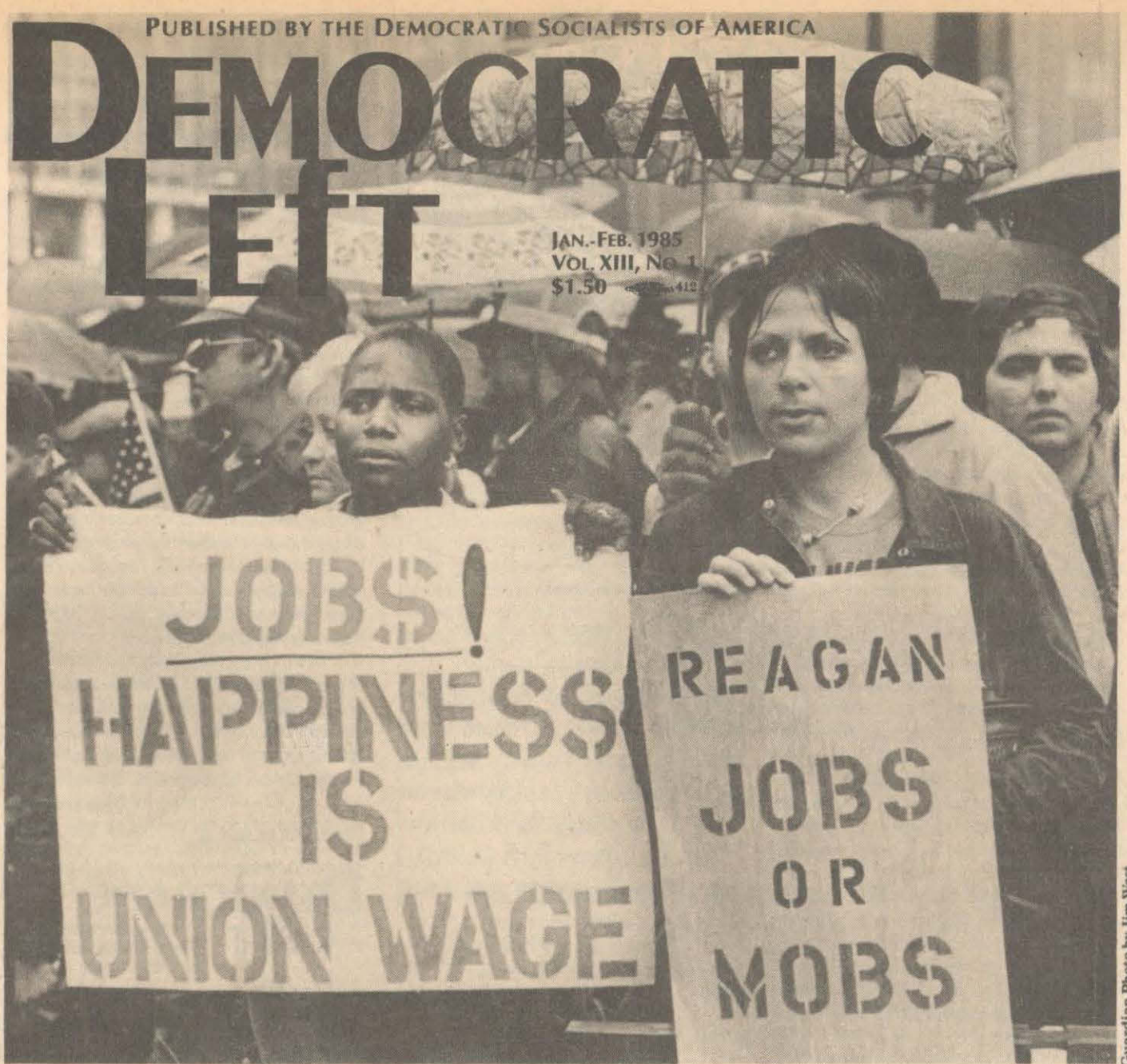


PUBLISHED BY THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

JAN.-FEB. 1985
VOL. XIII, No. 1
\$1.50

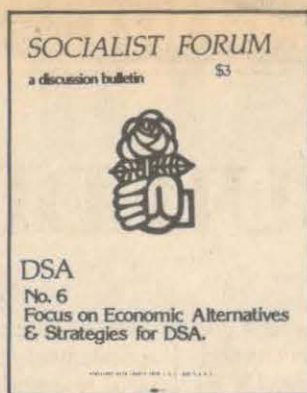
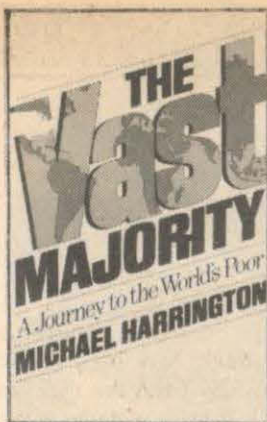


Guardian Photo by Jim West

Special Issue

Prospects for Building Multi-Racial Coalitions

*Articles by Paulette Pierce, Jim Sleeper,
Jerry Watts and Cornel West*



LETTERS

Can the Kitsch

To the Editor:

Perhaps someone can explain to me why DSA appears to be promoting the film "Seeing Red" ("Seeing Red in a Local," *DL*, Nov.-Dec. 1984). I recognize the importance of understanding and learning from radical history. It is precisely for that reason why we should not be using "Seeing Red."

In the review of the film in *DL*, Stanley Aronowitz claims that "little of the CP's dark side appears in "Seeing Red" because the filmmakers have a "relentless passion for nostalgia and an equally strong fear that a critical, unsentimental treatment of their subject would consign their work to obscurity." In other words, the filmmakers don't tell the truth about the American Communist experience because they fear if they did, their film would not be popular.

In its failure to confront the "dark side" of the CP's past, "Seeing Red" is an example of Milan Kundera's definition of kitsch—"the absolute denial of shit." DSA should not be in the business of promoting kitsch and therefore should not be promoting "Seeing Red."

Mark Levinson
New York, N.Y.

Continued on page 12.

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DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Formerly Newsletter of the Democratic Left and Moving On.

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DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ISSN 0164-3207) is published six times a year at 853 Broadway, Suite 801, New York, N.Y. 10003. Second Class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscription \$8 regular; \$15 institutional.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to DEMOCRATIC LEFT, 853 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT is published by the Democratic Socialists of America at the above address, phone (212) 260-3270. Other offices: 1300 West Belmont Ave., Chicago IL 60657, (312) 871-7700; 3202 Adeline, Berkeley CA 94703, (415) 428-1354. Microfilm, Wisconsin State Historical Society, 816 State St., Madison WI 53703. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore MD 21218. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not of the organization.

COALITION BUILDING

by Gerald Hudson

In the summer of 1983, few on the black left doubted either the necessity or the possibility of creating a multiracial coalition. We had always been convinced that black unity was necessary to achieve "liberation," but we no longer believed it to be enough. Racism could not be eradicated from American society, nor the abject poverty of a third or more of Afro-Americans eliminated, without the creation of a broad-based movement for social change. We had good reason to be hopeful. In Chicago, in Boston, around the candidacy of Jesse Jackson for the presidential nomination of the Democratic party, movements embodying these convictions had emerged onto the bleak landscape of American politics. By mid-1984, though few of us doubted the necessity of such a coalition, many of us had come to doubt its possibility. What happened?

Because we believe that this question, and the answers to it, are crucial not only for our society but for DSA's ability to engage in coalition politics, we are devoting a special issue of DEMOCRATIC LEFT to the topic. Each contributor has a different perspective representing opinions (by no means all) on the left and within DSA.

This subject has led to debates within DSA. Many black leftists were dismayed with and puzzled by the failure of important segments of the white left to support either Mel King's mayoral campaign in Boston or Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign. After all, the movements that grew around the candidacies of these men sought the empowerment of blacks through programs and demands that were of general benefit. Moreover, they made explicit overtures to the progressive white community. When that community did not respond, many of us were baffled and disappointed.

An analysis of this failure may begin by noting that black empowerment movements have often had a dual character. On the one hand they have sought a solution to the vexing problem of black economic and political underdevelopment—a goal easily compatible with the historic efforts of the American left to extend democracy and protect American citizens from the inherent irrationality of the

market. On the other hand, they have also sought to abolish racism in American society. Almost invariably, these movements have tried to realize both goals through appeals to racial solidarity.

This is by no means a complete characterization of these movements. Not every movement that might be subsumed under the rubric of black empowerment has these elements. However, they were prominent in two recent movements (e.g., Jackson and King) that I believe were worthy of more white progressive support than they received. I begin here because often white critics (not always leftists) of these movements focus their analyses on one of the

"Appeals to racial solidarity have been an almost constant feature of black empowerment movements.... Nothing more confuses, disquiets and ultimately alienates whites than this appeal."

above features while disregarding the others. As a result, the conclusions they draw about these movements are at variance with other aspects of the movements.

