
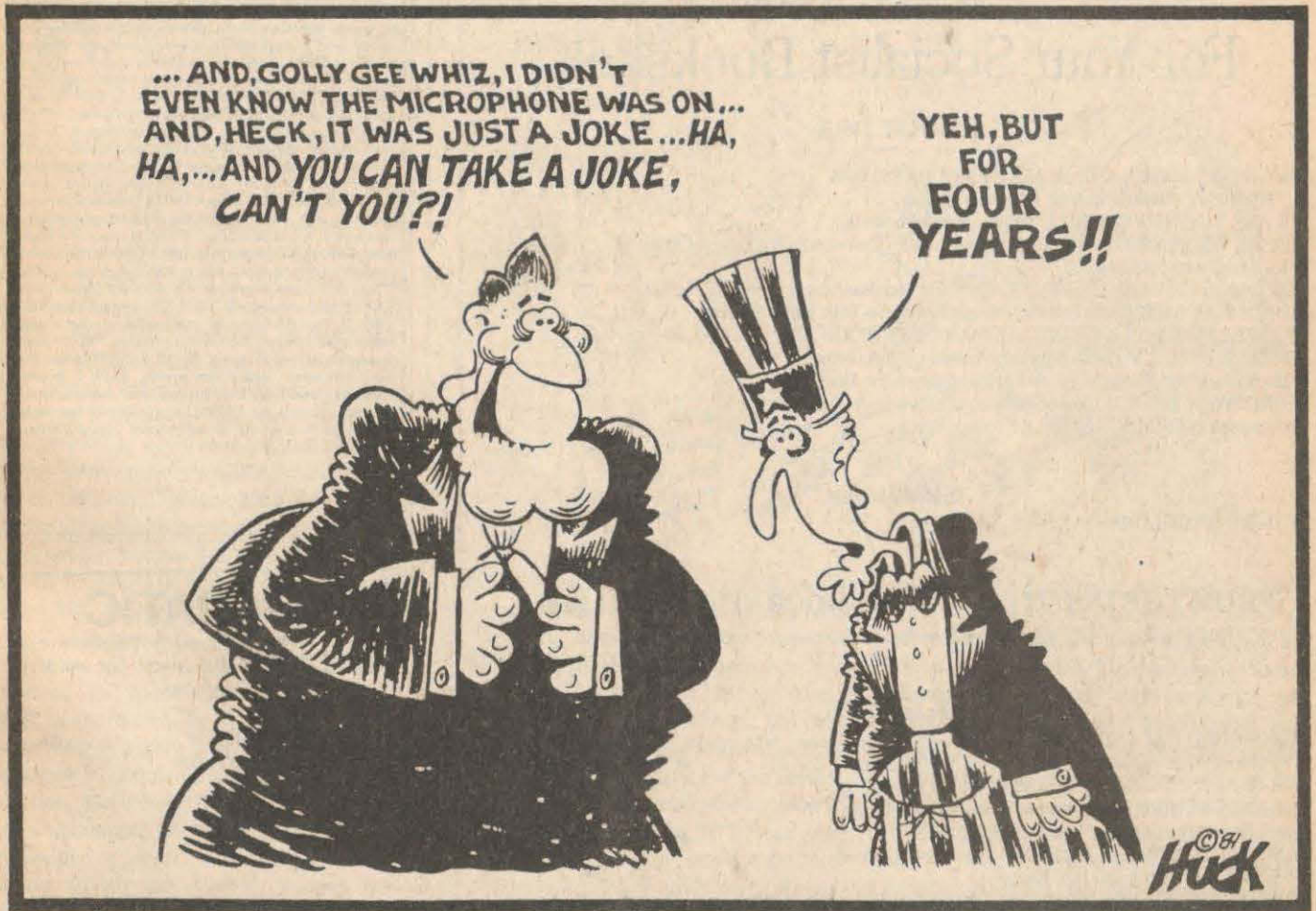


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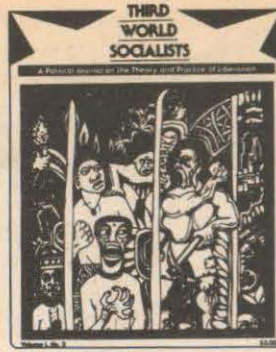
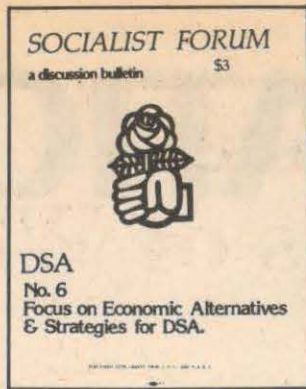
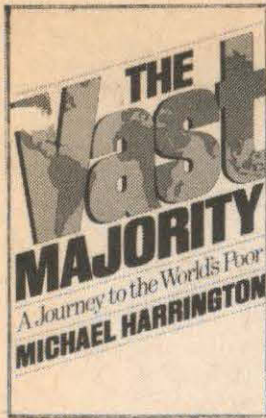
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Formerly Newsletter of the Democratic Left and Moving On.

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Facing the Future: Four More Years of What?

by Michael Harrington

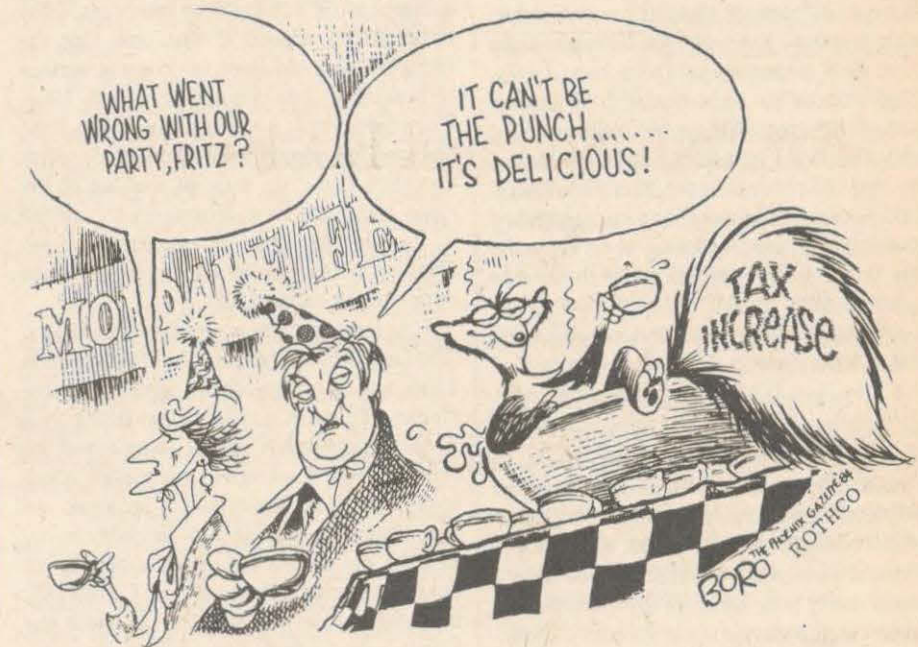
First the good news: the 1984 elections were not as bad as they seem on the surface. Then the bad news: if the democratic left makes an uncritical reading of this fact it can blow the very real opportunities that exist for it during the next two to four years.

The presidential election showed the attraction of a charismatic President Feello-good whose vacuous non-message was given the appearance of truth by the peculiar state of the economy in 1984. If the vote had been taken under the conditions of November 1982, when Ronald Reagan was less popular than Jimmy Carter at the comparable point in his term, it would certainly have been close and quite likely would have led to the election of the Democratic candidate. Between October 1981 and January 1983, i.e., in the period of the worst recession since the Great Depression, Reagan fell from a 61 percent approval rate to a 54 percent disapproval rate in the ABC News/Washington Post poll.

The surge of the economy in 1983 and 1984 was not a result of Reagan's brilliant planning. The contrast with Richard Nixon in 1972 is instructive. In August 1971, Nixon embarked on a game plan designed to create optimum economic conditions for his reelection. He imposed wage and price controls, announced himself a "Keynesian" and proceeded to spend a great deal of public money to get the economy moving, persuaded his friend Arthur Burns at the Federal Reserve to increase the money supply, and so on.

That was the last time that *conscious* Keynesian politics worked: September and October of 1972 were the two best months, in economic terms, of the Nixon Presidency and they helped an unpopular man win a higher percentage of the vote than Ronald Reagan in 1984. Reagan, as readers of DEMOCRATIC LEFT know, blundered into the 1983-4 recovery by following an unconscious Keynesianism and dealing with inflation by the massive immiseration of working people, the poor and minorities.

