

competence, corruption, and stupidity of P.W. Botha and his cronies in the National Party.”

While the ANC is predominantly Black African-led, white, Colored, and Asian South Africans also watered this soil with their blood, making this a fertile land for a new democracy. People that I met were intrigued by my fascination and disbelief over their multiethnic cadres, calling Americans “race-obsessed” and wondering whether we could truly grasp the complexities of the third world movement.

I hesitate at attempting to explain their concept of non-racialism because I know

Americans are likely to dismiss its application here as naive, if not racist. But in South Africa, this revolution was the victory of a multiethnic, multiracial, multilingual left, led by blacks: a winning paradigm we dreamed of here in the sixties. The core of this vision of a new South Africa is an absolute rejection of racial categorization -- the sublimation of ethnic identity in the political arena for the elevation of moral and human principle. While South Africans display a profound respect for identity, their politics of non-racialism strives for a humanism that transcends race. A people weary of classification -- Bantu, Cape Colored, Honorary White, Other Asian (non-Indian), Settler -- Karlo, Cassim and Madi revel in being now, simply and for the first time proudly, South African.

While the fact of a black majority in this country explains much of the confidence and generous spirit of black activists, particularly the ANC, toward their nonblack comrades, it goes deeper than numbers. A clear numerical majority did not create the relatively peaceful transition from police state to democracy. It was smart organizing and coalition building, nationally and internationally; an understanding of the role of economics in modern civil society; the ability of the white community to reject the example of Algiers, and to offer an apology to the black community; and the black community's strength in accepting this apology.

It struck me as an American South taking

Excerpts from Nelson Mandela's Inauguration Address, May 11, 1994

Today we are entering a new era for our country and its people. Today we celebrate not the victory of a party, but a victory for all the people of South Africa.

Our country has arrived at a decision. Among all the parties that contested the elections, the overwhelming majority of South Africans have mandated the African National Congress to lead our country into the future. The South Africa we have struggled for, in which all our people, be they African, Colored, Indian or White, regard themselves as citizens of one nation, is at hand. . . .

We have fought for a democratic constitution since the 1880s. Ours has been a quest for a constitution freely adopted by the people of South Africa, reflecting their wishes and their aspirations. *The struggle for democracy has never been a matter pursued by one race, class, religious community, or gender among South Africans.* In honoring those who fought to see this day arrive, we honor the best sons and daughters of all our people. We can count amongst them Africans, Coloreds, Whites, Indians, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Jews --all of them united by a common vision of a better life for the people of this country.

In the political order we have established there will regular, open and free elections, at all levels of government -- central, provincial and municipal. There shall also be a social order which respects completely the culture, language and religious rights of all sections of our society and the fundamental rights of the individual.

The task at hand will not be easy. But you have mandated us to change South Africa from a country in which the majority lived with little hope, to one in which they can live and work with dignity, with a sense of self-esteem and confidence in the future.

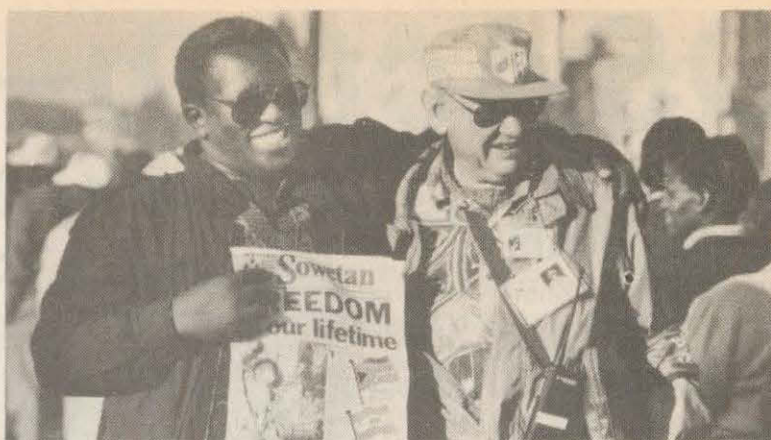
the necessary steps toward completing a successful Reconstruction. *Freedom On My Mind*, the recent documentary film about Mississippi Freedom Summer, contains 1964 footage of a White Citizens Council leader invoking the frightful image of freed slaves plundering the bank vaults and virgin daughters of the South as they escaped the chains of slavery. But this image is, of course, a racist lie: It seems that while oppressed people may demand reparations, they rarely butcher the innocent or even the guilty agents of their oppression. What South Africans and oppressed people everywhere seem to want is peace, and forgiveness seems to be the prerequisite.

Anyone from South Africa will rush to remind me that my Rockey Street crew and ANC friends are not indicative of the sentiments of much of the country -- people living in East Rand, or Natal, or those lining up to pitch a tent on a *volkstaadt*. My friends are educated and professional and have water and electricity. But as South Africa enters the twentieth century at a velocity close to the speed of light, these privileged folks with a leg up on their rural countrymen will hold great sway for this country's future.

While my most recent reports from South Africa suggest that there is virtually no violence compared to the pre-election convulsions, the future of this new multiracial democracy should be guarded by the same global forces that helped bring apartheid to its knees.