Appeals to racial solidarity have been an almost constant feature of black empowerment movements. This is not difficult to understand. Unable to rely on white help in attempts to solve the problems that beset our community, we have been forced to rely on our own resources. The magnitude of these problems has been such that nothing short of a total mobilization of the community could have been adequate. What could be simpler? And yet nothing in the character of these movements more confuses, disquiets, and ultimately alienates whites (including leftists) than this appeal. This confusion and alienation is, I think, the source of one of the more frequent criticisms of these movements made by white leftists: namely, that they are exclusive. In fairness to these critics, I must say that from a historical perspective it is not hard to see why they feel as they do. Such appeals sometimes have been ex-

clusive—read racist. Moreover, not all such appeals made by blacks have been free of racial chauvinism. Still, I find this criticism perplexing when it is made of some of the more recent of these movements—movements which have been unequivocal in their request for white support and participation.

If they lacked white support, the explanation lies less in their exclusive character or in the insincerity of their request for white support than in the unwillingness of whites to support them.

It is true that the tendency of black empowerment movements to organize around race sometimes makes it difficult for white progressives to see them as progressive and therefore worthy of support. Drawing as they do from a wide range of opinion, all classes, both sexes, etc., these movements inevitably contain capitalists, homophobes, sexists, etc. Still more, the leaders themselves are not always free of sexism, homophobia, etc. It is therefore not at all strange that a progressive (white or black) might doubt the progressiveness of these movements and ask him or herself why they should support such movements. But when one remembers that these movements frequently demand job programs, health care, a restoration of a host of social programs—in short, traditional social democratic demands—how can one reasonably doubt their progressive nature? Moreover, in the recent examples of these movements, the homophobes and sexists of the black community were organized around platforms and positions that were unambiguous in their opposition to homophobia and sexism. This is both a reflection of the increasing presence of black progressives in their midst and an implicit recognition of the necessity of progressive coalitions to the empowerment of the black community.

But perhaps even more problematic and fundamental to the problems of building progressive multiracial coalitions than these misperceptions of movements for black empowerment is a conception of coalition politics based on an economic program. This conception evolved on the left, I believe, as a response to a fundamental truth of contemporary American political life—because of the way members of a particular group understand their social predicament, each

chooses a mode of political action and oppositional movement that suits them. As a result, no one movement is able by itself to transform American society. Without an alliance between the constituencies of these various movements, no such transformation is possible.

What is not clear is on what basis this alliance is to be built. Each of these movements developed in response to a very different set of conditions—blacks responding to a racism that permeated American society, women responding to a sexism that permeated that society, etc. Amidst this stultifying diversity, many democratic socialists came to believe that it was possible to discern a saving unity in a progressive economic program. The enormous appeal of this idea should not be underestimated. Did not the various oppressions out of which these movements arose have an economic aspect? Though racism or sexism were not reducible to their economic aspects, that they had such an aspect meant that their victims would benefit from an economically based progressive program.

This notion of coalitions had one drawback. It did not address some of the most pressing concerns of its potential constituencies, nor was it able to suggest how a movement capable of addressing these concerns was to be created. Thus racism and sexism, insofar as they cannot be economically defined, go unopposed. When movements develop that do oppose these problems, they go unsupported by supporters of economically based coalition politics.

Moreover, although white leftists may agree, for example, with the need for a full scale effort against racism, in practice they often perceive the need for a coalition that includes constituencies that will not accept an anti-racist campaign, e.g., in Boston many leftists saw the need to mobilize racist white ethnics and called race a divisive issue in the 1983 mayoral race.

Unfortunately, we have not been willing to step back and assess the failures of economically based coalitions and examine the complex issues involved in the building of such coalitions.

Three of the four articles in this special issue of *DEMOCRATIC LEFT* are based on talks given at a plenary of the DSA National Board meeting in Philadelphia this past December. It was the object of that plenary to examine impediments to the building of multiracial coalitions and suggest ways of overcoming them.

Jerry Watts believes that those who wish to create a multiracial coalition with an anti-racist politics must recognize the hopelessness of trying to do so within the Democratic party. If such coalitions are to be created, he argues, they must be centered around a

community-based agenda appealing to poor people. In her impassioned defense of the Jackson campaign, Paulette Pierce suggests that the misconceptions and ignorance shown in the response of many white leftists to that campaign may themselves be impediments to the creation of a multiracial coalition. Jim Sleeper argues that the characterization of the black electorate implicit in the analysis of advocates of black empowerment is wrong. He believes that there is greater hope of

involving blacks in multiracial coalitions that do not make appeals on racial grounds.

In an article excerpted from *Social Text*, Cornel West postulates that the failure of the white left to support the Jackson campaign is evidence of the need to reconstruct the left around anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics.

It is my hope that these articles will contribute to an extended debate within DSA about the construction of multiracial coalitions. ●

Gerry Hudson is a NIC member who was active in the Jackson campaign.

Realign the Left

by Cornel West

Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic nomination constituted the most important challenge to the American left since the emergence of the civil rights movement in the fifties and the feminist movement in the seventies. Unfortunately, the American left, for the most part, missed this grand opportunity. In this essay, I will argue that this failure to respond in a serious and sustained manner to the contemporary black political upsurge signifies the need for a reassessment and reconstruction of the American left—a rearticulation of progressive forces centered on anti-imperialist struggles (against U.S. and Soviet forms) and black unity (a unity open to nonblack allies yet subordinate to no non-black groups).

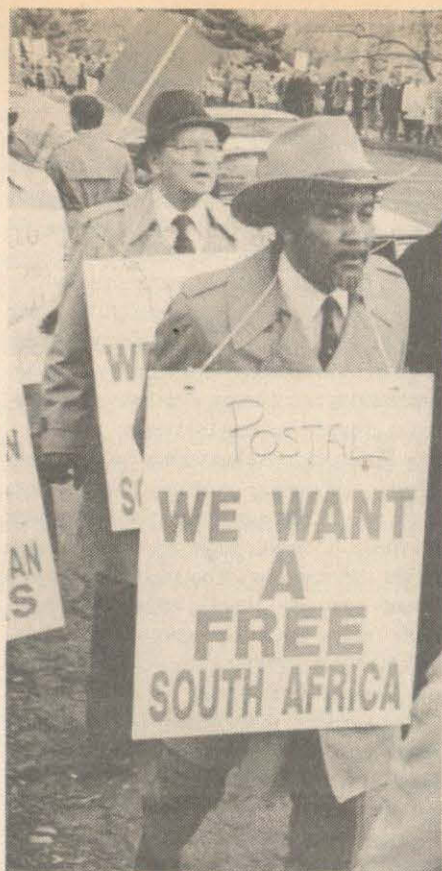
The challenge of the Jackson campaign to the American left is twofold. First, the prominence of international issues, especially Africa and the Middle East, splits the left into two basic camps: full-fledged proponents and reticent supporters of national self-determination. The major test cases are Afghanistan, El Salvador, Ireland, Israel, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland and Southern Africa. Each case, of course, is a highly complex matter. But full-fledged proponents for self-determination of nations tend to oppose Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, support the democratic elements of the guerrilla forces in El Salvador, the IRA in Ireland, the PLO in the Middle East, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the PLA in the Philippines, Solidarity in Poland and SWAPO and ANC in Southern Africa. Reticent supporters of national self-determination, on the other hand, unequivocally condemn Soviet interventionism in Afghanistan, support the land reform "movement" in El Salvador, choose no sides in Ireland, uneasily yet consistently endorse Israeli policies, equivocate on their support

of the Sandinistas, morally oppose the Marcos regime, enthusiastically approve of Solidarity and, when reminded of South Africa, endorse moderate forces resisting apartheid.

The line of demarcation here is not simply the depth and scope of opposition to U.S. and Soviet imperialism; it also is the degree to which one breaks with European, Soviet and American ethnocentrism. Those most willing to do so have been civic republicans like I.F. Stone and Sheldon Wolin, independent Marxists like Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, self-styled anarchists like Noam Chomsky and leftist people of color such as Edward Said and Randall Robinson. Most present-day populists, fervent feminists, utopian communitarians and bourgeois socialists have failed to raise their voices in this regard—they remain captive to Euro-American ethnocentrism.

The second challenge of the Jackson campaign to the American left is the presence of relative black unity. Since this unity transcends class and gender in the black community, it blurs left perceptions. In the eyes of some white leftists, black unity flows from "right-wing" populist appeals; for others, it reeks of anti-whitism, anti-Semitism and some glib Third Worldism. Black unity indeed consists of diverse and contradictory elements.

It is neither accusatory nor exclusivistic. Rather it is a creative response to the state of siege raging in working class and underclass black communities and households. Even with black petit bourgeois leadership, this response, for the most part, cannot but be progressive in its basic orientation owing to the constituency it brings together. Yet, the white leftist reactions to black unity efforts have rarely been salutary. And the white leftist assessments of the Jackson campaign have been, in the view of most black activists, highly disappointing—and revealing. The possibility for progressive interracial solidarity remains, yet it has been made more difficult to realize. Again select



civic republicans, small sectors of socialists, and feminists, larger segments of the new populists and vast numbers of people of color responded positively to the black unity efforts enacted in the Jackson campaign; others of the American left were found wanting.

