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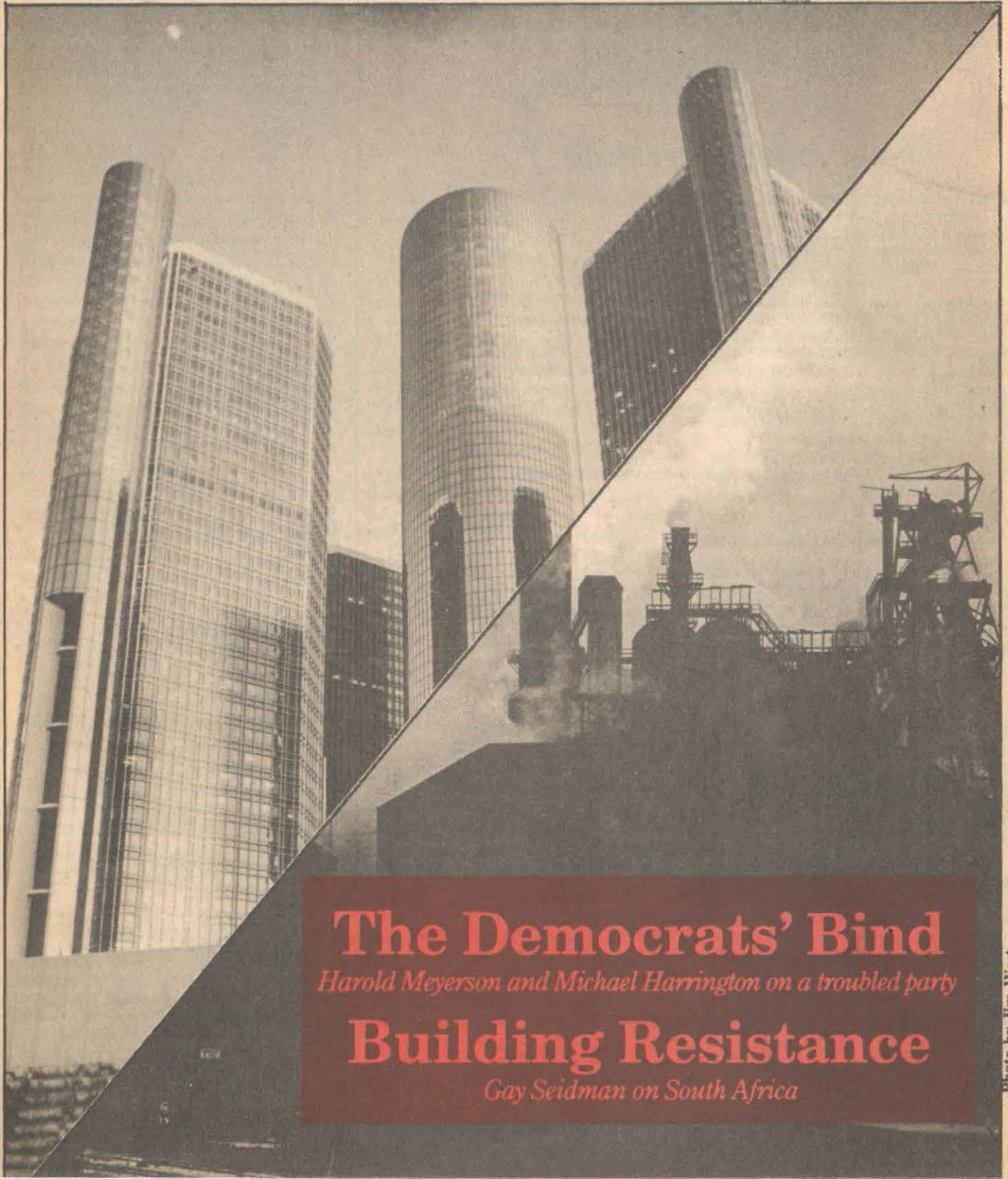


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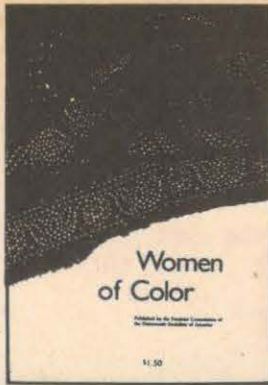
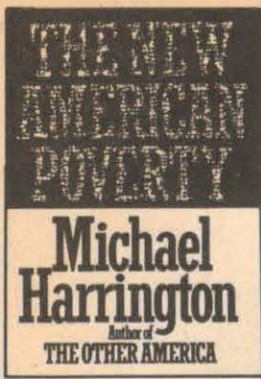
The Democrats' Bind

Harold Meyerson and Michael Harrington on a troubled party

Building Resistance

Gay Seidman on South Africa

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A TOO-LOYAL OPPOSITION?

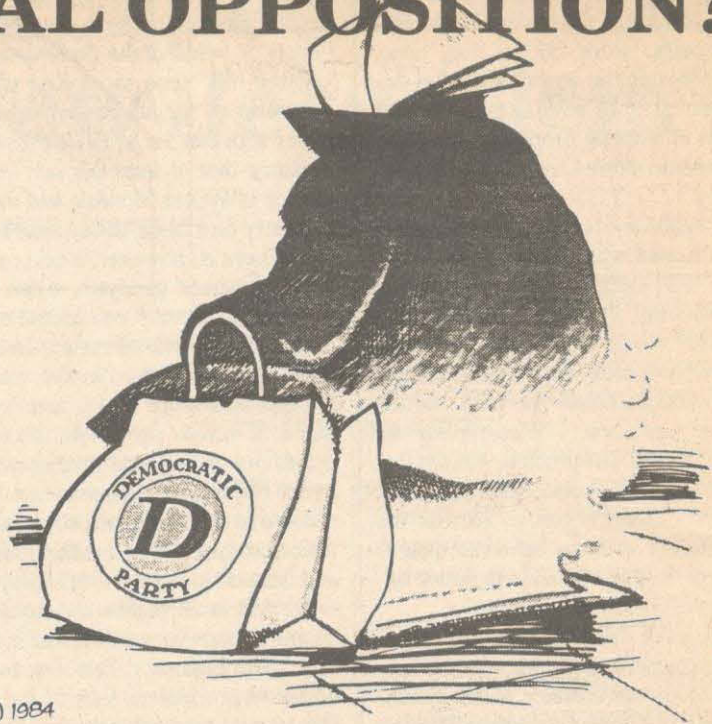
by Harold Meyerson

Symptoms of Democratic disorientation, 1985: Democratic National Committee Chairman Paul Kirk, guardian of conventional wisdom, passes through Los Angeles one day this April and suggests that applying a means test to Social Security is probably a good idea; the much-vaunted Democratic tax reform of early 1985, Bradley-Gephardt, taxes workers' fringe benefits. The reactionary Kemp-Kasten bill exempts them; the current Rostenkowski alternative to the Reagan tax reform adopts the basic premises of declining progressivity and revenue neutrality that underpin the administration proposal; unprompted by any discernible shift in public opinion, House Democrats reverse themselves and vote aid to the *contras*. They authorize funds for the MX missile. They fund nerve gas.

While their core constituencies suffer disproportionately from the continuing decline of manufacturing, the destruction of unions, and the decimation of social services, the majority of Democrats shun industrial policy. Full employment, even as a concept, seems obliterated from their collective memory. With trepidation, they inch towards a trade policy. With certitude that they are addressing something, they abolish the Democratic National Committee's "interest group" caucuses.

The Democratic party and American liberalism—two separate and sometimes overlapping entities—are adrift today without anchor. Bedrock positions of two or four decades are overthrown with perfunctory discussion. The National Chairman can suggest effectively scrapping the one program that sustains the party in the polls. Populist instincts atrophy. What gives?

We are in a period that Walter Dean Burnham recently termed an interregnum—a time of decisive realignment in public policy unaccompanied by decisive realignment in public opinion. The Keynesian consensus that underpinned public policy for three decades after World War II is long gone, subverted by an unprecedentedly international economy. Conservatism governs with an uncertain mandate; liberalism reacts to conservative initiatives and offers few of its own. Twenty years ago, Lyndon Johnson could proclaim on the 1964 campaign trail that, "We're in favor of a lot of things and against



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mighty few." Today, that statement describes not the Democratic but the Republican mainstream. To the left of the right in American politics today, confusion and silence prevail.

