

DEMOCRATIC

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# Transportation at Stake in 1997-- And Beyond

BY BILL MOSLEY

**P**rogressives seeking an arena in which to battle for greater social equity, a halt to urban decline and a healthier environment should take notice of the pending re-authorization of federal surface transportation programs.

Transportation? It's an issue often overlooked by the left. Yet in many ways, transportation inequities underlie much of what is wrong in America today, and fundamental transportation reform could go a long way toward addressing these problems.

This fiscal year, Congress must reauthorize highway and mass transit programs, currently funded under the six-year Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991 (ISTEA, or "Iced Tea" in transpo lingo). ISTEA sets the rules for the funding of these programs, and what emerges from this year's debate could determine whether millions of Americans have access to reliable, affordable mass transit service in the coming years -- or whether the auto lobby continues to dominate the transportation debate.

For most of this century, highway interests have held the upper hand in federal transportation policy -- and not by accident. As late as the 1920's, mass transit -- principally the electric trolley -- was the main mode of vehicular transportation in most U.S. cities. In the 1920's and afterward, however, automobile ownership increased exponentially while the trolleys declined. There were a number of reasons for

this, not the least being that mass production of cars made them affordable to the average American worker.

But less well known is the nascent auto lobby's quiet but effective conspiracy to destroy trolley systems. In the 1930's General Motors, Firestone Tires, Standard Oil, and Mack Trucks formed a holding company which bought, and then destroyed, trolleys around the country. By 1955 almost 90 percent of the trolleys were gone. Those responsible for the conspiracy were eventually brought to trial, found guilty -- and fined as little as \$1.

**T**he auto lobby also pressed for the construction of expressways around the nation. This campaign took off in the 1930's, when highway construction became a means to provide jobs and patronage during the Great Depression. The New Deal agencies largely

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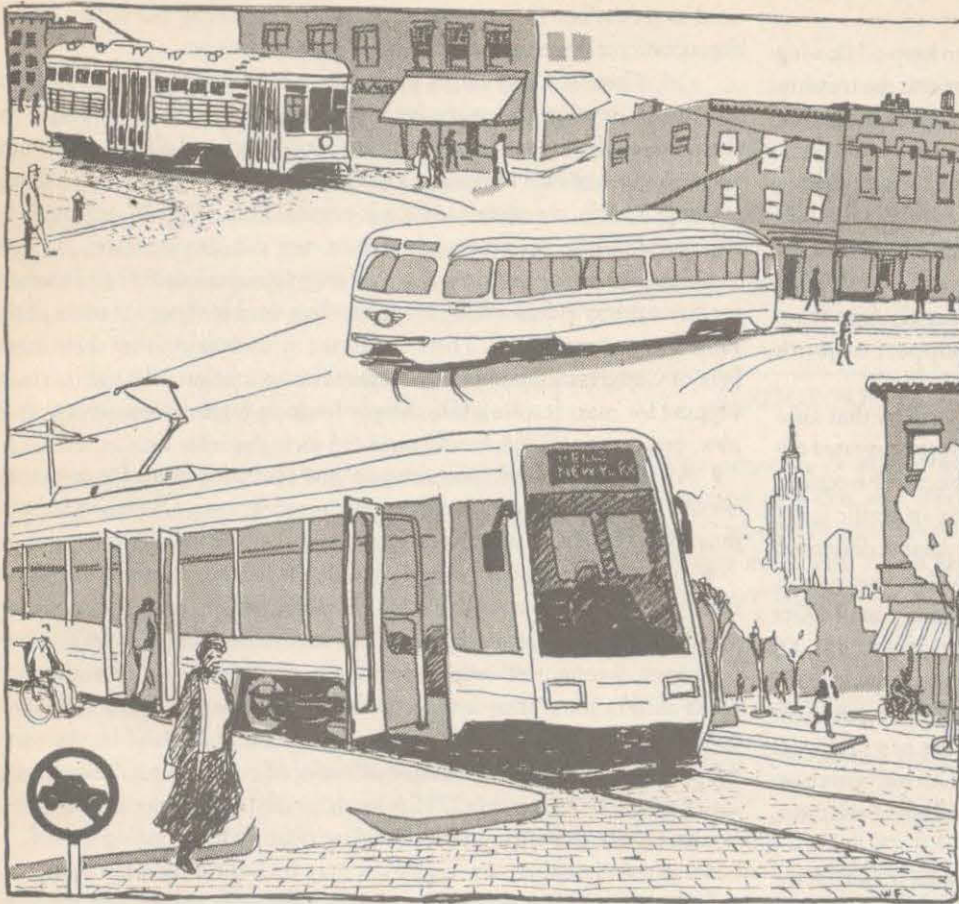
Michael Harrington  
(1928-1989)

Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements—of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color—which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

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overlooked mass transit, with highways getting more than 90 cents of the federal transportation dollar during the decade.

