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# DEMOCRATIC Left

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**NEW DIRECTIONS**  
**Will the Real Democrats**  
**Please Stand Up?**

**Also: Dennis Altman on the**  
**AIDS Crisis**

# LETTERS

## Kids

To the Editors:

Let me take a moment to express my appreciation for Maxine Phillips' fine article in the recent issue of *Democratic Left*. She concretized some very important issues which have all-too-often been overlooked. Thoughtful analyses were well integrated with practical insights and constructive suggestions.

I will encourage the Long Island locals and the like to take up the problems raised and the suggestions offered. This was one of the most helpful pieces I have ever read in D.L. (The debate on economic policy was also very helpful in shedding light on alternative approaches.)

David Sprintzen  
Syosset, NY

## Full Employment

To the Editors:

Frances Fox Piven laments that "the record of full employment as a movement-building goal has been dismal." Stanley Aronowitz dismisses full employment as "cockeyed realism" and "deeply conservative" (March/April issue).

Piven wants us to build socialism on a foundation of welfare rights, Aronowitz on a shorter workday or work week. Remember the National Welfare Rights Organization? Where is it today? And where do you see a significant movement behind a shorter work week since the New Deal, 50 years ago?

Both Piven and Aronowitz make some good points, but why trash full employment en route? They might as well complain that in the USA the record of social justice as a movement-building goal has been dismal. So the idea that every man or woman has a right to a decent job at decent pay is hard to sell. Try selling the idea that people should get good pay for working less or for not working at all. Try building a movement on that.

You want a "deeply conservative" idea? There it is: good pay for no work. The idle rich have been pushing it for years.

I must be blind and deaf, but I neither see nor hear the Right pushing the idea of full employment. I see them pushing the idea that 7% unemployment is full employment, the idea that fighting inflation is much

more important than fighting unemployment, the idea that unemployment is good because labor is cheaper, unions weaker, profits higher.

No, Stanley, dignity does not "derive only from a job." But try telling an unemployed worker that it is easy to hold onto dignity without a job. Go ahead, Stanley, try it. You might learn something.

John C. Cort  
Roxbury, MA

## Ditto

To the Editors:

In the latest issue of *Democratic Left*, Frances Fox Piven and Stanley Aronowitz argue that full employment is not only not sufficient, but not necessary for advancing the socialist cause. But their proposed alternatives are vulnerable to their own arguments against full employment.

Aronowitz says that full employment is "not possible under capitalism" because it results in labor shortages or rising wages which squeeze profits. But then how could a shorter work week, accompanied by a guaranteed income plan explicitly intended to force employers to substantially raise wages, be possible? If "entrenched interests" resist direct job-creating strategies, why should they react any more benevolently to work-sharing?

It would appear in fact that work-sharing et. al. presupposes radical changes, and if the (prior) policy ("possible" now) that would produce them is not full employment, then it remains to be specified. It is in any case hard to conceive of circumstances under which work-sharing would become feasible but full employment itself would not. Nothing compels us to regard the two as competing objectives — or would the pursuit of more radical aims (altering the work ethic and so on) require Left opposition to full employment where it actually existed?

Frances Fox Piven criticizes employment policy because, executed at the federal level, it is not conducive to popular organizing. But this is not grounds for canonizing the fact that US welfare programs are locally organized. In the best of times particular central city governments may find themselves with the means to (somewhat) enrich welfare services in response to indigenous campaigns. But weal-

## Miss Us?

Yes, it has been a while since *Democratic Left* last graced your mailbox. A financial crunch forced us to combine the May/June and July/August issues, thus saving on printing and postage costs. As partial compensation, we've published 24 pages rather than the usual 16. The September/October issue will be our annual Labor Day issue, and we expect it to be our best yet. We hope you will use the form in this issue to place a greeting ad and show off your solidarity to the whole world.

thier suburban jurisdictions are largely removed from such pressures, concentrating the costs of welfare on those least able to pay. And in the worst of times, the results of decentralization are still more critical. If international competition limits the autonomy of national employment policy, then the economic pressures — regional, international, and internal — on state and local governments to "fall in line" in terms of social policy and expenditures are at least equally irresistible in periods of slow economic growth.

Here again, the conditions for the success of the policy "alternative" are not unrelated to the conditions for the success of full employment itself. But recognizing the limits of what can be achieved independently of growth does not require naive satisfaction with the benefits of growth per se. A collision between pragmatism and utopianism may be unavoidable on some issues (e.g. cherished left ideas concerning planning, markets, competition, money), but I don't think that full employment is inherently one of them.

David Belkin  
New York, NY

**Don't Miss Out—  
Place Your Greeting in  
the Labor Day Issue**

# AIDS

## Health Care American Style

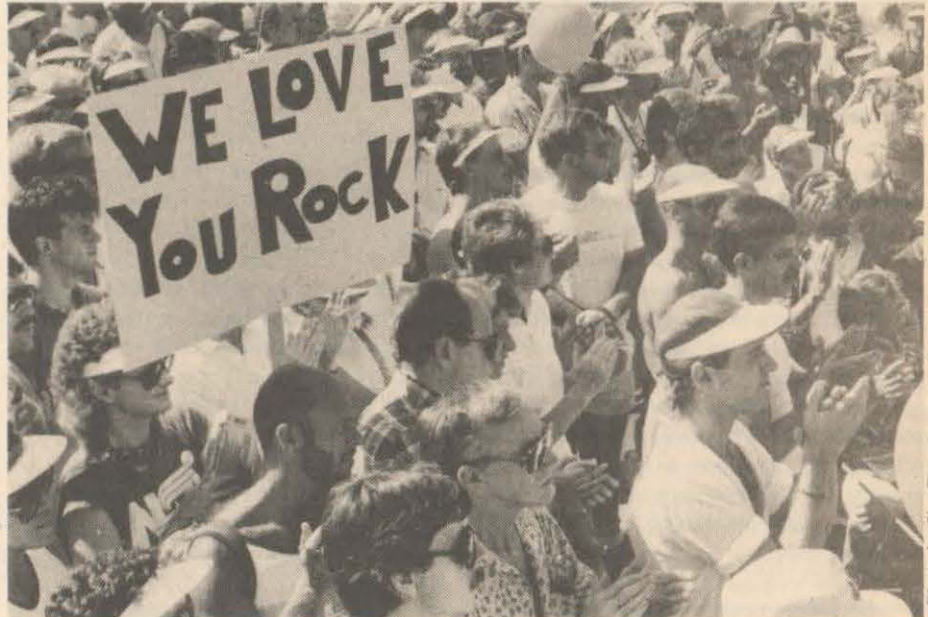
by Dennis Altman

In an end-of-year Readers' Survey, *U.S. News and World Report* asked: "Which of the following problems concern you most?: crime, recession, nuclear war, or AIDS?" This represents a measure of the extent to which fear and loathing around AIDS — to borrow Hunter Thompson's phrase coined for another event — has entered the American consciousness. I use the phrase to underline the fact that the most common discourse about AIDS involves panic, even hysteria, about its transmission, rather than any sign of genuine compassion for those who are actually suffering and dying from the illness.

Few illnesses have been so clearly politicized as AIDS. Politics, in the most conventional sense of that word, have played a central role in the ways in which AIDS has been conceptualized, constructed, researched, treated, and mystified, and there is room for a great deal of discussion on the role of ideology and politics in both the social construction of illness and the control and direction of medical research. In this brief space I shall focus on the response of governments to the epidemic, and to a lesser extent to the role of the press and of certain interest groups in the conceptualization of the disease.

AIDS was first conceptualized by both scientists and the media as a homosexual disease, and for a time was known popularly as GRID, or "gay related immune deficiency." Scientists abandoned this characterization as it became clear that there was no inherent or necessary connection between AIDS and homosexuality, but neither the media nor most politicians have been as quick to do so.

The most pernicious example of this view of AIDS is the use by the media of the term "innocent victim," which is applied to those other than gay men and drug users suffering from AIDS — with the clear corollary that if you belong to these groups and contract AIDS you are somehow guilty. This view persists despite the fact that well over a third of the cases in New



August, 1985 AIDS Walkathon in Hollywood.

Photo by Jim Rayman

York City, the epicenter of the disease in this country, are not found among gay men, and this proportion is increasing. In Central Africa, Spain, Italy, and Belgium the majority of AIDS cases are not found among gay men, and as AIDS becomes a global problem there are decreasing reasons to think of it as, in the phrase still used by some journalists, "the gay plague."

Despite this, politicians and journalists resist seeing AIDS as a public health crisis. The public image of AIDS is linked to white male homosexuals, while the reality is *increasingly* that it is affecting nonwhites and nongays. As New York Assemblymember Roger Green pointed out recently: "Of the 77 children who were reported to have AIDS in our city in 1985, 68 were black and Latino. . . . Thus an inappropriate response to AIDS interconnects with the general decline of public health." (*Village Voice*, January 14, 1986.)

On one level "guilt" and "innocence" are irrelevant terms when one speaks of an epidemic disease. No one has set out to get sick, nor to infect others. But guilt and innocence become meaningful concepts when one examines the response of governments, and it is not only reasonable but necessary to ask whether governments

have done everything that could reasonably be done to save lives and to prevent both the spread of AIDS and unnecessary panic. Even in this age of cutbacks and small government, no one has seriously argued that the state does not have a responsibility to safeguard the health of its citizens. We have not yet reached a point when anyone of consequence is calling for the abolition of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health.

There are many, however, who would slash their budgets, and one of the sadder aspects of the AIDS epidemic is that it coincided with a determined attempt by the Reagan administration to cut back on domestic spending, including that related to health. The failure of this administration to respond promptly and adequately to the emergence of a new epidemic disease has been well documented. It took considerable Congressional pressure for substantial monies to be made available for AIDS research, and too often that money has come at the expense of other health programs.

I want to look at three interconnected points of public policy, all of which I think illustrate the failings of governments to adequately deal with the challenge of AIDS. These are the provision and the

financing of health care, the use of the antibody test, and the provision of preventive education.

## Inadequate Insurance

I have always been struck, and I think this is particularly striking to those of us who are not Americans, by the way in which the AIDS epidemic so clearly underlines the defects of the American health care system. Above all, the linkage of health insurance to employment means that a disproportionate percentage of those people affected by AIDS find themselves without adequate insurance and, even those who have done everything that they could be reasonably expected to do to cover themselves will often find their insurance running out.

Thus, in the United States there is a dimension to this epidemic that we in Australia and people in Western Europe do not face. People in Australia or the Netherlands or France who get sick with AIDS do not face the possibility that they will lose their health insurance, and be forced to sell off their assets in order to qualify for some meager government support that is both inadequate and demeaning.

## DEMOCRATIC LEFT

*Formerly Newsletter of the  
Democratic Left and Moving On.*

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I stress this because I believe it is essential that the question of AIDS be understood within a larger context; namely, the failure of the American health care delivery system. It is a shame that the AIDS advocacy groups have by and large not made that connection and have not reached out to other groups in the United States, particularly minority groups and labor groups, who are committed to a more equitable and a better system of health care, even if such discussion has ironically moved off the political agenda just as AIDS makes it all the more relevant.

## Intrusive Tests

At the moment the connection between the general problem of providing adequate health insurance and the use of antibody testing for AIDS is increasingly becoming newsworthy. At this stage I don't know of any health insurer that has directly required people to be tested and to show themselves as antibody-negative in order to purchase health coverage. But there is no question that as time goes on this is going to be a very major problem. Already measures are underway to make it more difficult for single men who are presumed to be gay to get adequate health coverage. In both New York and California, legislators have begun to seek ways of preventing such practices. It is because of the insurance interests that the widespread use of antibody testing, which is an issue that comes up in most discussion around AIDS, is extremely difficult to advocate against.

Some public health officials believe it is desirable to encourage as many people as possible who may be at risk for AIDS to be tested for HTLV-III antibodies. Medical opinion is divided on this but the present reality is that the social, economic, and political consequences of testing are so enormous that it is very difficult to argue for it. We face the specter of hundreds of thousands of so far healthy people, distinguished only by their exposure to HTLV-III, being marginalized, refused jobs, excluded from the military (as is already the case), denied insurance, and living in constant fear of what new restrictions hostile legislators might impose upon them. (Secretary of Health and Human Services Otis Brown is reported to have called for antibody screening for all prospective immigrants to the United States.)

We know there is discrimination against whole groups — gays, hemophiliacs, Haitians, intravenous drug users — who are seen as carriers of the so-called "AIDS virus." Only a few localities, particularly in California, have politicians been

prepared to try to use legislation to protect both groups and individuals from discrimination based on the assumption that they are somehow a risk.

## Information Embargo

This in turn shades into the third major area of public policy that I want to discuss, namely the whole question of preventive education. It's become a cliché to observe that the only effective way of preventing AIDS is a program to dissuade people from sharing needles and engaging in high risk sex. Almost everybody in the AIDS business subscribes to this. Almost nobody in government is prepared to do anything about it.

