

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY
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Staying Alert Till November

By Jim Chapin and Jack Clark

IN WRITING ABOUT THE NOVEMBER elections a month before our comments will appear in print, we are tempted to fall back on Samuel Goldwyn's warning to "never prophesy, especially about the future." Clearly that advice should have been followed in the last year by numerous other commentators with larger audiences. Our own record of prognostication has proved somewhat better, so we will make an attempt to sort out patterns and even venture another prediction of the likely outcome of the election (we point out now that prediction does not necessarily represent a statement of preference).

Whatever else can be said about the politics of 1980, it is clear that these are hard times for the left. All three of the major candidates are conservatives. Among the minor parties, it is probable that the right-wing Libertarians may outpoll the Citizens Party and all the left splinters combined. The economic debate focuses on more deregulation, more for the rich and less for the poor; the foreign policy debate on just how much to increase the defense budget. We will suffer through a long autumn of platitudes about economic growth, hard work, and productivity. In the end, no matter who wins, we will suffer through four years of government handouts to those who neither toil nor spin.

Somewhere, on the other side of the failure of these regressive policies, we will face a nation in search of genuine alternatives. So the democratic left must



Tom Tuthill/LNS

“The democratic left should not waste energy cannibalizing itself over the choices available this year.”

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not waste energy cannibalizing itself over the choices available this year. John Anderson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Barry Commoner are simply not important enough to allow our positions on them to disrupt political and programmatic alliances.

This is not to ignore the differences between the three leading candidates. Although all three claim to be "born-again" Christians and have devoted most of their active political lives to antilabor, probusiness and "cold warrior" politics, they hold the differing politics one might expect of, respectively, a Southern Democrat, a Midwestern Republican, and a Southern California Republican.

The differences between the politics of John Anderson and Jimmy Carter are not great; the two even present themselves in the same general way—as born-again Christians who are relatively more liberal on social issues than most of their co-religionists, but safely conservative on economics. Above all they both carry a fundamentally non- or even antipolitical message. Politics is subordinated to their personality, or at least their personal morality, separated from any serious consideration of specific issues or any serious role for the candidate as representing the interests of certain constituencies.

Despite the rhetorical differences on issues between these two and Reagan, the real differences are somewhat smaller. The actual policy output of a Reagan administration on either basic economic issues or on East/West issues is not likely to differ a great deal from that of a second Carter administration. With the latter, there is always the fear on the one hand that Reagan might actually mean some of the stupid things he has been saying, or on the other, that Carter could bumble us into World War III.

The serious disagreements between Carter (and Anderson) and Reagan center on judicial appointments and on policy toward the Third World. In shorthand, the Democrats will (sometimes uneasily) adapt their policies to a Muga-

DSOC RESOLUTION ON THE 1980 ELECTIONS

Adopted by the National Board, June 21-22, 1980

If Kennedy is defeated . . . [and] Jimmy Carter is the Democratic candidate, DSOC will make no endorsement for President at the national or local levels. . . . On the issues none of the three main candidates comes even close to charting a way out of the worst crisis in a generation. . . . Given this situation, everyone in DSOC will make a choice—or non-choice—which must be less than satisfactory. And since it is clear that there is no consensus in the organization on what that choice, or non-choice, should be, it would be dangerous and disruptive to even try to come up with a majority policy with such deep, and sincere, divisions among us. The organization will take no position on these alternatives and our members will come to their own personal conclusions about what to do. . . .

Our organizational agnosticism with regard to the Presidential choice must not, however, be taken as indifference with regard to the 1980 elections. . . . We have to fight hard against any democratic left tendency to boycott the election as a whole because of the obnoxious choices on the Presidential line. . . . There is tremendous room—and need—for intensifying our local activism in 1980. . . . Our basic commitment to a coalition strategy has not been changed but reinforced. Either the trade unions, the minorities, the women and all the other progressive forces will forge an effective political unity behind a democratic left program and offer leadership to a nation in the deepest economic crisis of a generation or the social change constituencies will fragment, fight one another and only the corporate right will win. Politically, those forces remain overwhelmingly concentrated in the Democratic party and that fact remains our point of departure. . . .

We must call upon everyone, no matter how they resolve the Presidential issue, to remain programmatically united throughout the campaign, to work together at the Congressional, state and local levels, and to plan to meet and begin the new assault on the corporate domination of the American economy and polity the morning after the November election, no matter who wins.

be, but the Republicans believe only in a Marcos. Rightwingers from South Africa to El Salvador to Indonesia are all sharpening their axes in eager anticipation of a Reagan victory.

Will we have to face these consequences of a Reagan Presidency? Hardly. Reagan has a very small chance of being the next President. This is not simply the result of his tendency to flub his lines, although he has been truly heroic in his efforts in that direction. From calling Vietnam a "noble cause" to nearly relosing China, he has earned a reputation as a blunderer. The crowning moment was his attack on Carter for opening his campaign in Alabama "where the Ku Klux Klan was founded." His previous errors could at least be justified as habitual obeisances to his natural constitu-

ency on the hard right, but his KKK remark alienated one of the key swing constituencies in this election: disgruntled Southern whites.

We predicted in these pages last spring that Reagan's general election campaign would prove disastrous. His free ride from the media would end; his statements would be closely scrutinized. No longer would he be the semi-incumbent winning the nomination, but the challenger trying to win the Presidency. But on the day in New Hampshire when Reagan won the Republican nomination, he probably lost the Presidency. By dumping John Sears, he deprived himself of a strong campaign manager. Without a carefully-programmed Reagan, the Republicans began to relive the fantasy that a blue-collar vote would put them into

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power, while abandoning the serious concentration on the suburban middle class that *could* put them into power.

John Anderson's candidacy, columnist Richard Reeves has written, is the first in history to be created by a single profession: journalism. Anderson has a favorable decision from the Federal Election Commission on matching funds, a right to participate in the League of Women Voters' Presidential debates, the endorsement of the New York State Liberal Party, and qualifications in all or nearly all the states. What he lacks is credibility from the endorsement of established political/institutional forces, and, more importantly, any compelling justification of his candidacy, either in terms of ideology or of policy. Ironically, Reagan's bloopers have hurt him by scaring the suburban middle class towards Carter, thus cutting down his vote in his largest natural base. He is still more likely to end with less than 10 percent of the national vote than with more than 20 percent.

A year ago it seemed impossible: six months ago unlikely. But the most likely President of the United States in 1981 is still James Earl Carter. Partially this is a matter of luck: international crises and blunders that helped him knock off Kennedy; an ideological opponent who is one of the weaker Republicans who could have been nominated. Partially it is a matter of skill: Carter is surrounded

“We in DSOC must do some soul-searching about our basic positions. . . . Is it time for us to look elsewhere? . . . At this point the answer is a definite no.”

by one of the greatest crews of campaign technicians and “groin-kicking” (to use George Bush's phrase) operatives ever assembled.

Partially it is a matter of ideology. Carter's slogan could be “I may be a zero, but everyone else is a minus.” In a climate where no ideology has a clear field, it is easy to maneuver by not having a clear ideology. He won the 1976 nomination by not being George Wallace, “Scoop” Jackson, or Morris Udall. He won the Presidency by not being Richard Nixon's chosen successor and won renomination by not being the personally tainted heir to a faded liberal tradition.

In each case, Carter ruthlessly exploited his advantages. After four years of confusion and misrule, the issue so far is not Carter's actual performance, but Reagan's feared incompetence. In some ways it has been a masterful show.

CARTER—NO

I, for one, am sick and tired, in the American political scene, of having us revisited time after time with a candidate who is presented from his own podium and his own convention as the lesser of two evils . . . I reject that as the politics of my party. I have been very vocal about that because if no one protests that politics, then we invite it to be done to us again four years from now. . . . We are entitled to better, and the only way we are ever going to get it is to stand our ground now. . . . Ronald Reagan may be the nightmare candidate and John Anderson a hoax not a hope, and we have no intention of working for them, but they are not the only enemies in politics today. The real enemy is a Democratic President who believes and behaves like a reactionary Republican.

Fact is, though, we can do something else. We can use our financial resources and membership volunteers to support our Congressional and Senatorial friends. That we must do, because the Right Wing is all-out against them. They are not helped by Jimmy Carter heading their ticket, they are hurt, and many will have to disassociate themselves from his candidacy. These disenfranchised Senatorial and Congressional candidates need our help now, as never before. It behooves us to help take up the slack left by the head of the Democratic ticket.