Success will certainly be measured by the provision of basic services to the rural parts of the country and the ability of a new government to translate revolutionary rhetoric into relevant and lasting programs. The once insurgent, now establishment ANC will also need to contend with dissent around volatile issues such as land, housing, and jobs, and the use of security forces in stabilizing unresolved conflicts. For now, however, let the idealism on Rockey Street become a global trend. Let the Toyi-Toyi become the next American dance craze.

Going back to South Africa was not so much going back to my roots, to the past; it was like traveling into the future. When I stepped onto South African soil, it wasn't so much about the son of distant Southern slaves returning home; the moment had no nostalgia and offered little room to reconcile my particular past. I and we will have to find another forum for this process. (I am haunted by the process



Paula Bronstein/Impact Visuals

suggested by the recent film *Sankofa*.)

I arrived to celebrate the birth of a new democracy, and to measure the extent to which this rebirth of hope could affect the political stagnancy in our own country. What we are witnessing is the establishment of the world's first multicultural democracy -- eleven official languages, 27 parties on the ballot.

My trip to South Africa confirmed a growing perception for me -- that black is a political color. Since childhood, I have been ambivalent toward accepting the social construct "color" imposed on me. In adolescence, I accepted black as a *cultural* color, but as an adult I have embraced black as a *political* color. In South Africa, black people have achieved what Freire talked about: in the name of black liberation, they have freed a nation of many. As a political color, black is liberating; as a skin color, black is non-existent.

One has to ask: When will all of our suffering in the United States produce a sustainable *black* political organization like the ANC, or a Nelson Mandela to replace our slain leaders who once provided grace and moral guidance? Or better yet, where is our rainbow coalition? Maybe we can all take a sip from a cocktail served up at the Coffee Society and share in the intoxication that freedom has brought to this new country. Or dare we face the sledgehammer hangover of reality, when we wake to find that our own country may now bear the burden of being the last major holdout of naked market-driven state-sponsored racialism in the so-called industrialized first world? **DL**

Bill Batson, a DSA member, works for the Political Action Department of 1199: The National Health and Human Services Employees Union. He plans to return to South Africa in November.

In line to vote in Johannesburg on April 26.

DSAAction

Revitalizing DSA's Locals

The National Political Committee voted in May to launch a campaign to revitalize and reorganize DSA local activism. Ten regions and locals have been targeted for the first phase of the campaign: California (Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Francisco), Front Range-Colorado, Chicago, Columbus, Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington, D.C. California and Colorado will receive top priority for local development in the upcoming months.

National staff members will visit each targeted local for a strategy and development training session. DSAers will be trained in local building, strategic planning, membership recruitment, and campaign development. (See the forthcoming *Socialist Forum* for more details.)

National Activist Conference Rescheduled

The DSA National Activist Conference originally planned for August 12-14 at Oberlin College in Ohio has been reformatted and rescheduled. After consulting with local leaders, DSA's staff and elected national leadership felt that we could best reach DSA's goals by holding a series of low-cost regional conferences rather than a single national conference.

It is hoped that these free regional conferences will allow a wider and more multiracial and multigenerational group of DSAers to participate.

The theme of these regional conferences will be "Reinventing Socialist Activism." For more information, see the notice at right.

Please note that the Summer Conference of the DSA Youth Section will take place as scheduled at Oberlin in August; for more information, call Ginny Coughlin at 212/727-8610.

Solidarity Summer: Progressive Youth to Observe Mexican Elections

The DSA Youth Section is working in coalition with youth groups from Canada, the U.S., and Mexico to organize a youth and student delegation to the Mexican elections on August 21.

Participants will serve as international observers during the election, to help prevent intimidation and monitor fraud. The delegation will also hold a trilateral youth and student meeting to plan a joint political project around the campaign for a North American Social Charter. The young people will then return to their schools and communities to organize for democracy and social justice in the Americas.

DSA's coalition partners in the del-

egation, called Solidarity Summer/*Delegación Tri-Nacional*, include the Committees of Correspondence, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA-Chicano Student Movement), the youth section of Mexico's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), and the New Democratic Youth of Canada.

The delegation will represent the diversity of North America in terms of ethnicity, race and gender. To make this possible we need financial assistance. If you can help, please write checks to Solidarity Summer and send to 180 Varick Street, 12th floor, New York, NY 10014.

DSA Regional Activist Conferences: Fall 1994

Join us at these *free* events as leaders of DSA locals, commissions, Youth Section chapters, and political task forces gather to discuss:

❖ How should the left refine its political perspectives in order to face the challenges of the next era?

❖ How can DSA better carry out its national political projects?

❖ What steps must we take to make DSA a vibrant, multiracial, and multigenerational organization at all levels?

❖ What sort of U.S. foreign policy should the left fight for in the post-Cold War era?

For more information about these events, including detailed agendas, call Margie Burns at 212/727-8610.

Los Angeles

September 10-11

site to be determined

call 212/727-8610 for information

San Francisco

September 17-18

site to be determined

call 212/727-8610 for information

New York City

October 8-9

*at the DSA National Office,
180 Varick Street, 12th floor*

A midwest event will be held during November. Details will be announced in the next issue of *Democratic Left*.

DSAAction

Stonewall 25



Steve Oliver

On June 26, DSAers in New York City joined hundreds of thousands of lesbian and gay activists and their supporters to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. A DSA Youth Section activist carried a sign reading: "Born Lesbian in 1969 -- Thanks, Rioters!"