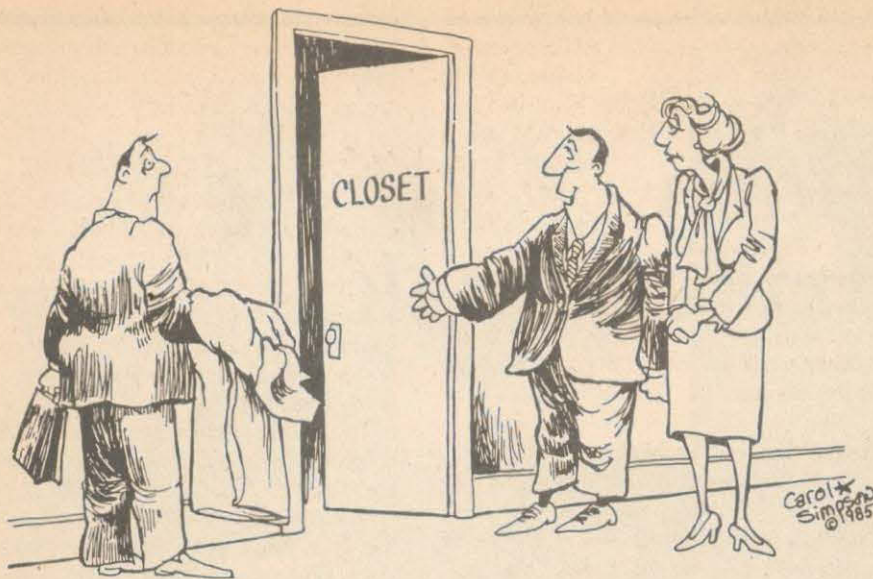
Again, with the very clear exception of San Francisco and the partial exception of other localities in California, city, county, and state governments have clearly been far too scared of seeming to condone homosexuality and drug use to provide either funding or resources for the sort of large-scale educational campaigns that are needed and required to supplement work already being done by community groups.

Government officials do little to contradict the single most dangerous misapprehension and myth around at the moment — that casual contact leads to AIDS. And if we think not only about the people who worry that if they come into Manhattan and go into a restaurant where the waiter is gay they will break out in ulcerous sores on their way back home in the subway, but we worry about those people who are really at risk because of their sexual practices and because of their use of shared needles, I can assure you as a gay man who has access to places that many *Democratic Left* readers are not able or would not feel free to go to, that there is less information being made available to people in New York about the transmission of AIDS than is true in my home city of Melbourne, which has had far fewer cases.

I don't want to pretend that anyone knows how we can change behavior most effectively, particularly in terms of sharing needles. I do know that by and large there is a strange morality around that seems to accept that it is better to do nothing that might check the spread of AIDS than to openly discuss the acts that lead to its spread.

## Lack of Compassion

The last point I want to make about government response to this disease is that one of the most striking aspects of the whole epidemic to date is that very rarely have we heard a word of compassion or sympathy from our political and religious



**"We don't discriminate against homosexuals in this company. As a matter of fact, we've already set up an office for you."**

leaders for the 8,000 Americans who have died from AIDS so far. President Reagan goes on television and sheds tears for one child who needs a liver transplant, but only the death of a Hollywood star, who was a personal friend of his, brought any sign of awareness from the White House that a new and lethal disease existed in the United States.

It is striking how much has been done for people with AIDS by volunteer groups, largely but not entirely in the gay community — and how little credit they have been given by a federal administration that claims to support volunteerism and community groups. Indeed, there is a great need to gently chide some of the AIDS groups for too easily accepting the Reaganite program that would make individuals and charity responsible for providing the basic support services that everyone who is seriously sick can surely expect to be provided by a civilized government. Too often sections of the gay movement itself have failed to focus on the right targets. When the leading gay newspaper in New York City can attack a researcher like Dr. Mathilde Krim while endorsing Ed Koch for reelection, or when self-proclaimed gay leaders can attack the CDC for procrastinating on research without showing any awareness of the reasons that they have been starved for funds, one can only conclude that some of the gay movement is as supportive of Reaganism as are those who actually benefit from present government policies.

Governments cannot be blamed be-

cause there is as yet no cure for AIDS, and no immediate prospect of a vaccine. They could, however, handle the present crisis more humanely, more intelligently, and in ways that are more likely to save both lives and money than the present patchwork of neglect and panic. For a start, the President could take seriously the proclamations of his own Public Health Service that this is a major emergency, and appoint a top level task force to advise him on all possible means to combat the epidemic. There are already bills pending in Congress that would help relieve some of the extraordinary burdens this disease is placing on certain local governments and individuals. Moreover, a call from the president for compassion for those who are dying, and an end to the ugly scapegoating of people who are sick and suffering, would be a major psychological boost for those who are most deeply involved in this disease. The governor of New York State and the mayor of New York City could commit themselves to a real program of prevention education, rather than to the selective closure of certain venues which is politically satisfying, but has little real benefits for public health. The media could start analyzing in some detail the response of governments to this crisis, instead of playing on the fears and panic of so many people who still believe, against all scientific evidence, that AIDS can be casually transmitted.

We need to ask why it has been so difficult to focus attention on the failure of government, and so easy to focus attention on the people who are themselves sick. If

we have ever had a case of scapegoating the victim, then I think the AIDS epidemic is going to go into the sociology of deviance textbooks for a long time to come.

When I was in San Francisco at the very end of 1985, I went down to United Nations Plaza, where a group of people are holding a vigil outside the San Francisco offices of the Department of Health and Human Services. Here some people with AIDS-related condition have chained themselves to the railing of that office and say they will not move until the federal government has met their demands.

Without going into the details of their specific demands, some of which I may or may not agree with, I want to point to the degree of anger, bitterness, fear, and alienation that leads sick people to lie day after day in the winter outside the federal building because they feel their government has failed them. (It's also true that they were only doing it in San Francisco because in that city there has been a response not just from the gay community but from the whole city that at least suggests a humane and a civilized response to this disease is possible.) Indeed, one of the saddest things about the vigil is that when I came to New York, hardly anybody was even aware that it was going on. Yet I have no doubt that if some third-rate bit player on "Dynasty" or "Dallas" were to say that 12 years ago she was kissed by Rock Hudson, it would be on every talk show in the United States.

But that people are dying from this disease, that the government at most levels is not responding to their needs, that no words of compassion or sympathy are being heard from the people who claim moral and political leadership is apparently not seen as a worthy story. I recall feeling mixed exasperation, anger, and sadness at seeing sick and gaunt men in the San Francisco winds, in the richest country in the world, in the country that President Reagan tells us over and over again is a beacon of freedom, forced to take such measures to highlight that the most elementary aspects of civilized health care are not being made available. ●

*Dennis Altman is professor of political science at La Trobe University in Australia and is the author of AIDS in the Mind of America. A longer version of this article was presented at a January, 1986 conference entitled "AIDS: Public Policy Dimensions," sponsored by the United Hospital Fund of New York and the Health Policy Center of the University of California at San Francisco. The full conference proceedings are available from: United Hospital Fund, 55 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003.*

# New Directions

## The Left Strikes Back

**W**e are the progressive wing of the Democratic party, and the news of our death has been greatly exaggerated."

With these words, DSA co-chair Michael Harrington welcomed participants to the national New Directions conference, held May 2-4 at the Washington, D.C. Convention Center. And for the two days that followed, the 1,200 feminists, trade unionists, community organizers, minority activists, seniors, college students, and other activists in attendance proceeded to demonstrate that the democratic Left is not only alive, but vibrant and relevant as well.

Sponsored by a coalition of more than 70 progressive leaders and spokespeople, the conference was called around the theme that "One Republican Party is more than enough." Its goal was not to present a finished progressive agenda but rather, as the conference title indicated, to suggest some common *directions* for programmatic and strategic thinking. Conference organizers and participants both felt that the conference's success in this regard was extraordinary, as substantial common ground was discovered.

It is impossible to describe here the full breadth encompassed in 40 sessions involving over 120 speakers. Indeed, participants were often heard to complain of impossible choices between equally compelling workshops. Most sessions dealt with policy, both domestic and foreign, covering topics such as Economic Conversion, Child Care and the Family, A Progressive Housing Policy, The Future of Work, and Crime and Social Justice. But there was time for discussing "How?" as well as "What?", in sessions such as Shifting Political Terrain, The New Populism, New Frontiers in Organizing, How to Sell Our Message, and Fighting the New Right.

The sessions were greatly enriched by the distinct yet complementary perspectives offered by a diverse mix of activists and analysts. One of the goals of the confer-



Jesse Jackson and Michael Harrington at opening session.

Photo by Mary Babic

ence had been just this breaking down of (often false) distinctions between "doers" and "thinkers." Even a very partial listing suggests the enormous range: participants included labor leaders (Gerald McEntee and Carol O'Cleireacain of A.F.S.C.M.E., the Steelworkers' Lynn Williams, Morton Bahr and Jan Pierce of C.W.A., Ken Blaylock of A.F.G.E., and the Machinists' William Winpisinger); analysts (Robert Reich, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Robert Kuttner, Frances Fox Piven, Jeff Faux, Barbara Ehrenreich); elected officials (U.S. Representatives Ted Weiss, Lane Evans, and Major Owens, Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, and D.C. City Councillor Hilda Mason); and movement leaders (Gloria Steinem, Jesse Jackson, William Hutton, and Ann Lewis).

Throughout the conference there was open acknowledgement of the real defeats suffered by the Left over the past six years, but also an encouraging sense of collective self-confidence and determination. The proposals advanced were humane and democratic, but they were not just that — they were workable and relevant as well. What we must do, people felt, is communicate them more effectively and build

movements capable of forcing them onto the national agenda.

That will *not* be accomplished, everyone agreed, by pursuing Democratic unity at any cost. Sharp criticisms were leveled at those party leaders who are seeking to move it to the right; the message of New Directions was clear: betray Democratic principles and you lose any claim to our support. This militance was perhaps best articulated by DSA co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich:

"A party that dares to take a side cannot be everyone's party. It will not be the party for the corporate leaders, the CEOs, the religious totalitarians of the right, the generals of America's growing warrior caste . . . But those people already have a party. It is the rest of us, the majority of the American people, who need a political party of our own. If we can reclaim that party, which is what we are here to do, then — without any question — our side will have the numbers, the spirit, and the vision to reclaim this nation for its people."

New Directions was a step forward in that struggle. ●



Photo by Mary Babic

Roger Wilkins at session on Defending Civil Rights.



Photo by Mary Babic

Go to your corners, and come out . . .



Photo by Mary Babic

Frances Fox Piven speaking on The Role of Government.



Photo by Roger Robinson

Growth Thru Equity: Eleanor Holmes Norton, Charles Hayes, Robert Kuttner, conference organizer Jo-Ann Mort, and Jeff Faux.



Photo by Mary Babic

Luncheon speakers Ann Lewis, Gloria Steinem, and Morton Bahr discuss coalition politics.

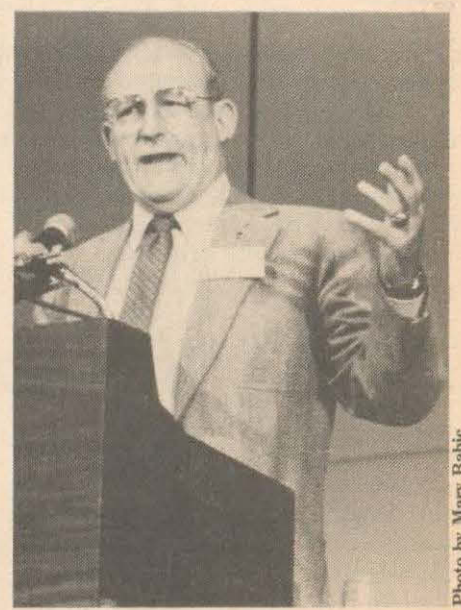


Photo by Mary Babic

William Winpisinger attacks Ronald Reagan's foreign policy.

# Robbing the Poor

## The Neo-Democrats Are Coming

*Editors' Note: To say that the Democratic party is in crisis is of course to engage in extreme understatement. But the nature of that crisis, its sources, and the solutions are all subject to debate. In this installment of our "Roundtable" feature, we have asked Mike Harrington, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, and Jim Chapin and Guy Molyneux to explore these questions. We invite responses.*

by Michael Harrington

A battle is taking place within the Democratic Party, not simply over its historic traditions, but over its soul. And the outcome of that battle will partly determine whether the Democrats are able to take control of the Senate in 1986, or the White House in 1988.

In part, the issue is foreign policy. At a meeting of the Democratic Policy Commission last month, Penn Kemble, a leader of the neo-conservative — and often neo-Reaganite — Committee for a Democratic Majority, attacked Congressperson Stephen Solarz for criticizing the President on grounds of "ideological ineptitude" in dealing with the South African racist government, "puerile name calling" with regard to the Soviet Union, and "injudicious confrontation" in Central America.