The basic lesson to be learned from the Jackson campaign is the need for a reconstruction of the American left. Crucial to this reconstruction is the centrality of anti-imperialist and anti-racist sentiments. This reconstruction requires not simply that former leftists be written out of the new realignment of progressive forces, but also that they be viewed for what in fact they are: often morally right regarding the evils they oppose but not politically left in the alternatives they endorse. This holds especially for mainstream peace activists, establishmentarian ecologists, moderate black politicians, liberal feminists, social democratic cold warriors and ethnocentric bourgeois socialists. Opposition to militarism, environmental abuse, racism, sexism, Soviet imperialism and economic injustice is morally right; yet the nuclear freeze, expansion of environmental protection, black presence in political office, ERA, support for Sakharov (often at the expense of eliding Nelson Mandela of South Africa or Father de la Torres of the Philippines) and endorsement of Israel's right to exist are liberal, not leftist, stances. They all surely are worthy of leftist support but not as displacements of more progressive con-

cerns, but rather as stepping stones to more fundamental issues. At the moment, the American left must sharpen its relation to left-liberalism, not because it no longer takes seriously precious liberal values of individual liberties, church and state separation and governmental checks and balances, but rather because left-liberals are unreliable allies to those progressives who take seriously anti-imperialist and anti-racist concerns.

Will a realignment of the left around anti-imperialism and relative black unity lead to political oblivion? I think not. First, it is important to acknowledge that most of the American left is already politically oblivious. So the loss would not be a net loss. More pointedly, as struggles in Central America, the Middle East, Poland, Ireland, Latin America and South Africa intensify, crucial leftist choices must be made regarding these international affairs. Furthermore, the efforts for black unity and the political articulation of people of color in this country is now sophisticated enough to link its concerns with the downtrodden white working poor and the morally sensitive white middle class—as evidenced in the Jackson campaign. So on the domestic front political pressure is brought to bear on the Democratic party to either embrace or exclude progressive forces. If it chooses the former, leftist possibilities loom large within the two-party system; if it chooses the latter, the only alternative becomes that of wholesale assault on the two-party system with the creation of a third political party. Most Jackson supporters, parts of the Citizens' party, elements of

ponents of the American left is anywhere near the mark, the possibilities for widespread domestic radicalism are highly unlikely. This means that American leftists must give first priority to the most explosive issues in American society, namely, the probability of U.S. participation in international war principally owing to imperialist policies (especially in Central America and the Middle East), and the plight of the urban black and brown poor primarily due to the legacy of racism in an ever-changing capitalist economy. Preoccupation with legitimate postmodern emancipatory projects must not overlook the lingering problems of imperialist and racist oppression promoted by the American powers that be.

The concrete consequences of American leftist attention to these two explosive issues are more intense involvement in anti-interventionist movements and more substantive support for the institutionalization of a progressive rainbow coalition (more than likely) outside the Democratic party. Such involvement and support must surely embrace postmodern emancipatory projects. Yet, given the present American terrain and the deep crisis of U.S. radicalism, a mature left must first and foremost direct its energies toward the struggles of oppressed third world peoples and toward the plight of its most downtrodden domestic citizens.

Presently, most of the American left dangles in the balance, caught between opposing a dangerous and conservative administration and a wavering and centrist Demo-

"Jesse Jackson's bid for the Democratic nomination constituted the most important challenge to the American left since the emergence of the civil rights movement in the fifties and the feminist movement in the seventies. Unfortunately, most of the American left missed this grand opportunity."

cratic party. The challenge of the Jackson campaign is that anti-imperialist and open-ended black unity forces may set the terms for a realignment of progressive forces which take us far beyond the knee-jerk pessimism and habitual paralysis of the American left. There are progressive possibilities beyond this predicament, but only a reconstructed left can fulfill them.

DSA, unorganized radical intellectuals and even some pragmatic sectarians would jump at this opportunity if it could become a credible option.

Are anti-imperialism and anti-racism mere outdated leftist slogans with little political substance and strategic effectiveness? Are these concerns antiquated expressions of a bygone modern era eclipsed by postmodern sentiments regarding the technological abuse of nature, the subjugation of women and the marginalization of gays and lesbians? If my analysis of the historical com-

cratic party. The challenge of the Jackson campaign is that anti-imperialist and open-ended black unity forces may set the terms for a realignment of progressive forces which take us far beyond the knee-jerk pessimism and habitual paralysis of the American left. There are progressive possibilities beyond this predicament, but only a reconstructed left can fulfill them.

Cornel West is professor of philosophy at Yale Divinity School and chair of the DSA Afro-American Commission.

Find Core Values

by Jerry G. Watts

The problems of generating multi-racial, left-oriented coalitions are immense but not insurmountable. Yet, it should by now be clear that because of the highly volatile nature of racial beliefs and perceptions, multi-racial coalitions, if they are to endure, cannot be entered into in a haphazard way. The will to belong to such coalitions is as vital to their potential success as the issues around which the coalitions are created and the nature of the opposition. For multi-racial coalitions to work, it is crucial that a core group of coalition members be committed to maintaining open channels of communications within the various racial ethnic factions composing the coalition. While most individuals or groups of individuals enter into a coalition as a tactical mechanism for realizing a desired end, a multi-racial coalition demands that many of its participants view the maintenance of the coalition itself as a goal worthy of politicization. Because a liberal/left-oriented coalition would inevitably confront numerous issues related to race and racism, the possibility of generating cross-racial tensions is quite high.

The attempts to maintain a multi-racial coalition are rendered difficult by their vulnerability to outside assaults. During the 1984 campaign, President Reagan continually mentioned before all-white audiences how the Republican party was the party of mainstream Americans and that the Democratic party had been taken over by fringe groups. Though Reagan probably envisioned gays and feminists when he made this point, it is clear that the key group that he labels as a fringe element is America's black citizenry. Reagan's appeal to the "mainstream" was directed at the children and grandchildren of immigrants and reminiscent of the nativistic appeals made *against* their parents and grandparents during the early 20th century. The ability of Reagan to invoke so easily the race issue was predicated upon the deep ignorances of whites and fears associated with blacks.

The response of some Machiavellian-minded, Democratic party political leaders (i.e., Virginia Governor Charles Robb, L.B.J.'s son-in-law) has been to assert that the Democratic party must once again be-

come the party of white men. Not only has Robb erroneously assumed that white men no longer run the Democratic party, but he is literally frightened by the possibility that a majority party could be established on the backs of many blacks, many Hispanics, many women, many gays and lesbians and a few white men. Even if such a coalition could win, it would still be seen by Robb and others as something other than fully American. This is, after all, why these Democratic party leaders refuse to fund the registration of the "non-mainstream" voter although all polls suggest that these folks will tend to vote Democratic.

The strategy for making the coalitions surrounding the Democratic party multi-racial will differ significantly from a strategy intent upon making the democratic left multi-racial. Electoral coalitions are formed to support or to defeat specific candidates or referendums and as such are usually short-lived. In most instances they are made up of people who disagree over many if not most significant issues but who feel that the issue that is personally dearest to their hearts is best advanced through the support of candi-

"If we assumed that getting Reagan out of the White House was a top priority and that Mondale, however visionless, was better than Reagan, then perhaps we should have reduced the luggage that the Democratic party coalition had to carry on election day."

date X or the defeat of candidate Y. One should not, therefore, expect shared political agendas or beliefs among the members.

Because there are no central values or principles which hold the coalition together, it is logical that each group within the electoral coalition attempt to strengthen its position as the controller over a certain area of public policy discourse within the coalition. Blacks want to control the coalition's discussion over jobs programs and affirmative action; women want to control the coalition's discourse concerning the E.R.A. and abor-

tion rights; those concerned utmost with Central America want to control the coalition's policy pronouncements in that area; and so on, ad infinitum. The Democratic party coalition is now like the political machines of old with various organized claimant groups ruling a policy fiefdom. There is, among the groups that make up this coalition, no shared vision. It is therefore not surprising that the Democratic party is often seen as the party of "special interests." The very way in which the party's coalition is structured reinforces perceptions of narrow-minded, self-interested groups choosing to coexist.