(Excerpted from remarks made by William W. Winpisinger, president, International Association of Machinists, at the IAM Convention, September 2-12, 1980. At the Convention, IAM delegates voted to make no endorsement for President, and to support the Democratic platform as the best hope of reelecting a Democratic Congress.)

Yet, as we have argued before, Carter's skill is narrowly technical and not broadly political. While winning every advantage in a campaign, he remains unable not only to govern but to choose what questions his administration will address.

An editorial cartoon appeared last June that summed up his administration. The President was featured in front of a TV set with a telephone in his hand. The TV reports that “Reagan says increase defense spending” Carter yells into the phone: “Increase defense spending.” Next, the TV blares, “Reagan says cut taxes.” Again, the President: “Cut taxes.” In the two final frames, the TV says “Stand on your head.” A nervous Carter does so, only to hear, “Aha, I fooled you. I didn't say ‘Reagan says!’”

What About 1984?

Both parties should have to select a new candidate in 1984. Reagan's age should make him a one-term President if he wins; Carter would be one constitutionally. This alone means that the 1980 election will not be a major turning point in American political life.

We in DSOC must do some soul-searching about our basic positions. With a conservative Democratic President likely to be reelected and a conservative Congress almost certain to be returned, the democratic left remains weak among Democratic officeholders. Is it time for us to look elsewhere?

At this point, the answer is a definite no. The problems of the democratic left are problems not of will but of weakness, and they are problems that are more glaring outside the Democratic party than inside it. The third-party movements that have appeared lack a serious mass base in any of the key progressive constituencies, and seem to have no real strategy to coalesce these constituencies into a winning coalition. None have the strength of the coalitions within the Democratic party.

The most interesting aspect of the recent party conventions was how “European” they appeared. In both parties, organized ideological forces appeared that were able to force the nominated candidates to at least offer a token bow in their direction. Thus Jimmy Carter found himself at his convention, far from enjoying a carefully orchestrated nomination and triumph, spending the whole

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Polish Workers' Victory Highlights Class Struggle

By Michael Harrington

THE MAGNIFICENT STRUGGLE OF the Polish workers for trade union democracy is, simultaneously and inevitably, a battle for democratic socialism. It would be preposterous to attempt a detailed analysis of this historic development on the basis of journalistic accounts at a time when the entire process may still be in motion. However, some aspects of these events can be grasped even on the basis of the limited data available. They have to do with the socialist nature of the workers' demands, the role of the Soviet Union and that of the United States.

When the negotiations were still underway between the strikers and the government, Flora Lewis of the *New York Times* rightly commented that what the workers wanted was more socialism, not less. And the London *Economist*, perhaps the most sophisticated of pro-corporate journals, was surprisingly perceptive, writing that "Marx's irresistible force, the working class, has collided with Lenin's immovable object, the communist party." (If this were a seminar, I would substitute Stalin for Lenin and capitalize Communist. But if the *Economist* can be faulted with regard to historic detail and nomenclature, the basic concept is quite accurate.) The *Economist*, therefore, concluded that "nobody is better placed than a Marxist to understand the issue in Poland today."

The Marxist key to the event is, of course, the fact of a class struggle between the direct producers—the workers—and the bureaucracy (party and state), which appropriates, allocates, and enjoys the surplus the workers produce. From this perspective the 21 points of the Gdansk agreement are particularly illuminating. Remember that the strike demands were intentionally moderate and subdued since everyone agreed that Soviet intervention

had to be avoided. Therefore, direct and open political (and revolutionary) demands were not put forward. Even so, the political dimensions of the class struggle broke through.

Dangerous Demands

The first demand was for "free trade unions, independent from parties and employers." In an American (or any capitalist) society in which the domination of capital is exercised *indirectly*, through economic coercion (in normal times) rather than through political repression, the demand for, or even the victory of, a union is not immediately political and does not challenge the basic structure. But in Polish (or any Communist) society, the rule of the bureaucracy is *directly* political and includes—at least in the Stalinist "ideal"—the power to run every aspect of societal life, the economic and social (and religious and athletic and sexual) as well as the political. In such a system, the assertion of workers' power

in the name of the most reformist, incremental, and "economistic" demand is political and potentially revolutionary, since it challenges the bureaucracy's right to plan the entire society. In Poland, this "ideal" model was altered as early as the strikes of 1970 (which toppled Gomulka just as 1980 forced Gierek out of office), and the working class has had some say—tacitly, covertly—over the decisions of the society for a decade. But the Gdansk demands *institutionalize* that shift and create an embryo of dual power simply by winning the right to free trade unions.

Secondly, there were some demands that were explicitly political, even though circumspect: "the right of the freedom of expression and of publications"; the rights of victims of former protests and the freeing of those who supported this action (including the leaders of the Workers Defense Committee, KOR); participation by the people in the economic planning to deal with the current crisis; the abolition of "commercial" (of-



©Punch
"Odd how we've the full support of the entire world's right-wing press for strong and free trade unions."

ficial black market) and foreign currency (elitist) shops. Whether there will be action forthcoming on these promises is still, of course, an open question. But the strikers actually did win a measure of free speech during the walkout by getting coverage of their actions in the international press.

Democratic demands do not challenge the very essence of capitalist power; but democratic demands in a collectivized, bureaucratically run economy inevitably pose the issue of social and economic power. They suggest that the workers, and the people generally, should decide on the allocation, and participate in the enjoyment, of the the surplus they themselves produce, i.e., democratic demands in Communist society are ipso facto socialist demands. Socialists would support them even if they were not—as we support democratic demands in South Africa and South Korea even though they do not necessarily have a socialist content—but the momentous fact is that they are.

Secondly, the Soviet Union is now playing the role which Marx so detested when it belonged to Tsarist Russia. As the policeman of Eastern Europe, it is the menacing foe of every democratic and/or socialist movement. That was first made clear in East Berlin in 1953 when Soviet tanks put down a general strike; it was reiterated with much greater brutality in 1956 during the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution; it was elevated to the status of a "Brezhnev Doctrine" in the imperialist attack upon Czechoslovakian democratic socialism in 1968; and it is clearly a major factor in reining in the Polish workers at this very moment. This is national repression—and every Pole I met in Warsaw in 1963, including the Communists, knew and resented the long history of Russian domination of their native land—and class repression by the Soviet bureaucracy on behalf of their Polish similars.

Clearly, the Kremlin fears that these ideas (as well as the evidence of a higher standard of living in Eastern Europe than in the Soviet Union) might corrupt their "own" working class. Indeed, there have been strikes and unrest in recent months in the Soviet Union itself, among the auto workers in particular. More to the point, I suspect that the aging, conservative elite agree with the essentials of the analysis I have made earlier, i.e., they understand the Polish strikes as a radical challenge to their class rule. That they

may be (and probably are) subjectively convinced that their rule is benign and even "socialist" simply means that they, like every ruling class in history, suffer from a functional delusion that masks their self-interest from themselves as well as from the people.

What Response from the West?

And yet, the conclusion of my analysis is not to suggest that World War III or Cold War II is the answer in the current situation. The Hungarian Revolution demonstrated the limitations of "massive retaliation." The United States could not come to the aid of the revolutionaries without incinerating them and starting World War III in the process. Indeed, it was precisely this fact, which made all talk of the external "liberation" of Eastern Europe mere talk, which became a basis of the limited détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. And

“This is no time for ringing, empty, dangerous declarations, but for committed support to a movement forced to walk a tightrope.”

that détente, in its turn, provided the framework in which some—much too limited, but quite real—gains were made through internal liberation. A return to the status quo of the late forties and early fifties would clearly doom all the hopes and gains of the Gdansk workers. Therefore, even as one clearly and forthrightly condemns the Soviet Union for its Tsarist role, it is necessary to remain cool and committed to negotiations, not out of a lack of concern for the fate of the Polish trade unionists, but out of a passionate identification with their struggle.

Finally, there is the role of the United States. I talk here, not of the trade unionists and democratic leftists who rallied to the strikers' cause, but of the bankers and business people who kept their enthusiasm very much under check. The *New York Times* reported on August 31 that an American banker, who wisely declined to be quoted by name, had said that Soviet intervention into Poland might make that country a better credit risk because it would create stability there.