Solarz was clearly stating the position of the majority of Congressional Democrats on all three counts. Even more to the point, he was right. The Administration's line of "constructive engagement" with the South African minority government effectively amounted to condoning apartheid. The comments about the "evil empire" made it more difficult to carry out essential negotiations with the Soviet Union. And the publicly "covert" attempt to overthrow the government of Nicaragua has betrayed the best of the anti-imperialist instincts of the nation.

It might seem strange to attack a congressperson of the opposition party for criticizing the president. But then the Coalition for a Democratic Majority is a group with little influence in the Democratic mainstream, even if it has considerable

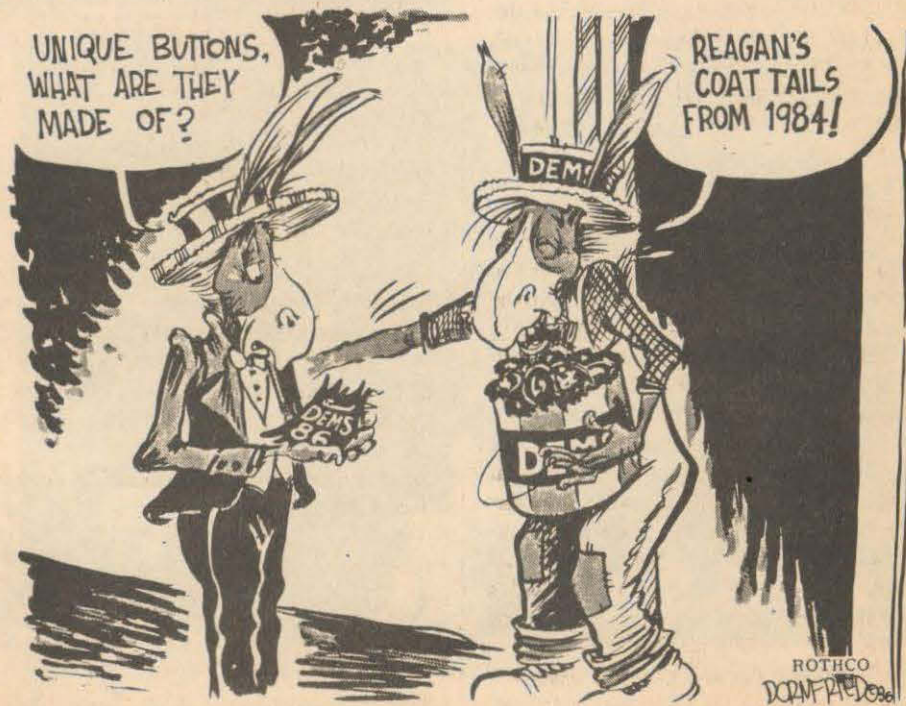
support in Republican circles. However, the emergence of the Democratic Leadership Council, led by significant politicians like Governor Bruce Babbitt of Arizona and former Governor Charles Robb of Virginia, is a far more disturbing phenomenon. It is an attempt on the part of leaders with considerable clout to pull the whole party to the ideological right-center, and their concerns are not limited to foreign policy. What that means came through with remarkable clarity in a recent speech on welfare and the poor given by Governor Robb at Hofstra University.

"It's time," Robb said "to shift the primary focus from racism, the traditional enemy from without, to self-defeating patterns of behavior, the new enemy within." That counterposition — the problem is defined either by "racism" or by "behavior" — is misleading, for it leaves out the institutional racism of the economy which has been the main cause of the *de facto* second-class citizenship of American minorities. Robb went on to argue that the welfare system "seems to be subsidizing the spread of self-destructive behavior in our poor communities." Not the disastrous unemployment rate; not the export of American

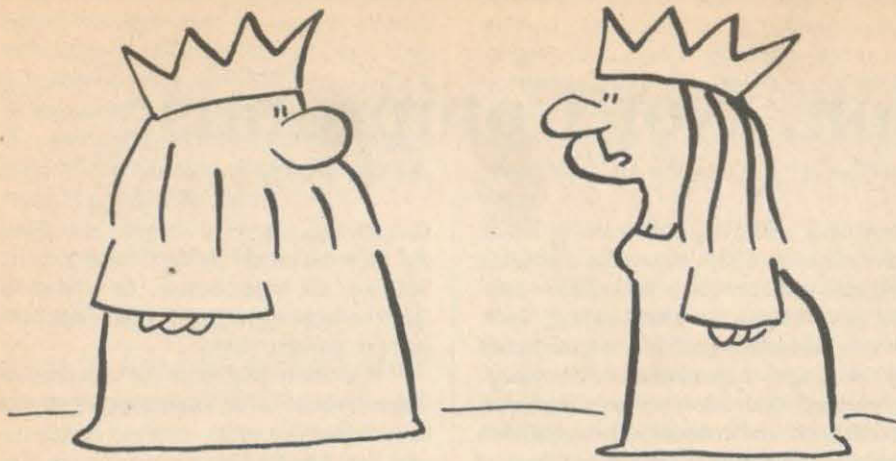
jobs abroad; not the shift from manufacture to service and the consequent disappearance of precisely those relatively well-paid and unionized jobs which were the exit from poverty for several generations. The *welfare system* is the problem.

The policy implications of such an analysis are as clear as they are offensive. Robb, sounding not unlike the president he allegedly opposes, argues that "for Democrats, reducing the deficit is more important than preserving individual programs." Notice, there is no mention of taking back the lavish tax benefits for the welfare rich contained in the 1981 tax act, or of cutting the bloated military budget. And that makes sense: if "behavior" (the "enemy within") is the problem, and welfare the cause, then one would gladly seek to balance the budget by cutting programs which are harmful in the first place.

But is Robb right? *The New York Times* report on his speech rightly noted that one of the first Democrats to talk about this issue was Daniel Patrick Moynihan (in his famous memo for President Johnson on the "Negro Family" in 1965). But the *Times* wrongly tried to link Robb's critique with Moynihan's. There is only one small prob-







"It doesn't work that way — you can't just *command* a mandate from the people."

lem with this: Moynihan's recent book, *Family and Nation*, convincingly refutes just about everything Robb said at Hofstra.

For instance, Moynihan quotes the very careful analyses of welfare recipients which derived from a University of Michigan study of five thousand American families over many years. It showed that about half of the women who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are forced to that point by the death or desertion of the father of their child or children, and that they largely leave AFDC in two years or less by getting a job. Only about 15% of the AFDC mothers, the Michigan analysis argues, are chronically welfare dependent. Moynihan quotes the conclusion: "... the system does not foster dependency," it is "a kind of insurance . . . providing temporary assistance."

Moynihan also follows the lead of the Congressional Research Service and other analysts in noting that one of the main causes of the outrageous increase in the percentage of children who are poor is to be found in the rising inequality of the United States promoted by the Reagan Administration. The "enemy without" named Ronald Reagan is, it turns out, rather more important than the "enemy within." And Moynihan's position takes on a special weight when it is remembered that he was attacked in the Sixties for being too concerned with behavior rather than external forces. That is, Robb is promoting a politics well to the right not only of liberalism, but of the Democratic center as well.

Is this simply an analytical disagreement? I think not. At least part of the ex-

planation lies in a dangerous misreading of Ronald Reagan's extraordinary popularity which could have terrible electoral consequences for the Democrats in the future.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan defeated a man who, in many ways, originated the politics of the Democratic Leadership Council. Jimmy Carter did a number of good things, particularly in the area of human rights, arms negotiations and the Middle East. But on issues of economic pol-

icy, he went from a timid liberalism in 1977 to a timid conservatism in 1979. Ronald Reagan, it will be remembered, came on as a bold, even radical, leader who was willing to overturn the traditional wisdom of the past in applying the nostrum of "supply-side economics." At the same time, he talked a populist rhetoric about getting government off the back of the rank-and-file citizen. He was anything but a me-tooer or a centrist in his political appeal.

Robb and others of his ilk have a rather simple analysis of this history: "reaction sells." Now, opportunism of this kind is never attractive, but when it is also self-defeating it's hard to see what it has to offer. For the relevant lessons are a) conservative Democrats fare poorly in national elections, and b) Americans will reward bold political leadership, not hedging and cowering.

It's time for those who would move the Democratic Party to the right to wake up and discover that there already is a Reaganite Republican Party, authentic and deeply committed. Attempting to create another such party, with nominal Democrats in charge, is a recipe for defeat. For if the Democratic Party is not ready to criticize Ronald Reagan and defend its own historic traditions, it will lose — and worse, it will deserve to lose.

*Michael Harrington is national co-chair of DSA.*



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# Mobilization, Not Compromise

by Frances Fox Piven  
and Richard Cloward

**W**e are at a low point in electoral politics. The Reagan Administration has scored large majorities, and the poll data continue to show that the President enjoys extraordinary personal popularity, somehow remaining impervious to the ill effects of his policies.

These circumstances have disoriented the left. We seem to be adrift and uncertain of our role. But there have been similar low points in the past — the 1920s and the 1950s, for example. And there has always been a singular role for the left.

To rediscover that role, we must set aside the prevailing view — put forward by many liberals as well as the right — which blames the left itself for the current impasse. Presumably the successes of the right are the result of a backlash against the preceding policies of the liberal left. Those policies ostensibly provoked a popular reaction — for example, against the social programs that were won by the militance of black people and women, or more generally a reaction against an atmosphere of liberal permissiveness which is said to have encouraged the decay of traditional American values.

Of course, this notion of a popular backlash is not entirely without merit. The political changes set in motion during the 1960s did offend many people. Black demands evoked American racism; the demands of women excited resistance arising from deep patriarchal attitudes; the liberalization of lifestyles was upsetting. Then there was the resentment of working-class people over the question of who was paying for new domestic programs, as well as the (often justified) skepticism about whether it was the poor or the "povertycrats" who were benefiting more. And beyond these specific sore points, there was and is a backlash because the articulation of new demands and new hopes by new groups is always bound to be unsettling and disturbing.

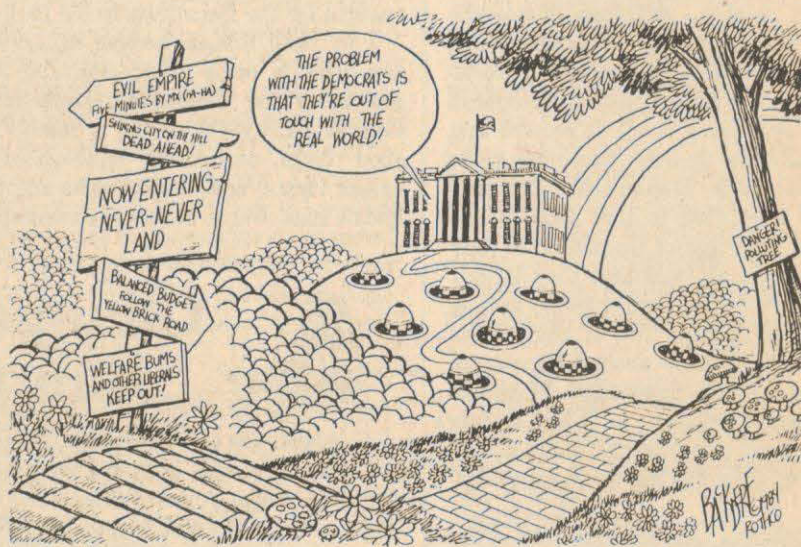
But that said, the far more important point is that there was also progress. There

were real achievements, most of which have come, over time, to win the support of majorities and are likely to endure — conflict and reaction notwithstanding. True, civil rights enforcement is being weakened by the Reagan Administration, but minority political rights have not been rescinded in the South, and mob and state terror have not been revived as the principal means of controlling blacks. Nor are women likely to be pressed back into traditional roles. These gains in legal rights and cultural attitudes toward women and minorities are major historical achievements. Similarly, Americans now strongly endorse environmental controls won by the ecology movement. They have come to understand that industry, left to itself, will poison them for profit. And the antiwar movement im-

nevertheless survived despite the fierce and insistent assault by the Reagan Administration, not least because the polls show that the large majority of Americans have come to endorse them.

It is also important to see that popular dissatisfaction with some aspects of the transformations which occurred during the past two decades does not explain our current electoral plight. To be sure, popular discontents provide a rationale, a source of legitimation for the rightwing attempt to roll back the gains that were made. But there are far more important reasons for the success of the rightwing counterattack.

One is the unprecedented mobilization by economic elites, a mobilization comparable to the organization of northern industrialists and southern planters during the clos-



planted a current of skepticism in our political culture about patriotic nationalism, and about American imperial ambitions, that has also had lasting effects.

