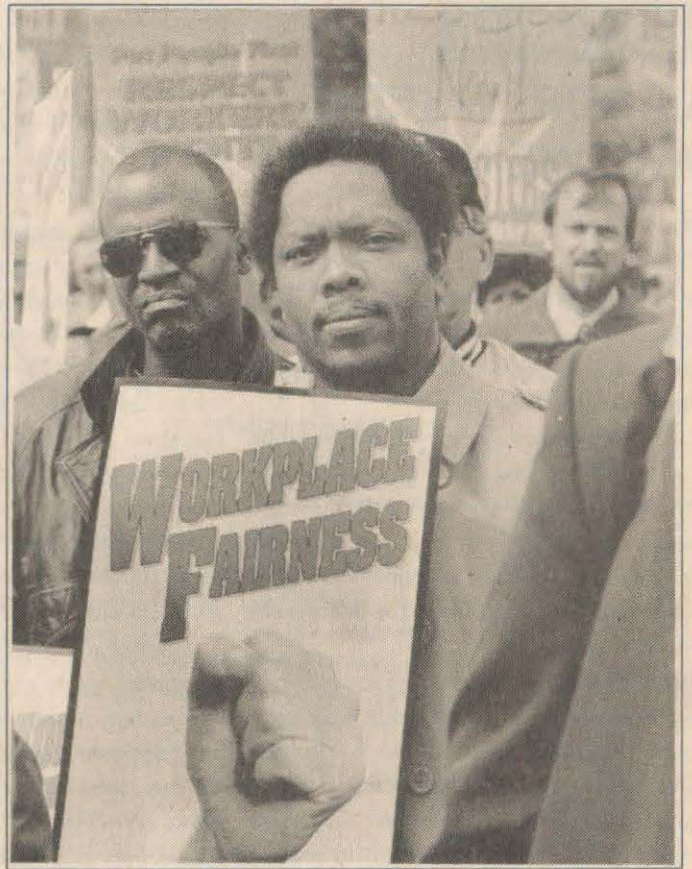


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# DEMOCRATIC Left

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## Labor Day 1994

Workers' Rights and Economic  
Justice At Home and Abroad

# Inside Democratic Left

## **Uncertain Progress:**

### **Labor in the Clinton Era**

by Mark Levinson . . .3

### **Responding to Privatization**

by Elliott Sclar. . .9

### **The Lockout at Staley**

by Gene Vanderport. . .13

### **Manufacturing Militance:**

#### **Trade Unionism in Brazil and South Africa**

by Gay Seidman. . .14

## **The Mexican Elections**

Reports by Ginny Coughlin, Tom Ellett, Barb Ferrill, and the DSA Latino Commission. . .20

## **Labor and the Crisis in Haiti**

by David Glenn. . .25

## **Features:**

DSAction, Health Care Update, On the Left, Letters, Present Progressive, Janie Higgins Reports. . .beginning on 36

cover photos: Left—Lina Pallotta/Impact Visuals;

Right—Rick Reinhard/Impact Visuals.

## **EDITORIAL**

### **LABOR: WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

BY ELAINE BERNARD

The good news this year was that U.S. organized labor grew by over 200,000 members—the first time since the early 1970s that unions have experienced net growth.

The bad news, however, is that labor continues to lose "market share"—the proportion of the work force that is organized shrank last year, as it has since the mid-1950s. And that's not just a problem for unions. It's a problem for democracy in America.

Unionization remains a necessary prerequisite for the acquisition and exercising of basic rights in the workplace. Outside of collective bargaining, the vast majority of Americans have few legal rights as workers, and no right to participate in workplace decision-making. No society can expect to maintain a lively democratic culture after work while tolerating union-busting and an authoritarian and arbitrary regime of total management rule in the workplace.

While labor has been reluctant to challenge the first Democratic administration in over a decade, it needs to mobilize its membership and supporters to create pressure on the administration and Congress from the left. In particular, it needs to represent, not simply to the administration, but to the community at

large, the interests of working people, who have been working harder and receiving less over the last two decades.

The administration needs pressure from the majority to take on the special interests of our country's best-organized minority: big business. We need to remember that no group gives up privilege or power easily. Reform—whether labor law reform or for progressive economic policies—is not just a matter of winning over a few votes in the Senate. Progress has never been achieved simply by electing a sympathetic government. Rather, it happens through the combination of an administration open to reform and a mobilized grassroots movement, organizing and demanding its rights.

Senator Wagner, not President Roosevelt, wrote the National Labor Relations Act. And he was prompted not by a sudden conversion to workers' rights but by the reawakening of the labor movement. Workers' actions and community support provided the push needed to pass labor law reform in 1935. The election of a Democratic administration provides labor with an opening for change, but the momentum for change must come from labor and its community allies.

Last year's campaign by labor, environmentalist, and community groups in opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement was an important watershed. The overwhelming labor opposition to NAFTA was matched by a strategy that stressed international links, solidarity, and community coalition building. For the first time in decades, progressives

both inside and outside the labor movement had a chance to discuss union and solidarity issues with a wide range of community groups.

All of this work needs to be deepened and broadened: international work and community outreach will be crucial if labor is to reverse its long decline. Let's make sure that the anti-NAFTA campaign is remembered not as a frustrating defeat but as a first step toward labor's revitalization.

*Elaine Bernard, a DSA member, is Executive Director of the Harvard University Trade Union Program.*

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# Uncertain Progress: Labor in the Clinton Era

BY MARK LEVINSON

**T**wo years into the Clinton presidency, the economy is generating jobs—four million since the 1992 elections. The problem is that these jobs are overwhelmingly low-wage or part-time. As a result there are over 14 million full-time, year-round workers in the United States—one fifth of all such workers—whose earnings are below the poverty line for a family of four. Another ten million workers work less than full time and earn less than the poverty line.

One reason for the proliferation of low-wage jobs is the decline of unions. Only 15.8 percent of American workers are in a union. Unions represent 12 percent of the private sector workforce, down from the 35 percent covered in the 1950s. By contrast, over a third of public sector workers are union members, compared to 11 percent in the 1950s.

Unions are in decline because most private sector employers do everything they can to fight them. It is not unusual for employers to harass workers during organizing drives, create endless delays at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), refuse to negotiate a contract, or break strikes with scabs who then become permanent replacements. Studies have shown that 75 percent of employers actively oppose unionization of their workforces and that nearly every anti-union device an employer uses, whether legal or illegal, has a measurable negative effect.

When workers are given a choice free of intimidation and fear, they overwhelmingly opt for union representation. In the public sector, for example, once employees gain the right to organize, the state usually respects that right and does not actively resist unionization. AFL-CIO Presi-

dent Lane Kirkland recently discussed the impact of employers' conduct:

A recent study of every public sector representation election in 1991 and 1992—1,911 in all—found that in 85 percent of the elections the workers voted for representation; in the private sector the comparable figure is 49 percent. Even more telling is the fact that in larger private sector elections, in which the anti-union campaign is more elaborate and intense, workers vote for representation in only 20 percent of the elections.

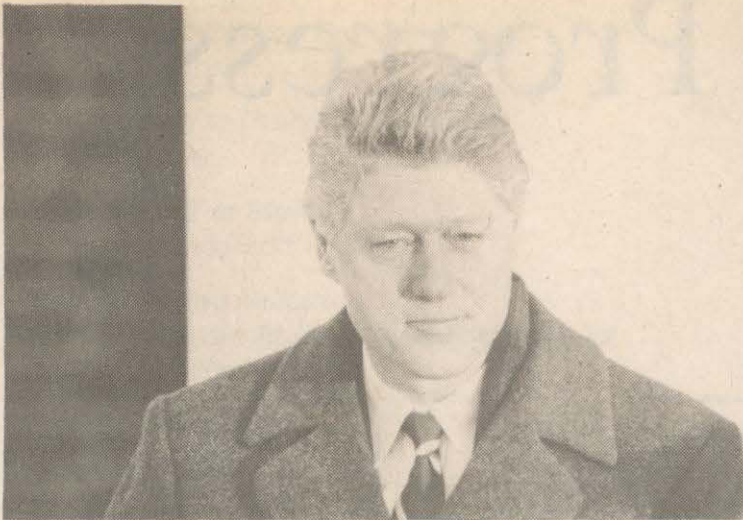
Public employees are not a breed apart from employees who work in the private sector. Public and private employees are raised together in the same way, go to the same schools, and live in the same communities. Public and private employees do the same kind of work: there are publicly-employed janitors, drivers, secretaries, nurses and the like, just as there are in the private sector.

## Labor's Quandary

Despite research demonstrating that unions improve wages and benefits, reduce inequality, and contribute to economic growth, the importance of unionism—both in the workplace and in the larger society—has never received adequate notice. Today's press portrays unions simply as interest groups, not as a force for democracy that counterbalances the political influence of capital.

The Clinton administration has been seemingly indifferent toward unions. "Unions are okay where they are," Commerce Secretary Ron Brown has declared. "And where they are not, it is not yet clear what sort of organization should represent workers."

This is not only bad economics (more on that



The Clinton administration has been seemingly indifferent toward unions.

later) but also a self-defeating politics. Someday Democrats will understand that it is in their interest to actively promote unions. The political education campaigns that unions direct at their members have an effect. A recent study by Steve Jackson, professor of public policy at Cornell University, documents that in every presidential election since World War II, union members (after controlling for race, religion, age, income and gender) voted in greater percentages for Democrats than their non-union peers. (The difference in the 1992 election was ten percentage points!) Democrats cannot hope to pass meaningful health care reform, public investment, or full employment legislation without a stronger labor movement.

But unions now find themselves in a terrible quandary. Workers in unionized industries are under heavy pressure to accept wage cuts in the name of competitiveness, whether against low-cost foreign producers or against nonunion domestic firms. Worse, mass layoffs have undermined unions' ability to defend the most basic right of all—job security. The more their strength declines, the more difficulty they have playing their outward-looking role as vehicles of democratic citizenship; the weaker they become, the more they look like just another narrow interest group. And if unions are in trouble, then a democratic left politics is in trouble.

Obviously the long-term solution is for labor to organize the unorganized. But here unions find themselves up against a new militancy on the part of business—a militancy aided by the structure of U.S. labor law, which favors management. The penalties for harassing or firing workers who sign union cards have become so light, and the delays

in enforcement so long, that our labor laws are, on balance, impediments to union organization.

Labor has long sought reforms—such as access of union representatives to workplaces, card check recognition, arbitration of first contracts, contract preservation when ownership changes hands, expedited NLRB procedures, broadening the law to include some of the roughly 50 million workers who are not covered, and serious penalties for unfair labor practices—that would encourage firms to negotiate with

their employees. In 1978 President Carter supported a version of labor law reform that had majority support in both houses of Congress but fell victim to a Republican filibuster in the Senate. Unions waited twelve years for a Democratic administration that would once again put labor law reform on the agenda.

### The Dunlop Commission: Promise or Pitfall for Labor?

The Clinton administration has set up a ten-member commission on the future of worker-management relations. The commission was directed to examine three issues: whether new methods or institutions should be encouraged or required to enhance productivity through labor-management cooperation and employee participation; whether changes should be made in labor law and collective bargaining to increase cooperative behavior; and whether anything should be done to help resolve workplace disputes without resorting to court or federal agencies. As the commission's mandate makes clear, the administration is interested in workplace reform because of its impact on competitiveness rather than a desire to expand worker rights.

The commission is led by former Secretary of Labor John Dunlop. Other commission members include two former labor secretaries, academics, corporate executives, and Doug Fraser, the retired president of the United Auto Workers. The commission issued a fact-finding report in June and is scheduled to produce recommendations this fall.

The fact-finding report documents that the U.S. economy and labor relations system “fall short of meeting the needs of many Americans.”

The U.S. is moving towards a two-tiered society with "an upper tier of high wage skilled workers and an increasing underclass of low paid labor." As a result the U.S. earnings distribution is the most unequal among developed countries. "A healthy society," according to the report, "cannot continue along the path the U.S. is moving."

The report also recognizes that the rights of workers are increasingly violated by employers. The commission finds that in one out of every four union organizing campaigns, at least one worker is illegally discharged, and that the risk of being fired for union activity has increased fifteen fold in the past forty years.

These findings, as the AFL-CIO pointed out, actually underestimate the problem since they count only workers who are fired and eventually reinstated, and ignore the thousands of additional workers who are forced to settle for back pay without reinstatement or who cannot prove that the reason that they were discharged was because of their union activity. The commission's conclusion that "the rights of most workers who seek to unionize are respected by employers. . ." is simply not true.

According to the commission, there is "a growing recognition that achieving a high produc-

tivity/high wage economy requires . . . the organization of work in ways that more fully develop and utilize the skills, knowledge, and motivation of the workforce." And while between one fifth and one third of the workforce is involved in some form of employee involvement scheme, less than 5 percent of American workplaces warrant the label "high performance."

Although the commissioners cite studies demonstrating that employee involvement programs are more effective in unionized firms, they make clear that they are interested in encouraging such programs in non-union workplaces. The problem, according to the report, is that our labor laws prevent this because "the adversarial conception of the employment relationship that had led to the 1935 Wagner Act [is] incompatible with cooperative relations that [are] necessary in the modern economic and human resource environment."

**"Employee Participation" vs. Workplace Democracy**

Labor Secretary Robert Reich echoed the dominant perspective of the Dunlop Commission when he commented, "The issue for me is worker voice. Workers need a voice at the workplace. I'm

June 25: A Caterpillar worker protests the pepper-gassing of locked-out workers at the A.E. Staley plant in Illinois (see page 13).



Jim West/Impact Visuals

Jim West/Impact Visuals



September 1993: UAW workers in Michigan protest the attempts of their employer, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, to cut their health benefits.

flexible about where that voice comes from or how it's expressed." The problem with this is that it glosses over what is meant by "voice," and it fails to distinguish the consequences of the different ways that voice may be expressed.

In a non-union setting, employee "voice" or employee participation is dependent on the goodwill of management. If employees are involved in decisions it is always at management's initiative, and the format, structure, administration and functioning of the process remain management prerogatives. *While non-union companies can involve employees, humanize the work process and perhaps increase productivity, the one thing they cannot do is democratize the workplace—that is, provide workers with true power.* Without unions the enterprise remains essentially authoritarian, no matter how benevolently its management may behave at any given moment.

