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IT'S A DIRTY JOB, BUT... A Quarterly Look at Conservative Periodicals and Pundits

BY HARVEY J. KAYE

However much we might despise the Right's politics and ideas, we cannot afford to ignore them. Given the conservatives' ascendance, we need to know: What excites them? What rankles and worries them? What, or who, are their latest targets?

This column presents a "conservative watch," a quarterly report on the conservative press and pundits. There's a lot to cover, for conservatives produce a remarkable and diverse number of periodicals: *National Review* (the original conservative weekly); *The Weekly Standard* (the Murdoch-sponsored, William Kristol-edited, inside-the-beltway magazine); *American Spectator* (publisher of *National Enquirer*-like exposes of Democratic politicians); *Chronicles* (the leading paleo-conservative monthly, anti-left but equally hostile to "mainstream" conservatives neo-cons); *Commentary* (the foremost neo-conservative monthly); *American Enterprise* (American Enterprise Institute's bimonthly of public affairs); *Policy Review* (Heritage Foundation's bimonthly, addressing public and social policy); *Public Interest* (the premier neo-con social science journal); *National Interest* (the premier neo-con international affairs journal); *First Things* ("religion and public affairs" monthly); and *New Criterion* (a culture and arts bimonthly). Additionally, I'll keep an eye on columnists like Robert Novak, Pat Buchanan, Mona Charen and Arianna Huffington. It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it...

The Republicans' continuing hold on Congress should have thrilled the Right. Yet there's no satisfying some people. Conservatives appreciate both Republican victories and Clinton's deference,

but they anxiously wonder if their "1994 Revolution" is finished.

Policy Review (January/February) asked 24 of their ilk to consider "Triumphs and Traps: What's Ahead for Conservatives." Responses reflect the growing divide between "economic" and "social/cultural" conservatives. Nodding perfunctorily to "family values," the former, like Dick Armey, House Republican Majority Leader, warmly repeat that the market rules and the days of big government are over (as Clinton himself promised). For these folks the most pressing challenges are budget-balancing, taxcutting and government downsizing. In contrast, social conservatives, like Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, bemoan Repub-

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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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lican moderation and blame Bush's 1992 and Dole's 1996 defeats on the party's failure to aggressively pursue the culture wars on abortion, affirmative action, school choice — thereby, Bauer insists, losing the Catholic vote.

A *First Things* symposium, "The End of Democracy?" (November 1996), further exacerbated the conservative schism. Conservatives widely agree that the Federal courts are "overstepping" their constitutional authority in pursuit of a liberal, if not radical, agenda on questions such as abortion, separation of church & state, and gay and lesbian rights. In fact, "The Judicial Usurpation of Politics" is the Right's hottest subject. However, the magazine's editors outraged neoconservatives by asking if "we have reached or are reaching the point where conscientious citizens can no longer give moral assent to the existing regime."

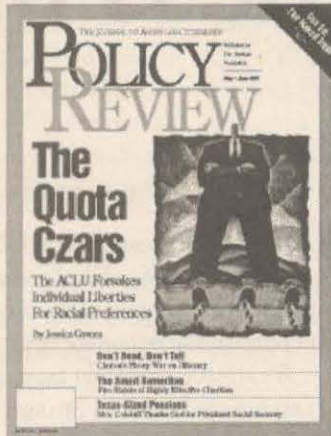
Concerned about rightwing extremism — in the face of gun-toting militias, the Oklahoma-City bombing, and murderous attacks on women's clinics — Gertrude Himmelfarb, Walter Berns and Peter Berger resigned from the editorial board and *Commentary* (February) extended its traditional post-election symposium to include discus-

sion of the "radicalizing mood revealed in the First Things symposium." *Commentary* editor emeritus Norman Podhoretz expressed the view of many: "The anti-Americanism of the First Things symposium has served to undermine [conservatism's counter-revolutionary] project, just as the anti-Americanism of the Left ultimately did to the ambitions of liberalism in the post-60's political wars." Obviously, whatever else is at stake, conservatives must never fail to attack the Left.

Apparently, conservatives long for the days of Ronald Reagan. Upset by the *New York Times Magazine's* publication of Arthur Schlesinger's latest Presidential rankings (December 15, 1996), wherein Reagan received mixed reviews and an overall low assessment, *Policy Review* (March/April) invited Bill Buckley, A.M. Rosenthal, Henry Kissinger, Jeanne Kirkpatrick and others to offer their own more reasonable assessments. Some ranked Ronnie only "near-great," but a few seemed prepared to personally chisel in his visage on Mount Rushmore.

