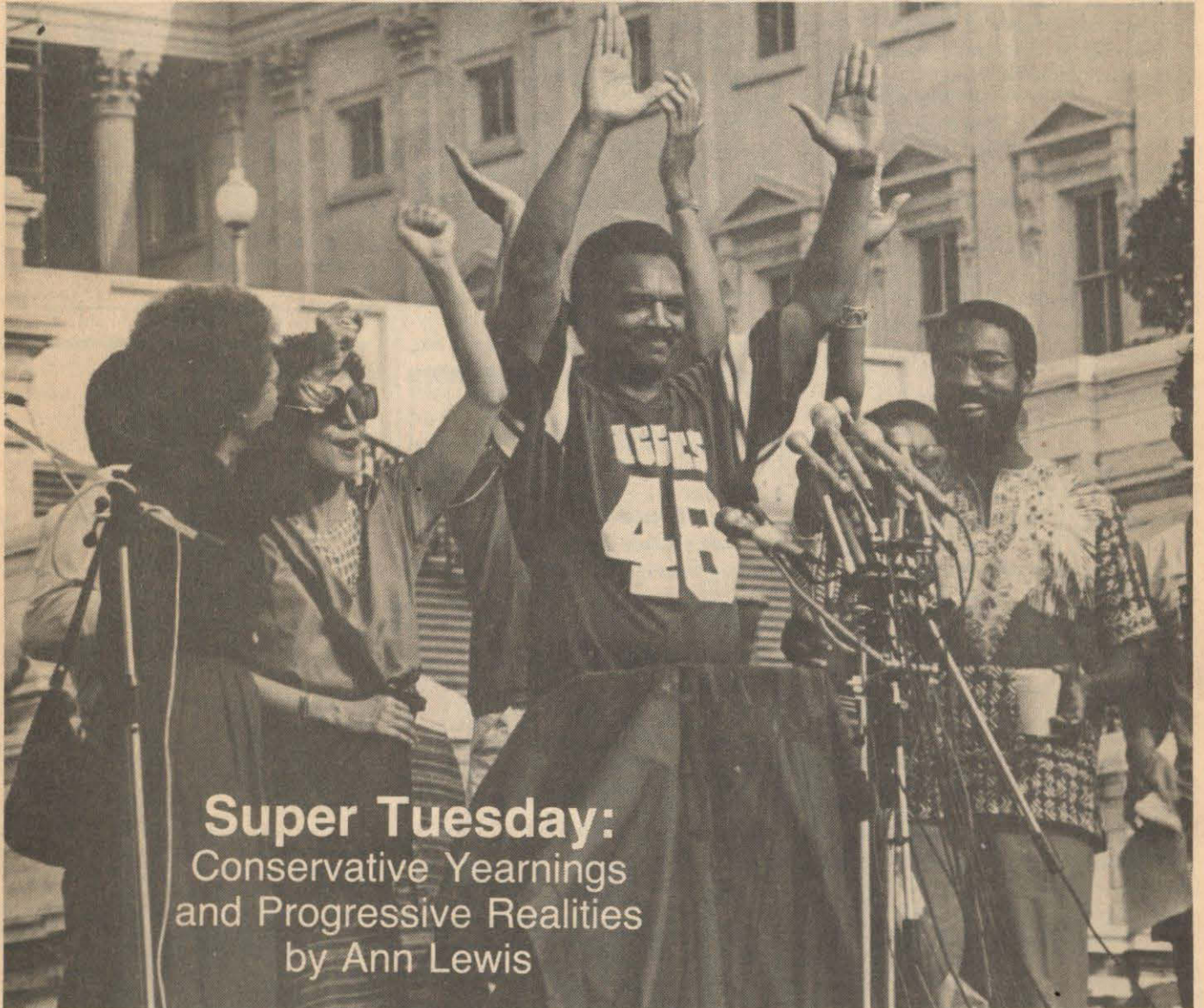


PUBLISHED BY THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Jan.-Feb. 1988
Vol. XVI, No. 1
\$1.50



Super Tuesday:
Conservative Yearnings
and Progressive Realities
by Ann Lewis

**Michael Harrington on Program for the Democrats
ALSO: Canada's NDP • Hollywood and Vietnam •
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

LETTERS

Matewan

To the Editor:

After seeing *Matewan* and reading the review of it in the November/December issue of *Democratic Left*, I would like to know what books or articles have been written about the Matewan strikes. Can you tell me anything about the historical accuracy of the film? Were any episodes or characters invented? Any information would be welcome.

Neil Copertini
San Francisco, CA

(Editor's response: The American Social History Project recommends the following book as a good source of information about that period in labor history: David Corbin's *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: Southwest Virginia Miners, 1880-1922*, which was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1981.)

But the right track can only be accomplished if the Soviet Union gives up on military adventurism. Imperialist wars are a very costly enterprise. A real solution to the Afghanistan crisis can only help the Soviet people. But what is currently proposed as a solution is a sham. Imagine that the United States invades Nicaragua. International crisis is set. Negotiations begin. The U.S. promises that it will leave Nicaragua in a year only if the safety and guaranteed participation in the ruling circles of their puppets is secured. What gall, right?

To keep silent on what's happening in Afghanistan can only feed Gorbachev's enemies and the enemies of *prestroika*. International indignation to the Soviet pull-out is needed. Shams never resolve anything.

Lorenze Canizares
New York, NY

The Soviet Union and Afghanistan

To the Editor:

It is perplexing to see a serious analytical article such as Louis Menashe's "Understanding *Glasnost*" of the November/December issue of *Democratic Left*, which does not consider the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan.

By now it should be a clear political position, to most political activists of the left, that the foreign policy of a nation is a reflection of its internal policies. How successful *perestroika* is going to be is tied to a situation very similar to one we face here in terms of our own economic well-being—how much resources are devoted to the military.

It seems clear that Gorbachev would like to eliminate at least some missile expenses. It also seems clear that Gorbachev is seriously trying to shake up the bureaucracy in order to improve the Soviet people's standard of living. All given, Gorbachev seems to be on the right track.

ARTICLES

- Super Tuesday:
Conservative Yearnings and
Progressive Realities
by Ann Lewis..... page 5
- Israeli-Palestinian
National Executive Committee
Resolution page 10
- Could Canada Vote for
Democratic Socialism?
by Desmond Morton..... page 11
- Hollywood
and the Vietnam War
by Al Auster
and Leonard Quart page 13

DEPARTMENTS

- LETTERS..... page 2
- EDITORIAL page 3
- DSAAction..... page 7
- ON THE LEFT page 8
- CLASSIFIEDS..... page 15

A Socialist Perspective on
THE POLITICS OF POVERTY



by
Michael Harrington

with contributions by
Barbara Ehrenreich
William Julius Wilson
and
Mark Levinson

Published by The Democratic Socialists of America

To order DSA's new pamphlet on poverty send \$1.00 for a single issue. Make checks payable to DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Room 500, New York, New York 10038.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

BARBARA EHRENREICH
MICHAEL HARRINGTON
Editors

SHERRI LEVINE
Managing Editor

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Joanne Barkan
Vania Del Borgo
Guy Molyneux

Maxine Phillips
Jan Rosenberg

DEMOCRATIC LEFT (ISSN 0164-3207) is published six times a year at 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038. Second Class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Subscription \$8 regular; \$15 institutional. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to DEMOCRATIC LEFT, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT is published by the Democratic Socialists of America at the above address, phone (212) 962-0390. Microfilm, Wisconsin State Historical Society, 816 State St., Madison WI 53703. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7229, Baltimore MD 21218. Signed articles express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the organization.

EDITORIAL

Democratic Candidates Need A Progressive Program

Program, the cynical wisdom says, makes no difference in American presidential elections.

Most of the time, alas, there is a rough, real-world truth to that attitude. Most of the time, Democrats and Republicans are not arguing about basic principles and new directions but about whether there will be a progressive or reactionary version of a common consensus.

If this were just another standard election, we socialists would be denouncing the vacuousness of the campaign but without much hope of getting the Democrats to take ideas seriously. Only 1988 is not most of the time.

In 1980, the most ideological candidate in the twentieth century was elected, in part because he promised radical new departures from a welfare state consensus which could no longer cope with the furious pace of worldwide change. Unfortunately, he was as good as his word. The Treasury has been given to the rich, the poor and the middle class have been under assault, and America now lives in an economic house of cards.