But the highway era began in earnest in 1956, when construction of the Interstate Highway System began. Often called the greatest public works project in history, over 40,000 miles of Interstate highways have been built between and within U.S. cities. It was sold to and by Eisenhower cold warriors as the National Defense Highway System. A parallel development – federally subsidized mortgage interest rates, which were made widely available to suburban homeowners but seldom given to city dwellers – led to an explosion of housing construction in suburban bedroom communities, often beyond the reach of mass transit but convenient to the new Interstate highways. Development sprawled outward from the deteriorating central cities to suburbs clustered around Interstate exits.

The pattern repeats itself to this day: Corporate interests—particularly automakers, oil companies and developers—lobby for more highways, which open the

shortages, and local transit riders are paying more for less, as fares have risen at twice the rate of inflation over the past five years. Urban areas around the country are experiencing similar shocks: *In These Times* recently reported that earlier this year, federal cuts forced all bus service in Greenville, SC, and Mobile, AL, to halt for one month.

The highway lobby and pro-lobby politicians of both parties contend that mass transit should be considered a strictly local concern – unlike the national networks of highways – and therefore transit agencies should gather their funding from local and state sources rather than asking Washington for a handout. They further assert that, while mass transit cannot pay its costs and must live off the public dole, highway users “pay” for road construction and upkeep through state and federal gas taxes.

But the facts tell a different story. A study by the World Resources Institute shows that gas taxes and user fees account for only about 60 percent of the \$33 billion that the federal government spends on highway construction and repair. Another \$68 billion – none of it from user fees – is spent by state and local governments on highway patrols, traffic courts, signals, snow removal, emergency response, accident and theft investigation, all services vital to making highways work. And these are only the direct subsidies to auto travel. Consider the following public and private inducements for drivers:

countryside to sprawl, sucking population and jobs from the central cities which became increasingly hard-pressed to maintain public services, including transit.

The highway lobby has not prevailed in every battle. In the 1991 ISTEA, pro-transit forces won a modest victory in a provision allowing metropolitan areas to shift a portion of their highway funds to mass transit. Yet transit remains vulnerable to the political winds. Last year, Congress cut transit funding by 30 percent, including a 50 percent cut in operating assistance. The current percentage of federal transit aid compared to highway aid – a bit under 23 percent – is virtually unchanged since pre-ISTEA days. One right-wing oil patch Congressman even called “public transit” an outmoded concept. Many cities have recently suffered severe cutbacks in transit service or steep fare increases. Washington, DC, for instance, lost 20 bus routes due to funding



◆ **Parking** -- According to the World Resources Institute, 90 percent of Americans who drive to work park free. The average value of an employer-provided parking space is about \$700 per year.

◆ **U.S. Military** -- It has intervened to keep oil flowing to the gas pump. The Persian Gulf War cost the treasury \$61 billion; earlier, protecting Kuwaiti tankers in the Gulf cost \$50 billion per year.

◆ **Costs of Pollution** -- Runoff from carcinogenic emissions from cars, loss of green space due to highway construction, and oil spills, which are just now being calculated, and the environment -- which belongs to everyone -- is provided largely free from charge to the automobile and its support network as a dumping ground.

◆ **Congestion** -- A recent study showed that auto commuters in some of the nations most congested cities annually spend more than 40 hours -- the equivalent of an entire workweek -- sitting in traffic jams. San Bernadino-Riverside, CA, bears the dubious distinction of being the most congested area, with delays averaging 76 hours per driver per year. The average annual cost of delays to each driver in the most congested cities runs around \$1,000 per year. And it is becoming more clear that we cannot build our way out of highway congestion. Laying more pavement only encourages drivers to use it and the new highways quickly become as congested as the old. Our highways have fallen victim to the "Field of Dreams" syndrome: build them, and the cars will come.

For additional investment in mass transit, on the other hand, we take cars off the road, reducing air pollution, sprawl and congestion while encouraging the development of housing and jobs in the communities that need them most -- our central cities and inner suburbs. Transit advocates also argue that federal policies have undermined mass transit, justice demands that Washington undo the damage. To the extent increasing congestion fails to convince affluent suburbanites to support transit, urban areas must unite in a demand for a more just allocation of resources from the federal government.