In a union setting, employee involvement rests on a very different premise: joint action by mutual agreement between management and the chosen representatives of the employees. Unions are necessary to ensure genuine participation of workers in decision making. Real cooperation requires two independent partners. Given the imbalance of power between employers and employees there is no non-union way to cooperate.

Strengthening unions is the only way to democratize the one major institution of modern society to which the revolution of democratic citizenship has yet to be extended—the workplace. We cannot have a democratic workplace without the preconditions for democracy—the right for workers to have an independent voice, a union. There is no other way.

Democracy is fine, a skeptic might say, but if the firm isn't competitive, what good is democ-

racy at the workplace? And indeed it used to be conventional wisdom that unions reduced economic efficiency. But recent studies show otherwise. According to *Business Week*, "More than fifty quantitative studies have concluded that the higher productivity of unionized companies offsets most of their higher costs." To the extent that higher union wages increase costs, they do not increase prices for consumers because the costs are paid for by redistributing profits to workers.

Why are unionized firms more productive than non-union firms? Unionized firms invest more in productivity enhancing technology; they have lower worker turnover and therefore more experienced workers; and they make it possible for workers to genuinely participate in decision making.

While the economic effect of unions is important, David Silberman, Director of the AFL-CIO's Task Force on Labor Law, told the Dunlop Commission that

It would be a mistake of the first order—and a grave disservice to the kind of public debate that is needed in this country—were the Commission to ground its recommendations solely in efficiency considerations. Public policy is not made, and cannot be, on one dimension. Enhancing enterprise efficiency is, no doubt, an important end of public policy, but it is not the only end. The commission should make that clear and should explicitly base its recommendations on the full range of social values.

## Are Works Councils Viable Alternatives to Unions?

At least one member of the Dunlop Commission, labor economist Richard Freeman, believes that one way to give workers "voice" without

unions is to encourage firms to establish "works councils" with which management would consult about personnel matters and corporate strategies. The theory is that by involving worker representatives in administration of education, training and social programs, we would encourage cooperation and enhance productivity.

Works councils *might* be effective under a series of unlikely conditions: Participants must have legal guarantees against employer retaliation should they advocate policies not favored by management. Employee delegates to a works council would have to be elected, not appointed by management. Members should be paid for time spent in works council meetings. Works councils should have rights to enforce health and safety regulations, to see information about company finances, and to codetermine expenditure of a firm's training funds.

Without independence, works councils can only be employer-dominated associations, which Section 8(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) rightly forbids. The concern of many in the labor movement is that the commission will support a works council proposal without these protections. If that happens, management will simply have another weapon with which to fight unions.

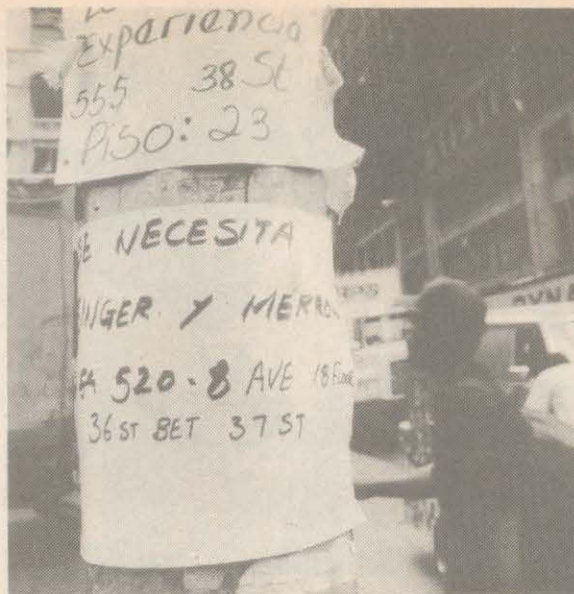
If the commission does recommend truly independent works councils, it will effectively be proposing mandatory enterprise unions (absent collective bargaining over wages and benefits). And it would also have to propose an enforcement bureaucracy similar to the NLRB to protect works council participants from discrimination, guarantee fair elections for councilors, enforce council access to company financial information, and so on.

If the Dunlop Commission somehow were to propose works councils that enjoyed these protections, management would be as militantly opposed as they are now to unions. Works councils, which started as a technocratic fix to the problem of employer opposition to unions, will likely succumb to the problem they were supposed to solve.

### Do Our Labor Laws Prevent Workplace Cooperation?

Some proponents of employee involvement claim that our labor laws inhibit labor-management cooperation. They object especially to Section 8(a)(2), which prohibits employer assistance or domination of labor organizations.

Proponents of changing Section 8(a)(2)



Lina Palotta/Impact Visuals

point to two recent NLRB cases known as *Electromation* and *DuPont*.<sup>\*</sup> Contrary to the opinion in much of the business press, the NLRB's decision in *Electromation* does not outlaw most existing employee participation programs. After an extensive analysis of these cases Robert Moberly, professor of law at the University of Florida College of law, comments:

Leaflets in New York City advertise work opportunities.

*Electromation* and *DuPont* do not inhibit the proper use of employee committees to improve productivity, quality, and efficiency. No court or board decision has struck down an employee participation plan aimed at those goals, provided they did not also establish employer-controlled groups that dealt with conditions of work. Therefore, these decisions do not call for repealing or amending Section 8(a)(2).

Cornell University professor James Rundle has reviewed every case since 1972 in which the NLRB ordered the disestablishment of an employee committee on grounds of employer domination. Despite the proliferation of workplace committees there have been very few disestablishment orders. The disestablishment orders that Rundle did find were all accompanied by at least one of the following conditions: (1) the employer in question committed one or more other unfair labor practices concurrently with the

<sup>\*</sup>For details about these cases see Robert Moberly, "Worker Participation after *Electromation* and *DuPont*;" and James Rundle, "The Debate over the Ban on Employer-Dominated Labor Organizations: What is the Evidence?" Both of these articles, along with much else of interest, can be found in *Restoring the Promise of American Labor Law*, edited by Sheldon Friedman, Richard Hurd, Rudolph Oswald, and Ronald Seeber.

Ther Swift/Impact Visuals



March 1994: The United Farmworkers march on the state Capitol in Sacramento.

8(a)(2) violation, including interrogation, threats, surveillance, discharge for union activity, and refusal to bargain; (2) the employer started the committee in response to a union organizing drive; or (3) the committee, by the employer's own admission, had nothing to do with quality, productivity, or worker empowerment. Rundle therefore concludes that there is not a single case of this type that demonstrates the need to relax or modify the prohibition against employer domination.\*

### What Next?

There is speculation that Dunlop is trying to arrange a deal in which business gets some assurances on non-union employee participation committees and labor gets some assistance in organizing. The chances of a deal don't appear likely. Many employers will surely resist any deal because the status quo suits them just fine. And unions are wary of any change in Section 8(a)(2) of the NLRA which might allow management to set up employer dominated workplace committees.

Real labor law reform, which would result in greater unionization, may be the key to ending political gridlock and economic stagnation. Because Clinton and many others in the Democratic Party appear not to realize the dangers of a non-union America, frustration is building. Last year several unions organized demonstrations and sit-ins at thirty NLRB offices around the country. The AFL-CIO is planning a national campaign around the issue.

\*This summary of Rundle's study is derived from the editors' introduction to *Restoring the Promise of American Labor Law*.

Worker rights are needed not only because they improve economic competitiveness and influence national politics in a progressive manner. When workers are not able to freely associate, speak without fear at the workplace, and organize unions, essential civil rights are denied. A democratic society cannot be indifferent to the lack of civil rights at the workplace. And there cannot be civil rights at the workplace without unions.

In testimony before the Dunlop Commission Richard Bensinger, Executive Director of the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute, captures what is at stake in the debate over labor law reform:

Last week I visited a worker from a poultry plant in Michigan, a young Hispanic father of two who was working two jobs to support his family. He told me, "I would love to talk to you about how to get a union, but I'm very afraid of what the company will do." He was practically trembling as we talked at his doorstep.

The issue is not about unions but about whether people have the freedom to believe in something and talk about something free of fear. A man or a woman can have a job and put food on the table, and yet if they have to go to work every day with fear in their hearts what do they really have?

Quality circles and employee involvement schemes in the non-union context may or may not enhance productivity, but they do not contribute to human dignity. Dignity and fear cannot coexist in the same heart.

Under current law, any employer who expends maximum (and even not so maximum) effort to defeat a union campaign can win, any time anywhere -- without breaking the law. The potency of implied threats, the futility of winning first contracts, fear of retaliation, combined with exclusive access to workers and subtle manipulation through so-called participatory schemes is virtually unbeatable under our current system. What this means is that right now it is the boss, not the workers, who decide whether there will be a union.

I have heard some propose in the context of the debate over employee participation that something short of a union is better than nothing. To this I say there can be no dignity, no voice where there is not freedom. **DL**

*Mark Levinson, a DSA member, is an economist at District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees and an editor of Dissent.*



# Defending the Public Sector

## A Few Points About Privatization

BY ELLIOTT SCLAR

In a February 1993 *New York Times* op-ed essay, a municipal bond analyst for a major security rating service argued that the cure for New York City's fiscal problems was to force it into bankruptcy and then to massively privatize public services. The writer's only evidence that this could work was an anecdote about a small Michigan town that did precisely that and reportedly saved huge amounts of money. Leaving aside the possibility that the reported cost saving was nothing more than an accounting fiction, the town in question is so small that it falls within the bounds of statistical error on New York City's census. Yet for the editors and most readers of that day's paper it was probably the case that neither the idea nor the evidence seemed implausible. Such is the power of conventional wisdom.

The conventional wisdom about privatization -- which has acted as a guiding force in the administrations of Democrat Ed Rendell in Philadelphia and Republican Rudolph Giuliani in New York City -- is based upon unrealistic assumptions about the economics of public service provision. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of privatization meshes so powerfully with popular beliefs about the ineffectiveness of government and the effectiveness of the market that even when major efforts collapse into scandal or failure, few go back and reexamine the basis for the notion. Instead, scapegoats are sought.

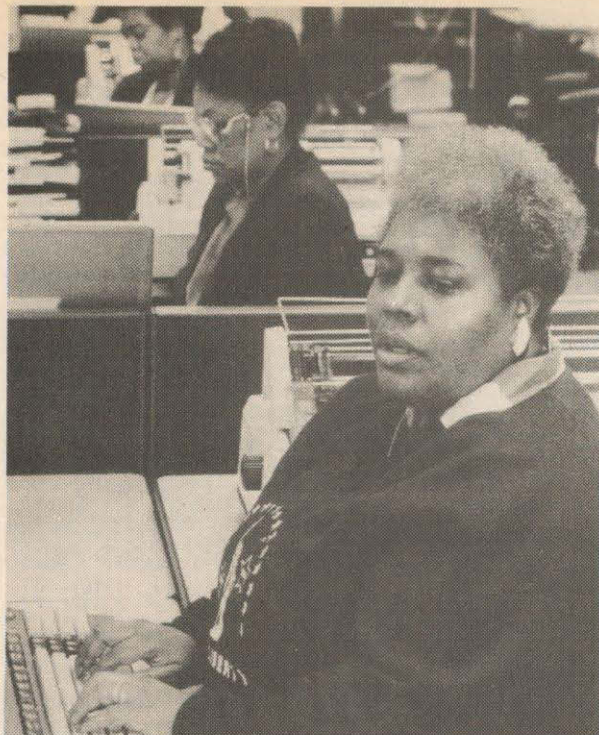
Consider, for instance, the press's reaction to the influence-peddling scandal that arose when the Dinkins administration attempted to

privatize New York City's Parking Violations Bureau. Jim Dwyer, a columnist for *New York Newsday*, defended the culprits and chastised those who brought the abuse to public attention. He bitterly observed that the high ranking officials involved in the scandal were only trying to save hard-pressed taxpayers some money, and the bureaucrats who exposed the scandal were merely trying to hold on to useless jobs at taxpayer expense. How did Dwyer know that the proposed privatization would actually save rather than cost money? He didn't. It was nothing more than a presumption based upon conventional wisdom.

How do I know that? The only study done by New York City before it embarked on its privatization venture suggested that it would likely cost the city an additional \$61 million. Because that finding was so contrary to the conventional wisdom, it was ignored by city officials.

I have been studying the economics of public-service privatization for six years. The only thing I can say for sure is that the cost savings case in a number of instances is dubious at best. Yet the conventional wisdom is so strong that citing fifty cases in which privatization lost money does not offset the evidence of a single case in which savings were attained. In this age of deep public skepticism about the efficiency and effectiveness of government, making the case against privatization in the court of public opinion will often be difficult. Progressives should nonetheless enter the debate. Much of the case for privatization is based upon an unrealistic under-

George Cohen/Impact Visuals



Clerical workers in a New York City agency.

standing of the forces that shape public service delivery. Three misconceptions in particular should be attacked.

### Misconception Number One:

*Large portions of municipal services could be effectively privatized.*

This claim is fundamental to privatization advocates' promises about saving taxpayers' money. It is based upon a surprisingly narrow base of evidence. The evidence is sufficiently thin that advocates tend to lean less on empirical data and more on a grandiose argument. They contend that the real savings lie in some vague future when public service is reduced to the work of a small cadre of contract managers.

There are two problems with this vision. First, it ignores the macro-economics of public-sector costs; second, it ignores the historical reasons for the large size of public agencies.

Let's begin by considering the economics of public work. The first principle to understand is that simply by their nature, most public services are labor-intensive. Therefore even if the public sector operates as efficiently as possible, there is an inherent inflationary bias in its costs. Most important services are not easily enhanced through labor-saving technology or workplace reorganization. A teacher generally becomes less effective by being asked to teach larger classes. The two major determinants of the productivity of bus drivers are the amount of congestion on the

streets and the number of people boarding the bus. Neither of these are improvable by the driver, *whether publicly or privately paid*. The best ideas in modern policing require more officers to spend more time walking the streets. Since public-service employees need to be paid wages that are competitive with private-sector alternatives, these added costs are not easily offset by productivity improvements.