The lease on that house of cards is going to run out sooner or later, and quite possibly sooner.

One of the reasons why program has to count in this election is that the people sense that something is wrong. Events like the stock market crash have broken the Reagan spell. But although the system is in crisis — the stock market crash; private, corporate, and international debt; the multinationalization of the world economy; and so on — there is no assurance that this will be obvious to the voters on election day in 1988.

If a recession begins this spring, which is possible but by no means certain, the Democrats can build on the facts of everyday experience. If not, the progressive task is much more difficult: to speak to the fears that exist even now, to show that a crisis will come, and to develop alternatives to it. Accomplishing these tasks requires leftist imagination, not leftist bombast.

If the Democrats allow 1988 to be a senior class election, they will lose. They need program to reach out to that uneasiness that is shared by a majority of Americans. And they also need to have some idea how to deal with the economic crisis that is sure to break out during the next Presidency, if not before.

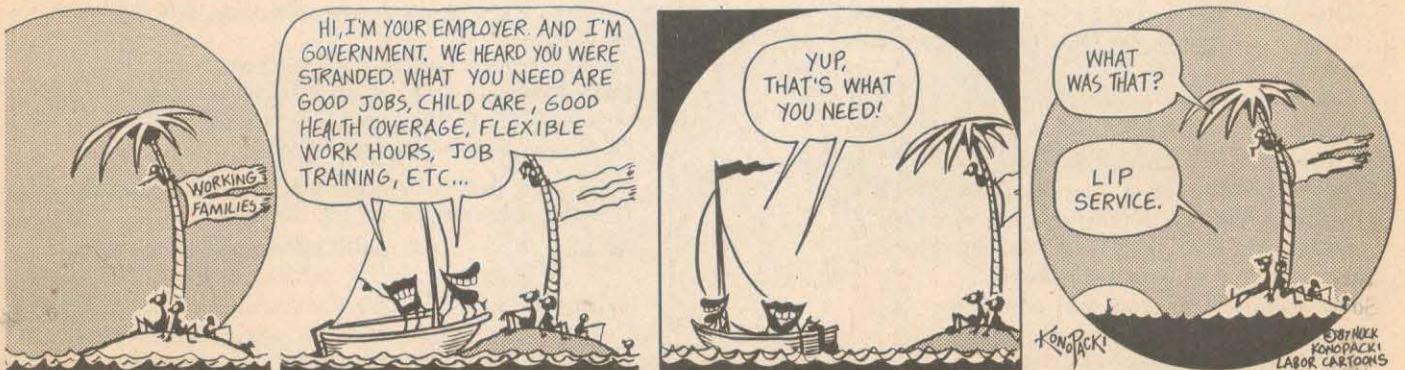
As it now stands, five and a half Democratic candidates are dodging the fundamental issues. Jesse Jackson is the

only Democrat who has come up with a comprehensive response to the national plight, which includes full employment based on redistributive justice, and Third World development as a means of solving problems in the rich and poor lands. That is why the DSA Political Action Committee voted to endorse Jackson at its December meeting.

Paul Simon supports an excellent full employment program — and persists in a reactionary commitment to a balanced budget amendment. He is also, however, the only candidate, besides Jackson, who has pushed for tax justice.


DSA will, of course, be putting all of its energy behind Jackson. But, as the December convention recognized, a good number of our members and friends will be backing other candidates. We believe that all of us on the democratic left have to work together on program. The time has come to turn that most derided of political institutions, the Convention Platform Committee, into a serious vehicle for ideas that will both mobilize the electorate and make it possible for the next Democratic president to face up to what is already the most serious crisis of the system since the Great Depression.

—BY MICHAEL HARRINGTON



\$1.00

A Socialist Perspective on
THE POLITICS OF POVERTY




by
Michael Harrington

with contributions by
Barbara Ehrenreich
William Julius Wilson
and
Mark Levinson

Published by The Democratic

**REMAKING
LOVE**



THE FEMINIZATION OF SEX
BARBARA EHRENREICH,
ELIZABETH HESS,
GLORIA JACOBS

**THE
NEXT
LEFT**

**THE HISTORY OF
A FUTURE**

**Michael
Harrington**
AUTHOR OF
The New American Poverty

Books

	DSA Price
The Next Left: The History of a Future , by Michael Harrington. His most recent work on the current political/economic crisis. Published at \$17.95.	\$13.00 _____
Remaking Love: The Feminization of Sex , by Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, & Gloria Jacobs. Published at \$15.95.	\$12.00 _____
The Next America: The Decline and Rise of the United States , text by Michael Harrington, photos by Bob Adelman. A photo documentary of the promise and pitfalls of a changing America. Paperback. Published at \$10.95.	\$6.50 _____
The New American Poverty , by Michael Harrington. Poverty in America in the 1980s. Paperback.	\$7.95 _____
The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism , by John Stephens. Prospects for a socialist evolution of the modern welfare state.	\$9.00 _____
Global Challenge , by Michael Manley and Willy Brandt. A followup to the Brandt Commission report.	\$3.50 _____
Taking Sides: The Education of a Militant Mind , by Michael Harrington. A collection of essays written over the past thirty years. Published at \$16.95.	\$12.00 _____
The Politics at God's Funeral , by Michael Harrington. The role of religion in recent history. Published at \$16.95.	\$10.00 _____
The Vast Majority: A Journey to the World's Poor , by Michael Harrington. A journal style treatment of Third World underdevelopment and aspirations. Published at \$10.95.	\$3.00 _____
Eurosocialism & America , edited by Nancy Lieber. Articles by Harrington, Palme, Brandt, & Mitterand. Published at \$17.95.	\$3.50 _____

Pamphlets

	DSA Price
A Socialist Perspective on the Politics of Poverty , by Michael Harrington with contributions by Barbara Ehrenreich, William Julius Wilson, and Mark Levinson. Special bulk rate: \$.20/copy for orders of 20 or more.	\$1.00 _____
Toward a Socialist Theory of Racism , by Cornel West.	\$1.00 _____
Taking Control of Our Own Lives: DSA Transitional Economic Program.	\$.50 _____
First Steps Toward a New Civilization , by Michael Harrington.	\$1.00 _____
Democracy & Dictatorship in Latin America. Essays by Octavio Paz, Jorge Edwards, Carlos Franqui, & others.	\$3.00 _____
The Black Church & Marxism , by James Cone.	\$.50 _____
Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Liberation and Socialism.	\$1.00 _____
<i>Alternatives Pamphlet Series:</i>	
#1 A Call for a U.S. Family Policy , by Ruth Sidel.	\$1.50 _____
#2 Democracy & Productivity in the Future American Economy , by Lou Ferleger and Jay R. Mandle.	\$1.50 _____
#3 The Common Good: Stalemate or Reconstruction , by Gar Alperovitz.	\$1.50 _____
Tax Policy and The Economy , debate between Michael Harrington and Representative Jack Kemp.	\$.50 _____

Publications

Democratic Left. DSA's bimonthly periodical. \$8.00/one-year subscription. Most current and back issues (including the annual Labor Day double-issue) available in quantity.	\$.50 _____
Labor Voice. The publication of the DSA Labor Commission. Most recent issue available.	\$.50 _____
Religious Socialism. The publication of the DSA Religion and Socialism Commission. One Year Subscription.	\$5.00 _____
Socialist Forum. DSA Discussion Bulletin. Published 4 times per year. Subscription.	\$10.00 _____
Single copies.	\$3.00 _____
Nuestra Lucha/Our Struggle. Newsletter of the DSA Latino, Anti-Racism, and Afro-American Commissions.	\$.50 _____
TOTAL \$ _____	

Free Literature

Send stamped, self-addressed envelope.
We will bill for shipping bulk orders.

We are the New Socialists. Brochure describing DSA. _____

Where We Stand. A position statement of DSA. _____

Which Way America. Statement of the DSA Youth Section _____

Twelve Myths of Poverty. Shatters the misconceptions which support anti-poor policies. _____

For a More Livable World. Religion & Socialism Brochure. _____

Bulk orders: 10% off on 5-9 copies; 20% off on 10-14; 30% on 15 or more copies.

Postage: Orders under \$.50, add \$.39 or send stamps. Orders from \$.50 to \$2.00 add \$.50 for postage and handling. Orders from \$2.00 to \$5.00, add \$1.00. Orders from \$5.00 to \$10.00 add \$2.00. We will bill for postage on orders over \$10.00.