Problems develop within loosely structured coalitions at precisely the moment when one of the numerous claimant groups attempts to universalize its policy agenda within the coalition. The race problem is a crucial example. Blacks within the Democratic party have for years attempted to translate the primary issues of their agenda into general party issues. Now on the philosophical level, there is no reason why equal rights for blacks Americans should not be seen as a national issue and not a special interest issue. Within the confines of the coalition, however, *all* issues are special interest issues. Whenever blacks, women or environmentalists attempt to impose uniformity on the coalition, the coalition will quickly falter. One must realize that on those occasions when the Democratic party coalition appeared united on the need for strong government action in behalf of blacks (as in Johnson's campaign of 1964), the issue of black civil rights was popular among the broader white populace. In 1964, the need for federal enforcement of black civil rights was a popular stance that could be used to defeat Goldwater. It is erroneous, however, to think that the entire Democratic coalition supported federal intervention for black civil rights. Whenever one perceives within a large electoral coalition what seems to be unity behind a single issue stance, one must assume that there is a great deal of "piggy-backing" occurring—many people are hiding their agendas, hoping to ride in on the popular one.

A problem that blacks and women have historically encountered within the electoral coalition stems from their sheer inability to perceive the coalition as a tactical mechanism and not as something driven by moral sentiments. In this respect, the Jackson campaign went too far in attempting to portray the Democratic party as the only game in town for black Americans. The party then labored under an unpopular image that could never have generated a winning candidate. Jackson, given his religious sensibilities, blatantly misunderstood the nature of the Democratic party's coalition, thinking that it

was governed by a moral commitment to black America and not a commitment to recover the White House in 1984. In much the same way the strategy of women at the Democratic party convention, threatening to walk out unless a woman vice-presidential candidate was chosen, was a bit too strong for the needs of the coalition in 1984. It burdened the party with an exploitable image of the party of feminists in a culture that has not yet accepted feminism. Am I saying that blacks and women should never run any risks in behalf of their interests? No. But I am saying that if we assumed that getting Reagan out of the White House was a top priority and that Mondale, however visionless, was better than Reagan, then perhaps we should have reduced the luggage that the Democratic party coalition had to carry on election day. Many of our complaints with Mondale pale in the face of Reagan's new budget.

Now, before I am accused of asking progressive people merely to silence themselves and fall prey to pragmatic liberal politics, I would want to claim that participation in electoral coalitions must not be the sole political strategy of the left. We must understand that the Democratic party is not and will probably never be the party of the left. It should be used by the left for merely tactical reasons until there emerges a true Democratic Socialist party. But we are then faced with an issue that will no go away: Whether the creation of a left-wing movement?

The left must, if it is to avoid becoming imprisoned within the ever narrowing confines of Democratic party politics, face its marginal status in American politics and take the risk, albeit a big one, of creating its own constituency. One can attempt to do this and still vote for a Mondale in elections where a Reagan is running. Marshaling one's resources to aid Reagan's defeat is, however, a far different act from engaging in a socialist-minded politics, *and must be seen as such*. The problem of developing a socialist movement coalition that is multi-racial remains. Movement coalitions, unlike electoral coalitions, *are* held together by shared core values. This character trait is virtuous in many ways, but it makes the coalition far more difficult to expand. Where, then, is the left to seek its constituencies?

We can become actively involved in the struggles of the poor not as their spokespersons to the "high and mighty" but as facilitators of their own distinct, political voice. The Democratic left has unfortunately never developed an ongoing strategy of outreach to the poor and dispossessed. This has been tragic not only for the left but for the fate of the poor. Too often the left has become a partner in the depoliticization of the poor by

believing all too quickly in the notion of the poor as intrinsically and rationally underpoliticized. The problem isn't that the poor are underpoliticized but that their desires for politicization are inevitably suffocated by a repeated inability to be heard. Helping the poor and dispossessed to claim a political voice is a journey fraught with frustrations and difficulties. In most cases, the poor do not possess a sense of personal efficacy that is so necessary to the political actor. The will to engage in political struggles has been broken. The left can therefore ill afford to await the articulation of a political agenda from the underclasses when politicization itself is a major battle that continues to be waged and lost today.

issues per se, but they do speak directly to the question of the failure of this social order to be democratic. It will be through linking ourselves to such issues that the left can build a presence among the poor who, we should admit, are supposed to be among our most natural constituencies. *But what resources do we have?*

During a recent conversation with my brother Robert, who works as a community advocate in East Baltimore (through the Lutheran Volunteer Corps), we discussed problems of political activity at the community level. He believes that his mere presence in an impoverished neighborhood increases the political voice of the community. That is, because of his educational background and feelings of personal political effi-



The tendencies of democratic socialists have been to concentrate on major national issues. And make no mistake, it is quite appropriate and necessary for the left to discuss and take positions on nuclear weapons, the United States policy towards Central America and Reaganomics. Yet the problems most urgent to the poor are often local, that is, neighborhood issues. The person who gets the "run around" from an absentee landlord and "the city" over repairing a broken toilet will not be found in many Central America protest marches. When working with the poor, one may discover that the primary issue on people's minds is keeping a liquor store from moving to the corner for fear of the bad influence it might have on the neighborhood teenagers. Snow removal from neighborhood streets is another crucial issue for those who are deemed least important economically. These issues are not socialist

cacy, he has access to crucial sources of information that are important aids in helping a community to wage certain political fights. He believes that there is a tremendous need for others to help impoverished communities to articulate their political agendas in ways that can be heard. Yet he was quick to note that not all of the political wishes of the local people lay to the "left of center." Poor neighborhoods often house some of the most conservative/reactinary beliefs. Accepted American standards concerning how one judges the value of his or her life (amount of income, home ownership, children in college, etc.) hold sway over poor people who have little chance of meeting these standards. This "inadequacy," in their own eyes, confirms the rationality of their oppression. It is a pervasive socialization that plays a cruel hoax on the minds and lives of many of the oppressed.

My brother is working and living in an impoverished white ethnic community. As such, he senses that his neighbors are even more vulnerable to the appeals of conservative ideology insofar as they don't have the racial issue to provide them with a sense of outsider status. Yet he believes like most of us that the white poor, if drawn into the political arena, will inevitably move left.

The problem facing us is how to facilitate the politicization of these people and yet not place them in a vulnerable position where they will be exploited by the imagery of the right. I suspect we can't insure that they won't become Reaganites. But given our belief in the democratic process, it must still be considered a major victory if we are able to extend the boundaries of who it is that participates politically in American society. In order to help facilitate the emergence of the poor as a viable entity within the *organized left*, the poor must be confronted with the same range of issues that we are confronting, including racism and sexism. It has long been the unofficial strategy of the organized left to let the poor emerge as part of the Democratic party electoral coalition in whatever way, espousing whatever views they hold dear. Simply because an individual is poor does not give us the right to abandon the struggle against racism and sexism with that person. The strategy of attracting large numbers of people, as if sheer numbers represent strength, is simply inappropriate for the left. This strategy has always made the left vulnerable to the deep-seated racism of

so much of the white working class. Interestingly, it is the unwillingness of blacks to see the Democratic party for what it is that has led them to continually make demands of the Democratic party electoral coalition that are implicitly those which can only be expected of a left movement coalition. If the Democratic party authentically championed the cause of anti-racism in American society, it would be destined to become a footnote in an introductory political science text. The problem is that, in the face of the left's inability or unwillingness to begin its own party/move-

"We must understand that the Democratic party is not and will probably never be the party of the left."

ment structure, blacks who are dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of the pragmatic Democratic party leadership have no mechanism to further articulate their political desires. The problem is not the Democratic party; the problem is the absence of a left alternative.

Can we imagine what would have happened to the anti-war movement had it defined itself as primarily a Democratic party entity? It would have exhausted itself trying to win planks on a party platform. The same holds true for the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, folks involved in the Civil Rights Movement continued to vote for the party's candidates at the national level. It isn't and should

not be perceived as an either/or choice and won't be until the left movement coalition emerges as a major electoral force. At that point we can think of abandoning the Democratic party electoral coalition.

The quest for a multi-racial, multi-class social movement coalition might be a dream, never to be realized. Yet given the collapse of liberal politics and the inability of either major party to provide the citizenry with a vision worthy of moral enthusiasm, it is imperative that all of us begin to rethink ways to act politically. Instead of running out every four years attempting to get poor Americans to vote Democratic, let's help them to develop a sustained politicization. This ongoing political activity of the poor and working classes could generate political beliefs that will also translate into increased Democratic party votes, but it could do more. It could help to sustain the politicization of people even in instances when supported candidates fail to deliver the promised benefits. In this way, we can begin to circumvent the despair that is so crucial in keeping many silenced. In doing so, the American left might just realize that any left worth its salt must have ties to those it claims to be acting on behalf of. We just might learn something, which after all shouldn't be surprising given our legacy of confusion. ●

Jerry G. Watts is assistant professor of government at Wesleyan University.

Go Beyond 'Black Empowerment'

by Jim Sleeper

Are black voters really where self-proclaimed progressive leaders, both black and white, often say they are? And if they're not, is it because they've been bamboozled by the pressures and expedients of a racist society? What *do* black voters really believe, anyway? And, where that differs from what some black leaders *think* they should believe, who's right?

