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A Man For Our Season?

Nelson Lichtenstein on the Sweeney-Lewis Parallels

Globalization & Its
Discontents

New York City
Labor Chorus

Union
Summer

Charging the
Elephant in
San Diego

and
more...

A Charge to Trade Unions

BY CLAIRE KAPLAN

In light of the newly-energized AFL-CIO's organizing under Brother Sweeney's helm, and the attachment of Bill Clinton's signature to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), we'd like to submit a proposal to our brother and sister trade unionists in both the rank-and-file and elected leadership.

When an employee receives benefits from an employer, that person's spouse and children are eligible for health insurance coverage and other benefits through the employer's policy. But if that employee is gay, lesbian or bisexual, or straight and living with a mate, it is a rare employer who offers the kind of benefits that would allow for an unmarried partner — especially if the partner is of the same sex.

The numbers of companies and private colleges that offer some kind of domestic partnership benefits are rising into the hundreds. Forward-looking employers understand that their cost is minimal, and is a boon for keeping their employees in same-sex relationships from moving on to a friendlier work environment. Yet few trade unions include domestic partnership benefits as an explicit demand in contract negotiations.

Domestic partnership benefits are essentially any benefits an employer offers for workers and their families that are extended to the partners of unmarried workers, regardless of the partner's sex. Employee groups across the country are lobbying their bosses for them. Cities such as West Hollywood and Seattle, companies ranging from Lotus to Disney (which is now being boycotted by the Family Values Coalition for this offense), universities such as Stanford and Duke, provide not only health insurance coverage for partners, but any additional perks, such as gym passes at colleges.

In most cases, these plans provide only for gay and lesbian employees, although some do include straight people as well. Straights who might benefit are not only a couple who live together. For example, two single mothers might buy a house together. One may have a steady job while the other works as a child care provider. The working mom could put her housemate on her health insurance policy.

Coverage of children is always a problem. For a lesbian or gay couple with children, if the biological parent is not the employee, and the co-parent does not have legal custody, than the biological parent must purchase private insurance not only for her or himself, but for the children as well.

Even for those who can apply for domestic partnership benefits, there is a price: the IRS does not exempt the additional health insurance as income. Most of us are willing to put up with that cost (assuming the taxes are less than purchasing a private health plan) for the advantage of group coverage.

Some trade unions offer domestic partnership benefits to their own employees. Others, such as my own union, UAW Local 1981 (the National Writers Union), various craft unions such as the Writers Guild, Directors Guild, or individual locals of AFSCME, IBEW and OCAW, offer health insurance that will cover a partner of any sex. However, most unions leave this particular aspect of benefits up to the locals and the employers with which they negotiate; I am unaware of any national union that includes domestic partnership benefits as a standard demand across the board in contract negotiations.

Bill Clinton himself has said he would strongly support the idea of domestic partnerships for gays and lesbians as the "preferable" alternative to legal marriage. While some of us would prefer the latter, others insist that mimicking heterosexual institutions is not the answer for people who are trying to change cultural assumptions of the meaning of family as a whole.

Legalized marriage for same sex couples is not soon on the horizon, even with the impending decision in Hawaii. Meanwhile, hundreds, even thousands, of life partnerships are short-changed by employers in ways straights could never imagine. It's time for the AFL-CIO to make a strong stand and urge all its member unions to demand benefits for domestic partnership benefits for lesbian and gay workers.

Claire Kaplan is a co-chair of DSA's Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Commission.

DEMOCRATIC

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Cover: John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, marches with striking convalescent home workers in San Francisco. Photo by David Bacon/Impact Visuals.

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A Man for Our Season?

The Sweeney-Lewis Parallels

BY NELSON LICHTENSTEIN

Will John Sweeney become the John L. Lewis of our time? This hopeful thought has certainly occurred to almost everyone who witnessed the remarkable victory of the insurgent Sweeney slate at the 1995 AFL-CIO convention. Since that time, the new team, which includes such spell-binders as Richard Trumka and Andy Stern, the newly elected president of the SEIU, has begun to make some of the right moves. They lead demonstrations, make speeches and show up on talk shows, which is more than you can say for the old crowd. And they are putting real money and energy into organizing and political action. Whatever its lasting accomplishments, the "Union Summer" project that put one thousand youth activists on the street was a brilliant public relations idea.

History does not repeat itself, nor does it offer a formula for social change, but the contemporary upheaval inside the AFL-CIO bears an uncanny resemblance to the more dramatic transformation in union leadership that launched the Committee for Industrial Organization more than 60 years ago. If we think about what happened then, maybe we can make history work for us today.

Both John L. Lewis and John J. Sweeney moved to unionism's center stage because a Democratic President had failed them. Although we now remember the 1935 Wagner Act as the keystone of New Deal labor legislation, John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman and other unionists had staked far more upon Franklin Roosevelt's first effort to make organized labor a part of the New Deal: the reorganization of capitalism under the National Recovery Administration. The big corporations were given free rein to set prices and

cartelize production, and in return the government asserted that workers had a right to "unions of their own choosing" (although employers often defined the latter as an employee representation plan—company unionism.)

Clinton tried to cut much the same social bargain during the first two years of his administration: he'd let a handful of big insurance companies run the health care system in return for universal coverage; and he expected the commission chaired by John Dunlop to make union organizing easier, in return for which managers would get a chance to set up employee committees that most in the labor movement thought a step toward "company unionism."

Old guard labor leaders were paralyzed when the reforms of both Roosevelt and Clinton floundered. The Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional in 1935; and 60 years later Newt Gingrich smashed Clinton's efforts to revive even a tepid version of the New Deal. The AFL offered no response to the collapse of the NRA or the opportunities offered by the new Wagner Act: fixated by a commitment to "exclusive jurisdiction," its leaders clung to an underfunded, highly fragmented, craft union strategy. Lewis and Hillman founded the Committee for Industrial Organization in 1935 because they saw only disaster and decline in this AFL non-program. "They seduced me with fair words," declared Lewis at the convention where he split the AFL. "I am enraged and I am ready to rend my seducers limb from limb."

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John Sweeney greeting Justice for Janitors demonstrators in Washington, DC.

Rick Reinhard/Impact Visuals

Likewise, Sweeney and company repudiated AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland because he had no new ideas to cope with the collapse of Clinton's social program. For years Kirkland had argued that it was useless to pour money into new organizing campaigns until there was a new labor law on the books. But Sweeney's approach has been based on the sounder history: "We'll organize now without the law, so that we can later organize under the law." This was precisely the strategy of the new CIO, which scored all its great victories in steel, auto, rubber and longshore—before the Supreme Court validated the Wagner Act in April 1937.

Lewis opened the CIO to the cadres of the left: Trotskyists, Socialists, and Communists were put on the payroll and thrown into the great organizing drives. This was not because Lewis was much of a radical: in the United Mine Workers he had a well-deserved reputation as an autocrat and a bully who voted Republican in most elections. But Lewis knew that he needed the left as much as they needed the opportunities opened up by the new CIO. When reporters probed his decision to hire so many Communists, Lewis replied, "Who gets the bird, the

hunter or the dog?" As it turned out, the dog got quite a few birds: the leftists with whom Lewis cooperated were energetic, young and confident they were marching with the tide of history. In 1935 the UAW's Walter Reuther was 26 years old, the longshore leader Harry Bridges was 34, while Mike Quill of the Transport Workers was 30. All would remain top union leaders for decades.

As with John Lewis and the old UMW, Sweeney's leadership of the SEIU during the last dozen years has not always been a pretty sight. But he too is opening a door to the left, declaring an end to the long Cold War that divided union leadership not only from the now middle-aged radicals of the Sixties generation, but from the gay, feminist, and green activists who define so much that is lively and provocative among the Generation Xers. It's impossible to know if this gamble will pay off. In the 1930s, the left was often rooted in America's ethnic, working-class communities and full of the self-confidence that grew out of the October Revolution and the seemingly imminent collapse of capitalism. Today, what we used to think of as the traditional, explicitly political left has never been weaker: its revolutionary vision has been dimmed

by the Reaganite decades and its most experienced cadres are now either well past 40 or making a career somewhere inside the academy. But there is another American left that Sweeney and company seem to be counting on: one lodged deep within the Latino, Asian, and African-American communities, or among the white working-class youth whose expectations have been so profoundly diminished during the last two decades. It is from this left that the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute has recruited some of its most exciting cadres; and I think it is this left upon which Sweeney is banking to sustain the disruptive, community-based organizing drives necessary to unionize the multicultural proletariat of America's low-wage sector.