Make checks payable to **Democratic Socialists of America**, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Super Tuesday:

Conservative Yearnings and Progressive Realities

by Ann Lewis

On March 8th, 1988, voters in twenty states will make their choice for the Democratic Presidential nomination. By March 9th, 38 percent of the pledged delegates to the 1988 Democratic convention will have been chosen — a dramatic increase over previous years.

By adopting Super Tuesday as the "centerpiece of their 1988 campaign," southern Democrats announced their determination to increase the importance of the South in the Democratic nominating process; to downplay what they considered to be the exaggerated influence of such "liberal" states as Iowa and New Hampshire; and to increase the chances of a southern (read white male conservative) candidate.

Political and ideological support for the Super Tuesday strategy was provided by the Democratic Leadership Council, formed in 1985 as a reaction to the landslide 1984 defeat of the Mondale-Ferraro ticket. Its original composition earned it the title of "White Male Caucus." Although efforts have been made in the last two years to broaden participation, the DLC continues to see its role as a kind of anti-party, compensating for the too liberal excesses of a national Democratic party, presumably skewed by its overly diverse membership and the "disproportionate influence" of liberal activists. Super Tuesday represented their determination to exert a moderating influence in the choice of the 1988 nominee.

These expectations for Super Tuesday have not been met. With an irony familiar to political historians and campaign junkies, almost the reverse has occurred:

—By moving the selection process up so early, Super Tuesday has actually forced most campaigns to pay more attention to Iowa, since doing well in Iowa is considered essential for continuing on into March.

—The South, by concentrating virtually all of its votes on one day, will play no further role if the contest continues beyond March 8th, as now seems likely; the fight will instead be played out in

states located in such areas as the populist midwest and industrial northeast.

—The southern candidates most often mentioned as likely choices, Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and Governor Charles Robb of Virginia, declined to run. That leaves the best hope for Super Tuesday in the somewhat unlikely hands of Senator Albert Gore Jr, a 39-year-old Harvard educated Washington insider whose best known congressional accomplishments have been in the field of arms control.

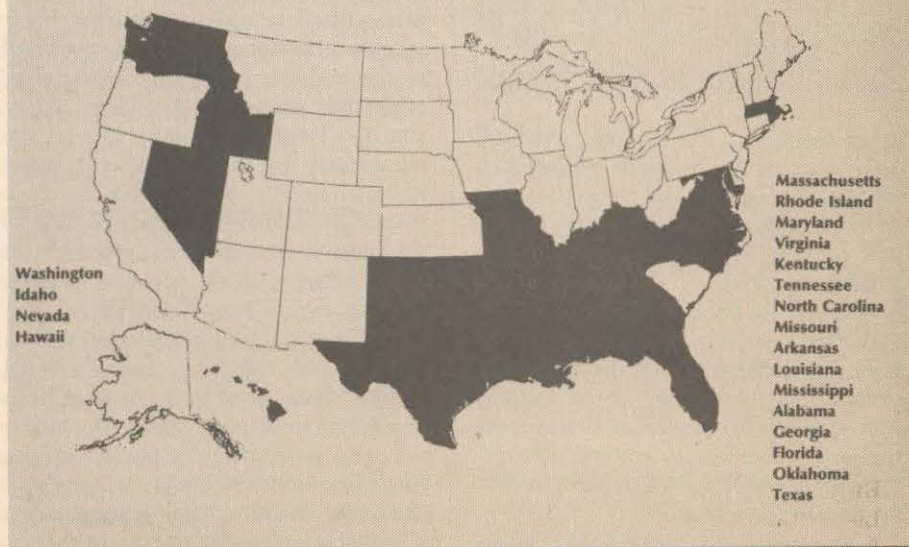
In developing his own Super Tuesday strategy, Gore suddenly discovered a conservative emphasis not previously noticed in his career. He makes a point of telling southern voters that he takes them seriously — so much so that he has chosen to opt out of the Iowa caucuses and is running only a minor effort in New Hampshire. A noteworthy success of the Gore candidacy so far has been the endorsement of a string of southern officeholders. It is not clear whether these endorsers consider Gore a safe parking space for their own political considerations or a launching pad to the White House. Ironically, that decision cannot be made until after assessing the impact of Iowa and New Hampshire on the South.

Even some of the DLC's own founders have moved away from the original formulation as they have gone on to seek the nomination of that very same Party. Congressman Richard Gephardt, the first chairman of the DLC, and former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt are both included in DLC literature, but insiders have been known to grumble at their apostasy in forsaking the pure doctrine in search of votes. Such are the perils of democracy!

Meanwhile, Jesse Jackson whose presidential campaign won sixty-one mostly southern congressional districts in 1984, appears the most likely beneficiary of this year's altered calendar. The fact that so many southern primaries and caucuses will be held on March 8th suggests that the 1988 Jackson campaign will win more delegates earlier in the process than might otherwise be the case. At a meeting of the Democratic Leadership Council in 1987, the candidate expressed his own assessment of his prospects. Introduced by Governor Robb, Jackson responded by thanking Robb and the DLC for the invitation — and for Super Tuesday.

Whatever the results on March 8th, Super Tuesday will undoubtedly receive considerable attention in this year's cam-

SUPER TUESDAY STATES



Super Tuesday States

Over one-third of the delegates to the Democratic Party's national convention will be chosen in the March 8th Super Tuesday primaries, to be held in twenty states.

State	Del's	Alt's
Alabama	61	19
Arkansas	43	13
Florida	146	45
Georgia	86	26
Hawaii	25	7
Idaho	23	6
Kentucky	60	18
Louisiana	71	21
Maryland	78	22
Massachusetts	109	33
Mississippi	45	13
Missouri	83	26
Nevada	21	5
North Carolina	89	27
Oklahoma	51	15
Rhode Island	26	7
Tennessee	77	23
Texas	198	61
Virginia	85	25
Washington	72	22

paigned narratives. But a report which focuses only on the delegate mathematics will miss the larger lesson. Super Tuesday, which began as an exercise in nostalgia, is now colliding with the reality of current American politics.

This is not what its proponents had in mind, and it actually seems to have caught them by surprise. Their discomfort reveals the extent to which Super Tuesday represented one more effort to turn back the clock of Democratic history, attempting in the name of political realism to undo years of actual events.

The lament is a familiar one, not re-

stricted to any particular region. Even in northern precincts, insiders can be heard longing for a return to the "good old days" of closed conventions, back-room maneuvering and pliable delegates. These insiders tend to focus on the post-1968 delegate selection rules as the source of our problems. Undo the reforms, they argue, and all would be well: the reincarnated ghosts of Richard Daley, David Lawrence, and Ed Flynn will once again meet to nominate Adlai Stevenson — not the best example of an electable candidate.

Such reminiscing overlooks the cost to the Party and to its eventual nominee of the last pre-reform convention in 1968, in which the unrepresentative nature of the proceedings exacerbated an existing division with no means for reconciliation. It also overlooks the number of undistinguished and unelectable candidates nominated by party bosses over the years.

But the fundamental flaw with this line of reasoning is more basic. An argument put forward by self-styled pragmatists turns out to be an exercise in wishful thinking; a yearning for simpler times that will not return in or out of the political process.

The single most important reality of modern American political life is the determination by most Americans to make important decisions on the basis of *their own* judgment and information. We may lament the information sources: two minutes on network news is probably not the forum we would choose for a presidential debate. But we can't ignore the cumulative effect of individual decision-making in politics, just as we can't ignore how these dynamics pervade culture, work, and the family.

Modern Americans are accustomed to making their own decision in every other area of life, from supermarket shopping to religious observances. They are not about to start taking orders from a revived army of precinct captains telling them how to vote for President — even if we could miraculously find the foot soldiers to serve in this army. The simultaneous loss of patronage jobs and increased competition for volunteer hours has severely eroded the ability of any political structure to cover the neighborhoods as it once did.

A nation of over-scheduled families juggling jobs, children, exercise, and personal fulfillment will not pour out to attend campaign meetings, rallies or parades. Appeals to party loyalty are less and less likely to convince voters to even vote at all. And yet, declining voter turnout among Democratic constituencies is fatal to

Democratic nominees.