As a white journalist, I can offer a few empirical observations in partial answer to these tough questions. As an American who believes, with Frederick Douglass, that established power concedes nothing without struggle, I could also offer a few opinions about what the relationship should be between black electoral politics and multi-racial

coalition-building for social change. Here, as at the DSA plenary from which these remarks are drawn, I'm going to confine myself basically to my journalistic role. In the January 16-22 issue of *In These Times*, I've tried to mesh my reportage with some thoughts about the relationship I just mentioned.

Most of my observations as a reporter can be summarized with a reference to a recent *Village Voice* interview in which senior editor Jack Newfield was grilling New York City Council President and mayoral aspirant Carol Bellamy. Why, Newfield demanded to know, had Bellamy endorsed the re-election of a white state senator, Marty Markowitz, in a district that was more than 70 percent black, and where the progressive black Coalition for Community Empowerment had fielded a challenger?

Bellamy hemmed and hawed, at first appearing to deny she'd even endorsed

Markowitz in the most recent election. She needn't have been so shy. She could have told Newfield, "I endorsed Markowitz because I wanted to be consonant with the views of the black electorate in his district, which gave him at least 60 percent of its vote. Why did *you* endorse his opponent?"

The truth was that even though Markowitz's challenger had palm cards with Jesse Jackson's picture on one side, black voters overwhelmingly re-elected Markowitz. Not only that, the generally progressive black weekly *The City Sun* refused to endorse Markowitz's challenger, staying neutral instead.

Markowitz wasn't alone in upstaging those who thought they had their fingers on the pulse of the black electorate in the wake of Jackson's impressive Democratic presidential primary showings. Two other white incumbents in predominantly black districts

—Rep. Joseph P. Addabbo in Queens and State Assembly Member Rhoda Jacobs, whose district overlaps with Markowitz's in Brooklyn, won re-election handily against strong black challengers, capturing 40 and 50 percent of the black vote respectively. In Philadelphia, Rep. Tom Foglietta overwhelmingly defeated a vocal black challenger in a heavily black district, doing so with strong support from Mayor Wilson Goode and black Rep. Bill Gray.

What's going on here? The mind flips back to Birmingham Mayor Richard Arrington's ability to carry the black vote for Mondale against Jackson in the Alabama presidential primary. But, no, that doesn't explain New York and Philadelphia, where Jackson swamped Mondale among blacks.

The best answer I've been able to come up with begins as follows: *Even with Jackson*

"Even among low income blacks, rising voter participation is tied to aspirations that go beyond 'black empowerment' as such, at least as it's been defined by black political leaders, including Jackson himself."

as catalyst, and even among low income blacks, rising voter participation is tied to aspirations that go beyond "black empowerment" as such, at least as it's been defined by black political leaders, including Jackson himself. Locally, appeals to racial solidarity don't work.

Additional support for that thesis comes from East Brooklyn, where 42 churches composed predominantly of low income working people banded together to mount a huge voter registration drive in an area long thought drained of economic and political strength. People from predominantly white, Latino, and black congregations worked "shoulder to shoulder," as one East Brooklyn Churches (EBC) organizer put it, registering 10,000 new voters and doubling the turnout over 1980 in the November election.

Though 70 percent of the newly registered voters were black, EBC never used the words "black empowerment" or "black agenda," believing as it does that low income communities, like unions, have to organize and be empowered *interracially* from the start, around issues of concern to all poor and working people. EBC even refuses to declare that its new voters are automatically in the anti-Ed Koch camp for the 1985 New York City mayoral election. That's not just a "non-partisan" facade for the IRS; it's a reflection of EBC's firm policy that accountabil-

ity in public officials is more important than race. Koch's challengers will have to prove themselves on their merits, not their rhetoric.

In a different way, a contest between two blacks back in 1982 for Shirley Chisholm's congressional seat in Brooklyn showed how misleading progressive-sounding rhetoric can be. It was the loser, the corrupt povertician Vander Beatty, who appropriated most of the rhetoric of black militancy and empowerment, often baiting the winner, Major Owens, for his unapologetic defense of interracial coalition-building. Owens believes fervently in black empowerment, but recognizes the importance of transcending what he calls "tribal" appeals. And black voters agreed with him, even though much of New York's black leadership initially favored Beatty. Once again, black voters seemed determined to keep faith with a vision larger than appeals to racial solidarity alone.

But why? Why are those appeals problematic in the electoral context? I think the answer is so prosaic that it's often overlooked. In "*changing neighborhoods*," where the arrival of blacks seeking a better life touches off racist white disinvestment and flight, it means something to black voters when a white incumbent reaches out across race lines, standing against bank redlining, municipal service cuts, and, indeed, white flight itself. In the delicate chemistry of such neighborhoods, "Our Time Has Come" campaigns

alienate not only the remaining white voters; they alienate *black* voters, too. Blacks didn't move to these neighborhoods to experience racial solidarity, but to experience integration and to participate in the larger society.

Yes, white incumbents do sometimes "buy off" local black leaders with patronage and other special favors. Sure, some black voters, especially homeowners, vote for white incumbents as a way of "passing," of escaping not only the ghetto but their roots and pride as well. But the most important impulse behind black voting for white incumbents—especially when those incumbents are reasonably effective and when their black challengers offer little more than racial solidarity appeals—seems to be an expression of black yearning for interracial improvement of their communities.

I don't mean to romanticize the white incumbents. They'll have to pass the torch eventually to blacks with more inclusive, broader agendas for *all* constituents. But let's not romanticize the challengers, either! As East Brooklyn Churches insists, the new coalitions and their candidates will have to prove themselves, to *black* voters, with something more substantive than racial rhetoric. At least, that's how I read the recent returns at the local level now. ●

Jim Sleeper is a journalist active in Brooklyn politics.

What Price Unity?

by Paulette Pierce

These are indeed dark days on the left. We suffered a humiliating defeat with the landslide re-election of the cowboy capitalist from California. The gender gap we thought pregnant with potential aborted its promise, and the unprecedented actions of organized labor in support of its candidate failed to prevent the majority of blue-collar households from going with Reagan. Notwithstanding these developments, the darkness fell over this political season for most black leftists as we watched the response of progressives to the candidacy of Jesse Jackson. The issue will not go away. Jewish progressives charge anti-Semitism, and black progressives suspect that a not too subtle racism may be at play. Without an open and perhaps heated exchange about this issue, the left will find it impossible to organize successfully within the black com-

munity, and black leftists already in progressive organizations like DSA will find it increasingly difficult to function. A second and related issue is the paternalistic response of some white progressives to calls for black unity and empowerment. We are accused of engaging in racially polarizing politics and told to grow up and content ourselves with an integrationist strategy. Then, of course, there are always a few black voices like that of Julius Lester recently published in *Dissent*, ready to join the chorus of admonition.

First, characterizations of black politicians and leaders who speak of black pride, black empowerment and the right of blacks to *lead* multi-racial coalitions as shallow manipulators of group identity are offensive. No one denies that there are charlatans who have sought to exploit racial solidarity, but this does not invalidate the appeal. Second, it is implicitly racist to assume that a coalition strategy which puts racial issues at the core of its politics cannot succeed. At best, such a

position assumes that racism is presently so entrenched in our society that multi-racial alliances based on equality are currently impossible. If this is really what is believed, it should be clearly stated. The black electorate has repeatedly demonstrated its sophistication and rejected candidates who seek to substitute racial rhetoric for a program. Black voters have given their support to other candidates (either black or white) who they felt would better represent their interests. More importantly, black people understand what John Saul refers to as "the dialectic of class and tribe," that is, the potential of ethnic sentiment and mobilization to express truly progressive or revolutionary aspirations. The difficult issue confronting us today is whether or not white progressives are willing to accept such a strategy.

Jesse Jackson unleashed the already growing and pent up political energies of black America; he created a movement because he articulated a broad vision and, in his person, claimed the long felt right among blacks to be the leading force in the progressive and multi-racial coalition needed to realize such a vision of America. Yes, black is the most brilliant hue in the rainbow coalition—by design. This does not, however, mean that black leaders who chant "Our time has come" are seeking to alienate anyone or to paint a monochromatic rainbow as some political pundits and satirists would have us

believe. For instance, Julius Lester's claim that this cry for black empowerment is a veiled threat to white people and thus is or should be taken as a warning to head off black domination is ridiculous. Instead, what is forcefully being called into question is the institutional racism which pervades every fiber of American society. The call for black empowerment and the creation of a rainbow coalition is a necessary response to the old and "new" racism which now masquerades in the costumes of Reaganomics, neoconservatism and neoliberalism.