This brings us back to privatization advocates' ambitious claims that they will achieve savings by privatizing jobs and reducing workers on the public payroll to "a handful of contract managers." Even though 60 percent to 75 percent of typical public-service spending is for employee costs, only about half to two-thirds of that is spent on direct-service provision -- the costs that would be immediately avoided through privatization. Thus only between one-half and one-third of total public spending is even amenable to short-term privatization. The balance is spent on management, materials, debt services, and so on. But since some portions of the public budget -- such as police and fire protection and portions of health care and education -- would be politically and culturally hard to privatize, at most about 20 percent of the budget is really at issue. (In Philadelphia, which is now heralded as a model of privatization success, only about fifteen small operations have actually been privatized, such as a single nursing home and a single parking garage.)

Even the most optimistic of privatization advocates typically argue that savings of 50 percent are the most one can hope for from individual privatizations. With only 20 percent of the budget really at issue, we are now down to an outer limit of overall budgetary savings of about 10 percent. When the real problems of a less than ideal world are taken into account, the likelihood that short-term cost savings rather than short-term cost increases will occur is small.

### Misconception Number Two:

*Privatization saves taxpayers money, because it introduces competition and "market principles" into the system.*

Competitive markets do not naturally exist for many of the most important products for which government is responsible, such as education, law enforcement, treatment and care for the indigent and ill, aerospace exploration, and national defense. To the extent that we seek to have private organizations provide these goods and

services, it frequently involves maintaining a stable of contractors who bid against each other in an artificial market created and supervised by government. Because government loses the ability to provide for itself, these bidders are not allowed to fail. Contracting then becomes even less a process of competitive bidding and more one of spreading the work around to keep the suppliers afloat.

Consider the Pentagon: By the time the cold war ended, the long and well-documented history of "lowball" initial contracts followed by massive cost overruns had made it impossible to maintain that national defense privatization was cost-efficient. No one seriously defends the proposition that hammers should cost \$80 or toilet seats \$600. The explanation for such outrageous prices was that the defense industry had become a ward of the state. Because its mission was considered vital, it needed to be subsidized. Occasionally, when news stories about fraud or price-fixing became politically intolerable, miscreant contractors were given a slap on the wrist. More drastic action was impossible because the government had no alternatives.

Not only are these government-created "markets" not truly competitive, and therefore not cost-saving, but they also require the maintenance of a substantial public bureaucracy in order to keep corruption from spiraling out of control. Whereas in the private sector, business owners bear the financial risk for inefficient or fraudulent use of resources, in the public sector this risk is borne by taxpayers, and governments must institute regulations to protect public resources.

If we were to peel back the layers of regulation in almost any agency with a long history of contracting, we would find a series of responses to specific abuses of the public trust by contractors and public officials. The Cuomo administration recently unveiled plans to require every company bidding on contracts in New York State to fill out a detailed questionnaire about its financial background and any criminal history of the firm or its principals. This information will

be fed into a centralized database for the use of all state agencies engaged in contracting. For the vast majority of firms this imposition will feel like one more case of bureaucratic harassment. But this regulation was prompted by the finding that close to \$200 million per year in taxpayer money ends up in the coffers of organized crime through the contracting system.

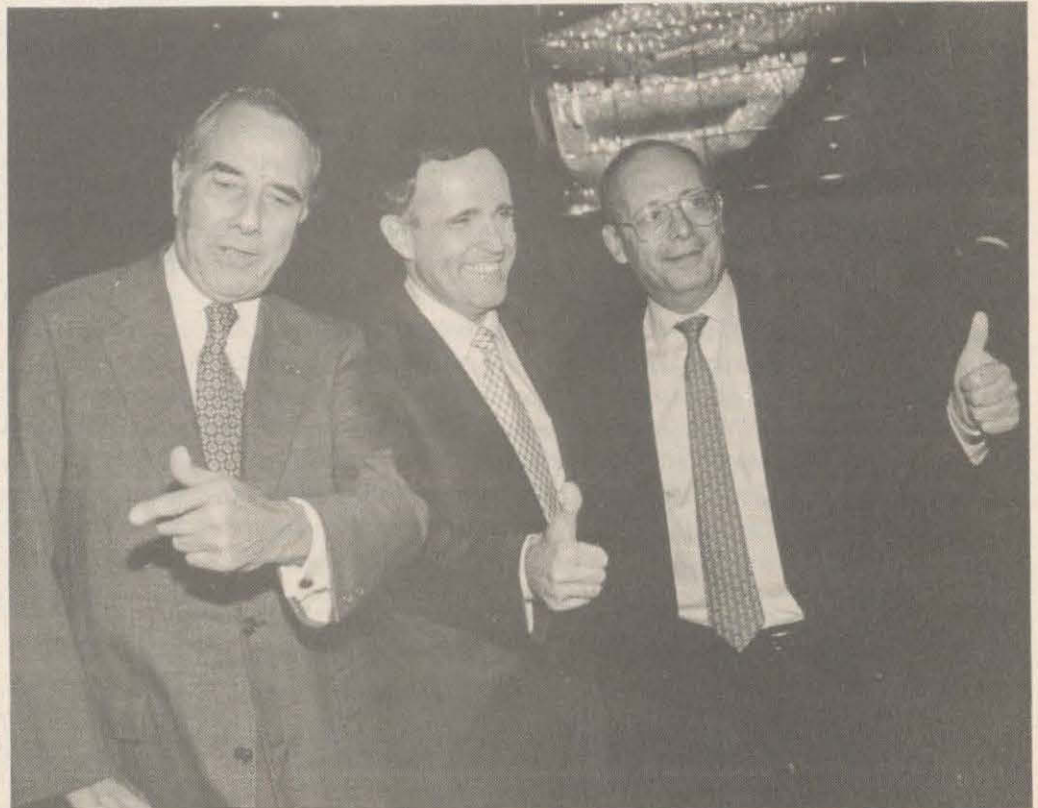
This kind of "red tape" is frequently cited by privatization advocates as proof of the inefficiency of bureaucrats. Yet it would be equally fair to cite it as proof of the damage caused by the profit motive. After all, the primary goal for private firms is profits, not public service. Only rarely will the provision of products to government and profits to sellers coincide in the manner idealized by Adam Smith. No one has come up with an inexpensive alternative to regulation for protecting public services.

#### Misconception Number Three:

*Even if it does not result in financial savings, privatization will improve the quality of public services.*

When governments attempt to privatize services for which there are no natural markets -- situations in which government is the sole or principal customer -- a perverse cycle usually develops. As various types of corruption are discov-

New York City Mayor Giuliani, flanked by Senators Dole and D'Amato, has made privatization a major part of his agenda.



Clark Jones/Impact Visuals



Office workers at a county administration building in Oakland, California.

ered, the government establishes ever more costly and complex supervision of both the bidding process and the administration of contracts. The evidence from the history of defense contracting, NASA, Medicare and Medicaid, and so on, cannot be overstated. Such costly regulatory undertakings have sharply diminishing returns. Ever more costly supervision is put in place to yield less and less effective additional protection of public resources.

If we create still more artificial markets through expanded privatization of traditional services, the public sector will become less effective on two counts: regulation will absorb ever more resources, and government will lose its ability to do for itself. Getting out of the mess will be far more difficult than getting in. Once contractors get into the public process they do not fade quietly into the night when needs change. (The cold war has ended, but not the political influence of defense contractors over the federal budget.) Privatization carries the risk that the public sector will sink into a morass of ineffective regulation of overpriced and inefficient but politically connected contractors. More money will be spent for less output -- the worst outcome for liberals and progressives, but tolerable for conservatives.

If we are to change this situation, two actions are imperative. First, loose generalizations about the cost-effectiveness of privatization must not stand unchallenged. Second, the issue of public-sector productivity must become central to a progressive agenda. It is ironic that just as American industry is finally making a break from dis-

credited nineteenth-century Tayloresque concepts that link productivity to strict discipline of workers, the public sector appears to be rushing headlong back in time. Public officials often concede that many privatizations are more expensive. However, they defend them as a management tool. From their point of view, such competition, or the threat of it, is the only way to move their employees to accept change in the workplace. The intellectual and political shortcomings of this approach have been abundantly demonstrated by the high rates of productivity achieved by Japanese and, increasingly, American industry with management methods based on cooperation rather than coercion. There is no reason to believe that public managers will be more successful with archaic and ineffective techniques than private managers were.

If American firms have to compete in a new market-driven international economy, they will be in serious trouble if the social and public infrastructure that supports them is grossly inefficient. Average Americans will suffer a worse drop in their living standards if the public sector is allowed to become more inefficient. Finally, it is the public sector that is the dispenser of social justice. It is difficult to imagine America sustaining itself as a progressive democracy with that role impaired. DL

*Elliott Sclar is Professor of Urban Planning at Columbia University. This essay is adapted from a longer article that appears in the Summer 1994 issue of Dissent.*

# No Contract and No Peace in Decatur:

## An Interview with Staley Worker and Activist Mike Griffin

BY GENE VANDERPORT

**M**ike Griffin is a millwright and a twenty-eight-year employee at the Decatur, Illinois Staley corn-processing plant. He is a leader of Local 7837 Allied Industrial Workers (AIW), now an affiliate of the United Paperworkers International Union. Mike was an early organizer of the AIW "Road Warriors," who are spreading the word about the year-old lock-out at Staley. Recently the 760 Staley workers were joined by members the UAW Caterpillar local and the Firestone United Rubber Workers. Today over four thousand workers are on the street in Decatur, a community of 80,000 people in the heart of Illinois.

**Democratic Left:** What led up to the lock-out at Staley?

**Mike:** In 1988, the London-based transnational agricultural firm Tate and Lyle bought out Staley. There was already trouble at the Decatur plant around the issue of a phony "Employee Involvement Program." The Staley approach was "You participate, we decide."

By 1989 we were bargaining with the new owners. Safety was our central concern. Conditions in the plant are horrible. OSHA [the Occupational Safety and Health Administration] has cited Staley with 298 major violations. We were being exposed daily to dangerous toxic chemicals. One steward was killed the day he grieved a safety violation. Management's response was to ignore the safety issues and instead to press for concessions in bargaining. As bad as the safety situation was and is, they demanded twelve-hour rotating shifts! I guess they figured that if you were tired you wouldn't notice you were being poisoned.

**Democratic Left:** What finally precipitated the lock-out?

**Mike:** Bargaining commenced again in 1992. We met 37 times and were at impasse on all the major items. This time they imposed the twelve-hour shifts, and told us that they would begin out-sourcing work and cutting our staff. We enlisted the help of UAW activist Jerry Tucker and the Corporate

Campaign of Ray Rogers. Our in-plant, work-to-the-rule actions cut profits dramatically. Management responded with discipline charges. There was a day-and-a-half walk-out on discipline issues. Shortly thereafter, Staley locked us out. That was June 27, 1993.

**Democratic Left:** What has local 7837 done to turn the situation around?

**Mike:** We organized the Road Warriors and an extensive community-based support network. Videotapes (*Deadly Corn* and *Struggle in the Heartland*) were produced by DSA members in Saint Louis. Support groups have been formed in Champaign-Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, Illinois; Saint Louis; Minneapolis; and Kansas City. New ones are organizing in San Francisco, Des Moines, Terre Haute, and Indianapolis. Support activities include an adopt-a-worker program, boycotts of Staley/Tate and Lyle investors such as State Farm, Archer Daniels Midland, Brach, Domino Sugar, and Smuckers. We are not boycotting Miller Beer, but we do encourage letter-writing to their owners and investors.

Local groups have hand-billed, held forums, and organized rallies and marches. In Decatur we had a solidarity march with African American community activists and ministers. This summer was exceptionally hot for Staley.

**Democratic Left:** What do you mean by hot?

**Mike:** Well, it started when four nuns and a priest asked to tour the plant and were arrested. That was in May. On June 4, six hundred people, including outside unionists, religious activists, and community folks, gathered for a rally at the plant. Forty-eight supporters, several of whom were DSA members, were arrested. On June 25, four thousand people marched. Folks came from all over the country. The police pepper-gassed the crowd, including children, at the plant entrance. This brought Staley a lot of bad press.

Most recently, we have formed a coalition with the UAW and URW strikers in Decatur. Weekly marches and rallies have kept us all going. Morale remains high.

**Democratic Left:** What do you think about the role of democratic socialists in all this?

**Mike:** For me, I have no problem with that label. DSA members have been first in line to offer support and help. I don't see the difference in the values and hopes of democratic socialists and any good unionist. We want the basic needs of the common people met as a condition of democracy.

*Solidarity activists are encouraged to send donations to Local 7837's Food and Assistance Fund, 2882 North Dineen, Decatur, IL 62526.*

*Gene Vanderport, a DSA member, is on the staff of the Illinois Education Association.*

# Manufacturing Militance

## The Rise of the Modern Brazilian and South African Trade Union Movements

Two of the most remarkable and heroic trade union movements in the world today arose in Brazil and South Africa during the 1970s. The following essay, adapted from Gay Seidman's book *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985* (University of California Press), explains how these movements arose seemingly from nowhere to form vibrant labor federations with strong community ties. These federations played a major role in toppling their countries' authoritarian regimes, and they now hold positions of significant power. In South Africa, labor is a major part of the ANC government's coalition. And in Brazil next month, the labor activist Lula will make a second bid for the presidency.

BY GAY SEIDMAN

In the mid-1970s, after years of enforced industrial peace, Brazilian and South African unions suddenly reemerged. In 1973, workers in South Africa rediscovered that they could halt production and win higher wages; over the next few years, they would build a national labor movement outside the country's established labor relations framework. In Brazil, starting in 1978, repeated strike waves ended fifteen years of industrial calm, and shop-floor activism created a basis for revitalizing militant unionism.

As the authoritarian state apparatuses of Brazil and South Africa began to unravel across the 1980s, these new labor movements played a profound role in articulating and mobilizing popular resistance. While they often worked in close alliance with opposition political parties, these labor federations -- COSATU in South Africa and the CUT in Brazil -- maintained political autonomy, seeking to embrace constituencies that spread far beyond the factory gates, voicing demands for broad social and economic change, not narrowly-defined employees' interests.