Voter participation can be increased. One of the most heartening examples is the increase in black voter turnout in the 1984 and 1986 campaigns — all but erasing the historic difference between black and white turnout rates and providing the margin that elected a Democratic Senate in 1986.

That increase was not engineered by changes in rules or delivered by any political boss. It was inspired by Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign, which heavily emphasized voter registration, and was fueled by the harsh realities of the Reagan administration. It was solidified by voters making the decision to act in their own best interest by voting for the candidates who they perceived could make a difference in their lives.

It is ironic that those southern officeholders and party strategists who were among the chief beneficiaries of increased Democratic voter turnout in 1986 seem to have overlooked that example in their plans for 1988. Instead of building on those victories which expanded and unified the Democratic coalition, they turned to old tactics of division, focussing not on the increasing unity of the modern Democratic party, but rather upon differences and divisions of years past.

For Super Tuesday, Jackson is reaching out to southern voters with a campaign that emphasizes economic justice and a workers' bill of rights. In highly effective appearances before workers, farmers, political newcomers, and longtime Democratic stalwarts, Jackson has reached across the color lines to make the connection between progressive politics and real economic opportunity. His agenda includes stronger unions, better pension protection, improved health and safety standards, and pay equity for women and minorities. His response already exceeds conventional predictions, and it seems that his support on Super Tuesday will again confound conventional and conservative wisdom.

Super Tuesday began as an exercise in regional sectionalism and regressive politics. To the surprise of its founders, it is likely instead to bring good news to supporters of coalition politics and progressive policies

Ann Lewis, who has advised Jesse Jackson in his presidential campaign, served as the national director of Americans for Democratic Action. She is currently the chair of the Democratic Task Force of the National Women's Political Caucus.

DSACTION

REPORTS

- The Religion and Socialism Commission of DSA is organizing a three-day Congress on "Religion and Progressive Politics: A Partnership for Developing Preferential Options for Social Change" over Memorial Day Weekend in Chicago, Illinois. Invited speakers include Cornel West, Harvey Cox, and Rosemary Radford Ruether. For more information or to register for the conference, contact Tom Wakely at the Chicago DSA office, (312) 384-0327.
- DSA's Socialist Feminist Commission will be holding a socialist-feminist retreat June 4-5th in Northeast Ohio. This will be an opportunity for women to assess the state of the feminist movement, so as to best determine how to further DSA's socialist feminist work. Anyone interested in helping to plan the event or in registering for the retreat, please contact Sherri Levine at the DSA national office, (212) 962-0390.
- The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), in conjunction with women's and community organizations, unions, and the religious community, is organizing a Washington, DC rally to demand a comprehensive national family policy. The agenda includes 1) family and medical leave; 2) quality, comprehensive child care; 3) improved educational opportunities; 4) economic security; 5) comprehensive health care; 6) services for the elderly. DSA has endorsed the event and will make mobilizing for the rally a priority over the upcoming period. Contact Sherri Levine at (212) 962-0390 for more information or to find out how to mobilize people in your community.
- Barbara Ehrenreich, DSA Co-Chair, appeared live with Gus Hall, Secretary General of the Communist Party USA, on the Phil Donahue Show on January 11th. Although Donahue did his best to keep the cameras focused on the CPUSA, Barbara made a stellar performance, explaining DSA's immediate program and asserting the need for a broad movement in the U.S. that is both democratic and socialist. She was supported by a strong showing of DSAers who participated from the studio audience. The show was aired later on over 200 stations nationwide, and the national DSA office is still receiving requests from viewers for information about DSA.

- This year's Mid-Atlantic Retreat will take place on June 25-26th in Baltimore. Call Julie Glass at the Baltimore DSA office at (301) 467-9388 for information.
- Organizational director Patrick Lacey and NEC member Skip Roberts were the DSA delegates to the Socialist International's Latin American Committee meeting in Caracas, Venezuela.

RESOURCES

- A documentary film, *Our Land Too: The Legacy of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union*, has been released. The film portrays America's first rural interracial union, founded by eleven white and seven black sharecroppers in Arkansas in 1934 at the suggestion of Socialist leader Norman Thomas. The film may be obtained from the STFU Association, Inc., P.O. Box 2617, Montgomery, Alabama 36105, (205) 256-4700.
- The November/December issue of *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*, the newsletter of DSA's Latino, Afro-American and Anti-Racism Commissions, focuses on the Rainbow Coalition, labor support for Jesse Jackson's presidential bid, and an update on immigration legislation. To join the Commission, send \$10 to DSA, 2827 Catania Way, Sacramento, CA 95826.
- *New Perspectives in North-South Dialogues: Essays in Honor of Olof Palme* has just been published. Copies are available for \$19.95 from Third World Communications, Kwame Nkrumah House, 173 Old Street, London EC1U9NJ, England.
- The United Farm Workers have produced an excellent videotape on the dangers of pesticides to farm workers and consumers. It is available for free distribution from UFW, P.O. Box 62, Keene, CA 93531-9989.

IN MEMORIAM

In mid-January, Brendan Sexton, a militant with more than fifty years experience in the socialist and labor movement, died.

Brendan participated in the very early days of building the Congress of Industrial Organizations, first as a member and organizer for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, then as a key rank-and-file leader in the United Auto Workers. Victor

Reuther, another founder of the UAW and the brother of the late UAW president Walter Reuther, called Brendan's work in the large Willow Run UAW local crucial to Walter's election in 1946.

Reuther's UAW was about as close as the United States has come to a conscious social democratic movement, and Brendan Sexton loomed large as an influence within the Reutherite labor movement. For more than twenty years, he served as UAW education director. Among his many accomplishments, Brendan established the Black Lake Family Education Center and developed a model labor education program still in use there. As Brendan always stressed, the task of workers' education is to convince workers that they possess the knowledge and power to change the world.

An organizer for the Socialist Party in New York City in the early 1930s, Brendan became a national leader of the Workers' Alliance, the Socialist-initiated organization of the unemployed. A high school drop out who was educated in the radical movement, he became a college professor and author after retirement from his three decade career with the UAW. Brendan and his wife and co-author, Patricia Cayo Sexton, helped to spark the revival of intellectual interest in problems of social class with the publication of *Blue Collars, Hard Hats*. Ever the organizer, Brendan provided consulting help on organizing drives and educational strategies for years after his retirement.

A lifelong socialist, Brendan was always available to speak at this local meeting or that youth conference or to simply listen and offer advice. He helped pull together a New York DSA labor forum, bringing his own considerable prestige to the task. Perhaps his own words to organizers of a socialist youth conference can sum up the intensity of his socialist commitment: "I've lived a better life, a more meaningful life and more moral life, because I am a democratic socialist."

Brendan Sexton's death deprives us of a passionate fighter, friend, and comrade. The example of his life challenges us to fill the enormous void his leaves. ●

— By JACK CLARK

Jack Clark, a DSA member, is a policy analyst at the Executive Office of Labor in Massachusetts.

ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

California

San Diego DSA and the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) co-sponsored the 4th annual holiday dinner for New El Salvador Today (NEST) on December 11th. The guest speaker was Miyera Lucero, a peasant organizer and women's activist from El Salvador.... Los Angeles DSA is active in voter registration in coordination with the Jesse Jackson campaign. They are also planning a concert for International Women's Day, which will feature a women's band known for its performance of Central American music.

Connecticut

Hartford DSA is actively participating in the People for Change Party which recently elected several blacks and Latinos to the City Council.... Hartford DSA is also supporting the defense of the Hartford 15, a group of Puerto Ricans being tried as "terrorists."

District of Columbia

DSA co-hosted a meeting of the Chile Committee of the Socialist International in Washington, DC on November 18-19th, which drew representatives from nearly twenty member parties from Europe and Latin America. Leaders from the Chilean Radical, Socialist, and Christian Democratic parties outlined the democratic opposition campaign against dictator Pinochet. DSA representatives were organizational director Pat Lacefield, National Executive Committee member Skip Roberts, and veteran unionist Frank Wallick.... DC/MD DSA and Northern VA DSA are continuing their work on the DC statehood campaign and are also working in coalition with the Maryland Citizen Action Coalition and Labor Under Apartheid.... Lisa Foley of the DC/MD local is hosting a DSA women's brunch at her home on Sunday, February 7th.... DC/MD DSA is putting together a pamphlet titled "Witness to Two Worlds — Salvadoran Refugees, the D.C. Community, and U.S. Foreign Policy."