Stop "S.O.S.!"

DSA activists in California are gathering their resources for the fight to defeat the anti-immigrant "Save Our State" referendum that will appear on the ballot in November.

The referendum would deny health care services and public education to the children of undocumented immigrants in California (see the editorial on page 2).

California DSAers will work to develop ties between the anti-S.O.S. coalition and supporters of the state single-payer initiative (see page 14).

The DSA Latino Commission and the DSA Global Justice Task Force have jointly created a new pamphlet, available in Spanish and English, on immigrants' rights. For copies of this pamphlet, which is entitled "Unite Against Racism," contact Margie Burns at the national office.

Letters to Democratic Left



Film History

The recent feature on the films that have been most meaningful to DSA members ("A Socialist Night At the Oscars," March/April 1994) appalled me. It struck me that almost without exception the films chosen reflected no socialist perspective. I got the feeling that the persons invited to express their views were mostly quite young, and perhaps didn't know what excellent films there have been in the past.

For example, among the movies I'd have expected to see mentioned were the following:

- The early Soviet film, *Potemkin* -- to me, one of the most exciting and dramatic movies I ever saw.
- The German film *Metropolis*.

· Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Who has treated the factory more effectively on screen?

· The powerful Franco-German film *Kamaradschaft*, dealing with miners' solidarity across national lines.

· *Grand Illusion*, which my son, a conscientious objector during Vietnam, described to me as the best anti-war film he's ever seen.

· *The Man in the White Suit*, which poked fun at our economic system, including the attitudes of workers.

Do you folks ever look at older movies? You may not realize what you're missing!

Stanley K. Bigman
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Upcoming Socialist Forum

The next issue of DSA's discussion bulletin, *Socialist Forum*, will be published in mid-August. The issue will include a wide variety of essays on DSA's national political projects and its organizational life. Highlights include:

- ◆ An extended section on DSA's international work, including debates on U.S. foreign policy in the former Yugoslavia and discussions of post-NAFTA organizing in the Western Hemisphere.

- ◆ Debates on the left and the health care reform struggle. Is our vision of single-payer too technocratic and scientific?

- ◆ A study guide and bibliography on market socialist economics.

- ◆ Minutes of recent meetings of the DSA National Political Committee.

Socialist Forum is published twice a year, and the one-year subscription price is \$8.00. For a free sample copy, write to David Glenn at the national office.

Breaking Bread in New York City

Hundreds Gather To Discuss The Future of Multiracial Organizing

BY JULIA FITZGERALD

On June 21, close to one thousand people met in New York City to join DSA Honorary Chair Cornel West, social critic bell hooks, and National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights leader Richie Perez in a free-ranging discussion of what divides us and what unites us. The event was the latest in a series of "Breaking Bread" dialogues that DSA has initiated in order to discuss race, economic justice, and multiracial organizing.

The gathering had been billed as "a dialogue among communities in search of common ground," and it was just that. Panelists and members of the audience talked about the problems we face, including white supremacy, economic injustice, and youth violence, and also the difficulties inherent in building multiracial alliances to combat these problems. The evening had been rescheduled from June 8 because of the death of Cornel West's father. However, neither the date change, nor the sweltering heat of the non-air-conditioned high school auditorium dimmed the enthusiasm of the audience.

The New York incarnation of the Breaking Bread project was put together by a broad Steering Committee representing several organizations. The DSA contingent included members of the African-American Commission, New York DSA, and the National Director. Other members of the Steering Committee

included representatives from Local 1707 of AFSCME, the Coalition for the Homeless, and West Harlem Environmental Action.

The evening began with a performance of African-American and Latino rhythms by a troupe called Sacred Drums II. Dancing and drumming up and down the aisles, the group quickly involved the audience and helped create a communal feel. Next, a young African-American rap artist, Madame Star, delivered a good-natured but biting rap indicting deadbeat dads. The remainder of the evening was devoted to dialogue between bell and Cornel, then a discussion among bell, Cornel and Richie Perez. Questions and comments from the audience were interspersed throughout, with time for the panel participants to respond to comments from the floor.

The audience itself was diverse: African-American, Latino, white, gay and lesbian, with ages ranging from under 18 to over 65. One of the most exciting aspects of the evening was the participation of youth. A number of students from the United Way's drop-out prevention program attended, as well as students from Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger's Youth Advisory Leadership Council and the 1199 High School for Social Change. Rise and Shine, a non-profit organization that teaches video skills to high school students, filmed the event. Members of the

audience came to the event with diverse political backgrounds and priorities. Some people were active in issue-based politics, some in community organizing; others had no organizational affiliation but shared the desire for public dialogue and a positive vision.

A major theme of the discussion was the persistence of racism (or white supremacy, as bell hooks likes to call it, to differentiate the subtle, insidious racism people of color face everyday from the overt, violent racism that expresses itself in lynchings). Cornel West talked about the economic injustice in this country: the vast discrepancies in wealth, the two out of five children of color who are growing up in poverty, and the pervasiveness of a market culture that subsumes values, love, and commitment to the quest for more and more objects. Cornel and bell talked about the need for love, trust, dissent without finger-pointing and a "politics of conversion" to combat hopelessness, nihilism and violence.