### Brazil: Against Employers and the State

On May 12, 1978, a hundred workers at Saab-Scania's plant in Sao Bernardo do Campo punched in, crossed their arms and stopped their machines, demanding a 20 percent raise. The strike spread through the factory; soon Saab-Scania's eighteen hundred workers were all punching in and refusing to turn on their machines. The strikers insisted on direct negotiations with the company, confirming negotiations through plant assemblies and rejecting intervention by union leaders or labor ministry officials because "our fight is with the firm." The strike spread rapidly through Sao Paulo's industrial belt: by the end of the second week, nearly seventy-eight thousand workers, mainly in the automobile industry, were on strike for higher wages and direct negotiations with employers.

The form and style of these strikes contrasted dramatically with the Brazilian labor movement of the early 1960s, before the military regime was established. Where earlier unionists had sought to

forge alliances with reformist politicians, in 1978 workers deeply distrusted state-controlled unions and controlled negotiations. At Saab-Scania, a small network of activists quietly planned a stoppage. As one worker recalled, "To speak the word strike was frightening. . . but this wasn't a strike. It was a stoppage." When workers throughout the factory refused to turn on their machines, the company invited in a representative of the Ministry of Labor; he arrived with an agent of the security police. The workers' main demand: salary increases, to be negotiated

between the company and an elected factory commission, and ratified by a factory assembly. This was a far cry from the mass rallies and demonstrations of the 1950s; it was a strike planned by workers, without visible outside leadership, and conducted entirely within the factory itself.

Above all, the 1978 strikes represented a campaign for workers' self-respect. During the auto industry's expansion, the drive to raise productivity had directly affected workers' lives, in terms of pressure to accept overtime shifts and in speed-up lines. One worker wrote simply, "I work at Volks, where I lose 70 percent of my life." Chronic fatigue and psychological pressure contributed to high accident rates. Control over workers' movements in most large factories was despotic: workers' accounts tell of supervisors who strictly limited bathroom trips and of guards whose arbitrary decisions amounted to the humiliating control of high school prefects. As a striker put it, "The strike was more for a guy's honor than for the raise."

Taken by surprise, employers were divided in their response to the 1978 strikes. Although many firms threatened workers with dismissals, assault, or arrest, and although the Ministry of Labor declared the strikes illegal, the army was not brought in. Employers may have feared that an invasion of the factories by police or soldiers would lead to widespread damage to expensive machinery. Some multinational companies, including Saab-Scania, were already under pressure from workers in their home countries to negotiate with their Brazilian employees.

Eventually, the automobile industry employ-



J.F. Rippe/Imagens da Terra/Impact Visual

Workers rally during a railroad strike in Rio de Janeiro in 1989.

ers' associations began an unofficial bargaining process with the ABC Metalworkers' Union, and granted a staggered wage increase of 24.5 percent. Employers were hardly ready to abdicate control: most workers who served on factory commissions were fired when they returned to work. But the strike appeared to be a victory for the workers, and its main lesson was a political one. Lula, then the recently-elected president of the Metalworkers Union, commented, "One learns that it is easier to negotiate with the machines stopped."

To many Brazilians, the strikes seemed to herald the return of industrial workers to national political life. By the end of the year, about 540,000 Brazilians -- including teachers, bank workers, and textile workers, as well as 350,000 metalworkers -- had followed the Saab-Scania workers' lead, striking for better wages and independent bargaining rights.

What had formed the organizational and tactical basis for these strikes? By the late 1960s, arrests, interventions, and expulsions by the military regime had left only the most pliable unionists in office. But small clandestine networks of labor activists, some of them linked to the Catholic Church, continued to hold secret discussion groups and to pursue quiet shopfloor organizing. A second crucial factor was the revelation in 1977 that the Labor Ministry had manipulated inflation figures in ways harmful to workers, whose wages were tied to official inflation indices. This scandal sealed Brazilian workers' cynicism about the Labor Ministry, and convinced many that direct negotiations with employers, without the state as intermediary, would be most effective.

The spirit of this "new unionism" was re-

flected in a 1979 declaration of a metalworkers' opposition group: "The role of the union opposition is to dismantle the current structure and create a new one, independent of employers and of the government, starting with factory organization." From 1978 on, the new unionism spread through Brazilian industries, with worker activists calling for greater shop-floor representation in union structures and direct collective bargaining. Even outside Sao Paulo's heavy industrial sector, workers' demands became increasingly radicalized, and broadened to include thoroughgoing critiques of Brazil's social, political, and economic structure.

As factory-level mobilization increased, and with economic and political demands increasingly seen as inseparable, two different, if related, organizational tendencies developed, both involving the construction of national entities uniting shop-floor organizations and unions. First, drawing on both the organized labor movement and the broader community-based social movement, unionists joined with left-wing intellectuals in 1979 to create a workers' party, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), to challenge elite control

over the political process. Second, unionists began to challenge the legal prohibition on interunion organization, creating national federations that could take up national issues. Two separate labor federations were formed in 1983, the more significant of which was the CUT (Central Unica dos Trabalhadores, or Unified Workers' Central), founded by the most visible leaders of the recent strike wave. Most of these activists believed, as one unionist put it, that "parties must be subordinate to unions, not the reverse." PT leaders insisted on taking direction from the labor federation rather than setting union policy.

The party made few electoral gains at first; before the PT could win substantial victories, the "new unionism" from which it emerged had to strengthen alliances with the communities in which workers and their families lived, to build a broader support base. As workers brought a factory-based understanding of economic relations to bear on community issues, the urban social movements that emerged in the late 1970s had a distinct class character; but at the same time, the labor movement could not ignore the importance of issues beyond the factory gates to its members

## The Workers' Party: Guiding Principles for the 1994 Elections

The Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) is widely seen as the most dynamic party on the Latin American left—some would say the world left—today. Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, the longtime PT and CUT leader known as Lula, will make his second bid for the Brazilian presidency on October 3. Polls throughout the year have shown him as the front-runner, although recently his lead has been thrown into doubt.

The following excerpts from the PT's "Guiding Principles for the 1994 Elections" reflect the party's insistence on transforming both the state and civil society on a radical democratic basis—an approach that has roots in the "new Brazilian unionism" of the 1970s:

"... Now, when the PT may well become the government, the establishment is exerting enormous pressure to make us become part of it. We will not do so. The PT's struggle for government

is essential to Brazilian workers' achieving hegemony. However, we do not mistake government for power, which is much wider and rooted in economic and social relations.

"... By taking this approach, the PT explicitly rejects two forms of socialism that have been unsuccessful in the past. The first is that of operating only outside of existing institutions, or treating them merely as an opportunity for propaganda. The second is of operating solely within the establishment. The PT reaffirms as a strategic objective the formation of a popular democratic government from both a popular base and an electoral majority.

"Our project of social transformation will work only if it is supported by a solid and self-organized base of the exploited and oppressed. ... The success of our struggle for reform and the democratization of the state and society depends

on both popular and governmental action against the existing order.

"... For structural reform it is necessary to create a popular democratic movement. The 1994 election campaign must be a starting point for and expression of this movement, which must be based on a revived union movement, workers' and students' organizations, civil bodies, popular parties, and organizations of women, black and indigenous peoples. It must also be particularly aware of those who are marginalized and excluded by society. A movement that transcends the election campaign is essential. ..."

*Excerpts courtesy of the Brazil Election Information Committee, c/o Brecht Forum, 122 West 27 Street, tenth floor, New York, NY 10001. West Coast address: P.O. Box 8402, Berkeley, CA 94707. E-mail: bkoehlein@igc.apc.org.*





Anni Ziminski/Impact Visuals

and their families. Brazilian trade unionists, working under the umbrellas of the CUT and the PT, forged alliances with popular movements for day-care facilities, public transportation, health clinics, and a variety of other issues. Across the 1980s, activists in the labor movement and in the PT popularized the language of class and citizenship, and increasingly appealed to a constituency that found itself excluded from the benefits of capitalist growth. By 1989, when Lula first ran for president, he was able to appeal to an extremely broad base -- a testament to the new Brazilian unionism's ability to articulate broad political grievances and to forge ties with diverse social movements.

### South Africa: "The Spirit Lives"

In 1973, nearly a hundred thousand African workers in South Africa downed tools, taking employers, the state, and even worker activists by surprise. Much as the 1978 strikes in Brazil relegitimized workers' demands in the public arena, the 1973 strike wave initiated a new era of worker organization in South Africa. Over the subsequent decade, black workers painstakingly built the nonracial unions that subsequently formed the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU); gradually, despite repression, the unions built a national organization with a strong shop-floor presence.

Like Brazil's 1978 strikes, the South African strikes of 1973 seemed spontaneous: early on the morning of January 9, 1973, a small group of workers from the Coronation Brick and Tile company in Durban woke up fellow workers at the company dormitories, telling them to go to a

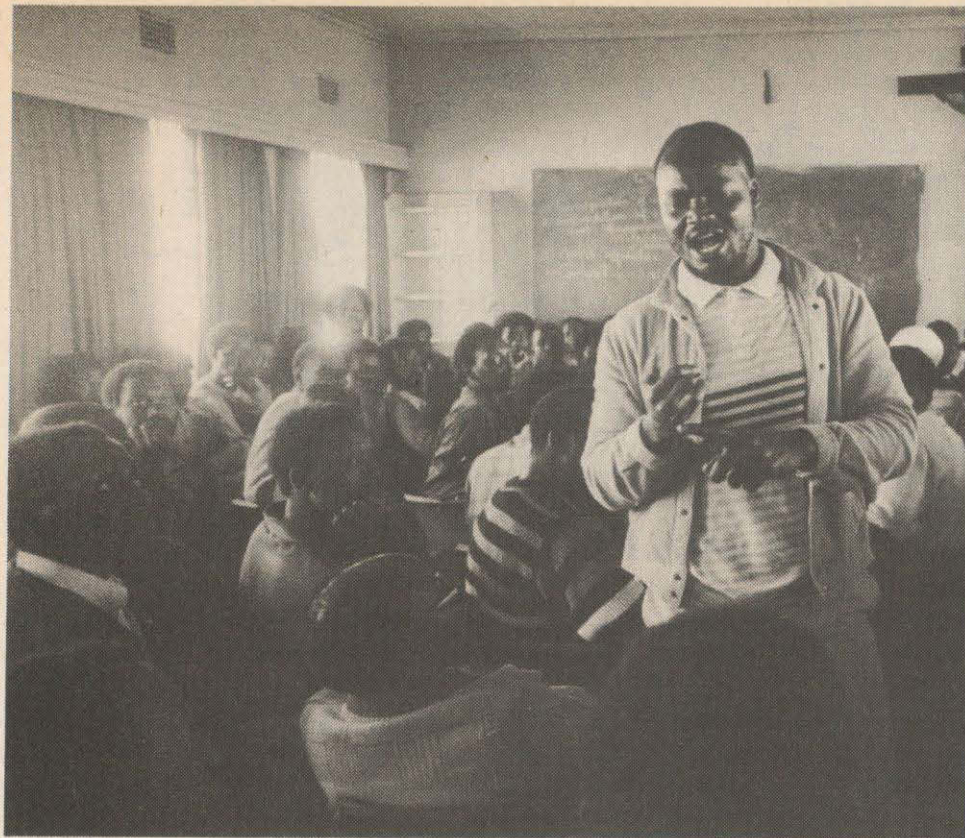
nearby football stadium instead of the plant. Chanting in Zulu, "Man is dead but his spirit still lives," nearly two thousand workers marched behind a large red flag to the stadium, demanding that the company raise its minimum wage from 8.97 rand to 20 rand per week. Refusing "to negotiate with 1,500 workers on a football field," and apparently unable to resuscitate a defunct factory works committee, the company made several offers to raise wages before the workers agreed to work.

Meanwhile, strikes broke out in several other nearby factories, inspired at least in part by news of the Coronation Brick and Tile strike. By the end of the year, nearly a hundred thousand workers had gone on strike. Repression continued: in late 1973, police shot thirty-eight workers, killing twelve, during a miners' strike near Johannesburg. But the strike wave clearly changed workers' perceptions of the possibilities of industrial action.

For the next six years, a new militant trade unionism gradually developed throughout South Africa, laying the groundwork for the powerful community-labor coalitions that would arise during the peak years of the 1980s resistance. Between 1974 and 1979, an average of 27,140 workers struck annually. The process of building this movement was painstaking and dangerous; where Brazilian activists could sometimes choose to work within state-controlled established unions, black South African workers had virtually no legal union bodies. The minutes of early union meetings are filled with reports of arrests and harassment of organizers, shortages of funds and transport, and the need for basic union education.

The 1976 student uprising in Soweto -- and

Johannesburg,  
1987: a COSATU  
Cultural Day  
festival.



A strike meeting in South Africa in 1987.

the severe state repression that followed -- created a turning point for the new labor movement. First, many unionists were detained in the wave of arrests that followed the uprising; it could be argued that the security police used the student uprising as an excuse to attack trade unions. Second, however, as part of the new international outcry against apartheid -- as the repression in Soweto triggered new worldwide campaigns for economic sanctions -- international and local business leaders began to insist on labor law reform. Even the owners of Heinemann, an electronics firm that brutally repressed a strike in early 1976, began to argue that the industrial conciliation system "needed drastic revision" to allow workers to express their demands in an orderly fashion.

Lastly, the Soweto uprising changed both workers' and activists' attitudes toward unions. During the three months at the height of the student uprising, students distributed pamphlets to workers at bus stops and on township streets, calling on them to strike in support of their children; years later, workers on the East Rand attributed increased worker militancy after 1976 to anger at repression and shame that students had taken the lead in resisting apartheid. One worker told an interviewer after the uprising, "We talked a lot. About injustice. About what they are

doing to us. About having no self-respect, no dignity in us. It was because of people like us that everybody [was] suffering in this country." Meanwhile, the repression suffered by student organizations -- culminating in the murder in detention of the Black Consciousness leaders Steve Biko and the bannings of all Black Consciousness and student organizations in late 1977 -- prompted many political activists to reconsider their strategies. Recognizing that students were relatively powerless, many activists left school and began to work in factories, where demands could be backed by strikes and work stoppages.

During the 1980s, trade unions became increasingly prominent in the anti-apartheid opposition. Especially when detentions silenced community activists, their campaigns were continued by trade

unionists, who could hope for some protections from shop-floor organizations' ability to pressure employers. When union leaders were detained, workers struck, individual businessmen suffered losses, and business associations complained about state interference in labor relations. By the late 1980s, South Africa's largest labor federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), dominated the legal opposition movement. Strikes, or general stay-aways, were prominent in the repertoire of protest actions, and labor activists were among the most visible opposition leaders.