Illinois

Tom Wakely, Chicago DSA's newly-hired organizer has recently been named Midwest field organizer for DSA's Latino Commission.... The Chicago local has been active in University of Chicago politics, helping to form a left party which won twenty-one out of fifty seats on the Student Assembly and will work hard to back investigations of stock holdings in South Africa of University trustees.... A DSA fundraiser is being held February 6th with DSA co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich and comedian Aaron Freeman to raise money for a coalition organizing to pass a City Council referendum calling on the Illinois

IN RESPONSE TO
QUESTIONS ABOUT
MY KNOWLEDGE
OF THE ARMS FOR
HOSTAGES DEAL...



I KNEW AS
MUCH AS THE
PRESIDENT
DIDN'T



I WOULD LIKE
TO TAKE THIS
OPPORTUNITY
TO JUST SAY...



WICKS
© THE NEWHALL
SIGNAL 1988

ROTHCO

National Guard to refrain from participation in military exercises in Honduras.... Frances Fox Piven, DSA vice-chair, is speaking at the University of Chicago February 10th.... Lesbian and gay Chicago DSAers have helped to form the mass-based Lesbian and Gay Democratic Organization.... Carbondale DSA worked with the Southern Illinois Latin America Solidarity Committee in opposing aid to the *Contras* and is also working in a local coalition in support of the homeless.

Iowa

Karen Kubby, whose Socialist views were emphasized in the *Daily Iowan*, lost her city council race by only 179 votes. ... Despite the Iowa Citizen Action Network's hard fight for tax reform, a special session of the Iowa legislature granted wealthy Iowans \$18 million in tax giveaways in the name of improving Iowa's business climate.

Kentucky

Central Kentucky DSA has set up a study group exploring the history of the

U.S. Left. The January 22nd session studied activity from 1880 to 1920.... CKDSA is holding a forum in Lexington prior to March 8th's Super Tuesday primary with DSA's field director and anti-racism coordinator Shakoor Aljuwani as part of their ongoing work in the Jackson campaign.

Maryland

Shakoor Aljuwani, DSA field director and anti-racism coordinator, spoke to Baltimore DSA in November on "Assessing the Rainbow," and the local is helping to coordinate a city-wide voter registration campaign.... DSAers are working with the Towson State College & with the Pro-

gressive Student Union at Towson State College and with the Progressive Action Committee and Students Against Apartheid at the University of Maryland on a talk by John Linder of the Ben Linder Peace Tour.... In conjunction with the Baltimore Nicaragua Medical Aid Committee and the People's Community Health Center they are working to establish a sister-clinic in Nicaragua and to continue to struggle for adequate health care in Baltimore.... Together with other community groups, Baltimore DSA is planning a women's film series to run from March through June.

Massachusetts

On January 31st, Boston DSA is holding a forum on "The Crash Heard Around the World — The International Limits on Domestic Economic Policy." ... Boston DSA is working actively on the Jesse Jackson campaign in Boston's Sixth Congressional District and is also organizing canvassers to go to New Hampshire prior to the New Hampshire primary.

Michigan

Rosemary Ruether, DSA vice-chair, spoke on November 23rd at the University of Michigan on "Women's Issues in Theology and the Church."...The Ann Arbor DSA PAC recently endorsed three people running for City Council and is supporting a rent control referendum.

Missouri

Kansas City DSA will be airing regular commentaries on the local National Public Radio station....KCDSA has begun holding a monthly discussion group.

New York

The Social Justice Center, of which Albany DSA is a member, held its annual awards dinner in November....DSAers at the State University of New York at Binghamton are supporting the university staff's unionization effort....At SUNY Cortland, DSA held a divestment rally and plans a teach-in on Central America in cooperation with the Latin Student Union....Ben Nichols, the former chair of Ithaca DSA, is now an Ithaca alderman....Suffolk County DSA's chair, Hugh Cleland, is on the steering committee of the Rainbow Coalition in his Congressional District and the local is organizing a bus of students to canvass for Jesse Jackson in New Hampshire. In addition, they organized to help defeat the *Contra* vote on February 3rd....NYC DSA is playing an important role in the New Democratic Coalition, which represents the independent reform Democratic Clubs of New York....The housing Task Force of the NYC local recently featured a slide show on the housing struggle in Nicaragua.

North Carolina

DSAers at East Carolina University have been working with Students for Economic Democracy to organize against *Contra* aid. They sponsored a series of soapbox open-mike forums and a political art show on campus this winter.

Ohio

Youth Section activists at the University of Dayton and Oberlin College have been active organizing against *Contra* aid and sending delegates to the National Rainbow Coalition Student Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina....Cleveland DSA is running a local school on poverty....Mahoning Valley DSA (in eastern Ohio) is reorganizing. They're starting a new newsletter, "Alternatives," and are planning an event in June to mark the anniversary of Eugene Debbs' speech in Canton.

Pennsylvania

The Bucknell Youth Section chapter is working with the NAACP and other groups to form a campus-based Rainbow Coalition chapter. Over the next few months, Central Pennsylvania DSA will engage in several discussions reassessing the state of the local....Curt Sanders, CPDSA secretary, lost his bid for East Pennsboro Township Assessor by 36 votes....One member of Reading-Berks DSA is running as a Jackson delegate and another is running as a Dukakis delegate....DSAer Babbette Josephs, a Democratic state legislator from Philadelphia, is leading the campaign against the use of Pennsylvania National Guard troops in Central America....The Pitt-

sburgh local helped organize a Peace and Justice Film Festival which will show thirty-five films about South Africa, Central America, the Middle East, and nuclear warfare....Joni Rabinowitz and Mike Freeman of Pittsburgh DSA are running as Jackson delegates....Four hundred blacks and whites took part in a march sponsored by the Coalition Against Racist Violence to protest the attack on a black woman and her family in predominantly white Morningside....The third annual Reading-Berks Democratic Socialists dinner was held on January 15th. Maurer-Stump Awards were given to DSA co-chair Michael Harrington and Bernard Sanders, the independent Socialist mayor of Burlington, Vermont.

Tennessee

Nashville DSA is heavily involved in the Rainbow Coalition and the Jackson Campaign, organizing phone trees and getting local peace and justice groups to pledge their support to Jackson.

Texas

DSA activists at the University of Houston have helped to initiate a world affairs forum with other organizations and faculty members. Its first event was a panel on the Arias Peace Plan, moderated by DSAer Eric Martin...."Jobs With Justice" march and rally was held December 12th in Nacogdoches. Participants marched from Richie Park to Stephen F. Austin University to build unity and public support for workers' rights....An all-Texas DSA meeting was held recently to plan out DSA's involvement in the upcoming elections and to organize a hospitality suite at the Texas Democratic Convention this spring.

Victory Vote Not the Last Word on *Contra* Aid

by Bill Spencer

On February 3rd, the human rights, anti-intervention, and solidarity community secured one of its most significant legislative victories of the Reagan era. The House of Representatives voted 219 to 211 to deny the President his requested additional funding for the *Contra* war against the government and people of Nicaragua.

The victory in Congress was the culmination of an unprecedented campaign by the progressive community to defeat *Contra* aid. A broad range of organizations committed themselves to the mobilization

of their own constituencies and to work within the two national coalitions coordinating those efforts, Days of Decision and Countdown '87. DSA members were active in locals, youth section chapters, unions and community groups doing their part to ensure defeat of the aid request. This upswelling of grassroots support occurred, in part, because the direction and funding of the *Contra* war has become the focal point for struggles around the administration's broader strategy of blocking or subverting social change in the Third World, and because of the historic possibilities set in motion by the Central

American peace accord.

The campaign which brought us this crucial legislative victory has also pushed forward some important lasting developments: 1) Though Congress allocated 21 million dollars to assist the *Contras* between September 1987 and February 1988, we helped hold off the President's request for military aid which would have provided 15 million dollars a month for 18 months. 2) New relationships with *Contra* aid opponents in the House of Representatives were constructed, creating the capacity to respond swiftly and in an in-

continued on page 15

DSA Condemns Israeli Violence and Calls for International Peace Conference

The following resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was passed by DSA's National Executive Committee at its January 30-31st meeting.

The Democratic Socialists of America expresses its outrage at the Israeli armed forces' brutal and illegal use of force against the Palestinian population in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The continuing confrontation between the Palestinian people and the Israeli occupying forces is a result of the profound inability of Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab world to arrive at a regional peace settlement. Both superpowers have also continually used the tragic turmoil in the Middle East to pursue their Cold War aims and claims to regional hegemony.