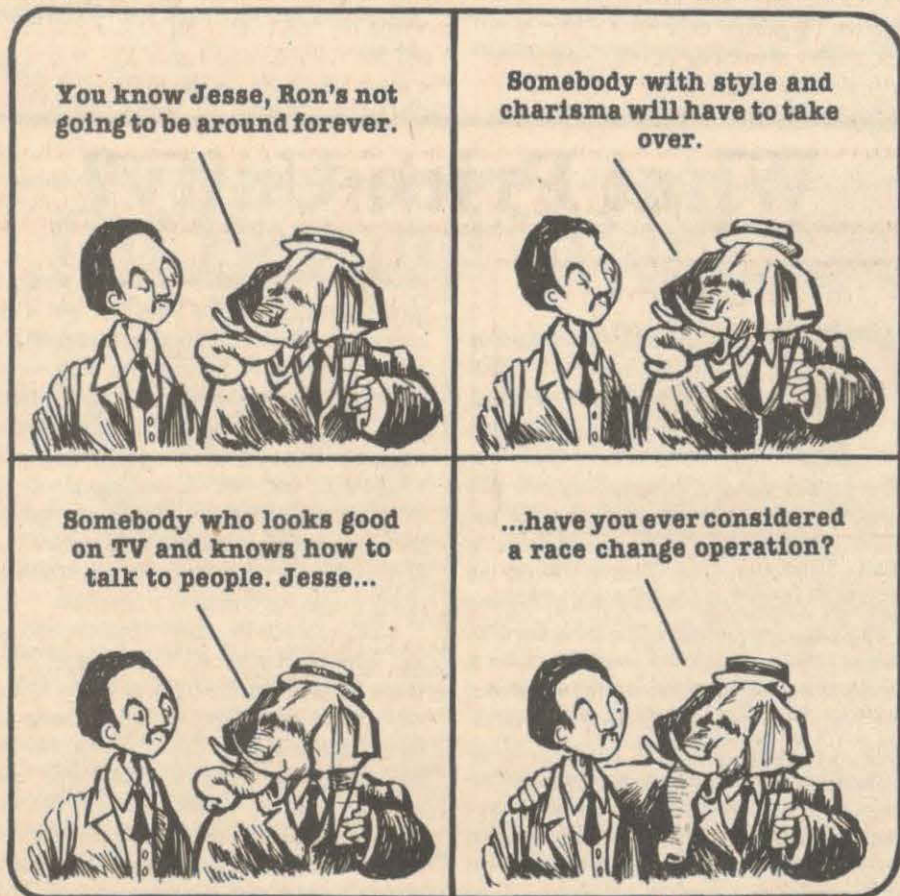
The right-wing "isms" are orchestrating the restructuring of the American political economy in the interests of the rich, indeed, the very rich. And blacks are astute enough to realize that we are not the only ones hurting as a result of the terrifying growth of a desperate underclass, socially acceptable high rates of unemployment, the flight of industry to low wage areas, the decay of the nation's infrastructure and cities and the Reagan-led offensive on the hard-won social welfare and civil rights victories of past struggles. The rainbow coalition is not, as Lester glibly remarked, inspired by "The Wizard of Oz" but more likely by the Bible. Coming as it does from a black Baptist preacher, it seems more reasonable to assume that Jesse Jackson's call for a rainbow coalition refers to God's promise after the flood and signifies an appeal for all people—

blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, the poor, women, gays and lesbians, liberals, progressives and radicals—to join together to prevent the fiery inferno of sweeping repression and economic conservatism.

What is deeply troubling to many blacks including this writer is why so many of the constituencies targeted by the rainbow coalition stayed away and chose to support the neoliberal domestic and cold-war foreign policies of Walter Mondale. The most frequently given excuses are (1) Jesse Jackson's purported anti-Semitism, (2) the participation of Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam in the coalition and (3) Jackson's espousal of the rights of the Palestinian people. (Neoconservatives like Arch Puddington denounce what they see as Jackson's anti-Americanism and radical foreign policy positions, but this need not concern us here since one would hope that at least among the readers of DEMOCRATIC LEFT there is acceptance of the fact that America is an imperialist country and fundamentally flawed by its intrinsically racist and exploitative character.) What is left unstated but may be the most important reason why white progressives stayed away is their fear that a coalition which puts anti-racism at the center of its politics will alienate white labor, the constituency which many on the left still believe is essential to a successful progressive alliance. It would appear that although many progressives have on a theoretical and rhetorical level moved beyond this basic tenet of orthodox Marxism, it is still retained at the level of practical politics.

The controversy over Jackson obviously centered around the "Jewish Question." Leftists generally agreed that Jackson articulated the most progressive program among the Democratic candidates, but they just couldn't, they said, bring themselves to endorse or support his candidacy because of his reputed anti-Semitism. One must be careful here. Jesse may well harbor anti-Jewish feelings, but I would ask my Jewish comrades who among them does not struggle with anti-black attitudes and sometimes slip into expression of this feature of the dominant ideology. Anti-Semitism is objectionable and should be attacked; however, the *real question* is whether or not anti-Semitism shaped either the strategy or goals of Jackson's campaign. It did not. Jackson did not seek to arouse anti-Semitism as a means of mobilizing support. His "Hymietown" comments were an admitted and costly gaffe. The question remains why repeated apologies by Jackson and members of his campaign were judged unacceptable. Enter Louis Farrakhan.

The participation of Minister Farrakhan in the Jackson campaign was taken as indelible proof of its anti-Semitic and ultimately reactionary character. The price of Jackson's



Carol Simpson © 1984

acceptance by white America was set as his repudiation of another black leader. Think about this in the context of the black community. The Nation of Islam is widely respected as an organization which has created viable and autonomous institutions in the black ghetto by utilizing the talents and energies of the worst victims of white racism including former pimps, prostitutes, addicts and convicts. Malcolm X came to the Nation of Islam while serving time and subsequently claimed a prominent place in the history of liberation struggles. Jackson is trying to unite all segments of the black community as the base for a multi-racial coalition against all forms of injustice. Why should he alienate that segment of the black community for whom Minister Farrakhan expresses its deepest feeling? Jackson repeatedly "dissociated" himself from Farrakhan's inflammatory rhetoric. Why was this not enough? Does anyone really believe that Jackson or anyone in the black community thinks that

"It is implicitly racist to assume that a coalition strategy which puts racial issues at the core of its politics cannot succeed."

Hitler was a great man (Farrakhan said "wickedly great") or that Judaism is a gutter religion?

Obviously Jackson was not the perfect candidate, but why must the black candidate be perfect? In anticipation of those who will ask, "Must we then accept the worst?", Jesse was not the worst. Mondale was. For many reasons not mentioned here, many blacks had trouble accepting Jackson's bid. He was, however, the best of the lot and grew stronger as the spokesman for the left-liberal position as the campaign developed. Blacks have always had to look beyond the known or implied individual racism of white candidates and support them for the public policy they advocated. The key components of Jackson's campaign platform were increased enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action, drastically reduced military spending, a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the crisis in Central America, an end to support for the apartheid regime in South Africa, an increase in social welfare spending, a major jobs program and rebuilding America's infrastructure and cities. In short, a solid social democratic program. Many blacks are thus asking themselves if Jackson's color, and/or his anti-racist politics or his challenge to US policy in the Middle East made his candidacy unac-

ceptable. Ever since Andrew Young was removed from his position at the UN because he dared to speak with a Palestinian representative, blacks have insisted that Israeli policy and US support thereof be open to scrutiny and question. We had hoped that progressives who also claim to see the dangers would support us. Were we wrong? Is the anti-racism (and one may add anti-sexism) of the left merely empty rhetoric, readily downplayed in the interest of what is perceived to be practical politics? Moreover, were we naive to assume that white progressives who have traditionally asked us to join their organizations and accept their leadership are, when the shoe is on the other foot, unwilling to do so? I deeply hope that the answer to these questions is a resounding no. If not, the left in America has no future, and there will be the fire next time. ●

Paulette Pierce is assistant professor of sociology at Queens College and was active in the Jackson campaign.

Labor Conference Set for June

A conference of DSA labor activists and their invitees will be held June 8-9 in Detroit to examine the role of socialists in the labor movement. A primary goal of the conference is to strengthen the DSA Labor Commission so that it can aid socialists working within the labor movement. Tentative topics include collective bargaining over investment decisions, quality of work life issues, comparable worth, collective bargaining in public and private sector unions, organizing white- and

pink-collar workers.

Proceeds from the Detroit Debs-Thomas Dinner to be held Friday evening, June 7, will be split with the DSA Labor Commission in order to help fund the Commission and perhaps a staff person. Victor Reuther will deliver the keynote address on Saturday morning on "Bargaining Strategies and the Need for a Solidaristic Labor Movement." For more information, write to Detroit DSA, 7500 Oakland, Detroit, MI 48211.

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LETTERS

Continued from page 2.

Dig Deeper

To the Editor:

Stanley Aronowitz is not entirely correct when he claims in his excellent article "Politics and Film" (Nov.-Dec. 1984) that filmmakers Reichart and Klein could not surmount the aesthetic and political problems to produce both the "heroic/sentimental (and) nostalgic paean to the achievements of the Communists" and a more realistic, balanced view of the same subject. They could have if they wanted to. And they could have done this, Aronowitz to the contrary, *within* the present format and structure of the film, with the same cast of characters as with the same highly effective personalization.

