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# DEMOCRATIC Left



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***The Right Has a Lock***

***on every policy debate. . .***

***but only as long as a timid***

***left allows it.***

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Cover photo: Loren Santow/Impact Visuals

## EDITORIAL

### BILL CLINTON'S BUDGET FIASCO: WE ARE ALL REPUBLICANS NOW

BY JOE SCHWARTZ

Bill Clinton's June 13 endorsement of a balanced budget as the Holy Grail of American public life accelerated the consolidation of a one-party state in Washington. The remaining liberals in Congress—about one third of the Democratic delegation, plus Bernie Sanders—are now the only federal elected officials willing to say the obvious: we can't simultaneously balance the federal budget, maintain outlandish defense spending, forbid progressive tax reform—and fund human needs.

Clinton's "I have a balanced budget plan, too" speech affirmed mainstream Democratic capitulation to the economic theories of David Stockman and the abandonment of even fig-leaf fealty to liberal Keynesianism. It was Stockman who ripped the veil off of "voodoo economics" by admitting in 1982 that the massive Reagan-era budget deficits, incurred by slashing taxes on the rich and priming the pump of military spending, would position Republicans to demand a balanced budget by the only remaining means—drastic cuts in social spending. This scheme presumed that the Democrats would lose grasp of their principles—that they would be unwilling to offer an alternative plan of

serious, prudent defense cuts or to articulate the distinction between productive public investment and wasteful public consumption (that is, new toys for the military bureaucracy and corporate welfare). Thirteen years later, with Clinton in charge, the Democrats have followed Stockman's script to the letter.

During the campaign and in the first weeks of his administration, Clinton sometimes spoke publicly about the difference between unproductive and productive deficits. But when pedagogy had to be transformed into practice, at the first murmurs of no-confidence from Wall Street, Clinton abandoned his modest infrastructure, education, and job training investment proposals in favor of fiscal conservatism. His first-year budget—passed by one vote in the House—aimed to reduce the federal budget by 500 million dollars more than the cuts projected in the final Bush budget proposal.

Working and middle class incomes have failed to grow during the past four years of modest economic "recovery." Clinton knows this, and in the 1994 congressional elections he was smart enough not to tout the "success" of his deficit-reduction plan. Instead, the Democrats ran on an imitation-Republican platform of welfare reform and anti-crime legislation. Of course, the Republicans swept the elections, as progressive constituencies largely stayed home and swing-voters opted for the tougher enemies of street criminals and the poor—the Republicans. But Clinton hasn't learned that you can't beat them by joining them; since November he's beaten a path even

further to the right by further abandoning his commitment to public investment and fully embracing balanced-budget conservatism.

Clinton's "more humane" ten-year balanced budget plan "only" cuts \$153 billion dollars from projected Medicaid and Medicare spending versus \$300 billion in the Republican budget plan. Clinton's plan also abandons any pretense of funding child care and job training as part of "welfare reform." Both Republican and Democratic proposals hope to trim health care inflation by curtailing both the quality of and the access to coverage. Rather than reducing health care cost increases by the one means that would improve both qual-

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## DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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# The Contract We Never Signed

## The Real Meaning of the Gingrich Agenda

BY ADAM SHATZ

**T**he Republican Party's Contract With America has "populist" written all over it. It reaches out to people who feel left out of the American dream and resent the government for being unresponsive, bureaucratic, and corrupt. Its solemn promise: "to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives."

But the Contract's populism is all rhetoric. Newt Gingrich and the other authors of the Contract say that "accountability, responsibility, and opportunity" are their core principles. But the Contract's proposals would actually *reduce* the level of accountability, responsibility, and freedom in our public and private lives. Like the broader conservative agenda, the Contract is a recipe for authoritarianism, greed, and social division.

The Contract's promises are simply deceitful. The Contract pretends that accountability can be fostered by dramatically broadening the powers of the police and the Department of Defense, and by letting corporations do pretty much as they please. It pretends that forcing people on public assistance into Draconian work programs somehow strikes a blow for "responsibility." It pretends that the society of opportunity and prosperity can be restored by giving *carte blanche* to businesses that take less and less

responsibility for American workers' safety, security, and prosperity.

What, then, is the Contract actually proposing? The standard line is that Contract's attack on the federal government is a call for "devolution"—a transfer of federal power to the states in such areas as social spending and crime prevention. But this point masks a more important one, which is that the aim behind the Contract's idea of downsizing government and making it more local is not to pass power over to "the people." The aim is to demolish branches of the government that serve (however imperfectly) the interests of poor and working people while expanding and emboldening the police and military branches.

### Job Destruction, Not Job Creation

The Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act is pure sleight-of-hand: a massive corporate welfare hand-out masquerading as a program for economic recovery. The authors of the Contract propose absolutely no measures that would lead to either job creation or wage enhancement. They desperately want us to talk about anything *except* measures that would actually create full-time jobs at decent wages—such as using fiscal and monetary policy to promote full employment, protecting the right to organize and bar-



Carolina Kroon/Impact Visuals

This Spring, students marched against cuts in the City University of New York's budget.

gain collectively, investing in education, and raising the minimum wage.

The reasons aren't hard to find. Gingrich and his followers are diametrically opposed to the idea of full employment, and want this principle written out of the Federal Reserve Bank's charter. They are also opposed to raising the minimum wage—a hindrance to capitalist freedom, evidently. The Job Creation and Wage Enhancement Act consists, therefore, of measures that enable corporations to escape their

obligations to society, whether in the form of taxes or safety precautions. These include cutting in half the capital gains tax rate; increasing the value of investment depreciation to equal the full value of the original investment to permit greater tax write-offs; and subjecting safety regulations to a cost-benefit analysis, which would allow profitability to override safety concerns in workplace evaluations.

The proposed "Citizens Bill of Rights" is the most egregious example of how the Contract panders to corporate interests against the interests of the general public. This "Citizens Bill of Rights" is not really about "citizens," but about corporations. It would make it easier for business interests to avoid responsibility when they pollute the environment or mistreat their workers.

## ARE STATES RIGHT?

**O**ur federal government, if the Contract goes forward, will not be able to perform its most basic functions. Those responsibilities will be left to the states. Gingrich and his buddies tell us the states are closer to the people, but that's exactly wrong. The states are closer to *business*, and the reason that the states are closer to business is that every state government worries about capital mobility. The vast majority of the capital mobility in the United States has not been overseas, but from Michigan to Tennessee, from Massachusetts to South Carolina. This kind of intranational capital mobility—the idea that business will move next door or down south—is terrifying to state politicians. And that's the government that will be left to regulate the American economy.

—DSA Vice Chair Frances Fox Piven,  
City University of New York

### More Rights

#### for Business, Fewer Rights for Us

Sitting next to this new "bill of rights" for business is a declaration of war against what most of us take to be our rights as citizens. The Taking Back Our Streets Act is tailor-made for law enforcement officials who complain that "their hands are tied" by liberals. Everyone, it's fair to say, hopes to inhabit and take pride in a safer environment. But this act doesn't proceed by proposing social reforms, gun control, and the like. Instead, it lays aside \$10.5 billion for state prison construction grants, and seeks a repeal of those sections of the 1994 crime control act that furnish specific funds for social prevention programs.

As the Contract explains it in Bell Curvian logic, because government is limited in its ability to "instill a sense of right and wrong in those *with a propensity to commit a crime* [our emphasis] . . . local law officers [should] decide how they want to spend the funds." As if that weren't enough, the act also permits police to seize incriminating evidence in violation of the "exclusionary rule," provided they do so in "good faith." Finally, the act places a restrictive one year time limit on the filing of federal habeas corpus appeals. So much for rehabilitation; so much for constitutional rights: apparently the state needn't be accountable to all people.

