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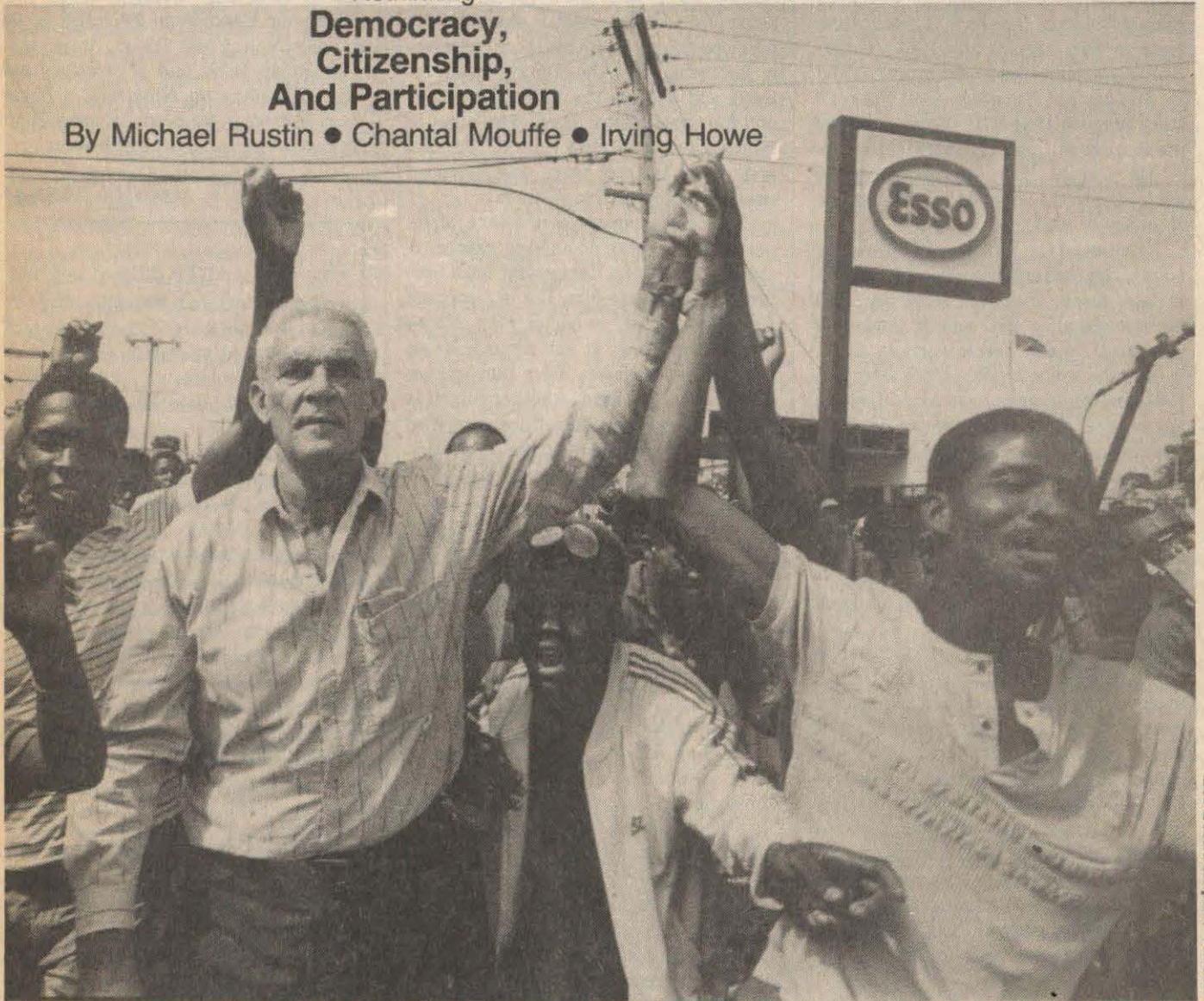
DEMOCRATIC Left

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Rethinking
**Democracy,
Citizenship,
And Participation**

By Michael Rustin • Chantal Mouffe • Irving Howe



Jamaica's Michael Manley on election day.

Les Stone/Impact Visuals

Plus: Mexico • Jamaica • Women Workers

EDITORIAL

BURNING ISSUE? WELL...YES

Winter draws to a close; it's Academy Award season once again. Glancing down the endless list of Oscar categories, we see there's no golden statuette for Most Controversial Film of the year. Too bad. It would have been so easy to pick the 1988 winner. Nothing came close to the storm raised by *Mississippi Burning*, Alan Parker's story about a 1964 FBI investigation of the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi. The controversy even made it onto the cover of *Time* magazine (January 9, 1989).

Critics of the film argued a series of points: the civil rights movement is completely absent from the story as is all black leadership; FBI agents (including one black) become heroic warriors when, in fact, the agency had no black agents in 1964 and would have been more likely to spy on civil rights workers and drag its feet during such an investigation; the film ends up endorsing lawlessness and violence, thereby betraying the ideals of the movement; and director Parker segregates blacks out of their own story by making the two protagonists white.

The critics have it right on all these points.

In response, Parker asserted that he made necessary concessions to the market; after all, there are things you simply must do if you want to reach a mass audience. This is a pretty miserable excuse and one that most proponents of the film don't endorse. Instead they praise *Mississippi Burning* for painting a powerful and largely accurate picture of conditions for blacks in the south twenty five-years ago; communicating that information was positive, they say, given that most Americans know *nothing* about it.

On this point, supporters of the film have it right. We all know people who have remarked that, although they lived through the period, they had no idea what it was really like "down there" until they saw the movie; and others, younger, say with some hurt as well as surprise

that they were never taught anything about it.

This sense of lost history, which *Mississippi Burning* sears into the consciousness of many viewers, lies at the heart of the controversy. It explains why passions run high both for those (relatively few) who know the civil rights movement and deplore the film's distortions and for those (many more) who came to realize their ignorance through the film and, in an indirect way, now defend a need to reappropriate history.

Seeing a populace unaware of its past and therefore doomed to misunderstand the present, thoughtful folks protest an inadequate film. But in searching for a malefactor, it makes no sense to point fingers only at one director or an industry that pushes most film-makers down the wrong road. Another culprit is the set of economic and political priorities that systematically relegates education — and with it, the teaching of history — to the bottom of the pile.

Americans are notoriously unschooled in history or superficially informed. And if history is a potential source of power, underfunded public education disarms society's least privileged members most completely. But all this needn't be so. It was never written in stone that Americans should remain ignorant of their history and consequently have no history. A memory span of three weeks isn't an immutable part of the national character.

Would a shift in priorities that funneled truly adequate resources into education necessarily improve the teaching of history? It probably would because such a radical shift implies recognition that a democracy survives only if its citizens are *fully* educated. It implies

the will to empower citizens with knowledge of the ambiguities, struggles, and mistakes of the past.

With George Bush in the White House, no one expects that shift in priorities. Even a discussion of the substance of democratic education is a long way off. But while the state shirks its responsibilities, the private sector has inadvertently stirred up a little thinking. A full-page debate on *Mississippi Burning* in the Sunday *New York Times*, interviews with Julian Bond and *Mississippi* star Gene Hackman on *Nightline*, a cover-story in *Time* — for a brief moment, light flickers across one piece of history.

— by JOANNE BARKAN

ARTICLES

Towards Socialist Pluralism

by Joseph Schwartz page 3

The Social in Socialism

by Michael Rustin page 4

Towards a Radical Democratic Citizenship

by Chantal Mouffe page 6

Participatory Democracy:

A Socialist Perspective

by Irving Howe page 8

A Return to Power in Jamaica

by Evelyn Huber Stephens

And John Stephens page 15

Women, Work, and Unions:

A Profile of the ILGWU

David Bensman Interviews

Susan Cowell page 17

Mexico: Prospects for Change

by Mike Tangeman page 19

DEPARTMENTS

Editorial page 2

DSAAction page 11

On The Left page 12

CLASSIFIEDS page 14

Review page 22

Jimmie Higgins page 24

JOB OPENING

DSA is looking for a Youth Organizer to Recruit, Mobilize, and Educate Student and Youth Activists. For more information, see the classified section in this issue of *Democratic Left*.

Towards Socialist Pluralism

by Joseph Schwartz

The crisis of liberalism and socialism confronts the democratic left with the task of constructing a renewed public philosophy of democratic radicalism. Liberalism no longer resonates as a compelling popular argument for government intervention on behalf of the common good; rather, it is associated with a bureaucratic welfare state which disproportionately benefits the "undeserving." Socialism in the public mind stands not for human emancipation but for economic inefficiency and political repression. The individual entrepreneur, braving the test of the "free market," is a cultural hero of mythical proportion, despite the growing concentration of corporate wealth and government intervention in favor of capital against labor. Not only is the unrestrained market popularly seen as an engine of economic growth, but many white workers identify conservatives as the bearers of the moral values of family, security, and community.

In the three essays that follow, Michael Rustin, Chantal Mouffe, and Irving Howe examine the impasse of liberal and socialist vision, a theme that will be further explored at this year's Socialist Scholars Conference. Mouffe and Rustin locate the crisis in the atomized social life of highly mobile and individualist liberal societies. They imply that traditional (often patriarchal or racist) conceptions of community gain appeal when liberals inordinately focus on individual legal rights against the state, while failing to offer a substantive moral vision of how we ought to live our lives in common.

Harsher "communitarian" critics of liberalism, such as *Dissent* and *Telos* commentator Fred Siegel, contend that liberalism's morally "neutral" procedures of justice prevent it from developing a moral view of individual behavior and of the values just communities should cherish. Rustin contends that social democracy has fared no better than liberalism at promoting a conception of community. Social democracy's inordinate focus on the mate-

rial security provided by the welfare state has diluted its historic vision of solidarity in the workplace.

In dealing with these issues, Mouffe and Rustin pose too stark a theoretical dichotomy between liberalism (or social democracy) and "community." Mouffe underestimates the importance of liberal theories of rights to her "communitarian" theory of pluralism, while Rustin undervalues the role of the struggle for economic or "social" rights in generating social solidarity. Undoubtedly, however, the excessive individualism and "economism" of liberalism and social democracy has rendered it vulnerable to conservative efforts to seize the moral high ground in popular discourse about community and values.

To combat the excessive individualism of liberalism, Mouffe and Rustin advocate a renewal of a "participatory pluralist" politics in which public life aids diverse communities to develop the capacities of their members. Only a social life of "shared commitments" can adequately respond to the political alienation and demobilization which pervade contemporary democratic cultures. Rustin is bold enough to suggest that individual freedom is not the only moral values for socialists and should not be maximized at all cost. The social commitments involved in childrearing and kinship or in the democratic structuring of the workplace or neighborhood limits our individual freedom. Freedom, he asserts, may be restricted through democratically structured social relationships which both enrich our lives and impose obligations upon us.

But, how do we know if those community obligations are constructed by the free choice of their members? One of the major flaws of contemporary communitarian theorists is that while they continually assert the need for common values and institutions, they never advance criteria for judging whether life in a given community is compatible with democratic values. Their hostility to "liberal" theories of individual rights prevents them from seeing the centrality of rights to any democratically structured state. For example, should democratic communitarians support the right of an ethnically bonded com-

munity to defend its "way of life" through the exclusion of African-Americans from residence, or should they support state intervention to ban discrimination? Communitarians often appeal to traditional community values as if such values were inherently reasonable. But if traditions at times "root" people, they can also shackle them. To avoid a conventionalist defense of any self-defined communities, "pluralist" communitarians must develop a theory of rights which the diverse communities of a complex, industrial society cannot violate.