That unexpected success did not, however, make the president's program popular



with the American people. Political analyst Seymour Martin Lipset, summarizing some of the data, said: "Support for increased spending for domestic programs moved up steadily between February 1981 and August 1983, from 49 to 67 percent for the poor, from 43 to 75 percent for education, and from 49 to 66 percent for health. But the percentages favoring an increase in military expenditures fell off from 72 to 33." Even more shocking, this difference between the president's program and the priorities of the people who elected him goes back at least to Franklin Roosevelt. Americans, it has been documented, tend to be "ideologically conservative" and "operationally liberal."

Indeed, that distinction between ideology and operation might have been one factor in Reagan's failure to shift the ideological makeup of the House. The electorate indulged its philosophic principles by giving him a landslide, and it backed up its practical, operational instincts by maintaining a moderate Democratic majority in the House. For this reason it can be argued that *party* realignment did not take place in 1984.

If I am right on this count, then even if Mondale had taken all of the advice DEMOCRATIC LEFT gave him and had run on a seri-

ous alternative program, he would not have won. Reagan was immunized from losing by the economy and any issue-based attack on him was bound to fail. But that does not mean that we should simply count issues out and fatalistically endorse what Mondale did. For a good part of the time, the Democratic campaign focused almost exclusively on the question of the deficit and the necessity of raising taxes. That was designed to show that Reagan is a hypocrite, a fact established beyond doubt by the White House within a day or two of the election when it began to acknowledge that the rosy picture of the economy painted by the president was a fraud, i.e., that the deficit is going to be well over \$200 billion, not \$170 billion.

But a tax increase is hardly a standard to which the masses will repair and can be easily subjected to demagogic attack, as it was. At the same time, Mondale refused the request of a delegation of black leaders to come out with a jobs program, thus reinforcing the feeling that he actually didn't have much more to offer than the late, and quite unlamented, Carter administration. Was this also one of the reasons why voter turnout increased only marginally? It is too early to say that with any confidence—the polls show-

ing that the presidential contest was not even a horse race did not help; neither did television's irresponsible projecting of the results while the polls were still open—but it seems a good guess that it at least played a role.

If it did, it might help explain the partial disappointment of the trade union campaign. The polls show that union members voted for Mondale by 57 percent, union households by 53 percent. Blue-collar voters, organized and unorganized, favored Reagan by 53 percent, which would suggest that labor's efforts made a difference, that blue-collar people with a union card were for Mondale more than their nonunion brothers and sisters. That statistic has to be qualified, for at least part of the union vote for Mondale coincided with that huge outpouring of black support for him (90 percent in the *New York Times*/CBS survey). If Mondale had campaigned on working class issues more—as he did in the last days of the election when those who changed their minds tended toward him—there might have been a greater mobilization and, if not a victory, then less of a defeat.

If the unions were disappointed in reaching their goal of 65 percent labor support for Mondale, they improved their score as against 1980 and showed that they remain an absolutely central component in the Democratic coalition. So did blacks and women. Thus, any suggestion that a renewed Democratic party can be built by downplaying those constituencies is a royal road to political suicide.

Indeed, I suggest that all the numbers that different strategists are now using to back up their tactical choices will be transformed within the next two years when the next recession takes place. The business press is, of course, filled with arguments about when and how the downturn will come. Most analysts, *The Wall Street Journal* reported in late November, are convinced that a full scale recession is not in the cards for 1985, which, given the flawed predictions of "most analysts," is reason to think that the crisis is at hand.

But there is no need to engage in flights of speculative fancy. No one knows when the recession will come, how deep and how long it will last, and how the recovery will take place. There is no doubt in my mind that it will come, almost certainly within the next two years, and that, when it does, there will be a considerable shift in the electorate. If the United States were run by Robert's Rules of Order, the people might want to make a motion to reconsider at that point. What is much more likely is a return of Democratic control in the Senate and an increase in the moderate majority in the House.

So everything is fine? The election was

an aberration explained by an accidental recovery and the charisma of President Feellood? And the democratic left should simply engage in its usual endeavors? That is dangerous nonsense.

Any New Ideas?

In the winter of 1982, when most Democrats assumed that they could run against Herbert Hoover in 1984, I pointed out in these pages that a recovery would come and that the political situation could be radically different in 1984. If I may be immodest, I was right. And I argued at that time that the Democrats would have to do some serious rethinking if they wanted to win in 1984. They didn't do it. And I argue now that, if the progressive wing of the Democratic party does not come up with an analysis of the crisis and some new departures for solving it, it could lose a historic opportunity to realign our politics to the left, to create a new period in our national life.

Let me put the proposition negatively. The Democrats win control of the Senate in 1986, and increase their majority in the House. There is a \$300 billion deficit as a result of declining federal income and increased federal outlays in a recession which is either just ending or still in progress. An unpopular president retains his ability to obfuscate the issues and sends a socially vicious, militarist package over to Capitol Hill, insisting that it will cure the ills which the Democratic Congress has created by refus-

ing his budget cuts. What will the Democrats do? Will they increase taxes and cut social spending while unemployment is, assuming a modest recession, at 9 percent?

The neoliberals—such as Senator Bradley and Representative Gephardt—will probably dominate the programmatic news in the months to come as attention focuses on their attempts at tax reform. But will a "flat tax" simplification which is specifically designed not to try to make the system more just be an adequate response to the situation imagined in the last paragraph? Will the neoliberal proposals for reduced government in order to enhance investments in high tech and education be relevant under such circumstances? I doubt it.

The Democratic party—or rather, its progressive wing—is going to have to think in the coming period. There is, I am afraid, no alternative to that difficult experience. It is conceivable that the election of 1984 will turn out to have been the last gasp of a conservative era that ends when the American people rudely discover that they were sold a snake-oil recovery by the Great Pitchman. If that happens—and it is not guaranteed, but it certainly is possible—where is the new New Deal or Fair Deal or New Frontier or Great Society? Where is there a unifying theme of social justice, antimilitarism and internationalism that rises above the constituency agendas?

We socialists will help answer these questions. ●

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Forming a New Majority

by Christine R. Riddiough

November 6, 1984—Ronald Reagan has won his “four more years.” Despite all the efforts of labor, feminists, black activists, gay and lesbian activists and many others, Ronald Reagan’s personal popularity overrode consideration of issues for the majority of American voters. We now must look ahead to four more years—what will they mean to us as socialists in the United States?

To understand the task ahead of us we have to look at the election results. Who really won? Does the election portend a realignment of American politics and the Democratic party? What were the problems with the Mondale campaign and what do they suggest about future electoral efforts?

Reagan won because of his own popularity and because he was able to maintain his nice guy image in the face of his and the GOP’s disastrous economic and social policies. Time after time in the debates and in his campaign speeches, Reagan was able to make up stories, twist the truth, even lie outright and get away with it. Because times are relatively good, compared with two years ago, people wanted to believe that everything was okay.

While Reagan was riding a landslide across the country, it was clearly not a mandate for conservative GOP policies. The Republicans lost two Senate seats, including that of Family Protection Act author Roger Jepson in Iowa. They made only modest gains in the House of Representatives. These victories can give us some hope that more moderate voices in the Congress will be able to block some of the right-wing agenda for the next four years.

Voter Blocs

Voting patterns were predictable. To take one factor, the gender gap was there at all levels: Reagan got 8 percent fewer votes from women than he did from men and in the state and local races the gender gap was even wider. In several races, including Carl Levin’s Senate race in Michigan and Madeline Kunin’s gubernatorial race in Vermont, the gender gap was the key to success. The groups that apparently voted most strongly for the Mondale/Ferraro ticket were blacks, feminists, and gay men and lesbians. Exit

polls showed that more than 80 percent of the black community supported the Democratic ticket, as did close to 80 percent of feminists.

In terms of the lesbian and gay vote, there are no exit polls to look at, but more informal surveys by the gay press and gay organizations suggest that between 60 and 70 percent of gay voters supported Mondale, with more than 80 percent of lesbians in that category. Although openly gay candidates for office in Massachusetts, Minnesota, and California were re-elected, the level of sexist and homophobic rhetoric seemed to increase in this campaign. In the Texas and North Carolina Senate races, particularly vitriolic anti-gay ads were run in papers and anti-gay statements were made by the winning Republican candidates.

