

PUBLISHED BY THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

DEMOCRATIC Left

November-December, 1988

Vol. XVI, No. 6

\$1.50



**Toward '89 and
Beyond**



**Barbara Ehrenreich on Socialist Feminism • Jeff Faux on the Economy •
John Stephens on the Transition to Socialism • Dorothy Healey
Interviews Ruben Zamora • Joanne Barkan on Sweden**

As we go to press, the presidential elections are only ten days away. We know that democratic socialists are working hard across the country to help elect Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis. If you receive this issue prior to the elections, we urge you to "vote early and vote often!"

DSA will be holding its bi-annual national board meeting in Los Angeles, CA the weekend following the election (November 11-13) to determine what challenges will be confronting DSA and the broad democratic left in the post-election period. We hope you will join us there as we analyze the election results, chart our future for 1989 and beyond, and assess how DSA will continue to promote viable, progressive alternatives — alternatives that will be relevant and critical regardless of who wins this election.

Coverage of DSA's board meeting, as well as an analysis of the elections, will appear in the next issue of Democratic Left.

CLASSIFIED

OFFICE SPACE WITH DSA — DSA has only one office left to sublet from its NYC suite. The office is 281 sq. ft. \$405.72/month including electricity. You can't find a better deal in Manhattan! Call (212) 962-0390.

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

"Socialist Party — Workers of the World Unite" T-shirts, \$8. Specify size. WRL Organizer's Manual. \$10. Free Catalog. Socialist Party Favors, Box 8211-D, Des Moines, IA 50306.

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.

Cover photo: El Salvador's Ruben Zamora at a NY walk-a-thon for Central America.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

BARBARA EHRENREICH
MICHAEL HARRINGTON
Editors

SHERRI LEVINE
Managing Editor

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Joanne Barkan
Vania Del Borgo
Neil McLaughlin

Maxine Phillips
Jan Rosenberg
Gerald Hudson

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.

ARTICLES

The Bi-partisan Consensus for Hard Times
by Jeff Faux..... page 3

El Salvador:
Prospects for Democracy
Dorothy Healey interviews
Ruben Zamora page 5

Rethinking the Transition
To Socialism
by John Stephens page 11

Shaping Social Democracy
by Joanne Barkan page 13

Socialist Feminism: Impact,
Strategy, and Vision
by Barbara Ehrenreich page 15

DEPARTMENTS

CLASSIFIEDS..... page 2

DSAAction page 7

On The Left page 8



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 _____

The Bipartisan Consensus For Hard Times

by Jeff Faux

The problem of the deficits, fiscal as well as trade, is the major domestic issue facing the U.S. government. And despite the evasion and hypocrisy of the candidates — particularly the “Watch my lips, no taxes,” of George Bush — the governing establishment is ready to push the next president to force more economic pain on the average American in order to pay for the excesses of Reaganomics. The conventional economic wisdom tells us that the fundamental problem with the U.S. economy is that consumers have been spending too much and saving too little. In addition, federal spending on entitlement programs — in particular, Social Security and Medicare for the elderly — has diverted resources that would otherwise have been available for productive investment. As a consequence, the argument goes, the U.S. government has had to borrow furiously from abroad, making the United States the world’s largest debtor. The solution is to drastically reduce the federal deficit by cutting domestic programs and taxing consumption, thereby increasing savings and freeing resources for more business investment. In short, Reaganomics II is being hailed as the solution for Reaganomics I.

The overconsumption thesis has gained widespread acceptance among politicians and among many economic advisors. A major salesperson for the idea is Peter G. Peterson, Wall Street investment banker and former commerce secretary under president Richard Nixon. Peterson has publicized his views in magazine articles, interviews, and in full-page ads in the nation’s major newspapers listing endorsements from 250 Republican and Democratic bankers, business people, and academics. Austerity is also at the heart of the consensus reached by 100 high-level political and business leaders brought together by former president Jimmy Carter in April 1988, and they appear

to reflect the views of the majority of the National Economic Commission set up by Congress to advise the new President on the budget crisis.

Peterson writes that, “We must be prepared for a perceptible fall in real after-tax employee compensation combined with a similar decline, or at best a stagnation, in real government spending.” The period of austerity will be a long one — some twenty years. After roughly ten years of austerity in which the average American’s income is squeezed to provide more savings for business investment, a further declining dollar and lower wages will have begun to turn our trade deficit into a modest surplus. Any benefits, however, will have to be “focused on raising net exports,” and it will not be until about the year 2007 that the period of austerity will end.

Peterson’s concern with the growing foreign debt and his point that we must invest and export more in order to work our way out of our trade deficit is well taken. But his conclusions are dangerously flawed. One problem is obvious; austerity will cause pain and suffering to the majority of Americans whose living standards have already been lowered. The average working American is worse off economical-

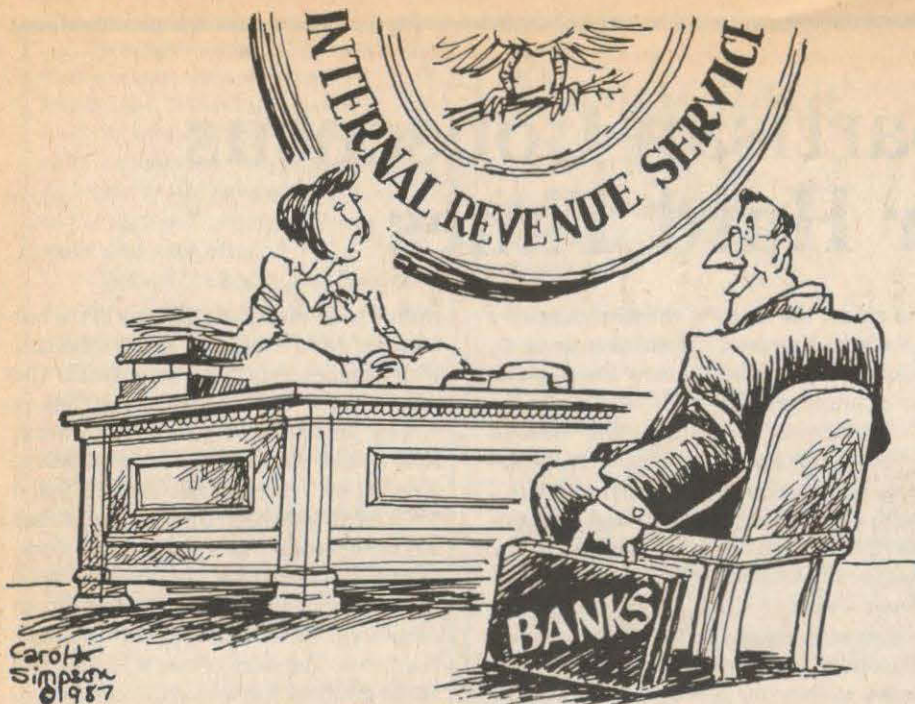
ly than he or she was at the peak of the last business cycle. Family income is stagnant, with families only able to maintain the same level of real income as they had in 1979 by sending more people out to work. Real hourly wages, adjusted for inflation, dropped by 7 percent between 1979 and 1987. By 1979 some five million Americans had been forced to accept part-time work. Between 1979 and 1987, 6.5 million more Americans fell below the poverty line. An austerity program will obviously intensify this trend. The pain, of course, is justified on the grounds that we have to make sacrifices today in order to raise our living standards in the long run. But austerity, in fact, undercuts the process that we know is essential to increasing living standards — raising productivity. In a modern economy, low wages, by making labor cheap relative to capital, are a disincentive to capital investment. Moreover, whatever productive investment is made will be progressively less efficient because of a retarded rate of public investment in human capital and infrastructure during this prolonged period of stringent public budgets.

But, perhaps more important, the austerity thesis risks a disastrous recession that could bring down upon us the moun-



Bank of America headquarters in Mexico City.