Richie Perez, an experienced local activist, made the discussion New York-specific. He welcomed a number of organizations who he knew were represented in the audience. He talked about the explicit policy of past and present Mayors of New York City to split the Latino vote and divide the Latino and African-American communities. He emphasized the need for local activists to talk together, educate themselves about each other's issues, and work together more. Finally, he explained that this event was just the beginning of the Breaking Bread project in New York. He announced a follow-up meeting to happen three weeks hence, open to all. At that meeting those interested will be able to discuss and plan further Breaking Bread events. Members of the audience suggested smaller Breaking Breads: in neighborhoods, on specific topics, and specifically for youth.

Although the overall tone of the evening was hopeful, the discussion raised more questions than it answered, and was not without moments of conflict. One DSA member who teaches public school in an economically devastated area of Brooklyn wondered aloud how to reach her students, to meet violence with love, when her students carry guns. An Asian woman rose to say that although she had listened carefully, she felt excluded from the discussion because there had been no mention made of Asians; her experience had not been reflected.



Leroy Henderson

**Cornel West
and bell
hooks.**

A man representing People for East Harlem asked how to bring the discussion back to the people he works with every day.

The evening had to end far too soon. It was easier to close because of the promise to meet again, to continue the work. As people left the hall, volunteers passed out evaluation forms. Many people stopped and filled them out immediately. Others took them home, and contrary to expectation, actually filled them out and mailed them in. The Breaking Bread Steering Committee has received over 200 evaluation forms, and the comments have been overwhelmingly positive. One respondent called the evening "a profoundly religious experience." Another wrote that it "allowed for common goals to be seen. I was grateful and inspired to continue with this work." A large majority of those who responded said they are interested in working on future Breaking Bread events. This enthusiasm is a testament to the hunger for a positive vision that includes social and economic justice, human values over market values, and positive connections across the racial boundaries in our segregated society. **DL**

Julia Fitzgerald is Chair of New York DSA and a member of the DSA National Political Committee.

Health Care Update

California: DSA Gears Up to Support Single-Payer Referendum

A referendum that would create a state-wide single-payer system will be on the ballot in California this November -- and DSA will put forward unprecedented efforts to mobilize its membership on behalf of the campaign.

The ballot initiative, co-sponsored by a wide variety of labor and progressive organizations, would put private health insurance companies out of business in the state of California. The system, financed through an employer mandate and progressive income taxes, would establish an elected state health commissioner and guarantee a wide range of medical benefits to all citizens of California.

DSA National Director Alan Charney and DSA Field Coordinator Ginny Coughlin will spend the month of September in California, working full-

time to help mobilize DSAers into the campaigns to support single-payer and to defeat the anti-immigrant "S.O.S." initiative.

DSA can play a unique role in the single-payer campaign because of its ties with Canadian progressive leaders. Plans include an October speaking tour of Canadian labor, business, and medical leaders, who will help rebut the right wing's disinformation about single payer.

DSA must also play a strong role in California in linking the campaigns for single-payer and against the S.O.S. initiative. It's extremely important that, win or lose, the California left comes out of these campaigns more vibrant, unified, and multiracial than it was going in.

If you live in California, please get involved today. Check out the list at right, and call the DSA contact in your area.

DSA Health Care Activist Contacts in California

❖ *Butte County/Chico:*

Tom Reed 916/343-1202

❖ *San Francisco/Marin County:*

Mike Pincus 415/695-0111

❖ *East Bay/Alameda County:*

Michael Lighty 510/839-4352

❖ *San Fernando and
San Gabriel Valleys:*

Lyn Shaw 818/767-6683

❖ *Metro Los Angeles:*

Larry Abbott 213/661-1905

❖ *West Los Angeles/South Bay:*

Brad Jones 310/829-9829

❖ *Orange County:*

Tim Carpenter 714/558-3329

❖ *San Diego County:*

Herb Shore 619/287-5535

❖ *All Other Counties:*

Tim Parks 213/484-5437

Washington, D.C.: Taking the Fight to Congress This Summer

If you're like a lot of health care activists, from time to time you probably wonder if collecting signatures or calling your congressional representative is really worth all the effort. Well, on June 23 it was absolutely critical -- the House Education and Labor Committee reported out H.R. 1200, the McDermott-Conyers-Wellstone single-payer bill. But you might not have noticed because the press has all but ignored it.

It all started when staffers for the committee hoped to avoid a vote on the McDermott bill by holding a surprise hearing. When single-payer supporters got wind of this trick they flooded the phone lines and forced the committee to schedule a new vote. At the full committee hearing, Representative Major

Owens (D-New York) dumped out the tens of thousands of signatures on SPAN (Single Payer Across the Nation) petitions given to him by the New York Mobilization for Health Care and said that his constituents demanded single-payer and he would accept nothing less. It passed by one vote.

The success of this massive phone-in has prompted SPAN and other health care organizations to emphasize building grassroots phone networks for the fight ahead. The general notion is that you get three of your fellow DSAers, friends, neighbors, or co-workers to be a part of your branch. You'll receive an action every one to three weeks from a local team leader. Then call your friends and have them carry out the plan. It's simple;

it's effective.. For more details, call SPAN at 216/241-8558.

