DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Ideas for the New Century

The World Trade Organization:

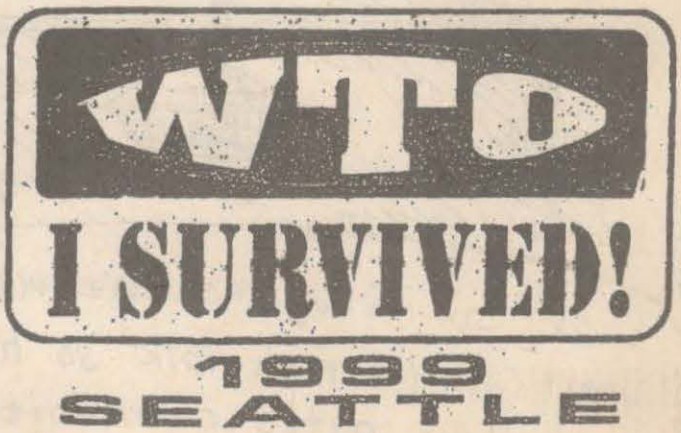
Making the World Friendly for Transnational Corporations

BY JOSEPH SCHWARTZ

Mainstream liberals and conservatives treat the "globalization of the economy" as if it were an act of nature. *NewYork Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman informs us that with growing economic interdependence comes the necessity to "compete in the market or die." But all economic arrangements are social institutions constructed within relations of power. Today's global market is structured mostly for the interests of transnational corporations, as opposed to those of ordinary citizens.

The mass protests at the Seattle ministerial meetings of the World Trade Organizations led by environmentalists, trade unionists, NGO activists from developing nations, and DSAers prefigures an emerging international movement to regulate transnational capital in the interests of human needs. For the first time since the collapse of authoritarian communism and the rightward drift of many governing social democratic parties, the traditional socialist demand that capital serve the interests of the very people who create it has been returned to the world's political center stage.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) places corporate interests ahead of human ones by preventing nation-states from democratically regulating the environmental, health, safety and labor practices of transnational corporations. The WTO is a five year old institution which enables international tribunals -- dominated by corporate trade lawyers -- to enforce international trade and investment agreements (the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs or GATT). Global "deregulation" is no longer a gleam in the eyes of transnational corporate elites. In less than five years, the WTO "Dispute Settlement Processes" have stopped the United States from requiring Venezuelan gas exporters to conform to air quality regulations stricter than those of Venezuela. The WTO has also banned European Union attempts to prevent the import of US-produced hormone-treated beef. And in 1997, a WTO panel ruled that the European Union could not grant trade preferences to union-grown Caribbean bananas over Chiquita bananas produced by exploited non-union labor in Central America.



In Seattle, ministers from pro-corporate governments around the globe tried to spread the WTO's powers over trade in manufactured goods, to agriculture, financial and internet services, and intellectual property. Such extensions would prevent developing nations from creating affordable generic versions of expensive, patented pharmaceuticals and would expand TNCs ability to patent and "own" indigenous medicines and the biospecies of the developing world. They would severely limit national regulation of food safety and animal and plant health practices. And they would prevent city, state, and national governments from refusing to purchase from companies that invest in regimes which violate labor and human rights and whom often employ child labor.

25 Years of Reagan-Thatcherism

The practices of the WTO do not derive from inherent economic laws of efficiency, but from the Reagan-Thatcher policies of the advanced industrial democracies. In the early 1970s a squeeze in corporate profits fueled by growing union power, higher real commodity prices, and a slowing of productivity gains caused TNCs to react by abandoning the post-WWII "social contract." this permitted corporate control of investment in return for relatively high real industrial wages and a safety net for many workers in developed nations. Corporations henceforth demanded to be free from the constraints of union power and progressive taxation, arguing that "deregulating" the economy would benefit all.

Twenty-five years of such policies, imposed by conservative and center-left governments in the First World and by the IMF throughout the rest of the planet, has severely increased global inequality. Global deregulation has not ushered in a free market utopia, but, rather, the inegalitarian gangster capitalism of the former Soviet bloc and the rampant financial speculation and corruption of the "East Asian miracle."

Masked in the rhetoric of comparative advantage and economic efficiency, these market policies impose

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About This Issue

In July, I was looking for ways to improve *Democratic Left*. In less than forty-eight hours, staff member extraordinaire Solveig Wilder came to me with a proposal: publish a millennium issue that would present ideas from luminaries of the Left on the Prospects for Democratic Socialism.

I loved the idea. We had a telephone meeting with Barbara Ehrenreich, and she helped give us direction as to how to proceed.

We reached out to leading members and friends of DSA, and so many responded we literally had to turn people away. In fact, this magazine is so big, we have to divide it into two parts. It may be the best magazine we at DSA have ever produced, and for that we have so many people to thank.

First, a heartfelt thanks to the extraordinary contributors who gladly responded to our call. Their thoughtful and thought-provoking articles will inspire and challenge you to think about a future where social and economic justice is a reality.

And then, there are our members. You have all been extraordinarily patient with us. This magazine is dedicated to you. Your words of encouragement and support mean more to us than you will ever know. Count on receiving *Democratic Left* on time from this moment forward.

A hearty thanks also to Jeff Gold and Frank Llewellyn, who continue to lend their expertise as to how to put out a quality publication.

