

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY
MICHAEL HARRINGTON

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Women won victories in the seventies, and will have to fight to keep them from being eroded in the eighties. But, says Roberta Lynch, the inroads made by the women's movement and its effect in all areas, from church to workplace, offer hope that new gains can also be made.

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Must the left avoid criticizing the Kremlin for fear of aiding right wing reaction? Ron Radosh looks at Ralph Miliband's essay calling for a "socialist opposition" to Soviet interventionism.

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A socialist mayor in Vermont, successful conferences—activity on the left is buzzing.

Land Reform's Faded Promise

By James C. Stephens, Jr.

A year after its inception, El Salvador's bold and disputed land redistribution program is taking hold . . . [and] . . . appears to be fulfilling its political objectives of undercutting the power of rightist oligarchs and winning peasants from leftist guerrillas."

The New York Times
March 15, 1981

THE SENSE OF DÉJÀ VU THAT one feels upon reading the above lines is compounded by daily press reports of U.S. "advisers" in El Salvador, of our government's fear that the "Marxist" revolution will sweep northward to our doorstep, and of the Salvadorean people's support for the "centrist" government supported by the U.S. The striking similarity between what is happening in El Salvador and what happened in Vietnam is no accident. For the agrarian reform process, the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy in El Salvador, was designed in large part by the same people who planned the campaign to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. Ever since March 6, 1980, when the Basic Agrarian Law was announced, the American public has been led to believe that legions of poor peasants have become owners of large modern plantations, that thousands of families renting small plots of land are now owners, that landless peasants now own property, and that the economic hold of El Salvador's planter oligarchy has been broken.



INS

“As much as 60 percent of El Salvador's rural population has no access to land.”

If true, these claims would be impressive, for El Salvador desperately needs land reform. However, a closer look at El Salvadorean reality flatly contradicts this picture. To determine the picture behind the assertions, it is essential to examine the actual agrarian reform process: what preparation and planning took place; who participated; what role peasant organizations played; who benefits and who doesn't; which crops are affected by the reform; what percentage of cultivatable land is affected; and to what extent the reform addresses the serious agrarian problems of El Salvador?

Since 1881, when the nascent planter oligarchy abolished communal forms of land tenure, evicting thousands of Indian and mestizo villagers from the fertile central highlands in order to spread the green mantle of coffee over the face of El Salvador, that country's agrarian reality has been shaped and dominated by the institutions of *latifundio*, large estates that underutilize land, and *minifundio*, tiny plots that are seriously overused.

As commercial export crops have taken hold of the most fertile and extensive tracts of land, in the process forcing thousands of peasants off the land, the dichotomy has sharpened between large landed estates devoted to commercial export crops and small, less-than-subsistence plots of land devoted to production of basic food crops. This dichotomy is reflected in the concentration of land holdings, pattern of land use and land tenure arrangements, the dramatic increase in the landless population over the past thirty years, the chronic underutilization of labor, and the glaring inequalities in land distribution.

El Salvador, the smallest country in Latin America, suffers from extreme concentration of land and income. In 1971, of a total of 271,000 farm units, 50 percent were smaller than one hectare (2.5 acres), the vast majority being located on very poor soil highly prone to erosion. Ninety percent of the agricultural units of El Salvador are smaller than five hectares. Yet these 90 percent represent less

than 20 percent of total land holdings. At the other extreme, less than one percent of the agricultural units, those 500 hectares and larger, control over 15 percent of the total land holdings.

Accepting Salvadorean sociologist Gabriel Pons's calculation of nine hectares of land as the absolute minimum needed to provide subsistence for a family of six throughout the year, ninety-two percent of El Salvador's land holdings fall short of that minimum. This situation results in massive seasonal migration to commercial plantations by hundreds of thousands of peasants.

Land Use and Tenure

Given the dense population and the lack of an unsettled frontier, patterns of land use take on increased importance in El Salvador. The larger the farm the less intensive the use of the soil and the smaller the farm the more intensive the use of the soil. The larger the farm, the smaller the portion of land devoted to food crops and vice versa. On plots of land smaller than one hectare, over 95 percent of the land area is devoted to the cultivation of basic grains; less than one percent lies fallow or in pasture. On the other hand, farms of 100 hectares and larger use only 18 percent of their total acreage for basic grains; over 50 percent of their land is left in pasture—the most unintensified use of land.

A look at patterns of land use from 1960 to 1975 reveals several facts:

- Pasture lands dedicated to extensive cattle raising represent a larger share of land use than basic food crops;
- Permanent crops (of which coffee represents more than 90 percent), are planted in only slightly more than 10 percent of total land area of large estates (500 hectares or more);
- The amount of pasture lands has not changed during a period of rapid population growth and increased demand for land and food.

LETTERS

To the Editor:

Michael Harrington's analysis of the Congress of the Socialist International (January) tends to conceal its growing hostility toward Israel. The Brandt-Kreisky meeting with the PLO prior to the Congress was a glaring example of this trend (which was castigated by Golda Meir as far back as 1973).

Indeed it is with great sorrow that I have waited for a clear forthright statement supporting Israel's right to exist and condemning Soviet-backed PLO terror, even by the DSOC.

Al Kogut
Garden City, N.Y.

Michael Harrington replies: Al Kogut is wrong. The Madrid Congress saw a rap-

prochement between Bruno Kreisky and Shimon Peres in a joint statement on the Middle East and unanimously passed a resolution proposed by, among others, both the Israeli Labor Party and the Austrian Socialist Party. DSOC's first statement of principled support to Israel—reiterated since on many occasions—was unanimously passed by our founding convention which, meeting during the Yom Kippur War, also supported American arms for Israel.

Letters to the editor must be signed. We reserve the right to edit for brevity. Please limit letters to less than 250 words. Letters should refer to articles that have appeared in DEMOCRATIC LEFT.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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In short, large estates underutilize land while *campesinos* are often forced to overuse their tiny plots.

There have been three major developments in land use tenure arrangements in the past twenty years:

- The rapid growth of rental arrangements;
- The marked decline in permanent resident laborers, *colonos*; and
- The tremendous expansion of the landless rural proletariat.

Between 1950 and 1971, the number of landholdings rented has increased by more than 100 percent (from 33,000 to 76,000). In 1971, 28 percent of 270,868 agricultural units were rented, more than 98 percent of them plots smaller than five hectares. Many *colono* lands have been converted to pure rental arrangements in the government's attempt to abolish the feudal-like arrangements of the past. This has coincided with a sharp decrease in peonage, or *colonaje* arrangements, from a high of 55,000 in 1961 to 17,000 by 1971. Though *colonos* are still found on cotton, coffee, sugar, and cattle haciendas, their ranks have been depleted because of greater capital investment in agriculture and the use of labor saving machinery.

But the most significant development in El Salvador's countryside in the past 20 years remains the growth of landless rural proletarians. According to a 1976 United Nations study, the number of landless ballooned from 12 percent of the rural population in 1960 to over 40 percent by 1975. By *landless*, I mean those without any *access* to land, those who neither rent, sharecrop, nor own land. It is widely believed that as much as 60 percent of El Salvador's rural population has no access to land.

Income Distribution

Not surprisingly, income distribution is very skewed. Over two-thirds of the population receives less than one-third of disposable income, whereas the wealthiest families in the countryside—fewer than two percent—dispose of approximately one-third of the income.

The source of income varies according to size of land holdings. *Campesinos* with less than one hectare earn over 80 percent of their income from *wage labor*, while farmers with 10 to 50 hectares earn



"FIRST THING YOU SALVADORAN TROOPS GOTTA LEARN IS HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE ENEMY..."

over 80 percent of their income from the soil. This translates into early death and chronic malnutrition. Sixty percent of the nation's families earn less than the absolute minimum needed to buy subsistence food products.