Besides, the impacts of sprawl and the proliferation of highways are felt beyond their own metropolitan areas. Air pollution knows no political boundaries. Toxic runoff, erosion and other consequences of paving fields and forests are felt across broad regions. For example, declines in marine life in the Chesapeake Bay have been tied to highways and their associated sprawl throughout much of the mid-Atlantic.

Neglect of mass transit is a part of a larger pattern of neglect of our central cities and the people who live in them. Cities are designed to be compact and transit-friendly. Furthermore, many urban residents do not own cars, in some cases by choice, in others due to poverty. Policies leading to the dismantling of mass transit increase the burden on transit-depend-

ent residents of central cities while encouraging others to flee to the suburbs. However, forms of mass transit which primarily benefit more affluent, better-connected suburbanites--such as commuter rail and long-distance subways--tend to get the lion's share of transit funding. Central-city bus service, which disproportionately serves the urban poor, gets the leavings.

There is a way to get mass transit back on track: Metropolitan areas must develop strong, active pro-transit coalitions of advocates for the poor, environmental organizations, neighborhood alliances and others. A number of such movements have already been formed. In the Washington, DC area, the transit advocacy organization MetroWatch has led a regionwide battle against transit service cuts and fare increases. In New York, the Straphangers Campaign has fought discriminatory fare increases for city subway riders, which are more than double those for users of the suburban commuter rail. These coalitions must demand that their members of Congress support a new surface transportation bill that increases support for mass transit while sharply limiting highway construction. A new, pro-transit ISTEA would include such elements as:

◆ An increase in both federal capital and operating funds for mass transit to a level well above that preceding the recent cuts. Operating support must be sufficient to prevent fare increases that exceed inflation.

◆ A requirement that new development be transit-friendly. Rather than paving distant cow pastures, developments in metropolitan areas should be steered to areas--especially the central cities--more readily served by transit. Strong, well-enforced zoning laws are essential. Another tool being used in some areas is the transfer of development rights, which encourages developers to trade their rights to build on land in the outer suburbs for projects in more densely-developed communities. The ultimate carrot would be increases in ISTEA funds for development compatible with transit; an effective stick, the withholding of funds for inducing sprawl.

◆ A mandate that new highways may be built only after transit options have been fully explored, and only if it can be proved that the highway will relieve congestion, not exacerbate it.

◆ An increase in the federal gas tax by at least half to raise funds for transit, discourage auto use and bring the price tag for driving into line with its true costs. The current 18-cent-per-gallon federal gas tax is one of the lowest among developed countries, and the cost of gasoline is actually declining in real dollars. Compare the current buck-and-change per gallon tab for gas here with that of \$2.91 in Britain, \$3.71 in Germany, \$3.73 in France, and \$4.21 in Japan--all countries with excellent transit systems. The cost of gas at the pump, adjusted for inflation, is functionally the same as it was in 1946, says New York DSA activist and transit advocate Jeff Gold. If 1946 prices are good enough for drivers, why not the nickel subway fare?

A pro-transit coalition's work should not, of course, be limited to the occasional ISTEA authorization. Most of the transportation decisions are ultimately made on the local level. Strong, effective advocacy organizations are needed full-time to oppose unnecessary highways and to fight for high-quality, well-funded, affordable mass transit for all.

*Bill Mosley is an activist in Washington, DC.*



# DSA Launches Campaign for Economic Justice

**T**he 105th Congress has been sworn in. Like the last Congress it is controlled by Republicans. It is perhaps more conservative than the last and is facing a President more eager to be bipartisan.

The good news about Congress is that all the members of the Progressive Caucus who ran for reelection won and several new progressives were elected. Their victories show that progressives running on a platform of economic justice can win.

The Progressive Caucus is eager to take on a more assertive role, particularly as Congress tackles such important issues as the budget, Social Security and reforming welfare reform. There is also an increased interest among progressives in Congress and in public interest organizations in revitalizing the left in America. As a part of that effort DSA is launching the Campaign for Economic Justice.

The campaign is an outgrowth of the economic insecurity hearings of the last year and of our work in Washington. It recognizes that Americans distrust the government to safeguard their interests, but they distrust corporations to do right even more. Americans feel taken advantage of by corporations, by a wealthy elite and by the 'undeserving poor.'

*The Campaign for Economic Justice has three central tenets:*

◆ Economic justice and security require first, that corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share, and second, that every American deserves a living wage.

◆ All Americans - men and women of all races, ages, sexual orientations and beliefs - must receive just and adequate rewards for their work.