The anti-gay tactics used by the right-wing were part and parcel of an apparent anti-feminist backlash. The charges that Mondale was a “wimp” while Reagan has made “America stand tall again” have striking anti-feminist and anti-woman connotations. In the vice presidential debate, a reporter asked Geraldine Ferraro if the Russians would take advantage of her because she’s a woman. One was left repeatedly with the impression that the Ferraro candidacy and the candidacies of other women represented a real threat to male politicians around the country.

At the same time that Reagan capitalized on his popularity and the GOP on anti-feminist and anti-black feelings among white males, the Mondale campaign proved incapable of using its strengths among these groups to offset Reagan. Mondale’s highly vaunted political organization turned out not to be able to field much of a grassroots campaign and his political directors seemed to be stuck around 1968—not recognizing the changes in the political scene in the last decade and a half. Enthusiastic volunteers often found little interest in their offers of help. Efforts to win the South by appointing Bert Lance as head of the Democratic National Committee were typical of the sloppy way in which Mondale played constituency politics.

The next four years present us with two challenges: to fight back against the Reagan/right-wing agenda and to move the Democratic party and the left into the eighties politically. Reagan is already claiming a mandate for his social and economic program, but there some hope that Congress will be able to forestall some of the more outrageous aspects of the program. Only days after the election the administration is already talking about “tax simplification” (read increases) and rising federal deficits. As the fallacies of Reagan’s campaign promises become clearer, there will be some potential for organizing an active opposition to the administration. And in 1986, with 22 Republican Sena-



tors up for re-election, there is every possibility that the Democrats could recapture control of both Houses of Congress.

Clearly, however, more cogent ideas for future economic development need to be presented to the American public. The democratic left also has to fight actively for maintenance of civil rights and for a pro-feminist and pro-gay agenda in the coming years.

Much the same is true within the Democratic party. Old-line moderate and conservative Democrats will want to move away from the 1984 platform's support for women's and gay rights, arguing that this is what cost Mondale the election. More dangerous to the interests of socialists, feminists and other progressives is the potential realignment of the party toward the politics of Gary Hart and his neoliberal cohorts. Hart and the other neoliberals reject constituency politics as a relic of the past. They view constituencies as special interest that the party should not cater to. They are thus much less likely to be responsive to the concerns of any organized group, leaving blacks,

women, gays and others outside, looking in at a new white male party leadership.

Instead of accepting this, the Democratic party needs not simply to throw out constituency politics but rather to look at the new alignments of constituencies. Phyllis Shlafly has said that the gender gap is really a male drift to the GOP. The reality is that white males are a minority in the U.S. and that a Democratic party based in the black, Hispanic, and Asian communities with strong support among women, gays and lesbians and progressive white males would in fact be a majority party. The Democratic party cannot be anti-constituency if it is to survive. It must recognize new constituencies. That kind of political realignment would actually move the party to the left rather than the center and provide more opportunities for DSA and other socialists to play a significant role. ●

Christine Riddiough is director of lesbian rights for the National Organization for Women and a vice chair of DSA.

Reagan's ratings, and had no lasting effects. The American voter, even in the rightwing era, is not a fire-breathing rightwinger but a non-ideological pragmatist.

The 1984 election was almost an exact analogue of the Republican victories of 1956 and 1972, also "lonely landslides" for an incumbent Republican president unaccompanied by any substantial gains in other political bodies. Why then, has there been so much talk of the importance of the 1984 election? In most ways, the election was utterly unimportant: if it had been cancelled, nothing about the politics of 1985 would have been in any way different from what in fact they will be. Republican realignment? Reagan was the first president in 20th century history to win election with fewer than 190 of his own party in the House. Lower-level realignment? The Republicans are weaker in the House, the governorships, and the legislatures than they were in 1956 or 1972, and nobody claims that those were realignment years.

Real Death of New Deal

But the 1984 election was important psychologically because it seems to have finally cracked the perceptual barrier about the *existing* Republican presidential majority (which has existed since 1968). It may be that the rotting corpse of New Deal Democracy, continually dug up ever since its real death in 1946, has finally been laid to rest.

Belief in the remaining New Deal coalition (even though in fact the electoral *base* of the New Deal coalition was an all-white southern electorate which has not been united in support of the Democrats since 1944) somehow lingered on. Among Democrats, the bitter splits of the Vietnam War era between labor and liberals fostered the idea that bringing together labor and liberals might do the trick. For example, Michael Harrington wrote in *Fragments of the Century* (1973), "1968 proved that labor cannot win alone; 1972 showed that the New Politics cannot win alone; and 1976 might prove that together they can carry the nation." Actually 1976 proved that neither was necessary even to win the Democratic party, and when in 1984 Mondale won the support of labor and of the NOW, ADA, etc., he came in with a result exactly the average of Humphrey's and McGovern's.

It is worth remembering that the New Deal coalition was built on the *exclusion* of blacks from southern politics, and that as the Democratic party was forced to grapple with this issue, its southern support melted away. The movement of blacks into northern cities eventually broke the Democratic coalition there, too (the studies of Warren Miller and others show that the break in the Democratic coalition came in the summer of 1965, with

Two Parties At Loss For New Directions

by Jim Chapin

There are two lies being told about the 1984 election: the Democratic lie and the Republican lie. The Democratic lie is that the election results for president were only a result of *personality*; Reagan's charm and confidence contrasted to Mondale's dullness, while the congressional elections and the issue polls confirmed that the majority of the voters did not accept Reagan's *ideology*. The Republican lie is that the *ideology* is exactly what they voted for, and that the *congressional* results were "accidental," a result of Democratic redistribution in 1981 and of the power of incumbency.

Both theories have obvious flaws: the Democratic theory overlooks that Mondale's performance, so far from being an exception, was *typical* of that of Democrats since 1968—he did only two percent worse than the Democratic average in the previous four presidential elections. The Republican theory fails to explain why the Democrats *gained* Republican seats in the Senate (as for incumbency, what about all those Democrats who lost in 1980?).

In fact, the 1984 election was decided

neither on personality (the last two landslide re-election winners were those winning personalities Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon) nor on ideology. Reagan ran for re-election as Dwight Eisenhower—not as a fire-breathing rightwinger, but on *performance*. The country was enjoying an economic revival, it was at peace, and there was no split in the ruling party. Under these conditions, incumbents get re-elected. The failure of the election to reflect either personality or ideology is best shown in the popularity ratings enjoyed by Reagan since 1981. In 1983, when the unemployment rate was peaking, his personality and ideology failed to prevent him from trailing Democrats. Throughout his term, his popularity has closely correlated with the unemployment rate (inversely!). The difference between the American voter, and, for example, the English voter, is best shown in the different ratings given to Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher was able to compensate for economic failure by her success at "wog-bashing" in the Falklands—British imperialism remains deep in the British electorate—but Grenada, on the other hand, was a blip on

the black riots in northern cities). Since then the Wallace constituency has been a key element of national politics, and it was only by recapturing half of it that Carter won in 1976.

Most of the so-called "social issues" of the 1960s-70s were code words for the race issue (welfare, busing, crime, etc.) and they all cost the Democrats support. But the Republican party has been unable to institutionalize its newly-won national support because of the limitations of its own class and ethnic base, and because of the growing power of the *other* swing constituency in modern American politics, sometimes called in shorthand "yuppies." Just as 1968 and later elections showed what losing the Wallace vote could mean to the Democrats, so 1964 showed what losing the yuppies could mean to the Republicans. Nixon's 1968 victory involved winning back part of this group, and Reagan's 1980 victory was helped by Anderson's 7 percent of the vote. State-by-state correlations show that Wallace's vote resembles nothing so much as Bryan's Democratic party, and that Anderson's represents Teddy Roosevelt's Republican party.

All this is another way of saying that the incoherence of the American party structure in the last few decades has been largely a result of the 180-degree shift in the bases of support of the two parties, a strain undergone by no other national party system in history. Increasingly but very slowly the local party systems have trended the same way: in this election, for example, the Republicans made their biggest *local* gains in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas, while the Democrats gained the governorship and the state senate in Vermont.

The most interesting part of this election, aside from the "dog that didn't bark in the night" (i.e., the failure for there to be much of a shift in any of the results) was the change in the state-by-state presidential results for the Democrats. Since Mondale received exactly the same overall percentage as Carter in 1980 (41 percent), these shifts are important. Mondale's biggest gain was in North Dakota, his biggest loss in Georgia (the last not too surprising!). More generally, he gained over Carter in the Farm Belt and the West, and lost in the South. Another "quiet dog" in the election returns was economic: there was little correlation between state-by-state economies and the presidential results as compared to sectional impacts. Depression-ridden Alabama or Oregon did not better Mondale's performances in surrounding better-off territories.