More broadly, a meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September rightly counted Poland among the Third World countries in economic terms. That is, its internal economic problems are partly caused by its own inefficient, wasteful totalitarian planning (there is a *cost* when one excludes the direct producers from any say in the production process) and partly by its being a "peripheral" nation in the capitalist world economy.

Poland now has a \$20 billion debt, in some considerable measure as a result of economic concessions made to the workers during the seventies in a bureaucratic response to their militancy. It needs \$7.4 billion to service that debt this year and its total of hard currency earnings from exports is \$8 to \$8.5 billion. In other words, Polish export industry works between 80 percent and 90 percent of the time for Western (much of it American bank) capital! Small wonder that bankers here might welcome a Soviet invasion to protect their investment. After all, the point of putting money into Eastern Europe (and the Soviet Union) is that the bureaucracy is supposed to protect foreign capital from labor unrest—in the name of communism.

But what, then, should Americans do? In part, continue the struggle to gain some kind of democratic and social control over those banks and to insist that Western capital not be allowed to become the Kremlin's silent partner in the repression of workers' struggles. And in part, adopt an attitude of patient solidarity with the Polish workers, responding to *their* demands, to *their* tactical sense of how far *they* can go. This is no time for ringing, empty, dangerous declarations, but for committed support to a movement forced to walk a tightrope. ■

GREETINGS

State Representative
Harlan Baker

In Honor of its 45th Anniversary **WORKERS DEFENSE LEAGUE**

Rowland Watts, President
Alice Dodge Wolfson, Secretary
Harry Fleischman, Exec. Comm. Chairman

GOLDY AND DAVID KLEINMAN

WHAT'S LEFT TO READ

By Ron Radosh

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN THE WEST IS EXPERIENCING a new rupture—an ultimately healthy one—between those who seek to develop a theoretical and political strategy for moving towards democratic socialism, and those who still adhere to the chimera and rhetoric of “revolution.”

As a case in point, the editors of *Radical America* (May-June 1980) are concerned, as is author Carl Boggs, with what they call the redefinition of the late Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (the founder of Italian Communism) into an “evolutionary socialist” whose theories have supposedly been warped to “lend a false ‘revolutionary’ legitimacy to social democratic strategies.” Boggs, whose RA article is titled “Gramsci and Eurocommunism,” is concerned lest in the U.S.—heaven help us—Gramsci’s work be used to promote “integration into the orbit of the Democratic Party.” Rejecting Eurocommunism—which Boggs and the RA editors see as a new variant of classic social democracy—they persist in calling for “the building of a revolutionary movement in the U.S.”

Boggs explains that he is worried about the “potential impact of strengthening social-democratic currents in Western Europe and the U.S. on the future development of socialist and progressive movements.” He should be, for clearly, such influence is growing—and a good thing it is! But this writer, for one, thinks that it is Mr. Boggs and the RA ultra-left that misinterpret Gramsci and draw the incorrect lessons from his pioneering theoretical work.

Ironically, a good starting point for answering this type of critique is to be found in the important collection Boggs has co-edited with David Plotke, *The Politics of Eurocommunism: Socialism in Transition* (Boston: South End Press, 1980; \$6.50 paper). In his introductory essay, Plotke refreshingly argues that “some type of social-democratic phase would seem to be necessary for the long term development of a left political movement in the U.S.,” which he sees as providing “part of the foundation for a later transition to socialism.” He writes:

The medium-term political choices for the U.S. are an American social-democracy, a continued conservative social liberalism, and an authoritarian neo-conservatism. The present choice is not between the ‘social democratization’ of a revolutionary socialist movement and a genuine social transformation, but between some version of social democracy and worse alternatives. The strategic implications of arguments which urge that social democracy be avoided . . . are in effect an abstention from politics in favor of the creation of a socialist subculture, or sectarian attacks on the development of reformist movements. . . .

Plotke sees a dual task—“that of building a ‘populist’/popular social democratic movement, while at the same time advancing a socialist movement within, alongside, and at certain points in opposition to it.”

Plotke has raised the question, but has not suggested any method for moving towards the goal. Two recent books tackle head-on the question of a socialist strategy for America, and take the issue one giant step further. They are John D. Stephens’s *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* (London: Macmillan, 1979, distributed in the U.S. by Humanities Press; \$12.50 paper) and Martin Carnoy’s and Derek Shearer’s *Economic Democracy: The Challenge of the 1980s* (White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1980; \$7.95 paper).

There is no way, in a brief discussion, to do justice to the richness and importance of Stephens’s work. He has produced the first attempt, from a Marxist perspective, to examine the thorny theoretical and political issues involved in the question of transition to socialism. Holding a socialist vision and a desire to move beyond the welfare state, Stephens declares without apology that “in the United States, the immediate task is the creation of a social democratic movement.” He takes as his inspiration none other than Gramsci, whose body of work pointed out the need to create “the hegemony of the movement” in the industrial West; the need to wage a struggle for control of civil society as a *sine qua non* for any transition.

Central to Stephens’s argument is his bypassing of the sterile old socialist debate of reform vs. revolution. Instead, Stephens suggests that there is a real “possibility of a gradual parliamentary democratic evolution to socialism,” that could be won much the same way that labor won victories that resulted in the welfare state. Control of the state by capital is not an inevitability, he argues. Again citing Gramsci (yes, Boggs has a lot to worry about), Stephens argues that the growth of unionism and the “increase in the hegemony of the socialist movement in civil society, changes the degree of class consciousness” and hence has an “effect on the policy output of the state.” He sees the necessity that any socialist movement that emerges must be a “mass movement based on organized labor with the immediate goals of instituting mobilising socialist reforms which are presented as a prefiguration of the future society.” The goal is to develop—à la Gramsci—“a hegemonic presence in the life of the society.”

If Stephens’s book is the essential volume for democratic socialists and Marxists, the Carnoy-Shearer volume is the equivalent book for activists of the broad democratic left. What they manage to develop in *Economic Democracy* is an analysis combined with concrete examples (drawn from Europe and America) of how reform and restructuring of the economy can be implemented while avoiding a corporate collectivist capitalism and a bureaucratic top-down “socialism.”

Some DSOCers might take umbrage that Carnoy-Shearer use the Haydienesque term “economic democracy” as their chosen alternative, rather than democratic socialism. Don’t let that stop you from reading and recommending this book. The authors are seeking to reach the mainstream of America, and seem convinced that for various historic reasons the use of the word socialism is a taboo that cannot be overcome. But even a

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A SPECIAL REPORT

Health Care: Prices Up, Distribution Still Unfair

By Victor W. Sidel

FOUR YEARS AGO, DURING THE Presidential campaign of 1976, it appeared that the United States would not long remain the only major industrialized nation without a national health care system or national health insurance. The media were full of exposés of the impact of the cost of medical care on individuals and families and of the impact of the medical profession's incompetence and greed. Candidate Jimmy Carter, and the platform of the Democratic party, called for the enactment of a comprehensive national health insurance program and Senator Edward Kennedy had introduced in Congress a bill providing for universal coverage, comprehensive benefits, little or no deductibles or co-payments, strong controls on medical practice, incentives for more equitable distribution of medical resources, and no role for private insurance companies.

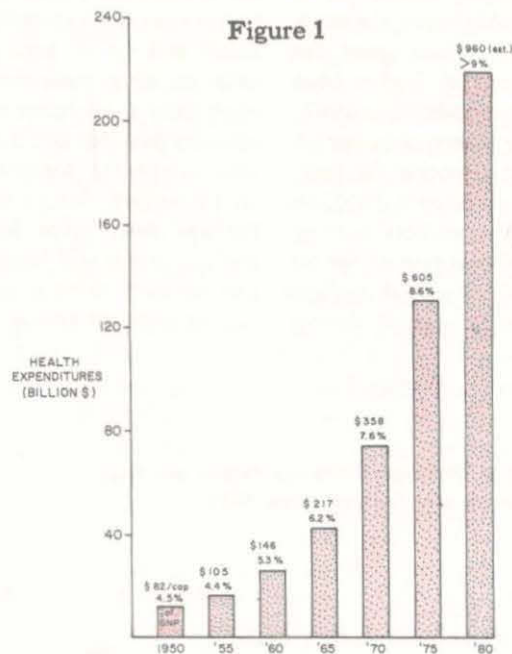
Now, four years later, significant change in health care in the United States seems further away. Apologists for U.S. medical care—doctors' groups like the American Medical Association, insurance companies, major foundations, individuals such as Harry Schwartz, formerly on the editorial board of the *New York Times* and author of *The Case for American Medicine*—dominate the media, telling us how good U.S. medical care is. Candidate Carter, and the platform of the Democratic party, have significantly reduced their commitments to prompt enactment of national health insurance, and Senator Kennedy has modified his bill to permit a major role for private insurance companies.