The combination of *minifundio* and sharp seasonal fluctuations in the demand for labor on commercial farms produces a chronic underutilization of labor. PRE-LAC of the International Labor Organization reports that El Salvador has the highest degree of labor underutilization in Latin America. More than 50 percent of the rural labor force is unemployed more than two thirds of the year.

Land Reform

Given these conditions, agrarian reform in El Salvador must address the complex problems of landlessness, concentration of land holdings, poor land use, chronic underutilization of labor, and skewed income distribution—all within a *framework of popular participation*.

From the outset, the planning and organization of the reform excluded Salvadorean groups who had expertise in agrarian reform and had advocated it: namely, the Catholic Church, universities, agricultural technicians and farm-workers' unions. Indeed, the only Salvadorean group other than the military and the ruling junta that participated was the peasants' union (UCS) created by the AFL-CIO-backed American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD).

Rodolfo Viera was made director of

the resurrected Salvadorean Institute of Agrarian Reform (ISTA) to direct the program. Viera, who had been on the verge of resigning because the program wasn't being carried out, was assassinated by right-wing terrorists this past winter, along with two American consultants. His successor, Lionel Gomez, has now fled the country in fear for his life.

Instead of tapping native talent, AIFLD, under a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), brought in Dr. Roy Prosterman, architect of the "land-to-the-tiller" program used in Vietnam in the late 1960s.

Phase I, which potentially affects 238 estates, called for the expropriation of estates of 500 hectares or larger, and the formation of producer cooperatives. Phase II was to affect properties of 150 to 500 hectares. Phase I covers 15 percent of El Salvador's cultivatable land, but much of that land is either used for grazing cattle or lies fallow.

The "right of reserve" clause in the law allows property holders to withhold 100 to 150 hectares from expropriation as well as an additional 20 percent if improvements are made, further reducing the impact of Phase I.

Approximately 90 percent of coffee is unaffected; 68 percent of cotton; 63 percent of sugar cane; and more than 90 percent of corn and sorghum. Since cotton and sugar cane are labor intensive during four months of the year at most, estimates of the number of beneficiaries

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There's No Turning Back For Women's Movement

By Roberta Lynch

WE LIVE IN A WORLD MADE of spiraling complexities. Every issue seems to open into another, its full impact trapped in a vortex of qualifications and contradictions. Each social movement today faces the difficult task of being willing to live with its complexities—without ignoring or denying them—while at the same time being able to shape out of them certain cogent themes that can communicate its fundamental vision or provide a focus for concrete activity.

The 1970s witnessed a host of contradictory developments. Progressives in those years found themselves on the horns of many a dilemma, seeking to resolve conflicts between labor and environmentalists, between urging government regulation and stimulating local self reliance, between international solidarity and job protection. But there was probably no single more complex, or unsettling, force to emerge in those years than the contemporary women's movement. Even today, as we confront basic issues of reshaping our economy, reorienting our expectations, or revitalizing our political system, it continues to tug at the warp and woof of our social fabric.

Some historical developments can, in effect, sneak in by the back door; that is, their initial appearance does not suggest their potential social impact, and their full meaning becomes clear only as they grow or in retrospect. The women's movement never had the option of such a gradual emergence. It arrived with bells ringing, calling card in hand: History in the Making. It transcended political system, religious tradition, or cultural mores. It ranged across time, challenging the exclusion of women from the pages of our past, and across national borders, exploring the common dilemmas of women



Phyllis Shames/LNS

“ What is important to look at is the way that the shift away from basic industry and towards a service economy affects women's role in the workforce.”

everywhere. Although it lacked any grand design for social reorganization or even the scientific claims of socialism, feminism posed questions so basic it could not be ignored. It probed the nature of gender distinctions, the manner in which the human species is introduced, the meaning of love, and the organization of work.

At the same time, the modern women's movement was an intensely pragmatic force. It taught women to fight where they were on whatever issues were of concern to them. It shied away from abstract theoretical debates and drew much of its impetus from a kind of "how-to" ism designed to help women figure out

ways to make concrete improvements in their lives.

This complexity of dimension was both the great attraction and the great threat of the movement. Its scope enabled feminism in a sense to eclipse its issues, its organizations and its leaders and to become a facet of almost every piece of American life. But it also made even the most minor reforms seem laden with the prospect of immense personal or social dislocation, riving rise to an organized backlash as well as to a more widespread sense of unease, even among women themselves.

Now in the 1980s, in the wake of a

political realignment whose outlines are only beginning to take shape, the women's movement finds this process intensifying. Those who now control the machinery of the state are in a certain respect all too aware of feminism's import. They see in even its smallest victories a dynamism that will eventually erode the given order. They are opposed to any change—no matter how seemingly innocuous—that furthers the movement's power and they will not be diffident in that opposition.

Moreover, they will be aided by a potent ally: fear. For beneath the surface of the past decade, large scale forces have been at work causing the ground to shift almost beneath our feet. We now find ourselves as a nation in a time of immense transition when forms of economic activity, governmental direction, and international relations that are all many people have known for their entire adult lives are being altered. The new forms that are emerging seem to imply lowered expectations, a reduced standard of living, and a concomitant crisis of national prestige.

Such changes, sensed even when they are not clearly articulated, cause a kind of collective fearfulness, an unwillingness to take risks that is not simply based on psychological timidity, but on the concrete problems that are generated by these changes. Take, for instance, the case of divorce. I do not hold divorce up as a sign of progressive movement. It is often a matter of personal trauma and tragedy. Nonetheless, it is the case that over the last decade there has been a steady increase in the divorce rate and that this increase has been tied to women's rising expectations for personal fulfillment. But now the divorce rate in Illinois is *down* this year by 11 percent! One could attribute this—as I recently heard a psychologist do—to a "new maturity" in which people recognize the need to work through their problems, be more tolerant, etc. One could just as easily, however, attribute it to a "new insecurity" in which people recognize that it is now virtually impossible to support a family on one income in this country.

In this climate, the women's movement—with both its real and latent impact—can easily be perceived as a source of further instability.

These are formidable obstacles for any movement. Yet the women's movement also has formidable strength pre-

cisely because of the scope of its vision. We will gain nothing and fool no one by seeking to narrow the meaning of our movement to fit the straitjacket of the times. On the other hand, we gain nothing and fool only ourselves by seeking to deny the influence of our opposition or by indulging in rhetoric about our own clout. We need instead a realistic assessment of the sources of our potential growth.

The threats to the ERA and abortion rights notwithstanding, the women's movement in its broadest form remains a central agent for effecting change. For the force of its insights and the breadth of its concerns have enabled it to become an organic element of some of our major institutions. Its influence extends far beyond those who adopt its labels to include millions of women across America.

It is this "organic institutionalization" of feminist ideas that can provide much of the basis for women's progress in the immediate future. Let me give some examples of this trend.

“We gain nothing and fool only ourselves by seeking to deny the influence of our opposition or by indulging in rhetoric about our own clout.”

Not only have women entered the workforce in record numbers over the past decade, but their entry has coincided with decisive shifts in the nature of employment in America. Since 1973, the *increase* in employment in eating and drinking places has been greater than the total employment in the steel and auto industries combined.

Much has been made of the fact that women are seeking entry into male jobs and an end to discrimination in hiring practices. However, the simple truth is that women have not succeeded in cracking the barriers to participation in the traditional male bastions of industry except in the most token sense. There are structural reasons for this failure that make it unlikely that they will: essentially, the combination of recession/lay-offs/industrial decline and the seniority system makes it impossible for women to gain entry to those industries on an ongoing basis.

What is important to look at is the way that the shift away from basic industry and toward a service economy affects women's role in the workforce. What we are witnessing is a shift of capital and resources toward precisely those areas of work where women have tended to be concentrated. What happens within these sectors will be increasingly decisive for the general standard of living/distribution of income within our society as well as for the more specific issue of the ability of the trade union movement to grow and renew itself as the representative of working people.