But the road to a revitalized trade union movement lies not just through a vigorous organizing drive, but through politics, too. John Sweeney here walks in the footsteps of John L. Lewis as well, but the path is a more problematic one. American unionists know that organization, collective bargaining and political action are insolubly linked. Early in the 20th century Samuel Gompers first declared, "Reward your friends and punish your enemies;" three decades later John L. Lewis ordered UAW radicals to drop their support of a Farmer-Labor Party and endorse President Roosevelt if they wanted \$100,000 from the CIO treasury to organize General Motors. For his part, Lewis put his money where his mouth was with a huge \$500,000 contribution to Roosevelt's 1936 re-election campaign. Such hard-nosed, seemingly pragmatic calculation has long captured the essence of mainstream labor's political activism; thus Sweeney's stepped-up political commitment to Clinton and the Democrats in this campaign season lies squarely within this venerable tradition.

Yet such a pragmatic calculus is not enough, for politics is not simply a question of rewarding friends and punishing enemies. Instead, a political party can be far more: an educational instrument that crystalizes an entire worldview and generates a compelling vision of social change. That's why we still listen to accep-

ance speeches at the nominating conventions, and that's why election campaigns still matter. In the fall of 1936 when FDR ran for re-election on a radical platform that condemned the "money-changers and economic royalists," he brought millions of workers into the streets and set the stage for the dramatic sit-down strikes that followed two months later.

The Democratic Party never again played such a role. Labor-based political parties have been almost universal in the industrial West because they arise out of compelling logic that urges unionized labor to reach beyond its own ranks and forge alliances with those natural allies who are either unorganized or demobilized. John L. Lewis once thought that he could transform the Roosevelt Democracy into such a party; but when FDR failed to come to the CIO's aid during the bloody "Little Steel" strikes during the summer of 1937 the labor chieftain began to break with the President. By 1940 he had repudiated FDR and the Democrats, but only to endorse Wendell Wilkie, the GOP candidate in that year's election.

Today neither Sweeney nor any other trade unionist would dare hope that the Democrats might actually become the kind of party that spoke forthrightly on behalf of labor. Along with the National Education Association, the AFL-CIO has had the largest single bloc of delegates at every Democratic convention of the last 20 years, but you would never know it either from reading the platform or listening to the campaign rhetoric. Given the decay into which America's contemporary political party system has fallen, American socialists should make clear that if John Sweeney hopes to become the John L. Lewis of our era, he should put a reassessment of the AFL-CIO's political options high on his agenda.

Nelson Lichtenstein is the author of The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor. He is a principle organizer of "The Fight for America's Future: A Teach-In with the Labor Movement" held at Columbia University October 3 and 4.

DSA PAC Endorsement Update

- ◆ In the last issue of *Democratic Left*, we reported that Carlos Romero-Barcelo (Puerto Rico at-large), a member of the Progressive Caucus, was endorsed by DSA PAC. We realize that this endorsement was a mistake and have withdrawn it.
- ◆ Likewise, DSA PAC voted to withdraw endorsements of Peter Defazio (OR-4th District) and Elizabeth Furse (OR-1st District).
- ◆ In addition, DSA PAC voted to endorse candidate John Tierney, who is running in the 6th district of MA against Republican incumbent Peter Torkildsen; and to endorse candidate Shirley Baca, running in the 2nd district of NM against Republican incumbent Joe Skeen.

Globalization & Its Discontents

BY DAN GALLIN

The globalization of the world economy in the last fifteen years or so means a qualitative change in its character—a change comparable to the transformation wrought by industrial revolution in the last century. The industrial revolution helped create a truly international world economy. One hundred and fifty years ago, Marx and Engels described it in the following terms:

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country...it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood.

All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe...The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all...nations into [Western] civilization."

The openness of international trade is nothing new. In fact, economies today are no more open than they were before 1914. The primary difference is that labor migration is far more restricted now than it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In an international economy, however, the principal entities remain national economies, linked together by a network of trade, foreign investment and credit. What we are moving toward now is something differ-

ent: a globally integrated economy where the populations of even successful and advanced states and regions are at the mercy of autonomous and uncontrollable forces—uncontrollable because of their global character.

The predominant actors in global integration are the world's 37,000 transnational corporations. Together with their 200,000 subsidiaries, they now control 75 percent of all world trade in commodities, manufactured goods and services (more, if subcontracting is taken into account.) One third of this trade takes place among different units of a single corporation, making it very difficult for governments and international trade organizations to control. Transnationals now also control one-third of the world's productive assets.

Globalization might seem inevitable as the objective by-product of irreversible and unstoppable technological advances. But, although technological advance would, in any case, accelerate and intensify international contacts, the form globalization we see now has been shaped by the economic and political agenda of the advanced industrial countries. This agenda, in turn, has been changing in the last twenty years. In the middle decades of this century, Western European countries operated on a tacit but generally accepted social contract that aimed to promote full employment and provide social protection for all their citizens.

But since the oil shocks of the 1970s, the recession of the 1980s, and a series of fiscal crises—most notably the suspension of debt payments by Mexico in 1982 that nearly caused an international financial crisis—the industrial nations have started dismantling their welfare states and deregulating the economy. In effect, the post-war social contract is broken.

The West has transmitted these policy changes to the rest of the world through its dominance of international

trade and finance, and through its control of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Developing countries were rendered particularly vulnerable by the massive debts they acquired during the 1970s and 1980s. The power of creditor countries, in particular the U.S. and Britain, increased just when their governments were taken over by reactionary politicians promoting "free market" ideologies—a convergence that permitted rigid neo-liberal views on structural adjustment to dominate the development debate in the 1980s. The antiseptic term "structural adjustment" has become a code word for a radical experiment in neo-liberal economics, with catastrophic results for the people both in Third World countries and in the former Communist countries.

Since the collapse of the Soviet system some six or seven years ago, transnational corporate power and its companion neo-liberal ideologies has become truly global. As *Business Week* described it: "A new, brutally competitive world economic order is emerging with the demise of the Cold War..." fueled by "the integration into the global economy of the new capitalist nations and much of the developing world—representing some three thousand million people."

In short, we face a situation where transnationals have immensely increased their power within two decades, and where capital mobility is practically uncontrolled. One political consequence, with major social implications, has been the withering away of the State—not, of course, in favor of a democratically organized civil society, as socialist utopians projected, but to the benefit of transnational corporate power.

At the same time, the ability of the State to control capital, even if it wanted to, has weakened. Conservative governments, both in the first and third worlds, are stripping the State of its social and economic functions. Indeed, their ideology demands that the State lose any function perceived as an obstacle to corporate expansion and that does not serve the purpose of supporting and protecting corporate expansion.

The role of the State has declined at several levels.

◆ In the first place, the State has declined as an employer: the number of global privatizations increased five-fold between 1985 and 1990. Privatization is rapidly increasing as formerly protected economies open up to transnational corporate investment in places such as India; in bureaucratic collectivized economies moving toward State capitalism, such as China, Vietnam or Cuba; and of course in the former Communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe and in Mongolia.

◆ In the second place, the State's growing inability to control international flows of capital or

capital flight has reduced its ability to impose or collect taxes and has thus reduced, sometimes drastically, the income available for public services and social programs. The social consensus that depended on the ability of the State to protect the weak is thereby further undermined.

In addition, international agreements encourage competitive bidding-down (underbidding) of taxes and standards between nation-States.

Corporate taxes have already dropped significantly as a share of total government revenue in Western European countries. In the same way, any regulation becomes a target simply because transnationals regard it as a cost.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in particular has offered transnationals much greater freedom and would penalize governments that try to exert greater control over them. The new World Trade Organization protects only the freedom of international trade; it does not protect other freedoms. It thus contributes to the fundamental imbalance in global society.

Because their most important impact is the promotion of capital mobility, deals such as the Uruguay Round of the GATT should more appropriately be called "free capital" rather than "free trade" agreements. These agreements can be used to change or remove national laws, policies and customs that stand in the way of the operations of transnationals in the global market economy. Free capital agreements narrow the scope of democratic control over social and economic policies, including the conditions under which firms may be bought, sold or closed by foreign investors. They transfer authority from democratically accountable governments to transnationals accountable only to their shareholders.

◆ Third, the growing inability of the State to control capital within national borders through legislation or other political measures carries with it a commensurate loss of influence of all other related national institutions: national parliaments, political parties, national trade union centers—in other words, all instruments of any existing democratic control. The loss of control over capital explains why it becomes difficult to distinguish political parties of the Left and Right, and why citizens feel helpless and cynical in the face of institutions that can no longer deliver.

The crisis of democracy is created by the growing irrelevancy of democratic institutions operating within the confines of the nation-State. It is in this context that we must look at the social consequence of globalization.

The antiseptic term "structural adjustment" has become a code word for a radical experiment in neo-liberal economics, with catastrophic results.

The global labor market, also sometimes referred to as the global hiring hall because of the mobility of capital and the fluidity of communications, puts all workers in direct competition, both between economic sectors within countries as well as across borders. Workers in industrialized countries compete against each other, as do the workers in third world countries, former Communist countries, and Communist third world countries, with wage ratios that can go as far as one to fifty.

This is not only a question of "poor" and "rich" countries. There is hardly a country so poor that a poorer one cannot be found. The computer operator in the Philippines working for \$150 a month is already competing with her Chinese counterpart working for \$80-100, while in Vietnam the legal minimum monthly wage of \$50 is in practice often undercut by firms paying as little as \$20.