The confusion stems chiefly from misreading the realignment in party orientation that the polls have been picking up for the past year—specifically, from the mistaken belief that the Democratic decline has its roots in the party's estrangement from a majority of voters on social and foreign and military policy issues. Thus, the fact that "Mondale lost, and lost badly" was used by Republican House leader Robert Michel to solicit Democratic support for the MX, though in fact polls show the public narrowly opposing the MX. Public repudiation of welfare state politics is cited by such figures as Governors Babbitt and Lamm to justify retrenchment in social spending and abandonment of universality in Social Security, though polls show greater support for social spending than at any time in the past decade and virtually no support at all for limiting Social Security. Neocons like Ben Wattenberg use the data on realignment to call on the party to abandon liberal social policy; neolibers such as Michael Kinsley give continuing Yuppie allegiance to the Democrats on social issues as the basis on which a new party can be built. Kinsley's conclusion is preferable to Wattenberg's, but both flow from false premises.

What all these analyses have in common is the belief that social and foreign policy

positions are central either to the Democrats' demise or to their prospects for renewal. This is not to deny that there is a relationship between voters' party identification and their support for their party's social and foreign policies. There is. Only, much of the time, *it is inverse*.

For example, when the electorate is broken down by age, we find that the age group most heavily Republican (18- to 29-year-olds, who incline to the Republicans by a 4 percent margin in an ABC/*Washington Post* poll from this summer) has the most liberal position on gender equality and the most lopsided opposition to American intervention in Central America. By the same token, the age group most decisively Democratic (those 61 and over, among whom the Democrats have a 15 percent lead) is the most estranged from policies promoting gender and racial equality. Clearly, among these age groups, the overriding factor in voter alignment is the parties' credibility as guarantors of economic security. The Democrats' greater commitment to Social Security commends them to the oldest voters; the Republicans' seemingly greater commitment to growth commends them to the youngest.

The central and historic reversal of American politics today, of course, is the Republicans' appropriation of the issue of prosperity. More respondents (40 percent) in the CBS News/*New York Times* 1984 election day exit poll cited the economy as the number one issue affecting their vote, and these voters favored Reagan by a two-to-one

margin. These numbers reflect not only the recovery but Ronald Reagan's articulation of a supply-side scenario, however implausible, for ongoing growth. Even implausible scenarios, though, work better than none. Stranded between the implicitly market-oriented economics of Gary Hart and the explicit needs of working people and the poor, Walter Mondale offered no model of growth whatsoever.

The neolib and neocons have it wrong: it was not so much what Walter Mondale said during the 1984 campaign that hurt him, but what he didn't say. Democrats have honored the claims of "special interests" since before the modern party took shape ("He's the man the people choose/Loves the Irish and the Jews"—Ira Gershwin, "Wintergreen for President," 1931). The problem was not that Mondale addressed "special interests" but that he never found a way to address the national interest with an economic policy. The problem is, this was not a personal failing, but one of liberalism generally.

On one level, the Democrats' inability to formulate a plausible economic scenario may be traced to the ascendancy within Democratic circles of Charles Schultze, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers in the Carter administration and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Since 1983, Schultze has argued against the need for any form of industrial policy, let alone state-sponsored full employment, on the grounds that deindustrialization is nothing more than a normal transition among industries, and that the public sector is less able than the private to allocate resources in a productive and socially beneficial manner. Democratic economics, Schultze contended, should be confined to deficit reductions and tax increases—a prescription Walter Mondale faithfully and disastrously followed.

But the definitive expression of the party's paralysis on economic questions, and the most fascinating post-mortem on last year's election, is that of William Galston, Mondale's issues director, in last winter's *Brookings Review*. "The Democratic party," Galston begins, "has no guiding idea"—whereupon he attempts to demonstrate that, given the invalidity of every idea in current circulation, it *should* have no idea. "It cannot, in current circumstances, stand for more government," he notes. "It cannot, without losing its distinctiveness and integrity, stand for less government." Warming to these themes, Galston criticizes the retreat from universality of social programs as politically and programmatically self-destructive; but he also criticizes progressive economics for alienating the middle class. A program of planned full employment, farm support, and most trade policies, he avers, "overlooks most of

the forces that have driven the lower middle class away from the Democratic party—including not just a feeling of neglect, but a deep-seated antipathy to many of the party's efforts on behalf of the disadvantaged." How Galston has come to confuse the potential constituency for full employment and trade policy with that for AFDC is a mystery, but a mystery that at least partially explains the silence of Walter Mondale and the center of the party on a range of key issues.

There is, however, a deeper reason for the Democrats' paralysis, which is that the forces in the party committed to opposing models of growth—business interests to a more market-oriented model, labor and minorities to a more social democratic one—stand at rough parity. As Thomas Edsall points out in *The New Politics of Inequality*, every dollar that Congressional Democrats receive from unions and progressive organizations is matched by a dollar from corporate and conservative PACs. (The Republican ratio is \$33 in corporate and right-wing contributions for every \$1 in labor and progressive contributions.) This one-to-one ratio marks a precipitous shift in the source of Democratic financial support; as recently as 1974, Democratic Representatives received \$3 from labor for every \$1 from business.

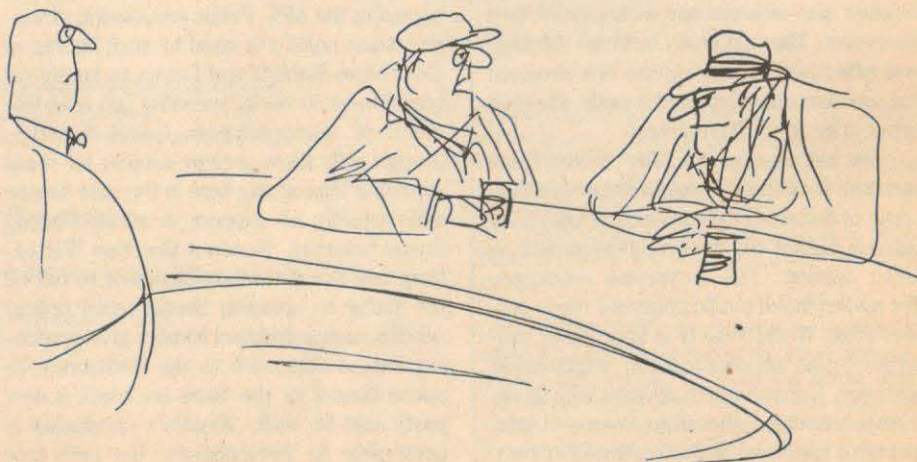
This is not simply a question of trading one set of contributions for another. To the contrary, the decline of the labor movement is central to the decline of the Democratic party at the polls and to its inability to formulate a policy to reverse the decline of the economy.

A close examination of the 1984 election, for instance, shows that labor's diminishing numbers played a major role in dooming the Democrats. The union vote, to be

sure, remains distinctly more Democratic than the nonunion. In 1984, union households supported the Democratic nominee by a margin 12 percent higher than the general electorate—the same margin that existed in the 1964, 1968, and 1976 elections. The union edge increases when we look at those constituencies that swung most sharply towards the Republicans. Thus, white blue-collar unionists voted for Mondale at a rate 20 percent higher than white blue-collar non-unionists. As for that most fretted-over swing constituency, southern white males, the CBS/*New York Times* exit poll showed that the 89 percent of southern white male voters who were nonunionists favored Reagan by a margin of 77 to 23 percent. The 11 percent who were union members favored Mondale, 50 to 49 percent.

For all the inadequacies of unions' political programs, then, the Democrats' electoral problem is not so much waning support among unionists for Democratic candidates as it is the declining number of workers enrolled in unions. It is the decline in union members, more than anything else, that explains why a united Democratic party could not do better for Walter Mondale than a divided Democratic party could do for Hubert Humphrey in 1968 or George McGovern in 1972. If the 1984 election were replayed with the percentage of the workforce organized at its postwar high of 35.5 percent rather than the 18.8 percent at which it stood last year, Mondale would have received not 40.6 but 49.6 percent of the vote, the Democrats would control the Senate—and, just conceivably, might have a political agenda.

Indeed, MIT economists Richard Freeman and James Medoff have observed that each one percent decline in union member-



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"What the hell do you mean you're a Reagan liberal?"

Prospects for the New Jerusalem

by Maurice Isserman

ship within a given state makes that state's Congressional delegation almost one percent (0.86 percent) more resistant to union-backed legislation. More generally, the Western European experience makes clear that unions are the key force in thwarting reversion to an unmitigated market economy and in counterposing more egalitarian models of growth. Even in the United States, it is the Auto Workers and the Machinists who have formulated "the most participatory forms of industrial policy.

And yet, though these plans were formulated during the Reagan years, they have been far from central to the mainstream left's response to the Reagan onslaught. Over the past four years, unions, minority groups, feminists, peace and environmental organizations—often separately, sometimes together—have battled the reversion to a pre-New Deal America. Their criticism of the inadequacies of the centrist Democratic alternative (necessarily the chief focus during the Carter years) has been muted. If it accomplished nothing else, though, the Mondale campaign made painfully clear the cost of those inadequacies. The lesson of the election is that, as Lear told Cordelia, nothing will come of nothing.