There are two still-embryonic developments that may be of considerable significance in this regard. The first began as a movement for equal pay for equal work that has met with considerable social legitimation. Just in recent weeks in Illinois, Women Employed, an organization of office workers, won a multimillion dollar sex discrimination suit against a major bank and the City of Chicago lost its appeal on a sex discrimination suit won by a group of its women employees and the National Organization for Women.

This focus on job inequalities is now expanding, however, to posit an even more fundamental challenge: the issue of pay equity or comparable pay for work of comparable worth. Based on a system of rating various elements of a job, this concept has the potential to alter the enormous wage gaps that exist between different types of work and that are among the primary reasons women still earn only 59 cents for every dollar earned by men.

A related development is the growing move toward organization among women workers, particularly office workers. The rapid growth of working women's organizations across the country has helped to generate awareness of poor working conditions, low pay, and a lack of respect. This new awareness, in turn, is laying the basis for unionization campaigns, a heretofore unheard of idea in most offices. And unions are beginning to recognize this potential. The UAW has recently put major resources into white collar organizing. And the Service Employees International Union just announced an alliance with Working Women, National Organization of Office Workers to develop innovative approaches to organizing the office. Still young, these efforts have the potential to bring women together in dynamic new ways.

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WHAT'S LEFT TO READ

By Ronald Radosh

Ralph Miliband and John Saville, eds., *The Socialist Register: 1980* (London: The Merlin Press, 1980) \$5.95 paper, distributed by Monthly Review Press.

IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE JANUARY 1981 *Encounter*, Leszek Kolakowski states that "in the political attitudes of the European Left," an undercurrent of feelings exists "which betrays a residual pro-Soviet bias," prompted in part by a "self-righteous assertion that a man of the Left should avoid doing anything that might further the interest of 'rightist' forces." Kolakowski argues that "when the chips are down, these people invariably come out on the side of the Kremlin."

In an important new essay, "Military Intervention and Socialist Internationalism," Marxist political scientist Ralph Miliband takes a stand that suggests that Kolakowski may have overstated his case. Miliband tackles head on the various forms of *apologia* for the Kremlin, but, unlike Kolakowski, holds that it is "a very legitimate fear" on the part of left intellectuals that they will find "their voice merged in that of a broad reactionary chorus." Hence he calls for a firm "socialist opposition" to Soviet interventionism; an opposition based on a socialist morality.

His analysis is confined to justifications by the left for Soviet *military* interventionism—from Hungary to Afghanistan. First, he discusses the argument that Soviet intervention is often taken to offer protection against counterrevolution. Miliband writes that counterrevolution is often defined as being synonymous "with the replacement of a government wholly subservient to the USSR by a government not thus subservient." Indeed, he argues, the reforms and liberalization that might have reached fruition in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, had Soviet intervention not occurred, would have only strengthened socialism and even "the credentials of the regime in the eyes of the working class." True, he says, they certainly would have loosened the monopolist grip of the state and party over civil society—but this would have been a far better alternative in socialist terms. "There can be," states Miliband, "no good socialist warrant for the imposition by foreign arms of a 'socialist' regime which the overwhelming majority of people resent and reject."

Turning to the type of justifications for Soviet intervention in Afghanistan offered by shrewd apologists such as Fred Halliday, Miliband notes that none of the pro-Soviet Afghan regimes ever "had more than a very slender basis of support . . . numbering no more than a few thousand people in a country of nearly seventeen million." For those who argue that the USSR was preserving an anti-feudal revolution, he answers that "there was no revolution to save in Afghanistan, only a government that proclaimed its revolutionary intentions and had extremely poor revolutionary prospects." The real Soviet reason for moving in militarily, he adds, was to keep that nation in its sphere, and the intervention lacks "legitimacy and has strengthened rather than weakened the forces of counter-revolution."

Next, Miliband takes on the argument that even without support, these military actions help create a future climate for

socialism—that at least the Soviet style regimes are "transitional," moving nations closer to socialism. Trotskyist thought, he argues, is responsible for such incoherence. Trotsky, he notes, posited that despite all their faults, these governments were still workers' states; that "for all their bureaucratic deformations, they are *on the way* to being socialist." But even a socialist economic base, he answers, has proved to "produce markedly undemocratic and inegalitarian 'superstructures,' with a strongly repressive state, a relatively impoverished civic life, and a general indifference and cynicism concerning the 'social good.'"

Even with a public sector economic base, Miliband writes, there is "no good reason to think that the regimes in question are likely to flower into legitimated socialist democracies." The notion that they are transitional societies is "misleading, illusory and even vacuous," since in truth these Soviet style regimes are "very far distant from anything that could be called socialism." Indeed, he notes, in terms of a real emerging socialist consciousness, capitalist societies are as transitional as Soviet types. And Soviet military intervention takes place not "to save 'socialism,' but to save monopolistic regimes that are not socialist or 'on the way' to socialism."

As for the final argument—that the Russians intervene to gain security—he answers that their interventions make their position less secure, since the result of invasion is only "the implacable hostility which a Soviet imposed regime" creates and the inability of "that regime to achieve a genuine measure of legitimation."

Some democratic socialists will find troublesome Miliband's conclusion that when Soviet aid "does help serve progressive purposes, it has to be supported," (i.e., as in Angola and republican Spain). Is it correct to disregard Soviet motives and be supportive of aid given to revolutionary movements, without assessment of the overall context in which it is given? Miliband insists that such aid not have strings attached, but one must ask if this is possible. Miliband calls the Cuban regime "now a repressive dictatorship of the Soviet-type model." Yet he welcomes "the help from the USSR which has kept Cuba afloat." Strangely, he seems not to notice the relationship between that extensive aid and the sad result it has produced. Despite these minor disagreements, Miliband's essay is a welcome sighting in a sea of print still so often infested by Stalinist type logic.

■ ■ ■

Working Papers has revived, and the January-February 1981 issue features Dick Flacks's important essay, "Populism in Search of the People." Flacks analyzes and contrasts Mike Harrington's and Tom Hayden's approaches to politics and the building of anticorporate movement. Must reading!

Readers who mourned the reported demise of *Marxist Perspectives* will be pleased to know that an agreement has been reached whereby it will merge with *Socialist Review*. Many of the original *MP* editors, with the exception of Eugene Genovese, will stay with the new *Marxist Perspectives/Socialist Review*, which will feature a blend of more scholarly articles with solid political analysis. ■

Economic Emphasis May Be Key to Civil Rights



Werner Willie/LNS

By Stuart Elliott

DOES THE ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT who opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act threaten a period so unfavorable to black Americans that it could resemble the era that followed Reconstruction? Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, fears an "open hunting season" on civil rights. Benjamin Hooks of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People shares Jordan's concerns: "They want to roll us back."

Responding to events such as the acquittal of the murderers of Arthur McDuffie in Miami and the Communist Workers Party members in Greensboro, as well as reports of increased Ku Klux Klan activities, historian George M. Fredrickson raises an even more pessimistic scenario: "A return to legalized segregation is unlikely; more conceivable is regression to a state of affairs permitting the practical denial of blacks' rights

because the authorities are unable or unwilling to suppress and punish white-supremacist terrorism."

South Carolina's Strom Thurmond, the 1948 "Dixiecrat" candidate for President, now chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thurmond has revamped the committee's structure so that for the first time in recent years there is now no subcommittee with explicit jurisdiction over civil rights. This symbolic wiping out of civil rights foreshadows the substantive changes Thurmond and his allies have in mind. A top target is the Voting Rights Act, key provisions of which expire in August 1982. Thurmond wants to kill it either outright or by subterfuge. Also expected are efforts to legislatively prohibit many affirmative action remedies. A different and novel danger is represented by renewed conservative interest in limiting the powers of the federal judiciary. Only a simple majority of the Congress is needed to pass a bill stripping the Supreme Court and lower federal courts of the power to hear cases involving such

areas as school integration, school prayer, and abortion.