Peter Kelly/Impact Visuals



“Now let me get this straight—You want to deduct the entire Third World debt as a charitable contribution?”

tain of debt that has been building up over the years. Peterson and the other austerity advocates seem amazingly unconcerned about this danger, and they take no precautions against it. It is hard to believe that this is entirely an oversight. Indeed, recession as a way to purge the system of excessive debt and to prevent the build-up of inflation is a time-honored proposition among the financial elite. As William Grieder, author of *Secrets of the Temple*, the celebrated book on the workings of the Federal Reserve, observes, “To put things very crudely, the austerity crowd wants the real economy to again take a bath. Further disinflation would restore financial market values and the wealth holders’ interest at the expense of everybody else.”

The austerity advocates are flirting with disaster. The idea that one can “manage” a recession — use it to destroy excessive debt and then restart the economy in an inflation-free environment — flies in the face of the new conditions created by Ronald Reagan’s deficit. In effect, by leaving his successor a fiscal deficit of more than \$150 billion for 1989, Reagan has denied him the tool that the U.S. government has used for the past fifty years to recover from a recession — namely, proactive deficit spending. With the next downturn, the deficit will inevitably increase, as revenues from an already weakened tax system decline rapidly and the public costs of unemployment rise. And as projections for the deficit soar, no President —

Gramm-Rudman or no Gramm-Rudman — will have the political courage to launch a countercyclical spending program, at least of the magnitude that may be required.

Without the tool of an expanding fiscal policy, the entire burden of preventing and getting out of a recession will fall on the shoulders of a looser monetary policy, i.e., lower interest rates. Yet, this line of defense is limited because of pressures to stabilize the dollar and attract funds from overseas to finance our deficit.

The austerity crowd seems to hope that the rest of the world will help us out of the dilemma by taking up the slack (despite the fact that they envision a wage-cutting trade war), and that any reduction in U.S. demand will be offset by a comparable increase in U.S. net exports. But where are the new export markets of this magnitude going to come from, given West Germany’s and Japan’s — not to mention Korea’s and Taiwan’s — propensity for running trade surpluses? Certainly there is little prospect of selling additional goods to those debt-ridden Latin American countries that have become dependent on exports to the U.S. market to service their debt.

Given that debt — which overhangs the world’s consumers, banks, businesses, and governments — even a shallow recession could quickly turn into a spiraling economic collapse. Compared to its condition prior to the recession of 1981-82, the U.S.

economy is extremely fragile. Debt of all kinds — corporate, consumer, and government — has increased. According to the General Accounting Office, 30 percent of all the thrift institutions in America are insolvent or close to it. And the federal savings and loan system is being kept alive with regulatory smoke and mirrors by a federal government that does not have the funds it needs to close the bleeding institutions and pay off the insured depositors. Major banks still hold large sums of shaky Third World loans, and, as a result of leveraged buyouts, hostile mergers, and greenmail, many U.S. corporations are loaded with debt. Clearly, there is a danger that the system would not hold. But even if it did, a recession would set back investment and productivity growth — the very conditions we want to encourage — by years.

Is there a better, progressive alternative to getting out of the mess Reaganomics has put us in? Certainly. In broad terms it has several elements:

First, we must avoid recession at all costs. We cannot repeal the business cycle from modern capitalism, but we can put off the next downturn until the nation’s economy is in better shape to handle it. This means that budget deficit reduction must proceed slowly and modestly, and that it must be preceded by a commitment on the part of the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates substantially.

Second, we must raise money now to make the public investments in human and physical capital necessary to raise the long run rate of productivity and innovation in the U.S. economy.

Third, we need new trade, technology, and industrial strategies. To the extent that we can improve our trade balance through more effective negotiation, better use of technology, and increased industrial performance through more labor participation in the workplace, we lessen the competitive burden on wages.

Fourth, we need to stimulate global growth of incomes — particularly in the Third World, where most of the industrial economies’ new customers will come from.

In the present political climate this may seem overly ambitious. But the alternative, sooner or later, is a massive dose of hard times for America, and the world.

Jeff Faux is the president of the Economic Policy Institute. This article is adapted from a larger piece, “The Austerity Trap,” which appeared in the Summer 1988 issue of World Policy Journal.

El Salvador: Prospects for Democracy

The following is an interview with **Ruben Zamora** conducted by **Dorothy Healey**, a DSA vice chair who has been participating in the U.S. left for almost sixty years. On October 11, 1988 Healey interviewed Zamora, the Vice President of El Salvador's Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and Secretary-General of the Popular Social Christian party. Zamora is also a key leader of the Democratic Convergence, a new political coalition that will challenge Napoleon Duarte's Christian Democrats and the ultra-right ARENA party (National Republican Alliance) in next spring's presidential election. Zamora was in the U.S. for a ten-city tour sponsored by the Democratic Socialists of America and the Institute for Democratic Socialism. The interview was conducted as part of Healey's regular radio program that airs every Sunday on Pacifica radio, WPFM FM.

Dorothy Healey: Describe the party that you now head in El Salvador.

RZ: Our party, the Popular Social Christian party, was founded in 1980. Before that, I was a member of the Christian Democratic party (PDC), Duarte's party, the party that is now in power. In 1980, the PDC changed its whole direction. Prior to that, the Christian Democratic party was trying to be with the people in alliance with popular organizations, trying to defend democracy against the military government. In 1980, however, they went into alliance with the high command of the military, made an alliance with the American embassy in El Salvador, and broke their alliance with all of the popular sectors. They forgot about human rights, and Duarte began to proceed over the most repressive government that we have seen in El Salvador's modern history.

We founded the Popular Social Christian party in response to that change in direction, and we have been developing that party ever since. At first we had to develop it while in exile. We could not stay in the country because they were trying to



Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals

May Day demonstration in El Salvador.

kill us. My own brother was assassinated by the death squads.

DH: Describe the difference between El Salvador's society then as compared to now. How does the economy function?

RZ: El Salvador has traditionally been a country in which social polarization has been one of the main features. The economy is based mostly on two or three export crops: coffee; cotton; and sugar. The land, however, has been concentrated in the hands of a very few families. These families not only own the land, but they control the banking and other industries as well. What we have in Salvador is an elite, a small group of families that marry among themselves and control the wealth of the country. There are a few that are very, very rich, while the masses have nothing. The majority of Salvadorans are peasants. A peasant only works 100 days per year, and the minimum wage in Salvador is less than the minimum hourly wage here in the U.S. This terrible social polarization is the route of the conflict in our country.

DH: When you and your allies broke with the Christian Democratic party, what transpired that brought about U.S. intervention?

RZ: People could not withstand the social injustice for very long. Some people began to organize to try to change things, and the army and the government responded by shooting at the people. By doing this, the

government excluded any possibility for political change. At that moment, the government perceived the whole of the trade union movement and the peasant movements as a menace. The government started to react, and the United States government started to support the Duarte government. The social changes that were initially introduced in 1980 were not for the benefit of the people. Agrarian reform was not introduced to benefit the peasants. It was introduced to try and stop popular unrest. In El Salvador we call it counterinsurgency agrarian reform. They didn't give the peasants significant land nor the capacity to make decisions for themselves. On the contrary, some land was given, but peasants were kept under very tight control. That kind of agrarian reform does not work.

DH: What kind of movement developed that challenged this?

RZ: In 1980, we had tried all of the avenues of change. We had been in elections, but the only results after the elections were fraud and repression. I had been jailed after an election because I had participated in the election. We tried demonstrations and they tried to shoot us for demonstrating, killing people in the streets. All the avenues for peaceful changes were closed. What do you do in that situation?

DH: Jack Kennedy once said in a speech to

the Alliance for Progress, "Those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable."

RZ: That happened in El Salvador. Armed struggle became an inevitable necessity in El Salvador because there was no other way. In 1980, the popular organizations began to unify and the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), a broad coalition, was formed. The FLMN (Farabundo Marti Front for the National Liberation) was developed as the political-military arm of the FDR. A military and political alliance was made and that opened these past eight years of struggle in El Salvador.