The Communist experience and its lessons were not *all* hype and demonstrations and red flag-waving, not all successful campaigning, and not all satisfying gutsy shouting at HUAC, McCarthy and the FBI. It was also sweat, blood and tears, frustrations and error.

Rose Kryzak, one of the film's personalities, could have been asked about her years of activity on behalf of the children and families of the Communist political prisoners and fugitives, the role of the women to fight back. Howard "Stretch" Johnson, another of the film's personalities, could have been asked what it felt like to be sent "underground" by the party, its effect on his family and whether that underground move by the party was heroism or idiocy. Dorothy Healey, a third personality in the film and a knowledgeable leader on the party's state and national levels, could have been probed for personal experience and opinions of some aspects of party policy; also, since she left the party 20 years after the Khrushchev Report and 10 years after the Czechoslovakia events, what were the *accumulative* reasons for her leaving the CP only in 1976? Each of the participants expressed no regrets for their years in the party. It would have been worthwhile to get their answers to such questions as to whether they have found that for which they had left, etc.

Stanley is right in emphasizing that films like "Seeing Red," despite its political shortcomings and perhaps because of them, can be valuable as an educational process. However, I found as a panelist at the film's show-

ing in San Francisco that the need for this educational process is not only ignored but is militantly resisted by those closely connected with the film. While the mixture of Old and New Left audience responded to the very limited effort to get beyond the exciting nostalgia and sentimentality, to some substance, a few highly placed close to the film were indignant and "how dare you" bristled for days over telephone wires and in letters.

It is puzzling that within the left we find critics demanding a higher perfectionism of quality of political content in Hollywood productions than they demand of independent filmmakers. I would think it would be the other way around. Whether in books or film, it is not a question of authenticity versus popular lowest denominator. Isn't it more a question of skill and integrity in producing authenticity in a popular form? And if DSA doesn't demand this, who will?

Peggy Dennis
Berkeley, Ca.

Ed. note: Peggy Dennis is author of *Autobiography of An American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life*.

Continued on page 16.

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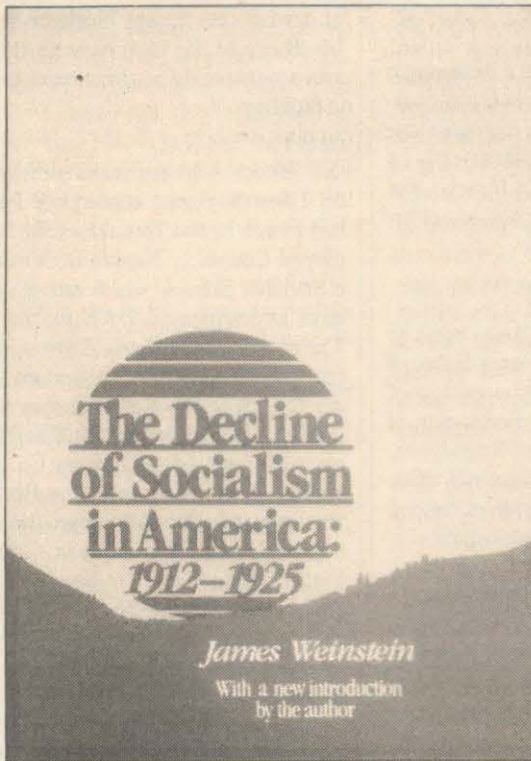
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ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

Alaska

Red-baiting in the age of Reagan. As we go to press lawmakers in Juneau are drawing battle lines over an appointment by Governor Bill Sheffield of Bill Ross, a self-avowed democratic socialist, to be Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation. Conservatives fear that Ross would not be open to private development of resources because, as one told reporters, socialists are "suspicious of private enterprise." Invited to explain his views before suspicious Republican legislators, Ross said his most fundamental belief was that "people should have a chance to have a say and some influence in things that shape their lives." Ross, who has been a state employee for eight years, has never joined a socialist group, but used to host a radio show entitled "Weekend Left," and once took a tour of Cuba.

California

Harold Meyerson, DSA NEC member, spoke on "DSA Leadership in 1985" at the January meeting of Orange County DSA... Jack Henning, executive secretary-treasurer of the California AFL-CIO, introduced Mike Harrington when he spoke in January at a rally arranged by the Sacramento Public Employees Council for the benefit of the Louisiana-Pacific strikers... Mike also spoke at a DSA forum, together with Nancy Skinner, DSA member of the Berkeley City Council, Grantland Johnson, Sacramento City Council member, and Susanne Paradis, president, Sacramento Democratic Club, on "Which Way for the Democrats?" The forum was held during the state Democratic convention, at which a luncheon for the Socialist caucus was a sellout affair... A Chicano Leadership Training Workshop was held in Sacramento in February, sponsored by Peace/War Studies, Bilingual Education (CSU/S), DSA and others.

Colorado

Denver DSA discussed the proposed DSA economic policy resolution at a meeting on "Beyond Voodoo Economics: What Should the Left's Prescriptions Be?"

Illinois

Springfield DSA started a democratic socialist club on campus which co-sponsored a concert by Pat Winn, a progressive feminist singer... The local plans to start a left community center and its Religion and Socialism committee is doing anti-intervention in Central America work.

Iowa

Iowa City DSAer Dan Daly failed to win a seat on the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, but was elected president of Local 183 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. That local carried on a successful drive which won 1,900 new members among state clerical and secretarial workers in Johnson County.

Kentucky

Central Kentucky DSA has elected Lisa Laufer and Ernie Yanarella as co-chairs for 1985... The local is holding regular discussions on DSA economic policy.

Maine

DSAer Harlan Baker, a state representative, is one of the sponsors of a gay rights amendment to the Maine Human Rights Act, which would guarantee equal rights in housing, employment, credit and public accommodations. Supporters are still looking for Republican sponsors and anticipate a tough fight with the "radical right."

Massachusetts

Three members of Mayor Raymond Flynn's administration spoke to Boston DSA in January on possibilities for progressive initiatives... State Rep. Tom Gallagher and DSA NEC member Jack Clark spoke at a brunch for public sector employees in January on state and national politics.

Michigan

Ann Arbor DSA is backing the City Council's Task Force on Affordable Housing, which has held three public hearings... The Voter Mobilization Project, which included DSA, organized 98 deputy registrars and 33 other volunteers to register 5,100 voters. "We worked so well," said

coordinator Jim Burchell, "that the City Clerk's office ran out of registration forms

... Detroit DSA honored two DSA authors, Ron Aronson, author of *The Dialectics of Disaster: A Preface to Hope*, and Steve Babson, author of *Working Detroit*, at a wine and cheese holiday reception... Members of the local have participated in anti-apartheid demonstration at the Federal building.

New York

Ithaca DSA participated in an Action on Unemployment conference sponsored last month by the Tompkins County Unemployed Council... Nassau DSA has started a Socialist School, which meets on Saturdays at District 65 UAW in Hicksville... The Long Island Public Power Project is pushing for an April referendum authorizing the creation of a citizen-owned, non-profit, non-nuclear municipal utility to replace the Long Island Lighting Co... A New York Area Labor Network on the island is working on education, organizing, strike support and public relations... The New York City local held a forum on "Education Under Siege?" with Norm Fruchter, Deborah Meier and Stanley Aronowitz as speakers... The local's Religion and Socialism branch held a forum on "The Bishops' Letter: An Endorsement of Socialism?"... The Third Socialist Scholars Conference, focusing on "The Left in Crisis," will be held April 4, 5, 6 at the Manhattan Community College. Last year's conference brought more than 1,600 participants together.

Workers Defense League officers and staff members—Shakoor Aljuwani, Ralph Del Colle, Harry Fleischman, Connie Kopelov and Mike Gorman—were arrested after picketing the South Africa consulate in New York. Most are DSA members... Rowland Watts, Westchester DSA member, president of the Workers Defense League and longtime civil liberties and rights activist, won the \$25,000 Durfee Foundation award for enhancing "the dignity of others through process of law or legal institutions."

Ohio

Cleveland DSA is sponsoring a Socialist school at Cleveland State University... Over 100 attended a meeting at which Steve and Beth Kagan recounted their experiences in Nicaragua... Toledo DSA serves as the clearinghouse for groups involved with Jobs for Peace and has organized forums on organized labor... Dayton DSA worked to get the state to pass a bill for divestment of South Africa investments.

Oregon

Portland DSA organized a hardware cooperative of eight members to purchase a Kaypro 4 computer. It is used to organize mailing lists, financial and membership records, correspondence, and for developing informational materials and papers... A reception was held last month for Bill Tattum and Jerry Lembke on the publication of their book, *One Union in Wood: A Political History of the International Woodworkers Association*.