Not least, Americans have come to approve of the idea that the state has a responsibility to ensure the economic well-being of its citizens, both through macro-economic policies, and through the particular programs designed to protect those who are most vulnerable to the naked forces of the market — the poor, the disabled, the dependent young and the old. Although the service and entitlement programs that were either expanded or inaugurated in the past two decades suffered cuts, the basic structure of programs has

ing years of the nineteenth century, when insurgent industrial workers and the Populists were crushed. Second, the contemporary mobilization is taking place in the context of large-scale shifts in the American economy which are profoundly alarming to ordinary Americans. Whatever the actual long-term significance of these shifts, they are being skillfully exploited by business propagandists. Economic elites are hammering home the doctrine that in this new era of the internationalization of capital and labor, American workers and citizens are inevitably pitted against cheap labor in the Third World, and must either accept less or court the disaster of accelerating capital flight. Third, and most

important, the rightwing counterattack has drawn strength from the apparent short-term improvements in the economy. Reagan swept to victory in 1984 on the crest of an economic boom. Nor is that surprising. It is a virtual law of modern politics that the state of the economy determines the outcome of presidential races.

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*"It should not be the mission of the Left to negotiate compromises."*

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When combined with the misguided view that we are in the midst of a popular shift to the right, these conditions — the business mobilization, the internationalization of the economy, and the apparent success of the Reagan economic interventions — help account for the definite inclination of erstwhile liberals and leftists to retreat, to fold up their banners and pack up their picket signs by throwing in with the neoliberals. The emerging strategy is to form a coalition of the center on the pragmatic grounds that it might stand a chance of halting the consolidation of the right, and that neoliberals, whatever their faults, are at least preferable to the right.

But striking such compromises is not the job of the left. For one thing, it is fatuous to think that the left's imprimatur would much improve the chances of a center coalition coming to power. We are not a European social democratic party. For another, and this is the more important point, it should not be the mission of the left to negotiate compromises.

It is our mission to strengthen the social forces that both make compromise necessary, and shape the terms of compromise. That is what we do when we organize opposition to American intervention in Central America, or when we support organizations of the unemployed, of working women, and of minorities, or when we undertake local community organizing projects, or lend our support to insurgent unions. It is what we do when we articulate the aspirations of the poor in America, and it is what we do when we raise our voices to denounce escalating arms expenditures and to defend the programs of the welfare state.

Even when our specific efforts fail, we nevertheless do important work. Organizing prepares us, and it prepares our constituencies, for the time when more will be possible. It keeps us, the left, alive and thinking and in touch with the oppositional

forces on which the left depends. And the work we do nourishes the political culture of opposition. It strengthens the always inextinguishable ability of ordinary people to remain skeptical, to think critically, and, when the time seems right, to articulate their interests and mobilize to advance them.

In this spirit, there is a specific organizing effort for which we, the left, should take particular responsibility. We ought to be working to reverse the electoral demobilization of the groups who are our natural constituencies, a demobilization which is owed more than anything else to the system of obstacles known as personal periodic registration. A good deal of voter registration work took place in the 1982-84 period among the poor and minorities in an effort to overcome those obstacles. But the right responded by accelerating voter registration among better-off groups and the contest ended in a class stalemate. Over the longer term, however, the statistics are on our side: of the roughly 60 million who are unregistered, 40 million have incomes below the median. Because obstructive county-based registration requirements, especially the practice of sharply limiting the times and places to register, effectively disenfranchise millions of working and poor people, the current electoral situation is much worse than it would otherwise be.

During the voter registration campaign of 1982-84, the Republican National Committee and the Christian right poured millions into their registration drives, while the Democratic National Committee spent nothing, and it does not intend to spend anything to enlarge voting by the poor and minorities in either the 1986 or 1988 cam-



**"I can't see this fuss about registering voters. In the old days we registered them four or five times each."**

paigns. The strategists of a center coalition do not emphasize enlisting millions of new voters from the bottom; indeed, a center strategy is more likely to succeed if new constituencies are kept from entering the active electorate, because these groups would press unpopular demands.

The United States is the only western democracy without a system of automatic registration, and it is not likely that the left's natural base can be enlisted on a mass scale unless reforms are instituted which move in the direction of automatic registration. There were some important innovations in the 1982-84 campaigns which made mass registration easier. Instead of the traditional door-to-door approach, volunteer registrars stationed themselves in the crowded waiting rooms of welfare and unemployment offices. Even more important, some state and local public officials were persuaded to make staff-assisted voter registration services available in an array of government agencies that serve working and poor people. These precedents suggest the feasibility of new strategies for opening the electoral system to the bottom, particularly if the relatively small-scale efforts of voter registration organizations during 1982-84 were enlarged by support from other groups on the left.

We can bring pressure on northern and western Democratic governors and mayors (especially those whose personal electoral fortunes are likely to be enhanced by the support of new voters from the bottom) to establish registration services in the agencies under their jurisdictions, as the governors of New York, Ohio, Texas, Montana and Idaho have already done. And we can also urge the executives of voluntary community agencies — health centers, daycare centers, planned parenthood clinics — to provide registration services at their reception desks. By such measures, it may well be within our reach to make voter registration widely accessible, and that would be in the long-term interest of the left.

These kinds of organizing activities lay the groundwork for the time when more is possible. The industrial workers movement did not spring full-blown from the upsurge of strikes in the 1930s; rank-and-file organizer/insurgents on the shop floors had for years been spreading the idea that workers could strike and win industrial democracy. The civil rights movement did not spring full-blown from the Montgomery bus boycott or the student sit-ins; organizer/insurgents had for years been spreading the idea that blacks could win political rights by rising and challenging the southern caste system.

The point is that even in grim times organizing efforts keep alive left alternatives and possibilities. The work we do now can help to counter "the doctrine of necessity" that is being used to bludgeon working people, and to justify dismantling the protections of the welfare state. And the work we do can also help to overcome the institutional obstacles that still maintain the electoral demobilization of the lower classes, which has distorted American politics in this century. •

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## Deeper

*Continued from page 17*

arrangement can be worked out without prior concessions from Managua to negotiate "internal reconciliation" with the contras, presumably leading to some kind of power-sharing, new elections, and the end of emergency measures prompted by the security threat of the war. In view of President Reagan's announced determination to make the Sandinistas "cry uncle," it's easy to understand why Nicaragua perceives the "democratic reforms" demanded by Washington as virtual capitulation.

Secretary of State George Shultz, en route to an O.A.S. meeting in Cartagena, Colombia where the Ministers of the Contadora/Lima Group countries had gathered, stated that Washington's support for the contras "is indefinite and will simply continue. I believe that the message is that we are determined to maintain that support."

The Secretary of State is nothing if not consistent, but this policy will only lead to an escalating conflict. The Administration is determined to slug it out in Central America, and while it would rather not commit troops, the logic of its own rhetoric — designating the Sandinistas a "vital threat" to the nation's security — may yet entrap it. Certainly Reagan's unwillingness to contemplate anything but a unilaterally-imposed U.S. solution in Central America has doomed the region to many more years of bloodshed, and a deepening role for Washington. •

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# Democratic Impasse: Myth and Reality

*by Jim Chapin  
and Guy Molyneux*

**T**he Democratic Party is in desperate shape — or so we hear. Yet, this is a party which at this very moment holds a higher percentage of all public offices than almost any other party in American history. Democratic dominance of registration numbers, state legislatures, governorships, and the House of Representatives is not contested at any serious level. And Republican dominance of the Senate is largely the result of the "rotten borough" apportionment of that body: even in 1980, the Democrats got more votes for Senate than did the Republicans.

The Democrats' problem can be defined quite precisely: holding the presidency. Here their problem is older than is commonly observed. The only Democrats to win a majority of the Presidential vote in this century were Franklin Roosevelt (four times) and Lyndon Johnson (in 1964). Except for the close wins of 1916, 1948, 1960 and 1976, and the Republican split of 1912, these would have been the only five Democratic presidential victories since 1896. Even an optimistic reading of this history would have to concede a Republican *presidential* realignment since 1968.

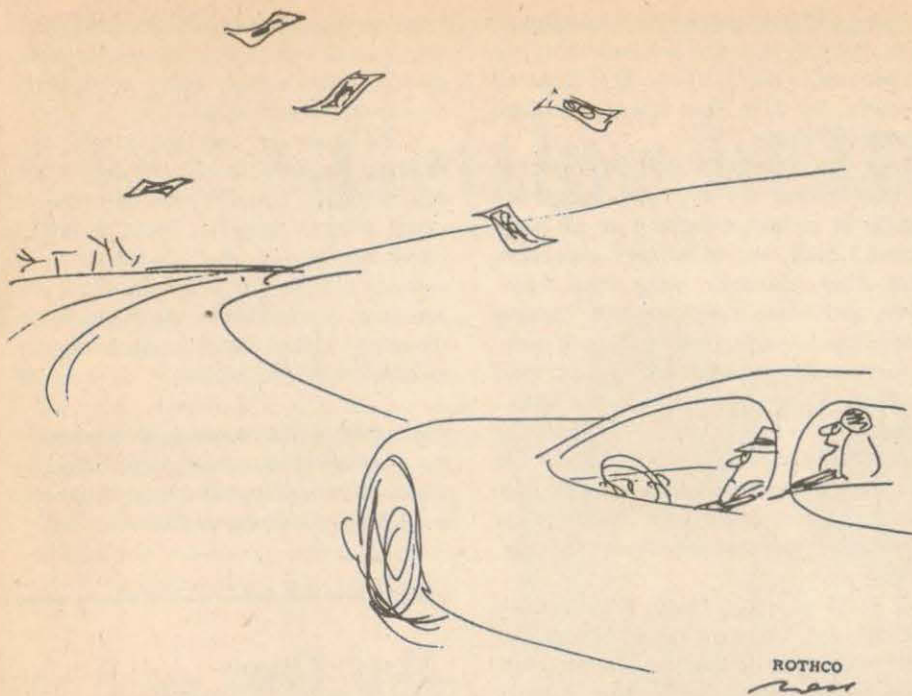
Of course, saying that the Democrats' only problem is the presidency is somewhat akin to saying that the Soviets "only" had trouble with Reactor #4 at Chernobyl. The continued centralization of power in the executive branch, together with a president's ability to manipulate the media and control foreign policy, means that, increasingly, to control the presidency is to control American government. Additionally, a political generation is coming of age which has experienced only a failed Democratic presidency and a successful Republican one; if support for Ronald Reagan is not to become lifetime attachment to the Republican party, something must change soon.

As there is confusion regarding the precise nature of the Democrats' crisis, so there are many misunderstandings of its causes. It is often stated that Democratic weakness derives from the change in the distribution of the American population: the rise of the conservative South and West at the expense of "traditional Democratic strength" in the Northeast and Middle West. But this too is legend: the South and West were Democratic bastions, and the Northeast and Middle West Republican strongholds, all the way through the 1948 election! The Roosevelt coalition rested on a racially exclusive coalition in the South, and once the race issue raised its head in 1948 there never was a "Solid South" again except for *Republicans* Nixon in 1972 and Reagan in 1984.

Furthermore, focus on the South obscures the Democratic presidential problem. Let's imagine a conservative's nightmare of America: the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, and New York. This truncated "liberal" version of America would have elected Humphrey in 1968, but still would have elected Nixon in 1972 and Reagan both times. Or let's take the giant state of California, which has elected liberal Democrats to many state and federal offices since 1952. In those eight Presidential elections, California went Democratic only in 1964. Those who say that the Democrats must have policies conservative enough to satisfy the South haven't bothered to explain what about their national policies fails to appeal to California!

*"It is clear that our problem is much bigger than class-skewed registration."*

In fact, the most significant change in American politics over the last four decades has been the steady rise of a *national* political system. The state-by-state and section-by-section differences in the presidential vote have been declining for years. In so far as there are local differences, these



"We must be nearing Washington."

generally help the Democrats, which is why they so monopolize local offices and the locally-based House of Representatives.

At the same time, some on the left have suggested that our problem is primarily the current shape of the electorate. If only we registered the unregistered, the argument goes, a progressive majority would emerge. This is a convenient analysis, absolving us of any responsibility to reexamine assumptions and programs, but that is precisely why we should be wary about adopting it. Having failed to persuade the voting public of our ability to govern, we are advised to look now to non-voters — the latest in a long line of "substitute proletariats" for the left — to provide deliverance.

Unfortunately, all the polling data suggests that non-voters would not vote much differently than do current voters; they are slightly to the left on economic issues and slightly to the right on social issues. When you remember that Reagan received nearly 50% of the vote from voters below the poverty line (and most non-registrants are not poor), it is clear that our problem is much bigger than class-skewed registration. This is not to say that voter-registration should be abandoned: it can be an important tactic, particularly at the local level, in the service of campaigns. But political leaders and issues generate new voters (as in Chicago with Harold Washington), not vice-versa — tactics cannot replace politics.

