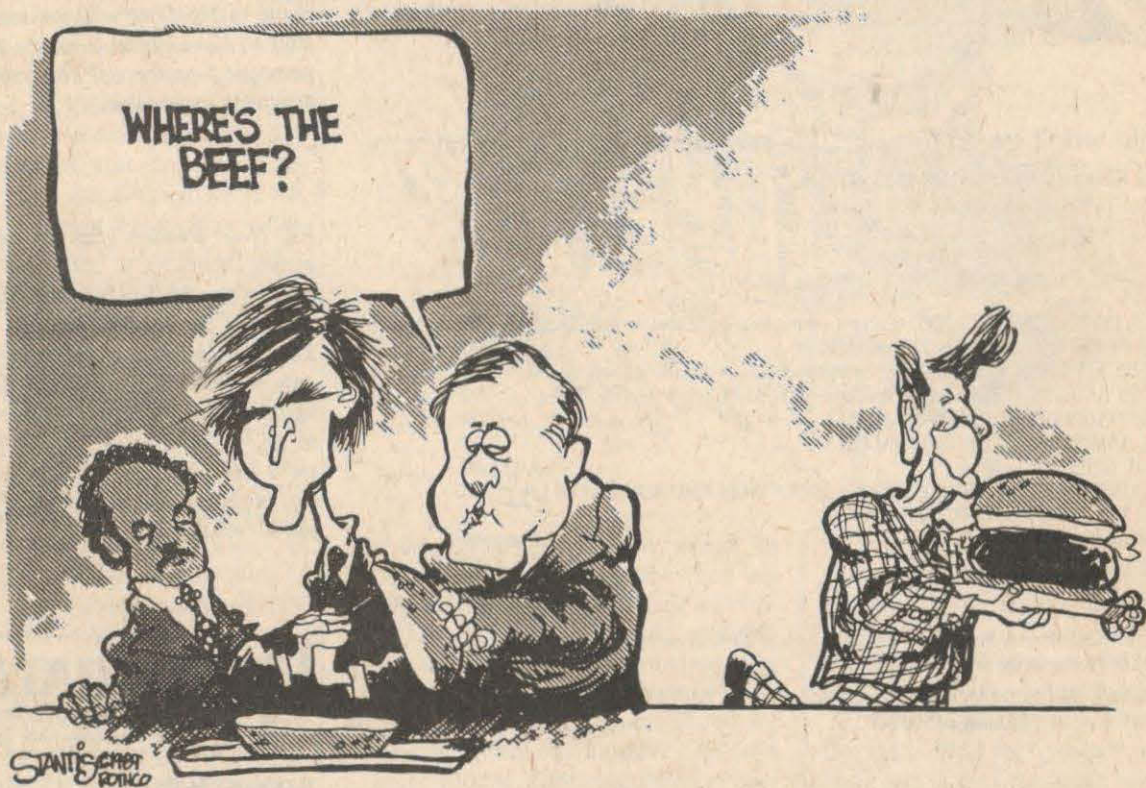


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LETTERS

To the Editor:

Yesterday I received in the mail my first copy of DEMOCRATIC LEFT, and read it through, enjoying the comments. Having paid my membership to DSA last July 6 after Jason Kay spoke in Lawrence, I was beginning to think national DSA was simply a figment of someone's imagination! Now I'm glad to have some evidence that there is someone "out there," with cogent ideas and articulate expression.

Mark Larson
Lawrence, Kansas

Ed. Note: Readers often ask why they aren't getting DEMOCRATIC LEFT. Our past schedule was not to publish in July and August, so if you joined in the summer you had a long wait. Last year, because of the fiscal crisis, we not only cut an extra issue, but we cut a computer update. Thus, instead of the normal six weeks to get on the computer, it took 12. This year we're publishing every other month and working on getting our own computer. We appreciate our readers' patience.

DEMOCRATIC Left

Formerly Newsletter of the
Democratic Left and Moving On.

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TAKING THE LONG VIEW

by Jim Chapin

At the beginning of 1984, there was a wider consensus among political insiders than had existed for any presidential election since 1956: it was that the Democrats would nominate Walter Mondale, who would run against President Reagan and lose. Ironically, despite all the upsets of the 1984 campaign so far, it is still possible that the conventional wisdom was right, but the purpose of this article is not to engage in prediction, a dangerous enterprise, but to try to put the forthcoming elections into the context of a struggle between the broad right and broad left.

The 1983 Elections

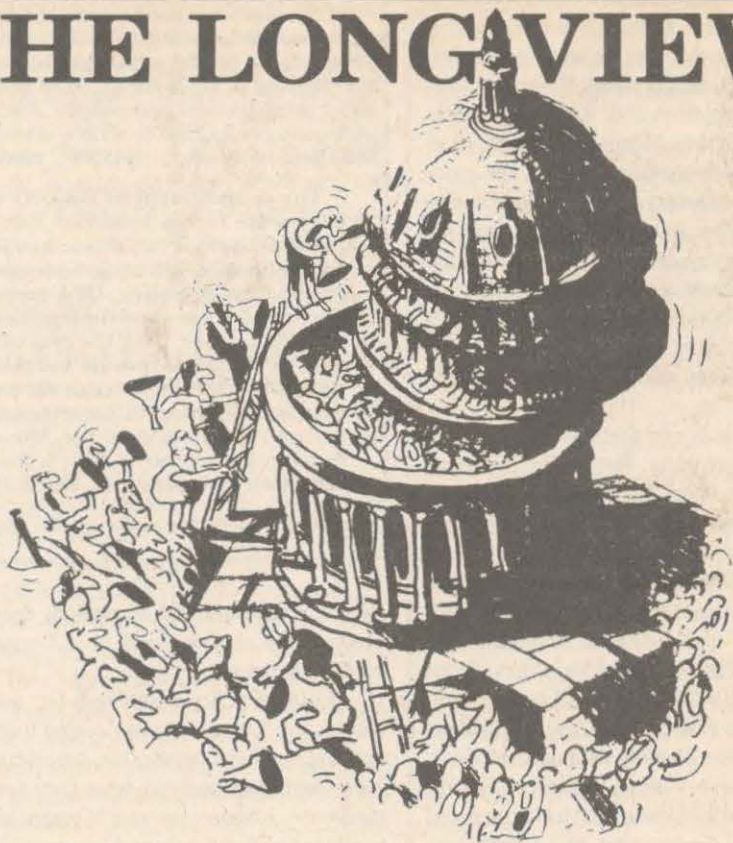
In party terms, the 1983 elections were a victory for the Democrats; in ideological terms, for the liberals. The elections of Wilson Goode in Philadelphia and Maurice Ferre in Miami followed that of Harold Washington in Chicago as victories for the black vote, as did the excellent showing of Mel King in Boston. (Ray Flynn's eventual victory in that last race was also a liberal victory, as his performance so far in office demonstrates).

The votes on major initiatives confirmed this direction: massive tax increases were sustained in Ohio, and a major transportation bond issue passed in New York. The ancient law of American politics, that Americans were ideologically conservative but operationally liberal, seemed restored once voters were reminded of what operational conservatism in practice could mean to them.

Presidential Race

Throughout 1983, Democrats seemed to be facing a rerun of their ideological primaries of 1980. Ironically, it was Jimmy Carter's vice-president, Walter Mondale, who was running as the "Kennedy," while Senator John Glenn was running as a more ideologically consistent Carter, in effect, the Democratic candidate for anti-Democrats.

Meanwhile, Mondale's formidable organization and clear links to the center of the Democratic coalition of old (AFL-CIO) and new (NOW), left (ADA) and right (CDM) put him far in the lead for the nomination (as Kennedy had been in 1979). Beyond the big two, it appeared that the Democratic field in general had opened up to the left for the first



time since 1972. Jesse Jackson, despite his past flirtations with the Republican right, was running a campaign as far left as any in Democratic history. He was attracting more publicity at the turn of the year than all the other candidates combined, and, I think, helping Mondale. By dominating the media, he was limiting the opportunity for other candidates to focus the kind of anti-establishment campaign needed to defeat Mondale; by attracting the votes of many white Democrats (he was up to 16 percent in the New Hampshire polls), he was limiting the base for such a campaign.