Speaking of important undertakings, in "A Return to National Greatness" (*The Weekly Standard*, March 3) David Brooks chastized fellow conservatives for failing to develop a new vision of American greatness and a grand civic project to embody it. Predictably, Brooks neglected to mention the Right's general indifference to the public good.

Harvey J. Kaye is professor of social change and development at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (kayeb@uwgb.edu), and the author of "Why Do Ruling Classes Fear History?" and Other Questions (St Martin's, 1996).



DSA's 1997 National Convention

DSA'S 1997 NATIONAL CONVENTION WILL BE HELD NOVEMBER 7-10 AT THE CLARION HOTEL IN COLUMBUS, OHIO. National Conventions, which are held every two years, are the highest decision-making body of the organization. Delegates to the Convention set priorities for DSA's elected leadership and national staff and elect DSA's National Political Committee, a twenty-four person body which guides DSA's day-to-day work between conventions. In addition to resolutions and plenary sessions, and speeches by DSA luminaries, there will be opportunities for local activists to meet and exchange ideas. This year, the Center for Democratic Values will sponsor a conference and workshop series on "Arguing with the Right—and Winning" prior to the Convention.

All DSA members are welcome, but if you wish to attend as a delegate—that is, with voting privileges—you need to take a few extra steps. If you live in an area where there is no DSA local, you should ask to attend as an "at-large" delegate. Check the "at-large" box on the reply form, and the national office will contact you with details during July. If you live in an area where there is a DSA local, contact the leaders of your local. Locals are required by the DSA Constitution to hold open elections to choose their delegates between July 7 and September 23. (If you are not sure whether you live in an area covered by a DSA local, or if you need information on how to reach the leadership of your local, call Michele Rossi at 212.727.8610.)

- Yes! I am interested in attending the Convention. Please send me more information. (Returning this form does NOT represent a binding commitment to attend.)
- I live in an area where there is no DSA local, and I would like to attend the Convention as an "at-large" delegate. Please send me more information about this.
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There Should Be A Law The Tax Fairness Bill

BY AMY BACHRACH

There is a tax fairness bill in the New York State legislature that doesn't have a prayer of passing. Nevertheless, New York DSA hired an organizer part-time to coordinate our work in a statewide Citizen Action campaign to support it. Here's a little bit about why.

The bill, dubbed the Stringer-Leichter-Eve bill, proposes to repeal the last year of Republican Governor Pataki's tax cuts for households with incomes over \$100,000, introduce an income tax surcharge of 1% for households with incomes over \$150,000 and of 2% for those over \$200,000 and close a variety of corporate tax breaks.

These tax cuts were funded by a few billion dollars in brutal cuts to public services and benefits and have established New York as the state with the nation's largest gap between rich and poor.

Leaders of the New York local, drawing on skills learned at the Midwest Academy and Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) leadership institutes, began planning for the campaign with individual and collective reflection to identify internal goals for the effort.

We determined that our primary internal goal was to involve our members actively in the campaign and to develop new leaders through our work, preferably in the four boroughs outside of Manhattan. While we had no hope that the legislation would pass this session, we did want to achieve some concrete political victories, including getting new legislators to co-sponsor the bill.

We decided to design a quasi-independent strategy that could be successful regardless of the performance of our coalition partners so that the campaign would build, not drain, our organization.

To develop and implement our plan, we analyzed our membership to find out in which assembly districts our members were concentrated. We then looked to see which of those districts had an assembly person who ei-

ther did not currently support the bill but could reasonably be expected to do so with a modicum of political pressure, did co-sponsor the bill but was doing nothing to promote it, or could never be expected to sponsor the bill, but was nevertheless an important target.

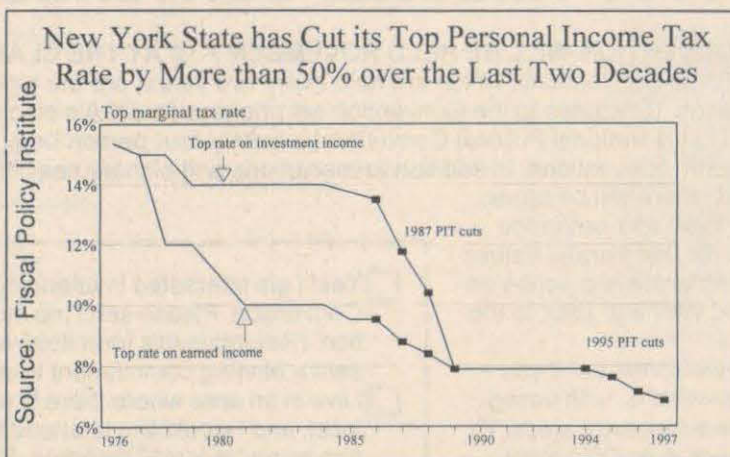
We already knew that most of our members live in a handful of districts represented either by Stringer or Leichter themselves, or others who already supported the bill. Of the local members, 250 reside in Manhattan's Upper West Side, the site of the New York Local's newest branch. The West Side Branch is itself a founding member of West Siders Together, a broadbased organization (built on the IAF model) composed of roughly 25 membership-based institutions including synagogues, churches, Ethical Culture, DSA's West Side branch and others.