## The problem

The problem then is not demographic, it is *political*. It is the Democrats' failure to present coherent national politics that lies at the heart of their dilemma, and gives many people a sense of pervasive crisis about a party which is doing well by so many statistical indicators. The public simply does not have confidence in the Democrats' ability to direct the country, especially the economy. In part this can be attributed to the failure of the only Democratic administrations in the last twenty years (Johnson's and Carter's). But those failures have had an even more important *indirect* impact: they have made Democrats so afraid of debate about economic policies that they have abandoned this field to the Republicans.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the depth of the resulting confusion. Consider this question: what would the next Democratic president *do*? What will s/he do about foreign policy and, above all, the economy? What would be the top legislative proposals of the first 100 days? The painful answer is that one simply has no idea.

Ironically, for many neo-liberals this obfuscation is a conscious strategy in response to the political impasse they see. Not having the courage or inclination to challenge Republican politics, they seek to make *competence* the focal point. "Successful" Democratic politicians — usually governors — are highlighted, celebrated for

their pragmatism and effectiveness. "Efficiency" is the central concept here, as the cult of the entrepreneur — already triumphant in business — takes over politics as well. While this might prove effective in a campaign for county executive, as a strategy for taking back the White House it leaves more than a little to be desired.

Those Democrats who run away from politics often run away from their supporters as well. Many neo-liberals attribute Democratic electoral difficulties to "fringe constituencies" such as women, minorities, and gays. The problem with this approach, beyond the fact that these "fringes" make up a majority of the population, is the dubious proposition that the way to attract new constituencies to one's movement is to begin by attacking those one already has. Conservative Republicans could have begun by defining their "problem" as unpopular Christian fundamentalists and attacking them, but of course they didn't.

Democrats who advance this analysis are so busy disassociating themselves from half their own party that they haven't bothered to explain just how their policies differ from those Reagan is already putting into effect, or why anyone of any persuasion should want to elect them to office. As conservative political analyst Kevin Phillips recently suggested in *The Village Voice*, this is a prescription for political suicide: "The biggest mistake the Democrats can make, short of becoming the party of all the fringe groups, would be to become the party of all the yuppies with the BMW's and the Cuisinarts, because that's another loser. What the Democrats have to be, and what they've always been in their various incarnations, is the party of blue-collar workers, farmers, minorities, and a large chunk of the middle class."

That the party needs to reach middle class voters cannot be seriously disputed. But thus far the party's national leadership has only figured out how to alienate the supporters it has.

## Opportunity knocks

The tragedy here is that this strategic incompetence may cause the party to miss important opportunities. It's often mistakenly assumed that the Democrats can only wait for the economy to falter and then take power, and that if the economy stays reasonably healthy they will never come to power again. In fact, many incumbent administrations have fallen from power in relatively good times, among them the Democrats themselves in 1952 and 1968. Furthermore, the Republicans' current program has little relevance to the problems this country faces, and many of its compo-

nents are distinctly unpopular. For example, key members of the Administration now advocate universal urine tests, blood tests, and polygraph tests — all from people who believe that a visit from an OSHA inspector violates civil liberties! To quote Phillips again, "Social issues can boomerang on the Republicans, but only because . . . they have gone too far. For the last 20 years, the people have been reacting against the Democrats. We are finally, in the late 1980's, coming to a point where the public will react against the Republicans."

It would be a mistake, however, to think that simply opposing unpopular Republican programs is an adequate strategy. Democrats have to think about why Reagan's presidency has been popular. He has succeeded not simply because he performs the ceremonial functions of the presidency better than any president of this century except the two Roosevelts, Eisenhower, and Kennedy (although that is important), but because he has focused only on big themes: America's place in the world, prosperity at home, "big government," and so on. In contrast, most Democrats have, as was said of Adlai Stevenson, "an instinct for the capillaries" — they criticize the details of the Reagan program while conceding its underlying assumptions.

The party must be prepared to project a clear alternative vision and program, that is, an ideology. This vision must transcend the division between "us" and "them" which lies at the center of contemporary American politics. For the past quarter century Democratic liberalism has been based on an elitist altruism: "we" should help "them." With the end of economic growth, many Americans were persuaded that they couldn't afford to help "them" any longer. As Robert Reich has suggested, this is not a tenable philosophical basis for a lasting progressivism.

Instead we need to develop a *collective* politics, which emphasizes our shared interest in confronting social problems. Such a sensibility marked Democratic politics prior to 1960, emerging from the real experiences of the Depression and World War Two. In a suburbanized, fragmented culture, it became increasingly plausible that everyone was on their own (though post-war prosperity of course owed much to highway projects, the G.I. bill, and other public initiatives). We must now persuade a younger generation that the challenges of nuclear weapons, technological transformation, changing family structures, and global economic transition also require a collective response.

In the space allowed here we can only suggest a few of the themes of such a new

politics. Different people will have different lists, but programs and demands should be 1) relevant to people's lives, 2) of universal concern, and 3) in clear opposition to free market ideology:

- One of the great scandals of our time is that children are the worst-treated age group in society: education at all levels takes a back seat to military expansion, 25% of our children are being raised in poverty, and while macroeconomic changes have forced a majority of mothers to work, we continue to treat childcare as a personal concern. This is an area which the Democrats need to make their own, supporting some sort of basic child grant, decreases in the work week, increased funding for education, support systems for families in the form of day-care and pre-school programs, and so on.

- As we write, People Express is up for sale, and it seems virtually certain that eventually four or five giant airline companies will survive, with air fares rising to their old level. The only real accomplishment of deregulation — aside from the widely noted decline in safety — will thus be a bodyblow to unions and a great reduction in workers' salaries, especially in predominantly female occupations (such as the airline attendants). Re-regulation of vital services — including transportation, communication, and banking — is essential for both consumers and workers.

- Every poll suggests widespread public support for disarmament and opposition to foreign intervention, yet many Democrats have decided to follow the President's lead here. Surely all citizens share an interest in moving away from a foreign policy that resembles, in Harry Britt's words, an adolescent male puberty ritual.

- Deindustrialization, a growing service sector, union busting, and public sector retrenchment are together yielding a polarized society. Increasingly, we are divided into two camps: some people clean the homes of, and serve Big Macs to, other people who are too busy making money to take care of themselves. The poor are not "them" — many of us are just a plant closing or medical catastrophe away (or, if another Supreme Court seat becomes vacant, just an unwanted pregnancy away). Our agenda must include an increased minimum wage, labor law reform, more generous and empowering welfare systems, and jobs programs.

Caring for our children, decent services, peace, shared prosperity — these are ideas the Democrats must advance without hedging or embarrassment. The American people are anti-establishment but not anti-government, they want opportunity

but also security, they are future-oriented, they want private morality instead of public morality. And neither party is currently prepared to meet these needs.

We must put together a bold, far-reaching program. It will take debate and even struggle. These are not all issues on which every progressive, not to say every Democrat, agrees. But the opportunity exists to redefine the limits of political discourse as successfully as the Right did in the late seventies. Surely we can be equally as imaginative and radical. ●

*Jim Chapin is an historian, a Democratic party activist, and a member of DSA's National Interim Committee. Guy Molynieux is DSA's Organizational Director.*

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## May Day

*Continued from page 23*

manded a nation of wage-earners who, by virtue of their dependence on their employers, would lose the capacity for independent thinking and responsible political action. Only in a society where all the economic producers achieved independence through individual ownership of a farm or shop, or through cooperative ownership of a factory, could democracy survive.

The Knights failed in their attempt to abolish wage labor and establish a cooperative commonwealth. But their desire to radically transform society in ways that affirmed rather than denied democratic principles is worthy of commemoration. May Day rightfully belongs to all those, like the Knights, seeking to build democratic, anti-capitalist movements. Democratic socialists might think of May Day as an opportunity to counterpose the Knights' republicanism to Reagan's Republicanism. If enough of us approach May Day in that manner, perhaps our children will one day experience May Day as a celebration of democracy — political, social, economic — rather than as a demonstration of the military might of an undemocratic, repressive regime. ●

*Gary Gerstle teaches American history at Princeton University and is completing a book on unionism and working-class culture in twentieth-century America.*

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and friends.**

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# Getting in Deeper

*Editors' Note: The following article was written before the House of Representatives' capitulation to the President on aid to the contras. The U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua now seems certain to escalate, and the C.I.A. is going to take open control of the contra forces. Birns, Danby, and MacMichael analyze here the sophisticated media manipulation and the logic of escalation that led to "Gulf of Tonkin II."*

by Larry Birns, Colin Danby, and David MacMichael

In late March, U.S. military forces went into action in Central America. In response to an alleged Sandinista "invasion," U.S. helicopters ferried Honduran troops to defend contra camps on the Nicaraguan frontier. The action had more than a whiff of history about it: Marines occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 and 1926 to 1933, to "protect American interests" and fight the rebel general Augusto Cesar Sandino. Indeed, the history of Central America has largely been shaped by Washington, and President Reagan means to go on running the affairs of that unfortunate isthmus.

International law, self-determination, and non-intervention are fine words, but when it comes to Central America the 1927 dictum of Undersecretary of State Robert Olds still holds: it is the United States that determines which governments stand and which fall. In El Salvador, Jose Napoleon Duarte serves at the pleasure of the United States, elevated to a ceremonial presidency by a U.S.-engineered ballot. Honduras, too, has a made-in-Washington democracy whose President is barely allowed to choose what he will eat for breakfast. Guatemala's courageous new chief executive also confronts an entrenched military apparatus, installed by Washington thirty years ago. Costa Rica's neutrality and anti-military traditions have been undermined by the crudest kind of U.S. pressure. And in Nicaragua, internal *detente* is rendered difficult because the opposition believes that



Photo by Steve Cagan

Washington will sooner or later topple the Sandinistas and the rewards will go, obviously, to those who showed themselves most amenable to U.S. direction.

Washington is no more inclined than it was at the turn of the century to dilute its power in the region. The Administration sees as its most serious foe the U.S. opposition, lodged mainly in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which is why during the most recent round of debate over funding to the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries — contras — domestic critics found themselves accused of virtual treason, calumniated with greater ferocity than the Sandinistas themselves.

Those Congressional opponents may be of different minds on the morality of applying U.S. power abroad, but many were seared by the Vietnam war, and have been struck from the beginning by disturbing similarities between U.S. policies in Central America and those in Southeast Asia twenty years ago. Time and again, they have been told that the Sandinista government of Nicaragua will fold if a little more pressure is applied to it, if the U.S.-created contras are furnished with a few more millions in aid. But as Washington has upped the stakes, Nicaragua has only become more defiant.

The result, inevitably, is a stepped-up

U.S. role, as was demonstrated during the last week in March. There was another Vietnam echo: the War Powers Act, one of the most important pieces of legislative reaction to the disaster in Southeast Asia, was unceremoniously brushed aside as U.S. troops were introduced in a combat support capacity in Honduras without Congressional consultation.

## On the Border

The confusion and deception surrounding the events in Honduras may have obscured the fundamental and dangerous changes in the Central American conflict represented by the Administration's response. Honduras, which for four years had pretended that the contra facilities on its territory did not exist, was forced by Washington not only to acknowledge their presence, but also to use its own forces to protect the rebels. And the United States, in violation of President Reagan's recent pledges, became directly involved, using U.S. Army helicopters and crews to transport Honduran troops to combat zones.

On March 23 the Reagan Administration, following a hasty and unpublicized trip to Tegucigalpa by Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, announced a Nicaraguan invasion

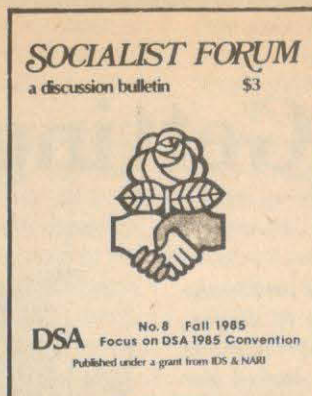
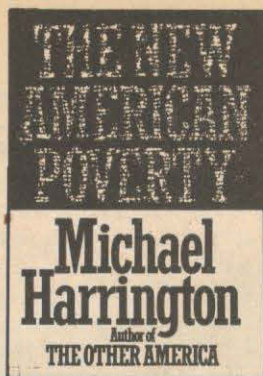
of Honduras. Though they must have known it was a routine incursion, Administration propagandists blew the raid up into "the biggest firefight in the history of Central America."

The initial reports on the fighting were greeted with skepticism by many in the media. The Honduran government at first denied any knowledge of an incursion. Contra sources were also unable to corroborate the first Administration reports. Only later was a semblance of coordination achieved. After heavy U.S. pressure on Tegucigalpa, including threats to withhold future military aid, Honduras capitulated, reported that it had been invaded, and asked for U.S. assistance. This came in the form of transfer to the Honduran army, on presidential authority, of \$20 million worth of military hardware (interestingly enough, of just the type the contra forces are said to need) and the use of U.S. helicopters to transport Honduran troops to the area, or supposed area, of the fighting.