At the same time, Alan Cranston was running on a peace position as strong as that of George McGovern in 1972 and McGovern himself was running a campaign that talked more common sense than even he did in 1972. Cranston, Jackson, and McGovern combined were doing as well or better than Glenn. The evidence seemed to suggest that there was no longer a substantial right-wing base inside the Democratic party.

Oh yes, and there was Gary Hart. Although he attempted to compete with Cranston for the liberal side of the spectrum, Cranston generally beat him out. His cool, cerebral, vaguely neoliberal campaign was going nowhere, and an analysis of news coverage and poll results showed that he received only one-quarter as much coverage in

the second half of 1983 as in the first half, while he lost more than half his poll support. By January, he was hardly more than an asterisk in the polls. In fact, the last candidate to run for President with so unclear an identity had been... Jimmy Carter.

There was no surge to Hart to detect in the polls. What was present was simply a large part of the Democratic electorate that had not been convinced of the "inevitability" of Mondale, a man who seemed to be running for Prime Minister, head of a legislative bloc, rather than for President. Mondale was trying to repeal the lessons of the last two decades, and many of his supporters, most notably the AFL-CIO, seemed to accept the idea that the nominations of McGovern and Carter were simply artifacts of the rules. By switching to caucuses and "front-loading" the process, they intended to take care of that problem.

But, timing went just right for Hart. Jackson started talking about "Hymies" to a reporter with a tape recorder on and Glenn's decline in the polls turned into a landslide collapse in February. Jackson's support in New Hampshire went from 16 percent to 5 percent, freeing up a liberal anti-Mondale vote, while Glenn's drop of more than ten points after Iowa freed up a more conservative anti-Mondale vote. In the week after Iowa, Hart went from 10 percent in the New

Hampshire polls to the 41 percent he eventually received.

The campaign has now settled down to a sloggish match. If there is any ideological past campaign that can be used as a reference point, it is the 1968 Humphrey-McCarthy confrontation after Kennedy's death: the cold-war liberal Mondale (Humphrey, after all, was his mentor) against the more economically conservative but more dovish Hart. In the excitement of the campaign, both sides are saying things that may hurt the chances of the winner in the fall: we, at least, should keep in mind that *all* the candidates have a more liberal record up to this point in their careers than any Democratic candidate in history.

Some are saying that it is a class war in the Democratic party, but the figures so far don't show it. What they do show is an *economic* war, based on the different economic realities in various parts of the country. Hart has carried all the New England states and all the Western states which have so far voted, as well as states like Florida. In these states he carried all groups of white voters, union and nonunion, white-collar and blue-collar. In states such as Alabama, Illinois, or Michigan in which he was soundly defeated, Mondale carried all these various groups of voters. The difference is obvious, and has been noted in the national press: areas with rising economies on the one hand, the "Rust Bowl" on the other.

Among union workers, one would guess (there have been few real analyses) that only auto and steel have been able to deliver for Mondale: a reflection of the felt decline in those industries, and the obvious link that their workers can see between their jobs and government policies (import rules, Chrysler loans, etc.). Most other union workers (government, construction, teachers, etc.) do not make any such link in the choice among *Democratic* candidates. Subtracting the votes of auto and steel workers, it may well be that Hart has carried a plurality of the vote of other union members.

Looking to the Fall

Despite the fact that his poll leads over Mondale and Hart have varied from thin to nonexistent, Ronald Reagan is an overwhelming favorite to win re-election. The Reagan recovery, ironically, is based on a kind of crackpot Keynesianism, a consumer-led recovery spurred by a two hundred billion dollar deficit. Supply side theories have failed totally: so far from increasing savings, the savings rate has dropped; so far from stimulating a capital boom that eventually led to a consumer boom, exactly the opposite has happened. But it doesn't matter: unless the economy does something unexpected

DSA-NPAC ON THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

At the October convention the DSA National Political Action Committee voted to make no endorsement in the presidential race but to urge members to work for progressive presidential candidates and progressive local candidates. At the March 3-4 meeting of DSA-NPAC, that position was reaffirmed, stressing the importance of voter registration campaigns. Excerpts from the resolution appear below. A complete copy is available with a stamped, self-addressed envelope from DSA-NPAC at 853 Broadway, Suite 801, NYC 10003.

The commitment of DSA-NPAC remains the building of the democratic anti-corporate forces to defeat Ronald Reagan in November. But we must also emphasize that no candidate has yet put forth a clear, anti-corporate alternative to Reaganomics, a truly progressive agenda for equality, social justice, and a democratic foreign policy. DSA members should act in every campaign to stress the need to go far beyond the traditional liberalism so far espoused in these campaigns.

In November 1984, the real candidate of special interests remains Ronald Reagan. It is the corporate establishment, and particularly its military-industrial wing that Ronald Reagan serves so well, that has weakened the American economy and misshaped American society. Our foremost task remains to unite those forces represented in the Mondale, Jackson, and McGovern campaigns—and those represented in Hart's, too—to defeat Ronald Reagan and begin the reconstruction of a more just nation and a safer world.

This text was adopted before George McGovern and John Glenn dropped out of the race.

(which, I hasten to add, it regularly does) the state of the economy will be a Reagan advantage in the fall.

Foreign policy might well be, too. Although the Russians have decided that Reagan is a hopeless fanatic, the American people were impressed with what they saw as a moderate position on the Korean airliner combined with a timely and successful use of force in Grenada. The Grenadan intervention might have marked a permanent boost for Reagan just as the Falklands did for Margaret Thatcher, because it reinforced an existing image and seemed to be a justification of that image. But if the public notices the utter collapse of Reagan's Mideast policy, or if Reagan gets us more deeply involved in Central America, foreign policy will become a weakness rather than a strength.

Reagan will have another advantage that Thatcher had—a divided opposition. John Anderson, carrying his six million dollars forward from 1980, will run again. Right now, although most national polls have not listed him, those that do show him matching his 1980 performance. In fact, the chances are that Anderson will get far fewer votes than that, but even a 3 percent showing would leave him with about 6 percent in most major Northern states, enough to give Reagan a decisive victory in the electoral college. (The presence of Anderson in the race is one of the major *electoral* arguments for Hart, who would pull Anderson voters.)

Finally, even aside from these factors, the Republicans retain their great advantage at the Presidential level. In the last eight elections, they have captured 29 states six or more times, while the Democrats have carried only Hawaii, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia as often. Put another way,

no Democrat has won the Presidency in this era without carrying at least two of these four states: California, Texas, Illinois, and Ohio, while no Democrat who *has* carried two of these states has lost. But at the present time, Reagan is favored in all four of these states.

Democratic Hopes

If the Democrats have a chance of victory, it rests on the possibility of a major shift upwards in participation in the political process. Kevin Phillips suggests that "the first major and deliberate deflation/disinflation and upper-bracket reorientation of the U.S. economy since the Coolidge-Hoover years" has led to a rise in turnout that first appeared in the 1981 elections and has gained strength since then. He estimates that there may be between seven and ten million more voters in 1984 than there were in 1980, perhaps one-quarter of them minorities, a solid majority women. And he and other commentators think that the turnout curve may rise throughout the rest of the decade. Reagan, after all, has demonstrated forcefully that no matter how bad the Democrats, there is a real difference between a conservative Republican and even a Jimmy Carter.

Most commentators stress the continuing aspects of dealignment, and here, at least, I beg to disagree. I think we may now be seeing the beginnings of a realignment. If higher turnout led to a Democratic victory (and Mondale's greater strength among minorities is the chief *electoral* argument for his candidacy) and a Democratic candidate were willing to focus the issues as Andrew Jackson or Franklin Roosevelt did (and Jimmy Carter did not), there might then be enough social timber to build a new Democratic majority.

The Future

Reagan's presidency has helped to make the nuclear freeze, hunger, the need for a national education policy, and women's rights into major issues. He has accepted Martin Luther King's birthday as a national holiday, and presided while the right-wing dictatorships he favored in Latin America collapsed. Carter, on the other hand, supervised gas decontrol, remilitarization, and the erosion of labor power. Those cynics who argue that the best way to get the policies you want is to vote for its enemies have at least some evidence to back up their claims. In part, this may be a result of the thesis advanced by Walter Karp, that the elites of the two parties are in a collusive game to prevent class politics from emerging in this country.