Irving Howe affirms the need for a more participatory political culture, but astutely warns that enthusiasm for community can render its members insensitive to the rights of dissenters and abstainers. The spirit of sorority and fraternity is rarely kind toward those who do not share in particular communal enthusiasms. Howe counsels us to combine liberalism's sensitivity to individual rights with socialism historic attachment to solidarity. He also warns that the decline of public forms of political debate in favor of the onslaught of the thirty second sound-bite threatens to rob our political life of any democratic substance. While television bashing is completely justifiable, given its ensconced role in our culture, the left needs to develop concrete reform proposal for elevating the level of political discourse on television. A crucial insight of Howe's piece is that political conflict will continue under socialism. Only a combination of representative and direct democratic institutions will facilitate the democratic determination of the complex social roles inherent to any postindustrial society.

In line with Howe's focus on the centrality of individual rights to radical democracy, Mouffe rejects the "premodern" view of one universal conception of the good life in favor of diverse conceptions of community and distinct moral values. The commitment that Mouffe believes should unite all citizens is the shared political ends of the democratic state. Mouffe describes these values as "freedom and equality for all." But the central end of a democratic society may well be the shared belief in the constitutional and political procedures by

Continued on page 14

The Social in Socialism

by Michael Rustin

In England, the main response of socialists to the rise of the New Right has been, in philosophical terms, a defensive one. The left has had to face up to the apparent success of an ideology of self-enrichment, of programs of state assistance for the private purchase of public assets (such as council houses and nationalized industries), and of the paradoxical deployment of state power to strengthen the rights of individual choice against those of collective decision (for example, in the spheres of trade unionism, local government, and education). This has led socialists to think hard about their own values and assumptions and to question some core beliefs and practices.

Some of this rethinking about planning, public ownership, and the importance of consumption is motivated by considerations of expediency — how to construct an electable program. But it goes deeper than this. *Marxism Today* (the magazine of the eurocommunist-type British Communist Party) has been vehement in its critique of old-style welfarism and state bureaucracy, and positively enthu-

siastic about consumption, style, and identity. A recent hard-hitting Fabian pamphlet, *Socialism, Merit, and Efficiency*, recommends respect for merit and efficiency as necessary socialist virtues. Above all, the debate about market socialism, or in philosophical terms, about the need to reconcile the core socialist value of equality with the liberal value of individual freedom, shows the influence of liberalism and market-theories on current socialist debates.

Liberal Individualism

Coming to terms with liberal individualism and seeking to give the most universal and radical force to its claims is all very well. But a political position that starts from the value of the individual and from the aim of making the satisfaction of (reasonable) individual rights and desires attainable for all is far from a definition of the socialist project. A contrast needs to be drawn between theories that begin with the pre-formed individual and those whose basic building block is a social idea of a human being as constructed through relations with others.

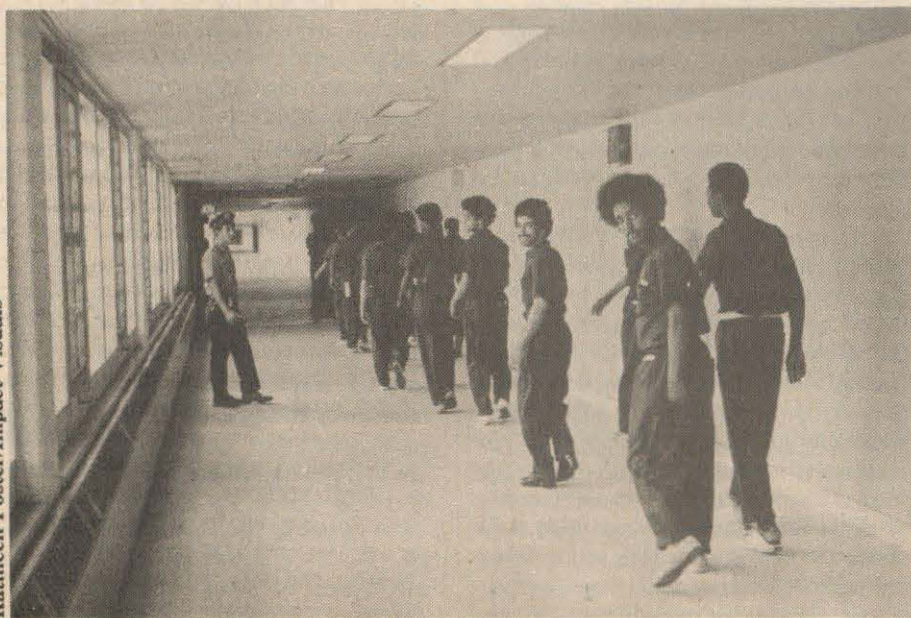
This idea of the "social" root of socialism is absent from the most current attempts to find a workable compromise

with or countervailing force to modern capitalism. The socialist movement was founded in the communitarian experience of the working class and on ideas of the social constitution of humanity such as those of Hegel, Marx, and various Christian socialists. If no equivalent social density can be retained or renewed in modern socialist thought and practice, socialism as a tradition will wither and die, leaving only hard and soft variants of individualist liberalism to compete with each other.

Organicism, as a philosophical tradition, has been monopolized for the most part in recent years by traditionalist conservatives. It is conservatives who tend to celebrate the links between generations, the importance of kinship ties, the historical continuity of institutions, and a sense of place. They argue these positions against what they see as an insatiable and restless individualism that celebrates desire, mobility, iconoclasm, and the ceaseless innovations of "the modern." Because many radical individualists stand on the left in politics, and most organicists on the right, socialists often find themselves allied with the former on matters of ethics and policies. Yet from a philosophical point of view, the socialist position should be quite different from both.

Philosophical Idealism

In recent years, a number of philosophers and political theorists such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel, and Michael Walzer have sought to develop a critique of liberal individualism from positions that might be characterized as organicism or philosophical idealism of the left. Taylor has argued that what is missing from liberalism is the idea of a moral discourse that enables rational deliberation about human ends to take place. Walzer had developed the idea that different human activities are framed by distinct systems of meaning and value and are violated in their specific essences when overbidden by such one-dimensional values as the ends of profit or reasons of state or party. MacIntyre has argued recently that the ideas of justice and human good are not abstract and universal but are always located in a particu-



Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals

Rustin discusses imprisonment as a form of social injustice.

lar tradition that selects among possible desires and choices and makes rational debate possible.

Socialists now need to develop more descriptive and substantive versions of these philosophical ideas of the social (though Walzer, for one, tries to do this through his particularistic kind of philosophical writing). This social argument needs to be made in terms of institutions and practices, and not merely through confronting alternative philosophical traditions. Particularly relevant to this task are the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, whose constituting definitions are fundamentally "social," in contrast to the atomistic individualism of classical economics, most psychology, and most political science, which now think of politics as behavior in a special kind of market. Sociology provides ways of descriptively mapping the social bases of individual identity in family relationships, ethnic and religious membership, the values of satisfaction of work or calling, and affiliation to the specific traditions of value in art forms, physical sports, or the sciences.

What we find when we map lives in these ways is the importance of social memberships and boundaries to most people, even those living in atomistic societies. The family member makes a different moral claim on us for friendship, help, or support than members of other families. It is impossible to feel equal obligations towards every other human being if we are to feel any significant obligations at all. Our commitments in the present will be formed by our memory of our experiences in the past. We may wish to follow or avoid the example of parents and teachers when it is our turn to take up roles that they have earlier taken in relation to us. We may wish to honor a calling — whether it takes the form of paid work, like medicine, or unpaid activity like coaching a football team — by which we have been formed, and without whose tradition we could not do what we do.

For Marx, the central social activity and identity came from work, and this emphasis has heavily shaped the socialist tradition. But other spheres of life are formed around values, gathering around them communities and a sense of traditions to be perpetuated and renewed. We need a wider sense of human life than the one found in the workplace, but these

dimensions amount to more than the activities of buying and consuming commodities so dominant in advanced capitalism.

We can do more than descriptively fill out our concept of the social with a richer sense of its texture and density. The social can also be a critical category, a Durkheimian way of contrasting and measuring one way of life against another. Some societies are more dense than others; that is, they have richer cultures, in an anthropological rather than aristocratic or elitist sense. In some societies or parts of societies families may be weak institutions (for example, young and old may be poorly cared for by their close kin). Or ideology of personal self-fulfillment may legitimize merely contractual or limited-liability attitudes to relationships, even with marriage partners. Or, a low value may be placed on work, especially for majorities without economic privilege. Institutions committed to the care or development of others may or may not be organized in ways that respect persons and their social relationships. The management of key life-transitions in a society (childbirth, illness, retirement, school-leaving, death, and bereavement) illuminate what society's relational qualities really are. A commitment to the value of the social implies a preference for institutions and practices that promote continuity and intensity of attachments and relationships, in contrast to more limited, contractual, and impersonal ties.

The Use of Sanctions

Societies with dense social ties — and the moral norms that these generate — will be able to depend on consensus and negotiated agreement to settle most differences. Individuals in such societies will be restrained in their actions by norms they share with others. The sense of identity and the psychological and social security that derive from membership in a community will usually support positive social motivations and inhibit the expression of destructive feelings. In societies that enjoy numerous social bonds, moral sanctions are more prominent and material rewards and coercive sanctions less necessary as modes of control and motivation. Such societies are more restrictive of individual freedom, but they may also offer individuals a richer array of possible identities and goals to choose from. Societies that provide a firmer moral and cultural

containment of individual impulse might be less free, from the point of view of individual rights. But the rights of individuals to express themselves are not the only positive value for socialists.

High levels of violence, addiction, armed policing, rootless mobility, family breakdown, and indifference to avoidable suffering indicate a society grossly defective in its social texture. The most capitalist and individualistic societies — the United States par excellence — display these signs of social unbondedness or negative social bondedness to an exceptional degree. But all modern societies seem to show some deterioration in these respects. We have a developed concept of material rights and or rights against the state, and we deploy these vigorously in criticism of state socialist societies that patently fail woefully on both counts. Yet we have hardly any comparable concept of social right, so that epidemic levels of murder, drug addiction, imprisonment, and homelessness — because they are supposed to derive from the actions of individuals, not from conscious decisions of states — are treated as misfortunes rather than as intolerable forms of social injustice. Political imprisonment and murder are counted as offenses against human rights, while execution for crimes or draconian levels of imprisonment (since they are responses to fearful levels of crime) are deemed to have nothing to do with civil rights at all. It does not seem to be widely interpreted as an abuse of human rights for the largest cause of death of young black men in the United States to be murder. If we had an adequately social concept of human rights, it would be.

Traditionalist conservatives defend a social definition of human life but attach it to a particular set of institutions that are usually hierarchical, patriarchal, and hostile to the changes associated with democracy, equality, and freedom. Liberals attack the claims made on behalf of such institutions as reactionary, arguing usually from the claims of individual rights and aggregated individual interests. Both positions should be rejected as insufficient by socialists.

Commitment to the value of social institutions as bearers of meaning, value, and transmitted skill, need not imply allegiance to the power of the privileged or to the idea that change is undesirable. The

Continued on page 7

Towards a Radical Democratic Citizenship

by Chantal Mouffe

How can the wide array of democratic demands — those of workers, women, blacks, gays and lesbians, the environment, etc. — be articulated as a single radical-democratic identity, without denying their specificity? I am convinced that the notion of citizenship is crucial to such a project, but it needs to be reformulated in a way that goes beyond both the liberal and the civic republican conception.