Pennsylvania

The Central Pennsylvania DSA testified before the Pennsylvania Utility Commission protesting a 13 percent rate hike granted to Pennsylvania Power and Light for 1985 and a similar rise in 1986. The *Harrisburg Evening News* reported the DSA testimony, which was placed in the PUC official records... Many Philadelphia DSAers joined the Waiters and Waitresses Local 301 picket line against Old Original Bookbinders Restaurant... Thirty-five members of the local joined an anti-apartheid vigil from 4 P.M. January 14 to 8 A.M. January 15... At a membership conference in February the local discussed the Philadelphia DSA urban policy statement aimed at creating a good working climate as opposed to a good "business climate"... Pittsburghers Against Apartheid, organized when a South African consulate opened there in 1982, organized picket lines, divestment campaigns, and demonstration at shops selling Krugerrands. In the wake of the controversy, the consul resigned and has not been replaced... Pittsburgh DSA is backing the Tri-State Conference on Steel, a labor/community group based in the Mon Valley that is working on plans to improve the infrastructure of the area... The local is co-sponsoring an appearance by DSA Vice Chair Frances Moore Lappe on March 29 and Pittsburgh's premiere of "Seeing Red March 9... Reading DSA is backing the strike by 370 members of the Upholsterers International Union against the Boyertown Casket Company.

Tennessee

Nashville DSA worked with a coalition of unions, NOW, the Nuclear Freeze and Physicians for Social Responsibility on the Mondale campaign and registered 8,000 new voters... The local plans to start a socialist country music group in February.

IN MEMORIAM

Sidney Hertzberg, 74, publicity adviser in the 1936 Presidential campaign of Norman Thomas, died in December. He was a founder of the Workers Defense League in 1936 and edited the *Sharecroppers Voice* for the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. He initiated National Sharecroppers Week. A writer, editor and active socialist all his life, he served as labor editor of *The New Leader*, editorial director of Consumers Union, edited *Common Sense* and *Current Information Please Almanac*. He wrote scripts for documentaries on Mahatma Gandhi for the CBS-TV series, *The Twentieth Century*, narrated by Walter Cronkite.

Paul Davidoff, New York DSA member, died in December at the age of 54 while undergoing treatment for cancer. Hailed as one of the half-dozen most influential planners of the past 20 years, he was an urban studies professor at Queens College. He created advocacy planning to challenge exclusionary zoning, and his lawsuits led to two landmark rulings by the New Jersey Supreme Court which required New Jersey townships to enact zoning codes allowing construction of inexpensive housing.

In February, New Jersey DSA member Muriel Gardiner, who as a medical student in Vienna in the early thirties smuggled false passports and money to help hundreds of Austrian So-

cialists and others escape Fascist-controlled Austria, died at the age of 83.

When Dr. Gardiner wrote her memoirs, *Code Name Mary*, about her activities in the anti-Fascist underground, her publisher suggested that her deeds formed the basis for the portrait of Julia in Lillian Hellman's memoirs.

She and her husband, Joseph Buttinger, leader of the Austrian Revolutionary Socialists in their armed struggle against the Dollfuss Fascists, were strong supporters of DSA since its inception.

A founding member of one of DSA's predecessor organizations—DSOC—and one of its first vice chairs, Ralph Helstein, died at the age of 76 in mid-February. Helstein was international president of the Chicago-based United Packinghouse Workers of America from 1946 until its merger with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen in 1968. (A later merger with the Retail Clerks International led to the creation of the United Food and Commercial Workers International.) Recalling Helstein's contributions to the cause of social justice, Illinois AFL-CIO president Robert Gibson said, "He spent his whole lifetime working on behalf of the poor and underprivileged." Illinois congressional Representative Charles Hayes noted that "Helstein was one of the few trade union leaders who participated in marches with King in the South and in Chicago."

IT'S A GIRL!

Emma Rose Roderick made her way into the world on Jan. 9, a healthy 8 lb. 9 oz. baby socialist-feminist. Mother Maxine Phillips, DSA executive director, and father Tom Roderick are also doing well.

STAFF NOTES

Midwest Regional Coordinator Adina Kelman resigned in January, and at its February meeting the National Executive Committee voted to close the Midwest and Western offices. Western Regional Coordinator Jim Shoch was named National Political Director and will provide field service throughout the country. A Special Projects Coordinator will be hired this summer

to work on conferences and special events. Executive Director Maxine Phillips, who has been on maternity leave since January 7, returns part-time in March. Thanks go to Guy Molyneux, former Youth Section Chair, for serving as acting executive.

ANTI-APARTHEID ARRESTS

On separate coasts, Albany DSA Secretary Larry Wittner was one of ten community leaders arrested at a sit-in in the federal building protesting Reagan administration policies toward South Africa, and Portland, Oregon DSA Co-chair Bev Stein was arrested for trespassing at the business office of Calvin Van Pelt, who was Honorary Consul to South Africa. Van Pelt resigned soon after the demonstration.

Socialist Scholars Conference

"The Left in Crisis"

Boro of Manhattan Community College,
CUNY 199 Chambers St. (near Trade Center),
New York City

Join . . . Ellen Willis • Bogdan Denitch •
Luciana Castellina • David Gordon • Harry Magdoff •
Cornel West • Carol O'Cleireacain • Allan Herskovitz
• Ray Franklin • Stanley Aronowitz • Judith Stein • Jan
Rosenberg • Cynthia Epstein • Michael Walzer • Ira
Katznelson • Erwin Knoll • Stanley Greenberg • Frances
Fox Piven • Paul Sweezy • Yair Tzaban • Saskia Sassen-
Koob • Michael Harrington • Amy Clampitt • John Hy-
land • Chester Feurstein • Joan Barkan • Jean Cohen •
Dorothy Healey • Irving Howe • Barbara Ehrenreich •
Robert Engler • Jennifer Hunt • Judith Lorber • Jewel
Bellush • Bernard Bellush • R.L. Norman • Jo Ann Mort
• Vern Mogensen • Don Harris • William Kornblum •
John Rantz • John Trinkl • Ruth Spitz • Patricia Mann •
Barbara Epstein • Deborah Meier • Gordon Adams •
Rosanna Giamanco • Dave Garrow • Paulette Pierce •
Robert Lekachman • Paul Piccone • Patrick Hughes •
James Weinstein • James Aronson • Jeff Escoffier

This year's conference is on the theme of "The Left in Crisis." Last year's conference brought more than 2000 participants together. This year the conference is being expanded to over 80 panels. There will be panel sequences on feminist, labor, theoretical, economic, cultural, third world, and American political topics.

Sponsors/Participants (in formation):

CUNY Ph.D. Program in Sociology, and *Dissent*, *Nation*, Institute for Democratic Socialism, Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization, *Monthly Review*, *Social Policy*, *Social Text*, *Socialist Review*, *Telos*, CUNY Democratic Socialist Faculty Club, CUNY Democratic Socialist Graduate Student Club, South End Press, and The Fabian Society

Pre-registration:
\$15.00 Regular
\$7.50 Student

Make checks payable to "Socialist Scholars Conference"
and mail to: CUNY Democratic Socialist Club
33 West 42nd St. Rm. 901, New York, NY 10036
For more information, call 212-790-4320

LETTERS

Continued from page 12.

Don't Forget Jews

To the Editor:

In reading with usual interest DEMOCRATIC LEFT (Nov.-Dec. 1984), why do those writers analyzing the election returns underscore the left coalition of labor, feminists, black activists, gay and lesbian activists, without a word about Jews? Why are we socialists so timid to even mention the election behavior of Jews, Jackson and Farakhan notwithstanding? Republicans reportedly targeted at least \$2 million to the Jewish voters. Neoconservatives pleaded with us that it was in our economic interest to go Republican.

They failed. Jews are the only white group among the so-called "haves" in our society to defy the Reagan onslaught. They voted 2 to 1 for the Mondale-Ferraro ticket, staying loyal with blacks (and the others mentioned above) as members of the New Deal coalition. The findings of the *New York Times*-CBS exit poll, studies conducted by the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Community Relations Council all confirm that about one-third—no more, rather less—of the Jews voted for Reagan. The president's 30 to 32 percent was less than Nixon received in 1972 and only a little more than Ford's 26 percent and far less than the 40 percent he garnered in 1980.

Indeed, in the wealthy suburban community of Great Neck, Jews did not vote their pocketbooks, nor did they react in the

ballots they cast to Jesse Jackson's upsetting campaign tactics. They reaffirmed allegiance to the Democrats, supporting the grand old coalition of ethnic groups that party has brought and as Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg has written, "in support of fairness in American life." "If this alliance," he warns, "breaks apart, and the poor have no hope of sharing in political power, an anger might be unleashed in America that would be truly explosive." With pride I stand with my Jewish community in its moral and caring behavior signalled in the 1984 elections.

Jewel Bellush
Great Neck, N.Y.

P.S. If readers want my analysis of Jewish voters in Great Neck, they may write me at Hunter College.