As the community-based uprising of 1984-1987 deepened, national labor leaders increasingly supported union participation in community struggles, describing their task as one of articulating "the politics of the working class, the politics of the democratic majority," and warning that if workers stood aside from community organizations, they risked isolation. Throughout the 1980s, South African workers mobilized in factory organizations brought an understanding of class relations to community debates. For the labor movement to succeed in shaping a future South Africa, Sidney Mufamadi, COSATU's assistant general secretary, argued, "We must make the militant youth in the street of our ghettos, the

students in the Bantu Education schools, the housewife in the four-roomed matchbox [government-owned rental housing], the unemployed person who is condemned to starve in the Bantustans understand that capitalism is the root cause of all our suffering."

Probably the most visible indication of labor's importance in the broad political movement came in 1990, when the South African government unbanned the ANC and the Communist Party and began a protracted negotiation process. As South Africa's major resistance organizations were finally able to mobilize openly, it became clearer than ever how much of the infrastructure of the country's popular movements had been developed and protected by the unions of COSATU. As Jeremy Baskin, a COSATU official, observed in 1989:

In the repressive climate COSATU became an outlet for the political hopes of far more than its membership. It acted as a political center. Youths and students looked to it for guidance; churches asked it for political direction; ambassadors, foreign visitors, and political journalists canvassed its opinions -- and not because of any particular interest in or support for trade unionism.

To a large extent COSATU spoke for the entire democratic movement. It was seen as the voice of the ANC in a situation where the ANC could not openly speak.

The 1991 election of the prominent trade unionist Cyril Ramaphosa as the ANC's new general secretary only confirmed the extent to which anti-apartheid goals had been reshaped by labor's involvement. Yet COSATU continued to insist on its independence and on grass-roots mobilization, especially through national strikes, as the most effective means of pressuring the white minority government; the union federation served "as the ANC's conscience, goad and muscular left arm" during the transition process. In South Africa, no less than in Brazil, citizenship had been redefined to include redistribution of wealth as well as political access, and to involve a changed relationship between workers and political power.

#### Courage and Tenacity

Despite the tremendous repression they faced, the new Brazilian and South African trade union movements of the 1970s enjoyed a



Cindy Fern on Impact Visuals

number of historical advantages. Both were able to target heavy industrial sectors that were key foreign exchange earners; in each case, neither the state nor employers could afford to see production stop for long. Second, in different ways, each movement benefited from solidarity efforts by foreign trade unions. Finally, each movement was grounded in recently-created industrial towns that were almost purely working-class. Unlike most emergent labor unions, these movements managed to construct new collective identities, so that workers and their families came to understand democratization in class terms. In both cases, labor unions became expressions of broad working-class identities and interests, challenging the inequitable patterns of industrialism that had marked both countries' histories.

With enormous courage and tenacity, Brazilian and South African activists were able to build sustained, democratic movements for workers' rights and social justice. Forging links with community organizations was a crucial part of that process. By broadening their constituencies, these two movements demonstrated how to create a force that can challenge the savage inequalities of capitalism on the periphery of the global economy. **DI**

*Gay Seidman is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. This article is adapted from her book Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985 (University of California Press, 1994). The material is copyright © 1994 The Regents of the University of California. Used by permission.*

Workers Party leader Lula, who will make his second bid for the Brazilian presidency in October.

# Facing the Future

## The Mexican Elections and the NAFTA Economy

BY GINNY COUGHLIN

This was a dreary summer for leftists in Mexico City. But in the days leading up to the August 21 national elections, the city blossomed with hope. Activists from the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) had followed the reports of the final barnstorming campaign tour of their beloved presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, as he spoke to tens of thousands of workers, campesinos, and students throughout the country. Perredistas, as PRD activists are called, had watched Cárdenas bounce back a bit in the polls after languishing in single digits since May's televised debate. And in Mexico City, perredistas were optimistic about the chances for a number of local PRD candidates.

At a boisterous party thrown by young PRD activists on the Wednesday night before the elections, the last legal day of campaigning, an ever-so-slight scent of victory was in the air. Among the party-goers were thirty-five students and young people from the U.S. and Canada who were part of the Solidarity Summer observer delegation (see page 24). We had been working closely with student and youth PRD activists (mostly based at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM) for the past several days. Although the PRD's prospects nationally were not very promising, polls hinted that several candidates who had come out of various Mexico City student and

youth movements (and for whom these UNAM students were working day and night) were poised to win seats in the lower house of the federal legislature. That Wednesday we danced until dawn, anticipating a better showing for Cárdenas than the polls predicted and modest PRD victories throughout Mexico.

In the early morning hours after the election, what little hope perredistas had was shattered. The PRD had not only come in a distant third in the presidential race (16 percent officially), but the party had lost every congressional district race, and they had lost their only gubernatorial race, in Chiapas. (Candidates from the PRD's party lists will serve in the legislature, proportional to the party's vote percentage.) When I asked a student activist, Iñigo Martínez, what had happened, he shook his head despondently and repeated over and over again, "Nobody knows what happened. Nobody knows."

The mood was similar at the PRD's post-election rally in Mexico City -- frustration, disbelief, despondency. Yes, there had been tremendous electoral fraud. Reports of irregularities and intimidation in rural and indigenous areas were coming in faster than the vote counts. Untold amounts of government money had been filtered to poor communities in exchange for votes. At the noontime demonstration, Cárdenas tried to channel the small crowd's outrage: "We wanted to be

able to celebrate the transition of Mexico to a democracy. We cannot. Once again the constitutional order has been broken." In the background, a few hundred PRD youth activists crowded around the doors of the national palace chanting and waving angry banners. But it was difficult for most PRD supporters to blame such an overwhelming defeat purely on fraud.

The PRD's severe loss on August 21st was not only a defeat for the people of Mexico, but it was a serious setback for the people of the U.S. and Canada. These were the first major national elections in North America since the passage of the North

American Free Trade Agreement. The potential victory of a democratic socialist (Cárdenas) held the possibility of real change for people throughout the three countries of NAFTA. And the actual victory of a free-marketeer (Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon) probably means a continuation of the same downward trends in wages, working conditions, and standards of living for working people across the continent.

This year's electoral campaign in Mexico was a battle fought on two different fronts: the battle for democracy and the war against "neoliberalism," as supply-side, free-trade economics is termed in Europe and Latin America. The struggle for a more democratic, less fraudulent system of choosing leaders was waged by a broad spectrum of Mexican society -- right, center and left (but mostly left) -- and aided by a corps of international visitors and reporters. The effort sought to challenge the ruling Party of the Institutional Revolution's (PRI) nearly complete hold not only on Mexico's government, but also on the trade union movement, the media, and other institutions of civil society. Their lock on power is guaranteed each election day by an elaborate system of fraud, intimidation, and vote-buying, and it is solidified throughout the year with vast sums of development and infrastructure funding for communities that vote PRI.

The drive to rid Mexico's elections of fraud, initiated by Cárdenas's first bid for the presidency in 1988 and jump-started this year by the



A PRD campaign sign in Estado de Mexico.

Zapatista insurgency, was a successful first step in what will be a long and arduous campaign to reform Mexico's electoral system. Intense political pressure and elections monitoring by groups such as Alianza Cívica (a coalition of hundreds of human rights groups in Mexico that coordinated over 10,000 citizen observers and 500 foreign observers) prevented some of the blatant election-day fraud that enabled the PRI to steal the 1988 election from Cárdenas. But it is impossible to quantify and far more difficult to stop the deeply insidious fraud that occurs long before the election -- manipulation of voter rolls, intimidation of employees at the workplace, and worst of all, widespread distribution by the government of so-called development funds that come with one implicit string attached: vote PRI in August.

So, was the 1994 election stolen? That's a difficult question to answer. If the election was stolen from anyone the numbers would show that it was stolen from the runner-up, the socially and economically conservative Party of National Action (PAN). Domestic and international observers ensured that there was probably less Election Day fraud than ever before. But the real story of electoral manipulation lies in the PRI's control and distribution of government development funds. If poor communities are faced with the choice of voting PRI and getting electricity and running water, or voting PRD and getting harassment and discrimination, voting for social justice becomes a luxury reserved for middle class radicals

Dominic Chan



August 21: A voting station in Estado de Mexico.

There were supposed to be curtains around all of the ballot boxes visible here.

and students. In his book *Utopia Unarmed*, Mexican political scientist Jorge Castañeda describes the 1991 interim elections, and presages 1994:

Any participation in a fraudulent electoral system -- totally controlled by the government, with one party enjoying all the privileges, funds, and advantages, and the others making do with goodwill and devotion -- was doomed to failure, unless overwhelming force could be brought to bear. After 1988, this overwhelming force was not generally

available, except regionally, or on occasion. Thus, the PRD participated in elections it knew beforehand were going to be stolen.

But this very participation, not only by the PRD, but by various forces -- Alianza Cívica, independent trade unions, and the Zapatistas -- is the most promising avenue for social justice in Mexico. The Zapatistas demonstrated that fair elections are central to their project of guaranteeing civil rights for indigenous people by putting election reform at the top of their agenda and by calling a national democratic convention just weeks before election day. Perredistas, Alianza Cívica activists, and thousands of people from throughout the Mexican left participated in the convention and joined its call for President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's resignation and the appointment of an interim government to oversee a new election.

Because the battle for democracy is so concrete, with the possibility of tangible and immediate victories, in some ways it eclipsed the other question that confronted Mexico in these elections: the question of neoliberalism. In 1988, Cárdenas's campaign touched a nerve because many Mexicans were fed up with the hegemony of

## Electrical Workers Forge Ties with Mexican Labor

BY TOM ELLETT

At the recent national convention of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), General Secretary-Treasurer Amy Newell argued that labor has become a commodity on the global market just like any other. As with other abundant commodities, labor's price is falling as the market for it becomes more internationalized. The response, argued Newell, must be a truly global labor movement.

Toward that end, for the past three years the UE has engaged in a "strategic organizing alliance" with the Authentic Workers Front (FAT) of Mexico. The FAT is an independent federation of militant unions seeking to organize factories in the *maquiladoras* along the Mexican-U.S. border. The UE provides

material assistance and helps develop organizing strategies. Public pressure in the U.S. by the UE on transnational corporations operating in Mexico has helped curb some of the most outrageous



violations of human rights there.

Like all of the UE's projects, the strategic organizing alliance has a strong rank-and-file component. The project is funded in part through UE members' "adopting" an organizer and sustaining him or her through donations. The union

regularly sponsors worker-to-worker exchanges between employees of common corporations.

Although the tangible results of the alliance have been modest, the cooperative effort did result in the first secret-ballot union election in Mexican history. And the enthusiasm and empathy by rank-and-file UE members toward their Mexican sisters' and brothers' struggle is the most encouraging by-product of all.

For information about supporting the UE/F.A.T. Solidarity Fund, contact Robin Alexander at the UE, 2400 Oliver Building, 535 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Fax: 412/471-8999.

Tom Ellett, a former DSA Youth Organizer, is an organizer with the UE in Wisconsin.

the PRI and the government's handling of the debt crisis and the economy in general. Six years later, voters are even more fed up with the omnipotence of the PRI, but many, perhaps a majority, are intrigued by Salinas's innovative economic strategies. Many people, particularly in the middle class, are willing to give NAFTA and neoliberalism a chance.

Cárdenas's vision of economic alternatives was not that radical. While he was pressured by social movement groups to declare his opposition to NAFTA at a conference in July, after that he continued to qualify his opposition and to mumble through the specifics. And he was careful not to antagonize the U.S. government or U.S.-based multinationals. Even so, elite consensus around free trade, deregulation, and the primacy of multinational corporations appears to have taken hold in Mexico, as it has around the world. In the coming months the PRD will engage in a thoroughgoing internal discussion. It will be interesting to see the post-election strategies that are developed by not only the PRD, but by the Zapatista-inspired democratic national convention (CND), the Alianza Cívica, and the Mexican network against free trade.

The elections in Mexico were only the first



Barb Ferrell

opportunity for citizens of the new North America to work together for a common purpose in opposition to the neoliberal agenda. Future elections in Canada and the U.S. will carry the same potential for social justice throughout the continent. And a tri-national campaign to call for the renegotiation of NAFTA and adoption of a social charter is being developed by a wide range of social movement leaders from the three countries.

DL

*Ginny Coughlin is DSA's Field Coordinator.*

## DSA Latino Commission Leaders Travel to Mexico

DSA Latino Commission leaders Alberto Rojas and Eric Vega traveled with separate delegations of election observers in Mexico. Rojas's group spent most of its time in the state of Michoacan, and Vega's group traveled to Estado de Mexico.

Vega reports that his group did not see any of the grotesque irregularities that marked the 1988 elections, but that the electoral process was still highly compromised. He spoke with one woman in a small town who had been approached by a political "pollster" as she was sweeping her porch. She told this person that she was planning to vote against the PRI. The next day she was visited by town officials who presented her with a fine, saying that she had been seen sweeping her porch,

and that this constituted "polluting the neighborhood."

Beyond this sort of petty harassment, Vega says, many Mexicans' jobs and livelihoods depend on their voting the PRI party line. Vega's delegation visited a remote dumping ground where dozens of families have formed encampments. The "manager" of this dump, who allocates areas where families may camp, is a PRI supporter, and he made it clear that he expected his tenants to vote PRI as well.

In Paracho, Michoacan, Alberto Rojas witnessed a post-election uprising involving several hundred indigenous people. The group blocked highways and occupied state and federal government buildings, claiming that there had been serious voting irregularities in the region.

They demanded that they be governed by the PRD, and that the federal government fulfill promises made in 1992 to bring major public works and development projects to Michoacan.

Michoacan's regional Federal Elections Institute was heavily guarded by federal soldiers and agents of the Judicial Police as the votes were counted. Cristobal Arias, a PRD candidate for Senate, declared that the party would continue to mobilize protests until all allegations of electoral fraud were addressed.

*To subscribe to Our Struggle/ Nuestra Lucha, the newsletter of the DSA African American, Anti-Racist, and Latino Commissions, send \$15 to P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816.*

# Solidarity Summer

## DSA Co-Sponsors Youth Delegation to Mexico

BY BARB FERRILL

This summer the DSA Youth Section co-sponsored a delegation of 35 young people to observe the August 21 federal elections in Mexico. The project was spawned by a unique coalition involving diverse progressive organizations in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.