What does "competition" mean in that context? There is no bottom to this relentless downward spiral, set in motion by the process of competitive underbidding of wages and conditions on a global scale. The endpoint is slave labor.

And therein lies the dirty secret of neo-liberal globalization: the global labor market is ultimately not regulated by economic laws but by political power. It is regulated by massive government intervention in the form of military and police repression.

In only one respect has the power of the State remained unchallenged by the growth of transnational corporate power, and that is in its ability to repress dissent and resistance against the consequences of globalization. National police and armies have been turned into the security guards of transnational capital, particularly in the free trade zones, of which there are now 700 (and growing). Increasingly, countries have become free trade zones at nation-State level, or aspire to that status, and have paid their dues by repressing unions, popular movements, and democratic rights in general.

This brings us to the economic role of repression and to the question of why poor countries are poor. People do not choose to be poor; if they are, it is because they have been forced into poverty and kept there by repression. The poorer countries that are significant actors in the global economy are either severely repressed societies (China, Vietnam, Indonesia) or societies that have been the victims of severe repression in their recent past (Russia, Eastern and Central Europe, Brazil.)

This is why the struggle for democracy and human rights has to be such an overriding priority for the labor movement and its allies. Democracy is not a matter of taste, a question of cultural preference, or an academic exercise. It is a fundamental class issue for workers, since their ability to organize and to defend themselves depends on it. The democratic struggle is the clearest expression of the common interest of international labor—that is, the con-

verging interest of those who work in conditions of virtual slavery and struggle to break out of it, and of those who are threatened by sinking into slavery and struggle not to sink deeper.

The treatment of the vast global underclass of 66 million migrant workers and at least 23 million refugees is emblematic of the worldwide brutalization of society. Massive and permanent unemployment is no longer a public scandal, even in societies where full employment has been taken for granted in decades; forced labor in different forms is widely tolerated (33 million) as is child labor (100 to 200 million). Neo-liberal globalization leads to a nightmare future—one where a few islands of high-tech prosperity survive under military and police protection in a sea of poverty, misery, and constantly seething and constantly repressed rebellion.

In the last century, Marx wrote that humanity had a choice between socialism and barbarism. We did not do so well on socialism, and now barbarism is staring us in the face.

Globalization, as such, may be inevitable, but the neo-liberal model of globalization is not preordained. By taking the struggle beyond the borders of the nation-State, to the global level where it belongs, we can offer a social-democratic model of globalization in contrast to the neo-liberal paradigm.

One of the building blocks of such a model would be a global social charter protecting at least four basic workers rights:

- ◆ the right to organize unions that members control democratically;
- ◆ the right to engage in collective bargaining and to strike when such bargaining does not resolve the issues;
- ◆ the right to be free from forced labor for prisoners and children; and,
- ◆ the right to be free from discrimination in hiring, promotion or remuneration.

Workers must also regain the right everywhere to strike in solidarity with other workers, whether one is directly involved in the dispute or not. We must work for the repeal of bans on so-called secondary action. It is up to workers themselves to determine whether a consistent and full defense of their interests requires taking solidarity action.

There are other building blocks; for example, we need international regulations ensuring that exploitation of natural resources and production of goods does not damage the natural environment or the host societies involved. (The exploitation of the rain for-

ests, open coal mining, and even certain tourist development are typical cases in point.) In every case, we are talking about building a new international system of regulating the operations of transnationals at worldwide levels.

So, how do we put the concept of social-democratic globalization on the political agenda?

Our problem is not that we are in contest with neo-liberal conservatives and with right-wing extremists on who has the better ideas. We have always had the better ideas. Rather, we are in a contest of power. For the opposition, power comes from the control of large amounts of money; for us, power comes from organization. So the issue is organization.

All of us are well aware that we must become, at the international or global level, a credible threat to conservative governments and to transnational corporations. In other words, we must demonstrate that we have the capacity to seriously inconvenience them unless the policy changes we advocate take place.

This means that we must restore our credibility, but in a power contest with new rules—not those that applied within the national spheres where the labor movement traditionally exerted its influence. This, I believe, will require a cultural revolution in our movement—a process of complex, profound change that takes place under great and increasing pressure.

First is the political task of reestablishing the unity of our movement. Despite all the complexities, at the end of the day we have one enemy, and we should be one movement. The collapse of the Stalinist system everywhere but in China and in a few lesser countries has created this opportunity. It has freed the useful part of the Communist trade union movement—that part controlled by its membership—to overcome the disagreements over tactics (although such discussions will always be needed and useful). No sane trade unionist today can pretend to be the vanguard, competing with the rest of the movement.

As the weight of the Stalinist orthodoxy lifts, and the means of enforcing it through corruption and terror shrink, Communist trade unionists are beginning to reflect on the sense of what Marx and Engels, the forefathers of social-democracy, wrote in the Manifesto:

"The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement."

Our principle must be: one enemy, one movement. We seek to become a truly unified, pluralist and

democratic movement, capable of mustering industrial strength through the voluntary discipline of the affiliated organizations and through professional and efficient organization.

We must also think of ourselves as one movement in solidarity. Simply because a significant conflict does not happen within our organizational jurisdiction does not mean that its outcome will not have a significant impact on our members. We cannot stand aside from it. We cannot do everything and be everywhere, but we should extend solidarity to workers outside our membership when important trade union principles are at stake and the repercussions are likely to affect the entire movement.

The second, even more serious problem is that the labor movement is, for all practical purposes, still confined by national borders. The relevance of national trade union centers is declining as that of the nation-State declines. Such links as they may have are mostly international links, particularly through common activities with respect to transnationals. Unions rarely give a central place to the international dimension of their activity.

We do not have today an international trade union movement worthy of that name. What passes for the international trade union movement is in fact a loose network of linkages and bridges between national organizations. At best it is something like a permanent international conference call.

The trade union movement at the national and international level must assume responsibility for the welfare of society as a whole and must make itself the voice of civil society. A position like that taken recently by one leader in the aftermath of the French December strikes, that his organization was not responsible for the general interest of society but only for his members' paychecks, is deeply reactionary. It is positions such as these that enable conservative politicians to downgrade the labor movement as one "interest group" among many, along with other lobbies defending "special interests."

The labor movement in fact defends the general interest of civil society on such fundamental and universal issues as human and democratic rights and sustainable development. It must become the voice of global civil society in advocating an alternative, social-democratic model for a global new world order, while at the same time becoming the organized core of the global force needed to carry it forward.

*For our opponents,
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NDP VICTORY

BY ELAINE BERNARD

Defying the political pundits, this spring the New Democratic Party won a tightly contested election battle and gained a second term as government in Canada's west coast province of British Columbia. Trailing the right-wing Liberal Party by as much as 25 percentage points less than a year before the election, the BC NDP victory provides some important lessons for progressives on how to take on the "new right" and win. In light of the dismal showing of the NDP in the last few years, the lessons of the BC election are as important for Canadian progressives and labor activists as they are for those of us in the US.

So, what has happened to the NDP in Canada over the last few years? After a dismal showing in the last Federal Election (where the party's popular vote dropped to 9%), the party experienced an equally disastrous Ontario election which saw the NDP government of Bob Rae booted out of office and replaced with a right populist Progressive Conservative government headed by Mike Harris. Harris has unleashed an onslaught of attacks on organized labor, the elderly, students, teachers, the public sector, the poor and all of the "usual suspects."

The Ontario party appears to be on the mend, having elected a new leader, Howard Hampton. Many of the public sector unions, however, are still hesitant about making common cause with the NDP in Ontario. They feel that the Rae government's public sector-imposed cutbacks, the so-called "social contract," was a betrayal of the party's longstanding commitment to public sector union rights and activist, progressive government. Worse still, they feel it opened the door to further draconian actions by right-wing local governments and successor Tory provincial government of Mike Harris. Hampton has a long way to go before he can reunite the coalition of labor and social movements that brought the NDP to power in Ontario in 1990, but at least

he recognizes that major reconstruction of the party in Ontario is required.

The Federal Party, on the other hand, got caught in a squeeze between the far right (Tory and Reform Parties) and the (near right) Liberals. The Federal NDP scrambled to occupy the center, but was not able to sufficiently distinguish itself from the Liberals, and was further weighted down by residual disappointment and anger over the Rae government. Again, the Federal party has started to rebuild its support under a new leader, former Nova Scotia party leader, Alexa McDonough. Overall the party still has a massive job ahead of it if it is to build a strong, viable left electoral alternative.

In British Columbia, NDP began to turn things around last spring when Premier Mike Harcourt resigned as leader. Glen Clark, a former union organizer, economist and well-respected activist minister in the Harcourt government, won the leadership campaign within the party to take over as leader and Premier. Coming from a long activist history in the party, Clark immediately provided strong leadership for both the government and the party. He called a public inquiry into a charity scandal that had beleaguered the Harcourt government. He promised to increase funding to health care, education, and women's programming, and froze tuition fees, electrical rates and insurance rates.