Liberal Individualism

Liberalism contributed to the formulation of universal citizenship with the argument that all individuals are born free and equal. But it also reduced citizenship to a mere legal status, defining the rights of the individual against the state. The way those rights are exercised is irrelevant as long as their holders don't break the law or interfere with the rights of others. The liberal conception does not encourage us to join with others to pursue common ends and develop common purposes. Social cooperation is viewed only as a means of enhancing our productive capacities and facilitating the attainment of each person's individual prosperity.

Ideas of civic activity, public spiritedness, and political participation in a community of equals are alien to most liberal thinkers. They consider them "pre-modern." This is why communitarian thinkers like Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre argue that liberal individualism is responsible for the increasing lack of social cohesion in democratic societies, and that the rejection of notions like the "common good" and "civic virtue" has destroyed community values.

For the communitarians, the solution lies in the revival of the civic republican view of politics. They emphasize the notion of a public good, independent of individual desires and interests. That tradition has almost disappeared today, but it has a long history going back to Greek and Roman



Tom McKitterick/Impact Visuals

Mouffe asks how the demands of different constituencies can be articulated as a single identity.

thought (though it received its full expression in the Italian republics of the Middle Ages). It has an English pedigree, too, since it was reformulated in England by the seventeenth-century political writer James Harrington, by John Milton in *Oceana*, and by other contemporary republicans. Later it traveled to the New World by way of the neo-Harringtonians and was most influential during the American Revolution.

Republican Tradition

The present debate concerns the possibility and desirability of a return to the civic republican tradition displaced in the nineteenth century by the development of liberalism. Thinkers like Sandel affirm that it is only thanks to its underground existence that Americans have been able to resist the corrosive effects of liberal individualism. The liberals argue that such a conception is incompatible with the pluralism of modern democracy, and that ideas about the common good today can only have totalitarian implications. To preserve the "liberties of the moderns" one must renounce the "liberties of the ancients." Active political participation, we are told,

is incompatible with the modern idea of liberty, which can only be understood in a negative sense as an absence of coercion.

This argument — powerfully restated by Isaiah Berlin in *Two Concepts of Liberty* — is generally used to discredit any attempt to recapture the civic republican vision of politics. But it has been challenged recently by Quentin Skinner, a leading British political theorist, who argues in *The Paradoxes of Political Liberty* that there is no basic incompatibility between the classical republican conception of citizenship and modern democracy. He finds in several forms of republican thought a way of conceiving liberty which, though negative (therefore modern) includes political participation and civic virtue. It is negative because liberty is conceived as the absence of impediments to the realization of our chosen ends. But it asserts that it is only as citizens of a "free state," of a community whose members participate actively in the government and pursue the common good, that such an individual liberty can be guaranteed. To ensure our own liberty we must cultivate civic virtues and devote ourselves to the common good.

Skinner's argument is important for the elaboration of a democratic conception of citizenship because it reconciles individual liberty and political participation. But that does not mean that we should not question some aspects of classical republicanism. For instance, it excludes women and blacks and emphasizes military values, and its views on property are to be rejected. It must also be said that not all its advocates stress the importance of individual liberty. Some, for instance, renounce liberal pluralism in the name of a substantive vision of the common good. This is clearly very dangerous.

The Common Good

It is important to restore a view of politics as the realm where we recognize ourselves as participants in a community. But the demands of the general interests should not be made at the cost of individual liberty. The critique of liberalism must therefore recognize liberalism's central contribution to modernity. The defense of pluralism, the emergence of the individual, the separation of church and state, and the development of civil society are all crucial elements of modern democracy. They require that we distinguish today between the domain of the private and the domain of the public, the realm of morality and the realm of politics. As a consequence, the common good cannot be conceived of in a way that implies the acceptance of one single substantive idea of the good life in all fields of society. It must be understood to refer exclusively to the shared political ends of a democratic political community, i.e., the principles of freedom and equality for all. Citizenship concerns the way those principles are embodied in different institutions and practices, the way the political community is constructed.

Feminist Critique

Democratic citizenship could provide the organizing principle of a new politics of the left, but on condition that it meets the challenge posed by the new movements and provides an answer to the feminist critique. Several feminists (Carole Pate-man, the Australian political writer, pre-eminent among them) have recently argued that even the modern construction of citizenship excludes women. They have shown how the public realm of citizenship was constructed on the very negation of feminine values. Women were confined to

the private sphere because they were seen as lacking the qualities and independence necessary to be responsible citizens. To postulate the generality and universality of the public sphere women had to be excluded. Later on, through bitter struggle, women were finally awarded their rights of citizenship. But the conditions for their full exercise are far from being attained. As long as women are not equal to men in all respects, and don't enjoy the same independence, they cannot be full citizens.

Some feminists also believe that a full incorporation of women into citizenship requires a radical transformation of the public/private distinction. A democratic idea of citizenship must find a way of constructing the public and the private that does not relegate all diversity and plurality to the private. The new social movements all reject the idea of a homogeneous public sphere where universality is conceived as the realm of the general in opposition to the particular. Democratic politics has to make room for difference.

Pluralism

Only a pluralistic conception of citizenship can, therefore, take account of the current proliferation of new political aspirations. An adequate conception of citizenship today should be "postmodern" — if we understand by that the need to acknowledge the particular, the heterogeneous, and the multiple (all that was precluded by the abstract universalism of the Enlightenment with its undifferentiated concept of "man").

Modern citizenship was formulated in a way that played a crucial role in the emergence of modern democracy, but it has become an obstacle to making it wider and more pluralistic. Many of the new rights that are being claimed by women or ethnic minorities are no longer rights that can be universalized. They are the expression of specific needs and should be granted to particular communities. Only a pluralistic conception of citizenship can accommodate the specificity and multiplicity of democratic demands and provide a pole of identification for a wide range of democratic forces. The political community has to be viewed, then, as a diverse collection of communities, as a forum for creating unity without denying specificity.

A pluralistic and democratic conception of the citizen can draw on the liberal as well as the civic republican tradition, but it

also needs to go beyond them. It must address the questions raised by the current phase of the democratic revolution. For that reason, it should become inseparable from the project of a radical and plural democracy, from the extension of the democratic principles of liberty and equality to the widest possible set of social relations. Only then would it provide the vehicle for the creation of a radical democratic hegemony. ●

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Social

Continued from page 5

rights and obligations of kinship (or its surrogates), membership in communities located imaginatively in space and time, attachment to an occupational culture, access to the expressive traditions of music, writing, sport, craft, or natural history — these should be seen as universal goods, no less than material wealth or political liberty.

A socialism adequate to our times would appropriate these aspects of organicist thought and universalize and democratize their implications. The central issue is to see that rich and complex ways of life depend not just on individuals, but on various kinds of community that make human accomplishments — even the everyday accomplishments of parenthood, craftsmanship, and good citizenship — possible.

Dominant traditions of radical thought now attach significant importance to political rights and material well-being. Liberals define a universal sphere of rights that enforced by law, limit the coercive powers of the state and of lesser institutions over individuals. Social democrats usually stress by contrast the material preconditions of freedoms — living standards, education, social security — as "positive freedoms" and preconditions of social life. But while these each define necessary spheres of entitlement, they also lack adequate social and cultural specifications of good societies and good lives. This is the sphere to which socialist theory needs to address itself. ●

Michael Rustin is a professor of sociology at North East London Polytechnic.

Participatory Democracy: A Socialist Perspective

by Irving Howe

The idea of "participatory democracy" became popular during the 1960s, when leaders of the New Left adopted it as a critique of "formal" or representative democracy. In the early 1960s before the New Left became infected with authoritarian Maoist and vulgar-Marxist ideologies, the notion of "participatory democracy" had real value. It focused on the way a political system adhering to the rules and procedures of democracy may nevertheless fall short of the substance and spirit of democracy. By the late 1960s, when the more extremist wing of the New Left began counterposing "participatory" to representative democracy, things became badly blurred. The vision of democracy can be enhanced only if our desire for greater and more authentic participation by large numbers of citizens is indissolubly linked to a system guaranteeing such formal rights as freedom of speech, assembly, press, and so on. Perhaps what we socialists want might be called "participatory democratic pluralism."

The Degradation of Politics

Well, the labels need not worry us very much. These days you don't hear very much about them, anyway. Yet the entirely legitimate concerns behind the notion of "participatory democracy" remain urgent for socialists. In a recent *Dissent*, for example, I wrote about the 1989 presidential election:

"We are living through the degradation of democratic politics. The procedures of democracy remain intact, perhaps even improved, but the substance of democracy (popular participation, serious discussion, structured publics) is visibly shrinking.... Politics has become largely a function of advertising an accomplice or branch of television, and television a power that tilts politics

more and more into the hands of the rich."

When writing these words I wasn't consciously invoking any notion of "participatory democracy;" nevertheless, I was close to its animating spirit.

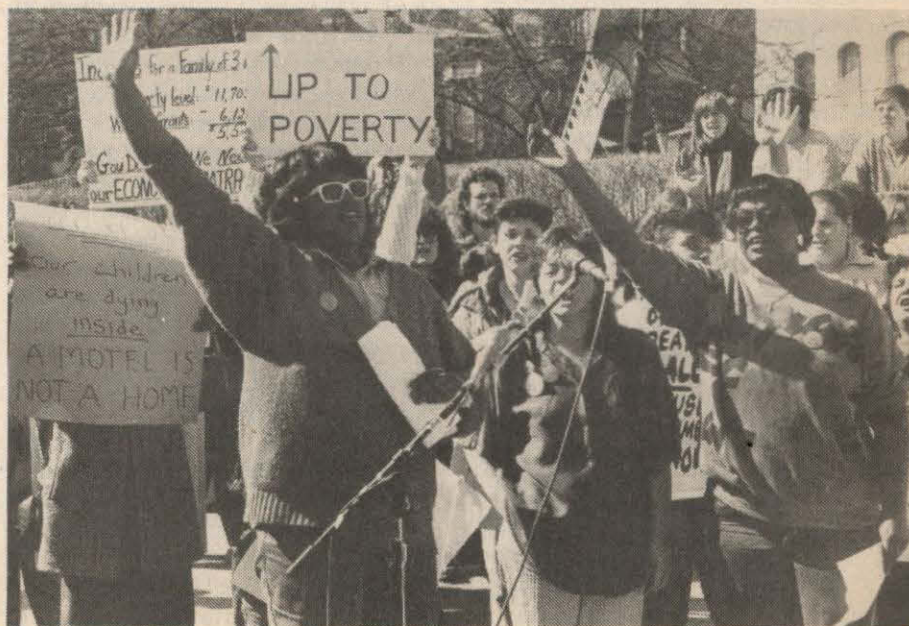
The concern here is a deep one, cutting across the political spectrum. A country where only about 50 percent of the eligible voters participate in national elections; where the level of cynicism regarding politics rises each year; where congressional representatives get reelected almost automatically, with token or no opposition; where public discussion of issues sinks to a level that shames even television; where no candidate feels obligated to offer or seems capable of making a coherent ten-minute statement on a major issue; where the one-liner represents the key to political victory — in such a country democracy becomes eviscerated, shrinking to ritual and vulgarity. No wonder coherent political publics (like, say, the New Deal coalition) break up.

A lot of this is due to the grotesque power that television has acquired in political life. The political meeting, the posi-

tion paper, the sustained speech — all replaced by the sound bite. Some will say this is a cliché; perhaps, but it is also true.