◆ Americans must work with others around the world to ensure that everyone receives a living wage and to guarantee that corporations do not exploit people or the planet.

The agenda of the Campaign for Economic Justice is made concrete through work on legislation such as the Corporate Responsibility Act and the Living Wage, Jobs for All Act. These and other measures provide a vehicle for activists to talk with people in their communities and at work, school or church about what economic justice and security should look like. While these bills don't address the full spectrum of issues that a new progressive voice in American politics should call for, they speak to our core concerns.

We recognize that measures like the Corporate Responsibility Act will not be won in the near term. This Congress, like the last one, will not stand up to corporate greed nor will it reconsider its ill-conceived welfare "reform" law. Through the Campaign for Eco-

omic Justice, we can, however, win victories at the local level on issues such as local living wage initiatives. We can also use federal legislation to educate the public about economic insecurity and begin to build a base of support for economic justice among public officials in Congress and in the states.

In the coming months DSA will be developing organizing guides, fact sheets, legislative summaries and political analyses for activists to use to build economic justice coalitions in their local communities.

*Christine Riddiough is DSA Political Director.*

## PLEDGE FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

*Our economy is going through rapid changes that have brought success to a few and despair to many. In these times of uncertainty I pledge to guide my actions by the principles outlined below. I urge you to do the same, both in your private life and in your legislative actions.*

I pledge to:

- ◆ Work for a living wage for all.
- ◆ Demand that corporations behave responsibly in paying their fair share of taxes.
- ◆ Work to ensure that all trade agreements adopt enforceable fair labor standards. I further pledge to put pressure on corporations selling products made in substandard conditions.
- ◆ Work to give employees and communities greater rights in the corporations they work for or live near.
- ◆ Not blame immigrants to this country for the problems created by an unaccountable international corporate market.
- ◆ Fight to make children a priority and a concern for all of society.
- ◆ Initiate and continue a dialogue to ease racial and ethnic tensions both at home and abroad.
- ◆ Work for health care for all.
- ◆ Work for welfare reform that preserves the social safety net and provides people with the skills and resources they need to effectively enter the work force.
- ◆ Work to ensure that our schools prepare our children for a more uncertain economic future and make them better citizens.
- ◆ Work to make government more accountable and accessible to the people it serves.
- ◆ Work for an economy that is environmentally sustainable and socially just.
- ◆ Reform campaign finances to make our elected officials responsible to voters and not big-money interests.

*DSA, 1126 16th Street NW Fl 5, Washington, DC 20036*



# Educating the Masses

BY MIKE HEFFRON

**R**oger Wilson knows which side his bread is buttered on. "Any politician that says 'I support business and the working man' — they're telling you they can blow and suck at the same time." So says the 75-year old manager of THE ONE, THE ONLY, LEFT-WING, RENOWNED, TRAVELING ROAD SHOW.

Like a ringleader of county fairs long past, Roger conjures up in the hearts and minds of his audience tales of monsters and better times ahead. However, the monsters of Roger's show are multinational corporations, and the better times ahead include an anti-racist and anti-sexist, democratic socialist world.

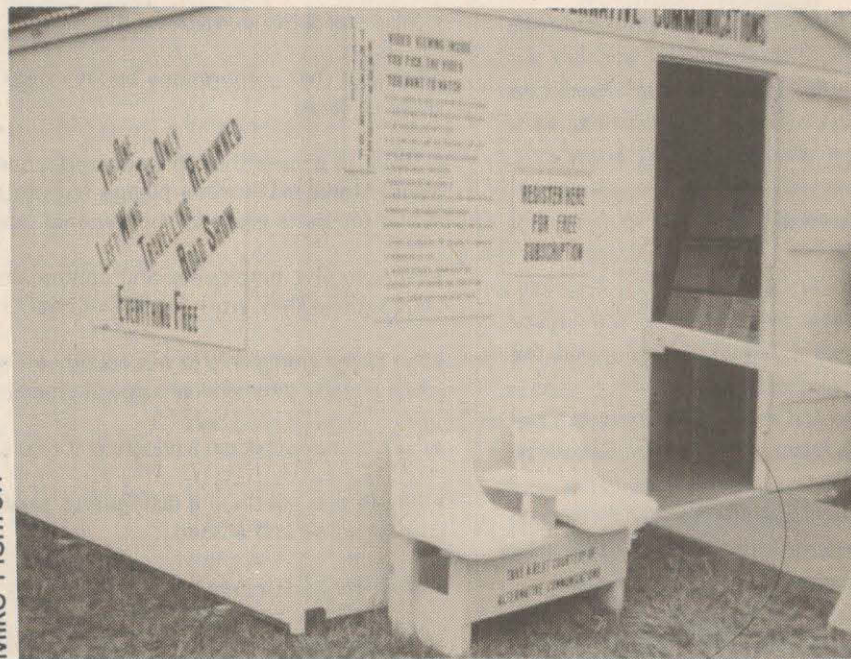
Taking literature, video, and his message to county fairs in rural northwestern Ohio, in a small, collapsible, self-built shed, Roger's setup includes literature and magazines from DSA, Anti-Racist Action, and *Z Magazine*. A brief talk with Roger will probably land you more reading material than a whole day at the Socialist Scholars Conference.