Dubbed a "class warrior" and "ideological" by much of the province's media for his pro-working people policies, Clark unapologetically ran the election campaign on the theme "on your side." While the Liberals promised a 15% tax cut, \$1.1 billion in tax breaks to banks, developers and corporations and a \$3 billion cut in government spending, the NDP countered by positioning itself as "your best choice to protect health care, education and the environment." Clark defended the role of government and public enterprise as not simply necessary evils, but as positive contributions to the quality of life and well-being of the province.

With most of the provincial media calling for a vote for the Liberals, a legacy of scandals, and the business community solidly behind the Liberals, the NDP suffered a large drop in seats. The party ended up trailing the Liberals in popular vote, but won 39 seats (with 39% of the popular vote), enough to form a majority Government in the 75 seat provincial legislature. For the first time in history, the BC NDP was elected for a second term in government.

With such a razor thin majority, the party is hardly out of the woods. But it at least has an opportunity to continue to govern the province and show the voters in British Columbia and beyond that there is a progressive alternative to the neo-liberal policies of privatization, deregulation, tax give-aways to the rich and corporations, and free trade. The right and business community, of course, are not resting. Having pulled out all the stops to defeat the BC NDP government, they are not content to accept the decision of the voters and wait five years until the next provincial election. In spite of BC's strong economy, low debt and small deficit (among the lowest of any province in Canada) they are continuing the campaign to force the government to cut social programs and gut the public sector.

But the successful formula that won the election for the NDP needs to be continued. Unlike in Ontario, the BC government worked with the labor movement — both public and private sector unions. In two crucial and potentially explosive areas, healthcare and telecommunications, the government helped broker industry-wide "accords" among labor, management and the government which give unions and the public greater voice and control over the transformation of these industries. In the case of healthcare, the accord provides guaranteed job security for health care workers. Rather than attempting to eliminate the public sector, the BC government is attempting to help empower workers through their unions to transform government — to make it more effective and efficient — in the interest of the whole community.

Today the battle lines between labor and capital are more sharply drawn than at any time since the NDP was founded. A corporate agenda of privatization, deregulation, cutbacks, austerity and free trade, along with corporate tax giveaways and the resulting large deficits, have all reduced the redistributive power of government. The NDP needs bold policies to address this crisis — not simply "kinder cuts." This means moving beyond opposition to the current market-driven restructuring and to begin to reassert the social values that should influence economic decision-making. It must champion economic democracy and popular planning. And it requires the party to move beyond the legislature and parliamentarism and to support, build, and work with the popular movements.

Progressive change today requires mobilization in support of change — and the NDP, both federally and provincially, needs the social movements and their ability to mobilize people in support of progressive social change as a counter to business. It is no longer solely in the hands of social democratic governments to deliver on reform. Rather, they must help to strengthen the social movements, including their most important allies in the workplace, organized labor, to create a climate and momentum for progressive change. The BC NDP has started to move in that direction with its industrial "accords." It has been given a second term in office, and it must now work with labor to breathe real life into these agreements — so that the promise of worker and public involvement in decision-making becomes the reality of civil empowerment and greater democracy in British Columbia.

Elaine Bernard is Executive Director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, a member of DSA and former president of the BC NDP.

Attention DSA Members & IDS supporters!

The Institute for Democratic Socialism has changed its name to the Democratic Socialists of America Fund. As was the case with IDS, all contributions to DSA Fund are tax deductible.

BREATH OF FRESH AIR

Union Summer Gives New Life to the Labor Movement

BY JEFF LACHER

Union Summer has certainly attracted its share of attention. Stories have appeared on screen, in print and on the airwaves from ABC News to *Z Magazine*. Most of the articles make the same point—though some more cynically than others—that labor is coming back as a political force and it will be led by a new generation of activists. True enough, it is precisely because labor is coming back that new programs like Union Summer have come to be.

Union Summer involved about 1,000 college students and young workers immersing themselves in labor support work in about 20 cities across the country in three separate three-week “waves”. The participants engaged in a broad range of activities in support of working people including strike support work, union organizing, Living Wage campaigns, the anti-sweatshop campaign, and voter registration.

The program was no doubt a stroke of genius. It was designed to invoke the heroic images of students who traveled to Mississippi as part of Freedom Summer in 1964. The goal of both programs was not simply to use volunteers from distant areas to support local struggles, nor just to educate the students about the struggle. Rather, it was a step to begin a larger change: to get these students back on their campuses and in their communities explaining what they’ve seen and the stories they’ve heard—and perhaps get the individuals hooked on the struggle for justice for working people.

Broadening the labor community was certainly an implicit, if not, explicit goal of Union Summer. The organizers of the program placed a special emphasis on recruiting Latinos, African Americans, Asians, and other people of color as well as women to participate. The group I encountered in New York was made up of roughly a third people of color, and roughly three-quarters were women. The effort to-

ward diversity proved only moderately successful.

Other very significant goals of the program involved the effects that students would have on the local unions they encountered.

“Union Summer was a great social experiment because unions were opening the door to young people from the community and saying we want you to participate, to take some responsibility,” explained Raahi Reddy, an organizer with SEIU and the Union Summer Site Coordinator for New York City.

By doing so, the unions were taking a real risk. Although there were some bad experiences with this experiment, there were also some phenomenal experiences. The greatest hope was that the eyes of the participants would be opened to what real struggles workers face and at the same time that the eyes of the local unions would be opened to this great untapped resource in the community—young people.

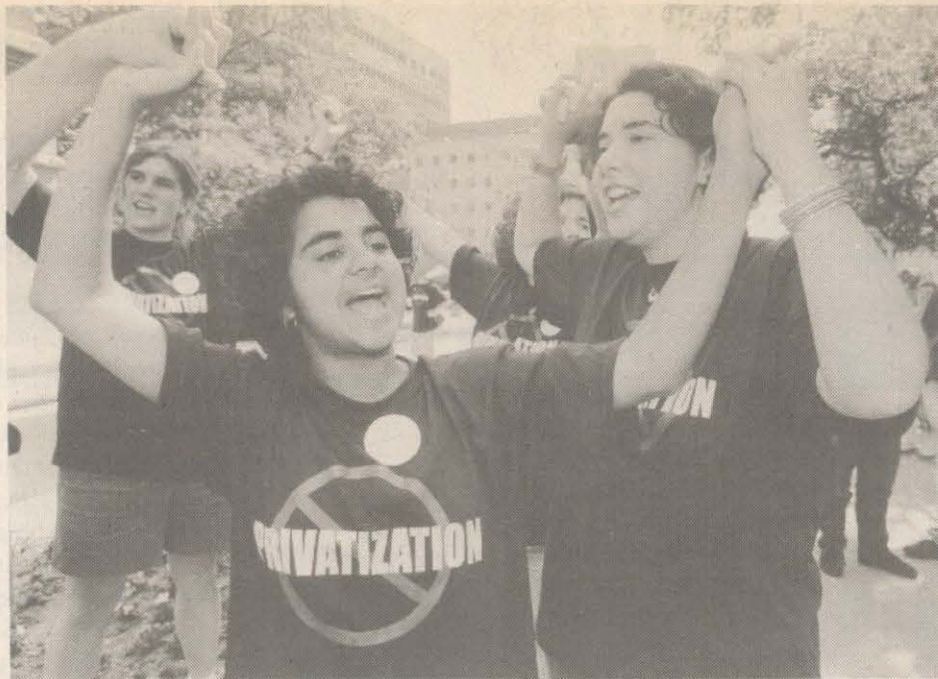
Clearly the young folks involved made a real difference to the local efforts they supported—both in practical terms, and in infusing weary strikers and activists with a boost of energy and enthusiasm.

Liz Campos, a 23-year old Union Summer participant from New York, described how Union Summer participants helped out Teamsters Local 25’s striking Hertz workers at the Boston Airport:

“The Teamsters had been out about a week...we joined them on about their 5th day on the picket line and about every other day we’d go out there for a couple of hours. We heard they were losing energy—they didn’t expect the strike to take this long. People were even thinking of crossing the picket line...then toward the end of our stay in Boston, we had the America Needs a Raise Rally. Before we went in we had a picket line outside city hall. It was Union Summer folks really leading the chants! We were really pumped up because it was our third picket line of the day...we were like ‘this is it!’ The Teamsters were unhappy and moping around,

so we were shouting 'Come on Teamsters, we can't hear you!'—trying to pump them up. We heard the next day that by the end of the rally they decided to stay out on strike.

I know it wasn't completely due to us, but I felt like our energy, our presence really added something... We may have given them the boost they needed at the time they needed it."



Jim West/Impact Visuals

Union Summer participants join public employees in a rally against privatization of public employee jobs in Michigan.

Whether the striking Boston workers are successful or not remains to be seen, but it seems quite clear the Union Summer participants had a positive impact on the workers.