### The Politics of Punishment

The same goes for the "undeserving poor." In Contract mythology, welfare makes you a deviant in a society reserved for rugged individualists. "Get your act together (and don't expect government to help)" is the subliminal message of the Personal Responsibility Act. Almost all Americans consider the overhaul of welfare an idea whose time has come. The Contract appeals to this feeling, advocating a tough-love policy ending the dependence of welfare recipients on the state after a period of five years. But the Personal Responsibility Act doesn't have a plan for providing employment for those who find

themselves ineligible for further assistance and jobless. Unlike radical critics of the welfare state, who espouse empowering welfare recipients through socially useful and compensated work, the Contract simply leaves the poor at the mercy of the Invisible Hand. And as anyone who's looked for a job recently can tell you, that hand isn't too full these days. Besides this dubious liberation from welfare "dependency," the act proposes to enhance state government powers to punish the poor. It includes measures to:

- ◆ require welfare recipients to work 35 hours a week, for wages ranging from a low of 79 cents per hour to \$2.42. The Contract's idea of "workfare" terrifyingly recalls the infamous English Poor House, whose main function was to shame and humiliate people, and to discourage them from ever seeking public assistance again.
- ◆ reduce low-income programs between 1996-1999 by \$57 billion, although they comprise a small fraction of the federal budget.
- ◆ deny AFDC benefits to 29 percent of the children who now receive them because their paternity has yet to be established, even if the mother is cooperative with the search, and deny benefits altogether and permanently to children whose mothers were under 18 when they gave birth.
- ◆ consolidate ten nutrition programs into one

## Meanwhile, in the Bedroom: The "Contract With the American Family"

On May 16, on Pat Robertson's fundamentalist talk show, *The 700 Club*, Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed launched his organization's campaign for a "Contract with the American Family." This legislative program has won the endorsement of such powerful figures as House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Republican Presidential candidate Phil Gramm of Texas.

The stated purpose of the Contract with the American Family is to "strengthen the family and restore common-sense values." It would be foolish to dismiss the concerns of many Americans about the fraying of their families and the collapse of shared values. However, there's nothing in the Contract that could strengthen the

family, and its values are very far from being "common-sense" in a secular and democratic culture.

The authors of the Contract with the American Family believe that the way to strengthen families is to restrict, rather than expand, their opportunities. What this means in terms of policies is a combination of privatization and repression.

Instead of recommending improvements in the public schools that serve the majority of the nation's children, the Contract calls for abolishing the Department of Education and for vouchers that would divert taxpayer funds from public education into private schools. Instead of proposing expanded safe sex education and counseling, the Contract seeks to replace sex education with "absti-

nence-only" programs, and to further restrict reproductive choice. Instead of advocating a more enthusiastic role for government in spreading knowledge of culture and the arts, the Contract supports liquidating the National Endowment for the Arts and the Public Broadcasting Corporation.

A merciless assault on government, right? But wait: the Contract also envisions a larger role for the same government in attacking "indecent" forms of expression. The authors aren't bothered by the inconsistency of radically opposing state intrusion in education and culture while advocating it to police the circulation and consumption of ideas. Their vision is a theological one, and they'll use whatever measures necessary to achieve it.

discretionary block so that "states will distribute food assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals more freely." This "flexibility" eliminates the rights-status of specific programs, and with it the automatic expansion of such programs in periods of economic crisis when more people qualify for benefits.

◆ render most legal immigrants ineligible for almost sixty federal social programs.

Instead of creating the conditions of opportunity in which "personal responsibility" is a viable option for people in poverty, the Personal Responsibility Act merely tries to relieve state governments of any responsibility for the fate of the less fortunate. It "frees" state governments to be less accountable, and more punitive, towards the poor.

### Protecting the National Security State

According to the Contract, social programs are so costly they undermine our national security. In the National Security Restoration Act, we read that readiness has suffered "because defense spending has been cut too far and too quickly in order to pay for expensive social

programs." An astonishing claim, considering that AFDC spending accounts for only 1 percent of the federal budget, as compared to a low estimate of 17 percent for the Department of Defense. But with the end of Cold War conflict and the loss of a coherent ideological rationale for military expansion, this Pentagon-friendly document will go to any length to keep spending at bloated levels. And when the Contract's authors assert that the scale has tipped in favor of social spending, they're laying out their bizarre idea of what a "balanced government" is. Apparently, it's spending a minute fraction of the budget to alleviate hardship that threatens "balance," not the preponderance of warfare spending. Hence the proposal for "firewalls" to prevent the diversion of DOD funds to non-military programs. These firewalls would make the long-awaited "peace dividend" a budgetary impossibility.

*Adam Shatz recently completed an internship at DSA's national office. He is a freelance writer in New York City; his work has appeared in New Politics, The Village Voice, and Tikkun.*

# Dissent

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# A Contract On the Disabled

## How Republican Plans Threaten People With Disabilities

BY MARTA RUSSELL

**T**he new congressional lingo—welfare “transformation” and “personal responsibility”—is Orwellian Newspeak for people with disabilities, masking the reality of what the Contract With America actually portends for us. House Speaker Newt Gingrich claims that the Republican “devolution” plan will empower state governments to become more efficient. But isn’t this an expedient ideology, when the details are missing as to how states will accomplish this “efficiency” and succeed where the federal government has failed? For disabled people, the devil will be in the details. How will the states handle their new mandate?

If enacted, the Republican plan, including the Welfare Transformation Act and the Personal Responsibility Act, would drastically decrease the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for children, end children’s entitlement to SSI, lump twenty to thirty welfare programs together, and cap the total federal expenditure on them so that programs will no longer increase to meet public need. Since the states will be given free rein to spend as they please with no requirement to continue existing programs, disability along with other programs face reduction or extinction.

The House has targeted Medicaid for drastic spending cuts. If the program is block-granted, the states will get 75 percent of the Medicaid money they currently receive, and they would be allowed to disburse these reduced funds with few, if any, strings attached. Because

people with disabilities and those over 65 years old account for 27 percent of Medicaid recipients but use 67 percent of the funds, disabled persons will be disproportionately affected by these cuts.

For people who need the support of these programs, “devolution” becomes a code word for de-funding. If the Republican block-grant plan succeeds, 27 percent of the roughly 900,000 children in the SSI program will be denied benefits. By shaving off 20 percent of the money allocated to these federal programs and distributing only 80 percent to the states, Republicans project a total savings of \$69.4 billion. The House budget cuts \$189 billion out of Medicaid funds.

Since block-granting allows the states to decide how to divvy up the capped funds among many competing programs, disabled persons living on SSI (\$400-600 per month) could lose their access to “Section 8” housing. (Recent attacks on HUD make this a more acute possibility.) People on SSI are not allowed food stamps. Many SSI recipients could be forced into the streets because they will not be able both to pay rent and buy food. Programs that provide for home care attendants in some states may be reduced or entirely eliminated, sending many more people into costly institutions. Disabled children will no longer be entitled to benefits. Since there will be no uniformity in delivery of services, and the entitlement to Medicaid will end, states could opt to discontinue

Frank Cocco/Impact Visuals



tendants enable disabled people to live independently in their communities rather than being institutionalized. PAS programs have a double purpose: they provide disabled people with an autonomy and dignity impossible to maintain in a nursing home, and they provide the government with a cost-efficient means of support, since institutionalization is a \$30,000-to-\$50,000-a-year proposition, and in-home care is in many cases about one-third of that.

A few states have implemented PAS programs but the vast majority of states have not. The proposed shifting of federal responsibilities to the states could throw a ringer into progressive disability program gains like PAS. For example, a state

certain Medicaid services, and more disabled people would be denied treatment.

It can be argued that if the states could be trusted to do what is right, then social justice issues never would have had to go to the federal level in the first place. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was implemented by the federal government because the states were not interested in eliminating discrimination against African Americans. The Family Assistance Act of 1972, which established SSI, was enacted because many poor elderly, blind, and disabled people were going hungry and homeless. One reason the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 became law was because states had not complied with the access laws already estab-

like Mississippi lags far behind in providing adequate disability programs. A person who requires an attendant in Mississippi has to pay entirely out of his or her own pocket or be placed in a nursing home. Without a federal mandate to provide services, Mississippi, like most states, has shown it will not make progress in the right direction.

Activists know that it takes much more money and energy to sustain a campaign for services in 50 states, state by state, than it does to focus on a national level. With devolution it is much more likely that disabled people will get shortchanged since energy is in short supply in the disability community. Disabled people have been only mildly effective at the state level, and more successful on the national level. In a system dominated by money, disadvantaged people are by definition politically weak: 60 percent of people with significant disabilities have yearly incomes of less than \$15,000, 75 percent less than \$22,000.