The other main attraction of the show are the movies, which are shown inside the shed, complete with the chairs to watch them on. Fairgoers pick from a list that includes *Manufacturing Consent*, *The Panama Deception* and, of course, *The Mexico City Bus Drivers Fight Privatization*.

Yet, it's not just literature and video that makes the "Left-Wing Traveling Roadshow" unique. Roger Wilson, director of Alternative Communications, has lived all his life in Celina, Ohio, and still

lives in a house that he built there in 1954. A union man who was first a shop steward and then local president of the Upholsterers Union Local in Celina, Roger joined DSOC after reading Mike Harrington's *Socialism* in 1975. Roger tells a story of once watching a debate Harrington did with Milton Friedman on television and then seeing it again on a later date. Roger would later remark to Michael, while eating breakfast with him shortly before his death, that "he was a full-fledged TV hero since he was now in reruns."

Now that the roadshow is all packed up for



Mike Heffron

the winter, Roger has some time to share his ideas about the strategy of the groups he advocates. According to Roger, the Democrats are less open to change than in the days of DSA's "Democratic Agenda." Therefore, he thinks DSA must make a break from mainstream parties and look to third-party options such as the New and Labor Parties. To Roger, organizations such as the Independent Progressive Political Network, and strategies such as fusion, offer DSA new options to express its politics in a much more honest and effective way.



As he plans for the next summer's worth of county fairs, Roger looks out over his backyard and roller-blade track, built for his granddaughter AND himself. He attempts to educate the folks he meets at the county fair as well as the students of six local high schools, to which Roger has donated subscriptions to *In These Times*. Speaking about his roadshow to another reporter last summer, Roger

quipped that "only about five percent of people read anything, but half of them read the wrong thing.... You gotta have knowledge of what's there to effect change." That's what the The One, The Only, Left-Wing, Renowned, Traveling Road Show's magical cure-all is: Knowledge.

*Mike Heffron is the Midwest Organizer for DSA.*

## 39th Annual Debs/Thomas/Harrington Awards Dinner

*honoring*

*James Weinstein, Editor, In These Times  
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for more information.*



# Conservatives, Lies, and Social Security

**I**n the next few months attempts to “reform” social Security will be made, so it is important for activists to understand what the issues are. Social Security provides retirement income to over 35 million people. It also provides survivor insurance for families if a spouse or parent dies; and it provides disability insurance to virtually all workers.

These benefits are provided in a manner that is both progressive and fair. Lower-income people receive a higher percentage of their earnings as Social Security benefits, but the more someone has paid into the system, the more he or she gets back. The system itself is remarkably efficient: administration costs are less than 0.7 percent of annual benefits, whereas administrative costs at private insurance companies run on average more than 40 times as high.

**Isn't Social Security in danger of going broke when all the baby boomers retire?**

Uh, no. According to the intermediate projection of the Trustees of the Social Security Fund (the standard basis for policy projections), the fund will be able to meet all of its benefit payments to the year 2030, without any tax increases. This projection is based on the pessimistic assumption that economic growth over the next 35 years will be much lower than during any 35-year period in U.S. history. It also assumes that wage growth won't increase, even though the trustees foresee a labor shortage cause by the retirement of the baby boom generation.

Social Security's opponents often raise the specter of a small population of workers toiling away to finance the retirement of the baby boom generation. It is a less-than-accurate picture of the future. The dependency ration—that is, the ratio of workers to both children and retirees—is expected to rise gradually until 2035, but even then it will reach only 84% of its 1960 level. The retirement of the baby boomers will lead to increased demands on government budgets, but these demands will be offset by the smaller portion of the population comprised of children. Such demographic changes will lead to savings in education

and other government outlays which support children. (Such spending presently accounts for about 20% of all government spending.)