Don't assume the fight is over. Even though the final proposal will very possibly be odious, we need to keep our eye on Congress. Single-payer supporters need to make their presence felt on the day the McDermott bill comes before the floor of the House. If we're so distracted by our various state-level initiatives that we let that day pass without a peep, we'll send exactly the wrong message to the D.C. political establishment. And keep gathering those signatures on the SPAN petitions -- they're still valuable for educating representatives fooled by the media blackout of single-payer.

-- Steve Oliver

Health Care Update

Colorado: Front Range DSAers Lead Successful Platform Battle

This year, the Colorado coalition UHICO/UHCAN (Universal Health Insurance for Colorado), organized by members of the Front Range local of DSA, won single payer as the official health care plank of the Colorado Democratic Party platform. The plank passed with 75.5 percent of the convention delegates voting, despite the lack of support of the state's Democratic leadership: Governor Roy Romer, U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse-Campbell, and U.S. Representatives Pat Schroeder and David Skaggs. If we can do it, you can too!

In election years, Colorado has a three-stage process: precinct caucuses, county assemblies, and a state convention. In order to succeed at the state level, we began at the local level -- in Boulder County, where our activist base is strongest.

Together with State Representative Dorothy Rupert (a key sponsor of the state single-payer bill), we drafted the following resolution for the Party platform: "We believe that health care is a right, that choice of caregiver is essential, and that cost containment is a necessity: a *single-payer health care system* for the state of Colorado would best meet these goals." This resolution replaced the vague "managed competition" wording of the county health care plank through the following steps:

1) DSA activists attended over a dozen caucuses, won overwhelming support for the resolution in each, and thereby obtained the threshold necessary for official debate at the County Assembly.

2) Meanwhile, a "single-payer

candidates' forum" was held for the one contested primary. Eighteen delegates and community leaders quizzed the candidates one at a time on single payer. Subsequently, all of them became vocal supporters of single payer at the assembly and convention.

3) A "Delegates for Single Payer" mailing was done to all delegates to the Boulder County Assembly, urging support for the resolution and providing materials in support of single payer.

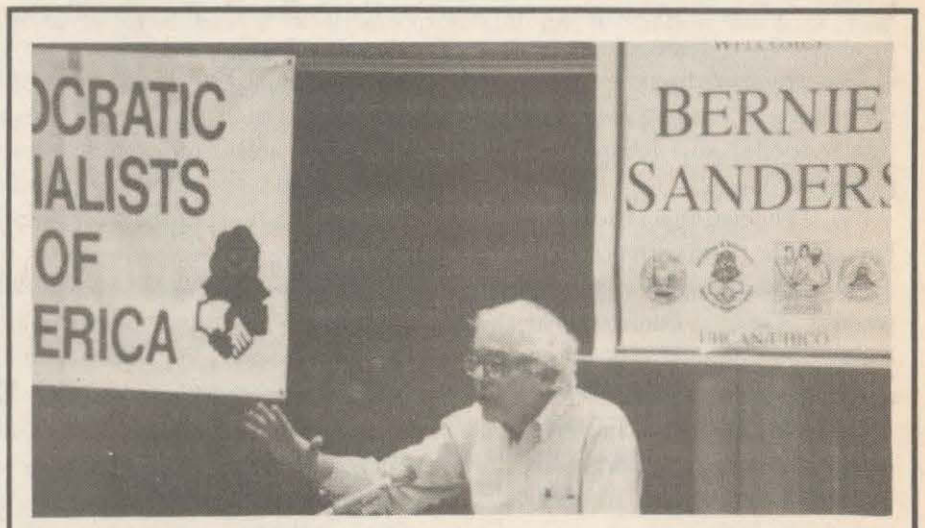
4) At the County Assembly on April 30, after a short debate (in which *no one* came forward in defense of managed competition), the question was called. The resolution was adopted by a near-acclamation voice vote of the five hundred delegates!

The state-level draft platform

did not reflect this decision, so we submitted a "minority report" signed by fifteen state legislators and party officers. On June 4, as the state convention opened, DSA and UHCAN volunteers handed out "Delegates for Single Payer" literature to all 2500 delegates. Our giant banner (of *New York Times* fame) blazoned "Colorado Wants Single Payer" across the central lobby of the convention center.

When the secret ballot voting was tallied, our single-payer resolution became the official plank of the party. Colorado activists now have a new tool with which to lobby for a just and rational health care system. The "political feasibility" of single payer, at least within a democracy, has once again been demonstrated.

-- Harris Gruman



Earlier this year, U.S. Representative Bernie Sanders (I-Vermont) traveled to Colorado and spoke to members of Front Range DSA and Colorado UHCAN about strategies for winning single payer on the state and federal levels.

❖ 3-minute guide to DSA

The National Political Committee

DSA's primary political leadership is the National Political Committee (NPC), a twenty-four-person body elected every two years by the delegates to DSA's National Convention. Every DSA local is entitled to send a certain number of delegates to the National Convention, based upon the local's size. There are also "at-large" delegates to represent areas where there are no active locals.

The DSA Constitution requires that at least half of the NPC's members must be women, and that at least six of the NPC's members must be people of color.

The NPC guides and leads the implementation of DSA's major political and organizational goals, which are broadly defined every two years by the delegates to the National Convention. The NPC gives instructions to the national staff about how to carry forward DSA's day-to-day work.