DH: That is very important. In other words, you formed an alliance between both the militarized action of the uprising as well as the political party that constituted the breadth of opinion of the left within El Salvador. How has such an alliance been? It must be a difficult and complicated alliance?

RZ: I am not going to say it has been a very easy alliance, but the alliance has been very important for everybody. We have learned how to reach agreement among ourselves. In El Salvador, our history teaches us that when the people get together in a very broad alliance it is possi-

ble to make advances. In 1984, we toppled a dictatorship of thirteen years, General Martinez's dictatorship, by joining together. In 1959, when we toppled the dictatorship of Colonel Lemus we had applied those same tactics. The Salvadoran people have been able to advance the road of democracy and social change when the people get together and form an alliance of democratic elements, revolutionary elements, centrist elements, and progressive left-wing elements. That is why the alliance between the FMLN and the FDR has been working well.

DH: Let me quote from the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus of the United States Congress: "El Salvador is approaching the record for dependence on U.S. aid held by South Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War, yet debate in the U.S. on Central America's future focuses exclusively on Nicaragua." We are pouring billions of dollars into El Salvador, tax payers' money. What does the United States get for its money?

RZ: The U.S. gets nothing positive from this arrangement. What you get is that the Reagan administration can claim that they have not lost another country. It is a little bit absurd because that would mean that the United States owns countries. It doesn't. The United States has poured into El Salvador more than two billion dollars in the last eight years trying to maintain a project or a scheme that is called low-intensity conflict.

DH: What do they mean by low-intensity conflict?

RZ: They are trying to fight a war against an insurgency without committing American troops. But they provide the money, direct the war, and organize the training of the local army to fight the war. In addition it is part of an economic and political scheme that will supposedly give legitimacy to the government and recovery to the economy. But after six years, the economy of the country is in the deepest crisis in our history. We have more than 35 percent unemployment in El Salvador. We are exporting less than half of the coffee that we used to export years ago, and coffee is our main export. The economy is becoming more and more an artificial economy because the country is living on foreign aid and on the money that Salvadoran families living in the United States are sending back to their relatives in El Salvador. It is artificial because it is wealth that we are not producing ourselves. Instead, all that is being produced is a lot of suffering for the Salvadoran people.

DH: If the whole strategy of the low-

intensity conflict has resulted in an economic crisis, what has it meant in terms of the political relations in the country? For instance, we had great celebrations in the United States over the "democratic" elections of Duarte as president. It was "proof" that U.S. policy works. What have been the political repercussions of that election and what is the status today of democracy in El Salvador?

RZ: I don't know how your country can call on El Salvador as an example of a democratic society. In El Salvador, human rights violations are day to day occurrences. The other day, ten people were assassinated by the army, and nobody knows why they were killed. Trade union leaders are put in jail, and people like me are under constant threat because the army spreads propaganda saying I am a terrorist. You cannot call that kind of thing a democracy.

DH: How did you have the nerve, the courage, to return to El Salvador in the face of the knowledge that these death threats were not abstract, but that people were being killed all over El Salvador by the death squads?

RZ: It was a necessity to do so. The whole political situation was disintegrating. We saw the need for a political presence of the democratic left in the country to try and present an alternative to the political situation. Building the Convergence was something that could only be done by working from within the country.

DH: What is the strategy of the Democratic Convergence?

RZ: The Democratic Convergence is much more than just an electoral coalition. We started the Convergence in November of last year, and at that moment there were three political parties that joined to become the Convergence. We identified four problems: structural injustice; the absence of a real democracy; the loss of the national sovereignty of the country; and the state of war. Then we agreed on four basic solutions. For the problem of the war, we propose a negotiated political settlement. The other alternative solutions we present are to develop a real process for democracy and pluralism, and to regain our national sovereignty back from the United States. That means that the problems of El Salvador are going to be solved among Salvadorans. The United States might be able to help a little bit, but the United States will never be able to solve our problems. Finally, we propose a process of economic recovery for dealing with the structural injustices.

Continued on page 16



Jim Tynan/Impact Visuals

San Salvador, El Salvador.

DSACTION

REPORTS

• The Democratic Socialists of America/National Political Action Committee has endorsed Democratic party nominee Michael Dukakis for President of The United States. In the endorsement statement, the DSA/NPAC acknowledged that Dukakis is "neither a socialist nor a candidate of the left." Still, according to the pronouncement, "There are clear differences between Michael Dukakis and George Bush on a number of critical questions." A Dukakis victory would "open up political space and political movement for the left."

The DSA/NPAC had endorsed the Rev. Jesse Jackson in the Democratic presidential primaries

On the level of U.S. Congress, the DSA/NPAC gave its endorsement to Democratic Congressmen Ronald Dellums (8th District, California) and Major R. Owens (12th District, New York), both of whom are members of Democratic Socialists of America. In addition, Burlington (Vermont) Mayor Bernie Sanders received an endorsement in his independent race for his state's lone Congressional seat.

• Billy Bragg was at it again, defying the common wisdom that if even the "L" word is unspeakable, the "S" word should be discarded at all costs. "I see no shame in putting my name to socialism's cause," sings Billy in one of his recent songs entitled, "I Don't Need the Pressure Ron." Bragg is a British musician and Labour party activist who has been working with the DSA Youth Section on his U.S. tours.

Bragg's latest album, *Worker's Playtime* was released in September, and he has been on tour in Canada and the U.S. to promote the album. Youth Section organizer Elissa McBride went along on the first three weeks of his tour, travelling from Seattle, WA to Nashville, TN with Billy and his crew. Meetings with local DSA activists and youth section chapters took place in most cities along the way, and DSA activists tabled literature and registered voters at each concert. In Seattle, a revitalized local met before the concert to plan an out-

reach meeting. In San Francisco and Los Angeles, Billy dedicated his anthem, "There is Power in a Union," to United Farmworker vice president and DSA member Dolores Huerta, who was brutally beaten by a police officer while distributing grape boycott literature at an anti-Bush rally in San Francisco. In Austin, TX, Billy explained during his concert that it was in Austin that he first learned about DSA. Several members of the local had been at his concert two years ago and let him know that there were indeed democratic socialists in the United States.

In Atlanta, GA, Billy made a strong pitch for the SEIU Justice for Janitors campaign. Several organizers for the union were present to pass out information about the November 17 Bring John Portman to Justice Day. Members of the student Action Union, CISPES, and ACT-UP also passed out literature at many of the concerts.

• The Industry Action Project recently won the Innovations award from the John Kennedy School of Government and the Ford Foundation. The IAP is an attempt to create community-based models for democratic planning — including union and worker involvement — to save good industrial jobs. Michael Schippiani, a long-time DSA labor activist, came up with the original idea, and Jack Clark, past DSA director, manages the program.

• Socialist women are moving up. So reports Britain's *The Economist*, which reminds us that Norway's Labour party guarantees women at least 40 percent of party jobs and seats in Parliament. Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland's cabinet is 40 percent female. The same policy is true of Denmark's Social Democrats. And now the West German Social Democrats' party congress voted that women will get at least 40 percent of the Party's jobs by 1994 and of its parliamentary seats by 1998.

RESOURCES

• The latest issue of *Religious Socialism* includes articles on "Human Dignity as

our Highest Priority," "On the Margins of Empire," "John Cort Passes the Torch," "Pro-choice Is Pro-life," and "The Congress on Religion and Politics." Subscriptions to *Religious Socialism* at \$5 per year should be sent to RS, P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

• The fall issue of **Not Far Enough**, the newsletter of DSA's Feminist Commission, has recently been printed. Articles on "Women Organizing in Central America," "Rape is Torture," and "Hazards in the Office" are included in this issue, along with a report on the socialist-feminist retreat held this summer. To obtain a copy send in your Feminist Commission dues of \$10 (regular) or \$5 (low-income) to DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

• **Red Wedge Magazine**, a journal of culture and politics produced by Red Wedge, the left-wing musician's group that Billy Bragg helped form during the British Mineworker's strike in 1984, is available through DSA. To order your copy, send \$2.00 to DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

• **The State of Working America**, a new publication produced by the Economic Policy Institute and co-authored by DSAer Lawrence Mishel and Jacqueline Simon, is now available. The pamphlet hopes to broaden the public debate about economic strategies and includes sections on "The Working Poor," "Finding the American Dream," and "Falling Wages." It can be purchased from EPI by sending \$5.00 to 1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Suite 812, Washington, DC 20036.