The good news, then, is not merely that the democratic left has sharpened its criticism of Democratic vacuity. It is also that the common agenda of the left is growing as a changing union movement moves further from the old Meanyite cold war verities to a closer alliance with the movements of the sixties and seventies. It is also that those Democratic officials who share the left's critique of the party's rightward lurch are represented disproportionately in the key Senate races of 1986.

The task before the democratic left, then, is to bolster all its elements, to bring them together to create a tendency that stands clearly for a democratized economy—growth through equity is the catchphrase that many have used—and in opposition to reaction on social and foreign policy. This is a task that must be undertaken at the local level across the nation, in the electoral arena on behalf of those candidates who have opposed the conservative drift within the party. It is a task that must be undertaken in the

arena of national political discourse. For the profound disarray of the center has made it much more urgent and (at last) a little more possible to reconstitute the American left. ●

Harold Meyerson is a California-based political consultant. He serves on the NEC.

Shortly after I arrived in Bournemouth I found myself standing in line with other foreign visitors to receive fraternal delegate credentials. An Asian gentleman ahead of me turned around, studied the DSA fist-and-rose button on my lapel in a thoughtful manner, and then asked, "D-S-A? Democratic Socialists of America? Michael Harrington?" I thought he was doing pretty well with two out of three correct. It turned out he was in Bournemouth as the representative of the "Chinese Association for International Understanding" from Beijing, a highly-skilled professional conference-goer who knew the ins and outs of even the most obscure affiliates of the Socialist International (one of which, of course, I had the honor of representing). I didn't find anyone else as knowledgeable on that particular subject in my next five days in Bournemouth. Most Labour party delegates I met seemed astonished, and a few openly amused, to learn that there were *any* socialists in Reagan's America.

To be fair to our British comrades, I can understand why they might have overlooked DSA's role in American political life. After all, they control a third of the seats in Parliament as well as city governments in major cities. We have a long way to go till we get to where they are.

Labour Party Crisis

So coming to this conference as DSA's representative, and listening to Labour party leaders and activists debate the "crisis" in their ranks, it took me awhile to overcome my gut reaction—namely "What crisis? We should only have such problems." And yet, the more I listened, the more I began to think that despite the discrepancies in size and importance of our two movements, the dilemmas facing the Labour party seemed all too familiar. Large or small, socialist movements need to strike the proper balance between principle and pragmatism, between posturing and expediency, between what satisfies the party faithful as they gather together in the warmth and excitement and fraternity of a political conference, and what will be of most use to the party as it goes on to face the cold, harsh and uncongenial reali-

ties of campaigns and elections. As the Labour party's leader Neil Kinnock put it in his keynote address to the conference, "power without principles is ruthless, sour, empty, vicious," while "principle without power is idle sterility."

On the face of it, the Labour party's prospects in the next general Parliamentary elections, due to be held in two years, should be excellent. The Tories, under Margaret Thatcher's leadership, have been in power

"Large or small, socialist movements need to strike the proper balance between principle and pragmatism, between posturing and expediency."

since 1979 and have led Britain into economic and social disaster. The latest official unemployment figures reveal that one in seven Britons are without jobs, the highest level since the 1930s (a figure which matches the current unemployment rate for black Americans). The north of Britain, home of the nation's heavy industry, has been particularly hard-hit. In Liverpool unemployment stands at over 25 percent, and a survey of economic problems by the European Economic Community placed the Merseyside region's economic wellbeing just above that of Sicily and Sardinia. Under the Tories, Britain's north has become part of Europe's "south." Not surprisingly, high levels of unemployment have brought with them an epidemic of drug addiction, racial tension, and a pervasive sense uniting older unemployed workers and young people searching for their first job that they are all part of a "lost generation" in British society. All of which should provide fertile soil for the cultivation of Labour's electoral prospects.

But, as is also no news, things are never that simple. Hard times have bred despair as well as anger, and cynicism as well as resolve. Public opinion polls this past summer



PREVENT STREET CRIME

and through the early fall revealed that the chief political beneficiary of all of this distress has been the "Alliance," the electoral coalition formed by the old Liberal party and the new Social Democratic party (the latter founded as a rightwing split from the Labour party). Had a general election been held in September 1985, the most likely result would have been a "hung Parliament," with no party holding a majority of MPs. As the party in the middle, the Alliance would be able to dictate terms for a coalition government with either Labour or, more likely, the Tories. Alliance leaders, who are very skillful politicians, portray themselves as standing "above politics." Their basic message bears a striking resemblance to the "neoliberal" camp in our own Democratic party. Politicians, ideologies, special interests, so the refrain goes, have brought us to disaster; what is needed is a corps of rational administrators to set things right. Labour and the Tories are both class-based parties that seek to divide society: the Alliance will pursue policies which bring the classes together and serve the collective national interest. Alliance leaders would fit in well in contempo-

rary American politics: they understand the importance of "image," even if the actual policies they would pursue in office remain somewhat of a mystery. The voters, in any case, seemed to like it, and the blow-dried specter of the Alliance leered over the shoulders of Labour party delegates as they gathered in Bournemouth at the end of September.

High Noon

Party leader Neil Kinnock, a somewhat colorless political technician in the center of the party, took and won a desperate political gamble at Bournemouth. In the weeks before the conference the newspapers had billed it as a battle to the death between Kinnock and leftwing union leader Arthur Scargill, usually predicting Scargill the victor. Last year, Scargill's mineworkers fought a prolonged, epic but doomed strike against the Tory government's plans to close down a number of the nationalized coal mines. The police and courts did their worst: thousands of strikers were jailed, and hundreds lost their jobs. Despite some misgivings—even within the trade union movement—over

Scargill's tactics (most notably his decision to launch the strike without benefit of a strike vote), the heroism and endurance displayed by the miners and their families eventually won a considerable measure of public sympathy. Scargill's miners may have become popular, but Scargill himself did not, except among his miners and among the Labour party's left. In the aftermath of the strike's defeat, he was not content to lick his wounds in private. Instead, he announced his intention to bring a resolution before the Labour party conference which would require any future Labour government to review the cases of all miners imprisoned or fired for their strike activities, and reimburse the National Union of Mineworkers for the fines levelled on it by the courts during the strike. Kinnock was willing to accept the first part of the resolution but not the second. He argued that taking on such a commitment to "retrospective legislation" would only lend ammunition to the Tories as they sought to portray the Labour party as the tool of union "bosses," and as a haven for dangerous radicals who would ignore the law and the courts whenever it suited their purposes. Scargill, supported by both the Labour party left and by the usually conservative trade unions, had the votes. The Tory press confidently predicted Kinnock's humiliation when the miners' resolution came up for a vote on the fourth day of the conference.

But Kinnock took the press and the conference by surprise by not waiting until the fourth day to make his move. In his keynote address on the afternoon of the third day of the conference, Kinnock slashed into the Militant Tendency (a Trotskyist grouping in the party) for their conduct in running the Liverpool city government. In Liverpool, as in other cities, Labour governments have had to contend with spending and taxing limits imposed by Parliament, so-called "rate-capping." In most cities Labour governments have attempted to offset the impact of rate-capping by juggling their budgets so that they could maintain as many services and lay off as few workers as possible. In Liverpool, under the Militant Tendency's influence, the city government kept spending at previous levels, and simply announced to the city work force that at the end of the year the money would run out and they would all be laid off—some 31,000 teachers, firemen, police officers and other public workers, all told. The tactic was supposed to force the Tories to back down on rate-capping, but since the only people who would suffer in the ensuing debacle would be the public workers and the residents of a Labour-dominated city, Thatcher showed no inclination to blink. Instead of backing this ploy, Liverpool's unions went to court to force the city government to

withdraw the redundancy notices. Kinnock lambasted the Militant Tendency for seeking to commit the Labour party to "impossible promises." The Labour party could do absolutely nothing for workers in Liverpool or anywhere else in Britain if it did not meet the precondition of winning the next general election:

If our response to...despair and anger is to chant slogans, if we give the impression that if we make enough noise the walls of Tory Jericho will fall, then we will not convince people and we will not deserve to convince people.

Kinnock delivered this speech with great emotional force and great oratorical skill. When he finished he received a prolonged standing ovation from the delegates, and the scattered boos of Militant Tendency supporters could barely be heard. I don't think anyone in the hall failed to understand that Scargill, rather than the Militant Tendency, was Kinnock's real target. Many who cheered Kinnock that afternoon did so fully intending to vote against him the next morning when the miners' reimbursement issue came up for debate (as expected, the resolution did pass, though by a smaller majority than predicted). But Kinnock had successfully deflated the media hype over the reimbursement issue, consolidated his own support within the party, and evidently done a great deal to persuade a skeptical British electorate that a British Labour government would not be weak, divided, or irresponsible. Polls taken in the immediate aftermath of Kinnock's speech showed that Labour had jumped to first place, the preference of nearly 40 percent of British voters, while the Tories trailed by 6 or 7 percentage points and the Alliance shambled along in a miserable and insignificant third place. Kinnock has proved himself the leader of the Labour party—but the Labour party has shown that it is still willing to tell him, publicly, when it thinks he's wrong. And that is, perhaps, the best of all possible situations for the party in the aftermath of the Bournemouth conference.