In many ways, the Reagan victory now predicted for 1984 would not lead to as bad results as might be feared (always excepting the Big War). For one thing, no President is ever as effective in his second term as in his first. Even massive re-election victories (FDR in 1936, Ike in 1956, Nixon in 1972) led not to final triumphs but to major defeats for the re-elected incumbent within the next two years. The same pundits that predict Reagan's re-election also expect a massive Democratic victory in 1986.

The worst aspect of a re-elected Reagan would be his appointments to the Supreme Court. He has no obvious successor, and the rest of the politico-economic process is extremely fluid. Those who see any political victory as *the* final victory always overlook that *circumstances recreate points of view*. Realignment worked: John Connally, Strom Thurmond, and Phil Gramm went Republican; John Lindsay and Wayne Morse went Democratic. By 1980, there were almost no old-style Dixiecrats left in the Democratic party, and the Republican party has united behind the ideology of Barry Goldwater to an unprecedented degree.

But somehow the Democratic party of 1981 was a host to a new form of conservatism, while the triumphant and united Reagan Republicanism of 1980 has dissolved into a scatter of factions. Bob Dole and Pete Domenici are seen as moderates not just because the center has moved right but also because circumstances have forced them to the center. None of the leading Republican contenders to succeed Reagan is a full-blown Reaganite, and the New Right is not only losing strength, but may be on its way out of the Republican party.

The New Right thrust on the social issues was always overestimated and the strength of hard-nosed conservative *economics* underestimated by Democrats. The fact is that Democratic party elites are united around social issues, not economic ones.

The women's movement has an emotional clout in the Democratic party (consider the 1980 position of the party that *no* candidate opposing the ERA would get national money) that labor cannot match.

The long-run evolution of the American political economy presents a mixed picture. Since the tendency of late on the left has been to focus on negative trends, let me suggest a few positive ones. The evolution, possibly, of a real two-class economic structure may be bad for the peace of the society but it certainly would be a belated justification of Marx. More likely, in the 1990s the advantage between capital and labor will shift back to labor as the labor oversupply of the baby boom years is replaced by the shortfall of the post-1962 "baby bust." The sunbelt legend is drawing to a close in face of the fact of the greater equality within the national market. In truth, American politics is becoming more national even though attention is focused more on the regions than before.

As new entrants pour into the voter universe, we must pay more attention to how they are politically socialized. Even more important, perhaps, we should continue our growing interest in the political process as an autonomous one, and on such questions as the effects of the legal structure on that process. We must note that any real attention to the evolution of politics means that attention must be paid to *both* major parties and their effect on each other. The

New Right has lost its moral veto over the Republicans, and that is a very important development.

Finally, I have argued for most of a decade that this decade was not likely to be a good time for the left. It has not been, and for a few more years it may not appear to be. But it is characteristically true that just when many "objective" commentators (and those involved themselves) feel that their cause is lost (the left in 1957, the right in 1965) is when it is about to revive most forcefully.

The conservative reconstruction of society has failed, and that in effect means that other agendas are now in order. Ironically, our own agenda is less solid than it was a decade ago, but it is surely time for us to present a coherent alternative course for the looming 21st century. There are no forces of any degree to our left, and the lesson that I, at least, draw from that is that it may be time for us to simply declare ourselves the left wing rather than worrying about whether it is "probable" or not. What could be more improbable than Ronald Reagan as President? What we must bring to the coalitions we work in is not just our bodies and our organizational talents, but even more our ideas. And our ideas need work. That is the immediate task before us. ●

Jim Chapin is a historian and Democratic party activist who serves on the National Interim Committee of DSA.

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UNION FIGHTS COKE



A banner outside the fortress-like plant accuses Coke of trying to break the union.

by Jim Wilson

After a five-year long struggle in which at least 10 workers, including three union general secretaries were either "disappeared" or killed, workers at the Embotelladora Guatemalteca, S.A. (EGSA) finally won a contract from this franchise of the Atlanta-based Coca-Cola bottling company. The contract came in 1980, not only after the killings, but after a well-publicized international solidarity campaign organized by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF). At that time Coca-Cola put up the money for the purchase of the franchise by the Mexico-based consortium that negotiated the contract. There had been no major conflicts at the plant since then, until February 17, when

workers on the night shift were informed that the plant would close because of financial insolvency. In a country where 14 union leaders and labor lawyers have been kidnapped or killed by government forces since November of last year, no one expected much resistance. Surprisingly, though, the workers have resisted—occupying the plant and demanding that the parent company step in. Coca-Cola claims that it is not involved in the dispute, even though the 1980 agreement called for it to retain management control for five years. Workers and the unions that have joined the solidarity campaign believe that the closing is an attempt to break the union. Jim Wilson, a DSA member who is an IUF editor, was in Guatemala City at the plant site from March 5-10 and filed this report.

The EGSA plant is an unarmed fortress under a state of siege in an undeclared war.

Though most of the time no uniformed military or police are visible around the plant, the threat of intervention at any moment is the main concern. But the visible signs are scary enough. Occasionally a *tanqueta*, a small tank, lumbers by. Some nights noisy army trucks packed with jittery teenage soldiers roll up in front of the plant and set up quasi-roadblocks which stop passing vehicles at random. If a selected driver fails to notice their signal, soldiers hidden a block further down shoot. On the night of March 2, near the main factory gate, on almost the exact spot where EGSA union General Secretary Marlon Mendizabal was machine-gunned to death in May 1980, these soldiers shot and killed one passing driver who had no connection with the plant and wounded his two passengers. The last night we were there we witnessed soldiers firing five volleys at a car that turned out to be driven by plain clothes police. The tires

Peter Schnall

exploded with a lot of noise, and bullets ricocheted around the front walls and glass windows of the plant. No one was injured. These actions presumably are intended to intimidate the strikers or perhaps to set the stage for an accident in which someone inside is involved.

All this is taking place within a context where the Labor Ministry is continuing to study the workers' case and is making some attempts to help them (pressing Coca-Cola to meet with workers in Atlanta last month, considering calling the conflict an employer lockout rather than a strike, opening an investigation of the franchisees' activities). On balance the government's attitude is ambiguous. This can be explained in part by the possibility that the government's left hand may be unaware of what its right hand is considering. But it is even more explicable by the government's conflicting desires to retain a major investment in the country while containing the example the EGSA workers' union, STEGAC, is giving to the rest of embattled organized labor. (On March 3, Guatemalan President General Oscar Mejia Victores was quoted by the *Financial Times* of London as having said: "I think the violence is fine. It is folkloric in our country, as all countries have their violence in one form or another. Sometimes there is a little, sometimes it decreases or increases.") In any case, the EGSA workers do not expect too much help from any part of the government and they believe that ultimately Coca-Cola International is the party they must reach.

Even from the outside the besieged fortress image is vivid. The large plant and its storage and truck yards were enclosed some years back by a high cinder block wall prickling on top with broken one-liter coke bottles embedded in cement. Above that is a barbed wire fence. Four large banners stretch across the front of the complex, condemning Coca-Cola and explaining the workers' position.

Life in the Plant

Inside, over 200 workers at any given moment are engaged in various activities. Some 460 workers, virtually the entire labor force except for a few office personnel, began the occupation originally. Their main purpose was to protect the machinery and grounds and to keep alive the possibility of reopening the operation after the franchisees abandoned the country. But within a few days a well-organized shift routine was set up that allows most workers every other night at home. At various points near the walls small open fires burn which reheat black beans and tortillas by day and warm dark coffee during the long watches by night.

The entire ten member leadership of

the union remains inside the walls night and day because of the unspoken common knowledge that they are the most likely to be targeted by any one of a number of forces, including the ever-present death squads. Some cars of the latter have been spotted nearby. At least one STEGAC leader has received anonymous telephone calls at home ever since the beginning of the strike.

Despite the prospect of a long occupation, morale is very high. This is emphasized by the organized and disciplined nature of life inside. The big event of the day is one or more general assemblies when present union Secretary General Rodolfo Robles or other officers give updates on events — talks with ministry officials, a new ad in the newspaper, new plans for helping those whose families are in the most precarious straits, and so on. Next, visiting unionists are introduced. After this, the day's telegrams of support are read amid much enthusiasm and cheering. Then the microphone is given to any worker who wishes to speak. Invariably this eventually turns to long reminiscences of those who fell in the 1979-1980 campaign and exhortations that their deaths not now be allowed to have been in vain. The hundreds present stand attentive and silent. Then one or more members may come up to sing and to play the guitar. At the end all participate in several stanzas of the rousing STEGAC union song.