• **The New American Poverty**, a 60 minute inspiring and informative video of Michael Harrington speaking on poverty in the U.S., can be purchased from DSA for only \$15. Order this VHS video for your home, class, church, or union. Send \$15.00 to the DSA office, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

• **The Long Distance Runner**, Michael Harrington's new autobiography, is available from the DSA office for only \$21.25. Harrington shares his experiences from the last two decades in this inspiring book. Send your order request to the DSA office, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

ON THE LEFT

by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

California

Los Angeles DSA held a public forum September 30 that featured community activists James Simmons and Karen Bass, discussing "Mean Streets: The Gang Crisis in L.A.'s Black Community." "Voices on the Left: A Socialist's Perspective" is carried every Friday from 5-6 p.m. over KPFK, 90.7 FM...Local DSA member Eric Roberts taught a course on the history of the Sixties for the Stanford community/campus education program. His syllabus is available through the DSA office...San Diego DSA endorsed the Margin of Victory Campaign and encouraged activists to participate in this progressive electoral coalition.

District of Columbia

The *Washington Socialist* features an interview with Joslyn Williams, president of the Metropolitan Washington AFL-CIO Council, who was recently elected chair of the D.C. Democratic State Committee. Williams, a long-term DSA member, gave his views on labor and politics and DSA's role. The issue also stressed the janitors' fight for justice in D.C. and how women have organized to win respect. D.C. DSAers voted unanimously to endorse Tom Chorlton, of the D.C. Statehood Party, for the at-large seat on the D.C. City Council.

Illinois

The University of Chicago DSA chapter participated in a progressive slate for the student government elections. Other projects included a "Trustee of the Month" series and participating in a student committee on sexual harassment. They are also helping to organize a Chicago Student Leadership Conference, that will be targeted at progressive Chicago-area student government and student club leaders...The Chicago DSA local held a forum October 23 on "Will this Elec-

tion Make a Difference?" with representatives from the Dukakis campaign, DSA, and *Against the Current* magazine.

Kentucky

Sue Massek reported on her trip to Nicaragua and Guatemala at the September 27 meeting of Central Kentucky DSA in Lexington. The local held its yearly garage sale in October, and has set up a "Lefties Library" of socialists and labor books, magazines and pamphlets. The October monthly meeting will feature Chuck Sohner, who will speak on "What's Ahead for the Labor Movement."

Maryland

The Baltimore DSA local has been working to register people to vote, and on election day they will be passing out special literature urging voters to vote for Question #3, which would ban the sale of "Saturday Night Special" guns...Howard County DSA held a public meeting on October 20 to discuss the presidential elections.

Massachusetts

With DSAer's support, Nelson Merced became the first Hispanic to be nominated to the State House of Representatives. The *Yankee Radical* features an article on "Glasnost's Evil Twin" by Monte Pearson...The Student Government Association of Mount Holyoke College is using DSA youth section materials in a campus education project. The SGA did an all campus mailing with "Twelve Myths About Poverty" and plastered the campus with "A Simple Questionnaire" on homophobia.

Michigan

The DSA youth section at the University of Michigan holds weekly educational meetings and worked with feminists on campus on a project coinciding with an effort being undertaken by the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). The youth section chapter at Michigan State University co-sponsored, with the Women's Studies Department, a talk by Emily Martin on reproduction and culture. The chapter also worked with the Women's Council on a Take Back the Night March...MSU activist Jon Oakes has been helping to revitalize

the East Lansing DSA...Ann Arbor DSA held its annual mass meeting at the end of September to plan for their activities for the year ahead.

Missouri

A conference on workers' self-organization, sponsored by the Washington University History Department in St. Louis, will be held November 11-13. It will feature the St. Louis premiere of "Our Land Too — the Legacy of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union," with a discussion led by DSAer H.L. Mitchell, co-founder of the STFU in 1934 and Louis Cantor, author of "A Prologue to the Protest Movement." The DSA Washington University local sponsored talks October 7 by Walter Amusa, field representative of the American Federation of Teachers, on "The November Election: Which Way Black America?" and October 21 by professor Liane Kosaki on "The Elections and the Judiciary: There's More to it than the Supreme Court."

New Jersey

DSA co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich spoke at several meetings at Princeton September 29. One session was on "Remaking Love: Sexuality and Gender in the 90s" and another was entitled "Welfare Reform: Is it Good for the Poor, Women, and Children?" The evening talk, on "For Our Own Good — What's Missing in Campaign 1988," was co-sponsored by DSA. A DSA reception attended by over thirty people was held prior to the evening forum. Recently, Bernie Backer's 70th birthday was celebrated by activists and friends in Princeton.

New York

DSAer Nick Salvatore, Associate Professor at Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations and author of *Debs: Citizen and Socialist*, has been elected to the Ithaca School Board with the help of Ithaca DSA...The Courtland youth section continues to work on Central America issues...Michael Harrington, co-chair of DSA, and Bogdan Denitch of CUNY Graduate Center, spoke at an overflow meeting on "The Future of the Socialist Idea."

Ohio

Oberlin College DSA is publishing a newsletter on the labor movement, "Labor in the Land." ...The University of Dayton DSA organized a feminist awareness week with the slogan, "Use the f-word at UD." The chapter action against CIA recruiting on campus led the student senate to bar the CIA from returning to campus...Kent State DSA sponsored a forum with a French socialist who spoke on Haiti and Central America...Cleveland DSAers were involved in organizing a two-day forum on poverty with Michael Harrington and Cornel West as two of the key participants. A DSA reception was held while both West and Harrington were in town for the event. The Cleveland local recently held elections for its eight-member steering committee...In Columbus, DSAer Bob Fitra-kis had been working with AFSCME, Ohio Council 8 to register voters at Columbus State Community College. Over 200 new voters were registered.

Pennsylvania

Central Pennsylvania DSA gave Meritorious Service Awards to the Milton, Pennsylvania Friends of Labor, and to Liz Hrenda, local president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. The awards were given at the September annual dinner of DSA. ...The Bucknell University DSA sponsored a film series on the economy and had speakers discuss the Left in Europe and the politics of art and Picasso...The Philadelphia DSA annual meeting will assess the past year's activities and plan for the post-election year...The Coordinating Council of Pittsburgh DSA is planning a series of educational forums this fall on democratic socialism...DSAer Tony Slomkoski, a union machinist at Allegheny Ludlum, spent two weeks this summer working at a steel-fabricating plant in Tiptapa, Nicaragua.

Texas

University of Houston DSA co-sponsored Central America week; an appearance by Alex Cockburn drew nearly 200 people, and a panel included DSAers Karen Baird, president of the College Democrats, and DSA activists Eric Martin.

Zamora Tour Spreads Word of Salvador Crisis

by Patrick Lacefield

As he was leaving El Salvador, Ruben Zamora confided to me that he had heard that DSA had put together a schedule that redefined the term "whirlwind tour." Well, it wasn't quite that bad. Still, the tour — organized in conjunction with the Institute for Democratic Socialism — covered nine cities in ten days and was a rousing success.

Zamora began the tour on October 10 in Baltimore with a speech to 300 members of the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs. Later came a meeting with the *Baltimore Sun*, and an evening get-together at the Progressive Action Center organized by Baltimore DSA. Over 100 folks heard Zamora compare the political space in El Salvador to entering a dark room filled with furniture. "We are constantly testing the limits — bumping up against furniture and then moving it or moving around it."