Ironically, both Mondale's campaign rhetoric and his final election showing were "neoliberal." The poor old dead New Deal coalition has been blamed for the defeat of the Carter presidency and for the Mondale cam-

paign, neither of which actually had much relation to it; the Humphrey and McGovern campaigns were the last to use New Deal rhetoric. In fact, Mondale's deficit-focused campaign was closer to Robert Taft than to FDR.

The smartest thinkers in both parties now think their own parties are in trouble. Conservative Kevin Phillips argues that the cultural issues on the agenda (abortion, prayer, etc.) are lifestyle issues that cut against the Republicans (the Democrats have already paid the price for their stands) and that the 20-year Republican era that be-



gan in 1968 is now drawing to a close without having resulted in lower-level realignment. He sees 1984 as an election like 1928 or 1964—the "Indian summer" of an old system rather than the beginning of a new system.

Many Democrats have argued that the party's problem is one of *ideology* (too far left) or of *constituency* (poor, blacks, labor, gays, etc.) and that it can be solved simply by "appealing to the center" or to the middle class, or whatever. But in fact I would argue that it is neither. Remember that the American voters are *not* ideological (not in the sense that their parties are ideological opposites: both parties reflect liberal capitalist values, as does the society as a whole) but that they look for what they consider to be "practical" government. The Democrats are now quite poverty-stricken as a party of *presidential* government. Their problem is not simply one of electoral strategy (which should not be overlooked, of course!) but one of *what to do once elected*. Democrats can be *elected* as neoliberals, but that is not a philosophy of government (Carter was the recent horrible example).

Electurally, the Democrats must go either South ("Wallace") or West ("yuppies"). The former choice seems foreclosed: the

ideological demands of the swing southern vote are too great for the party to pay and still hold the rest of its base. Democrats can win at the state level there, just as Rockefeller Republicans once could win much of the Northeast, but they can't carry most of these states for president. The West, particularly California (which has gone Democratic only in 1964 of the last nine presidential elections), is where the Democrats can go without sacrificing their identity as a liberal party.

The next four years are a very important time. For the first time since the 1850s, both major parties are up for grabs. The psychological gains in accepting that this is a country which has been dominated by conservatives since 1968 could be very great. Democrats, and the left in general, must begin to abandon a self-conception as forces of defense and to think of themselves once more as a change-oriented force. This was a self-conception frankly absent from the Mondale campaign, which might have been the most past-oriented campaign in recent American history.

The Democrats face a difficult task: democratic socialists at least face an accustomed one. It is the same task that faced us in 1925 or 1955, at the same points in the 30-year political cycle. Indeed, we are in somewhat better shape now than then. Now the left will begin to develop those issues that will be central to the 1990s. I expect activity to grow: the protests against the South African regime are just the beginning. The virtue in accepting that the past is gone is that we can now begin to shape the future. ●

Jim Chapin is a historian, Democratic party activist and member of the National Interim Committee.

PLEDGES

Socialists like to plan and it makes it easier for us to plan if we know how much money we'll have each month. You can help us by making a monthly pledge. Your pledge of \$5, \$10, \$25 or \$50 a month provides a steady source of income that helps keep us out of the cash flow crunch.

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POLITICS AND FILM



by Stanley Aronowitz

In the mid-sixties, an east coast based film collective called *Newsreel* documented some of the activities of the New Left: the earnest but largely unsuccessful organizing activities in major northern cities by SDS, the burgeoning antiwar movement, and the black workers' revolt of the later years of the decade. Most collective members were not professional filmmakers; some were writers, others activists learning while making films. *Newsreel's* philosophy was anti-art; nor were the films designed for commercial audiences, but had instead a more specialized aim: to assist particular organizing projects and social movements. None of the films were made for posterity. These movies were shown principally in church basements, union halls and other meeting rooms rather than in theaters and it was only more than fifteen years later that they were displayed in museums as documents of the sixties' artistic sensibility.

The recent spate of political documentaries appears at a time of retreat rather than insurgency and most of the new filmmakers are professionals, many of them graduates of leading film schools. Moreover, their products are designed for public TV or "legitimate" film houses even though they also want their movies to be shown to workers and movement activists and performed in the context of political struggles. However, these are not typically 15-minute, crudely edited pieces made in the heat of combat. The latest phase of political film resembles those made during the late thirties and forties when professionals who had become left-wingers used their considerable skills and big money contacts to produce slick Hollywood "progressive" movies that possessed all of the strengths and many of the weaknesses of their chosen genres.

The new documentary films are of two distinct categories: commentaries in the form of news reports on contemporary social and political issues such as the deindustrialization of America's heartland; and work of cultural reclamation of contemporary radical and labor traditions. Several of the new films,

notably *Rosie the Riveter* (implicitly) and *Seeing Red* and *The Good Fight* (explicitly) examine the legacy of the American Communist party and its achievements, especially in the 1930s. I want to look at each type separately and use one example from each, because, even though they are made by people of similar political and technical backgrounds, they have not only a different focus, but a somewhat different intention.

The news documentaries include such films as *Harlan County*, *The Willmar 8*, which dealt with a strike by eight women bank employees, *The Last Pullman Car*, and the recently released *Business of America*. The commercial equivalents would be *The China Syndrome* and *Silkwood*. To pick the most recent, *Business of America*, made by California Newsreel, continues in the older *Newsreel* tradition in its topicality. Like several other films, it concerns the flight of capital, in this case from the Mon valley (Pittsburgh and environs) and the enormous unemployment and hardship this move has brought. Made for television, the film runs for less than an hour and displays the technical and dramatic finesse of a commercial product. The legacy of the sixties is present, even if the agitational propaganda element is somewhat mute. This legacy is revealed in the action orientation of the film. Rather than presenting a social "problem" in the naturalist mode of prior or current leftwing mainstream documentaries, it is not only about the impact of capital migration but about how those affected have tried to do something about it. If the tone is clearly anticorporate, it manages to avoid the stridency that marked an earlier generation of such films. Nor does it disguise the fact that steelworkers are faced with an uphill battle not only against the steel corporations who are perpetrating the misery, but also the international union which has, until recently, been less than helpful in the workers' struggle. *Business of America* is an example of the new radical realism: its politics are sober rather than triumphal, its appeal has the earmarks of broad coalition efforts rather than waxing in a "workerist" version of the class struggle,

and it conveys hope rather than being mired in the bitterness that steelworkers feel for their permanently deferred dreams.

But, like other efforts of this genre, *Business of America* submits to the networks' TV documentary aesthetic: it is couched in the news program format of commercial versions; the filmmakers take on the persona of reporters rather than partisans, the voiceover narrative remains objective and the film lets the people speak for themselves. In short, the topical documentary produced by radicals differs only in its activist slant from the commercial versions. And, by the evidence of several recent examples of these, tries hard to emulate the prevailing styles rather than opposing them. Undoubtedly, this conscious "commercialism" enhances the chance that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting will help fund production, and public TV stations will run the films. And, it confirms my suspicion that the real audience for these films is, in the first place, the distributors who are likely to reject more explicit political content. For my taste, only one of these recent films, the 1979 *Children of Labor*, about the Finnish radical movement in Wisconsin, successfully deals with conflict and avoids sentimentality.

In an era when the various social movements are suffering hard times, and money is hard to come by from their traditional sources, independent leftwing filmmakers have few choices. There simply is no base within the popular left to support technically professional productions; the days of the rough-and-ready propaganda flicks are temporarily past. The most likely option is public television which, with some notable exceptions, is merely imitation network fare.

Topical documentary filmmakers face another problem: the goal of their work is to try to reach the widest possible audience in the shortest time. Issues by their nature are short-lived. As with such organizations as the Workers Film League in the early thir-

ties, these films aim at action. In order to present their messages as accessibly as possible, they often have to sacrifice innovations in form.

The second category, the historical documentary, is far more controversial. *Reds* is the only commercial equivalent that comes to mind. Here filmmakers confront the same funding problems as with the topical group but with even fewer resources. Although socially oriented liberal foundations will join public funding agencies to finance some topical films, when it comes to labor and radical history, the funders run scared. Those who sought backing for a film to mark the Norman Thomas centennial, for instance, were initially encouraged by the National Endowment for the Humanities under a Carter appointee, but found a frigid reception under Reagan's influence. The makers of *Seeing Red* drew some of the funds to complete the film from old leftists, raising money at private parties. Second, although this genre includes films on wobblers, socialists, and anarchists, the most widely reviewed have dealt with Communists. The project of taking the Communist party seriously as part of the left's progressive legacy suffers its many detractors from both sides of the spectrum. Many on the non-Communist left and some who were part of the non-CP communist movements consider the party anathema, unworthy even of historical praise.