I met Liz in front of a D'Agostino's Supermarket in Greenwich Village where she and other Union Summer participants were asking shoppers not to buy Farmland milk, whose employees have been on strike for eight months. Word in the union office is that D'Agostino's may be planning to drop their contract with Farmland next time the contract comes up for renewal—partly the result of so many strikers, union supporters and Union Summer folks in front of their stores.

Liz, who participated in all three of the Union Summer waves—first as a participant, then as a "Team Leader," seemed very glad that they got to do a lot more than strike support. She explained that when her group was out doing voter registration in poor neighborhoods, "We had people saying, 'This is great, we've needed this, we need people here, we want you here...When you hear that it just gives you more energy.'"

Her face lit up every time she described the specific details of their activities. In support of SEIU Local 285's opposition to mandatory drug testing, Union Summer folks stood outside before negotiations. "We were out there handing out cups of urine to [management's] chief negotiators. Of course they

didn't take them." She paused before explaining, "It was really Gatorade."

The New York Union Summer group, where Liz was stationed for the last of the three waves, worked mostly with UNITE's anti-sweatshop campaign. The participants helped out in the Garment Workers Justice Center doing sweatshop research, organizing delegations to confront sweatshop bosses who withheld wages (getting workers' their money on at least four occasions), organizing rallies, and helping UNITE staff with outreach to campus and community groups.

Ginny Coughlin, the organizer of UNITE's Stop Sweatshops Campaign and former DSA youth activist and staffer, was glad to have the help. "It was a great opportunity to introduce college students to the horrible conditions in sweatshops but also to the organizing going on to end the sweatshops."

Ginny was not the only DSA member involved in Union Summer. In fact, more than half of the attendees of last winter's DSA Youth Conference signed up for Union Summer at the Conference. Also noteworthy is the fact that DSA's manual for activists doing labor support work provided a valuable model for the development of Union Summer's organizing materials.

On behalf of the United Farm Workers, the NY Union Summer group also orchestrated a signature drive of twenty-three Red Apple and Sloan's supermarkets, to get the store managers to sign a pledge in support of strawberry workers' right to organize. Only eight managers refused to sign, a few managers couldn't be located, but

Picketing a
scab's house
with striking
Detroit
newspaper
workers.



Jim West/Impact Visuals

thirteen others signed the pledge on the spot.

Not all of the experiences were pleasant. For some, the harsh realities of labor union membership challenged participants' romanticized images of labor. One Union Summer participant explained how surprised she was at the level of racism that existed among some union members in a California local. Many participants occasionally had to deal with disorganized locals, sexism, racism, or reactionary politics. While the experience certainly did not shatter their support of working people and unions in general, it perhaps informed them of just how difficult a task it is to build unity among workers at a local level, let alone in a mass-based progressive Labor movement.

In talking to Liz, or nearly any of the participants, it is obvious that these young people learned a lot about unions and organizing during the program.

political action, with standing up to injustice... Labor brings it all together—if workers don't have rights you don't have anything. This generation—those who just graduated who aren't working, or are underemployed, or treated like shit in their workplaces are realizing that something has to be done. Otherwise we won't have a future...we must get back to the Labor Movement."

A new generation has been touched by the organizing bug. Optimists on the left have often said the 90s would make the 60s look like the 50s. Will the Union Summer participants help prove this hypothesis to be just a decade or so behind schedule? I for one, am counting on it.

Jeff Lacher is a member of DSA's National Political Committee. He is also one of those chic young labor organizers you've been hearing so much about lately.

In addition to a full schedule of activities where priceless practical experience was gained, the participants enjoyed frequent guest speakers who discussed subjects ranging from "Labor History" and "Organizing" to "Labor's Musical Traditions." Unlike the AFL-CIO of the past, subjects like "Political Economy" and "Diversity, Class & Gender" were featured prominently rather than ignored.

It is far too early to tell if the long-term goal of Union Summer has been achieved—that is, to start a ripple of labor consciousness through America's college and university communities—but it seems clear the students are returning to campus planning to do just that. The seeds have been sown.

Most participants have been noticeably changed by their experiences. Liz for one is ready to bring the message home. "Labor has always been important to me, but the most important thing I learned [in Union Summer] is that this is something to live by...you can't just support things here and there, like you do in high school...It's a way of life." Liz is planning to go to graduate school in the field of social work, but in the long run, she wants to get into labor. As she explained it,

"Unions can set a standard for where we should be, what is acceptable...I've always associated unions with social justice, with po-

Rocking Solidarity

The New York City Labor Chorus

BY MARGIE BURNS

When the union's inspiration through the
worker's blood shall run

*There can be no power greater anywhere beneath
the sun*

*Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble voice
of one?*

But the union makes us strong."

As is the case with any mass movement, the labor movement has weathered many changes, but two things have remained constant: the struggle for dignity and basic human rights and the powerful voices that have told the story through song.

Indeed, music has always played a significant role in political struggle on the left, educating and enlightening those who dare to listen, by telling the stories of working people and providing courage and inspiration.

The New York City Labor Chorus proudly carries on that tradition. Founded in 1991, it is the largest chorus of its kind, with 70 members representing over 24 unions. Its membership crosses over ethnic, racial, gender, and generational boundaries, giving new meaning to the word solidarity.

The Chorus has performed everywhere from universities, union halls, and churches to Lincoln Center, Town Hall, the United Nations and Madison Square Garden, where they were the opening act at the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Yet their performances are not limited to pure entertainment. Recently the chorus performed at a demonstration in support of social workers from DC-37 who were on suspension for fighting for the right to work, earn decent salaries, and get medical benefits.

Among the Chorus' many supporters are former mayor David Dinkins, Ruby Dee and Ozzie

Davis, and a host of other political activists and union members. Their musical repertoire ranges from gospel, jazz, classical, Irish, and folk to Yiddish songs. Chorus members have sung in Spanish for a show celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and learned the South African National Anthem for a show in Washington, D.C., where the audience spanned 90 countries. They have also appeared on the same stage as Pete Seeger on numerous occasions.

They are as inspirational as they are versatile, which is probably due to Geoffrey Fairweather, the Labor Chorus conductor. "He teaches us to listen to the music in a completely different way, and has such a gentle and wonderful way about him that he always brings out the best in us musically," one chorus member remarked. Fairweather has taught at Julliard and is currently Chorus Master of Opera Ebony.

Accompanying the Chorus on piano is Eustace Johnson. Johnson is the music director for the Praise Ensemble, where he is the resident composer, arranger, and keyboardist. He also directs the gospel choir at Trinity Church.

For a typical performance, the Chorus usually arrives an hour early to warm-up with Eustace on his portable electric keyboard. The singing lasts anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour (or six or seven tunes) and ends with a song that has become their anthem, "Rocking Solidarity," an up-beat version of the traditional union song arranged by Pete Seeger.

But more important than where and for whom the Chorus members have performed is why they do it at all. What is the motivation that brings together these diverse people from various unions?

"Becoming a part of this chorus, with so many ethnic groups and learning so many different types of music, has given us a special awareness," claims Ione Foote,



Bobbie Rabinowitz

from Social Service Employees Union Local 371. “We learn so much about the cultures of peoples through singing folk music from different countries, it really brings us closer together,” she explained. “We don’t feel so upset, because hearing the words about the struggle makes you feel better.”

“We always have a big turnout of chorus members at the shows, even though we have busy work schedules and responsibilities at home, because we feel very strongly in our hearts a commitment to the labor movement and the struggle,” she added.

“I heard about the Labor Chorus through the Educational Director of my union,” said Elizabeth Graves from UNITE. “The performance that sticks out in my mind is the Democratic National Convention, when we had to learn ‘God Bless America’ in eight-part harmony, and we did it.”

“Not only do we learn about the history of the songs we sing, but we learn about the people who wrote the songs and how the songs came about,” she continued. “We meet a lot of interesting people, and I can’t stand to miss one performance, or even a rehearsal, because it’s about more than just singing, it’s about friendship.”

“I work for child welfare and I joined the chorus for therapy—to relax myself, because I work in a very stressful job, dealing with children—and it’s hard,” explained Theresa Hargrove of Social Services Employees Union, Local 371. “We identify with the struggle, because we are the Labor Chorus—and that’s what it’s all about—solidarity in the union,” she said.

It’s also good for networking. “I may find some kind of services I can offer to my client because of the people I meet from different unions,” she added.

Being in the chorus is not all fun and games, though. Chorus members have a very heavy performance schedule and two-hour weekly rehearsals at a grammar school located on the Upper East side, where they spend a lot of time learning the words and working out the melodies to new songs.

Notes Rick Eisenberg, a former carpenter with the United Auto Workers, “You don’t have to look alike or sound alike—but you realize that it takes different parts to get the whole sound, and we have to come together at some point.” Not a bad metaphor for labor unions in general.

“A lot of people in the group have been with the labor movement for a long time, because they saw the need for a strong support for union leadership,” he said, “and since there has been no vital leadership in the past 15 years.”