In Washington, D.C., the Institute — working with Fenton Communications — hosted a press breakfast for national and international reporters. An afternoon of press interviews ranging from Pacifica radio to the *Wall Street Journal* culminated with a public meeting of over 300 people at the Machinists Hall chaired by DSA vice-chair Dorothy Healey. The morning after, a meeting with local unionists — hosted by American Federation of Government Employees' vice president Dave Schlein — preceded a spirited exchange at the *New Republic* magazine.

The Philadelphia DSA local hosted a reception, followed by a speech at the University of Pennsylvania that drew a standing-room only crowd of 400 people. Here, as elsewhere, DSA worked closely with other Central America solidarity, union, and church groups to make the evening a success.

If it's Thursday, it must be New York. First, breakfast with Jack Sheinkman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, a DSAer, and a key fighter against Reagan's foreign policy in El Salvador. Zamora then went to the National Council of Churches for a mid-morning discussion. He raced to midtown for a CISPES press conference marking the introduction of placards in the New York City subways calling attention to the rising tide of human rights violations in Salvador. That evening, Zamora addressed over 300 people on the same night that the second Dukakis-Bush

debate was televised.

Boston wasn't much of a respite. First, a meeting with the *Boston Globe* editorial board. After a TV taping, Zamora told over 500 people at Boston University about the Democratic Convergence's work in Salvador. He was introduced by Nelson Merced, soon to be the first Hispanic member of the Massachusetts legislature. When Boston DSA co-chair Tom Gallagher, the evening's master of ceremonies, asked the audience to pass their questions forward, Zamora was left sifting through sixty-four questions! Perhaps the most moving moment came when Polish Solidarity activist Zbigniew Kowalewski brought greetings and news from Poland and embraced Zamora. On Saturday evening, Zamora caught a red-eye flight to the West coast.

Different coast, same story — Zamora getting out the message about U.S. policy in El Salvador and the prospects for a political settlement. He had an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as well as a mid-day meeting with prominent Bay Area Democrats. The evening meeting, chaired by San Francisco City Supervisor (and DSA vice-chair) Harry Britt, was organized by the San Francisco, East Bay, and Palo Alto DSA locals in conjunction with CISPES. Over 400 people cheered Zamora's message.

A Sacramento breakfast, organized by DSA and the Social Concerns Committee of the Catholic diocese, kicked off Zamora's second Monday of the tour, followed by a meeting of over 350 people at California State college organized by chapter stalwart Duane Campbell. Then, like a politician stumping for statewide office, Zamora flew to San Diego for an evening speech attended by 150 folks. Los Angeles was the last stop on the tour for Ruben Zamora. A public meeting in Santa Monica — competing with an LA Dodgers World Series game — drew nearly 400 people. In a switch, Zamora did this stop in Spanish (with English translation) since half of the audience was drawn from the LA Latino community.

Ruben Zamora: democrat, democratic socialist, revolutionary. DSA and the Institute for Democratic Socialism were proud as could be to host this tour. ●

Patrick Lacefield, DSA Organizational Director, coordinated the Zamora tour. He is co-editor of El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War.

\$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

- Images of Labor, with an introduction by Irving Howe and preface by Joan Mandel. Photographs and commentary on American labor. Paperback. Published at \$16.95 \$15.00
Remaking Love: The Feminization of Sex, by Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, & Gloria Jacobs. Published at \$15.95. \$12.00
The Long-Distance Runner, by Michael Harrington. An autobiography that spans the past two decades. Published at \$19.95 \$17.00
Decade of Decision: The Crisis of the American System, by Michael Harrington. An analysis of the economic crisis of the seventies. \$11.00
El Salvador: Central America in the New Cold War, edited by Marvin Gettleman, Patrick Lacefield, Louis Menashe & David Mermelstein. A collection of essays on the conflicts in El Salvador. Paperback. Published at \$12.95. \$11.00
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
Eurosocijalism & 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
Alternatives Pamphlet Series:
#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. Mandel. \$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

Rethinking the Transition To Socialism

by John Stephens

When you ask American socialists why they continue their public commitment to socialism despite the unfriendly climate in this country, they say that they are committed to and motivated by the long-term vision of socialism and that the socialist analysis of capitalist society is the basis for their understanding of how the system works and what its defects are. Thus, though they promote policies in their day-to-day work that are usually the same as those promoted by liberals, socialism has definite relevance to the way they approach their political work. Without denying the importance of the socialist vision and socialist analysis, I want to argue that an analysis of the appropriate long-run strategy of achieving socialism in the advanced capitalist democracies in general, and the United States in particular, is of great relevance to the immediate political strategy of DSA. I elaborated just such a strategy almost ten years ago in *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*. Here, I will briefly recapitulate that analysis and then reflect on how it applies to current options facing the democratic left in the United States.

Strategy for Transition

Policies in capitalist society reflect the relative strength of social classes, with the capitalist class drawing its power and influence from ownership and control of capital and the working class from organization, both in trade unions and political parties. Since the advanced capitalist societies of the contemporary world are all democracies, one must explain why many voters in capitalist societies vote against their interests, assuming, as I do, that socialists have the correct interpretation of what those interests are. Gramsci provides the key with his concept of hegemony. Unlike previous ruling classes the bourgeoisie rules through consent not coercion. Capital is able to exert a massive influence on public opinion through own-

ership of the media, domination in various other social institutions, and alliances with other traditional forces. In the hypothetical absence of the organized counter-pressure from unions, socialist parties, and other popular organizations, this ideological domination is sufficient to ensure that state policy represents the interests of capital.

The strategy of the socialist movement is to develop a counter-hegemony, an organized presence in civil society to influence "public opinion" on the issues of the day and the people's consciousness about how capitalist society functions and on strategies to change it. The movement does this through organization, above all in trade unions and the political party but also in movement-related to youth organizations, education leagues, and so on, and through independent, though sympathetic popular organizations, such as cooperatives.

This theory of the state does much to explain why the public policy of advanced capitalist societies varies greatly. To take the extremes, in Sweden four-fifths of the labor force is organized and the Social Democratic party has been in office for forty-seven of the last fifty-six years. In the United States less than one-fifth of the labor force is organized and we have no significant labor or socialist party. As the theory predicts, in Sweden the welfare state is well developed: nonmilitary expenditure is two thirds of the National Product and the public sector effects a very

significant redistribution of income. Moreover, reforms have brought workers substantial influence over decision-making in the place of work. In the United States, by contrast, nonmilitary expenditure is less than one third of National Product, basic welfare state legislation such as a national health care system and adequate pensions are absent, and occupational health and safety standards are unenforced. Statistical analysis show that in all advanced capitalist societies the strength of the labor movement is very highly correlated with the length of time socialist parties have been in office which, in turn, is highly correlated with the level of nonmilitary expenditure. Comparative studies also show that class consciousness is most developed in countries with the strongest labor movements. It is important to note, however, that there are very little cross-national differences in support for basic welfare state programs: In all countries, including the United States, the mass public supports government initiatives in the areas of pensions, health care, education, and full employment, which together constitute the vast majority of nonmilitary public expenditure.

This theory also helps us to understand why the social democratic parties of Europe in practice abandoned their attempts to effect any immediate socialist transformation and, in turn, what conditions might allow them to put socialism back on the agenda. For example, after winning battles for democratic representa-



1988 Labor Day parade.

Les Stone/Impact Visuals

tion, the Swedish Social Democrats made several attempts to put their more radical programs on the agenda, each time meeting political defeat. In the thirties, they (and following them in the next decade and a half many of their European sister parties) pushed their socialist programs into the background and put the achievement of the full-employment welfare state at the center of the program. This consumed their energies until the early Seventies. By this time, the strength of the labor organization had grown from 36 percent of the labor force in 1940 to 75 percent in 1970. This is just one indicator, albeit the most important one, of the changed balance of power in Swedish society that helped change the balance at the ideological level (expressed, for instance, in public opinion) also. This massive change allowed the Social Democrats to bring socialism, or "economic democracy" back to the center of their program. This expressed itself first in a series of reforms greatly increasing the workers' decision-making rights in the workplace and then in the proposal of the LO, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, to institute "wage-earner funds," essentially a program of gradual socialization of capital. A greatly modified version of this proposal was passed in 1983.