The rest of the day is taken up in numerous activities. Literacy classes for the sizeable minority who never went to school were started by the union several years ago; with so much extra time now these have been intensified. Sometimes entertainments are organized, and there are sports, but most activities have more immediate and practical purposes. On a regular schedule, the entire plant is swept clean and trash burned. Machinery and the scores of idled trucks are inspected. Statements need to be written, leaflets run off, and attempts (usually unsuccessful) made to break through to the local media. A committee drives daily to the nearby campus of San Carlos University to collect modest contributions. This is a risky business; though the students receive them warmly, the physical dangers are greater there. One student leader was kidnapped a few days before we arrived.

The biggest single activity surrounds the gathering and preparing of food. So far the union has had to use little of its meager financial resources for buying food. Everyday one or more truckloads of provisions arrive. Some of this is solicited aid, the result of the rounds the workers make each day to the stores where they used to deliver or trade. (Each night a woman from a tavern down the street comes in with a basket of

chuchitas, the Guatemalan tamales.) But most of the aid comes in from the workers' relatives in the countryside or from the surviving Guatemalan unions. While we were there, we saw provisions come in from other food plants, a sugar mill, chemical and textile factories, a laundry workers' union, bank employees, and a number of other organizations. One delegation of a banana workers' union arrived after a 300-kilometer journey over rough dirt roads through mountains and jungle. Another day, a truck appeared with dozens of dozens of eggs—a gift of the semi-clandestine Democratic Socialist Party of Guatemala.

At night, when not on guard duty, the workers sleep in long rows on the main bottling area floor, in trucks in the yards, or in huts of bottle crates in the outdoor storage areas and on the soccer field.

Support in the country

It is in listening to the visiting union delegations that one becomes most aware of the larger importance of the Coca-Cola workers' struggle. No one in the Guatemalan labor movement doubts, despite the tortured reasoning which Coca-Cola's officials in Atlanta put forward, that the closing of the large union coke plant while two other small-

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can send messages of protest to the Coca-Cola Company, stressing that the company should take responsibility for EGSA and demanding that it reopen the plant: The Coca-Cola Company, P.O. Drawer 1734, Atlanta, GA 30301. The IUF office in Washington (Sally Cornwale, Food and Allied Service Trades, Room 408, 815 16th St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20006) is coordinating support work in the U.S. The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility is working with religious groups that hold stock in Coca-Cola (Carol Samplatsky-Jarman, ICCR, 475 Riverside Dr., NYC 10115).

er non-union operations take over its territory, is primarily a blow directed against trade unionism. Union leader after union leader came in to express the need for EGSA workers to hold on, not just for STEGAC's own sake but also for the sake of the other unions. The plant's union, one of the country's biggest and most visible for several years now, has a real and symbolic importance far beyond what one realizes before going there.

For the other Guatemalan unions,

Continued on page 10

WILL WORK AID WOMEN?

by Barbara Ehrenreich

If the left at this time has an economic problem, it could be abbreviated in two words — full employment. Slogans at demonstrations read: “Jobs and Peace,” or “Jobs, Peace and Freedom.” Some of our best intellectual efforts focus on how productive investment could lead to economic growth and hence to full employment. We’ve heard it so often that we barely question the formula that economic misery stems from unemployment and that the solution is more jobs.

For some segments of the population, the formula works. An unemployed steelworker, for example, needs one thing: his (or very rarely, her) job back. However, for the large and growing segment of the workforce that works at or not far above the minimum wage, jobs are just as desperately essential, but — and this is a key “but” — jobs are not a solution to poverty. This is true for a majority of women workers, who remain segregated in low-wage, usually dead-

end occupations. Thus, economic programs that focus solely on full employment neglect the needs of women, both employed and unemployed. We must ask: What does employment now do for women and minority men, and why would full employment improve their situation?

In asking these questions I am not talking about the small number of women who have, in the past ten years, broken into the upper middle class. I am talking about the woman who is segregated in the women’s part of the labor market. For full time year round work, the average woman in this country earns about \$11,500. The average black woman earns closer to \$8,000 a year. If she is supporting a few children, she has a sub-poverty income. Diana Pierce has suggested that if black women who work full time, year round, are compared with unemployed white men who have been unemployed for some time, the rate of poverty is the same for both groups. In other words, black women have

to work full time, year round, to be in the same economic ball park as white men who don’t work at all. Clearly, employment is not a solution to women’s poverty when women are paid at poverty level wages.

What, then, does economic growth do for women? Here I am speaking of growth determined according to capitalist priorities, when we have no control over investment, construction, or choice of growth sectors in the economy. Today, growth is occurring in fast foods and in so-called services, which refer not just to people who are well-paid health professionals, but to clerical workers and people who clean offices at night. “Services” include a huge range of mostly low-paid, dead-end, and stereotypically female jobs. Growth means low-paid jobs that don’t lead anywhere, and specifically don’t lead out of poverty.

There is not enough discussion of these facts on the left or in Marxist analyses of the economy. There is too much emphasis on smokestack industries, which traditionally have offered well-paying jobs to white, male workers, because these industries are highly unionized sectors of the economy. Left male economists focus on how to revive smokestack industries and thereby solve our economic problems. But the fact that they concentrate on industries that have historically paid men well for their jobs contains within it an assumption about family life: men are breadwinners; women homemakers; and there are intrafamilial transfers of money. Thus if we could just figure out how to revive well-paying male jobs, then benefits will “trickle down” to women and children too, because women will have the sense to marry men with well-paying jobs, and the men will obligingly marry women in the low-paid sectors of the economy.

This assumption leaves out a stark social reality, that is, the growth in the number of women who support households by themselves, or who are the major breadwinners for families whether or not they are married. The number of women solely supporting households doubled between 1970 and 1980; 14 percent of all white households and 45 percent of all black households are now female headed, and they are here to stay.

This is not a temporary state of affairs, nor do these families represent temporary

Carol
Simpson
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I USED TO BE
IN CAREER COUNSELING
BUT THIS LOOKED
MORE PROMISING



"pathology" as Moynihan and others would like to believe. Analysts who ignore women's economic needs not only are a little unchivalrous or sexist, but are wrong about what is happening to the economy. They miss the trend toward the feminization of the proletariat — the feminization of the work force in this country and abroad. In the U.S. the proportion of the labor force that is female keeps rising, and, as Harry Braverman pointed out ten years ago, the proportion that is male keeps falling. When multinational corporations go abroad for cheap labor, it is cheap female labor.

In failing to consider what employment does and does not do for women, the left almost universally neglects social welfare programs, by which I mean public sector sponsored services, such as day care, health insurance or health services, and income maintenance and income support programs. A left economic program that addresses women's needs must not only talk about holding the line on cutbacks the Reagan administration has initiated, but discuss expanding and democratizing social welfare programs. Currently welfare programs are designed to keep people from using them, to prevent people from thinking that they have a right to live, that their children have a right to live. We have to talk about expanding programs so that they offer people not mere subsistence, but dignity and opportunity. We have to discuss the fact that social welfare programs are too much in the grip of state and local governments, where they are hostage to business interests that threaten to leave a state if taxes go up. We need programs that are nationally uniform, and that consolidate current programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security and AFDC. We need to stop the fragmentation that divides people principally along racial and class lines and prevents the development of a strong constituency for social welfare programs. In a moment of impulsive radicalism, Douglas Fraser said a few years ago that this country was experiencing a "class war," and I believe that is true. Class war was initiated, is being carried out and won in this country by the capitalist class. Decertification of unions is an example; cutbacks in social services are another, as are givebacks, robotization and unchecked plant mobility. They have brought us closer and closer to a deunionized America, to what Bill Tabb calls the "Brazilianization of America," where there will be a big upper middle class, wealthy, comfortable people doing world class, high tech, fancy things on the one hand, and a giant class of extremely impoverished people on the other.