During these same four years, the situation for health care in the United States, particularly for the poor, for mem-

bers of minority groups, for undocumented workers, and particularly in the public sector, has grown worse.

Spend More, Get Less

In 1980, we will spend an estimated \$220 billion—almost \$1,000 for every person—on medical and health care (Figure 1). This is almost 20 times the \$12 billion spent in 1950; on a compound basis, the annual increase for each of the past thirty years is more than 10 percent, considerably higher than the average annual rate of inflation over the period. More significant than the increase, even in constant dollars, is the increasingly higher proportion that these expenses represent of the gross national product. In 1950, they constituted less than 5 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP); this year they will be over 9 percent of the GNP. The Health Care



NATIONAL HEALTH EXPENDITURES, U.S., 1950-1980

Financing Administration estimates that by 1990, if the trend continues at the present rate, the U.S. will spend over \$3,000 per person, or 11.5 percent of its GNP, on medical and health care.

Taken by itself, the steady increase in expenditures on medical and health care is not necessarily bad. The industry provides jobs for over seven million people, presumably in a more socially useful enterprise than, for example, the cigarette or advertising industries. U.S. medical technology, which consumes a large part of the expenses, and an even greater part of the increases, is among the best in the world. Many people—perhaps most—are satisfied with their care.

The problems emerge when one explores from whom the money that supports medical and health care is taken, to whom it is paid, and for what purpose and to whom the services are provided.

The burden of medical care costs is grossly maldistributed in the United States. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that seven million families had out-of-pocket medical expenditures exceeding 15 percent of their gross income during fiscal year 1978; these families spent the equivalent of two months' pay or more that year for their medical care. In 1975 families earning less than \$5,000 per year on the average spent more than 20 percent of their income on medical care while those earning \$15,000 or more per year spent less than 5 percent. Even for people over age 65, almost all of whom are covered by Medicare, the mean annual out-of-pocket dollars spent for medical care are now far higher than before Medicare was introduced in 1967: in 1966, the average person over age 65 paid about \$250 out-of-pocket for care; by 1974 the average was over \$400, an increase of 75 percent, considerably more than the general inflation rate or the 50 percent increase in out-of-pocket medical expense for those under age 65 during

the same period. Of course, the dollar shrank in value during those eight years, but that was of little comfort to the many elderly people living on fixed incomes or on savings. Even the public funds that support the system are gathered inequitably, not only due to the generally inequitable tax structure in the U.S. but also because tax deductions for medical expenses and health insurance payments are more likely to be of greater benefit to those with high taxable incomes than to those with low incomes.

If the funds that support the system are inequitably gathered, their distribution is even more inequitable. Part of the funds end up in high-profit industries such as drug companies and medical equipment manufacturers, and startling amounts pass through the hands of insurance companies, permitting vast returns on investment during the flow process. Perhaps even more inequitable, since medical care is still largely a labor-intensive industry, there is gross maldistribution of payment among those who work

in the system, with physicians earning on the average over 10 times as much as the lowest-paid service workers.

In addition to the grossly inequitable ways in which the money for medical and health care is raised and distributed, much of it is spent dysfunctionally. Approximately 98 percent of the \$220 billion dollars expected to be spent this year will be spent on medical care, that is, on services for people after they have become ill. Only about 2 percent will be spent on health care, that is, on promotion of health and prevention of illness. Forty percent of the total will go for hospital care alone. Although estimates differ as to the amount of hospitalization and of surgery performed for the primary purpose of remuneration of the physician or of filling hospital beds, there is little doubt that the hospitalization insurance systems and the prevailing fee-for-service method of payment for medical care in the United States encourage a great deal of hospitalization and surgery that could at least be deferred and possibly avoided

Figure 2

Relative Number of Physician Visits per Person per Year by Income and Type of Visits, 1971

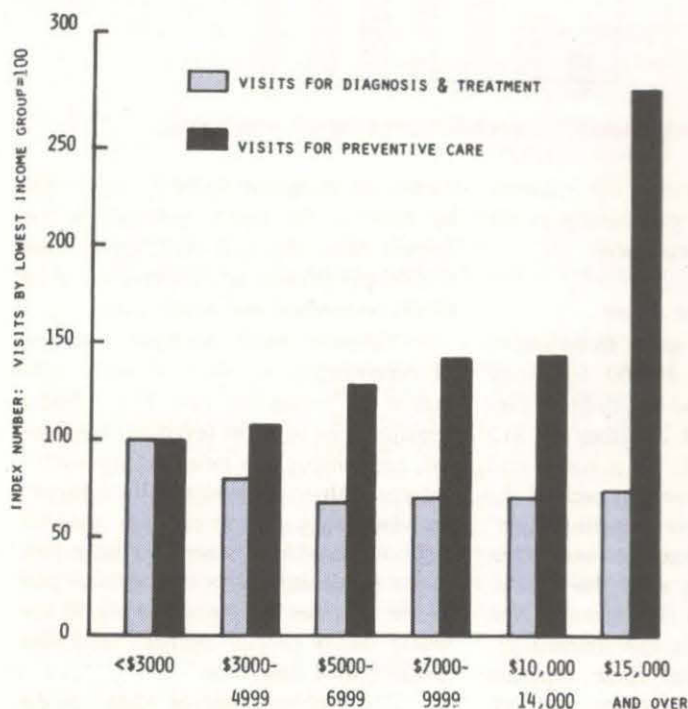
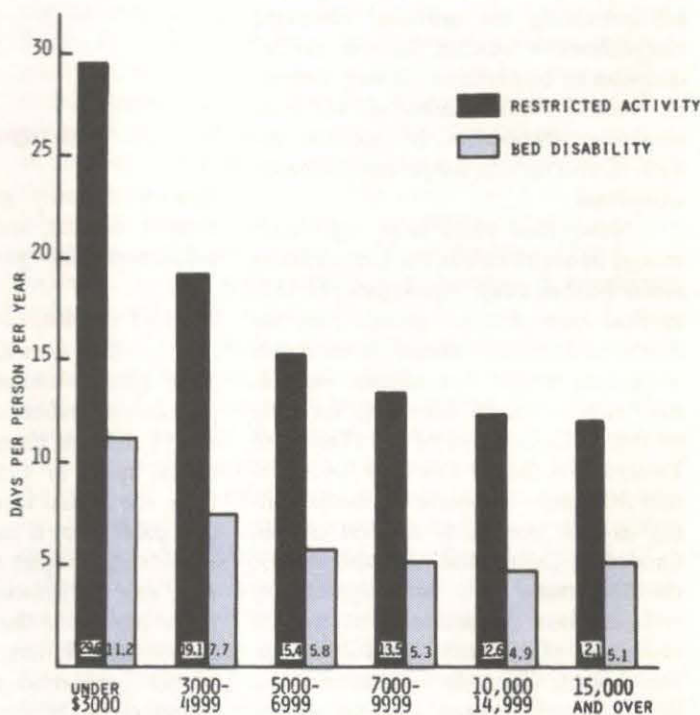


Figure 3

Restricted Activity and Bed Disability Days per Person per Year, by Family Income, 1971



Pantheon, reprinted by permission

Figures prepared by the University of Michigan School of Public Health from data published by the National Center for Health Statistics. The data are limited to the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States.

entirely. Massive advertising for brand name drugs for conditions for which there are cheaper generic equivalents or substitutes, or perhaps no need for drug treatment at all, means additional unproductive or even destructive costs.

Perhaps the most unfair feature of the system, however, is its distribution of services. Conservative economists and physicians have made much in recent years of the fact that poor people in the United States now make on the average about the same number of visits to doctors' offices annually, or even somewhat more, than do affluent people (Figure 2). Yet if one looks at the need for such services, as measured for example by restricted activity or by bed disability (Figure 3), the need of the poor for care is clearly far greater than that of the affluent. Furthermore, the number of doctor visits for preventive care is much higher among the rich than among the poor. The reasons for the greater need and for the lesser use are complex, but the undeniable fact is that the distribution of physician services further skews the already gross maldistribution of income and services in the United States.