What does that say for us in a country where the labor movement and other popular organizations are among the weakest in advanced capitalist democracies? We can look for guidance to the recent experience of Canada. The situations of the two countries were similar in the fifties: The density of labor organization in Canada was only slightly higher, and no significant labor party existed in either country. Canada then began to diverge from the U.S. The New Democratic party (NDP), Canada's social democratic party, was founded in the early sixties. Despite its minority status, the NDP began to have an impact on policy. The party used national political campaigns to present policy alternatives to the Liberals and Conservatives, forcing the Liberals to adopt some of the more popular NDP policies to avoid losing votes on the left. Key difference in the Canadian and U.S. welfare states, such as the existence of national health insurance in Canada, can be directly linked to the NDP's initiation of national debate on the issues.

The underlying power balance between the classes in the two countries also began to differ. First, the emergence of the NDP itself effected an important change. Socialist parties have an impor-

tant counter-hegemonic function; that is, through their electoral campaigns, legislative proposals, and other political activities, they can have a significant impact on the opinions on specific issues and the political consciousness of the mass public. Second, while the density of union organization declined to under one-fifth of the labor force, it increased in Canada to over two-fifths. The reasons are obviously complex, but one factor deserves mentioning because it has implications for the immediate agenda in the U.S. There is a simple difference in the laws governing union recognition. In Canada, while laws vary by province, in most provinces, the union achieves recognition by simply getting 55 to 60 percent of employees in a bargaining suit to sign union cards. In the U.S., after a majority have signed union cards, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) then conducts an election, which gives the employers the opportunity to launch a counter-offensive, which often includes the threatening of jobs of the workers and so on. It is not unusual for two-thirds of employees to sign cards and then for the union to lose an election. Thus, in precisely the same situation, workers end up with representation in Canada and without it in the U.S.

"The strategy is to develop a counter-hegemony."

The Canadian experience has two important lessons for socialists and progressives in the United States. First, the degree of union organization can be changed by conscious political activity and organizing efforts. Second, it is important to have a disciplined left-wing political party. All American socialists are familiar with the various explanations for the absence of a labor party in the United States. Seymour Martin Lipset and others have argued that the single-member district, plurality (first past the post rather than the majority) elections, and a presidential system with a presidentially appointed cabinet together create massive pressure for a two-party system. The presidential cabinet system also creates no incentive for the development of disciplined parties. In parliamentary systems, the majority party's ability in parliament to maintain its governmental position depends on its ability to count on the votes of all its members of parlia-

ment in any key vote. Thus, it must ensure that all of its candidates are committed to its program. No such pressure exists in the United States. Political parties in the United States are hardly political parties at all in the Canadian and European sense.

As the example of the NDP clearly demonstrates, the problem for the American left is that it needs a political organization to help in building counter-hegemony, that is, the role in ideological and political education that social democratic parties perform in other capitalist democracies.

In an article published in the *Nation* in 1983 (July 23-30), Peter Drier, John Atlas, and I argued that there was one other alternative, which we labelled "a Party-within-a-Party." Briefly, we contended that the democratic left should attempt to build a political organization which would be for all intents and purposes a political party, but would run candidates in Democratic primaries rather than general elections. We argued that organized labor and the Citizens Action movement were the most logical candidates for initiation of a national progressive coalition that would form the basis for a new political organization. Without underestimating the tremendous political obstacles in the path to success of such an effort, I still think that this is the best alternative.

To a large extent, this theory of socialist transition and political analysis of the current American political situation argue that DSA should continue doing what it has always been doing: labor support, coalition building, working for progressive Democrats in elections, and educational activity. Nevertheless, three specific points that arise out of my analysis are worth underlying.

First, the underlying power balance in American society and the current state of the international economy make it very difficult for a candidate to run a national campaign and win on the social democratic reform program of aggressive welfare state expansion. The kinds of national legislation that DSA and its allies on the progressive left should be pressing for are those that promote "empowerment" of the people, that change the balance of power in society. The experience of our Canadian sister organization argues that prime among these should be labor law reform. Another obvious choice is the laws governing voter registration. The legislative struggle can be complemented with activity in organizing campaigns and voter registration drives.

Continued on page 14

Shaping Social Democracy

by Joanne Barkan

Wearing a bright yellow pullover, slacks, and sneakers, Ingvar Carlsson, Prime Minister of Sweden, leapt up to the podium and, for the third time that afternoon, outlined the accomplishments and immediate goals of the Social Democratic Labor party (SAP). It was one week before the September 18 elections, and he was pushing the party's message at a series of outdoor rallies near Stockholm.

During the twentieth century, he repeated, the Social Democratic movement had achieved its first three historic goals — universal suffrage, full employment, and social welfare. And now, he announced, the fourth great task would be to rehabilitate and protect the environment.

Carlsson's overview made sense, and yet anyone familiar with the history of Swedish social democracy would have noticed a shift in rhetoric. His SAP predecessors often described the stages of the project in this way: political democracy, social democracy, and finally economic democracy. In the 1970s, that ambiguous term, economic democracy, came to mean — at least in part — a change of property relations in the direction of greater socialization.

Did Ingvar Carlsson's campaign rhetoric indicate that the leadership of the SAP had completely revamped its project? Sweden-watchers claim the party has retreated from the more radical politics of the 1970s. Yet it may be more precise to say that, *as always*, the Social Democrats have adjusted the shape of their project in response to the immediate context.

Political trends, changes in the international economic scene, and events on the domestic front all influence the "look" of Swedish social democracy in a given period. And as the contours shift, the issue of socialization — traditional litmus test for the left worldwide — occasionally resurfaces.

From the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, for example, the political current in Sweden flowed to the left, just as it did in most other Western European countries. Equality and solidarity were more acceptable words than profit and private enterprise. Supported by this climate, the trade union movement promoted a plan of collective profit-sharing to gradually shift the ownership of most Swedish industries from private hands to wage earners and their unions.

So began the long struggle — both within the Social Democratic movement and between right and left political forces — over the Meidner Plan (in later incarnations, the "wage-earner funds"). The SAP leadership never liked the proposal and had no desire to push for socialization; support within the SAP electorate was lukewarm; but trade unionists refused to abandon the idea.

"What then is this Swedish Model?"

Before the controversy was resolved, the political winds shifted. By the late 1970s, the SAP was swimming against an ideological current set in motion by the "Blue Wave." (The color of the most conservative party is dark blue.) The Swedish right made privatization, the free market, entrepreneurship, and deregulation key terms in the political debate. This was hardly the climate in which the socialization of ownership could win popular support. By the time Parliament approved the wage-earner funds in 1983, they had become relatively small funds channeling surplus into investment on the stock market.

Last September when Ingvar Carlsson described the environment as the fourth historic task of the movement, the SAP was making another adjustment to the political context. With the economy booming and unemployment below 2 percent, the election campaign proved the dictum that "non-material" demands come to the fore when material needs are satisfied. The environment took center stage. Not only was a dynamic Green par-

ty making a strong bid for representation in Parliament, but every Swede was watching tv reports on dead seals in the Baltic, and the government had been blamed for a lax attitude toward chemical pollution. The party had to respond to a legitimate concern. When the ballots were counted, the SAP retained control of the government — although its share of the vote had dipped by 1 percent.

But if the political and economic context continuously reshapes the contours of the project in Sweden, what makes up the solid core?