The legislators from those areas do not have the ear of the Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. Silver opposes this bill with such virulence that it took a campaign to get him even to assign a number to last year's version of the bill.

While that was the area with the highest concentration of DSA members, we also found districts where we had 10 to 50. In those districts we determined to take several actions.

Our first step was to target specific legislative districts. In a few of the

targeted districts, the legislator had signed onto the bill last year but not this year. In a few, the legislator did not currently support the bill but could reasonably be expected to do so with a modicum of political pressure. Two state senators, almost irrelevant to the future of the bill in the Republican senate, were chosen anyway because we have a relationship with them and wanted to see them on board. And we targeted the Assembly Speaker and Ways and Means Chair who would not



sponsor this bill if it were the last bill on earth but because we wanted to put DSA and tax fairness on their radar screens. We sent letters to our members in all targeted districts explaining the bill and asking them to call their legislator and press them to sign on.

Next we worked to increase labor support. The bill does not enjoy the active support of the AFSCME unions who stand to gain the most from it because their leaders and Speaker Silver have already made their separate peace with Republican Governor Pataki. Ironically, those same unions fund the Fiscal Policy Institute which drafted the bill and whose supportive research is used by the campaign for educational efforts. A meeting we had with a comrade at the Central Labor Council resulted in the drafting of a resolution of support.

We also decided to target the the Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, Herman "Denny" Farrell. Farrell would never sign on, as he has subsequently told the campaign in no uncertain terms. However, we decided to target him, not as a legislator, but as leader of Manhattan's Democratic County Committee. By getting local Democratic clubs and District Leaders to endorse the bill, we could put pressure on Farrell from within his own Party. To date, we have signed up five Manhattan clubs and their respective district leaders. We will continue this work so that the bill is in a stronger position next year.

Unfortunately, as time went on, we discovered that the coalition's statewide campaign did not consist of much more than activities of a thinly stretched Citizen Action Albany office, the New York City organizer they hired — a DSAer we had recommended for the job — and DSA's internal campaign.

At this writing, the campaign has lost steam. The Stringer-Leichter-Eve bill has taken a back seat to other

more urgent concerns — concerns that demand more attention because timely action by a broader constituency may be at least partly successful. New Yorkers are now defending themselves against powerful assaults on rent regulations, injurious welfare reforms and a possible state constitutional convention that could deprive low-income people of even the few remaining strands of a safety net.

This is a common problem pervading the work not just of Stringer-Leichter-Eve but also of ALTERBUDGET — a citywide coalition of human service-providers and other advocates — the Fiscal Policy Institute and other New York City and state efforts for tax and budget justice. The tendency is for budget organizing to be energized in reaction against cuts to human services and against tax cuts. Even New York's City Council changes on average only about one percent of the budget proposed by the Mayor. As a result, work that takes more than a few months' time rarely gets done. Instead, we organize yet another rally of 500 people at City Hall. Or maybe a postcard campaign which results in a few Council members receiving a weak trickle of postcards. Very little organizing is begun now for a goal five years away that might allow us to change something significant.

Amy Bachrach is the organizer for New York DSA and is a former chair of the DSA Feminist Commission.

Designer Educations and Sweatshop Wages

BY MICHAEL THOMAS

Ithaca DSA has joined a community-wide coalition demanding a livable wage for service and maintenance workers at Cornell University. The Justice for Cornell Workers Campaign brings together student activists, church and community groups, and the local UAW in united struggle against poverty-level wages and lack of opportunities for women and minorities at the university.

The Ivy League grandeur of Cornell contrasts sharply with the rural poverty found in surrounding areas. Many of the workers who maintain these justly famous buildings and grounds as the centerpiece of Ithaca's liberal reputation are themselves unable to live within the community they serve. A local livable wage study prepared by Alternatives Federal Credit Union estimates that a single person with no dependents must earn \$17,420 to maintain a decent basic standard of living in Tompkins County (Ithaca). Of more than 1000 service workers represented by UAW Local 2000, nearly 200 full-time workers (17%) are below this line. More than 600 workers (59%) would be unable to support themselves and even one dependent at the corresponding livable wage standard of \$22,452. Pay rates are so low that seven percent actually fall below the minimal federal poverty line, and many more full-time workers are considered eligible for federal assistance of various sorts.