Now it can not be said that there is no popular participation in American politics these recent years. The unions mobilize significant numbers of people during major elections. Single-issue groups (such as pro-choice and anti-choice) get people involved. The women's movement has been able to mobilize large numbers of people recurrently, as has the movement centered around Jesse Jackson. At the other end of the political spectrum, the right has recently been more successful than any other political tendency in rallying people to active involvement. We may not like the ends to which the right brings them, but we must admit that these people have shown an active interest. Perhaps the political tendency least likely to mobilize large numbers of people in America has been the once-powerful liberalism.

Still, I think there is ground for very serious concern with the general loss of interest in political life. Insofar as we hold, as socialists, to an image of democracy in which citizens actively engage with and



Demonstration demanding an increase in benefits.

Marilyn Humphries/Impact Visuals

debate issues, organize themselves into movements and institutions to advance their programs, and take a certain pride in the idea of the *polis* or political community — insofar as we hold to this image, we have to conclude that there are serious problems with American democracy.

False Participation

But a few words of caution also. Participation is not something confined to democratic societies. There was a great deal of mass participation in recent totalitarian societies — rallies, meetings, schools, neighborhood committees. Enthusiasts for the Cuban and Chinese regimes fecklessly praised these things as evidence of popular enthusiasm, not realizing or perhaps caring that such activities were enforced, either through direct compulsion or strong pressures. Such “participation” is a mockery of democratic values, and to find strategies of evasion in totalitarian societies becomes a way of defending one’s personal integrity.

So participation is not good in itself. It must be voluntary, the result of free and conscious choices if it is to satisfy democratic norms. The “participation” of dictatorships, with whipped-up cheering and unanimous outcries is utterly false, and one of the happier consequences of recent

events in Eastern Europe has been that such travesties of participation, although by no means entirely abolished, seem to occur less frequently.

Choosing Not to Participate

Another caution. Though we may believe that a healthy democratic society requires a certain measure of participation by its citizens, we ought not to expect most people to be as intensely involved in politics as some socialists are — or activists of other stripes. Not everyone places the same value on political life, or takes the same pleasure in doing political tasks. It is a precious right of free men and women to choose to participate, if they so wish. They may prefer to play soccer, or garden, or read, or crochet. We must defend their right to make such choices even as we try to persuade them that if they want to live in a vital democratic society they have a duty to take an active interest in its affairs.

How much participation? There is no formula. Oscar Wilde once said that the trouble with socialism would be too many meetings. We don’t yet know whether that will be the case, but we certainly know that it’s a frequent cause for complaint about socialist movements. In all movements and communities there are grada-

tions of interest and participation — this seems to me a “natural” and appropriate state of affairs. People are different; they have a right to be different.

And they have a right to be wrong. The splendid Russian author Isaac Babel, speaking in the early 1930s at a writers congress in the Soviet Union, once referred, with a glance at the Stalinist commissars pressing the “party line,” to the writer’s “right to write badly.” That’s a precious value. If we want to persuade people to believe what we think is right, then we must defend their right to believe what we think is wrong.

Today in America, of course, a central problem is the large-scale indifference, or resignation and cynicism regarding politics. We socialists believe that a revival of serious political life requires renewed participation, just as renewed participation depends, in part at least, on the advancement of ideas and programs speaking to the interests of large numbers of people. There is only one democratic path toward this goal, and that is persuasion. ●

Irving Howe, longtime member of DSA, is the editor of Dissent magazine and the author of many books on the history of left politics in the U.S. and literary criticism.

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DSACTION

REPORTS

• The annual DSA Mid-Atlantic Retreat is scheduled for June 23-25 at the Claggett Center in Maryland. Large sessions and small workshops on a variety of topics. Registration runs from \$20 to \$78 depending on length of stay and choice of accommodations. Swimming, tennis, and rolling hills. For more information, write to P.O. Box 33345, Washington, DC 20003 (202) 483-3299.

• A working meeting of DSA's Commission on Religion and Socialism has been scheduled for June 2, 3 and 4, 1989 at Missionhurst-CICM Mission Center in Arlington, Virginia. People committed to bringing new life and purpose to the Commission are invited to attend. To register, contact the Commission at P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

• **Save the Date!** Join DSAers from across the country for the third almost annual national leadership retreat over the July 4th weekend. Panels and workshops on such topics as equity and the welfare state; the crisis of international socialism; questions of agency; labor organizing; recruiting for DSA; and much, much more. Tennis, hiking, and volleyball, as well as lots of time for socialist socializing. For more information, contact Sherri Levine at the DSA office.

• A **California Leadership Conference** is scheduled for April 28-30 in Los Angeles. Conference topics include building DSA Locals; socialist-feminism; the emerging Latino majority; and organizing a DSA statewide network. Registration ranges from \$35 to \$75 depending on accommodations. For more information contact DSA State Conference, Box 20, 1102 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale, CA 91202. Attend the conference and find out what you can do to help DSA flourish across California!

• **March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives.** Join DSAers from across the country for this April 9, Washington, DC march to protect abortion and pass the ERA. People will begin to assemble at 10:00 a.m., march down Pennsylvania Avenue, and rally on the steps of the Capitol. Contact the DSA

office to see where our contingent will be located.

RESOURCES

• The Winter issue of *Religious Socialism*, the newsletter of the Religion and Socialism Commission of DSA, is now available. Articles by Paul Buhle, Connie Benson, and John Cort and book reviews by Brian D'Agastino and Curt Sanders. To subscribe, send \$5 for 4 issues to *Religious Socialism*, P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17011.

• The current issue of **Not Far Enough**, the newsletter of DSA's Feminist Commission, highlights reproductive freedom and the recent threats to abortion rights. An annual subscription is only \$10. Make checks out and send to the DSA Feminist Commission, 15 Dutch Street, #500, New York, NY 10038.

• **Well Red**, the quarterly "pop and politics" journal of Red Wedge, is available through the DSA Youth Section for only \$3.00/issue. Volume 8 includes the first in what will be a regular column by **Billy Bragg**, in addition to environmental issues, music updates, and much more. Get your issue today!

• The winter issue of *Our Struggle*, the newsletter of the Latino, Afro-American, and Anti-Racism Commissions of DSA, is now available. Articles on such topics as El Salvador, the Rainbow Coalition, the Latino vote and the 1988 elections, and work in the Democratic party. To join any of the Commissions, send \$10/Commission to DSA, Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816.

• The Labor Heritage Foundation announces the release of "Carry it On," a record album of special value to unionists and socialists. This two-record set of songs features the voices of Peter Seeger, Si Kahn, and Jane Sapp telling the story of working men and women in America. Albums are available at \$12.98 from Flying Fish records, 1304 West Schubert, Chicago, IL 60614.

• DSA has just published a pamphlet on "Unilateral Reciprocated Nuclear Disarmament" by Robert Delson, an international attorney. To get a copy send 50 cents to the DSA office.

• New Books by DSAers available through the DSA office: *The Mean Sea-*

son: The Attack on the Welfare State by Fred Block, Richard Cloward, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Frances Fox Piven; *Socialism and America* and *A Margin of Hope* both by Irving Howe; and *The Crisis in Historical Materialism* by Stanley Aronowitz. To order these books or any other materials carried by DSA, use the full-page order form in this issue of *Democratic Left*.

• DSA is sponsoring a speaking tour by **Nomonde Ngubo**, a South African trade unionist. Nomonde will be speaking in such cities as Chicago, Nashville, Lexington, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio from April 10 through April 21. She will address the current political situation in South Africa and the role the unions play in advocating an end to apartheid. If you are interested in more information, contact Robert Meitus at the DSA office.

When drafting your will, please consider making a bequest to the Democratic Socialists of America or the Institute for Democratic Socialism.

For more information, write or call Patrick Lacefield, Organizational Director, DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038 (212) 962-0390.

MOVING?

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IN MEMORIAM

• DSAer Robert Lekachman, an economist whose witty writing and speaking made that "dismal science" enjoyable to study, died in January of liver cancer at the age of sixty-eight. Throughout his career he espoused a philosophy that sought to promote social justice simultaneously with economic growth. His two latest books were *Visions and Nightmares: America After Reagan* and *Greed Is Not Enough*, a critique of Reaganomics.

ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

Alaska

Juneau DSA meets every Friday at noon to discuss political and organizational topics.

California

Steve Tarzynski, co-chair of the LA Local, and Paul Schimek, DSA graduate student at UCLA are highlighted in the *Los Angeles Times* in an article titled "Democratic Socialists Survive on Left in Era of Right."....San Diego DSA organized a forum on "New Revolution in The Soviet Union? The Meaning of the Gorbachev Era" with Herb Shore as the facilitator....San Fernando DSA's first meeting of the year viewed Mike Harrington's videotape on the roots of poverty in the U.S. and the obstacles to its elimination....Sacramento Valley DSA met in January to hear a report on the national board and to plan future activities in the Democratic party. Duane Campbell, Sacramento Valley co-chair spoke on "Building the Democratic Left" at a forum on critical issues confronting the Democratic party....Santa Cruz DSAers organized a city-wide outreach meeting with the hopes of starting a new Local in that area....Peninsula/Stanford DSA heard DSAer Loren Rusk and United Farm Workers organizer Gus Romero discuss the UFW grape boycott at their January meeting....Alan Snitow reported on his recent trip to the Soviet Union at East Bay DSA's February membership meeting....A state-wide California Leadership Conference is being organized for April 28-30, 1989 in Los Angeles.

Connecticut

DSA organizational director Patrick Lacefield met with Hartford DSAers on February 6 to discuss their efforts to impact the local Democratic party as well as to participate in "Peo-

ple for Change," Hartford's third party that contests with the Republicans in local elections.

District of Columbia

The DC/MD/Northern Virginia Local discussed the Local's political priorities at its February meeting. The topic of this month's women's brunch was "Socialist Feminism and other Feminist Movements." The Labor Committee organized a forum with Nelson Lichtenstein on "Decline of American Labor? A Critique of Some Alternative Left Perspectives." The Local has been instrumental in organizing a pro-choice coalition to mobilize for the April 9 March For Women's Lives and they have begun to organize to secure statehood for Washington, DC.

Illinois

Chicago DSA has organized a seminar at De Paul University on "Democratic Alternatives for the Nineties." As part of this seminar, J. Hughes spoke on "The Student Movement Today," Evelyn Stephens spoke on "Is Democratic Socialism Possible in the Third World — Lessons from Jamaica," and John Stephens spoke on "Socialist Strategy for the United States." March 16 will bring Jane Mansbridge talking on "Learning from the Struggle for the ERA," and Carl Shier will address "Labor and American Socialism" on March 23. Chicago DSA's Debs Dinner, honoring International Association of Machinists President William Winpisinger, will be May 6. The University of Chicago DSA helped to organize a Chicago Student Leadership Conference, targeted at progressive student government and student club leaders.

Iowa

Iowa DSA is organizing a city-wide, day-long workshop on the labor movement in conjunction with a planned visit by Michael Harrington, DSA co-chair.

Kentucky

Governor Wilkinson has created a 26-member council to help design a state master plan for assistance to the homeless. Among those named to the Council is DSAer Anne Joseph, director of the Kentucky Task Force on Hunger....The January meeting of

Central Kentucky DSA in Lexington featured a showing of "The New American Poverty," a video of Mike Harrington's speech. Lexington DSA Socialist Women: Action and Theory have been meeting monthly. A concert to benefit the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, a school in Tanzania for South African refugees, was co-sponsored by Lexington DSA.