The NPC creates task forces and committees to guide particular areas of DSA's political work. The 1994-1995 NPC, for example, has established a Health Care Task Force, a New Urban Agenda Task Force, a Global

DSA locals

DSA currently has approximately fifty chartered locals. Locals serve many purposes that are critical for maintaining and developing a strong democratic socialist organization in the United States. Through concrete political work -- educational forums and grassroots organizing campaigns -- locals help ensure that DSA is visible in cities and communities across the country. In addition, locals are where DSA members continuously learn what it means to be a democratic socialist, gain the organizing skills necessary to become effective activists, and -- through the process of sending delegates to the National Convention -- develop and debate DSA's national strategies and priorities.

The national office helps locals in their organizing by supplying them with literature, campaign materials, and occasionally with public speakers. DSA's Field Coordinator and National Director visit the locals on a periodic basis. The national office also raises money for a "local

The NPC also charters DSA's commissions, which are autonomous groups organized around issues of identity or particular political interests. Current commissions include the African American Commission, the Anti-Racist Commission, the Commission on Religion and Socialism, the Commission on Socialism and the Environment, the Feminist Commission, the Latino Commission, and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission.

By publishing newsletters, organizing

Justice Task Force, and a Labor Task Force. Standing committees created by the NPC deal with internal education, DSA's budget, local development, personnel, and *Democratic Left*.

The DSA Constitution gives the NPC the power to charter DSA locals and commissions, as well as DSA's Youth Section.

The NPC conducts long weekend meetings three or four times each year. The NPC also elects a five-person NPC Steering Committee, which meets more frequently, both in person and by conference call.

The minutes of the meetings of the NPC and the NPC Steering Committee are circulated through the organization in "key list" mailings, which are sent each month to DSA's Honorary Chairs and Vice Chairs and to the leaders of DSA's locals, commissions, and Youth Section chapters. (Any other DSA member in good standing may receive these "key list" mailings by sending a request to the national office.) The minutes of these meetings are also published in DSA's discussion bulletin, *Socialist Forum*.

development fund" that makes small grants to four or five DSA locals each year.

The NPC actively encourages locals to organize around DSA's major national political campaigns, but there is no formal requirement that they do so. The NPC does, however, have the power to revoke the charter of a local that has fallen into extreme inactivity or is violating the political principles of the organization in some fundamental way.

A few of DSA's larger and more active locals have developed the resources to hire part-time organizers and other staff people -- but for all locals, dedicated volunteer labor is crucial. To sustain a viable local, all it takes are five or six people who have made DSA their primary political commitment.

If you live in an area where there is no DSA local and you would like to organize one, contact Ginny Coughlin, DSA's Field Coordinator, through the national office.

DSA commissions

conferences, and launching activist campaigns, the commissions do extremely vital work that helps to link DSA to some of the world's most significant social movements. The commissions also provide an important mechanism through which DSA members can mobilize around particular issues within the organization.

For more information about the commissions, contact Margie Burns, DSA's Membership Services specialist, through the national office.

The DSA Youth Section

The DSA Youth Section is one of the nation's largest multi-issue progressive youth organizations. With active chapters on thirty campuses across the country, the Youth Section organizes activist campaigns around access to education, reproductive freedom, U.S. foreign policy, and a variety of other issues.

In 1993, the DSA Youth Section played a serious role in mobilizing student activism in opposition to NAFTA and in support of progressive alternatives for economic integration. DSA organized a delegation of U.S. and Canadian student leaders for an investigative visit to Mexico in January 1993. The delegation met with independent Mexican labor leaders, environmentalists, and community activists.

The Youth Section has also done a great deal of labor support work during the past several years. DSA helped to mobilize students in solidarity with striking workers at Pittston, Greyhound, and Eastern Air Lines. Each year, the Youth Section sponsors a series of Campus/Labor Institutes, which bring together progressive labor activists and progressive student activists for a day of mutual education and discussion.

The Youth Section is chartered by the NPC but operates autonomously. Its leadership, the Coordinating Committee, is elected each year at the Youth Section's Summer Conference.

For more information about the Youth Section, contact Ginny Coughlin through the national office.

The national staff

DSA's national office in New York City has five full-time staff members. The national staff members work to facilitate the political work of the organization and to carry out routine tasks including maintaining the membership database and raising funds. The staff does *not* set DSA's political and organizational goals -- it helps to fulfill the goals set by DSA's elected volunteer leadership.

The **National Director**, Alan Charney, coordinates the office's work and bears the major staff responsibility for the organization's operations. He serves as a major arm of communication between DSA and other progressive organizations. He contributes to discussions and problem-solving within DSA with insights from his many years of experience in organizing, political strategizing, and fundraising.

DSA's **Field Coordinator**, Ginny Coughlin, provides services both to locals and to Youth Section chapters. She gives assistance to local organizers and helps locals and the national leadership communicate with one another. She facilitates the work of the Youth Section Coordinating Committee. She also develops and coordinates speaking tours and organizational delegations

such as the January 1993 Youth Section visit to Mexico.