**I'm an overeducated, underemployed twentysomething. What about MY retirement?**

The news isn't all bad. According to the Social Security Trustees' report, it is projected that average wages will be 35% higher in 2030 than at present, after adjusting for inflation. If the consumer price index (CPI) overstates inflation, as many insist, future generations will be even better off. According to the estimates of the Boskin Commission, a group appointed by the Senate Finance Committee to evaluate the CPI's accuracy, average wages will be 140% higher in 2030 than at present, and nearly 300% higher by 2050. This means that the average annual wage will be around \$60,600 in 2030 and \$98,210 in 2050 (measured in 1996 dollars.) To put this in perspective, today's average annual wage is around \$25,260, and the typical couple getting Social Security has an income of about \$20,000. (The Boskin Commission and the CPI are controversial in themselves—but that's another story...)

If a tax increase were necessary to finance Social Security into the next century, it would be small compared to these projected increases in wages. For example, if the Trustees' projections are correct, Social Security could be funded indefinitely by increasing the tax by approximately 3 percentage points over the 30-year period from 2010 to 2040. Such an increase would be smaller than the 4 percentage point increase in the tax from 1980 to 1990. Future workers would not be overly burdened according to this scenario.

**C**autions are advised, however. Although average wages are projected to rise substantially in the next decade, most of us will not see wage increases if most of the gains go to those at the top of the economic pyramid, as they have over the last 20 years. Average wages have continued to rise, but the increase has been driven by the gains of those at the top. The median wage—the wage of a typical worker—has been falling for the last two decades. Should this trend continue, future generations will experience declining living standards—but the sources of this decline will be the institutional structures and political forces that allow wealth and income to be concentrated at the top, not a distributional problem between generations.

Source: Dean Baker, “Privatizing Social Security: The Wall Street Fix” (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 1996). The Economic Policy Institute is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank which publishes many reports and studies useful to activists. Check out their website at <http://epinet.org> or write to them at EPI, 1660 L Street NW #1200, Washington, DC 20036.

*Social Security's opponents often raise the specter of a small population of workers toiling away to finance the retirement of the baby boom generation. It is a less than accurate picture of the future.*



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## The Gap Narrows

BY MICHELE ROSSI

On January 9, over 600 people attended "The Progressive Challenge: A Capitol Hill Forum" sponsored by the House Progressive Caucus, DSA, and a host of other progressive organizations. The primary goal of this day-long "kick-off" forum was to identify the unifying values shared by progressives at this point in US history, to help define core elements of a forward-looking progressive agenda, and to pinpoint ways to connect that agenda with the concerns of millions of disillusioned people who lack voices in present politics and policy-making.

After a welcome by Representative Bernie Sanders, an impressive array of legislators, activists, and thinkers offered their (sometimes conflicting) insights. Senator Paul Wellstone, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Patricia Ireland of NOW, Richard Trumka of the AFL-CIO, Noam Chomsky, William Grieder of *Rolling Stone*, and DSA Honorary Chair Barbara Ehrenreich were among the many who spoke. Some emphasized the importance of the conventional, if difficult, process of progressive candidates building grassroots campaigns that treat voters with intelligence and challenge prevailing wisdom regarding what values and issues motivate ordinary Americans struggling to make ends meet—as opposed to using polls and focus groups to concoct "designer" campaigns to appeal to upscale "soccer moms." Other speakers reminded those present that great changes are made by people acting outside of the corridors of power to define justice and "political reality," and the electoral and legislative processes are not the only arenas worthy of activists' attention.

What virtually all participants acknowledged (thanks in no small part to DSA's role in helping to organize this event and in focusing the activities of the Working Group on Economic Insecurity) was that the centerpiece of a progressive agenda involves address-

ing the question of the economy and the disruptions, suffering, powerlessness and fear created by the mobility and power of corporations—without glossing over the racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other injustices exacerbated by economic uncertainty. As panelist after panelist noted, "out" groups are the first casualties while democracy itself is disappearing.

Undertaking the political education necessary to prepare the public to understand the source of the problems, and to build democratic, grassroots support for the solutions the Progressive Caucus develops, is a daunting task. The Progressive Caucus and its allies are looking for ways to "take the show on the road," to continue to point the finger at corporations, and to introduce the public to their alternatives. That's why this forum was conceived as the first of a series of activities aimed at increasing the visibility of progressive politics in the United States. The next step at the policy level is a series of briefings for Congressional staff and members on specific issues related to economic justice (global economy, corporate responsibility, and welfare reform are among the topics to be covered). These briefings are planned for January and February, and out of the briefing sessions working groups on the issues will be formed. The working groups will include Congressional staff and progressive organizations who will help draft legislation. The coalition of

*Great changes are made by people acting outside of the corridors of power to define justice and "political reality," and the electoral and legislative processes are not the only areas worthy of activists' attention.*



activist groups is working on plans to bring the issues to the grassroots through a round of town meetings this spring and through the development of a network of progressive elected officials. The town meetings will be modeled on DSA's Public Hearings on Economic Insecurity and the AFL-CIO town meetings of 1996, and will bring Progressive Caucus members together with local activists.