Foreign Policy Impact

A lot can happen between now and the next general election, which is not due to take place until late 1987 or early 1988. But if the Alliance bubble has burst, the Tories continue to falter, and Labour comes to power, what can be expected from a Kinnock-led Labour government? Labour has launched a public relations offensive, called the "Jobs and Industry campaign," to publicize its economic proposals. Stripped of hyperbole, these proposals are not the stuff of the New Jerusalem. A Labour government would restore Thatcher's cuts in the welfare state, renationalize the industries denationalized by

the Tories, establish a minimum wage, undertake public works projects, and establish various programs and policies designed to shift investment into deserving regions and industries. Labour's greatest domestic impact would probably be felt through administration rather than legislation: getting rid of the Tory-hired union busters on the National Coal Board, for example. That all adds up to a decent but hardly radical domestic program, one that—at least in better years—the Democratic party would have been capable of endorsing. The most dramatic effects of a future Labour government might be felt in foreign relations. Although I was the only DSAer in Bournemouth, I was not the only American there. The American embassy sent a platoon of observers, who looked increasingly gloomy as the week wore on and the conference adopted resolutions reaffirming the Labour party's commitment to a "non-nuclear defense" of Britain, and condemning American policies in Central America. Kinnock has repeatedly stated that on his first day in office he would order that the cruise missiles in Britain be dismantled and shipped back to the United States. He has committed himself to dramatic cutbacks in nuclear weapons systems that would go a long way toward making Britain a nuclear-scarce if not a completely nuclear-free zone. Perhaps some skepticism is in order. The US government has means to encourage pragmatists like Kinnock to forget about certain campaign promises. But it is my impression from talking to many people at Bournemouth that this is one set of issues Kinnock is not personally inclined to compromise on. And on this particular issue, even political expediency might argue for defying the US. Look at David Lange, the Labour party leader and prime minister of New Zealand, whose domestic policies lean more towards Thatcher

than they do to the resolutions passed at Bournemouth. His personal popularity in New Zealand is soaring because of his defiance of the United States and France on nuclear weapons issues. I doubt that Lange's triumph has escaped Kinnock's attention. Suppose for a moment that a Labour government is in power in Britain in the spring of 1988 and actually begins a process of nuclear disarmament. For the first time in history a member of the nuclear club will show that it is possible to dispense with all the cant and hypocrisy and mumbo jumbo of "arms limitation" negotiations, and simply start to disarm. What would be the impact on world opinion? On the fortunes of the peace movement in America, Europe, and even in the Soviet bloc? What would be the impact on the Democratic convention in the summer of 1988 and on the presidential election the following November?

American reform movements have long owed a debt of gratitude to their British counterparts. The growth of the British movement against slavery in the early 19th century did much to inspire the organization of an American abolitionist movement. The adoption of new and creative tactics by British suffragists at the beginning of the 20th century did much to inspire the revival of the American women's suffrage movement. And perhaps—just perhaps, because ultimately it depends more on us than it does on them—a British Labour party victory over Thatcherism will help inspire and will foreshadow our defeat of Reaganism in 1988. ●

Maurice Isserman is a member of the Smith College history department, and is teaching this fall at the University of Sussex in England. He attended the Labour party's annual conference September 29-October 4 as DSA's representative.

ON THE GREENPEACE AFFAIR

The following is the text of a telegram sent by DSA co-chair Michael Harrington to French President Francois Mitterrand immediately after the Greenpeace attack, prior to subsequent revelations of government complicity.

As one who long supported you in your difficult and lonely political struggle before May, 1981, and who is in deep sympathy with your courageous fight to defend poor and working people even as you lead in the modernization of France, I appeal to you to end nuclear testing and to bring to justice all who were responsible for the attack on the Greenpeace ship. I fully appreciate the principled differences which separate us on the nuclear issue, but in the light of the current Geneva negotiations and the forthcoming Soviet-American summit I believe that a cessation of tests would give France greater and more positive influence in the world than any technical improvements in its deterrent force. As history honors Mendes-France for his unilateral initiative in Indochina in 1954, so it would honor you for a signal contribution to world peace in 1985.

ROOTS OF THE CRISIS

by Gay W. Seidman

A year ago, if you said South Africa was reaching a turning point, people responded incredulously: Americans had grown used to the idea that the South African government would brutally repress any opposition to minority rule, and would continue indefinitely to preserve apartheid. Today the statement sounds almost clichéd. But to say the situation is more fluid today than it has been for years begs further questions. How is the present crisis likely to develop? What can we expect to see in the next few months? And for those who believe only a democratic system will end the institutionalized violence that is apartheid, there is a third question: what can we do to block the government's efforts to preserve white supremacy?

Three main forces have shaped the current situation: internal resistance, government efforts to enact limited changes in the apartheid system, and international pressure on the economy. Perhaps the least under-

stood element in this country has been the roots of the current uprising. Foreign journalists tend to make regular comparisons with the 1976 "unrest," when high school students inspired by the Black Consciousness movement took to the streets. A common analysis of the present uprising rests on a generational argument, which suggests that the students we see in street demonstrations now are simply the latest age cohort to come up against the state. But this view is superficial at best.

The Black Consciousness movement was oriented towards intellectuals and activists; the students in 1976 were never very successful in mobilizing support from other parts of their communities, from workers or community groups. The roots of the present uprising lie in a much broader-based, grassroots mobilization; although activists across South Africa have been jailed, killed or forced to go underground, the uprising has not died down.

In 1977, the government was able to crush the Black Consciousness movement by detaining leaders and banning its organizations. Since then, activists have learned to

use another strategy. On one side, there has been the development of a strongly grassroots-based union movement; today, some 12 percent of the black work force belongs to unions, and many more workers feel allegiance to the union movement. On the other, there are a range of other types of groups, which have allowed activists to mobilize new groups in the black communities. There are tenant groups, formed to fight rent increases on government-owned housing; squatter communities, organized to resist forced removal to the bantustans; community organizations fighting increases in government-regulated fares on the buses that carry workers from black residential areas to industrial sites. There are women's organizations, which fight apartheid's impact on black South African families; and student groups, which object to the segregated system of inferior education.

To varying degrees, these groups have set up democratic structures and decision-making processes, and have learned to use what power they have to confront the regime directly. Unions, of course, use recent modifications in labor legislation to organize workers and back up their demands with both legal and illegal strikes. Tenants organize massive rent strikes, denying the local township authorities the funds they need for local administration. Commuters refuse to ride buses or trains, walking miles to work for months until the fare comes down. Students refuse to attend classes, or even more threateningly, organize their own learning groups inside the school buildings. Since late 1979, groups have also learned to coordinate their struggles and strategies in specific campaigns. Obviously, linkage between different groups makes all of them stronger, and makes it harder for the government to crush resistance.

It would be misleading, I think, to talk about the rise in open mass-based resistance to apartheid in the last few years without talking about the rising awareness inside South Africa of an intensifying guerrilla struggle. Although strict censorship laws prohibit most descriptions of guerrilla activity inside the country, there can be no doubt that since the late 1970s, most anti-government activists have been aware of attacks by



Photo by Jim West

the armed wing of the African National Congress on police stations, oil refineries, electrical power stations and even military offices. During the 15 years after the ANC and other black political groups were banned in 1960, the ANC's armed wing slowly built up an underground network, infiltrating, according to Western intelligence reports, some 2,000 trained guerrillas into the country by 1980. Certainly, this effort was aided by changes in the whole Southern Africa region: the independence of Angola and Mozambique in 1975 and '76, and the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, removed the buffer belt of colonial states that had once protected South Africa's and Namibia's borders from guerrilla infiltration.

By 1979, an independent report published in South Africa argued that the country was already engaged in a low-intensity war,

1981, this awareness was heightened by an apparent conscious strategy on the part of guerrillas, who chose targets that could either damage the regime's economic or military capacity or that were directly linked to popular, open struggles.

For example, in 1983, there were attacks on police stations, Bantu administration buildings, electric power stations and railways. But the two attacks that stood out were the bombing of the air force and military intelligence headquarters in Pretoria, and the destruction of the "consulate" of the nominally-independent Ciskei in Johannesburg at a time when the Ciskei authorities were involved in brutally repressing a bus boycott, which underlined the links between the Ciskei and white-ruled South Africa, and which showed the links between popular resistance and guerrilla activity.