The Democratic Socialists of America supports the massive popular struggle of Arab people in Israel and of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which is an inevitable and understandable consequence of an intolerable situation. This struggle highlights the dead end policies of the present and past Israeli governments as well as those of the PLO and the Arab leadership which have blocked a negotiated settlement between the Jewish people in Israel and the Palestinian people.

The continuing occupation clearly jeopardizes the democracy and national security of Israel itself. The violent repression of the legitimate demonstrations of the Palestinian people must stop. Negotiations will have to take place. They will need to include representatives of the Palestinian people chosen by themselves and must be guaranteed by the major powers. The settlement will clearly have to recognize the right of both Israel and the Palestinians to secure and mutually recognized statehood. Shortsighted exclusion of the Soviet Union from any regional settlement by the U.S. and the Israeli government would make any stable settlement in the religion impossible. This is increasingly recognized by our comrades among Israelis and Palestinians who seek peace. Continued repression of progressive Palestinian spokespeople by Israeli



Members of New Jewish Agenda and other groups holding a vigil across from the Israeli Counselate in New York.

occupying authorities and the PLO has made such views difficult and dangerous to express in that community.

We recognize and support the legitimate security concerns of Israel as well as the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. Recognition of the Palestinian people's right to a homeland is the beginning of the process which, to produce a stable peace in the region, must end with the recognition of the state of Israel by the Arab world.

The Democratic Socialists of America supports a two state solution with democratic self-determination for the Palestinian people and equal rights for all minorities in both the Palestinian state and Israel, with international guarantees assuring sovereignty and security. In that context we express our solidarity with the present struggle of the Palestinian people against the continued occupa-

tion of their land and our admiration for those forces in Israel opposing the brutal, illegal, and repressive activities of the occupying forces. They deserve the support of all genuine United States friends of Israeli democracy — a democracy that is increasingly in danger.

It is not enough to condemn the excesses of occupying forces as does the Reagan administration; we condemn the policy of occupation itself. DSA therefore joins with our sister parties in the Socialist International in calling for an international conference for peace in the Middle East, which must include the major powers and representatives of Israel, the Palestinians, and the neighboring Arab states. The National Executive Committee of DSA calls on its members and locals to take an active role in campaigning for a just peace in the Middle East and demonstrating against the present repression of the democratic rights of the Palestinian people. ●

Could Canada Vote for Democratic Socialism?

by Desmond Morton

If you believe in opinion polls, the United States' northern neighbors would have elected a democratic socialist government if they had gone to the polls in 1987. Three national polls taken last summer placed the New Democratic Party, a member of the Socialist International, well ahead of the Liberals with 40 percent of the vote, while the governing Progressive Conservatives trailed far behind at 26 percent. The election, which may be scheduled at any time, must be held by September, 1989.

Since more recent polls show the Liberals in first place, perhaps a clearer indication of growing support for the New Democrats is their electoral success. New Democrats won all three elections held last August to fill seats scattered from the sub-Arctic Yukon to the historic seaport of St. John's, Newfoundland. Another measure of growing NDP support is the enormous personal popularity of NDP leader Ed Broadbent. Compared to the two-thirds of Canadians who believe Broadbent is doing a good job, less than a third have a kind word for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney or Liberal leader John Turner. Although the trend is encouraging, it's not as if Canadians have acquired a sudden fervor for social equality and nationalization. Many are joining the ranks of the NDP in protest against the policy failures of Canada's traditional pro-business parties.

While campaigning in 1984, Mulroney made hundreds of promises, many of them contradictory. If elected, he promised he would increase spending and cut the deficit, expand services and scale down government, embark on far-reaching privatization and leave untouched popular crown corporations. Mulroney also claimed to support Medicare, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and other social programs, calling them "a sacred trust," and said that Canadians could count on "jobs, jobs, jobs." Fed up after twenty-one years of Liberal government, almost half the Canadian electorate bought the package, giving 211 of 282 seats

in the House of Commons to the Conservatives.

Once in office, Mulroney's myriad promises proved to be a recipe for ineffectualness. The new government also got mired in minor scandals, some involving officials close to the prime minister. Moreover, while, on the whole, Canada's economy flourished after the recession of 1982-83, western Canada, a Conservative stronghold, was badly hurt by a worldwide slump in resource prices.

In foreign policy, Prime Minister Mulroney assured *The Wall Street Journal* that "Good relations, super relations with the United States will be the cornerstone of our foreign policy," but his well-publicized courting of the Reagan White House brought few dividends. A number of Canadian industries were hurt by U.S. protectionism, and Canada's claim to sovereignty in the Arctic was challenged when Washington conspicuously failed to notify Ottawa before sending a Coast Guard ice-breaker through the Northwest Passage.

The Liberals, who profited initially from the Conservatives' slide in popularity, have had their own problems. John Turner, selected just before the 1984 elec-

tion because his right-wing corporate lawyer image was expected to be an antidote for disaffection with former Prime Minister Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, promptly led his party to its worst defeat in history. In representing the opposition, Turner has been more dogged than effective. Led by the media, voters have dismissed Turner as old-fashioned and irrelevant.

In these circumstances, "parking" support with the New Democrats is an understandable midterm alternative. Ed Broadbent's popularity is considerable. A former philosophy professor with a taste for cigars and sports cars, and a power base among workers at the huge General Motors plant in Oshawa, Ontario, Broadbent has intelligence, style, and a common touch.

Advisers, including Vic Fingerhut, an American who has worked for the AFL-CIO and the Democratic party, have persuaded Broadbent and the NDP brass that Canadians want a party that speaks for ordinary wage-earners, not for socialist paradise. In 1984, when the NDP seemed headed for oblivion, the strategy helped turn party fortunes around and gave Broadbent thirty seats in the current Parliament. The more recent surge in the



New Democratic Party leader Ed Broadbent.

Photo by Michael Basham

opinion polls has kept ideological critics quiet and raised the hope that the New Democrats might somehow climb out of their traditional voting base of 18 to 20 percent.

While Ontario, Canada's biggest, richest, and most industrialized province, has shown only a moderate increase in NDP support, the biggest apparent gains have been in the West and in Quebec. The four western provinces, agricultural and resource-producing, have traditionally been a battle ground for Conservatives and New Democrats to square off. It is not surprising that disillusioned voters would switch to the NDP, if not to a messy collection of far-right parties that have emerged in recent years. The surprise for the NDP was a standing as high as 48 percent in Quebec, a province that has never even elected a New Democrat to Ottawa.

Explanations are not very hard to find. While many Quebeckers disagreed with Trudeau, they supported the former prime minister, considering him one of their own. Although Brian Mulroney comes from Baie Comeau and speaks a fluent, colloquial French, he is not "*un des nôtres*," nor are Turner and Broadbent. Much of the Tory sweep in 1984 came from disillusioned Quebeckers, shopping for a new party. By 1987, the NDP looked as good as any other to Quebeckers who have no aversion to social reform and government-run enterprises.

The NDP's opponents insist, of course, that current support is a bubble that will burst when Canadians take a hard look at socialist policies. Throughout much of 1987, NDP policies got more extensive and hostile scrutiny than usual in the national media. Most Canadians do not share the NDP's determination, since 1969, to take Canada out of NATO and the North American Air Defense Command. On the other hand, the NDP's determination to reform Canada's tax structure to eliminate notorious havens for the wealthy is widely popular. Women's organizations back the NDP's high priority for a national non-profit day-care program. Business and finance are predictably alarmed at the NDP's stated intention to nationalize one of Canada's powerful chartered banks, while energy industries on both sides of the border would do anything to stop NDP proposals to restore public control over depleting oil and natural gas reserves.

Assessing what an NDP federal government would do in power probably depends less on its 200-page collection of

convention resolutions than on its performance in the three western provinces it now governs. In Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, the NDP has run innovative but by no means radical social democratic governments. For example, the Manitoba NDP's Stay Option has helped established farmers survive the price-credit squeeze of the past ten years while enabling younger farmers to take over farms without crippling debts. Saskatchewan's NDP pioneered a law that allows workers to quit jobs they deem unsafe without penalty. In the Yukon, Canada's newest socialist government is diversifying a single-industry economy with a "Buy Yukon" program geared to the potential of native co-ops. In all three provinces, government-issued car insurance has been an NDP staple. Driver-owned plans have proved so popular in Canada that no business-backed government has dared meddle with them.