In this period, few activists are prepared to explain patiently what is wrong with the

economy, who's to blame, how to fix it and why it needs to be fixed. It's a long process of adding up the existing left "grassroots," weak and demoralized as they may be, and growing new ones—under tough circumstances. The experience DSA activists have gained in grappling with these concerns has been, and will continue to be, critical.

*In her latest incarnation, Michele Rossi serves as DSA's Projects Coordinator.*

As you'll note from this issue, *Democratic Left* has undergone some changes. Starting with this issue, *DL* will be published eight times per year in an 8 to 12 page format.

This new *DL* will include more information about DSA activities. We will continue to include feature articles that provide political analysis and socialist vision.

Each issue will also have "Present Progressive" - viewpoints of our national director, Alan Charney, "Activist Toolbox" with information, reports and news for grass roots activists and a Washington report discussing national politics and policy.

We also hope to feature, from time to time, book and movie reviews, what's new on the Internet, letters to Margie and the Janey/Jimmy Higgins report.

## **Socialists Scholars Conference**

is scheduled for:

**March 28-30th 1997**

at

**Borough of Manhattan  
Community College**

**For information  
call  
CUNY DSA  
at  
212-642-2826.**



I guess you can say that I've recently become a born-again health care advocate. But for some very different reasons than before. So, I'd like to take the time to share some of my thinking with you.

When we look back on the heyday of the movement for single-payer, we are immediately struck by the vast changes that have recently taken place in the political economy of health care. Even in 1990, the delivery of health care was dominated by fee-for-service physicians and non-profit hospitals, and its financing by private insurance companies. At the same time, there were two government-based social insurance plans—Medicare and Medicaid—which represented a large foot-in-the-door toward universal, publicly-financed coverage. Yet, even with these two safety net programs, nearly 40 million Americans had no health care coverage. Moreover, health care costs were rising precipitously, even putting American business at a competitive disadvantage with enterprises in other nations that benefited from public systems of medical finance and delivery. Our goal—a single payer system—was a comprehensive solution to this financial crisis through government action: that is, payroll and other taxes on business to pay for universal coverage, along with global budgeting to restrain health care costs. Indeed, we argued that getting wasteful insurance companies out of medicine would actually make health care more affordable.

Corporate America had another comprehensive solution: turn the delivery of health care into big business. Here was our Achilles heel, because the single-payer solution left the structure of delivery intact. You remember. One of our strongest arguments was that only single-payer would preserve fee-for-service and consumer choice. But as socialists, we should have known better. In just the space of a few years, health care has gone the rationalized way of so many other sectors of the economy—from small firms to large corporations; from private practice to HMOs.

This vertical integration of health care delivery on a corporate grand scale, devised and controlled by finance capital, has so enriched insurers that the record quarterly earnings of these service rationing empires lead the finan-

cial headlines. They have also helped to push another four million Americans out of any health insurance coverage. Goodbye Marcus Welby, hello Mega-Wellcare, Inc.

The corporate model has prevailed for now, but it has set the stage for a broader battle over health care in the future, on a terrain that is, objectively, more favorable to us. Here are the reasons:

*In a world of corporatized health-care, the great divide between the insured and the uninsured is surmountable.*

♦ Many doctors may be on our side. Corporate health care has made docs less like small business professionals and more like well-compensated workers; from employers to employees. The majority of M.D.s that can't, or won't, grab a conflict-of-interest equity piece in, for instance, laboratories, are chafing under micro-management directives from corporate Kremfins.

♦ Issues of finance and delivery are now fused in the HMO so that all health care issues can take on an anti-corporate character.

♦ As the HMOing of America rations out more sick or underemployed Americans, these growing inequalities can be the basis for an alliance of the insured and the uninsured.