Although Reagan appears at least willing to listen to black leaders, and has met with Jordan, Hooks, and others at their request, the blacks who have the administration's ear are not the leaders of the mainstream civil rights groups. They are a small band of black conservatives led by University of California at Los Angeles economist Thomas Sowell. Sowell, and his co-thinkers, while supporting past anti-discrimination legislation, blame the lack of black progress on government programs and maintain that the free market and individual initiative should be relied on to bring about racial equality. Sowell charges that a "light-skinned elite" of blacks have pursued policies designed to help themselves gain "access to whites," while another black conservative, Temple University economist Walter Williams, claims that the black leadership has supported laws and struck alliances that benefit whites at the expense of blacks, i.e., support for the minimum wage, rent control, and the Davis-Bacon Act. In late March, 300 blacks are expected to attend a meeting sponsored by the conservative Hoover Institution with the aim of forming a national, mass membership counterweight to the NAACP.

It is not likely that Sowell's group will get too far, but even moderate success in attracting black businesspeople, professionals, and academics may have considerable psychological impact. First, such a group can provide Reagan with a basis to claim to be speaking over the heads of the civil rights groups directly to the interests of black Americans. More importantly, the black conservatives reinforce the Reagan philosophy (indeed, the new conventional wisdom), which is a reprise of the "benign neglect" devised by Daniel Patrick Moynihan for the

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A SPECIAL REPORT

Budget Cuts Gift to Rich

By Michael Harrington

THE REAGAN BUDGET IS NOT only an attack on the poor, the minorities, and the most vulnerable people in the society; it also strikes at working people while projecting enormous subsidies to the very rich. It is a sign of the intolerable political confusion of these times that a significant minority in the Democratic party, including some who used to be liberals, are either going along with this outrage or, even worse, participating in it.

In the February DEMOCRATIC LEFT, I pointed out (and documented) that the basic, underlying premise of Reagan's program—that government spending is the fundamental cause of high inflation, low productivity and a lack of American competitiveness—is wrong. I cited for my case none other than David Stockman, Reagan's butcher in the budget process, and Representative Jack Kemp. They demonstrated in a memo last November that the high deficits are the *result*, not the cause, of our troubles. Joblessness, with its attendant costs (unemployment compensation, food stamps, welfare—not to mention alcoholism, broken homes and the like—combined with falling federal revenues and national production) is extremely expensive even in a semi-humane society. The fact of the matter is that unless the government attacks the real causes of stagflation, such as corporate monopoly power, a subsidized energy structure planned to be wasteful, a costly, unjust medical system and all the rest, these cuts will merely bring misery and a further maldistribution of income and wealth.

Rather than repeat that analysis, I now want to take a careful look at Reagan's budgetary, and other economic, policies to show how they hurt everyone but the rich; explain why they will not work; and then attempt to deal briefly with the politics of a democratic left response. But before getting down to those partic-

ulars, one last word of introduction to confirm my basic thesis. It comes from the most sophisticated—and in this case, candid — procorporate publication in America, *Business Week*.

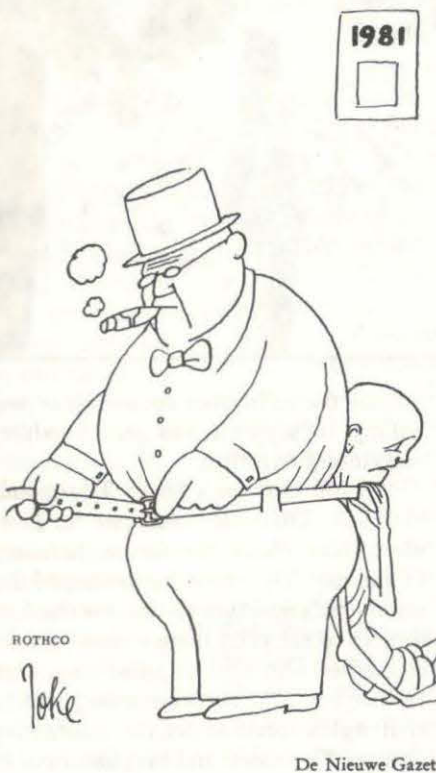
Stockman and Reagan, the *Washington Post* reported when the budget was being unveiled, want to share "the pain widely, so that both recipients of food

stamps and the big corporations are seen to be suffering together." Now it would be bad enough if a government treated even-handedly people who have to scramble for necessities and giant corporations. Such "equal" treatment is blatantly unequal. But the Reagan reality is worse, as *Business Week* admits. "Cuts that only nick business" was the headline on the lead story in the March 9th issue. The opening paragraph reported: "In the publicity barrage that accompanied President Reagan's tax- and budget-cutting package, the Administration went to great lengths to argue that—with the exception of the very neediest Americans—all elements of society, including business, will share the pain of the spending reductions he proposes. But the impact on business will generally be light and, in some cases, will be offset by the planned buildup in U.S. military capacity."

Who Will Suffer?

The accompanying chart is far from complete, but it does focus on the basic philosophy underlying the budget. With a great show of piety, the White House leaked the news that the "very needy" would not be hurt; that there would be no cuts in basic Social Security, in federal welfare for the blind and the severely handicapped and the like. But the fact is, as *The New Republic* has pointed out, that Reagan exempted programs that were either politically unassailable (or difficult to slash) or had most of the benefits going to the non-poor (Social Security) or both. We do not know what the President's idea of the "very needy" is.

But look at the needy people who are attacked in the Reagan budget: the recipients of food stamps, one of the most successful programs in a generation, the only federal welfare program for American citizens (all of the other welfare payments are state controlled even if federally funded); the non-aged poor who require Medicaid; and the benefici-



“ Stockman and Reagan want to share the pain widely, so that both recipients of food stamps and the big corporations are seen to be suffering together. ”

aries of a number of health and education programs that will have their funding reduced by 75 percent (health) and 80 percent (education) with the decision whether to cut aid to the handicapped, bilingual education, desegregation, and the like turned over to local authorities. By 1986, the United States will have "saved" almost \$12 billion at the expense of some of the most hopeless, marginalized people in the land.

But then there is another category of cuts that will hurt the poor the most but will also harm many working and middle class people as well. It is well known that there have been problems with some of the federal funds for area redevelopment, CETA jobs, mass transit, and the like. Some of us on the democratic left have criticized aspects of these programs. But what Reagan proposes is to wipe out these efforts, not reform them. That will have a devastating impact upon the most precarious cities and the regions with the highest unemployment; it will strike viciously at employees in the public sector; and it will almost certainly cause an increase in racial and male-female tensions in those areas as people at the bottom fight over which groups are going to be hurt the most.

Thirdly, note that trade unionists are a particular target of a number of the cuts. Some are obvious, such as forcing miners with black lung to take the point in a bogus assault on inflation. Others are more complex and insidious. Trade Adjustment Assistance is a limited compensation to workers who suffer from the incompetent managerial decisions of American industry, more often than not made with public subsidies. It is a partial recognition of the fact that those least able to pay should not be forced, in effect, to finance the "rationalization" of industrial structures, which makes them jobless and lays the basis for profits in the future. If Reagan succeeds in putting this one over, it is hard to see how those workers will resist a turn to straight and simple protectionism, which will then be their only recourse. Some of the anti-union aspects of the Reagan package are concealed, such as the denial of food stamps to strikers.

But how is the middle class affected? In part, they are affected because much of the middle class lives in big cities that are often crime-ridden, dirty, and unpleasant, or else in outer cities (once called suburbs) that are increasingly

crime-ridden, dirty, and unpleasant. A budget decreeing a general decrease in public amenities will strike at all those who lack the money to totally insulate themselves from the deterioration afflicting the rest of the society. However, the middle class is directly and adversely affected, along with working people, by the outrageous skewing of the tax benefits in favor of the rich.