Maine

Twenty-five people turned-out to hear Patrick Lacefield speak at the first organizational meeting of Portland DSA. Lacefield was also the featured guest on Maine's Public Radio's "Maine Things Considered." Portland DSA has prioritized reproductive rights work, "Jobs with Justice," and community organizing.

Massachusetts

Robert Kuttner, a regular *Boston Globe*, *Business Week*, and *New Republic* columnist, spoke at a Boston DSA forum on "Lessons and Opportunities: The 1988 Election and the Future of the Left." Boston DSA has also undertaken the publication of a progressive political agenda for the state of Massachusetts. A new staff person, Mike Fadel, was recently hired as the Local organizer. The Boston DSA Religion and Socialism Commission held a well-attended meeting with David Gil speaking on "Work and Violence."

Minnesota

Mike Harrington spoke to standing room only crowds at the University of Minnesota and MacAlester College January 6-7, then addressed several hundred at a meeting of the Progressive Roundtable, boosting the upcoming mayoral bid of DSAer Jim Schiebel, President of the St. Paul City Council. The DSA local met January 29 and is planning to organize literature tables at local colleges throughout the spring.

Missouri

The St. Louis Local recently sponsored a forum on "Strategies for Combatting Homelessness in St. Louis," with a Pastor and longtime social justice activist as the key speaker. Next month, Stanley Spector, the director of the international studies department at Washington University, will speak on "A Look at the Soviet Union: Recent

Observations of Glasnost and Perestroika."

New York

New York DSA sponsored a day-long meeting on membership participation in the local. As part of this meeting, Wayne Barrett, author of *The Selling of New York*, and Gayland Kirkland, Executive Director of the West Harlem Community Development Organization, spoke on a panel on "Politics in New York City." A contingent of NY DSAers joined thousands of other activists for a Housing Justice March that demanded decent housing for all...Brooklyn DSA held its second meeting, at which Patrick Lacefield, organizational director, reported on his recent trip to El Salvador...Ithaca DSA is backing the United Food and Commercial Workers boycott of Wegman's Supermarket which is non-union....New York DSAer David Dinkins, Manhattan Borough President, has announced that he will run for Mayor against Ed Koch. Polls today show him leading Koch by a large margin, with wide margins in the black and Hispanic communities and strong support in the white community. Ruth Messinger, DSA city councilwoman, will run for Manhattan Borough President...A Paul DuBrul Fellowship Fund has been started to provide government and non-profit agency internships through Hunter College to honor the memory of DSAer Paul DuBrul, who died last December of cystic fibrosis...CUNY DSA has been busy organizing this year's Socialist Scholars Conference on "The Two Centuries of Revolution — 1789 - 1989," which will be held March 31 through April 2 at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. It will feature dozens of panels.

North Dakota

The North Dakota Commission on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday gave its fourth annual award January 16 to DSAer Dr. John R. Salter, Jr., for his work on civil rights in North Dakota for Native Americans and all people of color. The award was presented by Governor George A. Sinner at the State Capital in Bismark.

Ohio

Mahoning Valley DSA celebrated the beginning of the New Year with a party in Youngstown to which DSAers in Kent and Cleveland were also invited...Locals in Cleveland, Toledo, and Columbus all heard Patrick Lacefield speak on such topics as El Salvador and DSA's political priorities during his recent swing through Ohio...Cleveland DSA has already begun mobilizing for the April 9 March for Women's Lives....Black Swamp DSA has called for a state-wide DSA convention to establish a state-wide DSA in Ohio.

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia DSA drew a large crowd to a forum on "Racism and the Elections" with Howard Winant, co-author of *Racial Formation in the U.S.*, and Art Haywood, a black community and Rainbow Coalition activist, as speakers. In February, Michael Harrington, DSA co-chair, spoke to overflow crowds on "Prospects for the Left" at several Philadelphia campuses....Pittsburgh DSA backed Councilman Jim Ferlo's new bill on construction projects in Pittsburgh which combines fair wages and affirmative action, bringing minorities and building trades unions together. The Local organized their second annual International Women's Day Awards Party to honor Pittsburgh women who have contributed to improving the quality of women's lives. Seven women were honored at this year's event...The Reading-Burks Democratic Socialists gave their Maurer-Stump Awards at their annual Award Dinner February 10 to William Hinton and Frances Fox Piven.

Texas

Austin DSA meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m....On January 27-29 DSAers joined a regional gathering of peace, social justice, and environmental activists at the University of Dallas Conference Center....DSAer Paul Mitchell spoke at the 16th anniversary rally of Roe vs. Wade. The rally, sponsored by Texas NOW, focused on abortion rights and such issues as day care, family planning, and sex education.

**Demanding Democracy:
The Struggle Continues**

by Barbara Fedders

Over three hundred youth activists from around the country came to Columbia University on February 17-19 for the annual winter conference of DSA's Youth Section. Convened under the title, "Demanding Democracy: The Struggle Continues," the conference featured three days of plenaries, workshops, and caucuses.

Four more years of a right-wing agenda at home, combined with the increasingly common public perception that socialism has failed abroad, requires of DSAers, both young and old, a renewed commitment to the struggle for a genuinely democratic socialism. The importance of this commitment provided the unofficial theme of the conference and was addressed in plenaries by Co-Chairs Barbara Ehrenreich and Michael Harrington, *Dissent* editor Irving Howe, New York City Councilwoman Ruth Messinger, South African trade unionist Nomonde Ngubo, Midwest Academy activist Steve Max, and many others.

Curriculum and financial aid reform, family policy, ecology, reproductive rights, and glasnost, among other issues, were discussed in organizing workshops as opportunities for mobilizing support for radical change on campuses and in our communities.

Activists met both informally and formally to discuss spring organizing projects. On Friday afternoon, early arrivals participated in a conference orientation and activist skills training session. On Saturday morning, a women's caucus was convened to discuss feminist organizing in the youth section. Other caucuses that met during the day on Saturday were the gay, lesbian, and bisexual caucus and the labor caucus.

Youth Section Organizer Elissa McBride, Executive Committee members, and Columbia/Barnard DSAers deserve congratulations for an educational and empowering conference. ●

Barbara Fedders is a member of the University of Dayton DSA chapter and was a conference participant.

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RECONSTRUCTING OUR SCHOOLS: ORGANIZING FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY, August 4-7, 1989 in Cincinnati, OH. A conference sponsored by the Coalition of Educational Activists and organized for teachers, parents, community organizers, union activists, and students. For more information write to DSAer Roy Silver, Department of Sociology, Kentucky U., Highland Heights, KY 41076.

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Pluralism

Continued from page 3

which we work out differences among the distinct communities of a pluralist democracy.

Can the commitment of various constituencies to democratic values serve as glue for a diverse, but cohesive *movement* for democracy? Successful political movements need vision and values, but their constituencies must also share common interests if they are to achieve political unity amidst increasing social diversity. That is, what do feminists, gays and lesbians, African-Americans, unionized and non-unionized workers share, particularly when their own groups are cross-cut by differences of race, ethnicity, gender, and class? Marx's notion of the proletariat as a universal class sharing a common culture and set of interests is negated by the complex structuring of community and workplace in late capitalism. While some radical theorists urge moving beyond a politics of "material" interests, increasing numbers of citizens cannot provide a decent life for their children nor care for their parents. The struggle for social rights must strive to build political unity among the diverse constituencies that must constitute a future majoritarian left. ●

Joseph Schwartz, a member of DSA's NEC, is a professor of political science at Temple University.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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A Return to Power in Jamaica

by Evelyn Huber Stephens
And John Stephens

In the February 9 Jamaican national elections, the democratic socialist People's National Party under the leadership of Michael Manley defeated Edward Seaga's conservative Jamaica Labour Party. It was a landslide victory. At this writing, the PNP had won forty-four seats to the JLP's twelve, with four still to be decided. A look back to what the PNP did while in office in the seventies and an examination of the economic and political constraints facing the PNP will shed light on what the PNP is likely to be able to accomplish while in office.

Democratic Socialism: 1972-1980

After ten years of the JLP rule, the PNP, running on a vaguely defined populist program, was elected in a landslide victory in 1972. The PNP government immediately moved to implement extensive reforms. In the first two and one half years, the Manley government introduced a broad range of policies including literacy, educational, and employment programs, skills training, public housing, land reform, sugar cooperatives, increased minimum wage, and rent control. It also moved to nationalize the utilities. These policies led to significant increases in taxes, some of which were specifically aimed at the wealthy. The PNP government also began a process of political mobilization and party building designed to bring the Jamaican people into more active political participation and to strengthen the PNP as a political movement. In addition, the PNP reoriented the country's traditional pro-West foreign policy toward one of non-alignment and vigorous promotion of Third World cooperation. Finally, the government launched the country on an offensive against the North American aluminum companies that were mining bauxite and processing alumina in Jamaica. The undeniable turn to the left on the part of the PNP occurred without an initial ideological redefinition. It was not until late 1974 that the PNP officially defined its



Les Stone/Impact Visuals

Soldiers keep PNP and JLP supporters apart on election day.

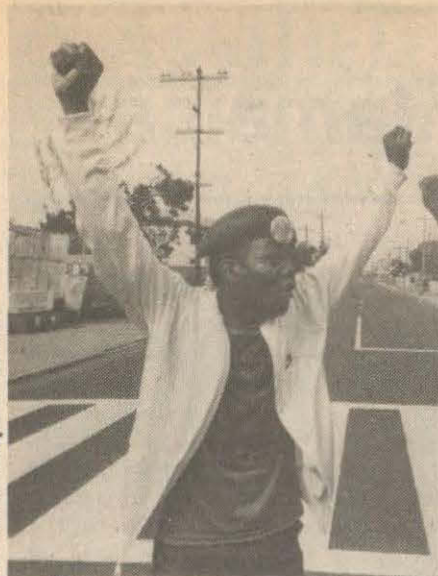
political project as "democratic socialist."

The Jamaican economy, which had already shown signs of serious weakness when the PNP took office, began to deteriorate in 1975, thus turning the Jamaican middle and upper classes against the PNP. The uncertainties and fears generated by the economic deterioration were fueled by militant anti-capitalist rhetoric on the part of some PNP leaders and by the increasingly anti-U.S., pro-Third World and pro-Cuban foreign policy of the government. The Cuba policy — including an extensive exchange relationship and diplomatic support for Cuba on the Angola conflict — was decisive for turning the U.S. against the PNP government. The PNP, however, won the 1976 election as a result of a massive realignment of the Jamaican electorate; The party picked up support among workers, which offset its loss of support among the middle and upper classes.

After the election, the left in the party seemed to be ascendant. The representation of prominent leftists in the cabinet increased from one to four. The PNP left convinced Manley to seriously consider foregoing an IMF loan despite the country's dire financial straits. The government in the end decided that the political risk in rejecting an IMF program was too great. The subsequent implementation of two IMF agreements demoralized the PNP, arrested and even partially reversed

the reform process, and put the government completely on the defensive. The decision to accept the first agreement was a clear defeat for the left, and by the time of the implementation of the second agreement the moderates in the party were in control of the key positions. After the failure of the December 1979 IMF test, the PNP government broke with the IMF. From this point until the October 1980 election (when Seaga was elected) was the only period in the seventies in which the PNP left controlled major ministries and had a significant influence over party policy as opposed to merely the rhetoric of the party.