Under these conditions, universal coverage means something very different than before. In the past, we pushed for single-payer because it was the only way to provide coverage for the 40 million + uninsured. Our motivating principle was: health care is a right. Poll after poll showed that, on principle, a significant majority of the American people were with us. Our political problem, however, was that the interests of the majority who had cover-

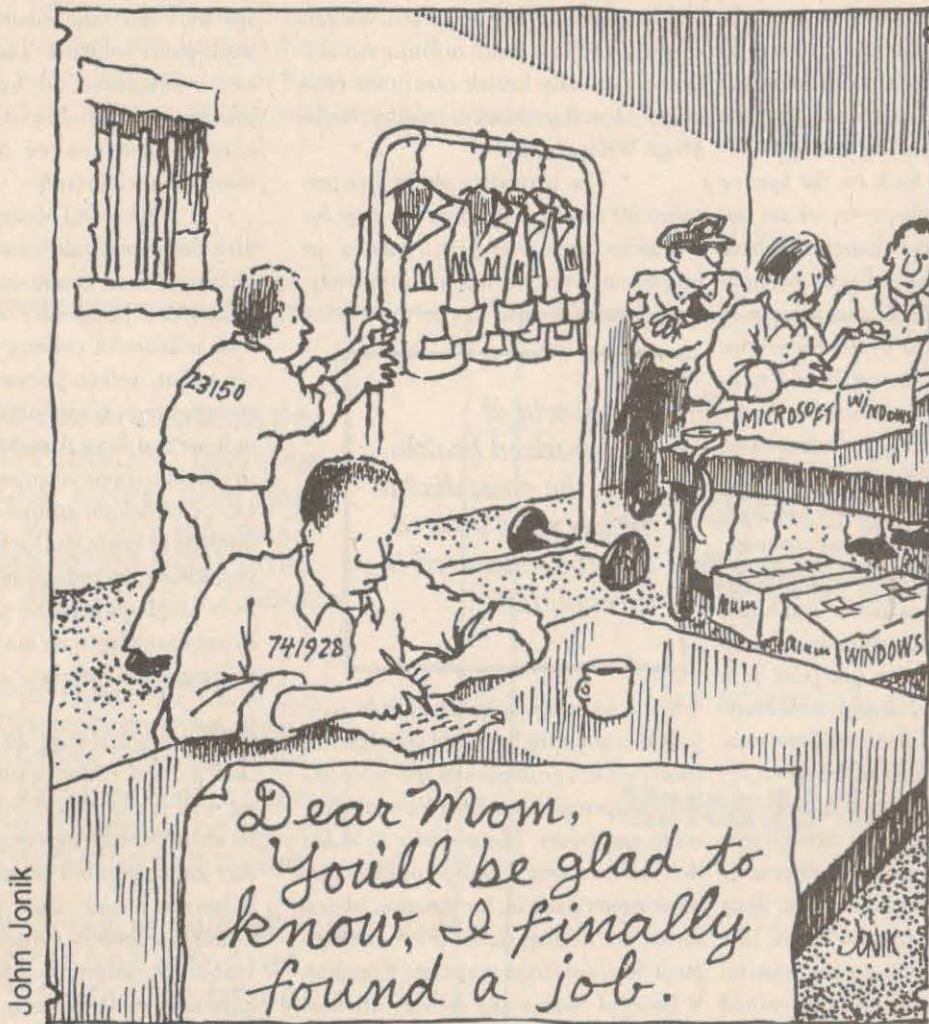
age were not fundamentally tied to the single-payer solution—just the interests of the uninsured. So, building a broad movement around fundamental health care reform proved more difficult than we anticipated.

In a world of corporatized health care, the great divide between insured and uninsured is surmountable. Our message of a right to health care remains resonant with millions of citizens. On top of this we add an anti-corporate dimension—the struggle for economic justice. Poll after poll indicate that most Americans are opposed to concentrations of corporate power, and can be mobilized around their economic interests to confront this power. This was the missing ingredient in the first battle over single-payer—the possibility of a broad anti-corporate movement uniting principle and interest.

But, as a first step, we need to change our conception of single-payer—starting with the term itself. First of all, it must be an anti-corporate campaign for health care justice, part of a broader campaign for economic justice. Universal, affordable health care must be viewed as a public service, much like a utility. Historically, there have been two options in the anti-corporate struggle against the utilities: public ownership, or regulation. The goal of each has been to achieve maximum provision at affordable rates, with accountability. As the delivery of health care becomes a big business, we need to force the HMOs themselves to provide universal coverage at affordable rates. Along with the Medicare and Medicaid programs, and potential tax-based funding streams, here is a powerful strategy that takes us beyond the financing-only approach of single-payer. Under this new strategy, the delivery, and not just the financial underpinning of health care, would be a public responsibility. Pursuing this movement for health care justice could also open the possibility of public ownership of the HMOs.



# Parting Shot



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