New Welfare Handouts

As the chart notes, in 1982, 75 percent of the cuts will go to 27 percent of the taxpayers. Reagan has compassion for people in the \$60,000 to \$215,000 class, lowering their obligations dramatically. As Lane Kirkland pointed out in the *New York Times* early last month, a family with \$10,000 a year would get \$52 in cuts during the first year of the Reagan program; a family with \$30,000 a year, seven and a half times that sum; and the \$100,000 a year family would receive savings that would be 35 times larger.

These individual inequities are compounded by the extraordinary largesse for corporations. Reagan's version of "10-5-3" (accelerated depreciation for structures, machines, and vehicles over 10, 5, and 3 years, respectively) would lower government revenues by \$9.7 billion in 1981—and by almost \$60 billion in 1986. All other things being equal, that means a shift in tax burdens from the corporations (whose percentage contribution to Washington's revenue has already been cut in half over the past generation) and a concomitant increase in the burden for everyone else.

But there is an argument against my point of view, stated by Secretary Regan in the *Wall Street Journal*. Isn't all of this largesse ultimately justified by the fact that the middle-class and working people consume their income while the rich invest theirs? Isn't it, therefore, in the interests of the non-rich to suffer a bit, since the money that their betters will now put

A FISCAL PROGRAM FOR REACTION *By Ronald Reagan as told to Michael Harrington*

I. Examples of cuts aimed at the poor, working people and the middle class (billions of dollars)

Program	1982 Reduction	1986 Reduction
Food Stamps	1.822	2.759
Medicaid	1.013	5.021
Unemployment Insurance Payments	—	.264
Trade Adjustment Assistance Payments	1.150	.380
Black Lung Trust Fund	.378	.469
Child Nutrition	1.575	2.045
Rural Electrification Coops	1.142	6.450
Regional Development	.440	.997
CETA Jobs	3.566	5.143
Mass Transit	.096	1.356
Mass Transit Grants	.270	1.480
National Institutes of Health	.145	.682
Health and Social Service Programs	2.540	3.929

II. Welfare for the rich

Individual income tax reductions, 1982:

- 75 percent of benefits to 27 percent of taxpayers
- 50 percent earned income rate shifted from \$60,000 a year to \$215,000 a year

Depreciation reform:

- reduces federal revenues by \$9.7 billion in 1982, \$59.3 billion in 1986

Selected subsidies, mainly to the wealthy, untouched by budget cuts, 1982:

- oil depletion and expensing 2.475
- mortgage interest deductions 27.825
- two capital gains deductions 21.445
- medical deductions 4.575

Source: White House, Congressional Budget Office

CAPITAL QUOTES

“But then, our economy depends on the endless inculcation of envy. If consumers succumbed to contentment, commerce would slow, dangerously. . . . A society that wants to be extraordinarily productive and prosperous should resolve to ensure that those who produce extraordinarily also prosper extraordinarily. Alas, an irrational and costly (especially to the non-rich) resentment of the rich has prevented implementation of sound policies, including substantial cuts in corporate taxes.”

George F. Will
The Washington Post
February 22, 1981

(especially to the non-rich) resentment of the rich has prevented implementation of sound policies, including substantial cuts in corporate taxes.”

into plants, productivity, and jobs will eventually benefit the whole nation? True or false?

Mainly false. When rich individuals get huge tax cuts and corporations receive those magnificent depreciation allowances—which will reduce the government's revenues in 1986 by more than double or triple all of the budget cuts against the poor—they may, or may not, invest them in productivity or jobs. Even if they do, they may well invest them in the wrong kind of productivity.

To begin with, as we have documented in *DEMOCRATIC LEFT* on many occasions, in the seventies rich individuals put much of their money (including the savings from the generous reduction in capital gains taxes in 1978) into “inflation hedges”: speculation in rare wines and violins, games in the money market. In effect, they gambled with that cash, but risked very little of it on productive investments that create jobs and increase productivity. Similarly, corporations regularly used their cash flow to buy up other corporations (U.S. Steel, for instance, has been getting into chemicals), a process which enriches lawyers and other intermediaries, but adds nothing to the job generating or goods producing power of the economy.

A report of the Small Business Committee of the House in October 1980 offers some fascinating new documentation of this trend. Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Harold M. Williams told the Committee: “In the last five years, I would estimate that \$100 billion of corporate cash resources—resources which, in my personal opinion, could have been devoted to capital spending, product development and innovation opportunities—have been diverted to re-

arranging the ownership of existing corporate assets through tenders alone. These are resources that do not flow back as new capacity, improvements in productivity, new products or new jobs.”

The February 13 issue of the UAW publication, *Solidarity*—which features an excellent exposé of “The Myth of the Affluent Auto Worker,” a point to which I will return later—describes a similar pattern. “Between 1973, when the energy crisis began,” *Solidarity* writes, “and 1979, the Big Three auto firms paid off stockholders \$12.7 billion in cash dividends. (That's an average of \$2,241 from each Big Three worker each year!) Had stockholders been happy with just half of that, the Big Three could have bought at least 20 complete sets of machine tools needed to build new kinds of engines. Last year, an Office of Technology Assessment study of the steel industry—the Office is a congressional research arm—told much the same story with regard to steel. Cash flow, the OTA said, was used, not to modernize plants and catch up with the Japanese, but to “finance high dividends and the acquisition of chemical companies.”

But doesn't at least part of the corporate tax break take the form of depreciation allowances on machines, structures, and vehicles, thus guaranteeing that at least that portion of the welfare for the rich will actually go into productive investment? There are a number of catches here. First, the depreciation tax break will provide government assistance to any company that wants to move out of the Northeast and industrial Midwest. Even if that is not the case, the fact remains, as Lane Kirkland commented in that *New York Times* article in March, “No important decision is ever based on

tax incentives alone. Any business contemplating an investment in the South Bronx, for example, is likely to care much more about the quality of police and fire protection than about tax rebates. Therefore the Administration's approach to urban programs offsets any hope of better days ahead for the cities.”

There is another possibility, one in which the corporation does indeed make a massive investment in sophisticated technology—and social misery. This becomes particularly pertinent at a time when American business may well be on the verge of a qualitative leap toward robots and various micro-chip devices, a job destroying process which could be financed by public largesse. Consider, for instance, a February 3rd article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled “Agony Now May Mean a Brighter Tomorrow for U.S. Auto Makers.” After describing the abundant and well-known problems of the industry, Robert L. Simison of the *Journal* went on to say:

“A silver lining, however, is hidden in all this gloom. As they reequip old plants or build new ones to turn out their new generation of cars and trucks, auto makers are building in significant new efficiencies and cost savings. When the presumably inevitable sales recovery comes, and spending stabilizes, Detroit should be able to make more money per car than it could with the factories it had before the upheaval began.” Part of this development is, of course, the extensive use of the computer controlled robot, a device that might do wonders for auto profits but spells disaster for laid-off workers.

Does this mean that federal tax policy should discriminate against technological change in the name of jobs? Not at all. It does mean that when technological change is financed by tax expenditures that increase the burdens on the rest of the society, it should be integrated in a socially responsible plan.

The Swedish socialists after World War II had a conscious policy of promoting modernization and of eliminating inefficient producers from an economy that had to be competitive in the world market. But it was done within the framework of a labor market policy in which the entire nation, including corporations, proportionately shared the costs of the shift and did not, as in America today, impose them upon defenseless workers. Indeed, during that same period, the Swe-

dish socialists legislated a higher investment tax credit than we have ever had in the United States, but with one critical difference: a company only got to claim the credit *after* it had made an investment that fit in with the national economic plan.