The coalition, called Solidarity Summer/Delegación Trinacional, came together in April, just four months before the election. The concept was to bring together young activists from across North America to lay the foundation for a renewed struggle for human rights, economic justice, and democracy. Now that NAFTA is being implemented it is not only important but *necessary* to work across borders. This long-term fight will require building relationships among youth activists throughout the hemisphere.

The diverse range of organizations represented on the Solidarity Summer steering committee in the U.S. included the Committees of Correspondence, the National Chicano Human Rights Council, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA-Chicano Student Movement), Nia-NUARTS (Arts Collective and Freedom School of New York City), and DSA. These organizations do not often work together, yet we all believe that we must fight the principles embodied in NAFTA, which will only deepen social inequalities, weaken democracy, and leave the poor more vulnerable to exploitation.

A primary concern was that the Solidarity Summer delegation be diverse in terms of race, class, and organizational background. Thanks to support from DSA members and a crucial



Barb Ferrill

contribution from 1199: The National Health and Human Services Employees Union, we were largely able to achieve this. Our delegation turned out to be just over 50 percent people of color and 30 percent Latino/a. Crucial to our success was that a majority of our group had some level of Spanish-speaking ability. This allowed a very high level of communication between our group and the Mexican students we worked with in the days leading up to the election.

We arrived in Mexico six days before the election. During the pre-election week Solidarity Summer was part of a trinational youth meeting on post-NAFTA politics, which also included the New Democratic Youth of Canada, Convergencia Juvenil (the youth section of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática of Mexico) and the Caravana Ricardo Pozas at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which organizes caravans of food and medicine to Chiapas. A major theme of this meeting was the possibility of a campaign for a North American

social charter, which would establish guarantees for wages, workers' rights, and environmental protections.

On Election Day, the delegation split up; members acted as election observers at sites in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Morelos, Estado de Mexico and Mexico City.

The 1994 Solidarity Summer project should be remembered as a beginning—however humble—of a process of international and inter-organizational dialogues for the North American student left. These dialogues taught all of us a great deal about our common goals, our differences, and our visions of a social order that would favor the needs of people over the agendas of multinational corporations.

But this was only a beginning. The U.S. Solidarity Summer steering committee continues to meet, and plans are being set for a second trinational project in the summer of 1995. **DL**

*Barb Ferrill, a student at Metro State University in Denver, was an intern at the DSA national office this summer.*



# Labor and the Crisis in Haiti

## An Interview with Cajuste Lexiuste

BY DAVID GLENN

Haiti's trade union movement has suffered enormously since the September 1991 coup that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Along with the rest of Haitian civil society, labor activism has been forced underground or repressed entirely.

As *Democratic Left* goes to press, the United States is laying preparations for an invasion of Haiti. This potential intervention has aroused deeply divided feelings among DSA members.

Cajuste Lexiuste, the General Secretary of Haiti's General Confederation of Labor (CGT), recently visited the DSA office to share his perspectives. Before the coup, the CGT was one of several emergent labor federations in Haiti; its 25,000 members include textile, manufacturing, and agricultural workers. Lexiuste was forced into exile in the U.S. in May 1993, after he and two other labor leaders were severely beaten and detained for several weeks. The three were seized as they attempted to appear on a small radio station to call for a general strike.

**Democratic Left:** How did the labor movement develop in Haiti after Jean-Claude Duvalier's ouster in 1986?

**Cajuste Lexiuste:** There was a huge upsurge of activity. Many labor leaders who'd been forced into exile returned, and all of our clandestine networks came to the surface. But eradicating the labor movement was a priority of the Namphy and Avril regimes [1988-1990]. Sometimes this was done through direct repression, sometimes by buying off labor leaders.

When Aristide's candidacy emerged in 1990, it was easy for the CGT and the other truly independent federations to support him. We sat



Harriet Hirshorn/Impact Visuals

down and met with him. He gave us commitments to fight for a higher minimum wage, to restore the social security system, and to mandate the use of Creole as well as French on ballots and workplace notices.

These were the issues that scared the elites—in fact, it was just as Aristide was taking action on the minimum wage that the coup was orchestrated.

Our experience before and after the coup has shown how important trade unionism is to Haiti's democratic movements. Many of Haiti's poorest citizens are easily led, out of sheer desperation, into right-wing paramilitary groups. But the working class is not quite so fragmented and desperate—so trade unions provide an anchor of strength and reliability.

**Democratic Left:** And what are your feelings about a potential U.S. military intervention to restore Aristide to power?

**Cajuste Lexiuste:** The CGT supports Aristide 100 percent, but we do not support any kind of military intervention. The United States has consistently acted against the interests of Haiti's popular movements. The U.S. Agency for International Development consistently undermined Aristide's economic initiatives. The U.S. continues to draw up plans for "assisting" and modernizing the Haitian military.

And the embargo imposed by the U.S. against the coup regime has been very leaky. It seems to have been designed not to weaken the regime but to wear down the popular movements.

We believe that all of this adds up to a consistent pattern—in Haiti the U.S. defends its own interests, not the interests of democracy. Restoring Aristide to the presidency through an invasion would probably only serve to integrate him into a new framework of power, in which Haiti's trade unions and popular movements would be kept weak.

All of the outrages we've seen this summer—the renewed killings of priests, and so forth—can be seen as attempts by some sectors of the elite to *provoke* an invasion that would ultimately serve their long-term interests.

So, no, I do not support an intervention. Instead I believe that the U.S. left should fight for truly effective sanctions and the freezing of Haitian elites' U.S. assets. And the left should work to expose the true role of U.S. agencies in propping up some of Haiti's most reactionary forces. **DL**

*Thanks to Ray LaForest of AFSCME District Council 1707 for providing translation.*

*For a detailed report on U.S. AID's role in Haiti, send \$5 to the National Labor Committee, 15 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.*

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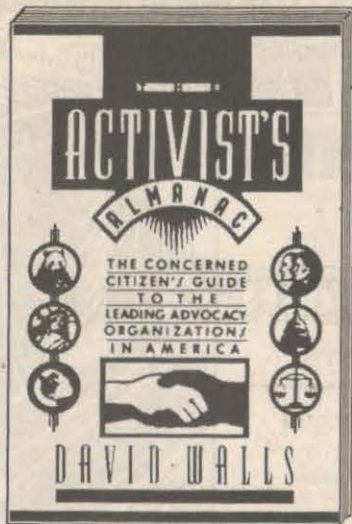
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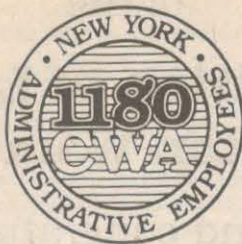


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<p>Happy Labor Day to all who work for social justice</p> <p><i>Ruth Messinger</i></p>	<p>For Libertarian Socialism!</p> <p><i>Jim Dinsmoor</i> <i>Indiana University</i></p>	<p>In remembrance of Michael Harrington</p> <p><i>Lucille Sydnor</i></p>	<p>Greetings from the rural peasant/academic soviet where the zucchinis are like baseball bats!</p> <p><i>Joseph M. Schwartz</i> <i>Marilyn Migiel</i> <i>Michael Migiel-Schwartz</i> <i>Slaterville Springs, NY</i></p>
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# DSA Action

## Freeing the Last Colony:

### DSA Locals Enlisted in Support of D.C. Statehood

As another mid-term election approaches, voters in the United States prepare to go to the polls to elect members of Congress who will cast votes on their behalf in Washington -- all, that is, except the 600,000 voters who live in Washington itself.

A ward of the federal government for two centuries, the District of Columbia not only has no voting representation in Congress -- only a non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives -- but also is subject to federal veto of its local legislation and budgets. For instance, for years Congress overturned both the District's legislation to use locally-raised money to fund abortions for poor women, and its domestic partnership law allowing the non-married companions of city employees to receive the same benefits as those

married to D.C. workers. Some members of Congress, employing a thinly-veiled brand of racism against a city that is 70 percent African American, claim that the people of the District are somehow incapable of managing their own affairs.

In response, a movement to make the District a state has been gathering momentum for the past decade. To make D.C. into our 51st state, the state of New Columbia (as local activists have christened it), does not require a constitutional amendment, only a majority vote of both houses of Congress and the signature of the President.

Leaders of the statehood movement realize that if the battle is to be won, it must be taken up in communities across the nation by citizens who believe that the current condition of D.C. constitutes

a denial of human rights. Members of Congress must hear from their constituents to learn that the issue of D.C. statehood resonates far beyond the beltway.

D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA, working closely with the statehood movement, has prepared a package of materials that was recently sent to DSA locals and activists across the country. Locals are encouraged to engage their members by organizing rallies and phone-calling drives targeting their local members of Congress. In concert with other nationwide organizations that have joined the battle, DSA can help give the statehood movement a national presence.

If you have not yet received the statehood activism package, or if you have questions, please call Bill Mosley at 202/265-4982.

## Labor Activist to Resume This Fall

The *Labor Activist*, the DSA Youth Section's newsletter for young labor organizers and rank-and-filers, will resume publication this fall after a several-month hiatus. The newsletter is intended to help young labor activists develop networks in which they can discuss strategies, tactics, and broader political issues. The *Labor Activist* is also designed to help campus-based DSA Youth Section chapters do effective labor support work.

Each issue of the *Labor Activist* will be distributed through the DSA "key list" mailings and by Youth Section chapters. If you would like to receive the *Labor Activist*, please contact David Glenn at the national office.

If you have any material to submit—essays, announcements, etc.—please send it to Tom Ellett, 419 East Montgomery Street, Sparta, WI 54656. E-mail: TEllett@aol.com.

## DSA Regional Activist Conferences: Fall 1994

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❖ 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?

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### MIDWEST

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DSA members in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and western Pennsylvania will receive a notice in the mail by October 12.  
Call Margie Burns at 212/727-8610  
for more information.

## Commission Notes

### **DSA Feminist Commission Spreads the Word on UN Conferences**

The DSA Feminist Commission has resumed regular publication of its newsletter, *Not Far Enough*. The new issue centers on international questions of women, wages, the environment, and development policy. Several major UN conferences this year and next will highlight debates on these issues. The Cairo conference on population has just concluded; there will be a conference on poverty and development in Copenhagen in March; and next September Beijing will host the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The DSA Feminist Commission, in conjunction with Socialist International Women, is fighting to ensure that women's rights and feminist approaches to economics are heard at these confer-

ences. Conservative forces throughout the world are attempting to sway the agendas of these meetings; feminists and progressives will need to organize carefully to ensure that their voices are not drowned out.

The new *Not Far Enough* also includes a discussion of NAFTA and GATT, highlighting the ways in which these treaties affect the status of women in developing countries—a topic that is too often overlooked in progressives' discussions about trade.

Subscriptions to *Not Far Enough* are ten dollars per year. Send checks to the DSA Feminist Commission, c/o Christine Riddiough, 5123 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC 20011.

### **DSA Commission on Religion and Socialism Sends Delegation to London**

Three leaders of the DSA Commission on Religion and Socialism attended a Congress of the International League of Religious Socialists (ILRS) in London in July. The Rev. Judy Deutsch, Robert Halbeisen, and Jack Spooner report that the conference was generally optimistic. Most participants argued that the tradition of religious socialism will be increasingly relevant across the next century.

The major theme of the congress was the social and economic costs of the privatization of public services around the world. Participants discussed the rise of international trading blocs and the importance of developing effective social charters to defend workers' rights and the environment. The DSA commission's delegates reported on the

ongoing series of North American meetings on developing a social charter component of NAFTA.

Leaders of the DSA Commission on Religion and Socialism are considering initiating a conference on the idea of a "Jubilee Year" in which the debts of certain developing nations would be forgiven. The conference would explore how progressive churches and citizens' organizations might develop a campaign to target the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

To subscribe to the commission's newsletter, send \$7.50 for one year to *Religious Socialism*, P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0080.

## Study Materials On Economics

The economics branch of New York City DSA has developed a packet of study materials for use by DSA locals, commissions, and Youth Section chapters.

The packet includes an annotated bibliography on "market socialism" prepared by David Belkin. Also included are transcripts of the New York City local's fall 1993 course on the history of socialist economics. Speakers included Joanne Barkan, David Belkin, Frank Roosevelt, and others.

To obtain a copy of this packet, contact David Glenn at the national office.

## Social Charter Update

DSA National Director Alan Charney attended a trinational meeting on post-NAFTA politics in Mexico City in July. Participants included trade unionists, environmentalists, and academics from throughout Mexico, Canada, and the U.S.

DSA will continue to conduct occasional meetings in the U.S. to explore activists' interest in pursuing a post-NAFTA social charter campaign.

## Resources

◆ For California activists, DSA has produced a leaflet on the three referendum campaigns the left is waging this year (see pages 38-39). If you'd like copies, please contact Margie Burns at the national office.

◆ Apologies for the delay in the new issue of *Socialist Forum*, DSA's discussion bulletin, which will be arriving in subscribers' mailboxes (promise!) by October 7. Our offer is still open: If you'd like a free sample copy, write to David Glenn at the national office.

# Health Care Update

## Washington, D.C.: The Perils of Incrementalism

As a Physicians for a National Health Program member flatly announced to an activist meeting in August: "No one ever said that challenging the power of capital head-on would be a barefoot romp through the meadow."

Yes, things went badly in Congress this summer. But this is not a time for hand-wringing—we need to creatively regroup the activist coalitions that DSA has been working so hard to build, put on our hiking boots, and make renewed efforts to challenge medical-industrial capital at the state and federal levels.

DSAers lobbying Capitol Hill this summer learned that several fundamental ideas have failed to penetrate the industry-saturated collective mind of Congress. Congress doesn't understand

that we *all* pay for health care, insured and uninsured alike; or the dangers of creating a corporate medical oligopoly of just a few insurance networks; or just what a disaster our GDP-eating health care financing structure truly is.