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**M**any people with disabilities are adamant that if cuts force them out of their homes, they will not go back into institutions. They would rather risk living or dying on the streets.

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lished 20 years earlier by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Disability activist organizations like Americans Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT) have not yet been able to complete the job on the national level. There remains a wide gap in areas not mandated by federal law—for example, personal assistant services (PAS). At-

**I**t is doublethink to believe that the Republican plan to shift disability programs to the states is a genuine attempt at better government. This rhetoric is a smokescreen meant to conceal the real agenda—the undoing of government—a way to make billions of drastic program slashes in welfare and health care programs with little concern for their real impact on people.

There is outright danger in turning disability programs over to the states. Many federal



protections now exist in Medicaid law. Because state governments have a bad track record of following these mandates, consumer protection agencies have been compelled to sue them to force them to fulfill their obligations. These lawsuits are over such basic issues as the right to a fair hearing, the right to access to services, the right to due process (which includes notice if a service is to be curtailed), uniformity of standard of services, and non-discrimination in the provision of services. If Medicaid is block-granted, none of these protections will continue to exist.

With no national standard, the effects from block-granting could vary widely from state to state. States that provide exemplary services may find themselves penalized for doing the right thing. For instance, if one state were to provide decent health care coverage with all the options available, and most others provide nominal care, people could choose to move to the state that would provide the best care for them. But if this state became overrun with people needing assistance, its taxpaying citizens most likely would vote to lower their state standards to resist the migration. This dynamic will lead all states toward a lowest common denominator.

We already have harbingers of how the states will translate the call for "reform." A trend has developed—what has been called "the race to the bottom" on social service spending. Twenty-six states have initiated welfare reform plans, often making Draconian cuts in social service programs. And the movement is spreading: California Governor Pete Wilson, now a presidential contender, has targeted welfare programs for slashing as a means to balance his budget. He proposes to eliminate Medicaid "optional" services, which include medical supplies, physical therapy, occupational therapy, foot care, and dental services to further reduce costs. Wilson had made cuts to SSI two years in a row and this year proposes to reduce benefits another 11.5 percent to 13 percent. This would mean a reduction of \$71 per month for individuals and \$149 for couples, in effect reducing grants well below the poverty level.

Federal "maintenance of effort" law makes it illegal for states to go below 1983 SSI supplement levels. But the Republicans are relentless in their desire to cut: at the request of Governor Wilson, Representative Wally Herger (R-CA) included a provision in the Personal Responsi-

bility Act that would remove that protection. This act has passed the House. If it goes through the Senate and Clinton signs it, then California will be able to go ahead with Wilson's proposed reductions.

Many disabled Californians are adamant that if this cut forces them out of their homes, they will not go back to the institutions. They would rather risk living or dying on the streets. It costs the federal government much more to put someone in an institution than to meagerly support them in their own home.

The Gingrich solution for children on AFDC is to send them to orphanages. The nursing home is the disabled's equivalent to the orphanage. If Gingrich is willing to go backwards in time to put kids into orphanages, he will be willing to "devolve" disabled people back into institutions, undoing much of what our thirty-year-old independent living movement has accomplished. Republican "transformation" then really means less freedom.

Maybe the Republicans think charity will pick up the pieces. But this is wishful thinking. Charities have admitted that they are overloaded. For disabled people, the thought of having to rely on charities is anathema. We have been working for thirty years to move away from the charity model to a civil rights model, so that disabled persons may enjoy the same *rights* other citizens enjoy. It is ironic that after passage of the ADA, those rights will be out of reach for disabled Americans who cannot withstand the fallout from cuts in welfare programs.

To this Gingrich might say: get a job, go to work. But the 60 percent of disabled people who would like to become employed have had little success with being offered jobs. We have a general unemployment rate of 70 percent. For significantly disabled persons it is 85 percent—and both of these figures are *higher* than before passage of the ADA. Congress's failure to enact disability-sensitive health care reform and to remove work disincentives from social security policies has further complicated employment for us. "Personal responsibility" then takes on a new dimension when applied to disabled people—lifting oneself up by nonexistent bootstraps is indeed Orwellian.

The Republicans surely have birthed a contract on the disabled.

*Marta Russell, a DSA member, is a freelance writer and disabilities activist in Los Angeles.*

# DSAAction

## Economic Insecurity Hearings

Later this year, DSA locals across the country will co-sponsor major public hearings about economic insecurity and the decline in wages that most Americans are experiencing. These hearings, which will involve several other major progressive organizations, are intended to build support for full-employment and other legislation proposed by DSA Vice Chair Ron Dellums (D-CA) and other members of the House Progressive Caucus.

This public hearings project embodies, we hope, the left's most crucial task: to bypass the right's agenda and to take a forward-looking set of radical proposals directly to the broad public.

For more information about this public hearings project, contact your DSA local leader (see page 16) or DSA's Program Coordinator, Michele Rossi, at 212/727-8610.

## Corrections

» Mimi Abramovitz's article "Welfare and Women's Lives" (May/June) contained a proofreading error. The sixth sentence of the third full paragraph on page 6 should have read, "It also suggests that women on welfare do not have children for money."

» Rhon Baiman, the author of "Yes, Break the Cycle of Dependency" (editorial, March/April) was misidentified. He teaches at Roosevelt University, not Rockefeller University.

The editors of *Democratic Left* apologize for these mistakes.

## DSA ON THE AIRWAVES

Members of D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA are working on a pilot for a new cable-access TV series, *From Out of Left Field*, a magazine-style half-hour program that will present progressive views of social, political, religious, and cultural concerns. Aimed to be informative, entertaining, and an organizing tool, the program will feature footage from conferences, demonstrations, and cultural events, as well as group discussions. The pilot program is scheduled for completion in August.

While much of the footage will be taped in Washington, the wide range of topics to be explored—such as poverty, the family, labor, and health care, along with reports on left-progressive political activity—will be of interest to a nationwide audience, and the program will be made available to other DSA locals for use on their own cable systems. The program's organizers are seeking video footage from other locals or organizations to be incorporated into the program.

For more information, write *From Out of Left Field*, P.O. Box 29490, Washington, DC 20017. E-mail: [acwarden@usa.pipeline.com](mailto:acwarden@usa.pipeline.com). Telephone: 202/529-6569. Send videos to *From Out of Left Field*, 1022 Upshur Street NE, Washington, DC 20017.

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## DSA ON THE INTERNET: a few points

- 1] DSA's e-mail address is [dsa@igc.apc.org](mailto:dsa@igc.apc.org). Network gopher. The address of this gopher is [garnet.berkeley.edu](http://garnet.berkeley.edu) at ports 1250, 1251, or 1252.
- 2] There is a "listserv" mailing list called *dsanet* for members and friends of DSA. To subscribe, send a message to: [dsanet-request@quantum.sdsu.edu](mailto:dsanet-request@quantum.sdsu.edu). Your message should contain only the single word "subscribe" (without the quotes). To post messages on *dsanet*, send them to: [dsanet@quantum.sdsu.edu](mailto:dsanet@quantum.sdsu.edu).
- 3] DSA materials are archived in the Economic Democracy Information
- 4] Thanks to the Herculean efforts of Chicago DSA activist J. Hughes, DSA now has a top-notch site on the World Wide Web. There you can find goodies ranging from articles from *Democratic Left* to minutes of National Political Committee meetings to DSA's FBI files. Plus, there are well-organized links to just about every other website on the left. Access us at: <http://ccme-mac4.bsd.uchicago.edu/DSA.html>

# Democratic Left Labor Day Issue 1995

The Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* will once again be dedicated to coverage of the American and international labor struggle. Our annual Labor Day ad campaign is the principal fundraiser for *Democratic Left*. It provides an excellent opportunity for you to join with trade unions, progressive organizations, and DSA members to show your support for DSA and for *Democratic Left*. We welcome advertisements and personal greetings from individuals, DSA locals, organizations, and progressive businesses. Your message will reach 12,000 of the country's most committed progressive activists. We must receive ad copy by September 1. Make checks payable to DSA, or pay by credit card.