What can we do? What can we talk about that helps people improve their lives? We can advocate full employment since it

makes it easier for people to fight the class struggle, because it means there are fewer or no scabs. That is the strategic point of full employment, and we should push for it. We should particularly make sure that full employment doesn't just mean highway repair, but entails women's jobs as well, and is not achieved through programs like CETA, which have been used to undercut union scale jobs. We should advocate greatly expanded social welfare programs. As Piven and Cloward point out in *The New Class War*, social welfare programs are not simply for marginal people who are unemployed, but are essential to working peoples' ability to make gains in workplace confrontations and struggles. As an individual you cannot protest forced overtime or sexual harassment; you cannot organize and start a drive, if you



know that being fired could mean destitution. And that's what it means now. The lack of a "safety net" seriously undermines organizing efforts everywhere. There are only two states in this country that offer unemployment compensation to people who are on strike, and then only after a waiting period of many weeks. Imagine if every striker had a right to unemployment insurance!

Expanded social welfare programs may have a certain kind of political achievability at this point because of the kind of organizing going on to build an interclass, women's constituency in support of social welfare programs. This is a constituency for the expansion and the democratization of social welfare programs, and it's a constituency that includes not only the poor but people, especially women, who have come to realize that

they are in the category of the "not yet poor." Strategically I believe we have more collective leverage right now for facing the state on expanded social welfare programs because of the gender gap and the organizing that women are doing around the feminization of poverty.

Now I want to leap from these practical considerations to a futuristic perspective. It is important to say that growth is not an end in itself, that reindustrialization is not an end in itself, that even full employment is not an end in itself. Human well-being is the end; the satisfaction of material needs and happiness not only for the young, healthy and employable, but for children, the elderly, the chronically ill, and for people who cannot directly participate in employment. At present we talk as if we can imagine no other way for money to circulate among people except through work. But jobs may no longer serve this function either because they don't pay enough, as in the case of women and many minority men workers, or because the jobs just won't be there.

When jobs no longer work to meet people's needs for economic security, we have to look to alternatives. The alternative is the direct redistribution of wealth through a program of steeply progressive taxes combined with generous public social welfare measures — income maintenance, health care, housing, child care, education. Such programs are not a substitute for jobs, especially not for jobs that are meaningful work. But they are necessary for all the people whose jobs do not now allow them to live at a level of material dignity, and for all the people — children, the elderly, and others — who are not part of the workforce at all. In fact, in a time of unpredictable economic dislocation and technological change, the great majority of people must have an adequate and reliable "safety net."

The social programs that we already have — from AFDC and Social Security to Medicaid and food stamps — represent the fruits of American working people's struggles in the past. The social programs we *could* have, if we were prepared to make them an economic priority, would greatly enhance the possibility of union victories in the future. Women, and especially the growing number of poor women raising children on their own, need expanded social programs *now*. ●

Barbara Ehrenreich is co-chair of DSA. This article is adapted from a speech given at the "Growth Pains" conference in January sponsored by DSA and Socialist Review. Another version, along with speeches by other panelists, will be published in Socialist Review.

Coca Cola

Continued from page 7

STEGAC is not just their rallying ground. It remains, even in its crisis, a major source of succor for the remaining union leaders hard hit in recent weeks by kidnappings and threats of kidnappings. These unionists came into the plant as much seeking solidarity as bringing it. The union shares its food daily with some of the widows of unionists who have been assassinated and with wives and other close relatives of those who have disappeared.

Several unions expressed willingness to begin illegal sympathy strikes to support STEGAC. But this would probably only bring still greater repression both against themselves and against the EGSA members. In any case, it would have virtually no direct effect upon Coca-Cola International. No one has forgotten 1980 when, after an EGSA worker was assassinated on company property, twenty-eight representatives of the CNT (the National Labour Confederation),

including two more STEGAC leaders, meeting to discuss a united reaction to murder, were kidnapped in mass by the army, never to be seen again. It is for this reason that the hope for international solidarity burns so strong in Guatemala, not only within Coca-Cola, but in all the labor movement there.

Two days before we left the plant, an ad appeared in *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala's major daily newspaper, calling on EGSA workers to report to a local bank to pick up their legal severance pay. This would effectively remove them from the struggle and would make their continued presence at the plant illegal. The union views this as the gravest threat to its solidarity so far, since many workers' families are suffering more than those inside the plant itself. In some cases they face eviction from their homes for non-payment of rent. The company in some cases is offering up to US \$4,000, an extraordinary sum in Guatemala. However, to date only six out of about 500 workers have given in to the company's offer and four of these are administrative personnel who never joined the union.

It is assumed that the ad was placed by the fugitive franchisees' Guatemalan lawyer.

If so, it is about the only responsibility the owners are willing to assume. Retirement payments under the union contract come from general company funds which now apparently will not be paid. The company underwrote a number of bank loans for workers, another union accomplishment, which now are being called in. In the 1980 agreement with the IUF, Coca-Cola International assumed responsibility for the widows and children of assassinated EGSA workers. In practice this amounted only to the franchisees' providing for the children's education. No one is continuing even these modest payments. We met a number of these women and children who told us they now face destitution.

Coca-Cola Atlanta lists among the causes of EGSA's closing, in its side of the story, "bad management." Evidence has now been found by the union that large amounts of company funds — some lump sums equaling US \$30,000 and more — were assigned by the company to its franchisees for unspecified reasons. But even this did not really bankrupt the plant. The union has further discovered that two sets of books were kept — one faking bankruptcy, another indicating the real conditions. Technically there is nothing illegal about cannibalizing the finances of one's own company. In this case, however, with the plant and machinery in Coca-Cola's hands and with the transnational signing for millions in loans, the question naturally comes up as to why Coke seems so unconcerned with the fiasco. We heard workers speculating that the transnational and the franchisees had some sort of spoken or unspoken understanding that the latter would run the place for three or four years, long enough to dissolve international solidarity and to get the IUF off their back, and then they could stay or go as they pleased. According to this theory, Coke would make no claims on the franchisees but would consider its losses "money well spent for services rendered." An even grimmer variant on the theory suspects that if the strike fails now Coke will reopen the place, non-union, half a year or so later.

As the *Financial Times* notes, "The very thought of Coca-Cola (in Guatemala) going bust is of course absurd." What is going on is a struggle with Coca-Cola International. The workers' leaders and the rank and file repeatedly told us that they would hold out in the plant for a long time — indefinitely, some said — no matter what happens elsewhere because they have no alternative. "But the difference," said Robles, "between whether or not our sacrifice is in vain or opens a new page in Guatemalan history is whether or not international solidarity forces Atlanta back to the bargaining table." ●



Peter Schnall

A father and son take a break during a family visit.

ORGANIZER'S DIARY

Michael Harrington on the Road

WASHINGTON, D.C.

January 13th-15th. A thousand years ago at the 1982 Democratic Agenda conference in Los Angeles, a small group—Ann Beaudry, Stanley Sheinbaum, Richard Parker, Dick Sklar and I—had lunch and discovered that we had all arrived independently at similar conclusions. There were, we said, many left economists and analysts producing work that shared the theme of democratic economics even though they differed on much else. Why not get them together?

We did so in San Francisco in the fall of 1982. Forty or so analysts sat around a big table and the only rule was, you couldn't quote your own book. In the fall of 1983 smaller meetings were held in New York, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington and now a larger event in Washington. There were activists and trade unionists—including an excellent DSA group from Pittsburgh—, economists and a lunch session with Pat Caddell and Alan Baron which anticipated some of the basic trends of this political *annus mirabilis*.

I came away with two vivid impressions. First, the American left is now more competent on economic policy questions than ever before in its history.

Second, everyone there agreed that we are close to serious alternatives to Reaganomics and technocratic planning, but that we need time both to develop our ideas and to make a serious impression on the political mainstream.

DETROIT

January 19th: I have been working to help put the American Solidarity coalition together since early December and part of that effort has been enlisting union support. I came to Detroit to speak at Wayne State, meet DSAers at a reception at Oscar Pascal's and to talk to Owen Bieber of the UAW.

Bieber is a big man, spiritually as well as physically. There had been much talk in and around the labor movement that because he had not grown up in a liberal-radical milieu like his predecessors, perhaps he represented a break in the Reutherite tradition. I didn't have that sense at all. He was excellent on the foreign policy issues we discussed and when we chatted about collective bargaining and economic issues, there was a quality of informed passion in his attitude. Not unimportant from an organizer's point of view: he was enthusiastic about the American Solidarity Movement.