There is little doubt that the growth of visible support for the ANC during this period is partly linked to the impression made by such attacks on young activists: from the early '80s, ANC slogans and songs appeared more and more regularly at meetings and rallies, and the ANC colors, green, gold and black, began to appear at activists' funerals.

But the ANC's influence goes beyond the armed struggle; the ANC is both a political and a military movement, and in fact places as much emphasis on the role of popular struggle as it does on military opposition to the regime. From about 1980, the ANC's influence on political activity became increasingly evident: many of the community and union groups which emerged expressed a clear commitment to the non-racial, democratic tradition of the ANC. Turning away from the Black Consciousness approach, which argued that blacks had to create separate organizations within the black community, activists in the early '80s argued that anyone willing to fight for majority rule, including progressive whites, should be able to find a place in the movement.

In 1980, a campaign to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, adopted as the ANC's fundamental principles in the late 1950s, allowed activists—including older ANC activists, who had been involved in the movement when it was still legal and who were emerging after long jail sentences or bannings—a forum in which to discuss the ANC's approach to the liberation of South Africa. The Freedom Charter begins, "South Africa belongs to those who live in it, both black and white," and calls for one-person, one vote in a unitary state, as well as for the nationalization of monopolies and land reform.

The clearest indication both of the resurgence of popular organization and of the growing importance of the ANC came in



Photo by Jim West

1983, with the formation of the United Democratic Front—today, the organization most clearly suffering from government attempts at repression. A coalition of more than 600 groups, the UDF allowed any group that wished to affiliate to join a broad front opposing the new constitution—including groups with white members. By creating a non-racial democratically organized front against the regime, the UDF hoped to plant the seeds of the new order within the old. Although the UDF's leaders and members are overwhelmingly black (a term that encompasses people classified "Asian" and "coloured" as well as "African"), a few sympathetic whites have also participated actively. More symbolically, perhaps, but also important, the UDF chose as patrons for the fledgling organization all the longterm ANC prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, and Helen Joseph, a white woman who spent some 20 years under house arrest for her resistance activities.

The UDF's formation and strategy can only be understood in the context of government initiatives during the late '70s and early '80s. In the late '70s, the South African state embarked on what was called a "total strat-



and the government was already talking about the need to build up its defense capacity against ANC guerrillas. In 1981 and 1982, there appears to have been an average of a guerrilla attack every two weeks somewhere in the country. The ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, is well known for its efforts to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties, but its attacks on empty government buildings and on military personnel, including police, undoubtedly offered activists a new sense of the possibilities of armed struggle against the regime. From about

egy," designed to meet the total onslaught it believed was coming from the north. Recognizing the inherent tensions in the old apartheid system, which allowed the growth of an urban black working class that had no stake at all in the status quo, government commissions began to recommend granting limited rights to urban blacks, while speeding up the process of cutting the 13 percent of the land area set aside as bantustans off from white-ruled South Africa. You can find the same approach in statements by P.W. Botha even today: on one side, he will grant limited autonomy to black residential areas, but on the other, he insists on retaining the Group Areas Act, under which different areas are set aside for each racial classification.

Alongside this limited autonomy, however, went an increase in the power of the central government: even white parliamentary opposition leaders, who reject one-person one-vote, say the new constitution grants dictatorial powers to the executive. Elections might be held for representatives to black urban councils or Asian or Coloured houses of parliament, but the white minority government would continue to decide the issues on which those bodies could vote, limiting the power of those elected representatives to participation in meaningless shop talk. This August, when the international community responded with horror at State President Botha's refusal to consider a democratic system for South Africa, the leader of the white parliamentary opposition, Van Zyl Slabbert, commented, "P.W. Botha has never lied about what he intends doing... Anyone who believes P.W. is trying to bring about a major political reform is a victim of his own wishful thinking."

Leaders in the United Democratic Front would undoubtedly agree with Van Zyl Slabbert's analysis; in fact, they began to argue along these lines when the government first began discussing a new constitution in late 1982. They believed that the effort to create separate autonomous bodies could divide black opposition: people classified Asian and Coloured might be split off from the broad movement, while urban blacks might be split off from people living in rural areas or working as migrant laborers. Further, they argued that any participation in elections for new black urban councils or Asian and Coloured houses of parliament might create a stratum in black communities that derived its power from the apartheid system, and would therefore defend that system.

From 1983, the UDF began to mobilize its nearly two million members to oppose the new constitutional proposals, calling for a complete boycott of any forms of administration that were imposed on the black population. Only a constitution drawn up by what

the UDF calls the "authentic leaders" of the country's population would be acceptable; and that means, UDF leaders say, that it must include leaders who have been jailed or forced into exile because of their demands for majority rule.

The UDF strategy of boycotting elections was overwhelmingly successful, with voter turnouts of one percent in many parts of the country. But in September 1984, the new constitution went into effect anyway. The opposition movement broadened its strategy: instead of simply refusing to participate in new administrative bodies, it tried to make the new system unworkable. Black councilors and Asian and Coloured parliamentary delegates were asked to resign; those who did not were threatened with property or personal damage. Today, only two townships still have functioning town

through townships.

Most of the UDF's national leadership now faces treason charges, for promoting a pre-revolutionary climate; nearly 200 UDF activists have disappeared or been found dead over the last year. But across the country, local groups continue to come up with tactics suitable to their organizations and local contexts, sometimes imitating other areas' efforts, sometimes inventing new techniques for making the country ungovernable.

From the late '70s, while the government carried out limited modifications in apartheid, it also began to build up its military capacity in earnest, recognizing and sometimes overstating the threat from guerrilla activity. Its defense of Namibia, the colony South Africa controls illegally, today involves about \$2 million daily, and some 100,000 white troops in an area with a population of



"I'm worried about the effect of sanctions on our economic situation."

councils. Townships near Johannesburg refused to pay rent increases, which were to fund the new administrative bodies; those rent strikes quickly turned into massive demonstrations, leading to a two-day stay-away in November that crippled the nation's industrial center.

In early 1984, ANC president O.R. Tambo called on the country to make itself ungovernable; by the end of the year, it was clear that that strategy was succeeding. The "unrest" had spread into small towns in rural areas; in larger townships, resistance continued despite military occupation of the streets. Local administration and control was virtually impossible: by the middle of 1985, not only whites but blacks who worked for the regime could no longer move safely

only a million. It has steadily built up defenses along the other borders, and become about 75 percent self-sufficient in arms production. It also began a concerted policy of destabilizing neighboring states, with direct bombing raids, assassinations, and support of contra groups against neighboring governments who support the liberation movement. Support for a contra group in Mozambique led to the 1984 Nkomati Accords, where Mozambique finally agreed to restrict ANC activities inside its borders; but recent evidence proves conclusively that South Africa continued to fund the contra group anyway, apparently figuring that a trouble-free Mozambique on its borders could still provide a dangerous example of socialist development policies. South African invasions of

Angola over the past ten years have cost Angola over \$10 billion in damages, to say nothing of lives lost and homes destroyed.

Inside South Africa, military input into decision-making bodies has increased dramatically, so that military advisers sit on every city council and a state security council advises the cabinet. By 1984, the South African military budget was up to R 3.75 billion, about half a billion more than the combined budgets for health, social welfare, tertiary education and all black education.

This military build-up has been costly: South Africa now owes some \$20 billion to foreign banks, and has become increasingly dependent on foreign technology in its effort to be self-sufficient in arms and energy production. It is because of this dependency that the state of emergency has proved disastrous for the regime: international concern over the murders of some 700 people by police turned to outrage at the imposition of the state of emergency.

Today, it is difficult for even the Reagan administration to claim that Botha's reforms mean very much; even *Fortune* magazine no longer considers South Africa's strategic minerals crucial to American interests. International sanctions may not have much practical impact on South Africa, but they will make possible investors wary. Already in the grips of a deep recession, and already in debt, South Africa cannot pull out of the recession without new sources of capital—and that capital is unlikely to appear while the "unrest" continues. When South Africa announced a moratorium on debt repayments, causing massive panic among foreign investors in South Africa's gold mines, it became clear that the country's economy was teetering on the brink.

Into this conflict between growing internal resistance and an apparently intransigent government stepped a third force: South African and multinational capital, which in recent months has begun to look for new alternatives. Unlike Botha, who must answer to a white electorate, and unlike the ANC, which believes that majority rule must involve some redistribution of South Africa's assets, South Africa's business community is likely to seek a centrist solution. In Zimbabwe, the terms of the Lancaster House agreement have limited the government's ability to nationalize large resources or carry out widespread land reform; South African businesspeople are already beginning to think about a similar deal, where blacks could elect the government but where private property would be protected. A recent meeting in Lusaka between businessmen and the ANC failed to produce much common ground, since the ANC leaders told their visitors that their businesses, all large conglomerates,

would have to be nationalized when the Freedom Charter is implemented. On their return to South Africa, the businessmen appear to have returned to an earlier effort to push the government to abandon racial discrimination before it is too late.