Indeed, that Swedish socialist idea might be an excellent demand for the American democratic left: opposition, not to investment incentives per se, but to those that require an act of naive faith in corporate social responsibility; support for those investment incentives that demand proof that a socially responsible and economically productive investment has actually been made *before* the government transfers the funds.

Anti-Wage Offensive

These considerations are particularly important in the light of an ominous trend: the offensive against the wages of American workers. Within the last two months there have been editorials in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* explaining that the problems of our economy stem, in considerable measure, from overpaying workers. In February the London *Economist* summed up this theory, arguing that "America is at present suffering from 12 percent inflation because annual wage rises of above 9 percent are going against productivity rises of almost nought, and because some food price rises are pushing a few points of further inflation on top of that."

In its crudest form this view leads to an effective demand to reduce the real living standard of working people at the same time that the poor are being hit by budget cuts and the rich and the corporations are receiving increased welfare. But, as the previously mentioned issue of UAW *Solidarity* documents, an auto worker—a labor aristocrat if you believe the *New York Times*—who worked at General Motors or Ford according to the patterns that prevailed in those companies received \$19,157 in 1979, assuming

For a fuller exploration of the relationship between social justice and economic prosperity, I urge the reader to look at "The Liberal Promise of Prosperity" by Robert B. Reich, *The New Republic*, February 13, 1981.

M.H.

a 40-hour week for 52 weeks. That was \$1,360 *less* than the Labor Department's "modest but adequate" budget for an urban family of four and \$527 under the median income of U.S. families that year. Even the cost of living adjustment in the UAW contract did not compensate for rampant inflation. After tax earnings at Ford and GM went up by 11 percent—and the cost of living rose by 12.7 percent.

It is not an accident that the anti-wage offensive and the budget come at the same time. They are both based on the same premise: that in order to give the corporations and the rich more so they can invest wisely—as wisely as they invested in steel, auto and railroads in recent years?—on our behalf, both the beneficiaries of the welfare state and the workers of the private sector must reduce their living standards. At the same time, the government is preparing to "throw money at problems" in the military sector, increasing the outlays on chaotically planned, often over-sophisticated technologies that will do little or nothing to increase our national security.

A simple example illustrates this last point. The funds for the MX missile

system are estimated at \$47 billion—but that figure is based on the assumption that the Soviets will make no counter move. In the absence of SALT II, Moscow could outfit its missiles to carry up to 30 independently targetable warheads each (as opposed to the 14 allowed under SALT II), allowing them to target every MX silo, whether genuine or dummy, making the current projected MX system useless. If that one response were made, then the present cost estimates on the MX would jump from \$47 to \$60 billion—and if some other, even nastier, Soviet changes were introduced, the bill could go as high as \$106 billion.

The Reagan budget, in short, is military waste, welfare for the rich, cuts for the poor, more burdens for the working people and the middle class. And at this critical time in our history, the Democratic party is either disarmed or, as with Senators Paul Tsongas and Gary Hart, joining the camp of the enemy. This brief article only sketches the beginning of a contribution to the mobilization of a new democratic left against this outrageous situation and in favor of democratic social investments. ■

You've already worked with us. Now, join us.

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

If you plan to work with us, join us.

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Send to: Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 853 Broadway, Suite 801, New York, N.Y. 10003. Tel.: (212) 260-3270.

Name _____

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Nixon administration, that the United States dealt with and solved the race problem in the 1960s.

Although the black conservatives have received attention all out of proportion to their present and potential numbers and influence, their existence does call attention to the error of thinking of the black community as a monolith, a key point of a recent study by two eminent black scholars for the Joint Center for Political Studies. Social psychologist Kenneth B. Clark and historian John Hope Franklin call for a renewed and restructured civil rights movement based on the reality that "progress in the past has been limited to progress for the few and has left untouched millions of lower-class blacks." They warn that "the growing gap between the black middle class and the black underclass is weakening the cohesion that once produced a civil rights movement in which blacks of all classes could work together. According to Clark and Franklin, economic issues are the civil rights issues of the 1980s and racial justice "must be defined in terms of the economic progress of large groups of blacks."

University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson goes a step further and maintains that the life chances of black Americans are now determined more by class than by race. Wilson believes that while the present class distribution of black Americans is the legacy of historical discrimination, the great mass of black Americans suffer today primarily not because of present racial discrimination but rather due to their class position in a structurally changed capitalism. The black poor, he told *DEMOCRATIC LEFT*, "are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of uneven economic growth, increasing technology and automation, industry relocation, and labor market segmentation."

Wilson's thesis of the "declining significance of race" is controversial. Critics charge that it opens the door to the neoconservative view that race no longer matters; and argue that racial discrimination, as such, remains a primary, if not exclusive, cause of black economic inequality. The critics, one suspects, are also skeptical of the prospects of a class-based politics in the United States, the unspoken conclusion of his analysis.

If Wilson's analysis is far from be-

ing accepted in full by black leaders, there are not only striking similarities with Clark's and Franklin's views, but other reasons to think that his programmatic conclusions may find increasing support. Wilson stresses the need "to attack inequality on a broad class front—policy programs, in other words, that go beyond the limits of ethnic and racial discrimina-



Kenneth Brown/LNS

tion by directly confronting the pervasive and destructive features of class subordination." For one, the traditional civil rights organizations are as much concerned about Reagan's cutback of social programs as about anti-civil rights legislation. The NAACP has launched a massive grassroots lobbying effort to mobilize its 1700 chapters to oppose Reagan's cuts. And, as Wilson has pointed out, black politicians have increasingly since the mid-1960s, articulated a lower-class based politics. Congressional Black Caucus leaders have been among the most progressive members of Congress on a whole range of issues and will undoubtedly play a key role in developing a left-liberal alternative to Reaganism and accommodationist Democrats.

Another source of strength may be the increased membership of blacks in

the unions. Today, a higher percentage (33 percent) of black workers are union members than are whites (26 percent). The 2.5 million black members of AFL-CIO unions are seventeen percent of the total. In individual unions, black membership makes up an even higher percentage: 40 percent of the Laborers, 37 percent of the Service Employees, 30 percent of the Food and Commercial Workers and AFSCME.

It was the lunch counter sit-ins and the marches for school integration of the late 1950s that sparked the revival of liberalism in the 1960s. Although it is a dark and threatening time for racial equality in the United States, it is possible that the new emphasis on civil rights as economic progress for the millions of blacks shut out of the American dream may play an equally critical role in laying the foundation for a progressive, left-liberal program that will contend for power in the latter half of the eighties and the nineties.

The effort to pose the question as one of the primacy of race versus the primacy of class is not only artificial, but divisive and liable to hinder the emergence of a revitalized black movement. ■

DSOCer Stuart Elliott is a contributing editor, New International Review, formerly research director, A. Philip Randolph Institute.

SUGGESTED READING

Kenneth B. Clark and John Hope Franklin, "The 1980's: Prologue and Prospect," Joint Center for Political Studies, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004. \$5.00, 1981.

Dorothy K. Newman, Nancy J. Amidei, Barbara L. Carter, Dawn Day, William J. Krivant, Jack S. Russell, *Protest, Politics and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions*. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

Charles Vert Willie, ed., *Caste and Class Controversy*, General Hall, Inc. 23-45 Corporal Kennedy Street, Bay-side, New York, 11360, 1979.

William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. 2nd Edition, University of Chicago, 1980. Paperback, \$5.95.

should be viewed critically.

A U.S. AID/El Salvador Agrarian Reform Sector Strategy Paper of July 21, 1980, notes, "... most of El Salvador's rural poor are not direct beneficiaries of the agrarian reform, especially temporary wage workers."

The government has used the occasion of land reform to reward peasants sympathetic to the junta and crush those suspected of being favorable to the guerrillas. The wholesale terror has resulted in large upheavals as peasants flee their homes and crowd into church-sponsored refugee centers.