The result of all this congressional ignorance: so-called incremental reform, which labor and the left rightly oppose. If anything at all passes this year, it's likely to be band-aid-level reform that would do more harm than good. Especially if financed by cuts in Medicare or Medicaid, these programs wouldn't come close to achieving universal coverage, and would massively *shift* health care costs, not contain them. (Look at the sad example of similar state-level "reforms," including New York's well-intentioned Open En-

rollment/Community Rating Law.)

This scenario, horrible as it is, begs for DSA. Most activists in the state-level single-payer coalitions, if they're not already dues-paying DSAers, increasingly sound like them. Struggling this year with the naked forces of corporate power has been a jolt. Part of our task will be to recruit and retain these activists, many of whom are new to our political orbit.

Future issues of *Democratic Left* will contain broader discussions and debates about where we go from here. One issue that will surely arise is campaign finance reform. Single-payer activists are increasingly mindful of Joe Califano's dictum that without *that* first, no serious health care reform will be possible.

-- Jeff Gold

## California: DSA Mobilizes For Single-Payer Initiative

California DSA locals are taking unprecedented steps to mobilize their members to support Proposition 186, which would establish a single-payer health care system in the state.

Working with a coalition of health care activists, trade unionists, seniors, and other progressive organizations, DSAers are hosting house parties, serving on the speakers' bureau, tabling at street fairs and shopping malls, and helping to secure endorsements from community groups and small businesses.

DSA regional meetings are being held throughout the state to organize activists into specific tasks. (A meeting in conservative Orange County drew 30 DSAers—over a third of the membership in the county.) A delegation of activists from Front Range DSA in Colorado will spend a week supporting the health care

campaign in the Bay Area. DSA National Director Alan Charney and Field Coordinator Ginny Coughlin will also spend time in the state (see page 39).

As exciting and uplifting as all this activism is, we are facing a tremendous uphill battle. The insurance companies have said that they will spend "whatever it takes" to defeat Proposition 186. Television and radio commercials financed by the insurance industry started airing even before Labor Day, the traditional start of the November campaign.

We need your help, nationwide, to pass this historic initiative. If you live in or will be visiting California, please call one of the numbers at right. And if you are able, please send financial contributions to: California DSA 2000, 1102 N. Brand Blvd., #20, Glendale, CA 91202.

-- Lyn Shaw

### DSA Health Care Activist Contacts in California

- ❖ *Butte County/Chico:*  
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- ❖ *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

# California 1994:

## DSAers Organize For Ballot Campaigns

DSA locals throughout California are mobilizing not only to support the single-payer referendum (see opposite page), but also to oppose Proposition 187, which would deny public education and health care to the children of undocumented immigrants, and Proposition 184, which would toughen California's "three strikes" law for felons. California locals are working with a wide variety of labor, anti-racist, and community coalitions on these campaigns. DSA National Director Alan Charney and Field Coordinator Ginny Coughlin will spend two weeks in California in September, and return for the pre-election week, to assist with DSA's mobilization efforts.

### Vote No on 187: *End the Racist Blame Game*

Under Proposition 187, children would be denied immunization, pregnant women would be denied prenatal care, and persons in desperate need of medical attention would not seek care for fear of deportation. This initiative is the latest in a series of social, economic, racial, and legislative attacks against immigrants.

Undocumented workers are taking the blame for the downturn in the California economy. In reality, Proposition

187 is a continuation of the orchestrated right-wing backlash against civil rights. Immigrants are the Willie Hortons of the '90s.

Proposition 187 is part of the right's agenda to create a series of racialized laws to deny basic human rights to people of color, and to chill the voice of progressives. California's conservatives, with a strong insurgence from the religious right, are seeking to roll back social gains.

Proposition 187 would also make cops out of teachers and grand inquisitors out of health care providers. And here's the kicker: California stands to lose some \$10 billion in federal funds for public schools and hospitals if the massive deportations under Proposition 187 were to take place.

Vote No on Proposition 187. Let's build the future, not resurrect witch hunts from the past.

### Vote No on 184:

#### *Get Serious -- Fight for Real Solutions to Crime*

Crime is the number one concern among Californians, as it is with most Americans today. All of us want safe communities where we live and work. We want our children to be happy and unfettered by such worries as which way to walk to school or whether they're wearing the wrong color jacket.

But Proposition 184, the "three strikes and you're out" referendum, plays on these fears and exacerbates race and class prejudices -- while doing nothing to address the prevention and

proper punishment of crime. This cruel and unusual referendum does not offer serious short-term or long-term solutions. California already has a "three strikes" law on the books -- do we really need even tougher restrictions on judges' discretion?

Authoritative sources, including the American Bar Association and the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, agree: Harsher sentences alone do not lead to a reduction in crime. Proposition 184 will only fur-

ther demonize black and brown youth.

It costs \$32,000 a year to jail someone, and \$23,000 to send them to USC. Progressives must stand for serious, proven responses to crime -- including drug rehabilitation on demand, effective gang intervention programs, and massive investments in public education. Most of all, we must demand government action toward full employment, which can restore hope to our most desperate communities.

-- Gary Phillips

# On the Left

by Harry Fleischman

## Alaska

The latest issue of Alaska DSA's newsletter, *The Northern Rose*, discusses the growing campaign for a state-level single-payer health care plan in Alaska. Alaska DSA co-chair Niilo Koponen discusses the strengths and weaknesses of State Senator Jim Duncan's single-payer bill.

## Arkansas

Arkansas DSA recently held its second annual summer retreat. The fifteen activists who attended discussed the role of DSA in their lives and develop political plans for the coming year. The local will play a major role in a community coalition against the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce's "I'm Big on Little Rock!" campaign. The Chamber of Commerce is seeking to develop political support for a lavish convention center and sports arena. Arkansas DSA, along with ACORN, the Sierra Club, and the Arkansas New Party, will campaign for alternative community redevelopment strategies for the city. The campaign will kick off with a public forum and teach-in in October.

## California

DSA locals throughout California are mobilizing around the Yes on Proposition 186, No on Proposition 184, and No on Proposition 187 campaigns. See pages 38 and 39 for more details. The next issue of *Democratic Left* will include a full report on all of this activity, as well as on the Regional

Activist Conferences held in Los Angeles and San Francisco in mid-September.

## Maryland

Baltimore DSA is continuing its process of reorganization and revitalization. In late August, local leaders mailed a survey to determine members' political priorities, skills, and interests. Data from this survey will be used to develop the local's political projects for 1995. The local will launch a newsletter later this year.

Baltimore DSA activists continue to do intensive work with Maryland UHCAN (Universal Health Care Action Network). Several members traveled to Washington in early August for the health care lobbying and activism days organized by Citizen Action.

## Minnesota

Twin Cities DSA will mobilize its membership in support of John Marty, the Democrat-Farmer-Labor candidate for governor. Marty has made social justice the theme of his campaign; he has pledged to fight for a 4 percent tax on Minnesota's wealthy.

## New York

Karen Burstein, the Family Court Judge who received New York City DSA's endorsement for State Attorney General, scored an upset victory in the Democratic Primary on September 13. Burstein, who once worked organizing farm workers on Long Island, has pledged that she would wield the office's powers to campaign against violence, including domestic violence.

Harry Belafonte was the featured speaker at New York City DSA's annual awards dinner this year. State Senator Franz Leichter presented Doris Rosenblum with the Paul DuBrul Award for her lifetime of community activism. And DSA Vice Chair Jo-Ann Mort presented the Debs-Thomas

Award to Jan Pierce, Vice President of the Communications Workers of America, whom she commended for "always being out front, pushing against the margins." Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger gave the closing address.

U.S. Representative George J. Hochbreuckner of Long Island placed a tribute in the *Congressional Record* to long-time activist Hugh Cleland, the co-chair of Suffolk County DSA. Cleland, a historian, was born in Marion, Ohio, the birthplace of Norman Thomas. He and other leaders of the Suffolk County local devote most of their activist energy to single-payer health care.

## Ohio

Central Ohio DSA is laying plans for public activism during the upcoming UN conference on trade and development, which will be held in Columbus during the week of October 17. The meeting will include several heads of state from around the world. A special target of the local's protests will be a meeting convened by conservative U.S. mayors to discuss how to weaken environmental laws by attacking them as "unfair trade barriers."

## Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania DSA will host a day-long meeting on October 1 in Harrisburg to discuss the state of DSA and the local's plans for 1995. DSA Program Coordinator David Glenn will attend. For more information, contact Curt Sanders at 717/328-5124.

## Virginia

DSA members in the Radford/Roanoke area are developing a new Western Virginia organizing committee. For more information, contact Carolyn Byerly at 703/639-0368.



# DSA Locals and Organizing Committees

## Northeast

ALBANY: Mark Schaeffer, 518-463-5611  
P.O. Box 128, Albany NY 12260  
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1443 Gorsuch Avenue, Baltimore MD 21218  
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134 East Oak Street, Kent OH 44240  
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117 Caroline Avenue, Hubbard OH 44425  
MILWAUKEE: Tom Sobottke, 414-367-5893  
162 Hill Court, Hartland WI 53029  
ST. LOUIS: Dave Rathke, 314-773-0605  
3323 Magnolia, St. Louis MO 63118  
TWIN CITIES: Dan Frankot, 612-224-8262  
695 Ottawa Avenue, Saint Paul MN 55107  
WICHITA: Jim Phillips, 316-681-1469  
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## South

ARKANSAS: Jason Murphy, 501-372-2152  
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P.O. Box 1190, Lexington KY 40589  
CHARLOTTESVILLE: Claire Kaplan, 804-295-8884  
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HOUSTON: Elroy Sullivan, 713-667-2726  
3322 Durhill, Houston TX 77025  
RICHMOND: Irene Ries, 804-276-8271  
P.O. Box 5011, Richmond VA 23220

## West

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LOS ANGELES: Leo Whitaker, 310-451-8934  
1102 North Brand Blvd. #20, Glendale CA 91202  
MARIN COUNTY: Mark Wittenberg, 415-388-6396  
215 Throckmorton Avenue #2, Mill Valley CA 94941  
SACRAMENTO VALLEY: Duane Campbell, 916-361-9072  
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SAN DIEGO: Virginia Franco, 619-276-6023  
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SAN FRANCISCO: Michael Pincus, 415-695-0111  
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# DSA Joins Left On Line

**D**SA has become a co-sponsor of Left On Line (or LBBS), a new computer bulletin board system billed as "a kind of continuous town meeting of the progressive community." Its main purpose is to promote democratic and open discussion among diverse progressive and activist constituencies. It is a place to learn telecommunications and to participate in consciousness-raising and agenda-setting for the 1990s.

## Who Is It?

LBBS is sponsored by *Z Magazine*, South End Press, *The Nation*, DSA, the Committees of Correspondence, the Union of Radical Political Economists, *In These Times*, *Dollars and Sense*, the Institute for Policy Studies, the North American Congress on Latin America, PeaceNet, *Radical America*, *Monthly Review*, The National Coalition for Independent Political Action, MERIP, *Left Business Observer*, *Gay Community News*, *Socialist Review*, and Project South -- with additional organizations and periodicals becoming co-sponsors daily. Join the members, readers, staff, and writers associated with these co-sponsors in Left On Line.

## What Can You Do?

Users can: send and receive e-mail to and from other LBBS users and to and from anyone with an Internet address; download files from LBBS's extensive library of articles and essays; answer and read the replies to LBBS's political polls; and teleconference with other users. Most important, users can participate in LBBS's many discussion forums on everything from gender to economics, racism to the contents and programs of LBBS's co-sponsoring institutions, sexuality to movies, foreign policy to technology, and science to religion.

## How Does it Work?

You hook up your computer to your modem to your phone. You install the free software LBBS provides (for DOS, Windows, or Macintosh computers) or, if you prefer, you use your own software. You call any of our local numbers throughout most of the U.S. (or our long-distance number) and connect to LBBS. Then you can use our online menu, or save time and money by using the LBBS automated facilities, which let you do all your reading and writing offline, and which do all your searching for you.

## How Do You Join?

To become a Left On Line member, you pay a one-time fee of \$20. You have to let us know what name (User ID) you want to go by on the system, what password you want to use (4 to 9 letters), and what type of software we should send you. We send you your membership package, and then you call LBBS. Your first two hours online are free. There is no monthly payment. You pay only for use, at about \$4 an hour. But, because our automated facilities let you do your work offline, the average call time on LBBS, even for heavy users, is only ten minutes.

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**SIGN ME UP FOR LEFT ON LINE! Enclosed is my one-time \$20 fee.**

Name:

User ID (if different):

Address:

Password (4 to 9 letters):

City/State/Zip:

Software (DOS, Mac, or Windows):

Return to DSA, 180 Varick Street, twelfth floor, New York, NY 10014.

# DSA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

This statistical picture of the DSA membership is based on approximately 700 questionnaires returned to the DSA national office from May 20, 1994 through July 15, 1994. Overall, 7.5% of the membership responded. Since this is a self-selecting group, there could be substantial bias in the results.

The survey clearly shows that the members broadly support DSA's objectives and projects, even though less than 20% have had any direct contact with a local, chapter, Commission or DSA sponsored event. For the great majority of members, the activities of the national office are their only link with DSA.

It's no wonder, then, that 60% of the members read *Democratic Left* on a regular basis and 25% feel that the national office doesn't communicate with them enough. This may also explain why 61% of the members are comfortable with the current level of fundraising, and only 9% feel DSA does too much fundraising.

By a two-to-one margin, the members are pessimistic, as opposed to optimistic, about the prospects of building a socialist movement. Still, by a ten-to-one margin, the members feel that DSA is moving in the right, as opposed to the wrong, direction.

Overall, the members want DSA to become much more involved in electoral activities. But there is a genuine divergence of opinion on where this activity should be concentrated, with 35% in favor of working within the Democratic party and 31% in favor of working within independent parties.

There is some criticism of DSA's efforts to become a more multiracial organization, with 24% of the members claiming that DSA has not done enough in this area. This is less true regarding feminism and gay and lesbian concerns, where less than 10% of the members voiced any criticism. Also, 25% of the members feel we should be paying more attention to the unions.

Finally, the members want DSA to become more of an activist organization and put socialist ideas more into the public discourse. Of course, this will take more activism on the part of the membership...and more resources.