Films such as *Rosie the Riveter*, *With Babies and Banners*, and *Union Maids* escape criticism because they wear their political point of view lightly. *Rosie* is, in part, a feminist portrayal of the struggles of women to achieve work and pay equity, but it is also a tribute to the leftwing unions that insisted on race and sex equality during the Second World War. *Babies and Banners* shows brave women autoworkers fighting sexism in the union and the bosses outside the plant, but neglects to mention that some of the women featured were active in the Socialist and Communist parties. Similarly, *Union Maids* shows the heroic efforts of four women to organize the CIO during the thirties without identifying them as being close to the CP. The filmmakers chose not to stress the ideological stance from which much labor militancy sprang, but to focus on the role of women in trade unions without leftwing didactic content except for feminism. By the late 1970s feminist goals had become widely accepted in left and liberal circles. The filmmakers obviously knew that their task of reaching audiences would be relatively uncomplicated if they excluded considerations of socialist ideologies that were likely to divide left audiences, much less their more general viewing public.

Seeing Red is a different matter. Julia

Reichert and Jim Klein, who also did *Union Maids*, have chosen to present the Communist experience in the thirties, forties and fifties in the heroic/sentimental mode. Of course, the filmmakers take care to mention the failures of the CP—its subservience to Moscow, its lack of internal democracy which, among other things, resulted in grievous errors of political judgment and confusion

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A FILM

As noted in the accompanying article, many DSA chapters have used *Seeing Red* this year both for fundraising and political education. Some chapters run ongoing film series as part of their socialist schools. Every chapter will at some time or other show a political film, and the success of the event will hinge almost as much on the thought and preparation that go into it as it will on the quality of the film. Lights that won't dim, projectors that don't work, publicity that didn't get out in time—all are common and guaranteed to frustrate the organizers and infuriate the filmmaker who wants his or her work to be seen and discussed. Some companies have produced discussion guides to accompany their films. An excellent guide to using films is *In Focus: A Guide to Using Films*, which is available from Media Network for \$10.45. Media Network is a national membership organization geared to broadening the use of independently produced media and helping people who are working for social change use media to further their goals. It publishes guides to films by topics and distributes information about how to use films well. Current guides include listings of media and film on disarmament, Central America, reproductive rights, community issues, adoption, and social issues. Individual membership is \$15 per year and includes free guides published by the Network and discounts on publications of cooperating organizations. For more information about specific topics, write to Media Network, 208 W. 13 St., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212-620-0877. On January 18-20 Media Network will sponsor a three-day conference on the use of the media as a tool for social change.

among the rank-and-file, and more important, made the CP a revolving door for alternating enthusiastic radicals and deeply disillusioned progressives. But these themes are not dominant in this largely sentimental and nostalgic paean to the achievement of the Communists. The method is to interview rank-

and-file activists, the "Jimmie Higginses" of the Communist movement—and several heavies, among them Dorothy Healey, former Southern California Party Chair; Howard Johnson, a Harlemite and education director of the party in the forties; and Bill Bailey, a longshoreman and a leading party industrial activist. The interview technique helps to "humanize" the party. Subjects are met in their homes or at work. We see them as ordinary folk, with all the regular problems that any of us suffer. At the end, we are left with a warm and uplifting feeling for these Communists as people. The personalism which is perhaps the characteristic feature of the Hollywood biography is worked to the hilt here. These are images of devoted people, who are, in some cases, still in the party or have left without bitterness or regret for their past activities. Unlike the conventional ex-Communist genre that begins with Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and ends with the ignominy of Harvey Matusow's double turnaround (party member/agent for the FBI, repentant confessant), *Seeing Red* presents tales of resistance and political honor as well as self-criticism. What is remarkable about this film is its statement that Communists had a genuine radical past, that they made mistakes, but equally made a contribution to the growth of the labor movement and other popular organizations and, most important of all, kept the faith in the dismal McCarthy years of the 1950s.

Like its literary counterparts (particularly Maurice Isserman's account of CP history during the war, Mark Naison's eloquent antidote to the dismal portrayal of Harlem Communists found in Ralph Ellison's fiction or Harold Cruse's powerful polemic *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*) and the many autobiographical works that have appeared in the last 15 years (especially Peggy Dennis's and Al Richmond's), *Seeing Red* is part of a major struggle to reappropriate the CP's past for today's left. Predictably, this film is hated by non-Communist leftwing intellectuals and activists whose formative period was the 1930s and forties. The older generation, notably Irving Howe, Lewis Coser, and in a different register, one-time socialists but now neo-conservatives Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset, experienced the CP as a deformation of American radical traditions, a kind of derailment in an otherwise honorable socialist history. For them, the party discredited American socialism which, even if it could not win a mass base, had been an innovator, a gadfly and a serious intellectual force before the popular front. According to the negative view, the party leadership thought little of the specificity of American culture and politics in their passion to win the approval of Stalin and the Communist International; the

Seeing Red in a Local

by Anne McCormick

Recently the DC/MD local has sponsored a number of cultural and educational events in Washington. Thus, we saw the chance to sponsor the D.C. premiere of *Seeing Red* this fall as an opportunity to be associated with a high-quality film on a left topic; discuss this segment of left history and its implications for our work today; do outreach to unaffiliated leftists, blacks, senior citizens, and others who were a natural audience for the film; and raise money and have a good time. We succeeded at least in part in all of the above.

First, the local had to decide that it would sponsor this event. This was an ongoing debate for the better part of a year. It brought out some of DSA's unresolved issues, with some members arguing strongly that the Communists' contributions to American and left history should be brought to light, analyzed and judged on their own merits and others arguing that the CP was a divisive if not destructive force on the U.S. left, and that a democratic socialist organization should not sanction the film in any way. In the end, we came to agree that having a possible "hit"—and the attention, discussion and fundraising it would entail—were strong arguments. We agreed to keep communications channels open and were pleased that some of the opponents supported the collective effort by selling tickets and bringing friends.

We began in earnest eight weeks before the premiere, dividing the work into media, outreach and general logistics. Our first task was to find a place that would seat 300-500 people, have a large screen and good sound system, space for a reception, and be near public transportation. This was particularly difficult when we were turned down by the U.S. government for one of its popularly used facilities after we had sent out some publicity. (Despite having given preliminary approval, the bureaucrats said it was a "political" event. We're still contesting the ruling.) In the end, we found a restored theater in Takoma Park, a residential area known for its grassroots political tradition and progressive local government.

After a great deal of debate, we decided to charge \$10 for the film, the discussion

following, and a champagne reception. A sympathetic liquor store owner helped us plan the reception; he and a local coop donated refreshments.

Given our limited time and energy, we decided to forgo putting a lot of effort into getting "big name" sponsors, but to concentrate on doing real outreach in the local community, among activists in the black, labor, and progressive communities, the Gray Panthers, "radical academics," and left artists. A mailing of 2000 was combined with poster-ing, and ticket-selling by DSA members and friends to their own contacts. In the middle of an election year, we were able to focus on making this cultural event a priority.

Doing media work was a pleasure with such a strong product. Dorothy Healey, who lives in the District, was interviewed by several publications. Howard "Stretch" Johnson, arriving in the city the morning after his return from Spain, generated great live radio as he remembered not only his past as a Communist, but the black cultural and intellectual life in Harlem in the 30s. (He performed with Lena Horne at the Cotton Club.)

There were last-minute crises, but when the night itself arrived, we were excited by the warm, comradely crowd of 450. It was a multi-generational event: some members brought family members who had been active in the struggles of the 30s, and for many of these people it seemed it was the first time they had discussed these times in a public forum. Even though it was the hottest night of the month (and the air conditioning broke down), people stayed for a 45-minute discussion with Julia Reichert, Healey, and Johnson and had to be forced to leave.

We did not make as much money as we wished—perhaps we could have charged more, and offered reduced rates to seniors, students, and the unemployed—but we did clear \$1200 for our efforts. However, we would gladly do this sort of thing again—because sharing works of art that honestly depict our collective experiences as leftists gives us the kind of enrichment and perspective we need—and is the ideal antidote to mid-80s burnout. ●

Anne McCormick is chair of the Cultural/Educational Committee of the DC/MD local.



Jocelyn Coblenz

San Francisco's 1600 seat Castro Theatre.