Need for Public Sector

This brings us to the desperate need for the public sector in medicine. But the very definition of the public sector is difficult, because while over 40 percent of the funds that go into medical and health care are governmental, an additional 25 percent are distributed through private health insurance programs. Most of the funds, whether governmental or from private insurance, go to institutions and physicians in the "private" sector. Complicating the definition still further is the fact that many of the hospitals in the "private" sector are not-for-profit, voluntary hospitals that are in many ways as publicly regulated and accountable as are hospitals directly operated by organs of government.

Looking first at the public sector in the sense of governmentally-distributed funds, there is no doubt that Medicare has facilitated access to medical care for many people over age 65 who would otherwise have forgone care or pauperized themselves in getting it. It has done so by providing coverage without a means test for eligibility and at rates of institutional reimbursement, promptly paid, that are reasonably related to costs. At the same time, however, because of inade-



“Today the continued erosion of services and the current and projected cuts are destroying truly 'life-preserving' services and are 'life-endangering.'”

quate controls over the whole medical care system, Medicare has led to increased emphasis on hospitalization for the elderly and to rapid inflation in the charges for their care. It also has created many problems through its limitations in coverage and the additional payments required from patients. Medicaid, largely controlled by the individual states although supported in large part by federal monies, has been far worse. It is grossly uneven in eligibility levels and in benefits from state to state. Eligibility set at unreasonably low levels and means tests have led to demeaning of the poor and pauperization of many of the "near-poor." Delayed and non-competitive payments for care have led many physicians in the private sector to refuse to accept patients who rely on Medicaid and the establishment of "Medicaid mills" that give minimal service for relatively low fees or "ping-pong" patients from one physician to another to increase the total income.

The inadequacy of public funding for private care and much of private care's unavailability, insensitivity, or discrimination against minorities and the poor, causes the other meaning of the "public sector" to take on major importance. Public hospitals and publicly subsidized clinics (whether through direct public funding or through the assignment of National Health Service Corps physicians) are often the path of first resort and even more often of last resort for

medical care for the poor, for minorities, for the unemployed (many of whom had health insurance at work and lost it with their jobs), and for the undocumented. Public health departments are the source of personal health care, such as immunizations and well-baby visits, for the poor and for environmental health care for everyone.

Funding Anemia

In this time of reductions in resources for public education and other public services, the public sector in medicine is also—and in some ways selectively—being starved of funds. Public hospitals and clinics are grossly under-funded and are being closed or reduced in capacity in a number of cities. Funding for maternal and child health programs and children and youth programs is being reduced. In some cities health departments are being decimated.

Destruction of the New York City Department of Health, once one of the leading public health departments in the world, is a clear example. It is now—in a time of greatest need for its services—an echo of its former strength. Examples include massive reductions in personnel, so that it recently had the highest attrition rate of any city agency; reduction in child health stations from 95 to 56, even as poor children require more and more services; reduction in tropical disease clinics from three to one, even as immigrants arriving in New York City present greater needs; and, perhaps most destructive of all, the virtual elimination of many types of district health workers who had helped people in their neighborhoods to protect and promote their health. A former New York City Commissioner of Health, Dr. Pascal James Imperato, believes that until about two years ago cuts were destructive to what he terms "life-enhancing" services. Today the continued erosion of services and the current and projected cuts are destroying truly "life-preserving" services and are "life-endangering."

Since the health of the population of a nation is influenced by many factors other than its medical care services or even its formally-designated health services—factors such as nutrition, housing, education, occupation, and social relationships—it is difficult to assess the extent to which the sorry state of the U.S. medical and health care system has affected health in the past few years and even more diffi-

cult to predict the impact on health of the current crisis in the public sector. As is well known, the United States lags behind other industrialized countries in easily-defined measures such as infant mortality, maternal mortality, and life expectancy. Even more telling, there are enormous differences in health status within the United States, between rich and poor and between minority people and others.

New straws blow in the wind. The number of reported cases of tuberculosis rose almost 20 percent in New York City last year—from 1,307 cases in 1978 to 1,530 in 1979, the first significant rise in tuberculosis incidence rates in 30 years. Statistics on immunization levels of preschool children in poor areas of New York City are difficult to obtain, but it is clear there are large numbers of unimmunized children and a potential for disastrous outbreaks of preventable infectious disease. Although infant mortality rates have generally improved in New York City during the past ten years, the rates for poor people in at least some parts of the city have not improved proportionately. For example, from 1970-72 the annual infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births in New York City was 20.8 deaths; in the South Bronx it was 24.8. By 1977-79 it had dropped to 17.2 citywide but only to 22.8 in the South Bronx. In other words, in 1970-72, infant mortality in the South Bronx was 20 percent higher than that for all of New York City; by 1977-79 it was 33 percent higher than that of the city as a whole.

The results of elimination of other forms of health promotion and disease prevention, such as nutrition counseling to low income mothers, and of medical services, such as the continuing attrition of New York's municipal hospitals, may take years to manifest themselves. And reduction in some services that improve the quality of life—such as medical care for the elderly—may never produce changes in vital statistics but are nonetheless important in a humane society.

What can be done? Over the long run nothing short of a national health service will in my view come close to providing equitable, efficient, and effective medical and health services in the United States. Many groups in the United States, including the American Public Health Association, the American Medical Student Association, the Gray Panthers, and DSOC, support efforts for a

national health service. Representative Ronald Dellums has introduced a bill calling for establishment of one form of it, but the proposal has yet to be given a serious hearing either in Congress or in the media.

In the short run, attempts must be made to provide more and better services to those who need them most. These might include increased funding for the National Health Service Corps, increased funding for the work of public health departments and other health programs for poor areas, and greater support for hospitals serving the poor and minorities. Establishment of a realistic Medicaid standard that would at least reflect the inflation of the past few years and relate the standard to the poverty level would relieve part of the problem.

Representative Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), head of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, has suggested including in the support for hospitals: (1) changes in Medicare and Medicaid so that they will pay their full share of these institutions' costs including the uncollectible debts incurred in serving the poor; (2) special grants to institutions whose financial problems can be

traced to care they give to indigent and uninsured people; and (3) elimination of barriers to public hospitals' participation in particular federal grant programs. The fact that these are stopgaps that shore up a fundamentally inequitable system must not prevent us from working for them, for without them there are people who will suffer needlessly and people who will die preventable deaths while waiting for structural reforms. But we must never forget, as we work for the stopgaps, that only fundamental structural change in medicine, and in the broader society, will lead to the system we need. ■

Victor W. Sidel, M.D., is professor and chairperson, Department of Social Medicine, Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, N.Y. He is a member of the Governing Council of the American Public Health Association, the DSOC Health Care Task Force, and president-elect of the Public Health Association of New York City. He is the author, with Ruth Sidel, of A Healthy State, An International Perspective on the Crisis in United States Medical Care (Pantheon).

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Let's not kid ourselves. No matter who wins the elections this November, there will be tough times ahead.

The corporations and the Far Right have a plan for a harsher, hungrier, and more militarized America. For progressives to fight back effectively, we need a strategy to build our own coalition and a program for an alternative future for America.

The Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee works to unite low and middle income Americans behind a program of full employment, tax justice and wealth redistribution, safe and affordable energy, improved public services, sexual and racial equality, and democratically planned investments in developing new energy sources, rebuilding the cities, and reviving our industries.

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I'd like to join the DSOC. Enclosed find my dues. (\$50 sustaining; \$25 regular; \$10 limited income. Dues include \$8 for DEMOCRATIC LEFT.) Send to: Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Suite 801, New York, N.Y. 10003. Tel.: (212) 260-3270.

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Fighting Aggression, Building for Peace

By Joseph Clark

HISTORY COMES FULL CIRCLE in Poland. How fitting that the Polish workers, fighting for free trade unions, have become an indigestible bone in the throats of both Polish Communist rulers and their masters in Moscow. It was a joint invasion of Poland, based on the secret accords to divide up Poland and other European countries, that marked the beginning of World War II by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in September, 1939. It was Soviet behavior in Poland—from the halt of the Red Army on the Vistula to enable the Nazis to destroy the Polish resistance fighters, to the murder of Alter and Erlich, to the slaughter of the Polish emissaries invited by Stalin to Moscow during the war, to the flagrant violations of the Yalta agreements with Roosevelt and Churchill—that inaugurated the cold war.