It is incorrect to see the PNP's project as one of socialist transition in the manner of the Allende government's project in Chile. It was more similar to the political project of the Swedish social democracy in the seventies. The PNP may have relied on state sector investment to fuel growth, but the nationalizations were limited to natural monopolies, failing concerns, and some foreign owned enterprises. Only one profitable domestically owned enterprise, the cement company, was nationalized, and the government constantly reiterated its commitment to a mixed economy. There is no question that the U.S. was suspicious of the government's policies and certainly did not like the bauxite policy nor the move toward diversification of economic relations, especially with communist



Manley's supporter on election day.

countries. It was, however, primarily the relationship with Cuba and Manley's anti-imperialist speeches that led the U.S. government and press to brand Manley and the PNP as dangerous radicals.

The Current Situation

The central feature of Jamaican economic reality today is the debt, which would limit the economic policy options of any government. The debt has increased from 82 percent of GNP when Seaga took office in 1980 to over 154 percent in 1985. Perhaps more important, the proportion of exports of goods and services which went to service the debt increased from 24 percent in 1980 to 61 percent in 1985. Obviously, a debt of this size is a tremendous drain on the economy. Moreover, the debt to the IMF is accompanied by the usual conditionality, which constrains any government to an extremely narrow set of economic options. Tourism is the number one foreign exchange earner. The other traditional mainstays of the Jamaican economy — bauxite, sugar, banana and citrus production — have fared poorly since 1980.

The overall economic situation under Seaga had not been good and, indeed, fell far short of the extremely optimistic projections on which 1981 agreement with the IMF was based. Eventually, the failure of IMF performance tests in 1983 allowed the IMF to force the government into a round of devaluations and other austerity measures, which substantially rolled back the level of consumption of the huge majority of the Jamaican population. Despite some recovery by 1987, the overall picture of the economy is still bleak. While many of the current problems of the

Jamaican economy are structural deficiencies that the PNP faced in its previous period in office, it is the debt that gives a future PNP government very little latitude for action.

While the most important factor behind the support of the PNP is certainly the deterioration of living standards, the causes of the decline in the JLP's political fortunes go deeper than the immediate reaction of Jamaicans hit by unemployment and falling purchasing power. The party had begun to slip in the polls by late 1982, well before the IMF induced devaluations were felt. The JLP had an image of the party for the "big person," while the PNP's image was one of concern for the "little person" and the poor. That the decline in popularity of the JLP is not limited to those who have suffered a severe deterioration of living standards themselves is demonstrated by the fact that the PNP gained huge margins of victory in the tourist areas despite that sector's economic boom.

A Shift to the Center?

The PNP reaffirmed its basic commitment to democratic socialism and also carried on an internal program of political education during its period in opposition. The party, however, has undergone some transformation since the 1980 election. The extent to which this represents a substantial shift to the center in terms of the policies the party is likely to carry out, as opposed to the rhetoric which accompanies these policies, is a more complicated question. The public perception of a move to the center is based above all on the exit of some leading leftists from the leadership of the party. But only in the case of D.K. Duncan, the former party General Secretary, can the departure said to be motivated by a difference with the party leadership on the direction the party ought to take.

The second source of the public perception of a shift to the center by the PNP includes the party's attempt to have cordial relations with the United States by toning down statements about U.S. imperialism; distancing itself somewhat from the close relationship it had to Cuba in the seventies; toning down left rhetoric in general, in part in order to improve relations with the domestic private sector; and distancing the party from the domestic communist party, the Worker's Party of Jamaica (WPJ). This agenda is hardly new. It dates back to early 1981. In Manley's post-mortem analysis of the 1980 election loss, he emphasized the negative role

the "communist boogey" had played for the PNP both domestically and internationally and he generally endorsed the agenda laid out above as necessary steps to reduce the party's vulnerability to attack by its domestic opponents and to destabilizing actions from the United States. In these initial years after the 1980 election defeat, Manley also adopted the self-critical view that the PNP government had overestimated the capacity of the state to manage all the programs passed by the PNP; the programs, though correctly conceived were often poorly implemented. Moreover, the party's policy had emphasized redistribution at the expense of production. Manley has since made clear that a new PNP government will put production first and that there won't be a bonanza of social spending.

Does this represent a move to the center? The moves to distance the party from "communism" are primarily a question of image management, not of substance. Neither can the emphasis on production be termed a move to the right. The realization that the PNP government had overestimated the managerial capacity of the state does not imply that the government should have done less. In general, most of the actual policy changes of the PNP, which on one level do represent a more moderate or cautious position, were necessitated by the objective constraints of the situation stemming from the world system and the internal political economy of Jamaica.

This does not mean that there has been no shift to the center at all in terms of the power distribution within the party and within the society at large. The Jamaican left, both within and outside the PNP, is weaker now than in the late seventies. The WPJ emerged much weaker, more politically isolated, and unsure of its own political direction. The PNP left is also weaker, though one should not exaggerate this since the left has never been firmly in charge of party *policy*. What the decline does mean is that there is less of a counterweight to the influence of the right in the party, which has been strengthened by the return of conservatives who had left the party in the late seventies.

The PNP Program

In 1985, the PNP began laying out the basic contours of what it would do if returned to office. The party's main priorities include stimulating production; increasing earnings and conservation of foreign exchange; lowering unemployment,

Continued on page 21

Women, Work, and Unions: A Profile of the ILGWU

The following interview was conducted on Wednesday, February 8, 1989 by David Bensman, DSA member, co-author with Roberta Lynch of Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community, and the director of the graduate program in labor studies at Rutgers University. He interviewed Susan Cowell, vice president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and member of DSA. The ILGWU, with a predominantly female and immigrant membership of 200,000, is based in the garment and women's apparel industry.

David Bensman: You have a lot of shops in Chinatown. Is there anything about the conditions of work there or the people working in the shops that is unique?

Susan Cowell: It is the one really large segment we have organized that consists primarily of immigrant workers. It has always been hard to organize immigrant workers and employers. The language barriers are considerable, as are the cultural barriers. It was a long process. Jay Mazur, president of the ILGWU was really the one who built up a large Chinese speaking staff. He undertook massive educational efforts to involve the workers and to educate them about the union and the contract.

DB: I know you do a lot of public relations work. How is that work tied to your organizing campaigns?

SC: What we are trying to do more and more is link together our organizing campaigns with our efforts to fight sweatshops and with our industrial homework campaigns. It is all part of the big picture of what is happening to working standards in this industry. This is an industry that is becoming more competitive on the backs of working women. We have increasingly reached out to the public to dramatize what is happening and to use public sympathy to help organize. Recently, we were involved in a campaign against a Manhattan-based firm. Our outreach was very effective. We organized a boycott that had a tremendous impact and enabled us to win the campaign. The

firm we organized the boycott against relied on contracting shops that were in a sector that was totally non-union. Part of the reason we were successful was we were able to bring public sympathy to bear against the manufacturer. We made people recognize that he bore responsibility for the conditions in which his clothing was made, even if he wasn't making the clothing directly but was contracting it out.

DB: Can you describe the conditions under which these sub-contracted workers were employed?

SC: It was very typical of the sweatshop: low-wages, minimum wage at best, but generally below that; no benefits at all; a good deal of underground work; a good deal of homework, which is totally illegal and provides no benefits such as unemployment compensation; child labor in the factory and in the home setting. These conditions have become very widespread over the last decade.

DB: How were you primarily involved in these efforts?

SC: I worked on the boycott and public relations campaign. The strategy was to target the stores where the firm was selling. One reason why it seemed very difficult was that the firm produced for a private label. In the past we have had some success with firms that market the clothing of very high visibility designers. This was a firm that no one had ever heard of. We went through these long

debates of how we were going to tell people what not to buy because on the rack the clothes were sold as brand names. How do we tell people not to buy a particular blouse when it is so unknown? We decided to target the stores. We concluded that the firm was vulnerable to pressure from the stores, its customers. The stores saw it as a nuisance. We reached out to the labor movement and community groups and we leafletted the stores. We backed up the leafletting with publicity. The stores didn't like it at all! Our goal was to be a pain in the neck, not necessarily to reduce sales, and we were certainly successful.

DB: Who joined you in this campaign?

SC: We won within a month after having seriously undertaken the boycott. Locally, in New York, we got great support from the Central Labor Council and a number of other unions. The next stage would have been to reach out more broadly, but we were so effective it was over before we had a chance to broaden our efforts. The other effective tactic was that we followed the work. They key thing about the women's apparel industry that makes it so hard to organize is that it can pick up and move anytime. It's not like a big firm that makes blue jeans or men's shirts; The bulk of women's apparel firms have everything contracted-out. That means that at any time they can pull the work out and send it somewhere else. He moved to New



Vietnamese woman in a sweat shop.

Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals



ILGWU Local 23-25 at the Labor Day parade.

Jersey and we followed him to New Jersey. He moved to Florida and we followed him to Florida. We have to have the ability to follow them wherever they go. Our persistence had a critical impact, although it called for a lot of people being able to follow him around.

DB: What are some of the issues you are involved with now?

SC: At the moment, I am very involved with the fight to preserve the ban on industrial homework. This is a fight that has been going on since Reagan came into office. Bringing back industrial homework has been a priority of the right-wing and this does not seem to have changed under Bush. It goes back to protections that were put into place in 1942, the culmination of decades of an industrial reform movement that started with the Triangle Fire and the early years of this union. After decades of investigations of sweatshops and child labor, the reformers of that era, union people and people like Frances Perkins who were part of that labor reform era, concluded that industrial homework was the most exploitative form of work in the apparel industry.

Bans were put in place in seven segments of the apparel industry. It was a very limited sort of regulation, but it had an impact. The bans were effective, but as sweatshops disappeared in the forties and fifties, there wasn't a lot of attention and there wasn't a lot of enforcement because it was no longer seen as necessary. Starting in the seventies, the situation began to change in this industry: the rise of low-wage imports greatly increased the competitiveness of this industry based essentially on labor costs; there was an influx of new immigrants from the

Third World who were used to poor working situations and were desperate for work; enforcement staff were cut-back; and a growing anti-union environment emerged. All of these things came together to change the structure and economics of the apparel industry.

Rather than moving in a direction that this union once hoped would happen — towards more productivity, more investment in the plants and equipment — the trend was in the opposite direction. We are moving backwards towards the contracting shop, homework, all of the techniques that were perfected at the turn of the century to sweat workers, to make profits by forcing down labor costs. The Reagan administration tried to lift the ban on homework, blindly talking about flexibility, technology, and the new workforce, none of which have anything to do with what is happening in the apparel industry. It has been an effort that is totally ideological. There is no industrial lobby calling for homework. The firms that benefit from it are essentially the firms that are operating in the underground economy and don't have lobbies in Washington.

DB: What are some of the assumptions that underlie the administration's efforts?

SC: This issue brings together a number of issues I think are very important. It brings together a whole set of women's issues. Supporters of homework often say, "Well, if women can't get child care, isn't it better that they are at least able to earn a little money on the side?" That simply brings us back to the idea that women don't need a living wage, that they only need "pin" money. The idea that they can do child care and industrial

piece work simultaneously is saying that child care isn't work. Both jobs are extremely demanding and require full attention. Given the economics of it, to earn even the minimum wage at this type of work requires a tremendous amount of time and attention. Deregulation has a range of implications that the administration, particularly under Bush, will try to gloss over. They will try and pretend that they are talking about a flexible workplace, child care, giving women choices. **DB:** Have you ever done any organizing specifically around the child care needs of women workers?