At the same time, there seems to be significant business support for a new grouping, the Convention Alliance, which is trying to bring black leaders inside the country together with moderate white politicians to discuss possible forms of future governance. By mid-October, this alliance seemed to have little hope of succeeding: only Gatsha Buthelezi, head of the KwaZulu bantustan who is widely hated for the way his followers attack and sometimes kill activists who reject the bantustan system, had agreed to join the new group. UDF leaders were unwilling to join the alliance, arguing that while their "authentic" leaders remain in jail or in exile no negotiations can be meaningful. Without the UDF's participation, it seems unlikely that the Convention Alliance will amount to a serious option.

Where does this description leave us? Neither resistance nor apartheid is likely to disappear overnight; at the moment, it seems probable that the struggle will continue for years, until there are free and open elections, and representative black leaders have some say in designing the system of government. In this scenario, what can the international community do? So far, international pressure has proved to be of immeasurable importance, more in staying the government's repressive actions than in forcing meaningful concessions. If we stop now—if

we let international attention turn away from South Africa, where two or three people are dying daily already—the process of attaining a non-racial, democratic future could take much, much longer. In 1960 and 1976, international capital pulled out because of internal resistance; in both cases it returned, helping the state build up its ability to repress and control the black population.

As long as we continue to fight for sanctions, as long as we push institutional investors to put more pressure on American companies, we deny the South African regime the capital it needs for its economy; we deny the regime the technology it would need to make its repressive apparatus even more efficient. And we deny the minority regime an important psychological prop, its confidence that in the end, the United States will back the minority government against some mythical communist threat. If we allow Congress to aid Angolan contras, we help South Africa protect its borders against guerrilla attacks; if we allow Reagan to make distinctions between black South African leaders who have used violent and non-violent tactics, we help South Africa divide the resistance movement. South Africa will be free; there will be a non-racial democratic future, no matter what happens in the United States. But what we do can certainly help make that day come sooner. ●

Gay Seidman is a member of East Bay DSA and a leader of the U.C. Berkeley Divestment Coalition. She has lived and worked in southern Africa at various times during the last eight years.



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ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

NEWS FROM ABROAD

Prime Minister Olof Palme and his Social Democratic party won 45 percent of the votes and 159 seats to maintain control of the Swedish Parliament. With the help of the Communists, who vote with the Socialists and won 19 seats, Palme has a 7-seat majority in the 349-seat Riksdag.

The turnout of voters exceeded 90 percent. The conservative "Moderates" lost ground while the more centrist Liberal party jumped to 14.4 percent from 5.9 percent. Palme interpreted the victory as a strong endorsement of the welfare state and the rejection of the free-enterprise policies of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the U.S.A.

Meanwhile, although the conservative coalition in Norway was re-elected with 78 seats, the Labor party and its ally, the Socialist Left party, won 77 seats and a majority of the vote.

The new president of Peru, Alan Garcia Perez, strongly criticized the International Monetary Fund at the United Nations. When Secretary of State George Shultz took offense at Garcia's talk, Garcia replied: "The IMF has a theory on deficits which apparently applies to Peru or Guinea-Bissau, but not to the United States. The U.S. has the largest deficit in history and we haven't heard anything from the IMF." Garcia's party (APRA) is a member of the Socialist International.

NATIONAL ROUNDUP

California

New branches of the Los Angeles DSA Local were formed this summer in the Hollywood and Highland Park-Pasadena areas... The Feminist Committee sponsored an August retreat on Feminism and DSA... William Winpisinger, DSAer and Machinist president, will speak at the initial luncheon meeting of DSA's Labor Committee October 30... LA DSA has a new paid staffer, Bob Bockwinkel. He replaces Marshall Mayer, who is now National Campus

Organizer for PRO Peace... In June, more than 600 members and friends attended the Debs-Sinclair dinner honoring Raoul Teihet... That same month, seven members of the DSA West Side Affinity Group were among the 70 people arrested at the June action of the Pledge of Resistance... Over 50 DSA members and friends walked precincts to elect Mike Woo to the LA City Council... DSA joined with the Free South Africa Movement in a rally October 12 against apartheid... San Diego DSA heard Greg Akili, co-chair of the SD Campaign Against Apartheid, talk in September on the struggle in South Africa... DSAer Virginia Franco and San Diego Machinist Union activist Martin del Campo were part of a union delegation to Nicaragua in July.

District of Columbia

The September DC/MD DSA meeting heard American University Professor Phil Brenner on "Do You Want a Soviet Base in Nicaragua? How to Answer Your Neighbor"... Northern Virginia DSA watched Bobbe Robbins show South Africa slides at its September meeting... The *Democratic Socialist*, published by DC/MD/Northern Virginia DSA, featured an interview with Victor Reuther, its Debs-Thomas dinner honoree on October 17... Northern Virginia DSA has joined the AFL-CIO in backing Virginia State Senator L. Douglas Wilder, the first black to win the Democratic party's nomination for Lieutenant Governor.

Iowa

DSAer Tim Sodawasser is running for reelection to the Davenport City Council. Representing Ward 5, Tim is Iowa's only socialist elected official... A forum on "Economic Development in Iowa City—Alternatives to the Chamber of Commerce" was held in September under the sponsorship of Iowa City Democratic Socialists and University Democratic Socialists. Speakers included Peter Fisher, Regional Planning, University of Iowa; Mike Sheehan, Iowa Rate-Payers Assn.; Michael Kyte, transit consultant; Jeff Cox, moderator; Clemens Erdahl, Iowa City Councilman; and Tim Sodawasser, Davenport City Councilman.

Kentucky

Photographer Steve Cagan and farmer Hall Hamilton spoke on their visits to Nicaragua at the September meeting of Central Kentucky DSA in Lexington...

The local joined in National Anti-Apartheid Protest Day October 11.

Massachusetts

Boston DSA's annual convention was held at the University of Massachusetts in September. Connected with it was a weekend New England DSA Leadership School... A Public Employees brunch was held in late September in Somerville and the local is continuing its economic policy discussions in Brookline.

New York

Doug Bullock, treasurer of the Albany County AFL-CIO and active in the Public Employees Federation, and Barbara Charles, first vice-president of CSEA Local 670, will be recipients of Albany DSA's Eugene V. Debs Award at a dinner November 23. Featured speaker will be Lillian Roberts, New York State Commissioner of Labor... New York State DSA held its first meeting September 14-15 in Sand Lake near Albany. Represented were the Albany, Ithaca, Nassau, New York City and Westchester locals. Absent were Suffolk, Rochester and Buffalo. Jack Robbins of Westchester was chosen chair, Larry Wittner of Albany secretary. The state group will coordinate lobbying in Albany, statewide electoral campaigns and campaigns involving more than one local. The next state meeting will be January 4-5 in New York City... Both Ithaca DSA and student-oriented Cornell DSA are active in electoral politics, and several DSAers are on the Tompkins County Democratic Committee... The Nassau and Suffolk DSA locals have taken the first step toward reorganization that may stimulate the birth of several new locals to meet the problem of geographic spread... The Nassau study group holds Saturday seminars that will meet October 26, November 2, 16, and December 7 and 21 at the UAW/65 headquarters in Hicksville... The Democratic Socialist Club at the City University held a debate on "Left Attitudes Toward Nicaragua," with Ron Radosh and Bogdan Denitch as speakers... New York DSA has hired Paul Baer as its half-time organizer... New York State has joined seven others in adopting a law permitting employers, with union approval, to use unemployment insurance to supplement voluntary work-sharing. The Workers Defense League spearheaded the drive, with the aid of the state AFL-CIO, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, the National

Organization for Women, the National Urban League, the NAACP and the NY City Labor-Religion Coalition. How does the program work? A firm which had to lay off 20 of its 100 workers toiling 40 hours a week could instead give 32 hours a week to all 100, who then would get unemployment compensation for the fifth day. What's more, all would still get such fringe benefits as health insurance. Experience of states with this approach reveals that it reduces tension and bitterness between black and white workers, and men and women workers (minorities and women are usually last-hired and first-fired), and shows that Americans can be innovative in caring for people. Short-time compensation, which California, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Florida, Maryland and Texas have also adopted, is no magic formula for ending unemployment. We still need effective fiscal and other policies for full employment.

Ohio

Cleveland State University DSA will hear Steve Cagan October 17 on "Art and Politics." A university debate is planned for the winter between Mike Harrington and Representative Jack Kemp... The Beacon Education Fund and Cleveland State University will hold a Fred Small and Betsy Rose concert October 27... The DSA monthly women's brunch will discuss Women and Pornography... The Cleveland local held its annual retreat September 22... Black Swamp DSA met in September in Holland to plan outreach programs for the coming year. It backed the anti-apartheid rally in Toledo last month.