The **Program Coordinator**, David Glenn, staffs the four political task forces of the NPC. He provides logistical support for meetings and events, develops literature pieces, and coordinates the task force mailing lists. He also works with the volunteer leadership to produce DSA's major outreach publication, *Democratic Left*, and DSA's discussion bulletin, *Socialist Forum*.

DSA's **Financial Coordinator**, John McMurria, works with the Budget Committee to manage the organization's finances and to develop new avenues for fundraising. He also manages many of the day-to-day operations of the national office.

The **Membership Services** specialist, Margie Burns, is responsible for maintaining the membership lists of the organization and for responding to individual members' requests for information and materials. She also assists the Financial Coordinator in the day-to-day bookkeeping of the organization.

The national office's address is 180 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014. The telephone number is 212/727-8610, and the fax number is 212/727-8616.

Organizational Communications

DSA's volunteer leadership and national staff seek to conduct their work with as much openness and accountability as possible. The minutes of NPC meetings and NPC Steering Committee meetings are distributed, along with other materials, in monthly "key list" mailings (for more details, see the section on the NPC). Another major vehicle for communication is DSA's discussion bulletin, *Socialist Forum*, which is published twice a year. *Socialist Forum* seeks to nurture healthy debates about all aspects of DSA's political and organizational work. All DSA members in good standing are invited to contribute. Subscrip-

tions to *Socialist Forum* are \$8 per year. For more information, contact David Glenn at the national office.

For those who have computers and modems, there are also ongoing DSA conversations in cyberspace. The national office has an e-mail address on PeaceNet: dsa@igc.apc.org.

There is also an on-line forum for DSAers called "dsanet." If you are interested in subscribing to dsanet, send your e-mail address and request to: hshore@quantum.sdsu.edu, which is the address of Herb Shore, the administrative postmaster for dsanet.

In Memoriam: Alec Nove 1915-1994

Alec Nove retired from the University of Glasgow in 1982 with his preeminence in the field of Soviet Studies secured by such works as *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.* (1969) and *The Soviet Economic System* (1977). But all this was only prologue for the Menshevik's son, whose book on *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (1983) probably stimulated more reflection and debate on socialist "first principles" than any single text since Oskar Lange's "On the Economic Theory of Socialism," published 45 years earlier.

Nove traced socialism's travails to the preconceptions of the "founding fathers" (Marx, Engels, Lenin) themselves: the "ex ante illusion" (the belief that planners would possess near-perfect foresight of social need); the myth that socialist production relations would be "simple and transparent"; the idea that "socialist man" could dispense with pecuniary incentives, and so on. Nove drew on his

vast knowledge of Soviet institutional realities to mount a devastating critique of these shibboleths -- and to show that they still would have placed a crushing burden on socialist planning even without a Stalin.

Socialists could not lightly dismiss Nove's criticisms because they came from someone who did not himself dismiss socialism. *Feasible Socialism* offered an alternative model of a socialist economy that featured real product and labor (but not capital) markets, planning of broad economic priorities, and a mixture of ownership forms -- public, cooperative, and even small-scale capitalist.

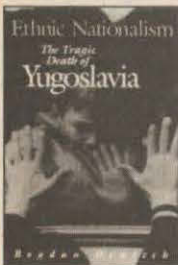
Radical for its time, Nove's brand of "feasible socialism" was soon overtaken by events. The mid-1980s saw Nove pressing his arguments against opponents like Ernest Mandel, who held out for the possibility of democratizing marketless Communist planning. By the end of the decade, with communism in

collapse, Nove was himself being pressed by former socialist reformers like János Kornai, who argued that Nove's own model did not go far enough in freeing market forces from state control. Nove stood his ground -- he was a forceful critic of academic and political idolization of laissez-faire -- but not without recasting a number of key ideas (for example, admitting the possibility of some socialist capital markets). These changes were embodied in the extensively revised 1991 edition of his book, now titled *The Economics of Feasible Socialism Revisited*.

Nove died on May 15. His influence can be seen in the mature works of Michael Harrington and Irving Howe and felt in the increasing institutional acuity of current market socialist models. In whatever form(s) democratic socialism may ultimately be realized, it will be in no small measure a testament to the craft and passion of Alec Nove.

-- David Belkin

If your neighbor cannot sleep. . .



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Bogdan Denitch

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PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

BY DSA NATIONAL DIRECTOR ALAN CHARNEY

As many of you are aware, we recently conducted a survey of the DSA membership through the mail. We wanted to know what people thought about our organizational activities so that we could improve communications and connections between the national office and the membership. It is our wish to make the resources and initiatives that emanate from the national office, including our fund raising efforts, more "user-friendly."

We never expected the kind of response we've received. It's not just that hundreds of the surveys have been returned, but that many people have taken the time to write additional comments.

One of our questions asked members to list the steps DSA should take to become a more effective organization. Two replies stand out: increase the level of local activity; and make socialism a viable alternative in the public discourse. If there was one main thread to all the comments, it was: more publicity for our politics and our organization.

So, it makes sense that you are avid readers of *Democratic Left*. Sixty percent of the members read DL regularly, 30% occasionally and only 4% hardly at all. This is very encouraging news. We compared it with information from a May 1994 national poll done by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press. According to this poll, only 16% of American adults read newsmagazines regularly. These results helped put our situation in perspective. Socialists are different. We care deeply about our politics and our organization. Still, we need to know if DL is talking enough about DSA activities and activists, and how we can better address the issues that are of most concern to you.