SC: One of the first projects I got involved with was starting a day care center. We surveyed our members on day care. The results were overwhelming; Parent's whose kids were in day care were very happy, and those whose kids were not in day care centers were frustrated. We then started working with the city and the employers to get them to make a commitment. They agreed they would work on child care, but they would not formally put it in the contract. The creation of the day care center was a major undertaking that took a little over a year to put into place. It was the first public/private center in the city and it has been very successful.

DB: It seems as if it would be a good way to also learn about Chinese families and social relationships.

SC: Absolutely. This issue played a different role in Chinatown than in a lot of other areas. We have not been able to replicate that experiment. One thing is that Chinese families are very receptive to day care centers. We find that other ethnic groups, such as Hispanic families, are much more likely to use informal child care networks such as neighbors and other family members. In Chinatown there was a very strongly articulated demand for day care centers, even for very young children.

Part of it is cultural. Most of our Chinese members came from the People's Republic of China. There, although the day care might not be considered sophisticated by our standards, it is universal and well integrated into the workplace. Child care in a workplace setting seems very natural to them, while for many groups in this country it is not. We also had a situation where we had a large industry that was well integrated into the community. Half of our members lived in Chinatown. The other half, if they didn't

Continued on page 21

Mexico: Prospects for Change

by Mike Tangeman

Whatever happened to Cuauhtemoc Cardenas?

Nearly eight months after Mexico's political culture was shaken to the roots by the unexpected showing of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the presidential candidate of the center-left National Front (FDN) coalition of parties, in July's national elections, that question has to be on the minds of most Mexico watchers in the United States.

The answer is both relatively simple and complex: Cardenas, having eschewed a violent response to the alleged vote fraud that gave the election to current President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, is steadily plugging away at the monumental task of building a new political party in the hope of effectively challenging the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), that has governed the country uninterrupted since 1929.

The major protests generated by public outrage over the allegations of fraud reached their peak in a July 16 rally that packed 300,000 demonstrators downtown in front of the National Palace, and then diminished rapidly as the Cardenas-FDN strategy shifted away from one of mass mobilization. The new strategy has become one of consolidating legislative victories in order to challenge the monolithic PRI within the legal framework of the country's constitution.

Loss of Momentum

Aside from the fact that such a strategy shifted the Cardenas "story" out of the focus of the major U.S. media, the results of this "legal" strategy for the democratic left (and not-so-democratic-left) parties backing Cardenas has clearly been less than spectacular. It has certainly meant a loss of momentum for the Cardenistas, and some would say they have actually lost some of the first major battles of this post-election "war."

The first setback came August 31 when, after several knock-down-drag-out sessions in the federal Chamber of De-

puties' Electoral College, the ruling PRI emerged with 260 of the 500 seats in the lower house, to only 139 for the FDN coalition and 101 for the conservative National Action Party (PAN). In the Senate's Electoral College, the FDN received only four of sixty-four Senate seats as tokens of the democratic openings.

On September 10, the opposition suffered its second major setback when, despite a walkout by 152 FDN and PAN deputies, the Chamber ratified Salinas as president by a vote of 263-85. Since then, as if to add insult to injury, the PRI has effectively blocked by simple majority vote every opposition attempt, whether in committee or on the full floor of the Chamber, to investigate government misconduct or introduce progressive legislation.

On December 1, Salinas' inauguration as Mexico's 61st president marked the third major blow to the Cardenistas. Once the oath of office was taken, Salinas achieved the de facto legitimacy which he had lacked as president-elect amid the allegations of vote fraud. And Salinas, the forty-year-old economist and former Planning and Budget Secretary who holds two graduate degrees from Harvard University, moved quickly to consolidate his position.

In his inauguration speech, he held out an olive branch to his political opponents, offering them a participatory role in

solving national problems. He also stole a page from the Cardenas campaign, saying the conditions set by international creditors for repayment of Mexico's \$130 billion foreign debt impede economic recovery and are "unacceptable and unsustainable."

Consolidation of Power

Since then, he has taken steps toward resolving Mexico City's growing problems of runaway crime and chronic air pollution — key rallying points for opposition sentiments which led to Salinas' winning only 23 percent of the vote in the capital. And he has put together his administration with appointments marked by a careful balance of his group of "modernizers" and the old-guard "dinosaurs" within the PRI.

The cabinet appointments nevertheless showed a clear preference for foreign-educated young technocrats with experience in budget-cutting and privatizing — or as Salinas would prefer to say, "modernizing" — a bloated economy. Eight of the appointments were economists, twelve have received graduate degrees abroad, and several served under Salinas himself in the Secretariat of Planning and Budget.

The Salinas modernizers believe that by streamlining the economy they can reverse the country's ongoing economic crisis, thus quelling the social discontent that contributed to the PRI's poorest showing



Rally protesting vote rigging outside the Legislative Palace in Mexico City.

Cindy Reiman/Impact Visuals



Rally for presidential nominee Cardenas.

ever in national elections. But several ominous signs have pointed to a parallel strategy for maintaining order should the economic strategy fail to stem social unrest. Among them are:

- the appointment of Fernando Gutierrez Barrios, a sixty-one-year-old former career policeman, to head the Interior Secretariat, making him responsible for national elections and state security. In 1952, Gutierrez co-founded and, until 1970, served in various capacities in the secretariat's infamous Federal Security Directorate (DFS). In 1986, he is said to have been directly in command of the DFS forces that participated in the massacre of several hundred protesting students in Mexico City. His appointment to perhaps the second most-powerful position in Mexico outraged opposition leaders of the right and left;

- the appointment of Miguel Nazar Haro to head a newly created Mexico City police Intelligence Division. As director of an infamous counter-insurgency unit known as the "Brigada Blanca" in the 1970s, Nazar is said to have personally participated in the torture of captured leftist guerrillas. Opposition leaders say Nazar's appointment shows less the government's desire to crackdown on criminals and more its interest in "getting tough" with political dissidents;

- the documentation by Mexican human rights activists of thirty-four politically motivated killings or disappearances since July. Some cases seem only marginally political, but others - such as the deaths of three people on January 22 when Morelos state rural police fired into a crowd protesting over a municipal election

dispute — are clearly political.

There is one incident, more than any other, which points to the possibility that the use of force may go hand-in-hand with Salinas's economic designs. On January 10, army troops raided the home of the powerful oil workers' union leader Joaquin "La Quina" Galicia Hernandez, arresting him and virtually the entire union leadership.

The raid was ostensibly the result of an investigation into a tip that the oil workers were stockpiling automatic weapons — though eyewitnesses have said that twenty boxes containing 200 Uzi machine guns found on the premises were brought by the army troops themselves. It has since become clear that the action was taken for political and economic reasons.

The power and corruption of union leaders has long been an obstacle to the streamlining of the state-owned oil industry, and Salinas has his own plans to privatize distribution and petrochemical production operations. For that reason, La Quina was displeased with the PRI's choice of Salinas as presidential candidate and reportedly gave the word for oil workers to vote for opposition candidate Cardenas — which they did in overwhelming numbers.

The arrests of La Quina and his captives thus represents an important coup for Salinas, removing a major obstacle to "modernizing" the country's number one export-earning industry and jailing a dangerous political opponent at the same time.

Coalition Strategy

If all the oil workers found it easy to

back Cardenas, it is because he represents all that is opposed to the Salinas policies. Cardenas comes out of the left-populist tradition of his late-father, former president Lazaro Cardenas, the man who nationalized the oil industry in 1938 and distributed more farmland to landless *campesinos* (small farmers) than all his predecessors combined.

After serving as a PRI senator and governor, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas co-founded in 1986 a reform-minded "Democratic Current" within the ruling party that finally split from the PRI in September, 1987. The FDN coalition of four parties and several non-parties and movements on the left were his strength in the election but have been his weakness ever since.

When Cardenas moved to form a united-left party to replace the FDN coalition, the Marxist-Leninist popular Socialist Party and the corporative Cardenist National Reconstruction Front Party refused to join. The Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution has also balked at the idea.

Cardenas has the support of the Democratic Current, the eurocommunist Mexican Socialist Party, the small Social Democratic Party and the Movement Toward Socialism in the formation of the new party, to be called the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). Once formed in April, it will hold forty-nine seats in the Chamber of Deputies giving it the largest legislative bloc within the FDN. It will continue to function as a coalition of parties. Importantly, the PRD will not be a Leninist party, but it will rely on individual affiliation and a collective leadership to give it a democratic structure often previously lacking among Mexican left parties.

Faced with a Salinas administration which has apparently rebounded from its setback, the PRD and FDN coalition will have a difficult time regaining the momentum lost since the heavy days of the election. And whether or not the figure of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and the formation of the PRD can again rally Mexicans to challenge the PRI government at the ballot box may not be known for some time to come — possibly until mid-term legislative elections roll around in July, 1991 ●

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ILGWU

Continued from page 18

live in Chinatown they shopped there or they had family in Chinatown. So, even though it wasn't on-site child care, it was community-based and that made it very successful.

DB: Some feminists have been attracted to the idea of homework, arguing that it addresses this work-child care tension. How do you deal with that?

SC: I don't know of a feminist defense of homework, but there has been a discussion about valuing child care of one's own children and the work that goes with it. But as long as caring for one's own children is an unpaid option, then it is a very limited choice. It forces some women into taking on responsibilities like piece work to earn some extra money, at the same time undermining their ability to care for their children. The real issue is looking at how we value women's work, how we value child care. Homework is a classic example of underpaid "women's work," a real pay equity issue. Right now, we can't even get unpaid parental leave passed, let alone paid parental leave.

DB: What are you and the union doing to mobilize public support around this issue?

SC: We have been involved in reaching out to a broad cross-section of groups — women's groups, child care advocates, other unions, immigration advocates, minority groups — in an attempt to get support for our efforts to counter the deregulation efforts. It has some broad implications for what working at home means for women, even professional women. Working at home tends to marginalize workers, to reduce benefits, to reduce wages. It is very poor substitute for things like paid parental leave and universal child care.

We have not yet undertaken a legislative effort. We have been concentrating our efforts on trying to defend the regulations. We, have, however, been reaching out to Congress more than we ever have in the past. Bush is clearly more susceptible to Congress than Reagan ever was. Also, given the attacks on the rules up to this point, we think that we might eventually have to turn to a legislative strategy. The Courts are no longer a secure line of defense. If we go towards a legislative strategy, we will involve other groups to a greater extent,

DB: Unions that don't have a direct interest in this issue have been supportive?

SC: Yes, the labor movement has been very responsive. They see it as part of an overall pattern of attacks on workers. It is related to contracting-out. It is related to the growth of the contingent workforce. It all fits together very clearly as an attack on unions and an attack on workers. The labor movement needs to look at issues like part-time work and learn to articulate our position better. We aren't opposed to part-time work if it is a choice and not part of a strategy to lower labor costs. Progressives also need to mobilize a whole coalition of groups to talk about what flexibility *really* means. Homework, as it is currently defined and implemented, is all about the *employer's* flexibility. The employer deals with the busy season without adding overhead, that's the flexibility. The worker gets no flexibility at all. The apparel industry is a terribly exploitative industry. A ban is absolutely essential to protect the interests of hundreds of thousands of garment workers

DB: Your understanding of the issues has a lot to do with your understanding of the way working women live, what their needs are, and how the union can respond to them. Do you feel like there is progress in unions learning to think that way?