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# Giving

## Democracy a Chance

### A Closer Look at Campaign Finance Reform

BY CAROL KIGER ALLEN

Why do Americans so rarely elect officials whose basic agenda is responding to people's needs? As democratic socialists, we know that the answer to this question is by no means simple—but a large part of the story lies with the campaign money that distorts the democratic process.

The two New Jersey chapters of DSA have recently launched a major study-and-activism campaign centered on campaign finance reform. A May meeting co-sponsored by Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School and Central New Jersey DSA featured National Voting Rights Institute leader John Bonifaz, who argued that campaign contributors create an exclusionary process determining which candidates get chosen in primaries and in elections. Candidates with money or access to money are overwhelmingly more likely to win.

Despite the decades of voter rights crusades, aggressive voter registration drives, the removal of poll taxes, and mass media access to candidates via TV newscasts, the system will not be truly democratic as long as election outcomes turn on financial contributions. Bonifaz and others studying the issue argue that most elected officials respond to contributors' interests.

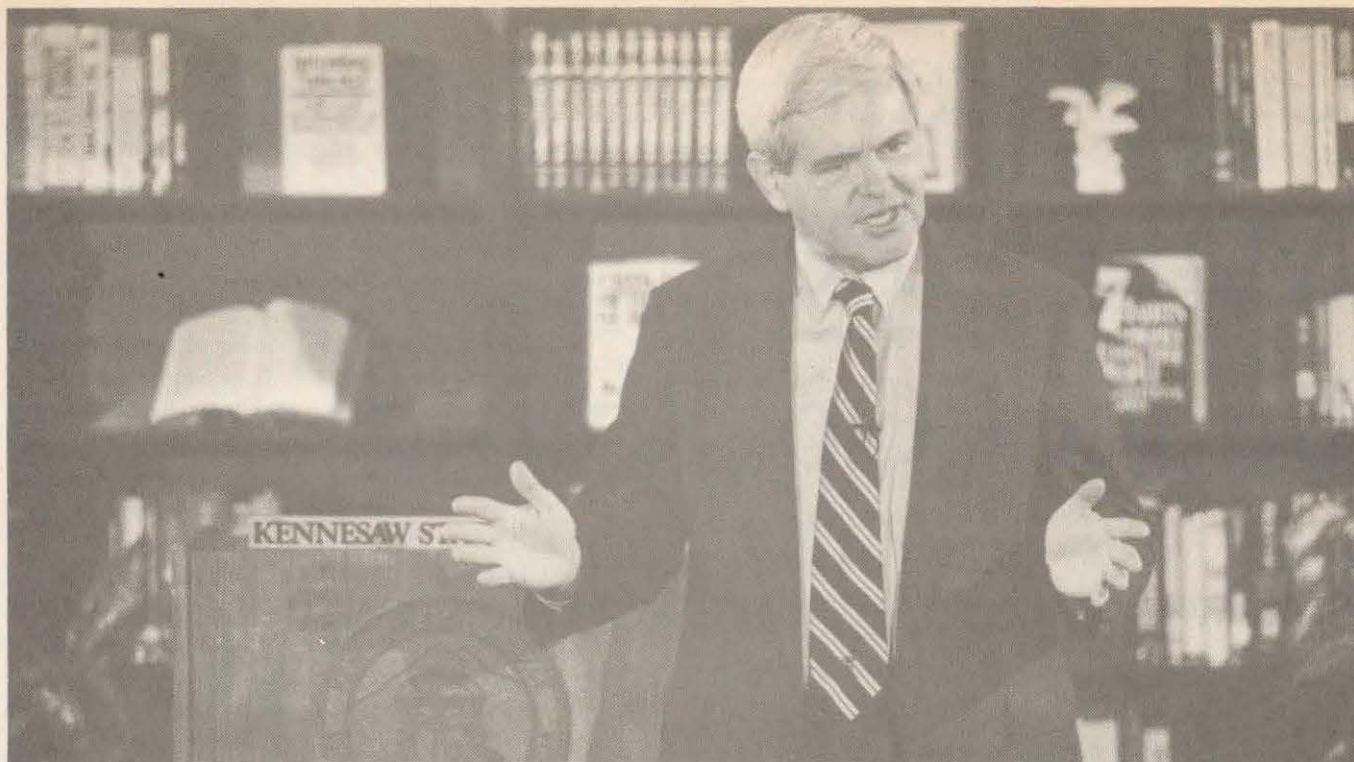
In the booklet *Challenging the Wealth Primary: Continuing the Struggle for the Right to Vote*, the National Voting Rights Institute reports that in 1994, U.S. House of Representatives candidate who won outspent their opponents

by 86 percent. Other statistics show that successful candidates are overwhelmingly likely to be from much higher income brackets than the average people they represent.

In 1992, corporate political action committees gave \$126.8 million to congressional campaigns. When large individual contributors, mostly from business interests, are added in, the total of business contributions is \$295.4 million, compared with \$43.3 million from organized labor.

Although in 1972 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against excess filing fees for potential candidates (*Bullock v. Carter*), in 1976 the court struck down campaign finance reform when it upheld a challenge to limitations on campaign contributions. The decision in *Buckley v. Valeo* struck down, on First Amendment grounds, mandatory limits on overall congressional campaign expenditures. Limits were not allowed on either candidates' expenditures of their own personal wealth or "independent" expenditures. No federal court has ruled on the equal protection rights of unsuccessful candidates and of voters they would have represented if they had not been left behind in the fundraising process because of their lack of money or access to money.

Could more democratically financed elections put better, more responsive leaders into office? Many elections are now won on superficial rhetoric and expensive media blitzes, even



Bill Clark/Impact Visuals

though the candidates and their financiers have non-populist, sometimes hidden agendas. We would not expect the fox to be a good guardian of the chicken coop; and we were not surprised that recent efforts for even incremental congressional campaign finance reform legislation failed.

The National Voting Rights Institute, with Bonifaz as chief counsel, brought the ground-breaking case *Albanese et al v. Federal Election Commission* to a federal court in July 1994. Sol Albanese, a five term New York City Councilman, ran for Congress in 1992 in the 13th District, covering Staten Island and part of Brooklyn. The incumbent, Rep. Susan Molinari, raised money and outspent Albanese by two to one. The plaintiffs, which include Democrats, Republicans, and independents, have asked the District Court to intervene to protect their constitutional rights under equal protection.

They look back to language in *Bullock v. Carter*, in which candidate filing fees were struck down. Chief Justice Warren Burger stated that the primary should give all voters influence and should not be based on wealth. Burger argued that the government should raise money from all citizens for the conduct of elections.

The Working Group on Electoral Democracy, a grassroots organizing and research group committed to the creation of a pro-democracy

movement in the United States, has presented a Working Model for Democratically Financed Elections. Eligibility for public campaign financing would require a commitment to eschew private financing. It would be based on the ability of the candidate to raise a large number of five-dollar contributions, for example, 1,000 from within a congressional district. Free broadcast media time would be available to publicly financed candidates. Contributions to political parties would be limited to \$100 a year. This system would significantly lower the costs of elections, because it would eliminate fundraising and media expenses.

*For a copy of the Working Group on Electoral Democracy's Model, write to them at Keets Road, Deerfield, Mass, 01342. Phone 413/773-8187, fax 413/773-7505. For a copy of their booklet, Challenging the Wealth Primary: Continuing the Struggle for the Right to Vote, contact National Voting Rights Institute, 1130 Massachusetts Avenue, third floor, Cambridge, MA 02138. Phone 617/441-8200; fax 617/ 441-6363; email voting-rights@igc.apc.org. Both groups would like to hear from DSA members and anyone interested in campaign finance reform.*

*Carol Kiger Allen is an activist with Central New Jersey DSA.*

# Corporate Welfare Makes the Budget Go 'Round

## A New Campaign Against Subsidies for the Rich

BY CHUCK COLLINS

**T**here is no money. Times are tight. These are the pronouncements flowing from our new conservative Congress—and therefore, they say, we must cut programs that keep our water clean, immunize and feed our children, house the homeless, and more.

Of course, times aren't all *that* tight. Corporate profits are at historically high levels; one business magazine wrapped up 1994 with the headline "What A Year!" And our allegedly penny-pinching Congress is still proposing to spend billions of dollars on tax breaks for the wealthy, new weapons systems, and "corporate welfare."