Now, some 35 years later, before he was ousted, Polish Communist leader Edward Gierak explained Soviet colonialism to the Polish strikers: "There are limits that must not be overstepped by anyone. These limits are marked by Poland's reason for being. Only a Socialist Poland can be a free and independent state with inviolable frontiers."

Translate that into a one-party state, which owns and controls the means of production and refrains from taking any political or economic measures unacceptable to Moscow, and you have the Soviet definition of "socialism." The point has been made again, the last major colonial empire in the world is that of the Soviet Union. And the Polish workers have made it clear that colonialism is a burden, not a benefit, a source of weakness, not of strength, as the Western colonialists learned much earlier.

Much of the discussion about Soviet aims in Poland, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, bogs down over the question of

whether they have a master plan for world conquest. That's nonsense, of course, a fit question for the late Joe McCarthy or the current Norman Podhoretz. But we are indebted to Nobel Laureate Andrei D. Sakharov for putting Soviet and Western conduct under a microscope and offering a perspective for those who want to avoid two equally disastrous alternatives: a race for military supremacy with the Soviet Union, leading to a possible nuclear Armageddon or, appeasement of Soviet aggression, as in Afghanistan. In his "Letter From Exile" (*New York Times Magazine*, June 8, 1980), Sakharov reminds us that the Soviet Union is "a closed totalitarian state with a largely militarized economy" whose decisions about arms are made behind closed doors. He adds that in democratic societies there is "public budgetary and political scrutiny . . . under public control."

Sakharov endorsed the sanctions proposed by President Carter in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, including the economic measures and the boycott of the Olympics. The specious argument has been made that these measures didn't force the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan. Given the relationship of forces in that area, that was hardly possible. Obviously, however, the need was for imposing a price for Soviet aggression, to make it clear that "détente" must be a two-way street. Noteworthy was Sakharov's condemnation of anti-Americanism so chic among many European (and American) radicals. Sakharov took sharp issue with Günter Grass, whose attacks against America after the Iranian and Afghanistan crises were seized upon eagerly by the Soviet press. This might be amusing, Sakharov wrote, "if it were not so harmful." And it might come as a shock to some American radicals that a heroic fighter for freedom such as Sakharov called upon Europe to "fight shoulder to shoulder with the transoceanic democracy, which is Europe's creation and

Europe's main hope." American radicals might also ponder the evils Sakharov describes: "a worsening of international tensions, Soviet expansionism, shameless anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Israeli, anti-Egyptian and anti-intellectual propaganda. . . ." In a stirring call to put first things first Sakharov calls on the West and the developing nations to "show the required firmness, unity and consistency in resisting the totalitarian challenge."

While the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan required effective counter measures by the West, it would be unfortunate if we lost sight of the imperative necessity of seeking an end to the nuclear arms race, endorsement of SALT II and, more important, work toward SALT III aimed at sharply curtailing and reducing nuclear arms. In this respect the lack of a movement for nuclear disarmament has been an obvious shortcoming of what passes for a peace movement in this country. The hullabaloo about destroying all nuclear energy has been a major factor in deflecting attention from the supreme need of our times—abolishing nuclear arms. Again, the radical left here has provided little clarity on the issues. Sak-

*“To oppose Soviet aggression
in the world today is not to
endanger world peace.”*

harov shows that negotiations on disarmament are possible only on the basis of strategic parity. In utter disregard of logic and the record of history has been the effort to place ultimate responsibility for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on the U.S. because of our proposals to install medium missiles in Europe to offset the steady emplacement of more deadly Soviet missiles in Europe.

Sakharov urges that we not become victims of blackmail and demagoguery by this campaign against American missiles in Europe. Indeed, when the French and Soviet Communists convened a conference of European Communist parties on this issue the Italian Communist Party refused to attend. The Italian Communists pointed out that Soviet missiles are already in place targeted on Paris, Rome, Amsterdam and London. The current

Communist campaign is about the future installation of American missiles by 1983. Meanwhile ten Soviet missiles targeted on western Europe are being installed each month! There was logic to the demand of the Italian C.P. that all nuclear missiles be removed from both East and West.

To oppose Soviet aggression in the world today is not to endanger world peace. In another incarnation, shortly after World War II, George F. Kennan sent a "long telegram" from Moscow to

Washington to clear up the confusion in the capital about the swift transition of the Soviets from the alliance with the Western democracies against fascism to the cold war against the West. Kennan called for the containment of Soviet expansionism. He showed that the record of history demonstrates an important difference between Soviet and Nazi expansionism. The Soviet Union, Kennan wrote, "does not take unnecessary risks." Though it is "impervious to logic and reason . . . it is highly sensitive to the

logic of force. . . . For this reason, it can easily withdraw—and usually does—when resistance is encountered at any point."

The carrots and sticks that have been the stock of diplomacy with expansionist powers are still available means to do what can and should be done to curb totalitarian expansion and to assure peace in the troubled times of a nuclear age. ■

Joseph Clark is a veteran radical journalist. A longer version of this article will appear in the next Socialist Forum.

WHAT'S LEFT TO READ, from page 3

quick reading lets us see that their goal is the same as ours—creation of a social order responsive to human needs rather than private profit. They define economic democracy, thus, as "democratic, worker and worker/consumer controlled production" in which the workers decide what and how much to produce "in a democratically planned economy."

They concentrate on how to proceed with a strategy of reform that will "transfer capital from the corporations to the public," and their aim is to help create a mass political movement that will win a legislative majority pledged to such a program. They assume, like Stephens, that enough space exists in America to accommodate the growth of such a movement, and that a shift in control to the public sector can be attained in the next two decades.

Carnoy-Shearer give us details and hard facts on the different forms of community, state and federal ownership of corporations; the strategy for control over investment; the experience in Europe and at home of worker control and participation in workplace decision-making; how to fight inflation and unemployment, and a precise examination of the successes and limitations of the American and Swedish welfare states.

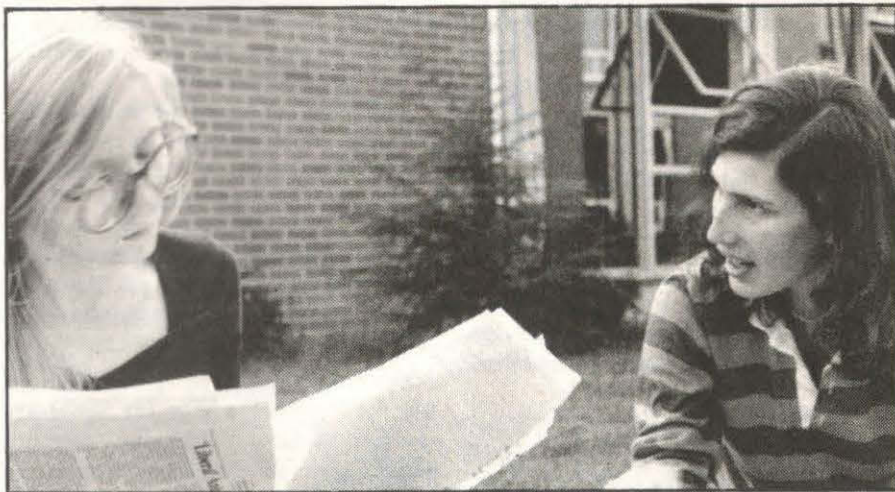
Economic Democracy is a breakthrough for those who have given up hope for any meaningful structural change in America—who either cling to socialism as a private vision that can never be realized, or propound an unrealizable and irrelevant program of revolution. The authors believe that "the democratic idea of America has been and can again be a powerful weapon." ■

Youth Parley

MORE THAN 120 YOUTH Section activists from 22 states and 40 campuses and communities gathered in Wilmington, Ohio on August 21-25 for the annual DSOC Summer Youth Conference. The

breadth of participation and depth of internal political discussion around the draft of the Youth Section political statement demonstrated that the rapid growth of the Youth Section (from 600 to close to 1,200 members and from 15 to more than 30 chapters over the past year) has been matched by growth in leadership skills and organizing experience.