Over the week the welter of detail coming from Administration sources grew ever more uncertain. The invading Sandinistas were said initially to number over 2,000, then 1,600 or 1,500, then only 800. The Administration said they were in El Paraiso department, the Hondurans said Olancho. A Nicaraguan battalion was said to be trapped and suffering hundreds of dead and wounded, then it had withdrawn safely. Finally, reporters were shown five corpses, and two prisoners, complete with convenient diaries. To confuse matters further, Nicaragua denied categorically that it had sent a single soldier into Honduras — Chief of Staff Joaquin Cuadra declared that his forces were only counter-attacking contra forces within Nicaragua.

Meanwhile, almost everyone in both countries, including the Honduran president, went off for Easter holidays at the beach.

Clearly, something had happened along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. Equally clearly, whatever had happened had been manipulated and misrepresented by Abrams and his colleagues as part of their contra propaganda blitz. What is certain is this: for four years Honduras has denied that there are contra forces on its territory. But they are there. For four years Nicaragua has denied that it attacks contra forces on Honduran soil. But it does. Honduras protests the attacks that Nicaragua denies it is making. Nicaragua protests the contra facilities that Honduras denies are there. This diplomatic *pas de deux* of denunciation and denial has served the common purpose of the two countries, permitting the conduct of normal trade and



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ambassadorial relations.

Now the Reagan Administration, in its zeal to get Congressional support for the contra enterprise, has stripped the figleaf from Tegucigalpa. This time, instead of merely denouncing with the usual *pro forma* note a territorial violation that Managua could just as routinely deny, the Hondurans sent troops to confront Nicaraguan forces. More than that, they have committed those troops to the defense of the contra camps against Nicaraguan attack. Moreover, they have accepted U.S. military support in doing so.

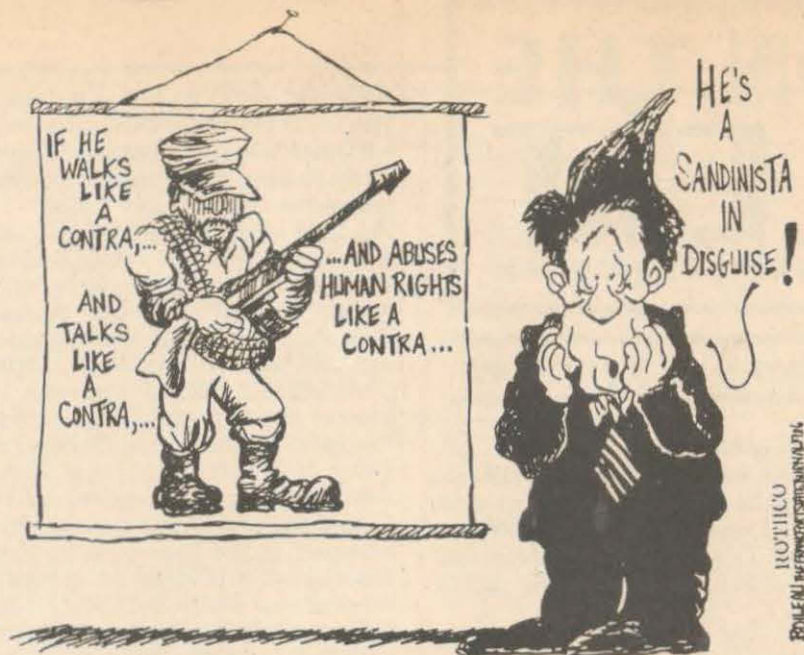
The Nicaraguans have also crossed, or been pushed, across a divide. Their initial categorical denials of an intrusion were simply the usual boilerplate. But in the face of Washington's hoopla and the Honduran action, with its credibility severely damaged, Managua belatedly came clean. On March 28, President Ortega declared in a televised speech that since Honduras no longer exercised sovereignty over the border zones from which the contras operate, these would be considered combat zones in which Nicaragua, under international law, could carry out acts to defend itself. At the same time, however, Nicaragua reiterated its appeal to Honduras to accept international supervision of the border under Contadora auspices.

## Expanded U.S. Role

The final ingredient is that the U.S. Army has finally taken an open and direct role. Surely, Honduras has both the surface and air transport capacity (at least 15 UH-1H and UH-1B helicopters) to move a few hundred troops to Eastern El Paraiso department, and has experience in doing so, having participated in numerous exercises with U.S. forces over the past four years. Yet Washington decided to use helicopters and crews to ferry Honduran troops into a region in which there was little exact knowledge of the number and location of Nicaraguan forces.

This happened only a week after President Reagan indignantly denied any intent of using U.S. forces in the Central American fighting. It was not, it could be stressed, a self-defense action by U.S. forces that had come under attack. There was a deliberate order, presumably from the highest levels, for the combat use of U.S. troops, in direct violation of a personal pledge by the President of the United States to both the Congress and the American people.

The week's events transformed the contra war. The military weakness of the contras has again been displayed — their feeble effort at an offensive was hurled back



across the border, they suffered a Nicaraguan government raid on one of their major camps, and apparently took considerable losses. As a result, Honduran forces have been called on to protect them, further demonstrating the contras' weakness. The new Honduran government of President Jose Azcona, already under heavy domestic pressure to get rid of the contras, has been hurt by its display of subservience to Washington. On the eve of the Nicaraguan incursion, two contras murdered Father William Arsenault, a Canadian priest in Tegucigalpa who had long served as head of the relief organization CARETAS. Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos of Santa Rosa de Copan, condemning the crime, also criticized the Honduran government for tolerating the contra presence.

## No Peace

The events of late March heightened the sense of urgency around Contadora. However, the Panama meeting broke up April 7, with Nicaragua refusing to sign the draft treaty without explicit assurance that the United States, a non-signatory power, would comply. Managua argued that so long as Washington backed the contras and refused to renounce use of force in the region, Nicaragua would be unable to fulfill the treaty's obligations.

This decision may have been tactically unwise. Nicaragua could have offered to sign, thus putting pressure on the Reagan Administration, as it did in September 1984. By blindly adhering to principle, the Sandinistas have discomfited their friends in Contadora, dismayed U.S. Congress-

sional opponents of contra aid, and delighted the Administration, which can now claim that it is Managua which spurns a diplomatic solution.

On the other hand, Nicaragua does not believe that Honduras and Costa Rica have the will, let alone the capacity, to control the contra forces and keep their end of the bargain. The current draft treaty requires all parties to "deny the use of and dismantle logistical and operational support installations and facilities in their territories used to launch activities against neighboring governments," and to "disarm and remove from border zones any group or irregular force identified as being responsible for actions against a neighboring State."

Since Honduras still has not officially admitted that there are contra camps in its territory, it would presumably not consider itself obligated to disarm and remove the irregular forces from the border area. Moreover, the U.S.-backed rebels are actually stronger than the Honduran military in ground forces, and pacifying the border would be impossible without strong U.S. cooperation and assistance. The Hondurans are not enamored of the contras, but as long as the U.S. supports the guerrillas, Honduras — heavily dependent on the United States for military and economic aid — will accommodate itself to Washington's desires.

The only negotiations the White House will support are over how the Nicaraguan government should yield power to the contras. The catch phrase at the State Department is "comprehensive agreement," meaning no effective security

*Continued on page 12*

# ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

## NATIONAL ROUNDUP

### District of Columbia

DSA members from around the nation joined in the massive March for Women's Lives, sponsored by NOW on March 9. TV and the press estimated that a total of 80,000 men and women participated.

### Illinois

DSAer Carl Shier was appointed by Mayor Harold Washington of Chicago to the city's Board of Ethics . . . Marilyn Nissim-Sabat and Sue Purriington of the National Organization for Women spoke to the DSA Southside branch on socialism and feminism . . . The 28th annual Thomas-Debs dinner, honoring DSA Co-Chair Michael Harrington and Jackie Vaughn of the Chicago Teachers Union, was a big success . . . More than 40 DSAers were active in aldermanic run-off elections that finally gave Harold Washington a majority.

### Kentucky

DSA has joined several other groups in Louisville and Lexington urging Governor Collins to keep the Kentucky National Guard from being sent to Central America. The governors of Maine and Massachusetts have already agreed to this for their National Guard units . . . A Socialist Feminist brunch March 16 discussed "Women and the Revolutionary Process: Global and Personal Revolution," and the local organized a socialist-feminist retreat in May.

### Maryland

Recent meetings of Baltimore DSA heard Jacob Shorter on the "History of the Black Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore," Becky Richards on "Feminist Theology," and Barb Larcom on "Problems of the Mentally Ill in Maryland" . . . Svetozar Stojanovic, a Yugoslav socialist philosopher, spoke on "Marx and the Bolshevikization of Marxism" at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

### Massachusetts

Boston City Councillor David Scordras received the 1986 Debs-Thomas-

Bernstein Award from Boston DSA in May . . . DSA member Duncan Kennedy, a Harvard Law School professor, was recently featured on the cover of the Lifestyle section of the *Boston Phoenix* . . . The third annual Social Change Conference, sponsored by the Center for Social Change Practice and Theory at the Heller School, was held in April at Brandeis University. One of the chief organizers was DSA member David Gil . . . When Curtice-Burns, Inc. of Rochester announced that it would sell the Colonial Provisions Co. of Boston to Thorne Apple Valley of Detroit, DSA joined United Food and Commercial Workers Local 616 to save the jobs of 600 workers. Mike Schippiani of the Massachusetts State Labor Department helped set up negotiations between Boston and Thorne Apple Valley, and David Scordras led a dramatic fight to get the City Council to vote 12 to 1 to take Colonial over by eminent domain. Unfortunately, the city corporation counsel, in a controversial decision, ruled that the takeover would be illegal.

### New York

New officers of Ithaca DSA are chair, Theresa Alt; secretary, Michael Burckardt; and treasurer, Jeanne Fudala . . . Ithaca DSA is pushing for a local ordinance on plant closing . . . A Labor Solidarity project of the Long Island Progressive Coalition raised \$925 for the Hormel P-9 strikers . . . Nassau DSA is working on campaigns by several Democrats for state legislature and Congress . . . More than 1500 people attended the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City April 18-20.

### Ohio

Black Swamp DSA re-elected chairperson Wally Smith and co-chairperson

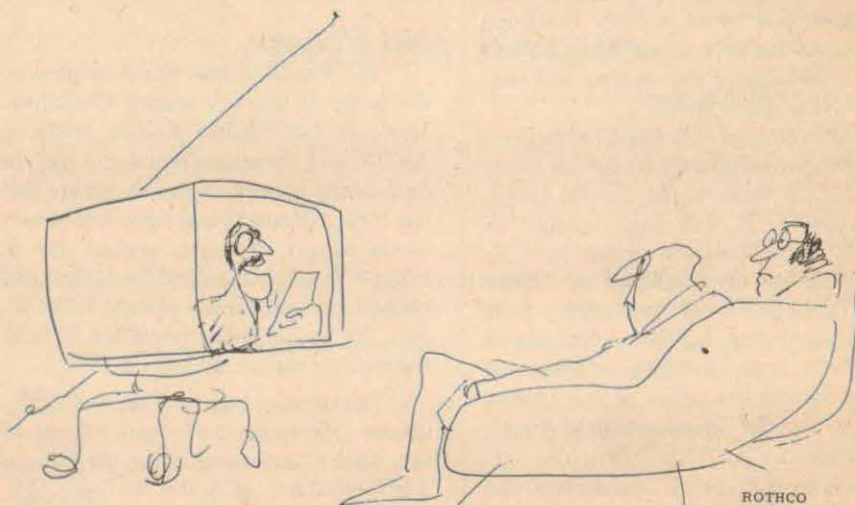
Don McQuarrie, and elected Skip Oliver as Political Coordinator . . . The local has given top priority to the Stop the Bombing in El Salvador campaign . . . Cleveland DSA had a busy spring, bringing Michael Harrington, Ron Aronson, and Cornel West to town.

### Oregon

Portland DSA discussed "Taking the LEFT Approach to Crime." Speakers included Lewis and Clark law professor Clayton Morgareidge and Mark Cramer of the Multnomah County Bar Association . . . The Red Rose School included "Current Issues in the Labor Movement," with AFL-CIO state president Irv Fletcher as a guest speaker; "Indian Issues," led by Laura Berg of the Columbia Intertribal Fish Commission and tribal leaders from the Northwest; Sevin Hirschbein on "Feminist Theory" and many others . . . DSA feminists sponsored a fundraiser for the Women's Rights Coalition.

### Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania DSA showed the documentary film, "Eugene Debs & the American Movement" at its April meeting in Harrisburg, which was also addressed by DSA political director Jim Shoch . . . DSAer Ed Asner (Lou Grant) spoke at Dickinson College in April and national DSA co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich was the keynote speaker for Planned Parenthood in Harrisburg June 16 . . . DSAer Louis Persico appeared on Harrisburg Channel 27 TV in an interview on the death of Olof Palme and DSA's dedication to his principles . . . Philadelphia DSA forums included Magali Larson on "The Organization of Time as a Political Category," Paul Lyons and David Hunt with a "Report from Indo-



"Good morning, all you lottery losers . . ."