More than any other area of the budget, corporate welfare dramatizes the sheer hypocrisy of the current proposals to balance the budget on the backs of the middle class and the poor. Even as our social safety net is being shredded, billions of dollars in tax breaks and direct subsidies continue to flow to our nation's wealthiest corporations and individuals. Let us count the ways:

- ❖ School lunches are being cut while three-martini lunches remain a deductible business expense.
- ❖ Mansion subsidies continue to flow to our nation's richest homeowners while rental assis-

tance and programs to house the homeless are being cut.

- ❖ And corporations deduct their fines for occupational hazards and pollution and polluting the environment as a cost of doing business while Congress eliminates funding and guts laws to protect the environment.

### Corporate Welfare in the News

**S**hortly after the 1994 national elections, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich proposed the cutting of \$110 billion in "corporate welfare." A few months later, the Green Scissors Coalition, an alliance of environmental and other progressive organizations, proposed cutting \$33 billion over five years in subsidies to corporations that damage the environment.

Even conservatives have gotten into the act, perhaps fearful of being accused of "never meeting a tax loophole they didn't like." In April, the libertarian Cato Institute released their own study proposing \$96 billion in corporate subsidies that should get the ax. And in a recent *New York Times* editorial, Republican House Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich of Ohio proposed gutting the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and "getting rid of corporate welfare."

The good news is that the spotlight is being

turned onto these "hidden entitlements." And community organizations and advocacy groups are pointing out that there *is* money for jobs, housing and the environment sitting in the corporate welfare account.

### Organizing To Shift Budget Priorities

A coalition of labor, anti-poverty, religious and political groups (including DSA) have put forward a proposal, the Corporate Responsibility Act of 1995, that will eliminate over \$570 billion in handouts to the undeserving rich over the next five years. Here are a few we suggest go on the chopping block:

❖ *The Dough Boy and Chicken McNuggets Subsidy.* \$110 million a year in direct subsidies to mega-food producers to advertise their products abroad. Pillsbury muffins, Chicken McNuggets, M & Ms, Sunkist and American Legend mink coats are major beneficiaries.

❖ *The Madison Avenue Subsidy.* Corporations fully deduct the cost of their advertising. If they were allowed to amortize 20 percent as a capital cost to build brand name recognition, taxpayers would save \$3.6 billion a year.

❖ *The Paper Loss Subsidy.* Reform the standards that allow companies to write-off their equipment purchases faster than the equipment actually wears out. Reform savings: \$32 billion a year!

❖ *The Corporate Foreign Operations Subsidy.* Special interest loopholes and subsidies for U.S.-based multinational corporations actually encourage them to ship jobs overseas while cutting jobs and taxes at home. U.S.-based multinational corporations use the tax code to deduct foreign taxes and other loopholes to avoid taxes they owe.

*Savings from cutting specific subsidies:  
\$50.32 billion a year.*

❖ *The CEO Subsidy.* Taxpayers subsidize the excessive compensation of corporate top managers because their salaries are tax deductible. Limiting the deductibility of their salaries and treating salary/stock options/perks and taxable profits would raise over \$10 billion per year and discourage ridiculous salaries.

❖ *The Polluting Energy Subsidies.* The U.S. tax code rewards polluting companies and non-

renewable resource development. Without all these subsidies, our nation might have an incentive to develop more environmentally sustainable conservation and energy policies. We propose a range of cuts totaling \$4.1 billion a year.

❖ *The Mining Subsidy.* The U.S. lets big mining companies pay peanuts for the use of federally owned lands. An 8 percent royalty would earn \$200 million a year.

❖ *The Home on the Range Subsidy.* Millionaire ranchers get subsidized use of federal lands. Asking to pay the going market rate on range land would net another \$40 million a year.

❖ *The Big Chip Subsidy.* The U.S. funds a cartel of the 14 biggest computer chip manufacturers at the expense of over 200 smaller companies. We say cut the big chip subsidy at its annual cost of \$300 million a year.

❖ *The Merchants of Death Subsidy.* U.S. arms merchants get big subsidies from the government to advertise and promote their products to developing countries. This includes the cost of air shows and wining and dining foreign government leaders. We think these big companies can pay for these expenses themselves. Savings: \$500 million.

❖ *Wall Street Subsidy.* The federal government subsidizes the operation of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission to the tune of \$140 million a year. If we have to pay more money to go to National Parks, we think Wall Street can carry its costs.

❖ *The Mansion Subsidy.* Owners of expensive first and second homes are major beneficiaries of the Home Mortgage Interest Deduction. Capping the amount of deduction to \$300,000 would save over \$7 billion a year.

Local groups can be helpful in supporting the Corporate Responsibility Act and the campaign to cut handouts for the rich by seeking organizational endorsements, organizing district meetings with members of Congress, postcards, and other activities.

*For more information about the campaign and an Organizing Kit, please contact: Share the Wealth, 37 Temple Place, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA. 02111. 617/423-2148 or fax 617/695-1295.*

# DSA Locals, Youth Section Chapters, and Organizing Committees

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## EDITORIAL

—continued from page 2

ity and access (a single-payer system), the administration has chosen to quibble over how corporate HMOs can best shift health care cuts onto the wallets and well-being of ordinary citizens.

A bolder Clinton (an oxymoron, of course) could have explained that budget deficits are less of an economic burden when they amount to only 3.5 percent of Gross National Product and are growing more slowly than GNP (versus escalating to 7 percent of GNP under Reagan). The Clinton administration's budgetary policy had already accomplished this by the end of 1994. A Wall Street enthralled by the policies of Alan Greenspan needs to be saved from its own instincts—any good moderate Keynesian knows that without productive investment (that is, smart deficits), slow growth will persist. And such slow growth is a central cause of increased personal and public deficits, as both individuals and the state can only stave off major cuts in living standards and expenditures through borrowing.

But Clinton—as well as almost the entire mainstream press and political class—has bought into a bizarrely puritanical economic theory that simplistically reduces the American economic dilemma to budgetary profligacy, allegedly caused primarily by spending on an "indolent" poor. Government, according to this misleading allegory, should act like "upright" families and virtuous state governments which, having no independent printing press, must "balance" their budgets. But no prudent family—let alone state government—avoids *all* indebtedness. Or perhaps no one in Congress holds a home-mortgage or comes from a state whose "balanced budget" coexists with separate capital budgets or large bond-floats to finance infrastructural investment? If one's household or state's income grows faster than the rate of debt obligation, then such debts can be easily managed.

Thus, the knowledgeable Keynesian economist Robert Kuttner holds that our six trillion dollar economy can healthily sustain an average budget defi-

cit of \$100 billion per year, with periods of economic downturn justifying far larger, temporary, pump-priming deficits. Could sustained public investment be combined with prudent fiscal policy? Yes, if mainstream Democratic politicians advance two moderate proposals that so far only radicals dare defend—defense cuts and progressive taxation. Prudent cuts in a bloated military budget are certainly possible, when that budget is ten times greater than Russia's and larger than the ten other largest national military budgets combined. Cutting the defense budget in half over a five-year period, combined with returning the top 20 percent of taxpayers to 1979 rates (a \$70 billion gain in annual revenue), would achieve a deficit below \$100 billion by the year 2000.

Health care will be central to budgetary politics as long as defense (18 percent of the federal budget) is ruled out-of-bounds for spending cuts. That foolhardy judgment, combined with the untouchability of payments on the debt (13 percent), Social Security (20 percent), and federal and military pensions (16 percent), means that health care (16 percent, of which Medicaid's one-third share is the most vulnerable) is the only significant area for cuts once one has slashed income programs for the poor. But the only humane way to reduce health care inflation would be to eliminate the costly bureaucracy of private health insurance and its profit-driven preference for high-tech care rather than low-tech prevention. Such a humane system has a name: single-payer national health insurance.

In this era of global economic integration, true fiscal prudence would mean embracing a politics of public investment in human beings rather than a punitive politics of belt-tightening for working people and the poor. But such a politics takes courage—and the willingness, possibly, to "lose" in the short run in order to win in the long run. The Republican right did that in the 1960s and 70s; it's time for mainstream Democrats to emulate the success of their more visionary Republican counterparts.