We need to know. Write to us and give us your analysis of DL: what's right, what's wrong, and where the publication should be going.

Of course, it will take a while to achieve the kind of national publicity for our politics that we all desire. Improving DL will help. Deepening our DSA involvement will help much more.

Let's face it. According to our survey, only 10% of us are involved with a DSA local or campus chapter and only 9% have contact with a DSA Commission. Even so, we are activists in a variety of organizations and movements. Our survey showed that, for many of us, even single-issue or constituency activism has been limited due to age, family responsibilities, work commitments, and so forth. So, as socialists, many of us feel very isolated. One answer is to come up with new and creative ways of building socialist networks. Of course, e-mail is one emerging network. We have our own DSAnet and we are joining with *Z Magazine* and others to fashion a broader network. But communications technology alone will not do the trick. Somehow, we must put our collective heads together and, borrowing a popular term, "re-invent" socialist activism.

Our National Political Committee has put reinventing socialist activism forward as the organization's highest priority. That's why our National Political Committee had planned a National Activist Conference for August 12-14. But when we realized that it would be difficult for enough DSA activists from all over the country to come to this conference, we changed course. Instead of bringing the activists to the conference, we would bring the conference to the activists by having three regional mini-conferences. The first will be held in Los Angeles on the weekend of September 10-11, the second in San Francisco the following weekend. The third will take place in New York City from October 8-10, in tandem with a meeting of the National Political Committee. The details of the fourth have not been set, but it will be held somewhere in the Midwest during November.

Does it sound inviting? We encourage you to come to one of these mini-conferences. After all, re-inventing socialist activism may be a difficult undertaking, but unless we want to be the undertakers of the socialist project, we have to grapple with the question of socialist renewal. **DL**

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DSA Youth Section Summer Conference

◆ August 12-14 ◆
◆ Oberlin, Ohio ◆

for more information,
call Ginny
Coughlin at
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Jimmy Higgins Reports

as told to Steve Max

Back in the good old days, I thought that I had figured out capitalism pretty well. Everyone was supposed to go and get a job, so that they could buy a car. There

wasn't much more to it than that, and those who complied were rewarded with good times on Saturday night. Some folks wouldn't get jobs. They were called bums. Others, preferring public transit, wouldn't get cars. They were called commies.

But somewhere along the line, the rules changed. Now, jobs and cars are out. No kidding, I read it in the *New York Times*. The Federal Reserve has raised interest rates in order to "slow the nation's brisk economic growth." And why? "The Federal Reserve seems to have been influenced by strong growth in employment... and extremely high car sales." Too much growth, too many jobs and too many cars. The Fed believes, subsequent articles explained, that if there are less than eight million unemployed people, then the economy is in danger. Yes, you read that right! It isn't a problem if there are more than eight million unemployed, but less than eight million unemployed is big trouble.

Robert Solow, the economics Nobel laureate from MIT, disagreed that a healthy economy requires eight million unemployed, saying that "a good national target is seven million people." He must be some sort of liberal. Allen H. Meltzer of Carnegie Mellon went a step further by claiming that there actually are no unemployed people. "They are really all people between jobs," Mr. Meltzer said.

You're probably wondering why keeping eight million people unemployed is such a big deal, so pay close attention. Here is the answer straight from the nation's main newspaper of record. "No economist questions that at

some point, unemployment will fall so low that the nation will lack enough people to apply for all the jobs that corporate America wants to fill. When that happens, companies compete for workers, bidding up wages in the process. The rising wages become the backbone of rising inflation." So that's it -- rising wages are the problem! I might have guessed, but what happened to the American dream of two cars in every garage and a chicken in every pot? Didn't that have something to do with rising wages also?

The *Times* columnist Louis Uchitelle explained why the merest hint of inflation, always hated by investors, is particularly troubling at this moment. He reports that in recent years, speculators have borrowed untold hundreds of billions of dollars to invest in bonds, but the value of those bonds is lowered by the slightest uptick in inflation. Then, the brokers call for more cash to back up the loans, and the speculators have to sell at a loss to make up the money. Either the Wall Street speculators lose their money, or you lose your job. President Clinton has made his choice. "The Clinton administration," noted the *Times*, "has reluctantly changed course, putting the stability of financial markets ahead of rapid economic growth."

Remember that old guy with the big gray beard and the worn coat, Karl something-or-other? The one who used to go around muttering about his theory of the "reserve army of the unemployed"? He thought that capitalism couldn't function without a permanent and really big group of unemployed people to hold down wages. That's why he said it was pointless to think that under capitalism, unemployment and poverty could ever be eliminated. Everyone said he was nuts. I wonder what ever happened to him?

DEMOCRATIC LEFT LABOR DAY ISSUE 1994

The Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* will once again be dedicated to coverage of the American and international labor struggle. Our annual Labor Day ad campaign is the principal fundraiser for *Democratic Left*. It provides an excellent opportunity for you to join with trade unions, progressive organizations, and DSA members to show your support for DSA and for *Democratic Left*. We welcome advertisements and personal greetings from individuals, DSA locals, organizations, and progressive businesses. We must receive ad copy by Wednesday, August 10, 1994. Make checks payable to DSA, or pay by credit card.

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