New Democrats' agenda goes far beyond Canada's mildly interventionist tradition.

None of this adds up to a social revolution, but no one, in or out of the NDP, believes that is in the cards for one of the world's richer countries and an immediate neighbor of the US. The NDP's moderate, Swedish-style social democracy is its best defense against red-baiting. Instead, a current editorial ploy is to condemn the New Democrats as conservative defenders of the decent but costly collection of universal social programs, which a market-driven Canada should no longer try to afford.

In fact, the Swedish-style New Democrats have an agenda that goes far beyond Canada's mildly interventionist tradition. New Democrats talk of using huge pension reserves to restructure Canadian industry in carefully chosen, high-tech sectors, such as telecommunications. Here, too, the NDP has had a successful local precedent. Quebec's *Caisse de depots*, funded by a province-wide compulsory pension plan, has been used for ten years to finance dramatic growth in French Canada's corporate power.

Can the NDP be stopped? That is certainly one of the goals of the trade agreement signed by the U.S. and Canadian governments last January. Labeled as a "Free Trade" deal and sold to Canadians as

a guarantee that U.S. markets will stay open even if Congress clamps down on imports, the accord is really a cunning way to make sure that Canada's economy will be managed according to U.S.-style free enterprise principles. If the accord goes through, even an NDP government would be powerless to regain control of natural resources, prevent the privatization of Canada's publicly owned hospital system, or protect other social programs from charges of unfair competition.

Unable to push their own right-wing agenda, Mulroney and the Conservatives are using a wide-ranging treaty with the United States to transform Canada. Politically, they hope that "Free Trade" as an issue will distract voters from a fixation with Mulroney's personality and attract them with the prospect of tariff-free U.S. imports. With some notable dissenters, Canadian business is backing the accord and the Conservatives with all the political leverage it commands. How else can they keep Canada safe forever from socialism?

As the trade deal becomes the main issue of Canadian politics in 1988, debate could polarize between Mulroney's Conservatives and Broadbent's New Democrats. The Liberals, as usual, are split. Turner and his federal lieutenants oppose the deal but his chief rival in the party, Donald S. MacDonald, was the main architect of the free-trade strategy, and Quebec's Liberal premier, Robert Bourassa, is among its most outspoken supporters. The NDP has its own splits. In western Canada, "free trade" is an old rallying cry against eastern financiers and industrialists. In Quebec, too, Bourassa's example may pull recent NDP converts back to the Conservatives.

The fact remains that political polarization should be no misfortune for the New Democrats. The issues are clear and Broadbent's popularity and pragmatism are assets in a debate over Canada's future and its political soul.

A generation ago, political economist Melville H. Watkins claimed that Canada could not survive without socialism, and that socialism in North America could not survive without Canada. That sounded like an exaggeration in 1969 but time has added to its merit. History will be made this year. ●

Desmond Morton is a professor of history at the University of Toronto, principal of its Erindale campus, and author of The New Democrats, 1961-1986: The Politics of Change (Toronto, Copp Clark Pittman, 1987).

Hollywood and the Vietnam War

by Al Auster
and Leonard Quart

Not too long ago a prominent American film director said, "I predict that the Vietnam veteran — because he lost the most, because he did it seemingly for nothing — will become the most romanticized war hero in American history." Had that comment been made during the late sixties or mid-seventies it would have seemed totally improbable. But today, when the Vietnam War has become a prime subject of our popular culture, Hollywood GIs, though not yet romantic heroes, have become symbols of the ferment of the sixties.

It's important to recall that in the films of the sixties and through most of the seventies, Vietnam was the war that dared not speak its name. If the war appeared at all it was usually in other guises such as the Korean War in *M*A*S*H*. And even when it made an actual appearance in John Wayne's *The Green Berets* it could easily be confused with a traditional cowboy-and-Indian genre film.

Later, when the war was confronted more directly, it usually manifested itself in the form of some traumatized "wounded hero" (e.g., *Taxi Driver*, *Black Sunday*, *Coming Home*). These were men whose anguish, rage, and even physical wounds were ascribed to a war whose everyday reality was rarely evoked. Inevitably, the end of the seventies saw a few films — *The Deer Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now* — that tried to provide a perspective on the war, but whose virtuoso camera-work and editing, striking imagery, and quasi-mythic central figures often distorted more than illuminated the conflict.

In the past year or so there has been a renaissance of Vietnam War films. The realism of Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, the stylized pessimism of Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, and the cinema verité-like *Hamburger Hill* have replaced psychotic



Actor Mathew Modine in *Full Metal Jacket*.

"supermen" like *Apocalypse Now's* Colonel Kurtz and revisionist cartoon heroes like Rambo with a more authentic and incisive treatment of the war.

Why Now?

Why have these films suddenly appeared? It doesn't rest primarily on Hollywood's desire to capitalize on the success of *Platoon*. Vietnam films like *Hanoi Hilton* and *Gardens of Stone*, as well as *Full Metal Jacket*, were in development and production long before *Platoon's* release. And clearly not because the passions about Vietnam have cooled. One need only remember the stir caused by Ronald Reagan's campaign remark that Vietnam was a "noble cause" or encounter the continual references to Vietnam in the Nicaragua *Contra*-aid debate to realize that, though the war is long over, the powerful emotions aroused by it still lie very close to the surface. Consequently, one of the prime reasons

for this spate of Vietnam films may derive from an unexpected place — the need for much of the twelve-to-twenty-five-year-old audience (Hollywood's major market) to know something about the sixties and the world of their parents. It's an era that Hollywood has only sketchingly touched on in films like Arthur Penn's *Four Friends* and in the nostalgia of Kasden's *The Big Chill*.

Hollywood researchers need only look at the number of students registered in the large variety of college courses on the sixties and Vietnam to perceive the extent of the potential audience. In lieu of doing that, they could just switch on their TV sets. For practically every successful TV cop show has as a leading or supporting character a Vietnam vet (e.g., *Magnum P.I.*, *Simon and Simon*, *Miami Vice*). In the same vein, one of the top-rated sitcoms, *Family Ties*, is built on the premise of a once-radical, sixties couple trying to raise three conservative,

conventional kids in the eighties.

It's not that any of these programs seriously confronts the reality of the sixties, but that the audience for the depiction of the era exists. Of course, for Hollywood there were genuine difficulties involved in choosing the aspect of the sixties to focus on. For instance, the shriveling of public concern over black poverty and the heightening of racial polarization in the eighties make the sixties civil rights movement a difficult and charged phenomenon for Hollywood to deal with directly. Similarly, the fact that elements in the anti-war movement used the rhetoric of anti-imperialism in opposing American intervention and were committed to a Viet Cong victory make them too controversial and alien for audience identification and interest. And the counter-culture, with its emphasis on "peace and love," drugs, and casual sex, is now either a subject for parody or an anathema in an age of crack and AIDS. Almost by default the Vietnam GI and War became for Hollywood the perfect symbol of the sixties.

In Oliver Stone's *Platoon* its eponymous hero and narrator, Chris Taylor, volunteers to serve in Vietnam because, "Maybe from down here I can start up again and be something I don't see yet, learn something I don't know yet." This

search for an authentic self takes him into the nightmare of Vietnam rather than a commune in Haight-Ashbury. In Vietnam, however, he meets the same black and white bottom dogs that any flower child might have met wandering the streets of San Francisco. And he smokes the same dope and listens to the same music, while killing dozens of the enemy in a murderous psychedelic light show that would have been the envy of any rock promoter.

The films don't neglect the black revolution of the sixties. Although blacks play essentially secondary roles in these films, some of their anger for being trapped in Vietnam and toward American society in general is expressed. And though an insidious black malinger like Junior (Reggie Johnson) whines through *Platoon*, the majority of blacks who appear in these films represent some either wise or eloquent variation on the sixties "Black is Beautiful" theme. Nevertheless, most of these characters are still too real and complex to be seen as merely heroic icons or examples of Hollywood's penchant for inverted stereotyping.