*Joe Schwartz, a member of DSA's National Political Committee, teaches political theory at Temple University.*

## SIGNS OF LIFE ON THE LEFT

BY CARL SHIER

William Kristol, Dan Quayle's political guru, has declared this period as conservative reactionary time. He is encouraging Dole, Gingrich, Gramm, and other leading Republican members of Congress to blast away at federal programs designed to help the jobless, feed the hungry, and curb corporate greed.

In the Senate and House, Dole and Gingrich have been following through, doing the corporations' bidding. They've allowed business lobbyists to write the laws that will hurt consumers, seniors, and trade unionists.

"Killer" John Kasich, the chair of the House Budget Committee, smugly says that the GOP can't be doing anything wrong because there have been no demonstrations protesting their activities.

Well, Kasich is wrong. So far this year tens of thousands of Americans have taken to the streets—in Springfield, Illinois; Indianapolis, Indiana; Lansing, Michigan; Washington, D.C., and dozens of other cities across the country to protest the "Contract on America." Most recently, on June 17, thousands marched in Chicago's Jobs With Justice demonstration.

These protests are working. Indeed, the *New York Times* reported on June 10 that Indiana Senator Richard Lugar no longer backs the Republican plans to gut federal school lunch programs because, as the *Times* reported, Republicans "concede they have lost the battle under withering fire from Democrats, who have attacked the House majority as cruel to children."

Through demonstrations, protests to Congress, and letters to the editor of local newspapers, we can keep up this pressure and kill still more of the GOP's Contract. Such protests won't come out of the lose-lose policies of the Democratic Leadership Council. We have to take the initiative and restore the Democratic Party's working-class roots.

*Carl Shier is a longtime activist in Chicago DSA.*

# Letters to Democratic Left



## It's Time for the New Party: Thoughts from Four Young DSA Activists

Dear Editors,

For many years, DSA members have debated this topic—whether to form a new party. Recognizing the major obstacles to building a third party, DSA has decided instead to work to make the Democratic Party more progressive.

But as part of the future generation of progressive activists, we think it's time for DSAers to renew that discussion, and to learn about the New Party—a new progressive effort that we believe could be the first third party that recognizes the barriers to third parties and has a strategy that can overcome them.

It's clear to us that this country needs a new party. With the Democrats following the trail of corporate donations and moving steadily to the right, there is no political party that represents the interests of working people, people of color, environmentalists, students, feminists, or gays and lesbians.

For too long, the Democratic Party has largely gotten its votes and activists from one set of people (us) but has taken its money and ideas from another set (corporations). It's time to end the abusive relationship between the Democratic Party and the left; it's time we had a real and credible threat of exit.

The New Party is, as the *SF Weekly* reported after the election, "the most interesting and promising of the progressive third parties." Over the last two years, they've run 115 candidates for local offices, winning 77 races for school boards, city council, county boards, and state legislatures. It's not high-level, headline-grabbing victories, but as the Christian Coalition realized six years ago, it's the right place to start. The electoral system is quite porous at the local level—with the collapse of party machines, local independent political organizations can compete as equals with the existing local parties in nearly every city in America.

The New Party avoids some of the major obstacles to building a third party by staying out of high-level races. The

Party doesn't waste votes by running noble but doomed candidates for President, Senate, or Governor. And it won't act as a spoiler—enabling right-wing candidates to beat decent Democrats. Rather, they support the re-introduction of fusion, which will allow them to endorse progressive Democrats when appropriate but still show their strength as an independent organization.

Who sits at the New Party table? Local unionists, civil rights leaders, feminist activists, students, and hundreds of individuals who have never before been interested in politics. They are beginning to reach beyond the self-identified left without compromising their principles and beliefs—which include a strong focus on democratic renewal (including substantial campaign finance reform) and economic reconstruction (including increasing the minimum wage, sustainable development, and universal health care).

And like DSA, the New Party recognizes the importance of student organizing. A half dozen Students for the New Party chapters have organized on campuses around the country, and the New Party co-sponsored a series of college teach-ins this spring to promote a progressive agenda and the need for independent politics.

The New Party has a three-part strategy: Building local chapters that can compete for power by running and winning local races; changing the electoral process, including campaign finance reform, proportional representation, and fusion; and fighting the battle of ideas. Leading progressive intellectuals like Cornel West, Frances Fox Piven, Noam Chomsky, and Juliet Schor have joined the New Party. Ralph Nader, Jim Hightower, and Barbara Ehrenreich are supporters. As the Democrats showed clearly last fall, you can't beat something with nothing. While the Republican agenda is truly corrupt and disgusting, they at least have an agenda. We need to use the electoral moment (including both candidate elections and initiatives) to move some of our own ideas about what a fair economy and a real democracy would look like into the political discourse.

That said, we understand that the New Party is at the beginning of a very

long road. We realize that building a new progressive party is not an easy task, but it's a task we think is necessary and one which we think democratic socialists should be committed to accomplishing. A New Party wouldn't compete with DSA chapters—it would provide a structure in which DSA and other progressive groups could work together on electoral and issue campaigns.

It will take years for progressives to build a grassroots third party capable of competing for power at the national level. DSA members could be (and in many cases already are) vital participants in this effort. With the New Party and its strategy in mind, we should renew our dialogue on the need for and possibility of building a new progressive party in the U.S.

For more information on the New Party and local organizing activity, call the New Party's national office at 800/200-1294, or write to 227 West 40 Street, Suite 1303, New York, NY 10018.

Maggie Dyer

Little Rock, Arkansas

Matt Mayers

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Jason Murphy

Little Rock, Arkansas

Eric Olson

College Park, Maryland

## A Reply

*The editors of Democratic Left thank the authors of this letter for raising important questions. The following response is by Joe Schwartz, a member of the DSA National Political Committee who teaches political science at Temple University. Joe wrote the first draft of the Resolution on Electoral Politics passed by the delegates to the 1993 DSA National Convention.*

While I agree with much of the spirit of this letter advocating stronger DSA relations with the New Party, its authors offer a rather common, anachronistic misstatement of DSA's electoral perspective. They also exaggerate, I believe, the strength and independence of the New Party's electoral efforts.

Since the collapse in the mid-1980s of the "Democratic Agenda" strategy of

organizing an explicit progressive coalition within the Democratic Party, DSA has quite explicitly viewed electoral politics as a *tactical* question—a question subordinate to the fundamental task of building a socialist presence within the progressive social movements that might someday build an enduring popular majority for social change.

DSA is by no means naive about the Democratic Party leadership's general drift to the right. As the Democratic Party in most areas is barely an institution, let alone one that facilitates democratic participation, most DSA locals treat it as simply a line on the ballot. Where progressives have the strength to battle corporate interests and use that line for democratic purposes, we support their efforts—witness Paul Wellstone and Carol Mosely-Braun's Senate victories. But where that ballot line is captured by centrist and center-right forces, DSA locals usually abstain from electoral work.

As the 1993 DSA Convention Resolution on Electoral Politics put it:

"DSA is no more and no less loyal to the Democratic Party than are any other individuals who run on its ballot-line or vote for its candidates. . . DSA will continue to support meaningful campaign finance and ballot access reform that would eliminate the power of corporate money and render progressive political action more feasible both within and without the Democratic Party."

Thus, active and loyal DSA members and locals will continue to engage in selective electoral work in support of both progressive Democrats and progressive non-partisan and third party candidates who share our values. In some locales DSAers and New Party members have engaged in joint electoral work. But any dispassionate analysis of New Party successes would show that they almost always occur in non-partisan local races (where candidates have no party labels) or in partisan elections in which local New Party affiliates endorse progressive Democrats. Only in the few states that have fusion (joint-party endorsement) possibilities or open ballot access laws has the New Party been able to achieve an independent ballot listing.

But the real question is not an either/or, Democratic-Party-or-third-party debate. The major task for the left is to rebuild its ideological and political strength in civil society. Progressive

movements for feminism, racial justice, economic equality, and the environment must come together and breathe new life into one another. These movements must also urgently find new ways of speaking to the politically disaffected.

The New Party's leaders share this vision of a revitalized left, and believe that independent electoral politics can act as a powerful catalyst for making it happen. DSA's elected leaders are, on the whole, extremely skeptical about this claim.