Oregon

When sales tax proponents mailed out a 16-page color comic to Oregon voters, Corvallis DSA counter-attacked with its own 4-page comic strip blasting "Oregon's Sales Tax Scam." Oregon voters responded by decisively voting down the sales tax (maybe DSA's comic strip wasn't the only reason)... Corvallis DSA members are teaching an experimental college class on socialism at Oregon State University... The Central American Task Force, the Corvallis Organization for South African Freedom and the OSU student government sponsored a series of anti-apartheid events October 10-11... Mike Harrington spoke at many meetings in Portland September 12-13.

He also spoke at Reed College, Pacific University, Lewis and Clark Law School, a meeting with unionists hosted by Oregon AFL-CIO President Irv Fletcher and DSA-

er Leila Wrathall, and a Wine and Political Ferment DSA benefit with an informal tasting of wines from the cooperative vineyards of Socialist-led Greece, France, Italy and Spain.

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia DSA holds a forum October 18 on "Must Workers Sacrifice Their Hard-Won Gains?" Speakers include Thomas Paine Cronin, president, AFSCME District 47; Richard Smith, Machinists Local 1864 shop steward; and Donna Ford, executive vice-president, Dist. 1199-C, National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers... DSA helped launch a Fair Share Coalition, whose first meeting enrolled over 25 organizations. The focus of its position paper, "Toward a Better Working and Living Climate," deals with the city's budget issues... The *Allegheny Socialist*, published by Pittsburgh DSA, featured an article on "Gandhi Comes to Dorothy Six," about non-violence planning for steelworkers trying to save the Duquesne Works from demolition by its owner, U.S. Steel...

Rhode Island

Rhode Island DSA and the Community Labor Coalition (CLOC) are working on a bill requiring advance notice of plant closings and even more at preventing closings and keeping existing jobs... DSA is backing the labor boycott of TV Channel 6, which refuses to bargain fairly with Local 1228 I.B.E.W.

Texas

Approximately 100 people attended Houston DSA's showing of "The Battle of

Chile," a documentary on the military overthrow of the democratically elected Marxist, Salvador Allende, and his Popular Unity government...

50 YEARS LATER

Fifty years ago, when Norman Thomas was speaking at a black church in Birdsong, Arkansas to support the newly-organized Southern Tenant Farmers Union, he was forced to leave the platform by a mob of armed and drunken planters.

It's supposedly all ancient history now, and this year the mayor and city council of Birdsong held a meeting to honor Norman Thomas, and the state of Arkansas plans to erect a historical marker dedicated to Thomas and founders of the STFU.

STAFF NOTES

After seven years as managing editor of DEMOCRATIC LEFT, Maxine Phillips is turning in her red pencil and taking up another one. She will become managing editor of DISSENT in January. Guy Molyneux succeeds her at DL and will be aided by an editorial committee composed of Stanley Aronowitz, Joanne Barkan, Gerald Hudson, Maxine Phillips, and Jan Rosenberg.

We want to welcome Gary Lucek aboard as DSA's new Financial Manager. Gary is a graduate of Columbia University, where he was active in the DSA Youth Section. Until recently, he served on the staff of gay activist David Rothenberg's unsuccessful campaign for New York City Council. We expect him to be a valuable addition to our staff, and look forward to working with him.

RESOURCES

The summer issue of *Religious Socialism* features articles on "The Metaphysics of Respect," dealing with the Bishops' Letter on the Economy; short definitions of religious socialism; "Socialism and Abortion"; "Marx, Praxis & Alienation"; and "Notes for a Left Agenda." Subs at \$5 per year available from IDS/Religious Socialism, 1 Maolis Road, Nahant, MA 01908.

Comparable Worth: The Road to Pay Equity has just been published by the Long Island Progressive Coalition. Copies are available from LIPC, P.O. Box 384, Hicksville, N.Y. 11802. A small contribution to cover mailing and handling costs would be appreciated.

Toward Economic Justice for Women: A National Agenda for Change, on which DSA co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich worked, has been published by the Institute for Policy Studies. It is an analysis of the feminization of poverty, with a programmatic response. \$4 from IPS, 1901 Q St. NW, Washington, DC 20009.

Media Network has recently published a *Guide to Films on Apartheid* that contains lively, evaluative descriptions of over 40 films, videotapes and slideshows on South Africa and the region. Available for \$2.50 from Media Network, 208 W. 13th St., New York, NY 10011. Bulk rates.

VISIONARY REALISM

by Michael Harrington

The American economy is in deep trouble. And the opposition does not know what to do about it. Those two facts define the greatest opportunity socialists in the United States have known for a generation.

In saying these things, I do not for a moment want to suggest that the Crash of 1986 is at hand. Indeed, it is quite possible that the fourth quarter of 1985 will be much more dynamic and positive from a Republican point of view than the three dismal earlier quarters. All I assert is that, sooner or later and perhaps sooner than many people think, the structural difficulties of the economy are going to create some serious problems. At that point alternatives will be on the agenda.

The Democrats are in utter disarray in the face of this momentous possibility. Paul Kirk and the Democratic National Committee have tended to treat the crisis of the party as if it were simply a matter of poor packaging in the 1980 and 1984 elections. The party right wing is in favor of building a second Republican party; the neoliberals are more discrete but they tend in the same direction.

Perhaps the most disgraceful moment in this sad history occurred last month when a major portion of the Democratic caucus in the Senate voted in favor of the bill to commit the nation to a balanced budget in 1991 and to switch constitutional authority over finances from Capitol Hill to the White House. There were names like Kennedy, Simon and Dodd in the majority that backed this return to the days of Herbert Hoover.

In voting for that bill, those Democrats joined the conspiracy of silence surrounding Ronald Reagan's responsibility for doubling the national debt in a mere term and a half in the Presidency.

The Senate behaved as if fiscal irresponsibility and big spenders were the culprits. In fact, the Reagan tax cut of 1981 structurally changed the internal revenue system so as to guarantee monster deficits; the cruel double digit unemployment figures of 1982 and 1983 cut federal revenues, increased expenditures, and radically raised the debt; Volker's monetary policy, which, one must never forget, we owe to Jimmy

Carter, fought inflation with high interest rates which all but brought the auto and construction industries to their knees; and an insane militarist policy increased expenditures even as we were cutting both food stamps and medical care for the working poor.

Many Democrats want to forget this outrageous history because they had a hand in promoting it. The congressional Democrats, for instance, tried to give away more money to the rich than the Republicans in 1981. They now compound that evasion by voting for a policy which takes us back to the good old days before Keynes, during the rule of Herbert Hoover.

What if there is a recession between now and 1991? If one cannot pinpoint when the next downturn will come, it is guaranteed



"Mmmm—reason for loan—'Want to keep the economy rolling.'..."

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that the economy will be in deep trouble prior to 1991. Are we then to decide in 1985 that the old-fashioned, pre-Keynesian virtues are to be imposed upon the economy no matter how many women and men are jobless in the streets? And if the answer to that question must clearly be "No," how exactly will the Democratic opposition carry out a policy of deficit spending when the deficit is approaching half a trillion dollars?

If ever there was a time when the democratic left must engage in bold new thinking about the economy, it is now. There are structural tendencies at work creating a two-tier economy with, of course, the bottom tier reserved primarily for minorities and women. The international debt crisis, which was supposed to be over, has come back with such force that even the Reagan administration has now admitted that global deflation is not quite the way to go. There is a depression in Silicon Valley and mighty IBM

has just announced that it is not doing too well. Meanwhile, the most savage attack on the standard of living of working people in a generation proceeds apace. And the Democratic party watches as some of its liberal leaders vote for... a balanced budget amendment!

I do not for a moment want to suggest that socialists have "the" answer to this crisis. I do emphatically argue that the debates at the DSA Convention will be infinitely more realistic than almost all of the discussions now taking place within the Democratic party. Consider just a few of our themes: repeal of the tax giveaways of the 1981 law; a solidaristic full employment policy aimed at improving the conditions of those at the bottom of the society, women and minorities above all; new productivity advances through significant worker participation in management or new forms of decentralized social ownership; the radical reduction of the working life as a means toward both greater freedom and full employment; a commitment to justice in the Third World which will protect American workers, but not multinationals, through worldwide reflation (we have the lead of Michael Manley's Socialist International report here).

There is no point in socialist arrogance. The anti-capitalist left in the United States managed to emerge from the Depression and the immediate post-War period weaker than it had been during the days of Eugene Debs; the greatest collapse of the system in history did not guarantee the political triumph of those who had been its most implacable, and often accurate critics. But we are moving toward a turning point in American society, and if DSA and its friends act with audacity and imagination there is now the possibility, not of our leading the society, but at least of our structurally changing our role within it.