"They are only beginning to recognize the urgency of local politics, and how important it is to have an independent labor organization," Eisenberg continued, "because so many of the rights unions have fought for over the years have been stripped away."

"Recently we performed at a rally for the 'America Needs a Raise' campaign, on Wall Street, and at meetings of the Central Labor Council, and it seems that business-as-usual is changing."

For most members, it is the powerful combination of personal and political satisfaction that draws them to this chorus, and they are overwhelmed, because it is a way of participating that they might never have considered important.

"When I walked into the auditorium everyone was so colorful—everyone's coats were on the side, in the middle of the winter. First they started with one group—the altos, and they did their part—then he (Fairweather) went on to the tenors, and I thought, "That sounds nice!" recalls Sabra Eisenberg from Local 371.

"It was amazing when you heard them all together and how tired people were totally transformed, and that's when I realized singing this type of music can actually regenerate you."

"My first performance was at a Baptist church on 117th Street and Manhattan Avenue. It was a small congregation, but their choir was magnificent—and we

had such a wonderful reception because they were happy to have this mixed group in their community."

"There's a sense of history and pride," she said, "and I think everyone would agree that it's the chorus that provides that pride."

I think one member of the chorus who asked to remain anonymous summed it all up when he said, "It's about raising the consciousness of the people—and if you look at the songs we sing—it's like we're labor organizers trying to learn about the struggle through music. We're the Joe Hills of the 1990's—propagandists for the working class."

The New York City Labor Chorus has produced a medley of traditional labor songs and timeless popular tunes. CDs are \$15 and tapes are \$10 (plus \$3 postage and handling). Make checks payable to Fund for Labor Education and mail to: New York City Labor Chorus, c/o Fund for Labor Education, 2109 Broadway, Suite 206, New York, NY 10023.

Margie Burns works as the Membership Services Coordinator and all-around database diva in the DSA national office.

Save the date!
The 1997
DSA National
Convention
NOVEMBER 8-9, 1997

Look for details in future issues of *Democratic Left*

Charging the Elephant:

San Diego DSA Kicks Off Convention Week with a Call to Action

BY SANDRA BROW & HERB SHORE

Saturday, August 10th, 1996, the week end before the start of the Republican National Convention, over 300 people attended the San Diego Hearing on Economic Insecurity, a forum intended to hammer home a message to our elected officials that working America is hurting, and to demand that government take corrective action.

For two hours, a panel that included Congressman Bob Filner (D), California Assemblywoman Denise Ducheny, and five candidates who may soon hold seats in Congress and the California Assembly listened while a steady stream of local people told their stories. Testimony came from workers, seniors, welfare mothers, men and women seeking work and students soon to join them, teachers, fired members of the bankrupt San Diego Symphony, government employees and hospital staffers fighting out-sourcing and downsizing, and even maquiladora workers from across the border, whose low pay and lack of benefits erode American jobs, compensation, and benefits. Representatives from the AFL-CIO, senior citizens, peace activists, an economist, and an elementary school principal provided interpretation and lent a broader perspective. Marc Bayard of Share the Wealth identified positive legislative solutions, and Eric Vega of Sacramento DSA summed it all up effectively with a call for action now.

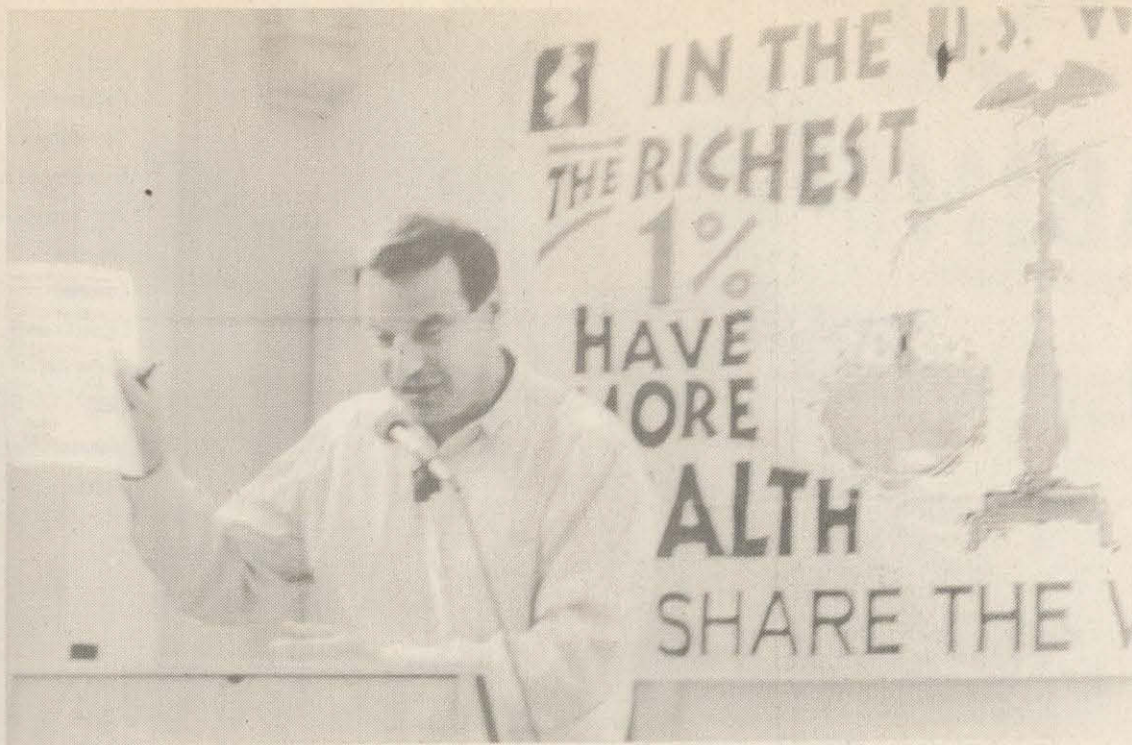
"I played by the rules," said Barbara Balaban, unemployed after 17 years of steady work at the Sports Arena. "I did all the right things," said Lillian Hanson, single mother forced onto welfare. "After 21 years with an aerospace manufacturer, I was laid off for fifteen months out of the last two years," said

Terry Christian, aerospace worker, "and I am surprised at how similar my story is to that of Manuel Delgado of the Garment Workers." The message was clear: poverty, unemployment, and welfare are not the choices of the lazy, the incompetent, or the mentally deficient. The slide into poverty is happening throughout mainstream American life. Our legislators must recognize the trend, redefine the tax structures, eliminate campaign funding that sells our elections to the highest corporate bidders, and support laws that promote full employment with a livable wage, guaranteed benefits, and universal healthcare.

Broad-Based Participation for a More Effective Message

Our local has been active in San Diego since the founding of DSA, but this was the largest event we had ever attempted. We knew that we could not put on an event of this magnitude without the support and participation of the San Diego progressive community beyond DSA. Following the example of the successful hearing held in Boston, we invited other organizations and individuals to join with us in forming a Committee on Economic Insecurity, and it was the Committee that formally sponsored the hearing.

"All too often, the issues of concern to the left unavoidably tend to divide us: women from men, African American and Latino from white, gay from straight, seniors from the young, labor from environmentalists," said Virginia Franco, longtime member of San Diego DSA. "The anxiety and uncertainty brought on by the current assault on all working people can only be fought if the organizations representing all of these communities work together.



Congressmember
Bob Filner signing
the Pledge for
Economic Justice

Julian Hintz

This is an issue that puts the overwhelming majority of people on the same side.”

Eventually, over thirty groups endorsed the hearing, including labor unions, Gray Panthers, Neighbor to Neighbor, Share the Wealth, San Diego NOW, National Lawyers Guild, California Nurses Association, Welfare Warriors, Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, and many others. However, the main work in organizing and publicizing the hearing was carried out by DSA members, a number of whom had been “paper members” and were participating in DSA activity for the first time.

Funding and Organizing the Hearing

San Diego DSA realized that an effort of this magnitude needed a full time paid organizer. We were fortunate in being able to hire Stephanie Jennings, a veteran supporter and organizer of progressive action, to coordinate the effort and provide day-to-day contact with panel members, speakers, and the media, to set up meetings, arrange for the hall, and serve as liaison with supporting groups. Stephanie kept in close touch with Boston DSA, with Alan Charney and Michele Rossi in the DSA national office, with Chris

Riddiough in our Washington D.C. office, and with Tim Parks, Eric Vega and Duane Campbell in other California DSA chapters. Chris provided us with the Pledge for Economic Justice, which we circulated among the panelists and audience. For a small DSA local in a conservative bastion like San Diego, the advantage of having the support of a progressive national network was critical.

A phone and message machine was set up for the Committee on Economic Insecurity. The meeting rooms and the use of Craftsman Hall for the event was provided at a nominal charge by the United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters. Congressman Bob Filner donated the use of his campaign office and phones for a week of nightly phone banking by DSA volunteers. Nancy Casady, a respected community leader who recently ran with DSA support in a Democratic congressional primary, met with speakers to help them refine and time their three-minute presentations, and on the day of the hearing served as moderator.