"For us, the agrarian reform has been nothing but death," said a homeless peasant. We talked to villagers who related how government troops had come to recruit sugar cane workers for a local expropriated hacienda. When the 16 men did not return, the villagers searched, and found their bodies in a shallow grave.

Who, then, are the beneficiaries of land reform? Can we believe reports such as the one of the happy peasant who proudly told a *New York Times* reporter, "We are more conscientious in our work. We know who we are working for."? The beneficiaries of Phase I are divided into two sharply differing classes: salaried employees and *colonos*-hacienda workers (who provide their services in return for permission to plant subsistence crops and to have a permanent residence). Although *colonos* far outnumber salaried employees, it is the latter's literacy, previous experience, and ties to security forces that place salaried employees in an advantageous position to administer and control newly formed cooperatives. AID official Dr. Norman Chapin, who traveled extensively in the countryside during May 1980, noted that: "All of the major decisions on the haciendas are made by ISTA technicians, and the cooperative leaders. The agricultural laborers have been excluded entirely."

To date, production results have been mixed on Phase I haciendas and plantations. Despite problems in obtaining credit, seed, and fertilizer, it does appear that small farmers and *colonos* planted previously unplanted areas with maize, thus ensuring basic grain in times of great insecurity. There were more serious problems with planting export crops, which could have a serious impact on the nation's balance of payments.

Cutting the Heart Out

Phase II is the *heart* of the agrarian reform. It could affect about 23 percent of El Salvador's farm land and 1800 pieces of property. Over four times as much coffee would be affected as in Phase I. I use the word "could" because, in an attempt to allay the fears of Phase II landowners whose support is vital for the survival of the junta, Colonel Jaime Abdul Gutierrez announced on May 14, 1980 that there would be no more reforms carried out beyond Phase I and Decree 207 (Phase III, now known as Phase II). This announcement alone reduced by close to fifty percent the amount of land affected by the agrarian reform.

Same Old Pacification

Phase III, or "land-to-the-tiller," is the most controversial aspect of the entire agrarian reform process. It is compelling in its simplicity. And it is its simplicity that has misled the State Department, the media, and the U.S. public.

Announced on April 28, 1980 by the junta, land-to-the-tiller essentially states that all current tenants shall henceforth become owners of their rented plots, providing a renter's plots all together do not surpass seven hectares in size. In effect, this abolishes landlord-tenant relations. No more renting of land will be permitted. And the former tenant, now owner, will stay on his land for thirty years and will not be able to sell it. In theory, it appears simple, even elegant.

More than 80 percent of renting takes place on plots of land smaller than two hectares, far below the minimum needed for subsistence, because commercial export agriculture monopolizes the best lands. Furthermore the greatest part of renting occurs on lands highly prone to erosion if used several years in succession. For this reason, renters seldom cultivate the same plots of land for more than two or three years. If they did, it would rapidly lead to serious soil erosion, diminished yields, and the constant need for more fertilizer.

An AIFLD-commissioned study conducted in August 1980 found that less than 30 percent of tenants farmed the same plots of land more than three years in succession.

Land-to-the-tiller says that peasants cannot rent any more land and must cul-

tivate the same land they now use for a period of thirty years. This guideline directly contradicts the wisdom of peasant cultivators. It would lock peasants onto tiny plots of land which would soon become worthless. Since few titles have been given, this has not yet happened. The only conclusion to be drawn is that the designers were apparently ignorant of the specific agricultural practices of El Salvador's peasantry.

How did landowners react to the announcement of land-to-the-tiller? Their reaction has been one of bewilderment and anger depending on the size of their land. Bewilderment because many peasants rent small plots from neighbors, kinspeople, widows, and old people, who are often just as poor as they. (For this reason many informed sectors of El Salvador, including the Church, strongly oppose it.) Landowners with 20 to 100 hectares have reacted by evicting peasants, thus increasing the ranks of the landless, by abrogating rental contracts, and by destroying the crops of their tenants. Land-to-the-tiller has aggravated the civil strife in many areas.

Our findings stand in direct opposition to the picture created in the American press of a potential new middle class—happy peasants with new titles to land, increased income, and improved diet.

The current land reform program is flawed to the core. El Salvador desperately needs a sweeping and equitable land reform. But this is not it. What we are presented with is a politically expedient aid program that does not reflect the legitimate objectives of the Salvadorean people. It is used as an excuse for continued U.S. involvement in the affairs of El Salvador. As long as the military holds the reins of power, no plan, even one more well-conceived, stands a chance. ■

James Stephens, who has lived and worked in Central America for four years, is a consultant on agrarian reform in Latin America for Oxfam-America and the Washington Office on Latin America. Material for this article was gathered during five different visits to El Salvador from July to November 1980. He is co-author, with Lawrence Simon, of a study of land reform in El Salvador, available from Oxfam-America, 302 Columbus Avenue, Boston, Mass. 02116, \$3.50.

ON THE LEFT

By Harry Fleischman

CONVENTION EXHIBIT—"GOING ALONG THE STREET of mañana," said Cervantes, "bye and bye one arrives at the house of never." Your intentions are good. You plan to send your posters, photos, pins, busts, medallions and letters of Gene Debs, Norman Thomas and other Socialist, union and civil rights leaders for our Memorial Day weekend convention display in Philadelphia of the political history and traditions of DSOC. *But we can't display intentions.* Send your items NOW on loan to Harry Fleischman, DSOC, 853 Broadway, New York, NY 10003. We will insure the exhibit.

■ ■ ■

LOCAL ACTIVITY BOOMS. *Albany, N.Y.* DSOC local, organized only last December, has jumped from 5 to 39 members and is currently developing political action campaigns around tenants' rights and state legislation. At its last meeting, Bogdan Denitch spoke to 60 people on "Democratic Socialism and American Politics."

The *Portland, Oregon* local is working closely with the Plant Closure Organizing Committee, a regional coalition of labor, church and community groups such as Oregon Fair Share and the New American Movement. Many new members have recently joined DSOC, including Representative Gretchen Kafoury, Chair of the Oregon House Human Resources Committee.

At least 29 DSOCers were elected at ward and town caucuses as delegates to the Massachusetts Democratic Party Issues Convention on April 11. Over 100 DSOC members attended caucuses across the state. . . . Mike Harrington spoke at the Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award reception for Father Mortimer Gavin, Director of the Boston Labor Guild.

H.L. Mitchell, founder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, will speak at DSOC locals in New England from April 6 to 14, as well to university groups. He speaks April 6 at Harvard, April 7 at Brown and the University of Rhode Island, University of Maine at Orono April 8, and the University of Vermont and Dartmouth April 12 and 13. The STFU, started in the 1930s, was the first integrated farm union in the South and became a model for later labor and community groups such as the United Farm Workers and ACORN.

Bernie Sanders, a 39-year-old self-styled Socialist, was narrowly elected Mayor of Burlington, Vermont's largest city. He plans to run the city with the aid of a steering committee of poor people, unionists and other representatives of the "disenfranchised." The coalition supporting him included poor people's and tenants' rights groups, students and faculty members at the University of Vermont and members of the Burlington Patrolmen's Association and other city workers upset over pay and working conditions.

DSOC *Alaska* is planning a conference of progressive Democratic Socialists in Alaska in mid-summer. For information, write DSOC/Alaska, Box 252, Fairbanks, Alaska 99707.

A Jewish Commission of DSOC has been formed to expand DSOC's program and influence within the Jewish community, to help counter anti-Semitism wherever it occurs and to raise consciousness of Jewish and other members on Jewish

issues of general concern. For more info, write Jo-Ann Mort, DSOC, 853 Broadway, N.Y. N.Y., 10003.