In fact, I believe that concentrating our strategy on building a progressive third party—even with a strategy as relatively thoughtful as the New Party's "fusion" orientation—would be a enormous *distraction* from, not a catalyst for, rebuilding the left in civil society. As the New Party's leaders are well aware, improving the U.S. electoral system to allow for true multi-party elections would require massive constitutional changes on the state and federal levels. Efforts in this direction have generally mobilized elite lawyers and social engineers rather than mass social movements.

We should remember that the most compelling electoral candidates run to win—and not just "to educate." To think that a strong third party possessing a real threat of "exit" from the Democratic Party can come by simple exhortation is a utopian project. Right now, insofar as citizens are electorally active, they mostly exit to the right (Reagan blue-collar, white Democrats) or stay at home (votes of color, progressives). A party that captured the progressive stay-at-homers (and even mobilized those like them), without influencing the much more massive core of disaffected non-ideological and conservative voters, would have no chance of influencing state power in a serious, national manner.

The perpetual "Holy Grail" of the American left, founding the best "third party" (there are always 57 varieties of them at any given moment) radically underestimates the length and depth of the struggle against corporate power and ideology. Thus, DSAers, New Party activists, and joint New Party/DSA activists have their work cut out for them. As the strength of the ideological left within the New Deal coalition and Great Society coalitions demonstrated, however, when the left is strong in civil society it can penetrate the electoral system—whether it be a two-party or multiple-party system.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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# DEFEND VOTING RIGHTS:

## How DSAers Can Help Monitor Enforcement of the Motor Voter Act

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) of 1993—popularly known as “motor voter”—took effect on January 1 of this year and has already enabled over two million people to register. By making registration more accessible to more people, especially the poor, the NVRA is an important tool in expanding the democratic process.

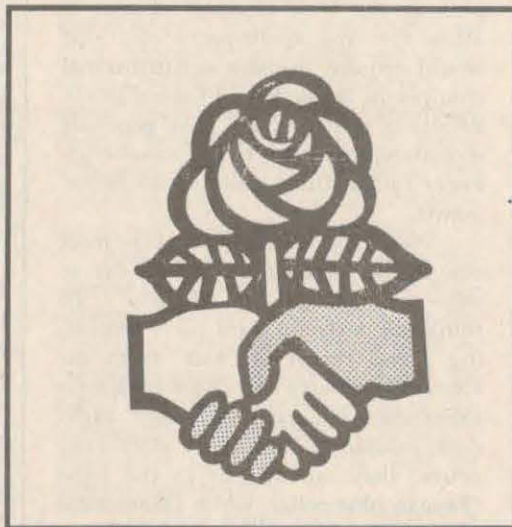
It does this by requiring states to provide registration services through drivers' license centers (DMV), public assistance and disability agencies, and through mail-in registration. The NVRA upholds safeguards including nondiscriminatory standards for list maintenance.

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia have implemented the NVRA to great success, all reporting significant increases in their registration rates. Richard Cloward, executive director of the watchdog group HumanSERVE, estimates that twenty million Americans will be registered by the NVRA before the 1996 elections. Although it is still too early to draw conclusions on how political parties will be affected, motor voter will make the electorate larger and more diverse. Since the targets of the campaign are the politically disadvantaged, such as the poor and disabled, the resulting electorate should also be more reflective of the American population.

Not all has run smoothly, however. Some states, mostly those with conservative administrations, have resisted implementing NVRA. Lawsuits for non-compliance are pending or completed against California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan,

South Carolina, Louisiana, and New Hampshire. Federal district courts have ruled against California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, saying that NVRA is constitutional, and that they must comply with it. (California and Illinois are appealing.) Arkansas, Vermont, and Virginia have constitutional conflicts and have been given additional time to comply.

In states that are complying with NVRA, most of the new registration has taken place at DMV sites. Public assistance sites have had poor showings in comparison. This is worrying, since clients of these centers are predominantly young, poor, and/or people with disabilities—people who are less likely than the general population to own cars or to visit the DMV. HumanSERVE, whose leaders include DSA Vice Chair Frances Fox Piven, is calling on political activists around the country to help monitor NVRA compliance at DMV and social service offices in their communities. You don't need a committee to do this—it's an important job that individual activists can do.



# You can help find out if the public assistance agencies in your community are carrying out the law.

Here's how:

**1** Go to the waiting rooms of your local public assistance agencies (agencies that offer AFDC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, or WIC). Look around to see if there are signs or posters indicating that voter registration is available.

**2** In order to maintain the element of surprise, DO NOT call the agency in advance to let them know you are coming.

**3** Once you have looked around, go back outside and stand by the exit. Ask at least 15 people who are leaving if they were offered the opportunity to register to vote. You may wish to start by saying "HI, I'M CONDUCTING A SURVEY TO SEE IF THIS AGENCY OFFERS VOTER REGISTRATION. DID YOU APPLY FOR BENEFITS, RECERTIFY, OR CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS TODAY?" If the person did not do any of these things, say "thanks, but I can't interview you for this survey."

**4** Give reassurance to the applicant that answering your questions has nothing to do with eligibility for benefits, and that you are *not* an agency worker.

**5** Ask each person the questions listed on the form below.

**6** When your interviews are done, go back inside the agency and ask to see someone in charge. Tell them that you are doing a survey of compliance with the National Voter Registration Act. If the people you interviewed told you that voter registration IS NOT being offered, ask the person in charge why not. Try to get a full explanation.

If you were told by the people you interviewed that voter registration *is* being done, get details on how the process works. Ask the person in charge for their office's statistics on the number of people they have registered. If they have nothing to hide, they will be forthcoming with you.

## Reporting form

Your name, organization, and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Address of agency visited (please include county) \_\_\_\_\_

Program(s) administered: AFDC \_\_\_\_\_ Medicaid \_\_\_\_\_ Food stamps \_\_\_\_\_ WIC \_\_\_\_\_ **1.** Are there any signs or posters indicating that voter registration is available? \_\_\_\_\_ **2.** Does the application package include the voter registration question and form? \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** Are people routinely asked if they want to register to vote? \_\_\_\_\_ **4.** Which employee does voter registration (e.g., receptionist, caseworker, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_ **5.** Did they assist the applicants in completing the registration form if they needed it? \_\_\_\_\_

**6.** Are completed registration forms collected by the agency, or were applicants told to mail them in themselves? \_\_\_\_\_ **7.** Are applicants allowed to take home extra forms for their friends or relatives? \_\_\_\_\_ (Attach other comments on a separate sheet.)

Return to: HumanSERVE, 622 West 113 Street, Suite 410, New York, NY 10025. phone: 212/854-4053

## Third-Party Conference in D.C.

Coalition building was the theme as 126 activists from 26 states and 40 organizations gathered at George Washington University June 1-4 for "Third Parties '96: Building the New Mainstream." The conference included representatives of progressive organizations—the Committees of Correspondence, the New Party, the Socialist Party USA, DSA—with a wide variety of perspectives on electoral politics. Indeed, DSA remains skeptical of third-party efforts (see "Letters to *Democratic Left*," pp. 18-19). Regional parties at the conference included the Pacific Party (Oregon), the Boulder Progressive Coalition (Colorado), and the Statehood Party (D.C.). Green Party activists from over a dozen states were represented. Notably absent was Labor Party Activists, which wants to build its own forces before entering into coalitions.

The largest progressive third parties remain the California Green Party and the Peace and Freedom Party, which together accounted for 359,000 statewide votes in 1994. Greens are also on the ballot in Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, Rhode Island and New Mexico, where their numbers are smaller, but where their percentages have been much larger. In New Mexico the Green candidate for State Treasurer, Lorenzo Garcia, garnered 33 percent of the vote. As

Howie Hawkins of Greens/Green Party USA pointed out, over a million votes were cast for eighty Green candidates nationally in November.

The conferees agreed to a "Common Ground Declaration," a draft platform that covers tax justice, voting reform, defense of affirmative action, deep cuts in the military budget, protection of human rights and the environment, and alternative approaches to crime and drugs. On workplace democracy, it states, "We believe that economic decisions should be made democratically, with participation by all affected workers, communities, and consumers." This received full consensus, as did the demand for "an end to corporate welfare."