Measuring Success

Two days after the Republicans left town, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* finally deigned to notice the many opposition events that filled



Jerry Butkiewicz, Secretary-Treasurer of San Diego & Imperial Counties Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, addresses the crowd.

Julian Hintz

Convention week. In a sort of backhanded compliment, the paper commented on the "[u]nprecedented numbers of people" who met to "raise their voices in dissent... The smaller protests drew 100 people, a significant demonstration by normal San Diego standards. Several easily drew 1,000 people."

By that account, the San Diego Hearing on Economic Insecurity was a thundering success. The panel members took note of the number of people attending the hearing at the start of a week of many such events, and knew that for every person in the hall, a hundred others hold the same fears and hopes, and will vote their concerns in the elections. Congressman Filner (the only elected Democratic congressman south of Los Angeles) signed the Pledge for Economic Justice. He echoed our own feelings in his remarks to the audience: it is up to grassroots activists like ourselves to force elected officials to put this issue at the top of their agenda.

San Diego DSA earned a lot of respect among both left politicians and activists. People inside the hall and outside now recognize San Diego DSA as a group to be counted on for support and organization in future joint efforts.

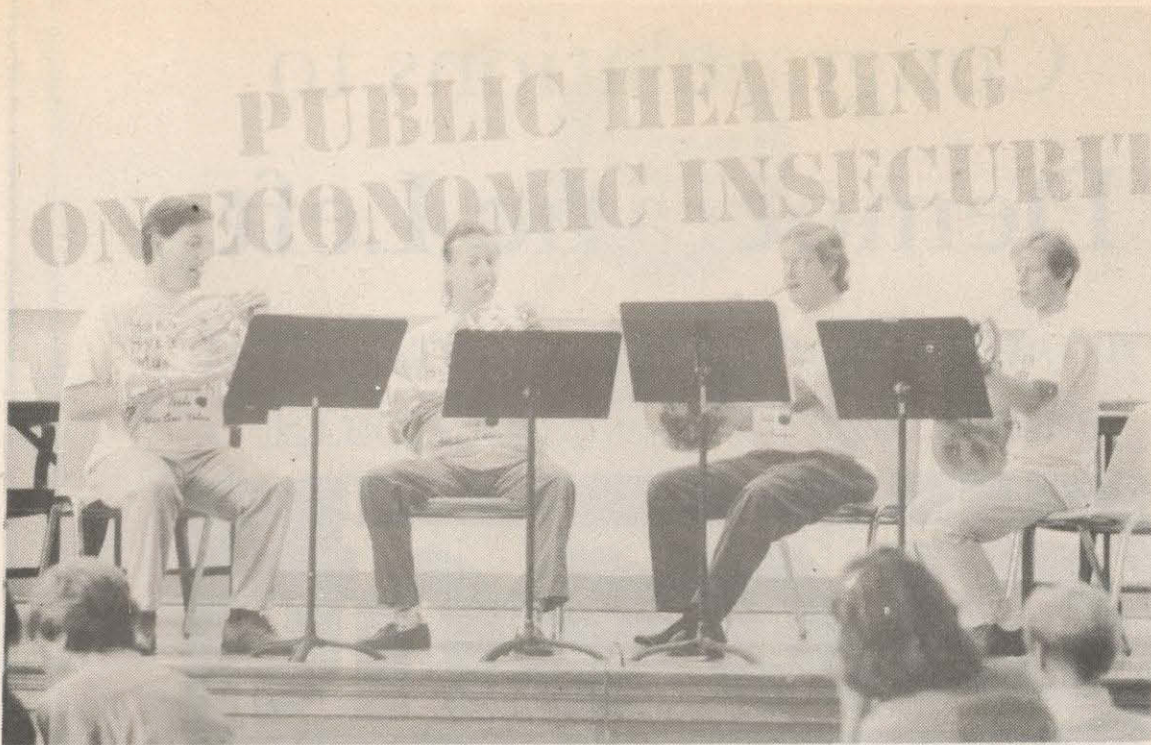
"Give yourself a pat on the back," said

Kathy Gilbert of the National Lawyers Guild. "This is really impressive!" "You can be proud of yourselves," added Miriam Clark, Peace & Freedom congressional candidate. "You can take credit for a very successful event!"

Future Plans

The video of the Boston hearing was a great inspiration for our event. We will shortly have a video of our own hearing to show that every DSA local can hold a successful event. We have held follow-up meeting of the Committee to review the results of our efforts and plan for future activities in the form of precinct work on ballot initiatives, use of our video and literature about the hearing in legislative lobbying efforts and activist outreach, and workshops and activist teach-ins on the issues of economic insecurity. Along with other California DSA locals we are focusing our efforts on passing Proposition 210, the Livable Wage Initiative, and defeating Proposition 209, the so-called "California Civil Rights Initiative". The San Diego Hearing on Economic Insecurity was just the first event of many on the subject of economic insecurity to be organized by San Diego DSA.

Sandra Brow is a DSA activist and folk singer, among other things. Herb Shore is a longtime DSA activist who contemplates quantum physics and the laws of the universe in his spare time.



Julian Hintz

ABOVE: Musicians from the recently abolished San Diego Symphony entertain those gathered in a gesture of solidarity.

BELOW: San Diego DSA's Economic Insecurity Hearing attracted a crowd that swelled well over three hundred people. Members of the California State Employees Association proceeded from the hearing to rally at the DMV to protest Pete Wilson's privatizing 50% of state workers' jobs.



Julian Hintz

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We applaud the DSA efforts to make the mobilization of young people a success in the Union Summer program and look forward to working with you around the country in the congressional districts so crucial to success in the 1996 elections.

In unity,

William H. Bywater

William H. Bywater
International Union President

Edward Fire

Edward Fire
Secretary-Treasurer

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*in solidarity for good wages,
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*Happy Labor Day to DSA
& the readers of Democratic Left*

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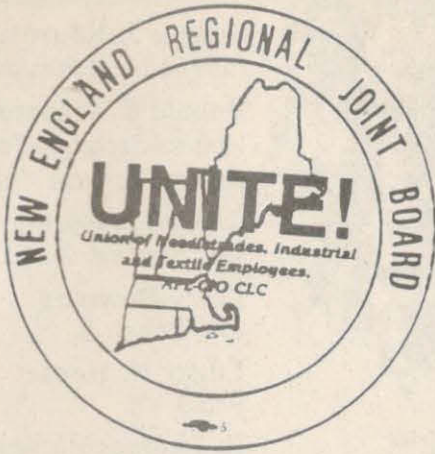
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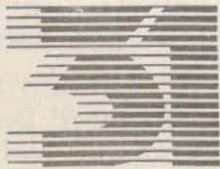
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Edward W. Clark Jr., Manager
International Vice President

867 State Road
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Keep Up the Good Work!

Henry Bayer
Executive Director



AFSCME Council 31

Greetings from
SEIU
the union of the '90s



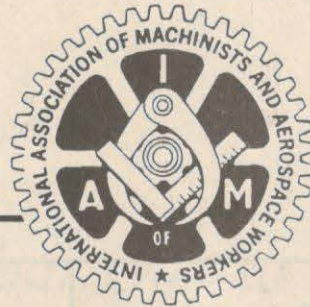
SEIU Local 585
237 Sixth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15238

Rosemary Trump, President

A Salute...

*The men and women of the
International Association of
Machinists and Aerospace
Workers proudly and
enthusiastically salute the*

Democratic Socialists of America
*for their credible endeavors
on behalf of America's
working families*



International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

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International President

Donald E. Wharton
General Secretary-Treasurer

GENERAL VICE PRESIDENTS

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East Hartford, CT

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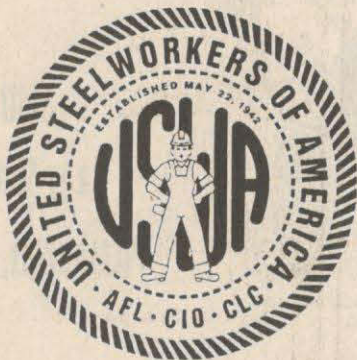
R. Thomas Buffenbarger
Upper Marlboro, MD

Lee Pearson
Sacramento, CA

William L. Scheri
Upper Marlboro, MD

Dave Ritchie
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

The United Steelworkers of America
commends
the Democratic Socialists of America
for advancing the cause of working people everywhere.