CP was less committed to American workers and black people than to the Soviet Union and, at the height of its influence and membership, was always uncomradely and often arrogant to others on the left, particularly the Socialists and the Trotskyists.

The film appeals much more to a younger generation, for it is a film of the New Left; its anti-anti-Communism is only the precondition for its narrative. More pertinent, it is an example of the widespread belief among sixties radicals that the party provides a recent and heroic past worth preserving. It is also a commentary, by its silences, of an equally shared belief that the Socialist party was all but dead after 1936 when a substantial part of its membership, particularly its leading trade unionists, deserted the party for the New Deal. In contrast, the CP's early recognition that the New Deal was America's version of social democracy enabled it to gain a bigger audience because it presented itself as the left wing of the Democratic party and the labor movement, in effect, the "left wing of the possible," to emulate a more recent phrase.

It is precisely because this is an exercise in combatting historical amnesia and an attempt to reclaim America's radical past for

this generation that little of the CP's dark side appears in *Seeing Red*. Beyond celebration, the filmmakers share with their colleagues a relentless passion for nostalgia and an equally strong fear that a critical, unsentimental treatment of their subject would consign their work to obscurity. They know better than we how dangerous it is to appear too "negative" in this pseudo-euphoric period of American nationalism.

But the generally positive representation of the CP's past is not merely a practical maneuver. It also reflects the deep ambivalence of the sixties political generation regarding the Communists. After all, the New Left attained its political majority in the process of separating itself from the anti-Communism of the fifties, even its left version. To represent the CP, which was a small mass party in the late thirties and during the war, as little else but a shameful chapter in left history was to admit the bankruptcy of the whole left, and even more agonizing, to lend credence to the Cold War drift of the non-Communist left after the Moscow trials and the Nazi-Soviet Pact in the late 1930s.

I certainly want to fault *Seeing Red* for its refusal to confront its own ambivalence, for glorifying this past without making a critical comment. But to do justice to the critical side the filmmakers would have faced a seri-

ous aesthetic problem. In good American Hollywood style, they focus on individuals who, in their lives, presumably embodied the party at its best. However, the CP's was a collective history; its policies were part of an international movement as well as an adaptation of that movement's line to American conditions. This collective political context is difficult to portray exclusively in terms of the rank-and-file and secondary leaders who appear in this film. The film would have had to explore *politics* as well as personalities, would have had to give space to the party's critics, historians, and some of its more profoundly disillusioned cadre. All of this would have produced a different film, perhaps less commercially viable and even less entertaining. For it remains true that biography is America's genuine literary genre, whether in *People* magazine, the documentary novel, or the many autobiographies of the great and the bizarre.

Perhaps it is too early to expect more in the age of Reagan. Maybe it will take the banality of a corporate liberal presidency to restore an alternative sensibility along with the alternative subjects for political documentary. *Seeing Red* has been nominated for an Academy Award, and the Academy is noted for its careful assessment of the pre-

vailing film aesthetic.

Both types of documentaries are suitable for the classroom because they remind viewers of the style, length and cultural outlook of network products even though their politics is at the opposite pole. In addition, they have been helpful to the left, both for education and public acceptance. *Seeing Red* has sold out at benefit performances, many of them for DSA in such cities as Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago. It and the others like it can be valuable educational experiences as well as entertaining. But this is not the stuff of which radical visions are made, not the imagination that created the radical feminist movement, the sit-down strikes, the university occupations of the sixties or the counter-culture. The new political documentaries are extensions of the liberal imagination for which tolerance and not resistance/opposition are the key sentiments. This is the limit beyond which political culture cannot seem to go in these times when America verges on becoming a Christian theocracy, and tolerance itself is under attack. The new political documentary illustrates the adage that dissent in America flourishes in the best of times, and conformity in these dark days. ●

Stanley Aronowitz's latest book is Working Class Hero.

Racism

Continued from page 15

themselves locally. Reagan used it to protect himself nationally.

This is not to say that all white people in the South are racists. In fact, just the opposite is true. The South has moved significantly forward in race relation (further forward than many northern cities). Whenever I had the opportunity to work with white workers to organize them into black-white coalitions for common economic goals, racism quickly disappeared.

But political leaders who see their base threatened by such unity whip up racial fears to keep black and white divided and thereby powerless. It is no wonder that 8 out of 10 white men in Mississippi and Alabama voted for Ronald Reagan while unemployment in those states still stands at 10 percent. Reagan's attacks on the Civil Rights Commission, affirmative action and his support of segregated religious colleges reaped him plenty of southern votes.

The same results can be found in the tactic of exploiting anticommunist rhetoric.

Almost everyone in the South ran against the specters of the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms and their rightwing moral majoritarian friends preach that America is "doomed" because "communist union leaders" are trying to organize textile mills; or "communist black militants" are lobbying for a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday; or "communist peace-niks" are leafletting for a nuclear freeze.

The real concerns of joblessness, education, equal rights and farming supports are washed over by the rhetoric of states rights, stop big government and Mondale liberals, and free enterprise virtues of more God and more money.

Reagan has won, but is America back? Is it going back to pre-civil rights days? Is the South rising again, as Ronald Reagan said during a campaign swing through Macon, Georgia? No way! The "Old South" is rapidly dying. Periodically it shows a spurt of decayed life such as a KKK rally and cross-burning or Jesse Helms's neanderthal appeal to the fears of confused individuals, but essentially the "Old South" is finished. Integration is firmly rooted; black political leadership continues to gain; intellectual and social consciousness for the "New South" among whites and blacks is accelerating; and most important, blacks will never go back. Neither they, nor history and culture will let them.

But with Reagan's re-election tensions in the South will rise. The positive movements of tradition and transition will be set back. Unity and progress can never be achieved on the foundations of anticommunism and racism. We have been through these periods before. And like then, the South could lose again.

But we are makers of our own destiny. It is nowhere written that Democratic leaders must follow the tactics of Republicans while promoting symbols of American growth and pride. We need not foster inflammatory myths and further strain social relations to say we love America and will defend our freedoms.

Within the cultures of sports, the military and religion are also found the values of teamwork, support, tolerance and a moral foundation that strives for peaceful co-existence. There are several paths for us to travel to our destiny. We can choose which one to take. We should not choose the path of division and fear. ●

Bernard Demczuk, a former professional football player, union and civil rights activist, is a national political organizer for the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO. He recently worked throughout the South for 18 months on behalf of his union and the Democratic ticket.

ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

Alaska

DSAer Nilo Koponen was re-elected to the Alaska State House from Fairbanks with strong community and union support. He will be co-chair of the Health, Education and Social Services Committee in the legislature.

California

DSAer Claire Kaplan received an award from the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women as Volunteer of the Year for her work as a trainer and lobbyist... Duane Campbell, Sacramento DSA chair, spoke at the Sacramento Peace Center's annual dinner on "Stopping Reagan in Central America"... San Francisco DSA heard Steve Judd, Maryknoll priest and liberation theologian and Sister Laetitia Bordes, peace activist, on how the religious and secular left might better understand and support each other... Local members joined the restaurant workers Local 2 picket lines... In Berkeley the Citizens Action slate was victorious, giving the Left a 7 to 1 majority on the City Council, including DSAer Nancy Skinner; in Santa Monica, the three candidates of the renters' rights coalition won the three top council spots; and DSAer Ron Dellums was re-elected to Congress.

Connecticut

DSAers from New York and New Jersey joined Yale strikers for rallies and picket lines in November and December.

DC/MD

As news reports of protests at the South African embassy mounted so did the number of DSAers arrested in them, including Ron Dellums, D.C. Council Member Hilda Mason, former director of CORE James Farmer, and D.C. Central Labor Council President Josh Williams.

Illinois

A DSA luncheon was held in Chicago for a delegation from the Swedish Social Democratic party. The delegation also met with Mayor Harold Washington... DSA backed the successful race of Paul Simon to win the Senate seat of Charles Percy... Maynard Krueger, who ran for vice president with Norman Thomas in 1940, spoke at the Roosevelt University Thomas centennial symposium Oct. 31.

Iowa

Iowa City DSA met Nov. 26 to plan an Iowa Labor History Workshop in the spring and to hear Gregory Zieren on "The Uses of History in Revolutionary Nicaragua." DSA hailed the victories of Tom Harkin to the Senate and David Osterberg to the Iowa House.

Kentucky

Central Kentucky DSA met in Lexington Dec. 8 with speakers from religious, black and political groups discussing "Shaping the Agenda for 1988"... DSAers Joe Bella and Betsy Neale went to Nicaragua as part of the Kentucky Witness for Peace delegation.