ROTHCO

China," and a meeting on "Korean and American workers in the International Economy" . . . Many Philadelphia DSAers worked for Bob Edgar's successful campaign for the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate . . . DSA and over 40 Pittsburgh organizations sponsored a conference April 4-5 on "Planning for Peace and Prosperity." Speakers included Ann Markusen, Michael Harrington and Jesse Jackson. . . . A Mid-Atlantic Feminist-Socialist Retreat was held on June 28. . . . Reading-Berks DSA devoted its May meeting to celebrating Karl Marx's 168th birthday.

#### Tennessee

Nashville DSA has started a new publication, *Political Solutions*. The first issue reported on the panel of four Nashville activists who insisted there were no irreconcilable differences between socialism and Christianity.

#### Texas

Houston DSA has had great success with monthly small group discussions on a range of topics . . . Their April public forum was devoted to "The Case of P-9: What is Solidarity?"

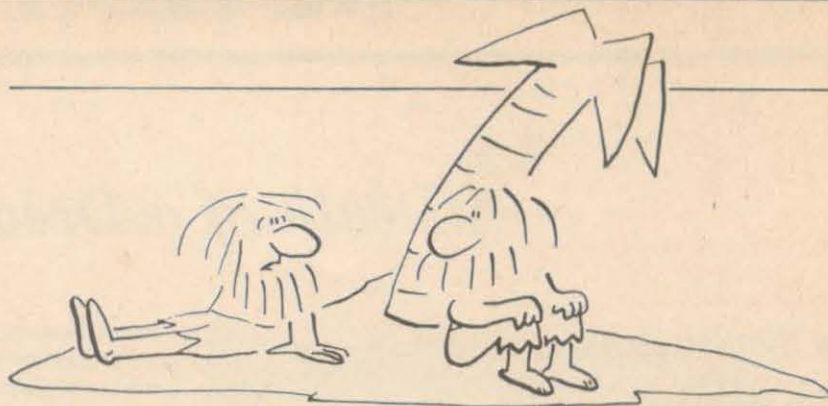
## RESOURCES

The Institute for Democratic Socialism and the Socialist Scholars Conference have published an important new pamphlet: *Toward a Socialist Theory of Racism* by Cornel West. West teaches at the Yale Divinity School and is a member of DSA's National Executive Committee, and this is a significant contribution to a crucial debate. Copies are available for \$1.00 (\$.50 each for 10 or more) from I.D.S., 15 Dutch St., New York, NY 10038.

The Scholars Conference has also produced four pamphlets independently, which are available at the same price and address:

- *Liberalism in Decline* by Stanley Aronowitz.
- *The Debate on Comparable Worth* by Ronnie Steinberg.
- *Nicaragua: The Revolution Deserves Critical Support* by Bogdan Denitch.
- *Socialism and the Third Camp* by Julius Jacobson.

From the Center for Popular Economics comes the *Economic Report of the People*, one of the best recent works on progressive economics. Simultaneously



"What I miss most are the media events."

Baloo  
ROTHCO

comprehensive and accessible, it will be of interest to both students of the field and the layperson. Robert Heilbroner writes that "the *Economic Report of the People* is a powerful indictment of, and a persuasive alternative to, the economics of reaction." Available for \$9.00 from South End Press, 116 St. Botolph St., Boston, MA, 02115.

Video and audio tapes from the New Directions conference are available for rent or purchase. Write to New Directions, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038 for information.

## Olof Palme Fund

The Institute for Democratic Socialism has recently created an Olof Palme Peace and Democracy Fund in honor of the slain Swedish Prime Minister, to support its international work. Planned activities include publications, conferences, and tours for foreign speakers. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to I.D.S., 15 Dutch St., Room 500, New York, NY 10038.

## Libya

The DSA International Affairs Committee issued the following statement after the U.S bombing raid on Libya:

DSA, an affiliate of the Socialist International in the U.S., joins with its sister parties in condemning the brutal, illegal exercise of super-power brinkmanship in the American attack on military and civilian targets on Libyan soil. This attack will do nothing to stop or even diminish terrorism, or to increase the safety of international travel. On the contrary, terrorism, both unofficial and state-sponsored, will increase. It should

also be noted that the U.S. is one of the most consistent practitioners of terrorism, both directly and indirectly. Its agencies have repeatedly attempted to assassinate foreign leaders, and it openly arms terrorist bands in Nicaragua. All this attack proves is the the U.S. is willing to publicly claim an international double standard: for itself, complete immunity to violate international law and to engage in terror; in the case of smaller nations, it claims the unilateral right to act as the judge, jury and executioner.

DSA's repudiation of the Reagan Administration's unilateral use of force and terror has nothing to do with our view of the Libyan regime, which we consider to be a typical demagogic military dictatorship, and which uses and finances terrorism. We reject the notion, however, that the U.S. is the world's policeman, and consider it to be a major contributor to the increase in world terrorism.

## In Memoriam

"I never cherished any illusion of changing women's condition; it depends on the future of labour in the world; it will change significantly only at the price of a revolution in production . . . But at least I helped the women of my time and generation to become aware of themselves and their situation," wrote Simone de Beauvoir in *Force of Circumstance*, the third volume of her autobiography. De Beauvoir passed away in April, just one day before the sixth anniversary of the death of her lifetime companion Jean Paul Sartre. With her seminal book *The Blood of Others*, she explored the combined struggles of socialism and feminism and reshaped the contemporary map. As socialists and feminists, we salute her efforts and accept her challenge.

# REVIEWS

## *Death of a Dream?*

by Stanley Aronowitz

**THE TRAGEDY OF ZIONISM** by Bernard Avishai. Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1985, \$19.95

**B**ernard Avishai is a Canadian-born writer, currently teaching in the United States. In 1972, he emigrated to Israel but returned to Canada three years later. In part, this book is his "elegy to the Zionist tradition." According to Avishai, the tragedy of Zionism is that its original commitment to freedom and democracy has succumbed to statism, and a new Zionism has emerged whose fealty to the old ideals is considerably weaker. Thus *The Tragedy of Zionism* is written from a democratic socialist and Zionist perspective, which makes its argument more persuasive than those which attack Israel from the outside.

Avishai goes a long way toward justifying the history of Zionism and its insistence that Jews needed a national home to become not only economically and politically autonomous, but also safe from antisemitism. While he clearly explains that the creation of a separate Jewish state was only one form — and not even the preferred one — of Jewish salvation, he finally justifies the Jewish state solution on purely contingent grounds: the choice was necessary because both the British and Arabs tried to thwart the establishment of a refuge for the 700,000 survivors of the Holocaust after the war. Avishai does not insist, as many left Zionists did at the time, that only a binationalist state would protect Palestinian Arabs' political and social rights. Avishai is a labor Zionist with no sympathy for leftist critiques of the origins of Israel or for Arab leaders who opposed its existence. For this reason, it is all the more remarkable that he has provided us with a systematic exposition of the rise and fall of Zionism and a frank admission that his tradition is, for all practical purposes, dead.

Avishai never blames the "Zionist revisionism" of Menachem Begin and his ideological mentor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, for the current state of affairs. Revisionism has triumphed, says Avishai, because of the failings of labor Zionism itself, in particular the drift of Mapai, the political party led for a generation by David Ben Gurion, toward militarism, statism, and undemocratic management of the economy at a time when the Israeli labor movement held the political and ideological loyalty of the overwhelming majority of Jews.

The great federation of Jewish workers, the Histadrut, was — like European labor movements — a veritable "state within a state" during this period. It is not only represented workers in their struggle with the nascent Jewish bourgeoisie, it also controlled the commanding heights of the Israeli economy after 1948. The labor federation was the source of housing, jobs, social serv-

ices, education, and culture. In the early years, the party was understood by Zionist socialists as the political arm of the movement, and the state constituted, for the most part, a necessary evil to defend against aggressors, to promote foreign trade, and to administer the still unfinished task of rescuing tens of thousands in Europe and the million Jews still living in Arab lands.

In Avishai's narrative, the right led by Begin grew from a marginal force to become the government power because the leaders of the labor Zionist movement were unwilling to risk democracy and a systematic egalitarian struggle, not only for Arabs but also for the Sephardic Jews streaming into Israel from Arab lands. In contrast to the earlier vision of economic and social equality, Israel became a land of privileged strata within the working class, even as the gap widened between the working class and the middle and bourgeois strata. Avishai refutes the parallel between Israel and South Africa by claiming that economic development depended on Jewish labor rather than on a Palestinian subproletariat and that Israeli Arabs have actually benefited from the scientific and technological innovations introduced by Histadrut in agriculture and industry. Yet, the author acknowledges that Palestinian civil rights have been flagrantly violated within both the 1948 boundaries of Israel and the post-1967 occupied territories.

The heart of Avishai's argument, however, is not the lack of consideration for the rights of Arabs but rather the exploitation of the Sephardim by the Europeans. Middle Eastern Jews, suffering class exploitation and caste oppression, turned to Begin who campaigned on both the "negative" libertarian program of anti-bureaucratism and the positive virtues of market capitalism. Begin became the candidate of the oppressed against a labor movement that had become a hierarchy of privilege.

This is the foundation of Zionism's fall, but it is by no means the entire content. As Avishai portrays the early ideology of laborism, the state was to be subordinated to the movement. For socialists, the primacy of the revolution's institutions (direct democracy in the workplace, popular militia, and agricultural collectives) was unquestioned. In contrast, the later Zionists who opted for cultural nationalism argued for the creation of a strong state and the subordination of the labor movement to the objectives of the state. They saw themselves as building a western capitalist democracy, that is, a state with formal political freedom for all Jews but with a traditional bourgeois economic and social base.

Avishai also shows how Ben Gurion fostered the creation of a new technocracy. This group lost touch with the libertarian socialism of the previous generation and saw themselves as managers of the state. Avishai portrays two key figures of this group, Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres, as also the most important of the new militarists who surrounded Ben Gurion in his final decade as

*Continued on page 22*

# REVIEWS

## Woody Allen: Family Man

by Harold Meyerson

**W**ith *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Woody Allen returns to the familiar terrain of his most acclaimed films, *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*. The setting is a romantic's New York: the giants of New York's cultural past, the Gershwins and Grouchos and Chrysler Buildings, still dwarf a squalid present of Trump towers and TV sitcoms. The subject is the relationships, fleeting and lasting, of New Yorkers, and the ongoing search for meaning or any acceptable substitute in a godless world.

But there are subtle if significant differences between *Hannah's* world and those of its predecessors. This is a warmer movie, more affectionate, in some ways more conventional than Allen's earlier work. In particular, it is a further step in the odyssey of our greatest comic away from the comic's film.

Consider one departure: Woody Allen's characteristic obsessions and shticks have been distributed among all the major male players. The sculptor played by Max Von Sydow watches a documentary on Auschwitz and delivers a diatribe on popular culture and fundamentalist preachers. The architect played by Sam Waterston offers a tour of Manhattan's early modernist and pre-modernist architecture. As to the executive played by Michael Caine, Allen entrusts not only the romantic confusions he normally reserves for his own character, but even the quintessential Allen gag of the interior monologue in which he painstakingly strategizes how coolly and discreetly to approach the woman he is wooing — only to leap all over her when she actually appears.

But comics do not give their own material to other characters, and Allen has never before entrusted aspects of his persona to Michael Murphy or Tony Roberts or the other actors who comprise his floating stock company. In part, this arises because Allen's own subplot in *Hannah* scarcely intersects with the rest of the picture until three-quarters of the way through: while the other characters couple and re-couple, he is embarked on a lonely mid-life scramble for God. But *Hannah* also is shaped by diminishing tension between the comic and his social world, and *Hannah* concludes with Allen not only back from the void but also, quite movingly, back in the family.

This is an inversion of the comic's traditional happy ending. From Chaplin and Fields and the Marxes, through early Allen, the fade-out saw a stultifying family and society shunned, fled from, occasionally smashed. The estrangement between comic and society is the one given of American comedy — and what makes Allen's career of surpassing interest, not only artistically but historically, is that unlike his forebears he has worked at a time when society, at least as a comic can apprehend it, has been crumbling all around him.

For, against the claims of culture and society, the classic

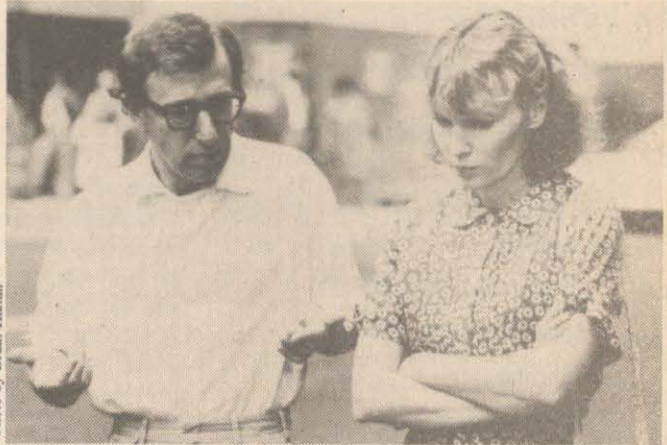


Photo by Brian Hamill

comic — like the majority of American artists — posited the claims of the self. The sham of bourgeois propriety was their straightman: Groucho cannot exist without Margaret Dumont, nor Fields without his harridans. But as the Seventies disastrously assimilated the more problematic aspects of the Sixties counter-culture, the mask that comics had parodied or ripped away was no longer there. If the Seventies is the most confused and undefined decade in twentieth-century American culture, it is largely because the counterposition of the self to society is nearly impossible to sustain when society professes allegiance to nothing but the self.