George Becker
International President

Leo Gerard
International Secretary-Treasurer

Richard Davis
International Vice-President (Administration)

Leon Lynch
International Vice-President (Human Affairs)

LABOR DAY GREETINGS 1996

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 Leo Edbril
 Lisa A. Foley
 Lottie & Joe Friedman
 Irving Gold
 Lester Goldner
 Suzanne Gottlieb
 Bill Mosley & Lisa Dowden
 Maxine Phillips
 Richard Rausch
 Phil Sillman
 Steve Tarzynksi & Kathie Sheldon
 Dorothy & Sam Tolmach
 Larry Wittner
 Roger S. Wilson

Greetings from
DSA ALASKA

Giving
 Democratic Socialism
 some
 "Northern Exposure"

POB 70252, Fairbanks, AK 99707
 FAX: 907.479.9466

Greetings from
NAUSSAU DSA

Saluting DSA's active role in
 exposing the mean-spirited
 Contract on America!

Mark Finkel
 Chair

Lottie Friedman
 Treasurer

**IN MEMORY
 OF
 MICHAEL HARRINGTON**

Lucille Sydnor

Best wishes
 for a re-energized DSA
 &
 Labor Movement!

Dorothy, Sara, & Max Siegel

LABOR DAY GREETINGS

to our friends at

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

At a time when it's fashionable to bash immigrants, people on welfare, affirmative action, and minorities, it's heartening to have a publication like **Democratic Left** that advances a different message: the vision of social democracy, peace, and justice. On this Labor Day, we must all recommit ourselves to these goals.



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UAW

Stephen P. Yokich, *President* Roy O. Wyse, *Secretary-Treasurer*
Vice-Presidents: Carolyn Forrest, Jack Laskowski, Ernest Lofton, Richard Shoemaker

PRESENT PROGRESSIVE

BY DSA NATIONAL DIRECTOR ALAN CHARNEY

DSA sponsored a progressive caucus meeting at the Democratic National Convention. Among the participants was Congressman Mel Watt from North Carolina. In his remarks, he crystallized completely the problem facing progressives inside (and also outside) the Democratic Party. "The problem" he said, "is that we have lowered our expectations of what is possible."

I agree completely. It's one thing to vote for Bill Clinton because only his re-election can prevent Bob Dole from becoming President. It's quite another thing to proclaim that Clinton's program is the most that is possible right now...and that Clinton had no choice but to sign the welfare bill because that's what a majority of the American people wanted. It was truly dispiriting to hear delegate after delegate at the Democratic Convention put these arguments forward. "Yes, the welfare bill is bad, but we have to support Clinton 100% now. After the election, he'll come back and fix the worst parts of it."

Jeff Faux, President of the Economic Policy Institute, has a good explanation for this attitude. There is, he says, a fundamental flaw in the progressive approach to American politics. We assume, as the pollsters repeatedly tell us, that the American voter is ideologically conservative, but operationally liberal. For example, voters don't like government in general, but will support this or that government program in particular, especially when it benefits everyone. The problem is that when we accept this analysis, it leads directly to the conclusion that Clinton has no choice but to adopt himself to conservative thinking. The President has told us repeatedly that the era of big government is over. That means he is committed to ending welfare as we know it. And, that means progressives have no choice but to accept his verdict because the American people, who are basically conservative, have spoken.

I think otherwise. The American voter is no more conservative than she is liberal, or progressive for that matter. A significant majority questions the role of government in their lives. But another significant majority questions the role of corporations in their lives. A majority think that there should be less people on welfare, and that workfare is a good idea. Another majority support health care as a right and endorse universal coverage even if they would have to make some sacrifices. The "average" American voter both believes in individual liberty and opportunity, and in equality and social justice. What the right-wing and the corporations have succeeded in doing, with

In a time of conservative ascendancy, we have to advance a new progressive worldview, which is, ironically more radical than mainstream liberalism...

money and media, is to present a worldview that resonates with certain values and ignores others—a story that emphasizes the private happiness at the expense of the public good, and that plays upon people's fears and anxieties in an age of declining living standards. They have also succeeded in discrediting the liberal worldview that dominated domestic politics until the mid-seventies.

Today, progressives are at a crossroads. In a roundabout way, we can credit Clinton for bringing us to this point because his Administration has definitively ended mainstream liberalism as we know it. He is saying, in effect, that lowering our expectations is a virtue, both because

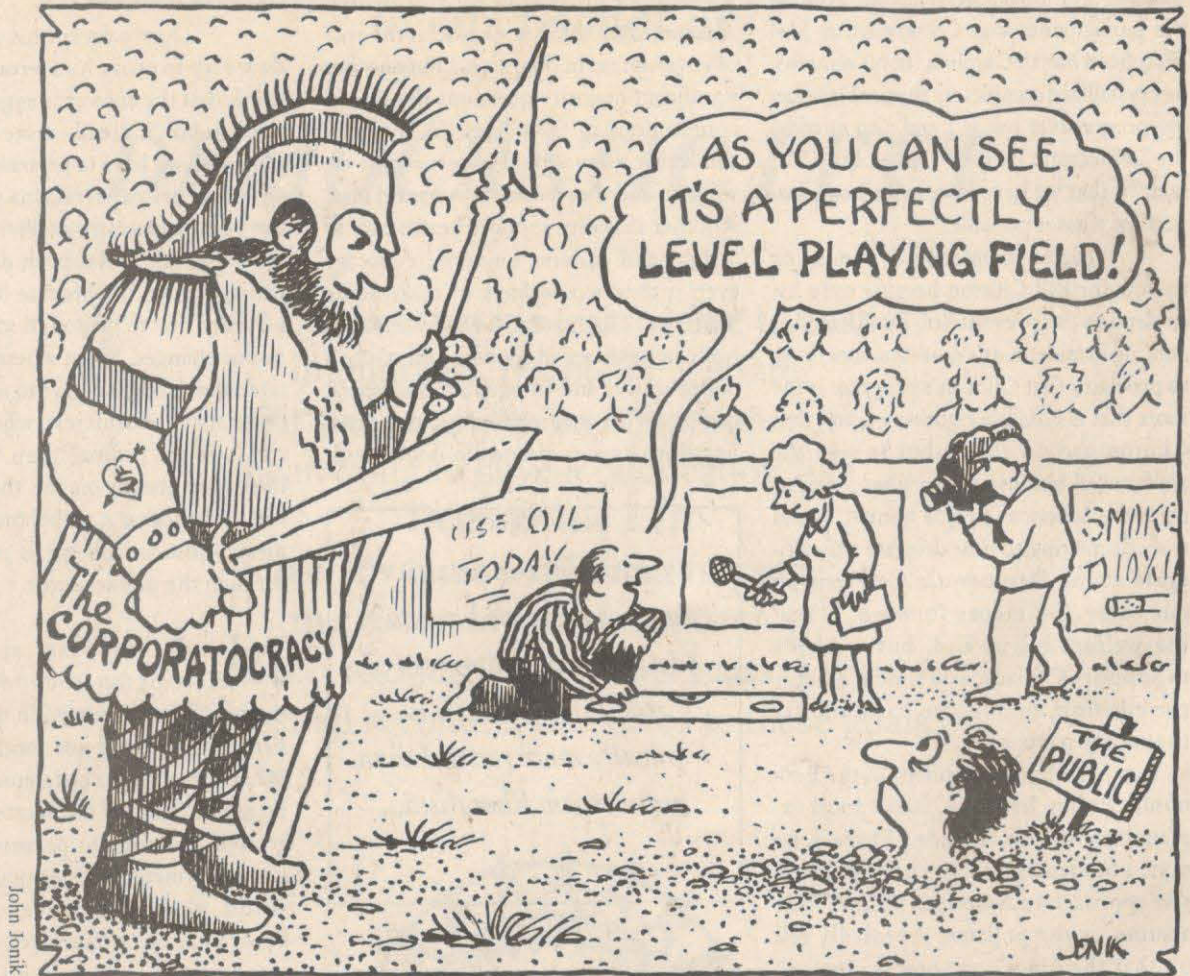
it's what the American people want, and because we can't deliver on big promises even if we try.

Do we accept his argument, or do we try to prove him wrong? You may think that the answer is easy—prove him wrong—but, it's really more difficult than that. Yes, we have to present a worldview which raises expectations again, but it can't be the mainstream liberal worldview—not because it has been discredited by the rightwing, but because it has been superseded due to profound social and economic changes. So, in a time of conservative ascendancy, we have to advance a new progressive worldview which is, ironically, more radical than mainstream liberalism...based on the themes of economic democracy, global (not merely domestic) justice, and social redistribution through the public sector.

Nearly ten years ago, Michael Harrington sounded the same theme: "What is needed in the late twentieth century is not just another program. What is needed is a restatement of the basic moral vision of the Western Left. For growth has brought persistent poverty, unemployment, hopelessness and hunger—and that has never happened before....For if the next Left understands itself as a movement of genuine moral vision, then it can begin now, in the midst of a misshapen and outrageous 'prosperity', to assemble the forces and develop the ideas of a new America in a new world."

This movement of moral vision—this next left which Harrington and, ironically, Clinton has challenged us to bring into existence—must resonate with Americans' core values, at the same time as it addresses their economic needs. It must be both ideologically and operationally progressive. No easy task! But, then again, if we don't have high expectations, who will!

Parting Shot



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.

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