A second round of Third Parties '96 is being planned tentatively for early October in either Boulder or Kansas City. For information, call 703/642-5710 or e-mail [lindamartin@igc.apc.org](mailto:lindamartin@igc.apc.org). And in Pittsburgh, the National Peoples Progressive Network and the National Center for Independent Political Action are jointly initiating the National Independent Politics Summit, August 18-20. For information, call the NPPN at 718/643-9603.

—Dave Richardson,

D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA

—Walt Sheashy, California Green Party

## Affirmative Action Under Fire in California

In mid-July, the University of California's Board of Regents voted to abolish affirmative action in the university's hiring and admissions systems. This decision sparked a serious campaign of student activism in defense of affirmative action principles.

The Sacramento Educational Consortium, whose leaders include DSA National Political Committee members Duane Campbell and Eric Vega, issued the following statement:

"We as faculty are proud to protect and promote affirmative action on our campuses. It is just and it is necessary. Far from maligning and outlawing efforts to open the benefits of the university to minorities, the Regents should offer support and encouragement. What they must not do is impose a politically motivated edict that would restrict profoundly the educational role of the university."

DSA will publish a new literature piece about racism and affirmative action in September. For more information about these campaigns, contact Carmen Mitchell, DSA's Field Coordinator, at 212/727-8610.

## Democratic Socialists of America

Members of the Democratic Socialists of America work in immediate struggles for justice—as we build a movement for long-term social change.

We bring to our work a strategy for building alliances among social movements and a vision of a more just and equitable society.

Join DSA and become a card-carrying member of the largest and most exciting democratic socialist organization in the U.S.!

Send me more information about DSA.

Enclosed are my dues!

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Enclosed is a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help DSA's activism.

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Return to DSA, 180 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014 212/727-8610

For fifty years, the Republican leadership paid lip service to populist diatribes against big government, all the while embracing their own preferred forms of bureaucracy and economic intervention. As Michael Harrington always emphasized, the centerpiece of Reaganism was that peculiar "conservative" beast called military Keynesianism. For all the "government-is-bad" rhetoric of the Reagan and Bush administrations, they practiced Keynesian political economy—inflating the economy (and the national debt) to finance a massive arms race. Whereas Keynes encouraged governments to use fiscal and monetary policy to benefit the working and middle classes, the Reaganites aimed their goodies at military contractors and the rich.

All of this was yesterday. Newt Gingrich and the Contract With America represent a genuinely new conservatism—a conservatism that takes anti-government populism seriously. The Contract With America, and especially the Balanced Budget Amendment, would cripple the federal government's ability to cushion us from the worst effects of laissez-faire economics.

So why is the rhetoric of yesterday turning into the reality of today? The short answers are simple. The globalization of capital has made Keynesianism—left, right, or center—much more difficult to carry out. As Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan recently put it, "The new world of financial trading can punish policy misalignments with amazing alacrity." This is, of course, a euphemism for a grave threat to democracy and justice: a global network of bond markets stands ready to veto democratically-established labor laws, environmental protection measures, and other "policy misalignments" that threaten short-term corporate profits.

Still, this Contract With America

writ large does have an Achilles's heel, but it's not at all where we would expect to find it. Common sense would lead us to believe that we could effectively confront the Contract in two interrelated ways: one by building political resistance based on the constituencies most directly affected by the cutbacks, and the other by finding ways to shift the debate back onto our anti-corporate agenda. These are necessary ways to oppose the Contract, but not sufficient. *Anti-militarism* must become a centerpiece of our program.

The current distortions in government spending and taxing all have their primary source in the massive military and national security build-up to the Second Cold War of the 1980's. The explosion of national

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**Anti-militarism  
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of the reactionary right  
against itself.**

---

debt is directly linked to military-led deficit financing. Although the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism put a brake on the expansion of national militarism, these events did not lead to a direct confrontation with the political legacy of Reagan's military Keynesianism. Moreover, Bush's Gulf War made sure that the fundamental issues were avoided. Clinton inherited a government apparatus still under the dominance of military spending and its debt legacy (with which he has done nothing). And although the Contract With America represents a break from military Keynesianism, it certainly doesn't break with *militarism*—it

leaves the defense budget untouched.

Thus, the military and national security apparatus is the one topic that is off the table. For progressive forces, it should be the one topic that is most *on* the table. The military embodies and promotes most of our least favorite social values—authoritarianism, bureaucracy, the cult of violence—and is responsible for some of the country's worst chemical and nuclear pollution. Equally important, it represents the only massive amount of discretionary income at our disposal to fund the new social programs that will be needed to counter the increasing effects of gradual mass pauperization. The billions of dollars spent on corporate welfare is small stuff compared with the \$300 billion in annual expenditures for the military.

Anti-militarism also gives us the opportunity to utilize the pervasive anti-government sentiment and make it work for our politics. Militarism represents massive government intervention into the economy. The Defense Department, the CIA, and the NSC are the greatest dens of corruption, influence peddling and cronyism in our entire federal apparatus. These expenditures hurt U.S. competitiveness and absorb funds that could be spent more productively. Let's force the reactionary right to defend military Keynesianism.

Anti-militarism alone, of course, does not constitute a full program for rebuilding a vital progressive movement. But it is an essential component of such a program. At a time when the democratic left no longer has a viable, majoritarian, anti-corporate program, we must be bold and inventive, turning the logic of the reactionary right against itself. We must think and act within a long-term perspective—forging the new majoritarian politics of the next left.

# The 1995 DSA National Convention

## November 10-12 ❖ Washington, D.C.

### AGENDA

(subject to approval by the delegates)

### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10

9 am: Plenary

*The State of the Organization:*

Reports from the National Director and from DSA Locals and Commissions

11 am: Plenary

*Strategies for the Next Left*

Panel presentations and open dialogue

1 pm: Lunch

2 pm: Plenary and Small Groups

*DSA's Political Priorities:*

*An Activist Agenda for the Present Period*

4 pm: Meetings of DSA task forces and commissions

6 pm: Dinner

8 pm: Major outreach event in D.C.

### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11

9 am: Plenary and Small Groups

*New Organizational and Political Directions for DSA*

Panel presentations and open dialogue

#### Invited speakers include:

Ron Dellums

Bodgan Denitch

Barbara Ehrenreich

Jeff Faux

Monica Green

Heidi Hartmann

Dorothy Healey

José LaLuz

Cornel West

11 am: Meetings of resolutions committees

12:30 pm: Lunch

2 pm: Plenary

*Electoral Tactics*

Panel presentations and open dialogue

3:30 pm: Meetings of resolutions committees

5 pm: Resolutions Plenary:

*Amendments to DSA's Constitution*

6:30 pm: Dinner

8 pm: Celebrating an Activist's Life

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

9 am: Plenary

*The International Arena*

10:30 am: Resolutions Plenary

1:30 pm: Closing

**S**o how do I sign up? Everyone is welcome — just fill out and return the form below. If you'd like to attend as delegate—that is, if you'd like to have voting privileges—you also need to take a couple of extra steps. If you live in an area where there is no DSA local, you should ask to attend as an "at-large" delegate. Check the "at-large delegate" box on the reply form, and the national office will contact you with details. If you live in an area where there is a DSA local, contact the leaders of your local. (See the directory on page 19.) Locals are required by the DSA Constitution to hold open elections to choose their delegates between July 10 and September 26.

**H**ow much will it cost to attend? This will be the least expensive DSA Convention in years. For most attendees, the total cost including room, meals, and the registration fee will be between \$175 and \$225. (The variation is because the site offers a variety of room styles, ranging from single-bed rooms with bathrooms attached to quadruple-bed rooms with dorm-style hallway bathrooms. We'll send you details about these choices after you return the reply form.) If you attend the Convention as delegate, you will also participate in the Convention's "travel share" pool, which is designed to equalize travel costs for delegates from throughout the country. Travel costs for delegates will be about \$100, whether they travel from Alaska or from three blocks away.

Yes! I am interested in attending the Convention.

Please send me full registration information. (Returning this coupon does not represent a binding commitment to attend.)

I live in an area where there is no DSA local, and I would like to attend the Convention as an "at-large" delegate. Please send me information about this.

If I attend the Convention, I will need child care for a child/children aged \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Return to DSA, 180 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014 212/727-8610