During that Detroit visit, I was on Late Night America, the Public Broadcasting System talk and call-in show. It was a terrific session and brought in about 200 letters asking for more information about DSA. Television, I conclude with that lightning insight that is one of my best qualities, is important!

NASHVILLE

February 4th: This is one of the best parts of the job of being Co-Chair of DSA. I had debated Michael Novak, the radical theologian turned neoconserva-

tive, in Memphis the night before and was able to spend four hours in Nashville on my way back to New York. First a meeting with the DSA chapter, then a packed meeting in a church hall. There is socialist life and struggle in many places where we don't usually expect to find it.

SALT LAKE CITY

February 29th: I meet with the Utah DSA.

There was a well attended meeting at the University, a party afterwards—somebody remembered that my birthday was five days earlier and Andrew Hunt made up a framed birthday card with a portrait of Big Bill Haywood and a fist and rose—and another discussion at the University the next morning. Some of the DSAers in Salt Lake grew up as Mormons, others came here to work from other parts of the country. But then, someone reminds me, in the old days the more radical communitarian Mormons were members of the Debsian Socialist Party.

BOSTON

March 10th: I fly to Boston with Bogdan Denitch, who is recuperating from a heart attack and preparing for a quadruple by-pass operation (which turned out quite well) and acting as if he had just recovered from a mild cold. He, Fran Piven and I were on a panel on the future of socialism at the Eastern Sociological Association in front of a lively and large crowd. Amazingly, the three of us were not echoes of each other. Fran did a marvelous job of putting voter registration into the context of an analysis of the structure of American politics, Bogdan gave a provocative discussion of the relation between the "Reds" and the "Greens" in the socialist movement, and I talked about some of the implications—and the American misrepresentations—of the Mitterrand experience.

That evening, DSAer Cynthia Epstein gave the presidential address, which was a knowledgeable and witty survey of the literature on the position of women in American society.

NEW YORK

March 30th: I am writing this report in between phone calls helping Jeremy Karpatkin, the DSA youth organizer, organize a press conference to protest the denial of a visa to Anna Marguerita Gastiazoro, a youth leader of the Salvadoran MNR who was scheduled to tour the country with youth activists from Europe and Central America. Apparently the Reagan administration is trying to stop even a discussion of the issues of Central America.

My startling conclusion from these three months of activity? We are needed more than ever.

Ed. note: The videotape of the PBS interview with Michael Harrington is available from the National office for a small rental fee.

ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

Arkansas

The 50th reunion of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, inspired by Norman Thomas and organized by H.L. Mitchell and others, took place in Little Rock's Old Statehouse, near the land where union members were chased, beaten, imprisoned, and some killed. Among those who attended the reunion of the first integrated union of tenant farmers and sharecroppers were its president, 77-year-old H.L. Mitchell; Rev. George Stith, a veteran organizer; Evelyn Smith Munro, one of the union's best workers; and John Handcox, who wrote some of labor's best songs, including "Roll the Union On" and "We Shall Not Be Moved." A *New York Times* story March 14 told the story of the union.

California

Prof. Charles Gesheker spoke on "Politics of South Africa" at Chico DSA in February... Marshall Mayer has become the first full-time organizer of Los Angeles DSA... The American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit vs. the L.A. Police Department for political spying was settled out-of-court last month. It included a \$900,000 damage award to plaintiffs representing 131 groups and individuals and \$900,000 in attorney fees for ACLU. DSA was a plaintiff organization, since an undercover LAPD officer, Jon Dial, infiltrated NAM in 1974. DSA had a 1976 conference and follow-up meeting surveilled by two LAPD undercover officers... Young socialists and progressives meet April 13-15 in Los Angeles for the second annual DSA Western Regional Youth Conference on "Building the Left"... LA DSA has just published "Reflections Upon the Legacy," a 40-page pamphlet on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.... Marin DSA joined CISPES and other groups to show the film, "El Salvador—Another Vietnam," last month... The DSA luncheon at the State Democratic convention was attended by 90 people... The DSA co-sponsored

conference on "Growth Pains: Dialogues on Employment, Equality and the Environment" attracted close to 1,000 people to the opening session with Mike Harrington, Barry Commoner, Maxine Waters, Heather Booth, Ginny Foat and Skip Roberts. Other conference sessions were attended by over 700 people,

District of Columbia

Former head of the House Banking Committee Henry Reuss and economist Margaret Reuss were honored at the DC/MD local's Debs-Thomas event. The event took place in the House Caucus room.

Illinois

Frances Fox Piven spoke last month to DSA and the Second City Socialist School on "A Movement Strategy to Beat Reagan in '84"... Barbara Ehrenreich will speak May 12 at the Chicago DSA dinner honoring William Lucy, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, with the Norman Thomas-Eugene V. Debs Award May 12... A Midwest Regional meeting will be held May 12 and 13... At least five DSA members participated in the February volunteer work brigades in Nicaragua, harvesting cotton. The Chicago Lesbian and Gay branch of DSA raised \$500 for four cases of syringes, which were delivered to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health... Chicago DSAer Bob Lawson, who is also an AFSCME representative, started the human chain that rescued 4-year-old Jimmy Tontlewicz, who survived 20 minutes underwater in ice-cold Lake Michigan Jan. 15. The case received national attention

Indiana

Four editorial board members were fired by *The Independent*, monthly magazine of Purdue University's Off Campus Students Association, for being "too leftist." Three were DSA members Kim Lawson, last year's editor, Thomas Ryan, and Barney McClelland. Purdue DSA is pushing for student support of the fired writers.

Kentucky

DSAer Anne Joseph, director of the Kentucky Task Force on Hunger, was honored by the Lexington branch of the American Association of University Women, for her efforts to help poor women and the nutritional needs of women and children... Two DSA members, labor columnists John

Herling and Harry Fleischman, will receive the Eugene V. Debs Award of the Midwest Labor Press Association in Lexington June 22... The Lexington DSA local will host a leadership school for the South in June.

Maine

DSAer Harlan Baker, three-term state representative, is working for a state bank, and has gotten about 40 "sympathy votes" from other Maine House members.

Maryland

Baltimore DSAer Barbara Ruland returned from a visit to Nicaragua and wrote an article for the local's newsletter on the gains made by women. Prior to the revolution women's wages could be paid directly to their husbands. Now, not only is there an equal pay for equal work law, but a law prohibiting the use of women's bodies in advertising.

Michigan

Some 60 people from Michigan, Ohio, Western Pennsylvania and Western New York attended an Industrial Heartland Regional DSA Conference in Ann Arbor last month... Ann Arbor DSA is working to save the Downtown Club as a single-room occupancy facility for low-income people... A DSA-SOCPAC has been started to campaign in close races this year.

New Hampshire

During the recent New Hampshire primary campaign Walter Mondale presented DSAer Earl Bourdon with a tee shirt proclaiming "Earl Bourdon for Vice President." Mondale still lost that primary.

New York

DSA is working with the statewide Network for Voter Registration... Albany DSAPAC is backing union rep Edward J. Bloch as a candidate against incumbent Republican Rep. Gerald Solomon... Ithaca DSA is cooperating with the Lesbian and Gay Political Action and Discussion Group, which held a forum last month on "Feminism and Gay Issues"... Stewart Selman, just returned from a work brigade in Nicaragua, spoke and showed slides at Nassau DSA this month... On April 29, Jewel and Bernard Bellush, who spent the last year in Israel teaching and traveling, will speak to the local on "Can Israel Survive?"... DSA vice-chair William Winpisinger, Machinists Union president, will speak at the Long

Island Progressive Coalition May 6 to celebrate its fifth anniversary. He was the inaugural speaker at the group's first meeting.

.. An overflow crowd heard *Dissent* co-editor Irving Howe deliver the Stanley Plastrik Memorial Lecture at the City University Graduate Center on why socialists in America have failed... Rochester DSA held a soiree in March to discuss local and national politics. The film, "Marianne and Julianne," with a socialist feminist perspective, was shown at SUNY-Genesee March 30... A "Metro-Act Urban Issues Conference: An Agenda for Rochester" will be held April 28, with Mel King of Boston as keynoter... An All-Suffolk County Conference on "1984—Year of Decision" will be held on April 28 at SUNY-Stony Brook.