Maine

DSAer Harlan Baker has been re-elected as a state representative from Portland. He was named an Outstanding Young Man of America by the U.S. Jaycees.

Maryland

Baltimore DSA joined with over 1,000 others in a rally for a citywide gay rights bill... The local secured 1,600 signatures on nuclear freeze petitions... It also testified on the feminization of poverty before the Baltimore City Women's Commission, and called for a pay equity study of city jobs.

Massachusetts

Four out of five DSPAC-endorsed state legislative candidates won election. In Worcester, John Houston beat Senate Majority Leader Daniel Foley in a race that stunned the political establishment. In Somerville, Alderman Sal Albano beat the odds by winning a write-in/sticker campaign against Rep. Vinnie Piro for the Somerville-Medford senate seat. DSA members Rep. Tom Gallagher of Allston-Brighton and Sen. George Bachrach of Cambridge, Watertown and Arlington, also

swept to re-election... Youth organizer Jeremy Karpatkin visited Wesleyan, Tufts and MIT to try to establish youth section chapters... Chilean Socialists Anselmo Sule, vice president of the Socialist International, and Hugo Miranda, spoke at the Harvard Law School Nov. 29... *Who Rules Boston?*, the expose on Boston's power structure published in June by Boston IDS, has sold out its first edition of 1,500 copies, and 1,500 more are being reprinted.

Michigan

Ann Arbor DSA is supporting the organizing drive of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to organize the University of Michigan clerical workers. Kathy Callahan, president of an AFSCME local in Detroit and chair of Detroit DSA's Labor Commission, spoke at the Michigan Union last month... Detroit DSA met Nov. 15 to analyze the 1984 elections and plan for the future... The local backed the Detroit Nicaragua Medical Relief Fund, which is taking a planeload of medical supplies, toys and clothing to Nicaragua in December.

New Jersey

More than 700 attended the weekend conference on "Socialism in America" at Princeton University, to mark the centennial of the birth of Norman Thomas. Speakers included Mike Harrington, Irving Howe, Maurice Isserman, Harry Fleischman, H.L. Mitchell, Millie Jeffrey, Ben McLaurin, Frances Fox Piven and many others. Historians Gary Gerstle, Peter Mandler and Sean Wilentz organized the conference.

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Hoffman, a founding member of Albany DSA, died suddenly of a heart attack Nov. 7. A history professor at SUNY Albany, Hoffman was active in the fight for peace and civil rights. His books include *More Than a Trial: The Struggle Over Captain Dreyfus and Revolutionary Justice: The Social and Political Theory of P.J. Proudhon*. Contributions may be sent to the Robert L. Hoffman Memorial Fund for Peace, Department of History, SUNY Albany, NY 12222.

RESOURCES

New York

Some 250 attended Albany DSA's Eugene V. Debs Award Dinner honoring John Funciello, chair, Solidarity Committee of the Capital District... At the annual New Year's Eve party, Albany DSAers will view "Pinks Go To Washington," a musical extravaganza... DSA co-sponsored a conference on "Reducing the Risk: Questions and Answers for the Nuclear Age." Speakers included Governor Cuomo, Albany Mayor Whalen and Albany legislator Sandra Rose Temple. DSAers Don Birn and Gordon Molyneux facilitated workshops on the cold war and South Africa... Ithaca DSA is backing the Tompkins County Unemployed Council's conference Dec. 13, which will plan an action program on health care, keeping jobs in the community, coping with tress, and dealing with immediate needs... The Long Island Progressive Coalition radio shows will include "Being Black on Long Island" and the Shalom Peace Center in Great Neck, which has been started by DSAer Barbara Sarah, who also heads the Reform Democratic Association in Great Neck... Several members of the City University Democratic Socialist Club were arrested at demonstrations in front of the South African consulate protesting U.S. support for the racist regime. They included Michael Harrington, Judith Stein and Paulette Pierce and Mike Wreszin, arrested in full academic regalia. Other DSA members who were arrested included N.Y. City Clerk David Dinkins, City Council Member Ruth Messinger, District Leader William Perkins, N.Y. Local Chair Stanley Aronowitz, ACTWU Secretary-Treasurer Jack Sheinkman, George Webber of CALC, Carolyn Knight, assistant pastor, Canaan Baptist Church of Christ, Frances Fox Piven and Bogdan Denitch.

DSAers Bill Tabb and Arthur Waskow were among the speakers at a conference on "Religion, the Economy and Social Justice" at the State University of New York at Stony Brook... Westchester DSA heard Bogden Denitch on how to survive four more years of Reaganism... DSAer Jack Robbins was elected chair of the White Plains Democratic party.

More than a score of Norman Thomas's five children, 15 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren attended the centennial symposium honoring him at the Norman Thomas High School in New York, including one 3-month-old great-great

Union Power & New York: Victor Gotbaum and District Council 37, written by DSAers Jewel and Bernard Bellush, has just been published by Praeger Publishers. Paperback price is \$14.95. Mario Cuomo, governor of New York, calls it "one of the most informative accounts of New York City's fiscal crisis of the mid-70s and labor's role in helping the city survive."

Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town by Stevé Babson, has just been published by Adama Books at \$19.95 per copy. Detroit Labor History Tours has bought part of the press run at cost and makes copies available at \$11.50 per book plus \$1.10 mailing costs. Write to Box 758, Detroit, MI 48231.

Lights, Camera, Action! A Guide to Labor-Related Slideshows, Films, and Videotapes, a 24-page special issue of *American Labor*, describes more than 400 labor-related audiovisual programs and gives good advice on how to choose the program, plan the showing in a way that will help you meet your goals, and lead a discussion afterwards that will lead to action. Available for \$2.65 (includes postage) from American Labor Education Center, 1835 Kilbourne

grandchild and Norman's sister and sister-in-law, Emma and Christine Thomas. They were thrilled to see the school and meet some of the students and the 350 self-appointed "children of Norman Thomas" who also were there. Videotaped proceedings were made available for student use through classroom closed circuit TV. Another school assembly, with songs, dances and poems, was held for the students, with over 800 participating. Coverage by the nation's media, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New Leader*, *In These Times*, *Commonweal*, *Jewish Frontier*, National Public Radio and the Voice of America was extensive.

Ohio

Cleveland DSA co-sponsored a talk at Cleveland State University by Frances Moore Lappe on world hunger... The local held a DSA Women's Brunch to discuss "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?"... Kent DSAers in Portage and Stark counties registered 6,226 new voters.

Oregon

"Good Grief," a post-election day of mourning and venting emotions, followed by planning for future action, was held Nov.

Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010.

M, an antisexist men's journal, explore issues concerning masculinity and feminism. The latest issue contains an article by DSA member Jim Creane on guidelines for a men's consciousness-raising group. Subs are \$12/4 issues from 306 N. Brooks, Madison, WI 53715.

Reaganomics Blues, useful for the next for years, is available from Fuse Music, 1230½ Garden St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101, for \$7.50 per copy. The LP album includes songs by Barbara Dane, Joe Glazer, Si Kahn, Holly Near and Fred Small, with a special guest appearance by Ronald Reagan himself.

The latest issue of the *Mill Hunk Herald* tells the story of labor's struggle in the Pittsburgh area, and includes fiction, poetry and essays. Subscriptions are still \$3 a year (4 issues), available from MHH, 916 Middle St., Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

Socialist Standard, Vol. 2, No. 6 is a special issue on the Jackson campaign and coalition politics, with articles by Ruth Jordan and Tim Sears. Yearly subs for the bimonthly are \$5 from P.O. Box 15352, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

17 by Corvallis DSA. It resulted in a community coalition of progressive, feminist, peace and environmental activists.

Pennsylvania

More than 250 people attended the DSA/IDS conference in Philadelphia on "After the Elections: What Next for the Left?" Locals will be receiving follow-up materials soon.

Texas

Houston, Austin and San Antonio sponsored Mike Harrington talks.

FEMINIST COMMISSION

The Fall/Winter issue of *Not Far Enough*, newsletter of DSA's Feminist Commission, carries articles on the forthcoming Socialist-Feminist Conference, August 2-4, the Youth Section's Women's Caucus, the gender gap in the elections and a report from Hawaii. Commission dues, \$5 per year, may be sent to Jerry Flieger, 412 W. 25 St., 2E, NY, NY 10001.