In the political priorities resolution passed at the conference, the Youth Section resolved to deepen its anticorporate and labor support work, to continue to bring a democratic socialist and anti-militarist perspective to the antidraft movement, and to extend its work in support of women's, gay, and lesbian rights. A new slate of national officers was



Gretchen Donart

Vicki Cross-Hugley, l., and Elizabeth Goldstein, r., review the Youth Section political statement before the plenary discussion.

elected. They are: Youth Section Chair Peter Mandler (Radcliffe-Harvard), replacing Mark Levinson, who served for almost three years; organizational secretary, Angie Fa (University of California at Santa Barbara); corresponding secretary, Miriam Bensman (Yale); treasurer, Penny Von Eschen (Chicago); and officers-at-large, Carol Dorf (Columbia-Barnard); Rose Feurer (Southern Illinois

University); Karen Levinson (University of Southern Colorado); Terri Stangl (University of Michigan-Ann Arbor); Guy Molyneux (Radcliffe-Harvard); Raphael Piroman (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union); David Rathke (Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union); and Horace Sheffield III (Union Theological Seminary). ■

ELECTION, from page 3

meeting in one form or another of ideological confrontation. This is relatively new in the United States—but old hat in Europe. In every social democratic party, the conscious ideological left can command substantial support, even majorities, in party conferences. But the center or right wing of the party holds the offices and takes state power when the party wins. We don't want to overdo the parallel but is Carter's role vis-à-vis the 1980 Democratic convention much different from that of Callaghan or Schmidt vis-à-vis their own party conferences?

Offsetting Economic Power

As we've argued before, the left has to pay more systematic attention to politics as politics, to matters of political structure, political culture, political constituency. It is now fashionable to stress the need to pay attention to local politics. Absolutely. But this requires money and a national perspective. One serious congressional campaign now costs as much as the entire annual DSOC budget.

The media and the "establishment" have worked to get the "politics" out of politics so that they can keep economics out of politics. Representative political institutions such as the political party reduce the naked influence of economic power. The new fragmented political system increases the immediate power of the large economic interests. But it also produces problems for those interests.

First, it prevents government from doing much at all, and despite the corporately funded attacks of Milton Friedman *et al.* on big government, in times of economic decay, business needs big government. Second, it operates to bring inefficient leaders into power, and American business cannot afford too many leaders of the caliber of our last four Presidents. Third, it reduces morale throughout the political part of society and increases social demoralization throughout all of the society. The "me first" ideology of the present day is only superficially an analogue of the ideology of the fifties: it lacks the social glue of moral belief that made that society work.

As we on the democratic left face the dismal choices of 1980, we must keep clear in our minds that our attacks on the current political process are not the same as attacks on the process of politics. Socialism means replacing an essentially economic model of how society ought to

CARTER—YES

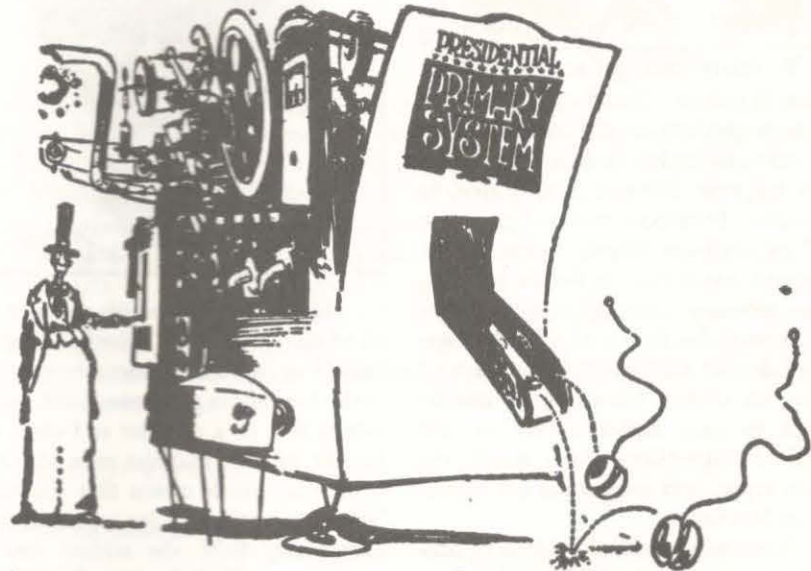
The options for the democratic left are: (1) to support Carter; (2) to support a minor candidate; (3) not to vote. If a sufficient number of people who customarily vote for the Democratic candidate choose options (2) or (3), Reagan will win. That win will stimulate an already surging right wing. It will place in the seats of government the architects of the Republican platform.

While the platform does not commit the candidate, as we have learned to our regret, it does reflect the philosophy of the party. On that score alone Carter deserves our support. The Democratic platform was a substantial victory for the Democratic left, for it embodied the planks that we fought for and won at the Democratic Convention. It is unfortunate that that victory was obscured by the battle for the nomination. That nomination was won by Carter long before the convention began. Like it or not, Carter did win the nomination handily. He won in Iowa and continued on until he won a majority of the delegates.

Although the nomination of Carter was a disappointment to many of us, Reagan's election will be a disaster whose impact will last for many years. As a union organizer who has come face to face with illegal and ruthless tactics of the employers, I know the difference between the candidates. Carter has appointed fairminded persons to administer the National Labor Relations Act. He has pledged to reopen the fight for labor law reform and is committed to resisting any efforts to weaken the minimum wage and occupational safety and health laws. Reagan proposes to remove all governmental controls from industry and his remedy for unemployment is to "curb the power of unions."

We must not punish Carter for his failure to perform as we wanted him to by replacing him with Reagan. That would be cutting off our noses to spite our faces. Let's continue to build the coalition that shares our concerns for the future of our nation by working within the Democratic party to implement the platform that we shaped. By staying inside the Democratic party, we will have a license to insist that Carter carry out the promises of that platform.

Martin Gerber
Vice-president, UAW



LNS

operate by an essentially political model. DSOC in the coming four years needs to pay more, rather than less, attention to such questions as the future of the Democratic party, and to electoral work at all levels. ■

MOVING?

Take us along.

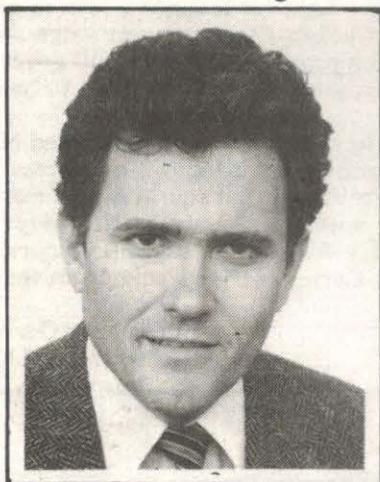
Don't forget to send DEMOCRATIC LEFT your change of address.

Please include an old label.

Socialists in City Hall

By Nancy Kleniewski

IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, SEVERAL Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee members around the country have been elected to public office in posts ranging from city ward committee to the U.S. House of Representatives. Their experiences have varied widely. This two-part series will give profiles of some of these public officials—those in city council positions and those in state legislatures.



To Harry Britt, gay activist member of San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, the major question the city faces is a struggle over its entire future direction. Downtown business interests would like to make San Francisco into a "corporate city" of high-rise offices, tourist attractions, and luxury housing for the wealthy. Those interests campaigned successfully this summer for repeal of the city's system of district elections that had allowed minorities, women, labor and low-income groups to gain representation on the Board of Supervisors. As a result, the eleven supervisors must stand for reelection in November.

Harry works with a coalition of progressive groups, trying to strengthen rent control, prevent condominium conversions and construction of high-rise buildings, reduce air and noise pollution, and maintain "people-oriented" services in the wake of Proposition 13. He sees his work as "more organizing than anything else" and his office as a forum for mobi-

lizing people around issues, for example by holding hearings to get different constituencies into coalitions with each other.

Harry is openly identified as a socialist, and has sometimes been redbaited by the press. He feels, however, that the other supervisors aren't bothered by his politics, especially since his roots in the gay movement already give his work "a different flavor." The main difficulty he sees in being a socialist is that he's always lobbying to the left of positions that are acceptable to the majority of his colleagues. Consequently, when legislation is passed it rarely has his name on it although he might well have influenced it. But Harry is unperturbed by labels, seeing the main split in politics not as left vs. right but as "people in politics for social change vs. others for career enhancement."