GI Joe as War Critic

What is most ironic about this attempt to make the Vietnam GI become

a symbol of the sixties is that the films have turned a number of them into critics of the war. We have Chris Taylor pontificating at the end of *Platoon* that the "enemy was in us," and *Full Metal Jacket's* Joker (Matthew Modine) prominently displaying a peace symbol while making snide comments about the military mentality. There are also the black and white grunts in *Hamburger Hill* who intone the nihilistic chant about the war "It don't mean nothing, not a thing." None of these GIs engages in a political critique of the American government and its policies, but they all know they have stepped into a quagmire where the patriotic rhetoric of past wars seems both ridiculous and heinous.

Turning the GIs into anti-war spokesmen paradoxically (or is it predictably?) allowed Hollywood to depict the representatives of the anti-war movement back home as fools and villains. According to some of these Hollywood deep thinkers the GIs' antipathy to the war could be accepted because they were there and they suffered. But the anti-war movement's opposition was seen as unearned. In this scenario anti-war activists sat smugly and safely at home taking potshots at both the government and the GIs and were, in addition, communist dupes. Consequently, films like *Hanoi Hilton* and *Hamburger Hill* have the GIs continually excoriate the anti-war movement as if they were the people who bore responsibility for the Vietnam debacle. And in *Gardens of Stone*, tough, cynical Sgt. Clell Hazard (James Caen) is critical of the war, but still punches out a particularly obnoxious anti-war activist at a garden party.

What is apparent is that by becoming the cynosure of the sixties, the Vietnam War film has provided more obfuscation than insight into the decade. Ultimately, only when films examine the political, cultural, and social issues that were both at the heart of and surrounded the war — including the anti-war movement and those in power who brought us into Vietnam — will there no longer be a need for these sixties surrogates. Then, and only then, will these films become true acts of remembrance of both the war and the sixties as well. ●

Al Auster and Leonard Quart are the authors of American Film and Society since 1945 (Praeger Greenwood, 1984) and How the War was Remembered: Hollywood and Vietnam (Praeger Greenwood) to be published in August, 1988.



Photo by Ricky Francisco/Orion Pictures

Soldiers from the movie *Platoon*.

Contra Aid

continued from page 9

formed way to the most intricate of legislative developments. 3) Advances were made in the critical task of bringing a regional perspective to anti-intervention work.

The repercussions of the defeat of *Contra* aid in the House of Representatives are significant but not necessarily decisive. The vote was clearly seen as a test of President Reagan's ability to carry out the administration's agenda in the final year of his Presidency, as well as a test of support for the broader foreign policy direction of the United States.

But the vote does not provide the last word on aid to the *Contras*. In the next several weeks, the Democratic leadership in the House will be putting forth a new package of legislation concerning Central America. This "positive policy" will include some "humanitarian" aid to the *Contras* as well as development funds for the rest of the region. The outlines of this package are only now beginning to emerge; it has not yet been decided who will be the recipients of the aid or in what form it will be distributed. Continued grassroots pressure on Congress is necessary for the February 3rd vote to truly represent a new stage the peace process in Central America.

The progressive campaign will be stressing the following as elements of a truly constructive policy:

1) Our nation must give its support to the **reintegration of former *Contras* into civilian life**, rather than sustaining them as a military force. Any aid to the *Contras* should be given only after a ceasefire has been achieved, and must be limited to food, clothing, and medicine and be distributed through a neutral third party;

2) The United States must remain **politically neutral in internal Nicaraguan politics**;

3) There should be **no more war-related aid to El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras**;

4) We must normalize relations with Nicaragua by lifting the trade embargo and by entering into bilateral negotiations to address this hemisphere's economic and security issues. ●

Bill Spencer, formerly the DSA Youth Organizer, is currently on the staff of Days of Decision and is a member of DSA's National Executive Committee.



Change the USA! Join the DSA!



Members of the Democratic Socialists of America work in every day-to-day struggle for social justice. We bring a strategy for building alliances among all the movements for social change. And we bring a vision of a society that can satisfy the demands for dignity and justice—a socialist society. Join the people working to bring together all the movements for social change . . . and to bring together day-to-day battles and long-term strategies and visions.

Join DSA.

- Send me more information about democratic socialism.
- Enclosed find my dues (\$50 sustaining; \$35 regular; \$15 limited income. Dues include \$8 for DEMOCRATIC LEFT.)
- I would like to subscribe to DEMOCRATIC LEFT: \$15 sustaining; \$8 regular
- I would like to subscribe to the discussion bulletin, *Socialist Forum*, \$10.

Send to: Democratic Socialists of America, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.
Tel.: (212) 962-0390.

Name _____
Address _____
City/State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Union, School, Other Affiliation _____

CLASSIFIED

MEET OTHER LEFT SINGLES through the Concerned Singles Newsletter. All areas and ages. Box 7737-D, Berkeley, CA 94707, for free sample.

SOCIAL CHANGE JOBS — COMMUNITY JOBS, a non-profit newspaper, lists progressive jobs/internships nationwide you can believe in. Current listing \$3. COMMUNITY JOBS, 1516 P Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005

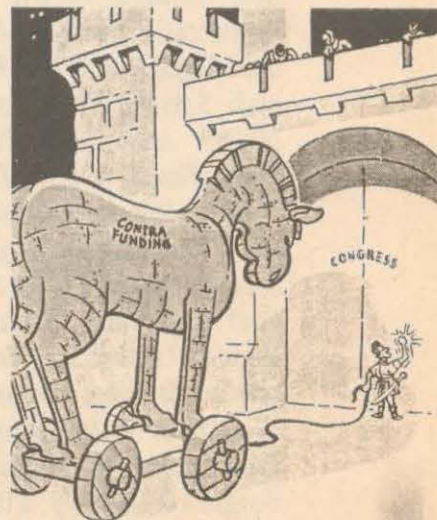
OFFICE SPACE WITH DSA — DSA is subletting two offices from its NYC suite. Offices are 430 sq. ft. @ \$552/month including electricity & 262 sq. ft. @ \$336/month including electricity. Call (212) 962-0390.

INTERNSHIP POSITIONS AVAILABLE with DSA for the summer or during the school year. Make plans now to spend a summer interning at the DSA national office. Call (212) 962-0390 for more details.

THE EUGENE DEBS FOUNDATION will be awarding the 9th annual Bryant Spann Memorial Prize of \$750 for the best

article written in the Debsian tradition of social protest and reform. For more information enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Bryant Spann Memorial Prize Committee, c/o The Department of History, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809.

Classified advertising rates are \$2 per line, \$50 per column inch. Payment in advance. Twenty percent discount if ad runs two or more times. We reserve the right to reject ads.



"Beware of Greeks bearing non-lethal aid."

Socialist Scholars Conference

Socialist Movements: National and International
April 8, 9, 10, 1988

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

The usual suspects and hundreds more . . .

- Paul Sweezy
- Paulette Pierce
- Barbara Ehrenreich
- Fred Siegel
- Luciana Castellina
- Joseph Murphy
- Bogdan Denitch
- Robert Lekachman
- Cornel West
- Stuart Hall
- Joanne Landy
- Michael Harrington
- Daniel Singer
- Ruth Milkman
- Stanley Aronowitz
- Paulo Freire
- Ira Shor
- William Tabb
- Irving Howe
- Frances Fox Piven
- Joanne Barkan
- Judith Lorber

Sponsors/Participation (in formation)

CUNY Ph.D. Program in Sociology, and *Dissent*, *The Nation*, Institute for Democratic Socialism, Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians Organization, *Monthly Review*, *Social Policy*, *Social Text*, *Socialist Review*, *Telos*, CUNY Democratic Socialist Graduate Student Club, South End Press, The Fabian Society, The Generation After, *Mother Jones*, *The Progressive*, *In These Times*, *New Left Review*, *New Politics*, Radical Philosophy Association, *The New Society*, *Science and Society*, Campaign for Democracy—East and West, *Semiotext(e)*, The Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, *Socialist Politics*, *Dialectical Anthropology*, New York Committee for Marxist Education, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, *The Guardian*, Union for Radical Political Economics.

1988 Registration Form

Make checks payable to "Socialist Scholars Conference" and mail to:

R.L. Norman, Jr.

CUNY Democratic Socialists Club, Rm. 800,
33 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Please enclose stamped self-addressed envelope

Preregistration

_____ \$17.50 _____ \$10
(student/low income)

Regular Registration

_____ \$25.00 _____ \$12.50
(student/low income)

Professional Childcare available during the day on Saturday and Sunday.

I need childcare for _____ children.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____