REVIEWS

by Maurice Isserman

New and noteworthy: Joanne Barkan's **Visions of Emancipation, The Italian Workers' Movement Since 1945** (Praeger, \$24.95 hardcover) provides a sober analysis of developments in the Italian labor movement since the end of the Second World War. Italian workers vote Communist or Socialist; in no other western capitalist nation in recent decades have workers come so close to fulfilling Marx's vision of a revolutionary proletariat. So it comes as somewhat of a shock to hear one of the union militants that Barkan interviewed complain:

Workers don't have confidence in their own class...I used to mythologize the Italian working class and how politicized they were. Part of the working class is like that, but part is also very different. They help the bosses or even stop others from struggling. They go around saying that if you go out on strike, you'll be worse off.

Political stalemate, the technological transformation of the workplace, growing unemployment and generational disaffection have all taken their toll on the strength and spirit of the Italian labor movement. Misery loves company, and while it's not exactly reassuring, it is interesting to learn that problems we think of as unique to the American labor movement are shared by others.

Sohnya Sayres, Anders Stephanson, Stanley Aronowitz, and Fredric Jameson have edited a volume of essays unambiguously titled **The 60s Without Apology** (University of Minnesota Press, \$12.95 paperback). "Trashing the 60s," the editors declare in their introduction, "has become a strategic feature of the current struggle for hegemony." I'm a little worried by the way they go on to lump together diverse critics of aspects of the 60s into one indistinguishable reactionary lump. Fortunately, most of the contributors avoid the counter-temptation to "celebrate the 60s." One of the shrewdest assessments in this volume is made by historian James Gilbert:

Thinking back on the 1960s, I see this period as one of enormous energy and change, of a movement in civil rights that altered American history as much as anything ever has done. But I also see it as a profoundly anti-political decade, nothing, in its premises or effects, like the 1930s during the heyday of the old left. And, I am forced to wonder what might have happened—what still might happen—if the moral energy of the 1960s were ever joined to the political shrewdness of the 1930s.

Not so new but still noteworthy: A revised edition of John H.M. Laslett's and Seymour Martin Lipset's **Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism** (University of California Press, \$10.95 paperback) has just been published. The new edition retains the classic essays of the 1974 edition (by Sombart, Hartz, and Bell, among others), and has added useful essays on the Socialist party's relations with blacks, women and immigrants. The edition is still about ten years behind the times in reflecting the state of scholarship on the Socialist party—one hopes that the 1994 version will catch up with the work done by Mari Jo Buhle and Nick

Salvatore. In the meantime, University of Illinois marketing strategists have heeded the warning offered in this space several issues back about the folly of charging \$25 for Nick Salvatore's **Eugene V. Debs, Citizen and Socialist**, and have brought out a \$9.95 paperback edition. If you only have time and inclination to read one book on the history of American socialism, this is the one to choose.

Finally, I was happy to see that one of the best-humored, most humane and insightful novels written about the American left has just been reissued, Clancy Sigal's **Going Away** (Carroll & Graf, \$9.95 paperback). First published in 1962, it is the chronicle of a cross-country trip by its protagonist in the fall of 1956, a moment of considerable uncertainty, disillusionment and reassessment for those who had been in or close to the Communist movement. **Going Away** is a collective portrait of a generation on the left. And it is a critique of the heedless way in which the left had squandered its own human resources. For Sigal's protagonist, being a radical is a way of life as well as a set of political beliefs. As he muses mid-way through the novel:

What's it like in America these days?...Is it possible to have a small circle of friends, friends of grace and purpose, not incestuously, but on a basis of mutual respect, work and a kind of informal dignity, in the United States?...It just struck me that this is what really makes me happy, to have that circle of friends. I've grown sufficiently old, now, to know that it is a very hard thing to achieve and we find it mainly through luck. But there are times, it seems to me, in any country, any nation, when circumstances are such that it is easier or harder. On the Left, in 1956, it is hard.

On the left, in 1984, it remains hard, but as we dig in for the long haul, Sigal's "circle of friends" sounds like a pretty good principle for internal organization. ●

Maurice Isserman teaches American history at Smith College.

In Memory of

NORMAN THOMAS

NEW HAMPSHIRE DSA

THE LAST WORD

Divide and Conquer in the South

by Bernard Demczuk

In covering the 1984 presidential election, political analysts have consistently missed the two most important reasons for Ronald Reagan's popularity in the South: anticommunism and racism. For Republicans, these two issues served as effective thematic tactics in an age-old political strategy called "divide and conquer." What is tragic about this strategy is that the South will suffer long-term injustices despite the short-term victories it achieved on November 6.

Elevating anticommunism and racism to top shelf analytical status is not to say that the so-called "economic recovery" is not an important reason for Reagan's popularity in the South. It is to say that culture, *today*, has as much if not more political benefits than economics. In other words, invading and conquering Grenada, a leftist and black country, in a cultural climate where football, stock car racing and television beer commercials are dominant in everyone's thinking, has more symbolic and subsequent political impact than does a recovery that has not yet been felt in most southern states.

A dynamic cultural trend, which I will call American nationalism, has been sweeping the country for years. This trend, built on racism and anticommunism, benefited Ronald Reagan's re-election more than his "economic recovery." The South, more than any other region in America, save the San Diego area, has led the way for American nationalism.

The recent surge of American nationalism began, essentially, on April 30, 1975 with the fall of Saigon and the defeat of U.S. troops in Vietnam. In a society such as ours that has always prided itself with being #1 and winning, our collective humiliation in Vietnam would not last very long. As the most active sports culture in the world, we knew there would always be another game on the schedule, another opportunity to redeem ourselves.

More than anywhere else in the United States, it was in the South where this reaction against not winning and not being #1 was felt most intensely. There, three cultural phenomena that aggressively promote

winning were in full swing long before Reagan's election in 1980: sports, particularly football and stock car racing; military life; and fundamentalist religion, especially the Moral Majority.

Ronald Reagan, the tough leader, the strong anticommunist, the macho president who chops wood, rides horses and takes a bullet in the chest, then makes a joke about it, has been riding this wave of American nationalism for more than four years.



In Dixie, there is a genuine belief that the South is rising again and that "America is back." The question is, however, rising to what and going back to where? I spent over a year in the South working toward election day in the interest of my union and the Democratic ticket. From San Antonio, Texas to Winston-Salem, North Carolina and everywhere in between this beautiful land called Dixie, I spoke to, organized and lived with its people.

Wherever I went to organize, I conducted street surveys in local communities. Most of what I saw and learned in the past year can be summed up in the following interviews.

At a small shopping center outside of Lovejoy, Georgia, I surveyed people entering a drugstore. Taking off my partisan buttons, I asked voters who they were voting for and why.

A poor, elderly black couple said they were voting for Ronald Reagan because he supports school prayer. Another farming couple, white and also seemingly poor and nearly illiterate, said they were voting for Ronald Reagan because he was against abortion. Next a young man, about 25, good-looking and strong, said he would vote for Reagan

because he will stop the communists and Castro. A middle-aged man, about 45, a blue-collar worker, said Ronald Reagan because if Mondale gets elected, he will let that "n..... Jesse Jackson run America."

How can the introduction of school prayer in central Georgia help poor farmers being devastated by drought, a 25% income reduction and possible foreclosure? How will convincing young men that stopping the Sandinistas at the Macon County Line will provide meaningful education and work for them? How will inflaming racial hatred against Jesse Jackson and inciting voters against Walter Mondale because he and Jesse work together help a white unemployed iron-welder find a job?

The answer is, of course, it won't. But it did help Reagan get re-elected because people who would normally vote for Mondale on his issues and programs voted for Reagan in the name of anticommunism and racism.

On October 28, 1984, Michael Barone wrote an editorial in the Outlook Section of the *Washington Post* entitled "A Party without a Solid Base." He stated: "Race is no longer the issue that keeps white southerners voting Republican in presidential contests. Economics does: southern whites are increasingly affluent, upwardly mobile..." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Most whites in the South are not affluent. They are just getting by and still reeling from the recession of 1981-1982. In addition, they are anxious about what the future holds because their experience is one of boom and bust economic cycles. Furthermore, white southern political bosses—conservative Democrats, that is—see the increased numbers of black registered voters as a threat to their economic and political power bases.

Consequently, white conservative political leaders use racism in a time of economic instability to turn white against black in order to save the hides of conservative political leaders. The rhetoric sounds like this: "Blacks are taking white workers' jobs because of affirmative action." The result is not simply attacks on affirmative action programs; it is attacks on blacks in general. Sadly, Democrats used the tactics to protect

Continued on page 11

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