Ohio

A new DSA local has been chartered in Kent... Some 40 people attended the first DSA statewide conference in Ohio in January. Holly Graff spoke on DSA priorities and plans for the socialist-feminist conference. Ohio formed a state-wide network. Representatives were present from Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Toledo, Dayton, Akron, Kent, Oberlin, Athens and Canton... The Cleveland local sponsored a concert by singer Fred Small.

BUILDING IN BALTIMORE

When Barbara Ehrenreich speaks at the May Day celebration of the Progressive Action Center in Baltimore she will be marking another event in the life of an unusual building. The former public library, bought from the City of Baltimore for \$1,000, was renovated with a low-cost city loan and funds invested by a group of leftists, primarily DSAers, who wanted a home for progressive activists and activities. It now houses the Alternative Press Center, the Baltimore Information Cooperative, Red Wagon Child Center, Workers Action Press, and offers low-cost meeting space. The investors, Research Associates, used tax laws to their advantage and their political know-how to gain community approval for use of the building. Cliff Durand, an original investor and member of the DSA education committee, lives in a

Pennsylvania

DSAers in Philadelphia are backing progressive two-term Congressman Tom Foglietta against Jim Tayoun, who has won the endorsement of the conservative Democratic Party machine. They have also endorsed DSAer Babette Josephs for state representative in the 182nd district against incumbent Sam Rappaport in the April 10th Democratic primary... A planning meeting in April will establish a statewide DSA. Locals now include Philadelphia, Reading, Central Pa. and Pittsburgh... Pittsburgh DSAer Paul Garver, a union staff representative, visited Nicaragua with a group of progressive unionists in January. A 15-person Pittsburgh delegation is visiting Nicaragua in March... Reading DSA-PAC has endorsed Paul Clark for Congress.

PUBLIC HEALTH

DSAer Victor Sidel, a member of the Socialist Caucus of the American Public Health Association, is President-Elect of APHA. The APHA convention in Dallas had 6,500 delegates and the Socialist Caucus held 15 high quality sessions there. APHA has 30,000 members. In *SCAPHA NEWS*, the Socialist Caucus newsletter, an interview with Sidel stresses his hope that doctors and others involved in health care will press for a national health insurance type of national health care.



communal apartment on the premises and helps manage the building. He reports that in the year and a half of its existence all the leftists involved have gotten along well. He sees the building as an example of what groups can do to create their own nurturing environments and welcomes inquiries from others interested in similar ventures. Contact him at 1443 Gorsuch Ave., Baltimore, MD 21218.

NEW DSA LABOR MEMO

The latest *DSA Labor Memo* features articles by Philip van Buren on the "Workers Defense League: A Democratic Socialist Movement for Workers' Rights," Chris Farrand on the "Cleveland Labor Committee" and one on "DC's Central America Committee." Copies are available from DSA Labor Memo, Rm. 810A, 1346 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

DSA FEMINISTS

The DSA Feminist Commission urges all DSA feminists not yet members of the Commission to join by sending \$5 or more to DSA, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657, listing their feminist interests, activities and memberships. The Commission has just published a directory to help its members get in touch with each other.

RED VIENNA LIVES

This February, the Austrian Socialist movement commemorated the 50th anniversary of the rising of Austrian social democrats against a fascist coup d'etat on February 12, 1934. I recall that day vividly. I was a young Socialist working in a Manhattan hand laundry, pushing a laundry cart in the street, and reading the *New York Times* stories of the revolt, with tears streaming down my face. The bravery of comrades like Koloman Wallisch, dying while fighting against Dollfuss' Fascist Heimwehr, shone like a beacon of hope. We young Socialists had been so dismayed by the feeble capitulation of the powerful German Socialist and Communist movements to Hitler that the heroic, even if unsuccessful, struggle of our Austrian comrades made a great impact on us.

RESOURCES

Media Network has issued two film guides, one of reproductive rights films, the other on Central America resources. Each one describes films, videotapes and slideshows, tells of low-cost distributors, and gives tips on planning a successful program. Order at \$2 each plus 50¢ per item postage from Media Network, 278 W. 13th St., NYC 10011.

REVIEWS

by Maurice Isserman

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: AMERICA, 1929-1941, by Robert S. McElvaine. NY Times Books, 1984. \$19.95.

DOWN AND OUT IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION, LETTERS FROM THE "FORGOTTEN MAN," ed. by Robert S. McElvaine, University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

With the newspapers currently celebrating the Great Economic Recovery of 1984 (a "recovery" that, at this writing, leaves a higher percentage of workers unemployed than when Reagan entered the White House), it's hard to recall that a scant eighteen months ago the papers were equally crowded with images reminiscent of the Great Depression. Now we hear about new cars and personal computers rolling off the assembly line (with an occasional nervous glance at the budget deficit); then we were shown families living in their cars (or in makeshift tent communities dubbed "Reaganvilles"), poor people waiting in line for a cheese handout, and bankrupt farmers standing by hopelessly while their homes and tractors were auctioned off to pay their debts. These powerful images stirred fears and memories that undoubtedly contributed to Democratic gains in the midterm Congressional elections. This year the media have decided, for reasons best known to the people who make such decisions, that homeless families and cheeselines and farm auctions aren't news anymore. That's one reason that it's nice to have Robert McElvaine around: he has a much longer attention span than your average newspaper editor (and better politics than your average newspaper publisher) and believes that the history of the Great Depression holds some enduring lessons for American political life.

"Most Americans in the 1980s," McElvaine writes in the foreword to *The Great Depression*, "are too young to remember the Great Depression. Perhaps this is why so many people were willing to follow Ronald Reagan down the path trod by Calvin Coolidge and Andrew Mellon prior to 1929." Reagan has praised his Republican predecessors of the 1920s for cutting corporate taxes drastically, arguing that under Coolidge "we had probably the greatest growth in prosperity that we've ever known." What Reagan has overlooked, McElvaine comments dryly, is "what happened to 'Coolidge Prosperity' less than eight months after Coolidge left office."

What followed the stock market crash of 1929 is an often-told story: layoffs, wage cuts, evictions, bank failures, Hoover's ineffective response, Roosevelt's election and promise of a New Deal, the alphabet-soup government agencies like the NRA, AAA, CCC, and WPA, which alleviated suffering but never quite got to the source of the problem, the rise of the CIO, FDR's landslide re-election and the high hopes of the mid-1930s followed by the disappointing results of his second term. McElvaine does a good job in retelling a familiar story: but he does something more. Using letters that ordinary citizens wrote to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during the 1930s, he gets us past the headlines and statistics, to give us a firsthand look at the despair, anger, and hopes of Americans in the Depression

"My Dear Friend," a farmer's wife from Goff, Kansas wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt in May 1935:

For the first time of my lifetime I am asking a favor and this one I am needing very badly and I am coming to your for help. Among your friends do you know of one who is discarding a spring coat for a new one. If so could you beg the old one for me. I wear a size 40 to 42 I have not had a spring coat for six years and last Sunday when getting ready to go to church I see my winter coat had several very thin places in the back that is very noticeable My clothes are very plain so I could wear only something plain. we were hit very hard by the drought and every penny we can save goes for feed to put in crop. Hoping for a favorable reply. Your friend....

As the New Deal programs took effect, many people wrote to the White House to express gratitude. But gratitude was often mixed with anger at continuing deprivations and injustice. The sense of having a friend in the White House fed into the upsurge of labor militancy in the mid-1930s. A textile worker from Columbus, Georgia wrote to FDR in October 1934:

I hope you can spare the time for a few words from a cotton mill family, out of work and almost out of heart and in just a short while out of a house in which to live. you know of course that the realtors are putting the people out when they cannot pay the rent promptly. and how are we to pay the rent so long as the mills refuse us work, merely because we had the nerve to ask or "demand," better working conditions. I realize and appreciate the aid and food which the government is giving to the poor people out of work Thanks to you. but is it even partly right for us to be thrown out of our homes, when we have no chance whatever of paying, so long as the big corporations refuse of work...wont you try to help us wont you appeal, "for us all," to the real estate people and the factories hoping you'll excuse this, but I've always thought of F.D.R. as my personal friend....