In the foreseeable future, that possibility will be focused in the bankrupt Democratic party. The forces of the future are still assembled there, even if some liberal leaders are marching resolutely into the past. But when the dust settles, we, along with the rest of the Democratic left coalition, will either have created a new party, most likely with an old name, or we will have failed.

If we seize the opportunity, if we are as radical as the situation, and as realistic as America's utterly confused politics demand, we are on the eve of a new relevance. ●

LETTERS

Lighten Up

To the Editor:

Hoo, boy! If anyone ever wants to accuse Democratic Socialists of being insufferable bores, all they have to do is point to Maurice Isserman's "Beach Reading for Democratic Socialists" in your May-June issue.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not advocating reading flashy trash as represented by Ludlum, Michener or their ilk. But hasn't Isserman ever heard of—gasp!—fiction? You know, that's that unreal stuff that dreams are made of, quite a bit of which is written by people who actually have something to say on a political level.

With this in mind, I'd like to recommend a few personal favorites as an antidote to Isserman idiocy. These are books I've found to be well-written, entertaining, and politically stimulating (forgive me if they're not all "politically correct." I'm still not sure what that term means.) All are in paperback. To wit:

1. *The Ivankiad*, by Vladimir Voinovich, is the Russian emigre author's hilarious account of his attempts to get a two-room apartment in the Moscow Writers' Housing Cooperative. Written with the savagery of a Gogol, this is a tale of Russian bureaucracy gone mad, and one of the funniest books I've ever read.

2. *Germinal*, by Emile Zola. This novel about a French coal miner's strike remains one of the finest books about the proletariat ever written.

3. *The Word For World Is Forest*, by Ursula LeGuin. A science fiction allegory about the Vietnam War, and the horrors it created. Beautifully written.

4. *The Joke and The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, by Milan Kundera. Those who believe that Socialist societies should never be criticized will call this Czech expatriate a reactionary. Those with open minds will find that his poetic criticisms of Stalinism and its consequences are right-on.

5. *A Dry White Season*, by Andre Brink. A truly harrowing novel about political repression in South Africa, written by that country's foremost Afrikaans novelist.

6. Any of the "Jungle novels" by B. Traven. This six-book series (*Government, Rebellion of the Hanged*, etc.) by the mysterious leftist author is political rabble-rousing at its finest. All about the Mexican Revolution and the people who fought it.

Finally, if you *must* read nonfiction at the beach, may I recommend the best there

is? If you haven't already read 'em, both *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days That Shook the World* by John Reed are political reporting at its best: lively, engaged, entertaining, full of insights. Great stuff.

And hey, Maurice Isserman. Do us all a favor: lighten up!

Lewis Beale
Philadelphia, Pa.

Maurice Isserman replies:

Okay. All right. I'm forced to reveal the truth. I *did* go to the beach this summer, and rather than anything virtuous I read Norman Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (a good read, as they say in the trade, but definitely *not* politically correct). But hey, Lewis Beale, come on, lighten up yourself. If the self-mockery in "Beach Reading for Democratic Socialists" escapes you, maybe it's time you started worrying about your own sense of humor.

Socialist Reforms

To the Editor:

Michael Harrington's analysis of the U.S. economy and his appeal to the Democrats in Congress to adopt a left populist program ("Tax Follies Revisited," May-June '85) limits itself to the political and rhetorical angle. Why not go further and point, inde-

pendently, to socialist reforms needed and possible? Historically, the left always advanced reforms that were later adopted and carried into practice by the government. True, we are missing a strong left movement, but a left program by DSA may help rally such a movement...

The "Pied Piper" in the Oval office proclaims eternal prosperity and none challenge him. Reagan's prosperity is based on deficit spending, and that cannot absorb the mass of unemployed. All branches of government are now committed to deficit cutting, which must further shrink markets and industry and result in increased unemployment. The fatal flaw in our economic system is that it needs constant expansion to absorb the human labor freed through greater productivity and more efficient administration.

We are rich and spend accumulated savings for services and comforts, which, while pleasant, cannot continue in the same manner. DSA, which is the largest segment of the left, has a duty to point to needed and possible reforms, and the dangers facing the country.

Leon Blum
Plantation, Fla.

Ed. Note: Proposals for a DSA Economic Program are currently being debated in locals and will be voted upon at the November convention. They are carried in *Socialist Forum*, Nos. 6, 7, 8.

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CORRECTIONS AND OMISSIONS

The cover photo of our Labor Day issue was taken by Earl Dotter of the American Labor Education Center.

In the same issue, we made a typographical error on the name of the press that published *Labor's Joke Book*. It's WD Press, not WO.

JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

Who is Jimmy Higgins, anyway?

He was called into existence in 1904 by Ben Hanford, Eugene Debs's running mate, as a metaphor for all those everyday workers who had built the Socialist party into a powerful force. Higgins became the archetypical socialist and trade union rank-and-filer, and was even the subject of a novel by Upton Sinclair. He has written this column since March 1973, and several years ago began sharing the responsibility (and credit!) with Janie Higgins, who will return next issue. Both Janie and Jimmy have been on well-deserved vacations for a while, but have now taken up their pens again. Our hope is to present new or little-known information in a lively and provocative manner. To help us do that even better, send your ideas, comments, and reports to Jimmy and Janie at the DSA office.

Whatever happened to the new voluntarism? You remember—the private giving that was going to replace slashed social welfare programs. It seems even the administration has abandoned this fantasy in the face of the stupendous selfishness of today's rich. By contrast, the robber barons of early industrial capitalism, who at least knew from philanthropy, are looking pretty good. Somehow we just can't see the John DeLorean Endowment for Peace, the Nelson and Bunker Hunt Conservation Fund, or the T. Boone Pickens Public Trust.

In the power concedes nothing without struggle department, Columbia University spokesman Fred Knobel, in announcing the university's decision to divest its South Africa-related holdings, denied any influence by last spring's student blockade of an administration building, noting, "The Columbia trustees have taken a leading role in the struggle against apartheid, independent of student activism." Right. And Bull Connor played a leading role in the struggle against Jim Crow. We must have just overlooked the militant trustees at last winter's sit-ins at the South African embassy.

First, spies in the Navy... and now we find an announcement in *Stars and Stripes* that "The Communist Manifesto," by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is available for the first time to German readers in braille. We assume Secretary of Defense Weinberger will demonstrate greater editorial vigilance in the future. C'mon, Cap, the Free World is depending on you.

Life in the fast lane. A research team at Rush Medical College in Chicago has discovered a common denominator among successful executives: they're dull. Researchers asked 88 execs at major corporations to rate 36 activities like lovemaking, winning the lottery, and fine food. They weren't interested. One executive, who scored high in the dull category, "couldn't slip into small talk. You would lose him with a joke," recalled one researcher.

No 1040 for 40. A study by Citizens for Tax Justice reveals that 40 of the nation's largest corporations paid no taxes in 1984 on \$10 billion in profits. Such struggling companies as AT&T, General Dynamics, and ITT Corp. were among the privileged group. Obscene, to be sure, but only half the story: 36 of the 40 received *refunds*, running as high as \$285 million.

Lost in the wilderness. In their latest debacle, Congressional Democrats were routed on the issue that was the centerpiece of the 1984 Democratic presidential campaign: the deficit. The party was ill-prepared and badly split in the face of the recent Republican balanced-budget initiative. Illustrative of the confusion was the role reversal of Senators Hart and Kennedy, with Kennedy supporting the bill. Quipped one Democratic activist: "Hart decided to become Senator Compassion, and Kennedy Mr. Fiscal Responsibility." This is a party in deep, deep...er, trouble.

Surprising encouragment from conservative political scientist Kevin Phillips, who thinks little of talk about a Republican realignment. He argues that the second Reagan administration marks not the Springtime but the "Indian Summer" of a conservative era that began a decade and a half ago. His pessimism stems from the weak Congressional showing of 1984, the "six-year itch" that sees Presidents invariably lose support in their second mid-term election, and the failure of Republicans to develop plausible positions on issues like agriculture and trade.

Blue ribbon commissions and their fancy reports are frequently the last refuge of complacent politicians and bureaucrats. Gravely receiving the distinguished committee's report can serve as a great substitute for changing anything to meet real problems. Happily, the AFL-CIO is *not* dealing in that manner with its report on "The Changing Situation of the Workers and Their Unions." Tom Donahue, the Federation's Secretary-Treasurer, seems to have taken on communicating the message of the report as his personal crusade. He's been to state labor conventions talking about using new technologies to organize and remembering old ideas about union democracy and rank-and-file mobilization. To insiders and outsiders, Donahue is presenting a labor movement engaged in self-analysis and readying for what he hopes will be labor's "greatest offensive in more than 20 years."



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