Mayor Don Fraser of Minneapolis and Marcy Shapiro, who attended the Washington conference on "Eurosociology and America," will discuss their impressions at a meeting co-sponsored by DSOC and the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group on Sunday, April 12 at 7 p.m. at the Coffman Memorial Union, U. of M. East Bank Campus. . . . Harry Boyte spoke at the *Twin Cities DSOC* study group on "Democratic Socialism and the American Radical Tradition: Regaining Our Roots." Boyte now directs the People's Heritage Center, whose introductory workshop analyzed the hypocrisy involved in the recent right wing use of radical democratic symbols and rhetoric, e.g.: Reagan quoting Thomas Paine, oil company PR people using the Bible to justify high profits. The workshop showed how progressives can begin to take back the insurgent democratic heritage.

Reverend James Will, a DSOC member who taught theology in Poland last year, spoke recently to the Evanston-Rogers Park branch of the *Chicago DSOC local* on "The Revolution in Poland."

The *New York City DSOC* convention April 10-11 at the Chelsea Vocational High School will plan its program for the coming year. . . . The local presents its "Conscience of New York" award on April 13 to crusading journalist Jack Newfield.

On May 8, the 1981 national Debs-Thomas Annual Award will be presented to District 1199, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, for initiating the Bread and Roses project that celebrates art and culture for and by working people. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee will participate in the evening's entertainment at New York's Roosevelt Hotel. Co-Chairs of the dinner are John Sweeney, president of the Service Employees International Union; Douglas A. Fraser, president of the United Auto Workers; and William W. Winpisinger, president of the Machinists.

Pat Lacefield speaks to Local Nassau April 5 on "Peace in El Salvador?" and Mike Harrington follows him on May 3.

■ ■ ■

GET IT BEFORE IT'S YANKED—An excellent 400-page book, "People Power—What Communities Are Doing to Counter Inflation," has been published by the U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs. It deals with community group activity in the fields of food, housing, energy and health services. Before Reagan bans it, get your free copy by writing to the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colo. 81009.

May Day was started in 1886 to arouse support for an 8-hour work day. It was organized by the American Federation of Labor's forerunner, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the U.S. and Canada. On May 1, 1886, some 350,000 American workers went on strike, affecting more than 11,000 businesses. As a result, more than 50,000 workers won an eight-hour day, and another 150,000 received it without striking. To celebrate that day's theme, a book by William McGaughey, Jr. on "A Shorter Workweek in the 1980's" will be published May 1.

WOMEN, from page 5

Two other examples of "organic institutionalization" are the churches and neighborhood groups. Organized religion has frequently been criticized as one of the perpetrators of sexist practices and the carrier of sexist ideas. However, within most major denominations today there is a kind of ferment and discussion taking place that would warm the heart of any feminist. Not only is the whole question of female clergy becoming a continuing source of agitation, but perhaps equally important, women are working to gain a greater voice for the laity so that their concerns can be heard on an ongoing basis. In this time of the Moral Majority, which claims the mantle of divine truth for policies of female subjugation, the attempts to develop a theology that is genuinely liberating for all human beings merits particular attention. Not only does it offer the potential for altering the way that scores of women relate to their religion—and to their God—but it also offers the potential for transforming the churches and the role that they play in the larger society.

While neighborhood/community/

civic organizations have been around for a good while, it was only in the 1970s that they emerged as a visible and highly organized force for social change. During that decade one of the most striking aspects of their development has been the number of strong, articulate women who have emerged as leaders. Most of these women were new to political activism—in fact had never previously thought of themselves as being "political" at all. They got involved out of their own experiences in the community and their immediate concerns for a better environment for themselves and their families. In the course of that involvement, however, they frequently began to make connections to larger issues and to develop a new confidence in their own potential to affect the world. As a number of these community organizations now begin to move toward participation in local elections, the role of these women takes on new dimensions. If they can bring their previous experiences and their unique insights into the electoral process, they may be able to provide new role models for women and a fresh approach to political

issues, with potential far-reaching impact.

These trends—and others like them—are in effect part of the women's movement, while also possessing a vitality and life of their own. They draw upon feminism's challenge to sexually-assigned roles and feed back into it an expanded understanding of women's lives. They do not necessarily provide an immediate base for the issues that are highest on the women's movement agenda today, but they provide an essential dynamism that can help to shape its future. We need to gather our forces and concentrate on those aspects of the feminist program that are most threatened now—the ERA and reproductive rights—but we also need to build on this wider potential. If we can accept the complexity of women's differing needs and concerns, we may be able to shape a new vision and identify new issues that can cohere an even larger and more politically potent force for the interests of women. ■

Roberta Lynch is active in the New American Movement and writes regularly for In These Times.

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JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS



EL SALVADOR FOLLIES — While Reagan escalates, the press fiddles, often off key. The *New York Times* managed to combine an interview with guerrilla leaders with invaluable surveillance for the paramilitary death squads. Edward Schumacher, in reporting the interview, revealed that it took place in San Salvador within two blocks of the Ministry of Defense. In the same interview, Schumacher discovered an "Arab" in the Salvadorean resistance; everyone in the interview used only a first name, except for one Ali Handro. A *Times* correspondent of ten years standing in Latin America apparently never met anyone named Alejandro, and never learned that "j" is silent in Spanish. The newspaper of record distorted the record more seriously by repudiating a Flora Lewis column that appeared in March. Relying on a report from the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Lewis reported on a State Department dissent channel paper warning of the dangers of escalation in El Salvador. A few days after her column appeared, the *Times* issued a correction and Lewis publicly ate "a lot of crow." The newspaper of record claimed that the paper was fraudulent. In fact, the paper was almost certainly written by staffers from the CIA, the State Department, and a congressional committee. Since it was unsigned, it was not an official dissent channel paper, but it was an inside document, not at all fraudulent. In fact, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs made clear in its initial release that the document might not be an official dissent paper. The crow eaten at the *Times* seems to bear no relation to careful journalism but some to incautious politics in opposing Reagan administration initiatives.

INVESTMENTS TO SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH

—That's what Reagan's economic program is all about. Create a tax program that redistributes wealth and income from the poor to the rich, deregulate to get the government off the backs of the corporation, and speed the decontrol of oil prices to spur new production. According to the economists gazing Through the Looking Glass of supply side economics, the end results will be

more for everyone as investors regain confidence and money pours into rebuilding America. Wealthy investors, though, are regaining confidence to rebuild their portfolios rather than create real wealth. In March, about \$8 billion in oil wealth was thrown around Wall Street in "mega-buck" (the phrase used on the Street) acquisition deals. Oil company spokespeople explained that the acquisitions provided the best return on their shareholders' investments and that's why they're in business in the first place. This real life game of monopoly does nothing to enrich society, though. That \$8 billion creates not a single new job or house or useable calorie of energy.

IN CONTRAST TO THE MEGA-BUCK PAPER SHUFFLE is the use of funds created by working people to create social goods. This column has reported on new developments in use of union pension funds before. Now the state of Connecticut is showing a promising lead by investing the state's pension fund in home mortgages. The real economic stimulus on the supply side proves to be a trickle up.

MOVEMENTS AND LACK THEREOF IN LABOR

—Despite the economic crisis, the business and right-wing offensive against labor, the Reagan budget cuts and hostility to labor's goals in Congress, AFL-CIO COPE Director Al Barkan remains forthright in his top priority for the labor movement: the "kooks and Communists" in the Democratic party must be defeated. At a December COPE conference, pollster Richard Scammon drew approval from Barkan when he charged that the intellectual wing of the Democrats had turned the party a vivid shade of pink. The tone of that attack continued at COPE meetings in Miami at the Executive Board meetings of the AFL-CIO. Not surprisingly, Barkan has been criticized for years by leaders and political action operatives of the more liberal unions; this year Barkan needed a suspension of the retirement rules to continue in his job and even "regular" labor stalwarts such as Rochelle Horowitz of the Teachers and Martin Ward, president of the Plumbers, raised questions. But even Barkan's critics presumably give him top marks for persistence.

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