The Great Depression and *Down and Out in the Great Depression* are by no means uncritical celebrations of the New Deal. Roosevelt was never wholeheartedly committed to his own reform program, undercut his chances to end the Depression by bouts of budget cutting, squandered his opportunities to initiate significant structural reforms, and pandered to southern conservatives in Congress by keeping his distance from proposed economic and social measures that would have benefitted southern blacks. But for all its limitations, the New Deal provided a setting within which compassionate human values and more far-reaching proposals for change could develop. McElvaine concludes *The Great Depression* with an appropriate quotation from FDR's speech accepting the 1936 Democratic presidential nomination: "Governments can err; Presidents do make mistakes...but better the occasional faults of a Government that lives in a spirit of charity than the consistent omissions of a Government frozen in the ice of its own indifference." On the basis of the experience of recent years, it's hard to disagree with those sentiments. ●

Maurice Isserman teaches history at Smith College. His book *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* will be reissued in paperback by Wesleyan University Press later this year.

THE LAST WORD

Red/Green Smokescreen

by Cornel West

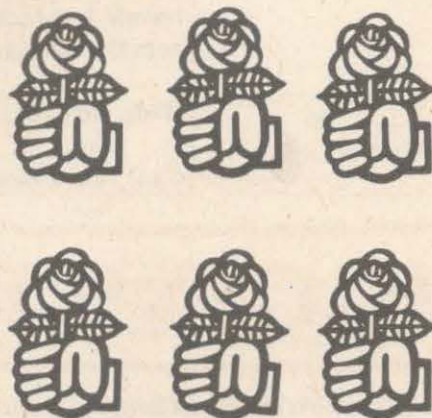
At the time of the DSA convention reports in the left press highlighted what was referred to as a "red-green" division in the organization. Members have responded and written analyses for Socialist Forum. In this space we present the first in a forum series on this topic. —The Editors

A fundamental intellectual and political controversy lurks beneath the fragile cohesion of DSA. This controversy is not simply about strategies and tactics, but concerns basic intellectual attitudes and political sensibilities. Some characterize this debate as being between "reds and greens," but such a formulation is neither helpful nor illuminating. This is so because the contemporary American left—of which DSA is the major expression—is far removed from most of organized labor ("red") and relatively uninterested in ecological politics ("green"). In fact, this glib conception of the controversy is itself symptomatic of a significant shortcoming of DSA: *the relative absence of serious intellectual debate and the reluctance to engage in sustained political dialogue.*

This shortcoming was quite evident at the DSA National Convention this past October. It was no surprise that varying perspectives and diverse viewpoints would result in conflicting—and sometimes clashing—positions. What was surprising—and a bit disappointing—was the lack of serious intellectual engagement regarding this diversity. As substantive differences emerged, there seemed to be no useful categories or enabling vocabularies to come to grips with them. A kind of intellectual vacuum was created, not because DSA is bereft of intelligent people but rather because this intelligence could not focus on the obvious differences among us. My aim here is neither to point accusing fingers at those who structured the Convention nor to blame those who spoke at the Convention. Rather, I am criticizing the *ethos* of the Convention and the *atmosphere* of the organization—an ethos and atmosphere fearful of refined intellectual debate and engaged political dialogue.

This fear is, in part, understandable giv-

ing our newness as an organization. But after two years of caution, it is no longer justifiable. The time has come for more candid intellectual and political exchange—for the sake of the organization. Our strength lies in such exchange, an exchange mediated by respect and guided by our progressive commitment to fundamental social change.



The so-called "red vs. green" controversy is not an informal debate between two groups, but a misguided characterization of the four basic intellectual and political viewpoints in DSA. These four perspectives are those of economistic Marxism, cultural leftism, democratic radicalism and pragmatic progressivism. Economistic Marxism—with its old-style class analysis and obsession with organized labor—remains an analytical straitjacket in that it refuses to take seriously culture and morality. Cultural leftism—principally rooted in the political struggles of feminist, black, Latino, gay, and lesbian socialists—tends to underestimate the role of organized labor and overestimate the capacity of its micropolitical movements to transform capitalist society. Democratic radicals often possess some allegiance to Marxist analysis and loyalty to cultural leftism, but usually are leery of class politics and suspicious of cultural politics—thereby falling in line with liberal politics (accompanied by a critical socialist consciousness!). Pragmatic progressives are neither Marxists, cultural leftists nor

democratic radicals; rather, they are full-fledged social democrats dissatisfied with bourgeois liberalism and cynical about the left in general.

Needless to say, these broad categories are ideal-typical ones that do not capture the diversity and variety of perspectives in DSA. They refer not only to different groups; they also constitute different components of single positions. Hence they generate tension within the organization and within ourselves. There can be no resolutions to such tensions. To be an American leftist is to be shot through with such tensions. But there must be more dialogue regarding the content and character of the various positions, the strengths and weaknesses of these positions.

I would suggest that a new emancipatory perspective is in the making—and fermenting in the bowels of DSA. Such a perspective preserves the powerful critique of class exploitation (including its imperialist expressions) and the normative call for workers' self-management of economic Marxism; incorporates the concerns for sexual freedom, racial, gender and sexual orientational equality and ecological balance of cultural leftism; accentuates the precious ideals of substantive democracy and liberty of democratic radicalism; and learns from the sobering tough-minded every-day engagement of pragmatic progressivism. This new emancipatory viewpoint, which draws from diverse intellectual traditions and political struggles, falls outside prevailing ideological labels. It spills over into new leftist frontiers, that is, new visions and new analyses that may galvanize and energize our present practices. Yet this new perspective, merely one among others in our organization, cannot be scrutinized or tested without a shift in our attitudes toward debate and dialogue. Only serious and sustained exchange can take us beyond the obfuscating categories of "red vs. green" and move us toward illuminating conceptions of the debate we so desperately need. ●

Cornel West is chair of the Afro-American Commission of DSA and teaches at Union Theological Seminary. He is the author of Prophecy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity, published by The Westminster Press.

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JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

Alabama Senator Jeremiah Denton is always good for a little unintentional comic relief. He opined recently that El Salvador's elections are more fair and democratic than Alabama's. This prompted a resolution by dissenters in the Alabama legislature urging that state troopers be organized into election enforcement squads and be given the necessary knives, bullets, and other implements needed to get out the vote. The penalty for not voting right or far right would be disappearance.

Registering one million new, low-income voters is the announced goal of a drive billed as Freedom Summer '84. This effort marks the twentieth anniversary of the Mississippi Freedom Summer during which three young civil rights workers were killed for trying to register blacks. Organizers expect more bureaucratic and less physically threatening resistance to this year's nationwide effort to register the disenfranchised. Drawing together the major student and youth networks and virtually all the major national voter registration groups, Freedom Summer '84 promises to be a big organizing drive. DSA is actively recruiting volunteers, for its success will depend on volunteers willing to help register the poor at social and health centers. For more information on how you can help, contact Hulbert James, executive director, Human SERVE Fund, 622 West 113 St., New York, NY 10025, (212) 280-8730, (212) 280-8727, or (212) 280-4053.

Making fun of Mobil ads on *The New York Times* op-ed page is cheap fun, but the March 29 entry on "how TV reported the recession" is too good to pass up. Headlined "Looking

for Snarks in Washington," the copy leads with a Lewis Carroll poem about the relentless search for the imaginary snark. So, too, with our current economic problems, these literate men of Mobil tell us (very few women, we suspect). They claim that electronic journalists were out to find the "imaginary evil force in Washington they felt was out to get the poor." Really what happened is that cutbacks were not cutbacks, "only decreases in the Carter budget projections." And the government spent more on social welfare than defense. The government spends \$236 billion to keep people from falling through the social safety net, "but the media are featuring disproportionately individuals who do fall through, never acknowledging the millions who don't." Of course, recessions by definition are times of rising needs for social welfare spending. So the non-cutbacks hurt—a lot. And most of the social spending goes for Social Security.

The latest in neo-liberal wisdom comes from Colorado Governor Richard Lamm who told a conference in late March that the ailing elderly have a duty to die. Elaborating on this charming thought, Lamm compared the dying old people to leaves falling from a tree and creating humus for new growth. He actually said that the old should die because they constitute a drain on the nation's economy and health care costs if they remain sick and alive too long. Too bad he's a Democrat. His comments would make him a strong contender to head Health and Human Services in this administration.