-- Alan Charney

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| 1] In general, about the prospects for building a socialist movement in the U.S., are you... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>optimistic 24%</li> <li>pessimistic 45%</li> <li>not sure 25%</li> <li>no answer 6%</li> </ul>  | 10] Do you have any contact with a DSA commission?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes 9%</li> <li>no 86%</li> <li>no answer 5%</li> </ul>  |
| 2] In general, do you feel that DSA is moving in the...                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>right direction 58%</li> <li>wrong direction 5%</li> <li>not sure 32%</li> <li>no answer 6%</li> </ul>  | 11] In general, regarding electoral activity do you favor DSA becoming...                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more involved 67%</li> <li>less involved 4%</li> <li>question not important 15%</li> <li>to political outlook 14%</li> <li>no answer 14%</li> </ul>  |
| 3] Do you think that the national organization communicates with you...                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too little 25%</li> <li>too much 1%</li> <li>just the right amount 61%</li> <li>no answer 12%</li> </ul>  | 12] In general, do you favor working more...   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within the Democratic Party 35%</li> <li>with independent parties 31%</li> <li>question not important 9%</li> <li>to political outlook 16%</li> <li>not sure 9%</li> <li>no answer 9%</li> </ul> |
| 4] Do you read <i>Democratic Left</i> ...  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on a regular basis 60%</li> <li>occasionally 32%</li> <li>hardly at all 4%</li> <li>no answer 5%</li> </ul>                                       | 13] With respect to trade unions, do you think that DSA pays...  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too much attention 5%</li> <li>not enough attention 25%</li> <li>just the right amount 32%</li> <li>not sure 31%</li> <li>no answer 7%</li> </ul>  |
| 5] Do you think that the national organization fundraises from the membership...             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too little 9%</li> <li>too much 9%</li> <li>just the right amount 61%</li> <li>no answer 21%</li> </ul>   | 14] Regarding turning itself into a multiracial organization, do you think that DSA is...                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not doing enough 24%</li> <li>doing all it can 31%</li> <li>not sure 38%</li> <li>no answer 7%</li> </ul>  |
| 6] Do you feel that the regular yearly dues of \$40 are...                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>too little 8%</li> <li>too much 23%</li> <li>just the right amount 57%</li> <li>no answer 12%</li> </ul>  | 15] Regarding truly incorporating feminist concerns into its activities, do you feel that DSA has...     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>done an excellent job 34%</li> <li>mostly paid lip service 7%</li> <li>not sure 49%</li> <li>no answer 9%</li> </ul>   |
| 7] Have you attended any DSA events in the past twelve months?                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes 20%</li> <li>no 77%</li> <li>no answer 3%</li> </ul>  | 16] And what about lesbian and gay concerns?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>done an excellent job 28%</li> <li>mostly paid lip service 8%</li> <li>not sure 54%</li> <li>no answer 11%</li> </ul>  |
| 8] Are you active in a DSA local or campus chapter?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes 10%</li> <li>no 86%</li> <li>no answer 4%</li> </ul>  | 17] Would you favor a dues increase of up to 25% so that DSA could become a more effective organization? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>yes 30%</li> <li>no 30%</li> <li>not sure 25%</li> <li>no answer 14%</li> </ul>  |
| 9] If "no," what is the main reason you are not active?                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no local in area 26%</li> <li>active in other organizations 14%</li> <li>not enough time 30%</li> <li>other 16%</li> <li>no answer 14%</li> </ul> |  |   |

## Books, Videos, Etc. Available From DSA!

### Essential Reading for the Clinton Era

- ❑ **Organizing for Social Change:  
A Manual for Activists in the 1990s**  
by Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max  
*An incomparable handbook.*  
Seven Locks Press, 1991, 271 pages, softcover, \$20.00.
  
- ❑ **New! The Activist's Almanac:  
The Concerned Citizen's Guide  
to the Leading Advocacy Organizations in America**  
by David Walls  
*A stunningly thorough and useful directory.*  
Simon and Schuster, 1993, 432 pages, softcover, \$18.00.
  
- ❑ **New! The Quickening of America:  
Rebuilding Our Nation, Remaking Our Lives**  
by Paul Martin Du Bois and Frances Moore Lappé  
*Strategies for building community-based democratic move-  
ments and revitalizing our public life.*  
Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994, 338 pages, softcover, \$15.00.
  
- ❑ **Letters from Lexington: Reflections on Propaganda**  
by Noam Chomsky  
*A collection of essays analyzing The New York Times.*  
Common Courage Press, 1993, 170 pages, softcover, \$10.95.
  
- ❑ **New! Back Off! How to Confront and Stop  
Sexual Harassment and Harassers**  
by Martha J. Langelan  
*Creative, non-violent techniques women can use to protect  
their social environments from sexist aggression.*  
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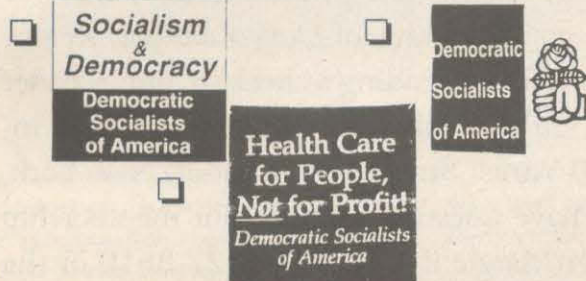
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University of Minnesota Press, 1994, softcover, \$17.95.
- Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class**  
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- Socialism and America** by Irving Howe  
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- After the Flood: World Politics and Democracy in the Wake of Communism**  
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- The Mean Season: The Attack on the Welfare State**  
by Fred Block, Richard A. Cloward,  
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The DSA Health Care Task Force  
plans to have an organized  
presence there.

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### In the next

### *Democratic Left*:

#### Crime

Articles by Elliott Currie, Lynn Chancer,  
Gary Phillips, Jim Chapin, and others.

**Also:** Clinton at mid-term; GATT; the  
crisis of African American leadership; and  
more. . .

## Letters to Democratic Left



### Welfare Reform

Dear Editors,

I have just finished reading "Wel-  
fare Reform and the Quandaries of the  
Left" by Frances Fox Piven (July/Au-  
gust). Piven says that we have words  
and arguments and political protest—  
but don't we ever have anything *positive*  
to offer?

We are a reform movement within  
society. Reform means change. Change  
can be positive. It is not only protest.

I'd like to see some positive propos-  
als in the publication.

*Dr. Herbert Oshrain  
Lawrence, New York*

### Kudos

Dear Editors,

Glancing through the current  
*Democratic Left*, stopping to read  
Frances Fox Piven's good piece, and to  
enjoy Stanley Bigman's letter on film  
history, I realized that you have put  
together a stronger paper than I remem-  
ber from last time around.

The layout seemed better to me,  
and the balance of short items with  
longer thoughtful pieces made this  
more of a magazine and less of a house  
organ. Always a hard job—and I don't

mean to be critical of those who did this  
work before you. And maybe I'm wrong  
and the changes are all in my mind!

*David McReynolds  
War Resisters League  
New York, New York*

Dear Editors,

The July/August number of *Democ-  
ratic Left* was interesting, useful, and  
encouraging. The articles were infor-  
mative and stimulating, while the orga-  
nizational information filled a need  
which I have felt for all of my several  
years of membership. Most impor-  
tantly, Alan Charney's column and sev-  
eral other pieces make clear that the  
national office has begun engaging in a  
real dialogue with the membership and  
appears to be entering into a virtuous  
cycle linking organizing, organization-  
building and mobilization on impor-  
tant issues. This is very encouraging  
and I would just like to express my  
appreciation of what you are doing.

*Chris Lowe  
Portland, Oregon*

*Letters should be addressed to David Glenn  
at DSA, 180 Varick Street, New York, NY  
10014. Please include a telephone number.  
Letters may be edited for space or clarity.*

## Time to renew?

If your mailing label contains the expiration code "93/06" or "93/12," then this is your last issue of *Democratic Left*. Renew your commitment to DSA by sending a check or money order for \$60 (sustainer), \$40 (regular), or \$20 (student/low income) to: DSA, 180 Varick Street, twelfth floor, New York, NY 10014. If you have questions about your membership status, please contact Margie Burns at 212/727-8610 or the above address.

# PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

BY DSA NATIONAL DIRECTOR ALAN CHARNEY

About a month ago I was talking with a long-time DSA member, who commented: "I've come to the conclusion that progressives may be worse off with Clinton as president."

Our expectations have always been that political space opens up for us when Democrats control the White House. But under the Clinton presidency, it appears that our political space has actually *shrunk*. NAFTA, health care, welfare reform, striker replacement...would we really have been any worse off under Bush? Has our Democratic presidency boiled down to "Reaganism with a human face"?

I know this is not completely true. We have friends in high places. The Supreme Court is safe from a further move to the right. The wealthy do pay marginally more in taxes, and so on.

And what is President Clinton's viewpoint? *The Agenda*, Bob Woodward's account of the Clinton White House, contains a fascinating -- and illuminating -- anecdote. In the spring of 1993, as Senate Republicans gained the upper hand in the fight over the economic stimulus package, Clinton voiced his frustration. As Woodward tells it: "Where are all the Democrats?" Clinton bellowed. 'I hope you're all aware we're all Eisenhower Republicans,' he said, his voice dripping with sarcasm. 'We're Eisenhower Republicans here, and we are fighting the Reagan Republicans. We stand for lower deficits and free trade and the bond market. Isn't that great?'"

Tragically, Clinton's bitter comments describe the current political terrain pretty well. Some people in DSA argue that this grim situation is caused mainly by our special-interest-driven campaign finance system. Others concentrate on the failure of the broad liberal left to mobilize effectively around issues. And still others focus on Bill Clinton's personal failures of leadership. All of these arguments have merit, of course -- but whatever its causes, we all agree on the basic situation: the center of gravity in U.S. politics continues to drift rightward. A genuine progressive advance in this period seems highly improbable.


So what are DSA's tasks in these

circumstances? When I began as National Director, I was not fully aware of the cumulative weight of 24 years of Republican, conservative hegemony on the political morale of our membership...the degree to which it has sapped our vitality and our will to action. But what is most disturbing is the leadership vacuum that has followed from this dampening of activism and involvement.

It's critical that we make DSA a more activist organization, but what this really means is "re-inventing" DSA's leadership first. We need to nurture a new type of leadership that can mature in the absence of broad-based activism and vibrant mass movements.

Ironic as this may initially seem, we need to encourage some cadre-building in our organization. Wait a minute! How can the first response to our marginalization be -- an inward focus? Shouldn't we try even harder to go against the grain and propel some progressive issues into the public arena? To which I can only respond: of course we should. We need to build DSA's issue campaigns, and we need to nurture vibrant, multiracial DSA locals and Youth Section chapters. *But none of this will mean very much if we don't also develop serious individual leaders who will commit to building DSA over the next thirty to forty years.*

In DSA, we need to shape a social psychology for the long haul. We know that democratic socialist ideas and movements will be crucial across the next century. Global capitalism continues to generate global pauperism, as 20 percent of the world's people prosper and 80 percent sink downward. We need to spend time working with those self-selecting DSA members who wish to become socialist leaders for the future. These members will include both long-time stalwarts and recent adherents. But this must all be done deliberately and systematically.

I guess I never really understood what the "long haul" meant until the last few months. Even though I have been a progressive activist and a socialist for 25 years, it's only now that I have come to understand why the two greatest socialist virtues are patience and irony. 

## CLASSIFIEDS

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# Janie Higgins Reports

## as told to Steve Max

**F**or a quick mental pickup I used to watch the hamster go 'round. Humans are so much better off, I thought. Not any more. To the great amusement of rodents everywhere,

humans are running on a wheel of immense dimension, and we don't even know it. It's called productivity, and it's the ultimate treadmill.

Said the *New York Times* (June 16, 1994), "Companies are becoming more efficient and profitable, but don't celebrate. Rarely has so much spending resulted in so little expansion by business -- and so little job growth." Smell a rat? The problem, explained the *Times*, is that although spending on new plant and equipment is as high now as during any period since the end of World War II, more of that investment than ever goes to replacing old equipment and less than ever is going into new production. In other words, American manufacturers are investing in greater productivity -- more goods at less cost. Of course, new investment isn't the only way to raise productivity: wage give-backs, benefit cuts, speedups, and health, safety, and environmental deregulation also do the trick.

**B**ut what's the gripe? Conventional wisdom holds that if you build a better mousetrap at the right price, the world will beat a path to your door. Productivity wins the markets, we are told, and markets mean jobs. It ain't necessarily so! With whom does the most productive factory compete? First, with the less productive plants of the same company -- second, with other American companies in the same industry. The losers are forced to cut jobs; the winners don't necessarily add any.

But what of the "real enemy," the damnable and sneaky foreign foe for whom English isn't good enough -- don't we have to compete with them? Aren't they really the cause of our lost jobs, and isn't raising productivity the way to win the trade war? All the sacrifice will pay off, we are told, when we lick the foreign competition and get the jobs.

**E**nter the hamster, laughing. While we work like beavers raising productivity in order to export American goods, American corporations see to it that we will never beat the foreign competition because, in good measure, American corporations are the foreign competition. Says the *New York Times* (July 25, 1994), "American companies are once again rapidly expanding their operations abroad -- demonstrating that no matter what the incentives for keeping business in the United States, the urge to spread factories, offices, stores, and jobs overseas is irresistible." The *Times* adds that overseas investments are rising faster than exports, and that American companies employ 5.4 million foreign workers, 80 percent of them in manufacturing.

Robert E. Lipsey, an expert on overseas investment at the prestigious National Bureau of Economic Research, told the *Times*, "If you are going to be really important in the world market, you are going to grow by producing in many countries, and not by exporting, which has its limits." For example, the Gillette Company, maker of the popular Sensor XL razor, has put 62 factories in 28 countries, producing products identical to those from their Boston plant. Says Gillette V.P. Thomas Skelly, "We are also concerned about having only one place where a product is made. There could be an explosion or labor problems." The result: Gillette employs 2,300 production workers here, and 7,700 workers abroad. Will someone please shut up that damn hamster!

**N**o, we are not against productivity or new investment, or our brother and sister workers in other countries, but we do ask for a bit of honesty. If productivity is about increasing jobs in which we will all share, that's one thing. If it is really about losing jobs to increase profits in which we don't share, that's something else. Let's call a trap a trap. Rodents don't have a lot of options because they can't organize. People, it is said, are different.

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