Most Social Democratic activists respond that values define the socialist project — democracy, equality, freedom, social justice, solidarity. These values function as concrete goals. Sometimes they list liberty, equality, and fraternity, emphasizing the Swedish movement's fulfillment of the ideals of the French Revolution. But ownership of the means of production is not central. For many, ownership is simply a means to an end, and history has shown that it's not necessarily the best means. Socialists make a serious mistake, they insist, when ownership becomes an end in itself.

Some left-wing SAP activists speculate that socialization — perhaps through democratic management of the huge pension funds — might eventually be necessary in order to exercise sufficient control over the economy. But they, too, tend to put values at the center of the project and see socialization as a tool — a tool that won't be used in the foreseeable future.

For Swedish socialists to the left of the SAP, values just aren't enough. In the end, something must differentiate capitalism from socialism, and they draw the line at property relations. When asked to state the fundamental difference between the Social Democrats and the VPK (Sweden's small eurocommunist party), the National Secretary of the VPK replies simply, "They aren't socialists."

Many SAP members insist otherwise, but no one — on the left or right — argues that Sweden is a socialist country. What, then, is this "Swedish model" that the Social Democrats have been con-

structuring for fifty years? Any American radical can blurt out the answer in less time than it takes to read the words: a capitalist economy with a large welfare state; tax at a high rate and provide social services.

But the standard description ignores the most striking features of the Swedish system. A better sketch would go something like this: A solidaristic wage policy (centralized bargaining to achieve equal pay for equal work nationwide) forces unproductive enterprises to shape up or go under because they can't pay low wages. This raises the efficiency of the entire economy. Strong tax incentives channel profits into reinvestment, boosting productivity and creating jobs. Labor market policy includes a vast program of job placement, training, interim work in the

"Where does the project go from here?"

public sector, vocational counseling, grants for worker relocation, education grants, subsidies to companies to speed up hiring when expansion is anticipated, and sheltered employment for the disabled.

But that's just the beginning. Since the transition to new jobs is eased, the trade unions can cooperate in industrial rationalization, once again increasing overall efficiency and growth. Surplus from a dynamic economy supports a vast system of universal, social welfare programs. Progressive tax policies reduce income inequalities, and this in turn keeps the market from listing too heavily toward luxury goods. The government oversees management of the immense pension funds, thereby exercising some control over investment and capital formation.

National legislation prevents arbitrary firings, allows workers to halt production if they find unsafe conditions, guarantees union representation on the boards of directors of companies with more than twenty-five employees, and obliges employers to negotiate with local unions before implementing any major changes.

This isn't exactly raw capitalism. About 85 percent of industry is privately owned, but control over the economy has

been partially socialized. When speculating on the future of their project, most Social Democratic strategists see no obvious advantage to eliminating private ownership. No one is sure that it would improve life on a daily basis. Many fear that it would stifle the dynamism of the system — a heretical but nagging notion for socialists.

So where does the project go from here? Some SAP theoreticians and trade-union economists believe that "quality of work" should be the next major undertaking (along with the environment). Their reasoning, ironically, takes off from data showing that job satisfaction has little to do with who owns the enterprise. Lower-level workers in Sweden's public sector feel just as dissatisfied as lower-level workers in the private sector. The problem is to devise policies to increase autonomy and variety in the "post-Fordist" economy. Gone are the days when legislating slower assembly-line rhythms will suddenly improve conditions for most workers.

Tackling the quality of work will be an immense undertaking. But, like full employment and social welfare, this is the kind of campaign that the Swedish movement seems to thrive on. Meanwhile the existing system needs constant readjustment. There's a clamor for decentralization and more choice in social services; the health care system has developed bottle-necks and inefficiencies; employers are aggressively trying to undermine the solidaristic wage policy; and the SAP needs to refurbish an image tarnished by government scandals and the unresolved trauma of the Olof Palme murder.

Other questions about the future of the project come to mind. Will racism grow as the immigrant population increases? How can the movement counter the political apathy revealed by low voter turnout in 1988? Will the Social Democrats be able to maintain their labor market policy and control over the economy after West European integration in 1992?

The Swedish model is neither perfect, nor invulnerable, and no one calls it socialist. But every evaluation raises a final question: Has any society since the industrial revolution done better by its citizens? ●

Joanne Barkan, a member of the National Executive Committee of DSA, spent the month of September in Sweden. Her research was made possible by a grant from the Bicentennial Swedish-American Exchange Fund.

Transition

Continued from page 13

Second, to the extent that the democratic left presses a social policy agenda, it ought to focus on universal programs such as national health care and pensions. Not only is there support for these policies in the public, but these universal programs have also been the ones that have shown themselves to be the most resistant to roll-back in the attacks on the welfare state carried on by Reagan and Thatcher. That is all the more impressive given the fact that they were by far the most expensive programs. The means-tested programs which benefit only the poor were the ones that met the ax. Paradoxically, an expansive welfare state built on universal programs is more resistant to attack than a cheap one built on means-tested programs. The obvious explanation is that the universal programs benefit everyone, including the all-important swing voter who decides which government will be in power. Thus, we must counsel our liberal allies against reversion to the means-tested programs of the sixties.

Third, we need to think deeply about how our coalition building work can help progressive organizations move toward the formation of a "party-within-a-party." DSA could not possibly initiate such a project itself. I would envision the role of DSA in a political formation as being similar to that of the Fabian League or the Marxist Social Federation in the development of the British Labour party, that is, an ideological center in the broader movement. The initiation of the kind of organization I have in mind would have to come from organized labor as it did in Britain or Canada or some broad-based political movement. The Jackson campaign occupies this political space now. The real question in the case of that campaign is whether it has enough organizational substance independent of the candidacy of one individual that it could form the basis for a permanent political organization.

To paraphrase Marx, people make their own history, but not under conditions they themselves choose. Though socialists in America certainly would not have chosen current conditions to build a movement, they present us with a difficult road, not a dead end. ●

John Stephens is associate professor of political science and sociology at Northwestern University. He is the author of The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism and a member of DSA.

Socialist Feminism: Impact, Strategy, and Vision

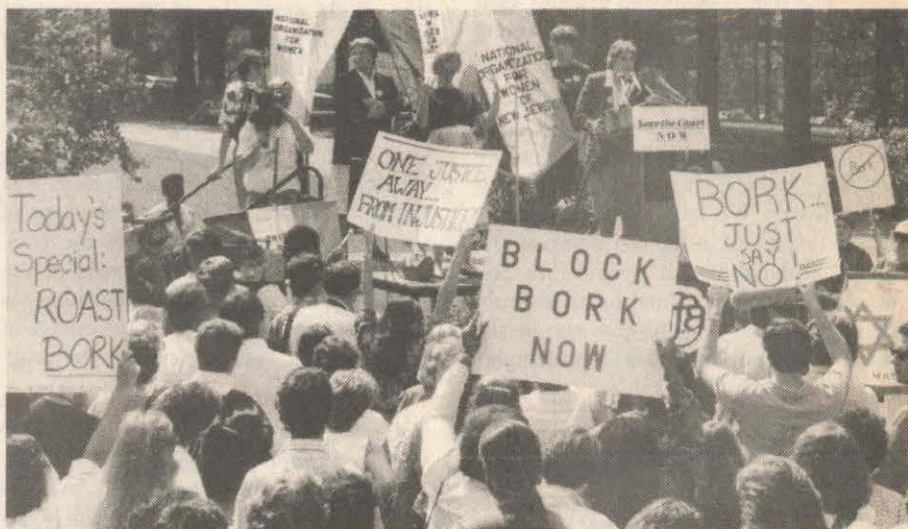
by Barbara Ehrenreich

(This article is the first in a series of articles on socialist feminism, that will run consecutively in the next several issues of *Democratic Left*. The series was inspired by the socialist feminist retreat held in Oberlin, Ohio in June, 1988.)

Once defined a socialist feminist as someone who goes to twice as many meetings. We may have consolidated our meetings a bit since the 1970s, but something of the split personality remains. To be a socialist feminist, you have to be willing to be a socialist when you're among plain, unmodified feminists, and to be a feminist when you're among similar sorts of socialists. Somewhere between these two identities lies a key insight — a leap beyond both socialism and feminism — that has slipped out of sight and is in urgent need of revival.