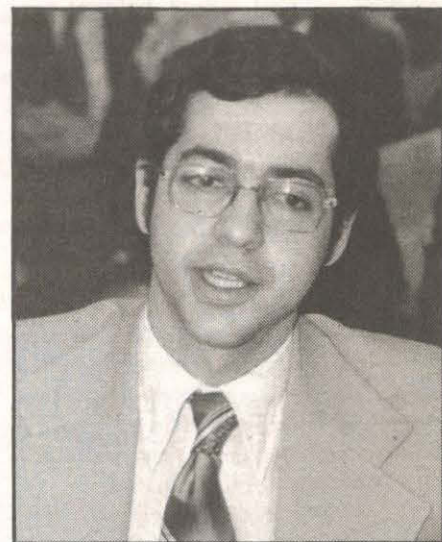


Hilda Mason, who sits on the Council of the District of Columbia, describes herself as "a radical—someone who gets to the root of the problems." She sees her role as that of a prodder and conscience prickler but says that she must also form coalitions, which means that she has to "take a lot of things I don't want to take." Like Harry Britt, she seldom sees her name on a bill that passes the Council, although several pieces of legislation that have been enacted have been slightly revised versions of bills she introduced.

The conservative majority of the Council once walked out when Hilda introduced an anticondominium conversion bill, leaving her without a quorum. Later

the bill was reworded, introduced by another Council member, and passed.

Hilda serves on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and is currently working for publicly supported fares to make mass transit a city service. She has also introduced a tax reform bill that would replace the District's flat rate income tax with a graduated tax. As a member of the Statehood Party, she is working for the passage this fall of an initiative to make the District of Columbia a state.



In Cambridge, Massachusetts, David Sullivan was elected to the City Council largely on the strength of his work in the tenants' rights movement and is proud to note that he is the first tenant on the City Council in ten years. Since he has been in office he has had passed a bill to prevent condominium conversions and has worked to preserve rent control.

David has been very involved in economic development issues. He opposed a proposal to "gentrify the job market" by razing a section of Cambridge to prohibit industrial use and permit only office construction. Although David was the only member of the Council's liberal coalition to oppose the bill, he successfully had it amended to encourage the development of manufacturing jobs.

Although David is openly identified as a socialist, he is better known as a tenant activist. His strategy is to build a

record on issues and become known as an effective leader before becoming identified primarily as a socialist.

In David's view, it is important to become involved in issues that concretely affect people's everyday lives, like housing and jobs. He finds that it is increasingly difficult to get progressive social change at the national level, and that it is important for socialists to show that government can have a beneficial effect on people's lives.

Ruth Messinger, who represents a West Side district on New York's City Council, says that she is usually identified as a leader of the progressive caucus on the Council—a Manhattan reformer, and a person who knows what she's talking about on issues—but not particularly as a socialist. "Most of my constituents know what I think," she says, "without worrying why I think it." Mayor Koch once called her a "commie," but her socialist politics have not lessened the respect that other members of the City Council have for her.

Ruth's strategy of being available to community groups and using her office

to work on a wide variety of progressive issues is only part of her work for social change as a public official. The other part is to identify crucial issues within the normal tasks of the Council and concentrate on those that fit socialist goals. For example, Ruth says that most Council members' attitudes toward federal community development funds is to "see how much they can rip off for the capital budget, which is always inadequate, while I try to see how much of the money can be retained for low income housing, which, after all, is the purpose of the program."

One of the Council jobs that Ruth thinks is crucial is the city's revenue budget. She points out that the fiscally-troubled city would have enough money if it were not for a "deliberate policy of action and inaction that results in their not collecting taxes." So instead of just advocating increased human services, she can also make concrete suggestions about where the money could come from. She suggests that the city would be better off giving money and services directly to people rather than to rich developers.

Finally, I asked Ruth if she thought



that city politics offered a good opportunity to work for social change and if she had any political ambitions beyond City Council. "I only like local politics," she replied. "I don't know if that's logical, but it's what I like." ■

Nancy Kleniewski is active in the Philadelphia DSOC and serves on the DSOC National Executive Committee.

DSOChallenge 80

The CHALLENGE 80 campaign has reached 43 percent of its goal. To date \$10,628.99 has been contributed directly to the campaign. Because each dollar is matched by a small group of donors, our total is now over \$21,000. Already six locals have met or exceeded their CHALLENGE 80 quota. *But we cannot allow ourselves to be complacent.* Our goal is \$50,000, not \$21,000, and 43 percent still leaves us with 57 percent to raise. This campaign was undertaken because after seven years of activity DSOC has an accumulated debt of \$50,000 which must be retired. We are extraordinarily fortunate that a few individuals stepped forward to help us out on

the sole condition that our own membership demonstrate the same commitment that they were showing. As a result, for each dollar you contribute, DSOC gets \$2. Of course, that means we will lose money if we fail to raise at least \$25,000 from our members and friends. We still have a long way to go, but this project is doable. To date 209 people have contributed to the campaign. That means over 3,800 of us have not. If each of us who has not yet contributed sends in a check this week we will exceed our goal. We depend on your commitment to our ideals. Please send in your contribution and be as generous as possible.

YES, I WILL DO MY PART TO MEET THE DSOCHALLENGE 80 GOAL. ENCLOSED IS MY CONTRIBUTION OF:

- _____ \$500 (With \$500 from the Matching Fund your gift becomes \$1000.)
- _____ \$250 (With \$250 from the Matching Fund your gift becomes \$ 500.)
- _____ \$125 (With \$125 from the Matching Fund your gift becomes \$ 250.)
- _____ \$ 50 (With \$ 50 from the Matching Fund your gift becomes \$ 100.)
- _____ Other (All gifts are matched.) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: your contribution will be counted with others from your Local to meet the goals established for each Local and Organizing area.

Send to: DSOChallenge 80, Suite 801
853 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003

JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

LABOR NOTES—The AFL-CIO's breaking of new ground in August with the election of Joyce Miller to the Executive Council received too little notice. Miller, a vice president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, has been a forceful leader of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (she led the successful fight to move the last AFL-CIO convention out of Florida in observance of the ERA boycott), and is the first woman on the highest body of the AFL-CIO. Incidentally, she is also a longstanding member of DSOC, bringing the total of dues-paying socialists on the Executive Council to three. . . . With the passing of Patrick Gorman, the secretary-treasurer of the Meatcutters and Butchers, American labor loses one of the most colorful of its old socialists. Pat at least once excoriated the editor of this journal for not keeping up the (Catholic) faith along with socialist principles. A great friend of DSOC, Gorman once began a letter on its behalf to the Socialist International with "We should have been in touch long ago as I am one of America's leading socialists." Idiosyncracies and all, he was a great fighter who lent his name and energy to numerous good causes. He undoubtedly died happy in the knowledge that he outlasted his old nemesis, George Meany. . . . A disturbing trend in collective bargaining was highlighted by *Business Week* in its September 8 issue. Employer takebacks in contract negotiations are an old story. What's new is the reopening of contracts in midterm so that unions can make

concessions that strengthen the employer's position. Delays or reductions in cost of living adjustments and changes in work rules are frequent subjects of such midcontract bargaining. U.S. Steel, Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel, Uniroyal, General Tire & Rubber and Dana are among the beneficiaries of such concessions. The biggest case involves the Teamsters and Trucking Management, Inc., tinkering with COLAs and work rules in the master freight agreement.

THE POLISH WORKERS' STRUGGLE INSPIRED THE WORLD, as Mike Harrington noted in a mid-August telegram to the Gdansk Interfactory Committee. Smart money men restrained their enthusiasm. Poland owes Western banks about \$20 billion; that creates a certain convergence of interest between capitalists and commissars in avoiding change. Or, as one anonymous banker told the August 31 *New York Times*, if the Soviets intervened, Poland's creditworthiness might increase. Is Wall Street bullish on the "Red" Army?

NOT ALL INVESTORS EXPRESS TIMIDITY in today's world. Doug Casey, author of the current best-seller, *Crisis Investing: Opportunities and Profits in the Coming Great Depression*, told the *Washington Post* financial section that he believes in buying "when there's blood in the streets." Of course, Casey was thinking of Latin America, not Europe.

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