This is the shifting terrain over which Allen's career has unfolded. He begins, classically, as the outcast, the criminal and revolutionary *malgre lui* of *Take The Money and Run* and *Bananas*, adrift in a world of idiots and conventions whose full silliness it is his duty to expose (when harp music wafts through a particularly dramatic scene, he opens the closet and finds the harp). In his next films, he maintains his social estrangement by situating himself in the totalitarian future (*Sleeper*) or the authoritarian past (*Love and Death*).

By the time of *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*, Allen is in the same world as the films' other characters; he is almost of it, too. *Annie Hall* has some vestigial asides for the audience only (producing Marshall McLuhan, for instance) and some scenes of residual estrangement whenever he travels. In *Manhattan*, there are no side trips, no asides, just a genteel war of each against all in which Allen is a player like everyone else. *Manhattan* walks an odd tightrope as a kind of egoistic critique of egoism, combined with an aching nostalgia for a younger, less cynical New York.

The comic as everyone, everyone as the comic: *Zelig* embodies the first, and in some part *Hannah and Her Sisters* embodies the second. Indeed, with *Hannah*, Allen tips the scales

Continued on page 24

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The Labor Day issue of DEMOCRATIC LEFT is your opportunity to show your support for DSA and its publication by taking out personal greetings and/or display advertisements and asking your friends and colleagues to do the same. This is the only fundraising that DEMOCRATIC LEFT does throughout the year. Help us make it a success. Deadline: September 5. Make checks payable to DSA.

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## Zionism

*Continued from page 20*

prime minister. The author demonstrates convincingly that militarism was not simply an act of will but a response to Arab intransigence. Indeed, he shows that a considerable portion of Labor opposed such policies as annexation, the exodus of Palestinian Arabs, and even the creation of a "greater Israel" when the Herut, Begin's early political vehicle, proposed them. Yet, despite Ben Gurion's antipathy to militarism, his conversion to statism, according to Avishai, accounts for the rightward shift in Israeli society in the 1960s.

For many Americans and Canadians, the history of Zionism is still shrouded in myths and half truths. This book will be an eye opener for them. There is no other place, to my knowledge, where left partisans can find a critical picture of the Zionist movement from the inside. Avishai's elegy stops short of a wholesale indictment of an entire society. Yet, he advances reasons why demo-

cratic socialist supporters of Israel should reconsider their perspective on Israel and the Middle Eastern tragedy. For those of us who unconditionally defend Israel's right to exist, there is no longer justification for defending the country as a radically democratic or socialist-oriented society. In many respects it has become a settler state, although Avishai is still somewhat blind to this. He remains loyal to the dream of liberty provided by one wing of Zionism to the immigrants: a place where each person could fulfill her or his aspirations and develop capacities to their full potential.

If *The Tragedy of Zionism* fails, it is because it substitutes historical narrative for critical explanation. This method prevents Avishai from addressing the historical objections posed by the Jewish socialist movement to Zionism itself — although he knows the arguments. Nevertheless *The Tragedy of Zionism* has prepared the ground for such a discussion by providing a meticulous history. ●

*Stanley Aronowitz is professor of sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center.*

# THE LAST WORD

## *Reclaiming a Holiday*

by Gary Gerstle

**M**y memories of May Day as a youth in Cincinnati are almost as vivid as those of baseball's opening day. No May Day celebrations occurred in Cincinnati as far as I knew. TV, however, brought the Soviet Union's celebration into our home. I scrutinized NBC and CBS film clips of troops, tanks, and rockets passing through Moscow's Red Square. As an aspiring cold warrior, I tried to identify changes in Soviet troop strength, tank numbers and especially rocket technology: had the Soviets gained a military advantage over America and the Free World? If so, what should the Pentagon do? My small group of friends debated these questions with the utmost seriousness and staged mock Soviet-American battles on a carefully-constructed map that covered my entire basement. As boys in early 1960s' America, we derived great pleasure from these war games; but we never lost sight of the fact that the defense of the Free World rested on our shoulders.

I did not know why May 1 was so significant to the Russians. I simply assumed that it marked an important moment in the Communist seizure of power. If someone — even my father — had told me that May Day celebrations had originated in America among American workers, I would not have believed it. How could American workers and the Soviet Union have ever had anything in common? My cold war mindset had to disintegrate — as it did through the years of the New Left, the Vietnam war and Watergate — before I could even have contemplated so subversive a notion.

This once subversive notion is now a well-established fact. In 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, the forerunner of the A.F.L., passed a resolution stating that "8 hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886." Though the Federation did not intend to stimulate a mass insurgency, its resolution had precisely that

effect. In late 1885 and early 1886, hundreds of thousands of American workers, increasingly determined to resist their subjugation to capitalist power, poured into a fledgling labor organization, the Knights of Labor. Beginning on May 1, 1886, they took to the streets to demand the universal adoption of the eight-hour day.

Chicago was the center of the movement. Workers there had been agitating for an eight-hour day for months, and on the eve of May 1, 50,000 were already on strike. 30,000 more swelled their ranks the next day, bringing most Chicago manufacturing to a standstill. Fears of violent class conflict gripped the city. No violence occurred on May 1 — a Saturday — or May 2. But on Monday, May 3, a fight involving hundreds broke out at McCormick Reaper between locked-out unionists and the nonunion workers McCormick hired to replace them. The Chicago police, swollen in number and heavily-armed, quickly moved in with clubs and guns to restore order. They left four unionists dead and many others wounded.

Angered by the deadly force of the police, a group of anarchists, led by August Spies and Albert Parsons, called on workers to arm themselves and participate in a massive protest demonstration in Haymarket Square on Tuesday evening, May 4. The demonstration appeared to be a complete bust, with only 3,000 of an expected 25,000 person crowd assembling. But near the end of the meeting, an individual, whose identity is still in dispute, threw a bomb that killed seven policemen and injured sixty-seven others. Hysterical city and state government officials rounded up eight anarchists, tried them for murder, and sentenced seven to death. On November 11, 1887, four, including Parsons and Spies, were executed. All the executed advocated armed struggle and violence as revolutionary methods; but their prosecutors found no evidence that any had actually thrown the Haymarket bomb. They died for their words, not their deeds. A quarter of a million people lined Chicago's streets during Parsons' funeral procession to express their outrage at this gross miscarriage of justice.

For radicals and trade unionists everywhere, Haymarket became a symbol of the stark inequality and injustice of capitalist society. The May, 1886, Chicago events figured prominently in the decision of the founding congress of the Second International (Paris, 1889) to make May 1, 1890 a demonstration of the solidarity and power of the international working-class movement. May Day has been a celebration of international socialism and (after 1917) international communism ever since.

May Day remained an important date on the American political calendar as long as the left remained a viable force in American politics. The Socialist party led thousands through the streets of Cleveland on May 1, 1917 to protest American entry into the First World War. Both Socialists and Communists organized May Day parades through the early 1930s, but the collapse of the Socialist party after 1936 allowed the American Communist party to claim May Day as its own. That claim mattered little after 1945, however, when the American government's anticommunist crusade (1948-1954), followed by the Kremlin's revelation of Stalin's crimes (1956), destroyed the party's organization, shattered its morale, and silenced its political voice. History had cleared the way for my youthful understanding of May Day — as the occasion for a foreign power to display the military hardware it would someday use to strike at the American values of freedom and democracy. Most Americans still see May Day that way.

The hundredth anniversary of May Day is a fitting time to contemplate how one might communicate to present-day Americans that the values of freedom and democracy were the ones that the original May Day demonstrators held dearest. The labor organization favored by most workers who participated in the May 1886 demonstrations and strikes, the Knights of Labor, espoused a radical republican ideology which emphasized the irreconcilability of capitalist social relations with the practice of American democracy. Capitalism de-

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# JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

**Thanks, we'd rather work.** More than one-third of major companies now offer unpaid paternity leaves — up from 8.6% in 1980 — but the benefit is still rarely used, the *Wall St. Journal* reports. At Merck & Co., where men can take off up to 18 months, only a dozen out of 9,500 male employees have taken the leave over the past five years. While the boys have clearly kept the urge to share parenting duties well in check, corporate culture has also worked to undermine the policy improvements. "It's not (seen) as smart for a man's career" to take such a leave, a Proctor and Gamble staffer acknowledged. Then why do they bother? To avoid sex-bias lawsuits, of course. "It's a nice thing to have on the books," said an AT&T official.

**Take that!** When General Dynamics was indicted for fraud in December, the Navy banned the leading military equipment supplier from receiving new orders. They quickly came to their senses, however, not only restoring General Dynamics' eligibility, but also granting it immunity from further suspensions that might arise from new indictments (what the military calls a "preemptive strike"). The Navy justified the move by explaining that the company was "making progress in correcting its shortcomings." Keep this valuable legal precedent in mind: the next time you're caught speeding, for example, just explain that yes, you *were* going 75, but it's o.k. because you were decelerating at the time. You should be on your way again in a jiffy.

**Dinero talks.** The New York Chamber of Commerce recently sponsored a seminar entitled "Hispanics: Marketing Opportunity or Social Responsibility?" After sessions devoted to answering questions like "Shouldn't they all be forced to speak English anyway?", "How many Hispanics are there anyway? Where are they?", and "Are they all different? How do you communicate with them?", the day wrapped up with a wine and cheese "business card exchange" arranged by Citibank. The invitation nicely summed up civic consciousness in the Reagan era: "Learn how to tap into this \$100 billion Hispanic market while at the same time meeting your social responsibility. You'll be glad you did!"

## Allen

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more toward creating a society than sustaining the oppositional self. Social estrangement isn't even an option here. As in *Manhattan*, Allen's character quits his job as a television producer, but there, it was because television was meaningless, here, because life is. In *Annie Hall*, dinner with Annie's family was a nightmare leap into Middle America; in *Hannah*, when Allen turns up at his wife's family's dinner (which is also his ex-wife's family dinner), cultural tension isn't even an issue.

Indeed, as the closing scene unfolds, all the traditional values of the comedian's world are inverted. As the plots and subplots resolve, the importance of family and relationships is affirmed.

**A terrorist and a gentleman.** National Public Radio reports that Phyllis Schlafly is raising money to send "care packages" to the Nicaraguan contras, complete with disposable razors and breath mints. What's next, Phyllis, designer fatigues and copies of *Miss Manners*? After all, it's important to observe the niceties as one rapes and pillages.

**Every once in a while,** William F. Buckley performs a useful social function, in spite of himself. Such was the case with a recent column ridiculing concern over democracy in the Third World. What's really important about a society, Buckley tells us, is *liberty*: "Ask not, in Africa or in Latin America, how many people voted for the incumbent governor; ask what kind of life are the people permitted to live? Are they free?" Surprisingly, he goes on to offer a test for freedom: "Are their holdings safe from inflation and thefts? Can they leave the country with their savings?" We hate to be critical, but we have heard more inspiring conceptions of human liberation. But it's not often we get such a revealing look at the conservative soul (sic). Thanks Bill.

**Going out of business sale.** The Reagan Administration is encouraging scientists involved with Star Wars research to patent their federally-subsidized discoveries and sell them to the private sector. Of course there isn't a corporation in America which doesn't insist on ownership of any discovery made by an employee, but what's good for business apparently isn't *always* good for America. This is "privitization" in its most twisted and cynical form: since we "know" that people only work for private enrichment, and that the government does nothing of value, we will enrich scientists on the public payroll and voluntarily give up government ownership of valuable technologies. Give this Administration its due: slowly but surely it destroys anything that might contradict its ideology.

**Block that acronym.** A women's PAC has been formed to funnel early donations to women Senate candidates. The group's name, Emily, stands for "Early Money Is Like Yeast." Ouch.

The scene derives its subtle tension from the Allen character's absence from these reconciliations until almost the very end. We have come full circle: the audience wants Allen to be part of this family, as intensely as it once wished on W.C. Fields the capacity to escape his horrifying family in *It's a Gift*.

The emotional-historical biography of much of the generation that came of age in the Sixties, then, is encapsulated in Allen's work: from a repudiation of social institutions in the name of authenticity, to confusion within a society that repudiated all community in the name of authenticity, to settling for family which, whatever its limitations, is preferable to the Hobbesian world of godless capitalism. ●

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