Cornell defenders insist that such wages "reflect the local market," but fail to consider that as the largest local employer the university actually helps to set the wage standards of smaller businesses. Moreover, corporate-minded administrators have increasingly employed unfair cost-cutting practices such as speed-ups, hour reductions, and increased use of temporary workers. In short, the bottom-line mentality of the modern knowledge industry reflects the same logic as the sweatshop and the maquiladora. The "designer educations" of our professional and managerial elite are directly subsidized by the low-paid labor of our most vulnerable workers, especially women and minorities concentrated in the lowest levels of the job hierarchy.

Unlike many industries, however, Cornell is unable to relocate their facilities overseas or in non-union sunbelt communities. As a result, emphasized Cornell Professor and DSA member Anne Maria Smith at a recent teach-in, "universities and colleges are one of the few places where the two economic spheres — the spheres of decreasing income and increasing income — meet." Cornell students headed towards high-paying careers interact daily with local workers who will never be able to afford such an education for their own children.

For some on campus, these workers remain a nearly invisible part of the infrastructure, but students and faculty have increasingly come to recognize the maintenance staff and dining hall workers as valued members of the university community. Since last fall, the student-run Cornell Organization for Labor Action (COLA) has been taking these issues home to the dorms, with videos, discussion groups, and petitions designed to educate students about labor conditions on campus. Their groundwork has paid off with unprecedented student support for the union campaign; not since the anti-apart-

heid movement in the early 1980's has campus activism reached such levels. Students have been joined by Faculty United in Support of Employees (FUSE) and the Community Coalition for Cornell Workers (C3W). DSA members are active in both organizations and have assisted in planning the over all campaign.

Such solidarity has touched many individual workers personally. Perhaps more importantly, it has demonstrated to the administration a community dedication to collective action. Union contracts are up for renegotiation this spring and, given this strong early public sup-

port, union representatives are tentatively optimistic. More than a century ago, Ezra Cornell charged the university he founded with a mission of social justice. Today, activists, community leaders, and workers themselves, are hopeful that the recently installed President of Cornell, Hunter Rawlings III, will see these negotiations as an historic opportunity to reaffirm that early commitment. Until then, the organizing continues.

The Justice for Cornell Workers campaign is asking for statewide support, particularly in the New York City and Albany areas. Possible actions are currently being planned. DSA members, and concerned Cornell Alumni, are urged to contact Sylvia Wahl (607-257-2520) for information on how to help.

DSA MEMBER CROFT FINISHES THIRD IN D.C. COUNCIL RACE

DSA member Howard Croft, in a special election for a seat on the District of Columbia city council, finished a strong third in a 12-candidate race.

In the April 29 election, Croft won 15 percent of the vote in the race for councilmember from Ward 6, a jurisdiction that stretches from the gentrified rowhouses of Capitol Hill to some of the city's poorest neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River.

Croft, until recently a professor of urban affairs and geography at the University of the District of Columbia and a longtime D.C. political activist, was backed by DSA, Progressive D.C. (the local chapter of the New Party), ACORN and most of the city's union locals. The progressive community backed Croft for his strong stands on education, the environment and a preventive approach to crime, as well as his defense of home rule in the face of congressional attack. However, Sharon Ambrose, a longtime aide to two establishment Democrats on the council, won with heavy backing from the local business community as well as the *Washington Post*. Finishing second was George Stallings Jr., pastor of Imani Temple.

DC/MD/NOVA DSA looks forward to continuing to work with Howard as we advance a progressive agenda in the city. And we congratulate him on a race well run.

—Bill Mosley

ARGUING WITH THE RIGHT AND WINNING

Center For Democratic Values
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“Globalization” has become the great cliché for the turn of the millennium. Is it an irreversible process to which all national economies must adjust? Or, is it more shadow than substance — an ideology designed to make us believe that all resistance to economic change is fruitless?

Activists and intellectuals in the U.S. left are now engaged in a spirited debate about the impact of “globalization” on the U.S. economy and about our capacity to stem the tide of declining wages, accelerating capital mobility and diminishing government regulations. One side says that the US economy has become so integrated into the global marketplace that the federal government no longer has the capacity to intervene to insure both economic growth and a high standard of living. According to this view, the days of Keynesian fiscal and economic policies are over. So, the only alternative is to concentrate on international regulation of the transnational corporations and financial markets. What Keynesian policies once did for the nation-state, they now must do for the world economy. Of course, it’s hard to imagine exactly what global institutions would regulate and govern the global marketplace, unless its global institutions like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, which are wholly owned subsidiaries of the transnationals themselves.