Defining that synthesis has not been easy, since socialist feminism has been, for most of its brief existence on the contemporary American scene, a fiercely embattled concept. I first came across the term in 1971, in a pamphlet from the then-thriving Chicago Women's Liberation Union. The idea was to carve out some sort of ideological space for feminists who were also women of the left.

In the scheme of the seventies, there were three types of feminists: bourgeois feminists, who sought assimilation into the mainstream of capitalist society; cultural feminists, who wanted to create an entirely new social order, predicated on "women's values," which in its separatist incarnations, excluded men altogether; and then us, the socialist feminists. We weren't bourgeois feminists because we couldn't see assimilating into an oppressive and hierarchial social order. We weren't cultural feminists because we believed the diversity of women precluded any certainty about "women's values," and because we saw men, at least potentially, as comrades in the



Rich Reinhard/Impact Visuals

struggle. What we were in a more positive sense we would find out through the time-honored methods of discussion, action, and study.

Well, for the most part, we never really got the chance. Cultural feminists — who still tend to see the left as the most intransigently male-dominated outpost of Western civilization — attacked us for consorting with the "enemy." Far worse, though, were the attacks from the left. Between 1975 and 1977, Marxist-Leninist groups targeted socialist feminist unions for infiltration and destruction. They denounced socialist feminism for being a "petty bourgeois" aberration, and accused its adherents of racism and anti-working-class attitudes for even *thinking* that women, as women, have some business together.

Why didn't the Marxist-Leninists attack bourgeois feminism instead? Probably for the simple reason that most bourgeois feminists wouldn't have paid much attention to them. But we fledgling socialist feminists were more insecure. Even quite democratic leftists demanded to know what was "our theory." (They, after all, had *Das Kapital* and thousands of other tomes.) They insisted that socialist feminism was oxymoronic: you couldn't have a class perspective and a feminist perspective since women were

scattered among all classes, etc., etc. We were made to feel that socialist feminism was an illegitimate hybrid, something we had concocted to justify our own political ambivalence.

I mention these ancient charges because they did succeed in provoking some very serious socialist-feminist thinking. In England, socialist-feminist historian Barbara Taylor (author of *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*) showed that socialist feminism was the original form of both socialism and feminism. Only with the arrival of Marx's "scientific socialism," which isolated class as the cutting edge of social change, had feminism been pushed out of the revolutionary scheme. But for pre-Marxist utopian socialists like Frances Wright, a radical leader in early nineteenth century America, things had been simpler and clearer: she was an advocate for women's rights, for abolition and an end to racism, and for the early "workingmen's movement," because all those things needed to be done, and because her vision of social change included an end to all forms of human oppression — even if the "theory" wasn't ready yet.

Both here and abroad, socialist feminists debated the theoretical in-

Continued on page 16

Zamora

Continued from page 7

DH: That means participating in the elections in March, does it not? Isn't there the argument that if you participate in the elections knowing that the military still has control no matter what happens, that all you are doing is giving legitimacy to something that is simply an illusion? That no election is going to solve the problems of the oppression of the Salvadoran people?

RZ: We participate in the elections knowing that an election by itself if not going to solve the problems of El Salvador. And we are telling the Salvadoran people that quite clearly. We have already had five national elections in the last seven years, and the problems now are even worse than before. An election will not solve the problems, but an electoral process can be the vehicle for developing positive and impor-

tant objectives for the Salvadoran people. Why? What is that objective? We have said to the Salvadoran people, we are in the elections and we are going to fight in the elections because we want to mobilize people around the objective of a political solution to the war.

Some people will say, okay, but you are giving legitimacy to the system. But you must put the whole thing in perspective. Right now, the counterinsurgency project is in such a state of crisis that the electoral system—that has in the past been a tool for the counterinsurgency project—now is destabilizing that very project. The proof of that is the recent March election. The result of that election was that the triumph of the extreme right of the party was destabilizing for the U.S. policy in El Salvador. The crisis of the project means that their own instruments are no longer useful for the maintenance of that project. There is room for the prog-

ressive causes to use those instruments to develop an alternative solution to the crisis.

DH: We have a U.S. election coming up, and tragically whatever happens in the U.S. will have an almost immediate impact on El Salvador. What do you think the response of the U.S. is going to be no matter who is elected in the U.S.?

RZ: The U.S. policy in Central America is going to be reviewed regardless of who wins the election. It is a policy that is clearly not producing results, it is only producing problems. Look at the entire region of Central America. After eight years of Reagan, instead of having stability, we have more instability than when Reagan first began. Bush or Dukakis will have to review that policy. Will Bush continue with Reagan's policies? It is hard to predict. I have heard that the policies of Dukakis are open to a political settlement in Central America. ●

Socialist Feminism

Continued from page 15

tersections of race, class, and gender oppression. One result — and I think it's time it was claimed for socialist feminism — has been a tremendous flowering of feminist scholarship that directly addresses issues of race, class, and sexual preference, and deepens our understanding of the connecting links. I'm thinking of the work of women (most of whom still go by the label of "socialist feminist") such as Linda Gordon, Gerda Lerner, Jacqueline Jones, Heidi Hartmann, Christine Stansell, Ann Ferguson, and many others.

For the most part, though, American socialist feminists simply went to work — like Frances Wright — on what needed to be done. Women who became socialist feminists in the Seventies fanned out into academia, trade unions, mainstream feminist organizations, the peace movement, and dozens of public interest groups. Now we are even beginning to see a second generation of young women who may not be as proprietary about the label socialist feminist as we once were, but are as determined as ever to work for change in a coherent and multi-issue way.

The effects of this socialist feminist diaspora are striking, and deserve more careful assessment than I have space for here. For one thing, socialist feminists have played a major role in bringing greater feminist consciousness to the un-

ions and other progressive enterprises. Not so long ago, many in the women's movement dismissed unions as male-dominated institutions. Unions are still excessively male-dominated, but they have become reliable allies and often leading actors in the struggles for pay equity, childcare, and other key issues on the feminist agenda. That is a change, and an important one.

On the other side of the fence, socialist feminists have played a part in bringing a more multi-issue perspective to mainstream women's organizations. NOW has shown a growing concern for the problems of poor women and women of color. The National Abortion Rights Action League has moved from a narrow focus on abortion to a broader concern with reproductive rights (an old socialist-feminist concept), which include the right to the food, health care, etc., necessary to raise a healthy child. Other women's organizations, from the League of Women Voters to the American Association of University Women, joined the broad women's effort to stop Reagan's attacks on social programs vital to poor women.

Today the feminist typology of the seventies is no longer very clearcut or useful. There are still divisions among feminists on many issues, but the old ironclad distinction between bourgeois and socialist feminists has grown a little fuzzy. Perhaps in a more liberal political environment we would have the luxury of

fighting over some of the old distinctions, but eight years of reaction have thrown most of us onto common ground.

Yet, in many ways, the promise of socialist feminism remains unfulfilled, perhaps especially on the left. We had hoped to be more than feminists among socialists, bringing an awareness of women and women's issues to our movements and organizations. We had hoped to usher in a new kind of left politics: one which would not fear to venture into the new political terrain opened up by feminism — from sexuality and family life to all the subtle forms of domination arising from differences in gender, race, class, and age; one which would search for the deep connections between individual and societal levels of experience — sexual violence and militarism, individual loneliness and capitalism; one which would be "prefigurative" in spirit and practice, and attempt to create among ourselves the kinds of egalitarian and supportive relationships that we hope will one day be the basis of human society.

With our highly successful socialist-feminist retreat last summer, DSA began to create the organizational space for a revival of socialist-feminist theory, discussion, and action. We need to build on that beginning. ●

Barbara Ehrenreich is the co-chair of DSA and author of several books, her most latest being Remaking Love: The Feminization of Sex.