SC: Many unions now recognize that women are the workers that we will need to be organizing. The shift in the labor force has been traumatic and has had an impact on the labor movement's receptivity to women's issues. The Coalition of Union Women (CLUW), in which I have been very active, was successful in getting the labor movement to see that there is a family agenda that incorporates things that up until recently were seen as specifically feminist goals. This agenda is a natural part of labor's agenda. I see a lot of progress, and a natural fit between feminist goals and labor's goals. ●

Jamaica

Continued from page 16

particularly among the youth; establishing a national nutritional program; and restoring education and health services. Though state entrepreneurial activity is envisioned, state takeover of viable existing enterprises has been ruled out. The management of foreign exchange will initially include setting a fixed exchange rate; formulating a budget for careful allocation of foreign exchange; re-introducing import licensing; promoting exports; and continuing the promotion of tourism.

In the area of foreign policy, the PNP

has reaffirmed its commitment to non-alignment. The search for export markets, diversified sources of finance, and new opportunities for investment mandate good relations with the U.S. and Canada, but also closer relations with Scandinavian and Southern European countries, and with Eastern European countries which are to play a strategic role in trade diversification.

The debt places a somber view on possibilities. On the one hand, the leadership is very clear about the fact that unilateral repudiation of the debt is out of the question for Jamaica. On the other hand, they feel servicing the debt as scheduled is not possible either. The idea of tying future debt service to foreign exchange earnings, as Peru has done, will be given serious consideration by the PNP.

What Will the PNP Achieve?

It is doubtful that the PNP will be able to achieve even this limited program given the constraints imposed by the IMF and backed up by the World Bank and Washington. Given the objective constraints of the international and domestic situation, the only significant departures from JLP policy that could be introduced by a PNP government all fall in the international arena: restoration of the non-aligned posture of the seventies; greater efforts at trade diversification; promotion of South-South economic cooperation; and, most important, movement toward a multilateral solution to the debt problem in cooperation with other Third World countries. In terms of the PNP program for domestic economic and social policy, it should be possible to stimulate production by offering support for small farmers and businesses and for community-based enterprises. State encouragement of community mobilization for the rehabilitation of education and health services may possibly produce the desired results. Some concessions on the part of the IMF are possible, but it is highly improbable that the Fund will give in on many of the points desired by the PNP. This means that the effects of economic policy departures will hardly be more than marginal. This is the depressing reality that the PNP faces as it takes the reign of government. ●

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REVIEWS

The Origins of Domination

by Beth Cagan

THE BONDS OF LOVE: PSYCHOANALYSIS, FEMINISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF DOMINATION, by Jessica Benjamin. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988. 224 pages. \$12.95 paperback.

It has become a truism for some feminists that power and domination are male: men dominate women to maintain their privileges, and women submit because they are forced to do so. This simplistic and essentially moralistic analysis has been challenged by other feminists, particularly those working within a socialist or psychoanalytic framework. Jessica Benjamin draws from the latter tradition. In her new book, *The Bonds of Love*, she subjects psychoanalysis to a feminist critique and at the same time uses it to explore domination as a general human problem and a critical aspect of relations between women and men.

Benjamin's interpretation of psychoanalysis, which she calls the "intersubjective" view, is unorthodox on many counts. Like the British "object relations" theorists who have influenced her, Benjamin emphasizes the interpersonal nature of human life over the intrapsychic. As a feminist, she rejects Freud's preoccupation with the father as the key figure in personality development and his unquestioning acceptance of female subordination. But she shares two of his crucial assumptions: that infantile experiences are formative of adult personality, and that these experiences have a strongly erotic component. Thus, the adult's relationships, especially sexual ones, echo themes from early life in the family.

Benjamin's explanation of the origin of domination focuses on the young child's efforts to establish an identity, a self. In this early and intimate relationship with the primary caretaker — the mother — the child comes to experience the self as "the doer who does, the author of my acts." It is the mother's recognition of the child's assertions of self — her acknowledgement of the child's acts, feelings, intentions — that affirms the child's independent existence and subjectivity. As Benjamin explains,

"Recognition is the essential response, the constant companion of assertion. The subject declares, 'I am, I do,' and then waits for the response, 'You are, you have done.'"

For Benjamin, recognition must be mutual. The child needs not only the mother's affirmation of the child's existence, but needs to affirm that she, too, is a separate being. Mutuality



Jessica Benjamin.

is necessary because if there were no other subjectivity, there would be no recognition, no other to say, "You are, you have done." This paradox — that one's own existence is contingent on the existence of the other — is difficult for the child to accept. The child must come to terms with the fact that "he does not magically control the mother...that what she does for him is subject to her, not his, will." Domination has its roots in the unsuccessful resolution of this paradox.

Benjamin uses the sadomasochistic literary fantasy, the *Story of O*, to explore the link between domination in sexual relationships and the early conflicts between mother and child over assertion and recognition. Of particular interest is the novel's depiction of a woman consenting to her own domination, not out of fear but "in complicity with [her] own deepest desires." The basis for this masochism, Benjamin asserts, is "a search for recognition through an other who is powerful enough to bestow this recognition." Similarly, sadism arises from the individual's attempt to force recognition from the other without mutuality, in a denial of dependence on the other. The child's failure to resolve conflicts over self and other, then, sets the stage for adult sexual difficulties:

"Submission becomes the 'pure' form of recognition, even as violation becomes the 'pure' form of assertion. The assertion of one individual...is transformed into domination; the other's...recognition becomes submission. Thus the basic tension of forces *within* the individual becomes a dynamic *between* individuals."

The question arises, why is it that men typically adopt the assertive way out of their prototypical identity crisis, and women the passive? In other words, what causes domination and submission to be *gendered*? Here Benjamin draws on feminist theory that holds that the male child must differentiate himself more fully from the mother to establish a masculine identity. In a reworking of the Oedipal complex, Benjamin argues that it is the father who provides the resolution to this dilemma. For all children, the father "is the way into the world," the representation of an exciting reality apart from the mother. For the boy, the father becomes his ideal: he identifies with the father's power and "autonomous individuality," and in this way both distinguishes himself from the mother and denies his dependency on her. But the father is "missing" for the girl, as he rebuffs her attempts at identification while encouraging her brother's. Benjamin explains:

"The thwarting of an early identificatory love with the exciting outside is damaging to any child's sense of agency, in particular to the sense of sexual agency. Such early disappointment may well lead to relationships of subordination or passivity.... [T]he woman loses herself in the identification with the powerful other who embodies the missing desire and agency."

A restructuring of sex roles, so that both women and men care for children and represent the outside world of agency, is needed to break this cycle.

Of course, this is just a brief sketch of Benjamin's analysis. Much of the book consists of disputes with other psychoanalysts over the intricacies of Freudian theory. For the reader not well versed in this jargon, this may be rough going. And it may be disappointing that Benjamin is far more engaged with psychoanalysis than she is with feminism. When discussing the broader social context such as the ways in which intellect and social life replicate the gender polarity of the family constellation, Benjamin draws generously from feminist sources. But the heart of the book is the analysis of that family constellation, the *source* of gender polarity, and for this Benjamin relies largely on fellow — and rival — psychoanalysts.

This strongly psychoanalytic orientation means not only that her analysis is difficult to follow, but also that it may be unconvincing to those skeptical about Freudian interpretation. Often it seems that she is just restating in abstruse language insights that have become commonplace — e.g., that fathers serve as vigorous, assertive role models for their sons, and girls pattern themselves after the more passive and constricted role of their mothers. Furthermore, as is true for much of psychoanalytic theory, the evidence used to support interpretations is often theory itself, with little grounding in empirical data for either illustration or justification. There is an unsatisfying absence of "the real world" in her discussions.

For example, disputing those who mourn the loss of paternal authority in modern society because it has supposedly encouraged narcissism, Benjamin cautions that "paternal authority...is a far more complex emotional web than its defenders admit." Her evidence for this is Freud's own discussion of the Oedipal myth — nothing is said about fathers' actual role or conduct in society. Sociological investigation is irrelevant; the "word," the text, is all.

Similarly unconvincing is Benjamin's attempt to use her model of the child's conflict with the mother over assertion and recognition as the basis for the subject/object split in Western

thought. The child's denial of the mother's subjectivity, reducing her to an object, may indeed account for all sorts of problems in human relationships. But Benjamin makes a further claim, that the reduction of the mother to an object establishes a *gender* polarity between ourselves and the rest of the world, which permeates "our ways of knowing, our efforts to transform and control the world." Too much is demanded from this model. After all, the child (and adult) also has experiences with things that really are objects, that don't require recognition, and this may be the basis for our splitting the universe in two. To speak of our relations with the entire outside world, animate and inanimate, as based on "the bonds of love" is psychological reductionism and determinism writ large.

These criticisms may represent more my disagreement with psychoanalysis itself rather than with Benjamin's analysis. Like Nancy Chodorow's pioneering study of how mothering is reproduced, *The Bonds of Love* provides us with a more complete grasp of the complexities of human life. She will be criticized for her rejection of the notion that domination is a one-way street and her acknowledgement that we are all — men and women — shaped by circumstances over which we have little knowledge or control. These are important contributions, especially in an arena which invites a virtue/villainy categorization.

Benjamin also deserves credit for reminding us how deep are the sources of our difficulties without abandoning a vision of a better future. This vision is only hinted at, but it is compelling. "Feminism," she concludes, "has opened up a new possibility of mutual recognition between men and women," allowing them to confront the difficulties of recognizing the other and exposing "the painful longing for what lies on the other side of these difficulties." Just what is there is never specified, but it seems worth the struggle. ●

Beth Cagan, a longtime member of DSA, is a professor of sociology and women's studies at Cleveland State University.

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JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

Who Does The Dishes? Women, even when they work full time outside the home, are still doing most all of the cooking, cleaning, and other household chores. So say the results of a 5,000-household survey conducted for *Across the Board* by National Family Opinion, Inc. Among the findings:

Men in Two-Earner Families

	Almost Always	Often	Some- times	Rarely Or Never
Wash the dishes	5.5%	24.3%	32.5%	37.7%
Cook	5.0%	20.0%	38.5%	36.5%
Do the laundry	3.9%	13.7%	23.4%	59.0%
Clean the house	3.4%	18.5%	41.2%	36.9%
Shop for food	12.2%	15.9%	33.7%	38.2%

Conservatives Beware: In 1988, the House of Representatives had the most liberal voting record since the Americans for Democratic Action began rating Congressional voting records in 1947. The House was judged on twenty roll-call votes on such issues as civil rights, women's rights, labor issues, and foreign and military policy. The Senate's

average score, however, was 48 percent, down from 53 percent in 1987 but higher than any other year since 1975.

If Only the Federal Government Would do the Same. In Washington State, voters approved a new law to raise the minimum wage to \$3.85 in 1989 and \$4.25 in 1990 and to include farm workers for the first time.

Caregiving as a Juggling Act. A recent study conducted by the American Association of Retired Persons found that close to seven million people, three-fourths of them women, provide unpaid care to an elderly friend or relative. 50 percent of all caregivers work in jobs outside the home and 39 percent care for their own children as well. 38 percent of the caregivers reported changing from full-time employment to part-time to make time for the added responsibility. And we can't even get the federal government to support unpaid leave programs, let alone paid ones.

Time Off? According to the London *Economist*, Hong Kong residents work more hours a year (2,600) with less vacation a year (under eight days) than residents of any other major city. Europeans work an average of 1,700 hours with twenty-four vacation days a year.