The other side maintains that the U.S. economy is still substantially independent from global pressures. Keynesianism can still work here. All the talk about “globalization” is just that — talk aimed at demobilizing our forces and demoralizing our activists. What we lack is the majoritarian coalition to advance a program of high-wage economic growth, and to elect a President and Congress willing to implement it. Needless to say, building this coalition is almost as daunting a task as building an international coalition against the transnationals. The U.S.

broad left has been engaged in building anti-corporate coalitions around such a program for twenty years, and, during that time, it is the economic program of the Right that has done nearly all the advancing.

The problem with both sides is a political one. If progressive forces were strong enough to build a powerful counter-weight to the corporations on the national level, they would be strong enough to do it at the international level. So, it’s a spirited — but

“Any progressive victory here which weakens the capacity of U.S. capital to impose its “neo-liberal” program opens up more space for progressives in other nations to advance their struggles against neo-liberalism.”

pointless — debate, this counter posing of national verses international.

One point, however, that both sides agree on is that the United States government and its corporations occupy a unique place in the global economy. They are the prime movers transforming it. All the multilateral changes that have taken place since the Second World War, from Bretton Woods to the World Trade Organization, could not have happened without the full support of the U.S. government and the compliance of U.S. corporations. Every such agreement was squarely in the “interest” of U.S. capital. For the first thirty years, these international changes also served the “interests” of a substantial majority of U.S. workers, who experienced unprecedented increases in wages and living standards. However, for the last

twenty years, this trend has been reversed; the “interests” of a majority of U.S. workers clearly run counter to increased globalization, as the economy descends from mass prosperity to gradual, mass pauperization.

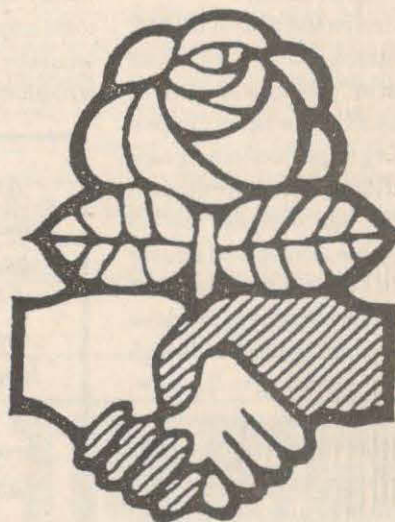
This puts U.S. progressives in a unique place as well. Changing the direction and character of globalization — from a transformation that benefits capital to one that favors labor — is only possible by changing the direction and character of the U.S. government and corporations. The U.S. is the world’s hegemon, not only as a superpower but as a “super” economy. “Globalization” is, for the most part, an “American” creation. We have a special responsibility that no other left faces. This is not my idea, but one I have heard repeatedly from foreign socialists and progressives. The left outside the United States is taking a greater interest in the future of the left in the U.S., and this is a radical departure from past attitudes. They know that their future is bound up with ours. They recognize the importance of the U.S. in shaping the world economy. Without a strong left in the United States, their capacity to implement an economic alternative to globalization in their nations is greatly restricted.

I believe we can draw some strength from this recognition, for it is the source of an internationalism that can inspire us. It really is true that a revitalized progressive movement in the U.S. will have an impact way beyond our borders. Any progressive victory here which weakens the capacity of U.S. capital to impose its “neo-liberal” program opens up more space for progressives in other nations to advance their struggles against neo-liberalism. So, we can be just as “international” by winning a living wage ordinance in our hometown as by protesting the policies of the IMF in Washington. Our Political Perspectives Document puts it best: “International solidarity is no longer a utopian dream, but a practical necessity.”

Democratic Left

Labor Day Issue 1997

The Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* will once again be devoted to coverage of labor struggles in the United States and around the world. Our annual Labor Day ad campaign is the principle fundraiser for *Democratic Left*. It provides an excellent opportunity for you to join with trade unions, progressive organizations, and DSA members to show support for DSA and *Democratic Left*. The 1997 Labor Day issue will reach over 15,000 readers. We welcome advertisements from individuals, DSA locals, unions, organizations, and progressive businesses. **We must receive ad copy by Wednesday, July 16.** Make checks payable to DSA, or pay by Visa or MasterCard.



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