And last but not least, a very special thanks to Solveig Wilder. Sister, you are truly a talented and extraordinary woman. We gave you an assignment that no one else wanted and you hit a home run. I asked you to give us a magazine that would pass the *good* bathroom test. We got that and more. Thanks.

Now sit back, relax, pour yourself a rich cup of hot chocolate, and get lost in the magic of this edition of *Democratic Left*.

Cheers!

Horace Small

National Director

PS Your letters and comments are more than welcome.

'99 DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements–of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color–which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

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inside DL

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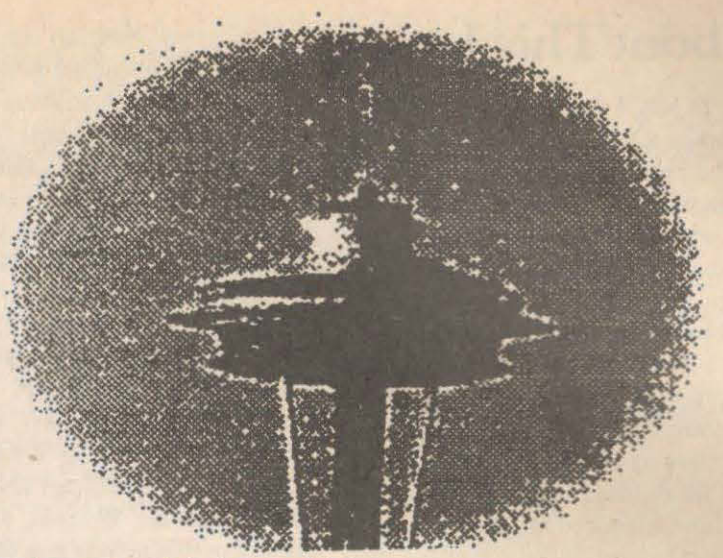
a race-to-the-bottom in regard to living standards and labor rights. By demanding that all nation-states remove regulatory constraints on corporations, gut social welfare programs, enact balanced-budget fiscal austerity, and declare war on trade unions, the WTO ensures that capital will be able to move labor-intensive forms of production to the "lowest cost producers" in the developing world. While more capital and knowledge-intensive production remains in advanced industrial nations, like software design and computerized machine tool production, the anti-union practices of race-to-the-bottom capitalism means that the disproportionate share of the benefits from such increases in First World productivity goes to the top twenty percent of the population, the "symbolic manipulators" who organize production itself.

Resistance to Democratic Political Control

The worldwide protests against the Seattle ministerial meetings represents a new stage in international popular resistance to corporate dictates. This fledgling trans-border network must both identify the enemy and put forth a feasible, democratic, alternative economic model. The 1997 defeat of the proposed Multinational Agreement on Investments (the MAI), which would have deregulated control of global investment (similar to GATT's deregulation of trade) demonstrated that worldwide alliances of trade union, environmental, and human rights activists could slow the juggernaut of corporate globalization.

To impose a democratic global order upon TNCs will necessitate coordination of policy among democratic sovereign governments. Nation-states, contrary to mainstream nostrums, can still influence corporate behavior. To do so they must engage in regional and international cooperation aimed at instituting a new *global* social contract which would level-up global living standards, impose labor and environmental regulations upon



TNCs and regulate global financial actors in the interests of equitable and sustainable development. A global democratic left must be rebuilt as an alternative both to a dead-and-buried authoritarian Communism and to a social democratic welfare state which can no longer be sustained strictly on a national level.

Thus, the new social movement politics of civil society must still grapple with the political question of gaining state power. For only the policies of national governments can create the regional and international institutions which can control TNCs on behalf of a global New Deal in the interests of people. In the first half of the twentieth century this federal nation regulated corporations which had become truly national in scope and thus could no longer be effectively regulated by state governments.

Reversing the transnational corporate race-to-the-bottom now requires the same kind of global coordination of economic policy in favor of a high-wage, high-productivity economy. This would require progressive taxation and high-quality public provision of education, health care, childcare, and job training. In addition, in order to allow developing nations to improve living standards, new international trade and investment regimes will have to be constructed to reverse the unfavorable economic relations that labor-surplus and capital short developing nations inevitably face.

Short-Term, Feasible Agenda

The international movement for global justice is somewhat divided: most international labor federations and mainstream environmental groups favor reforming the WTO so it could enforce international labor and human rights guarantees. But many NGO and activists in the developing world believe the WTO must be abolished and a completely new, more democratic international institution be built from the ground up. This is complicated because many governing elites in Third World governments oppose any international limits on the rate of exploitation of their domestic workers. There is disagreement as to what institutions would best democratize the global economy under those circumstances. However, there is fairly broad consensus as to immediate, constructive reforms an international democratic movement should demand. They include:

- Jubilee 2000 debt forgiveness for developing nations by both private banks and national and international lending institutions. These economies have been distorted into export-platforms which then do not serve the needs of their own population. Such an economic strategy makes them permanent debtors to the very global banks and IMF which encouraged this disastrous economic strategy in the first place.

■ Establish a floor rather than a ceiling on basic human and labor rights and environmental standards in all international trade and investment agreements. Such agreements would have to recognize that for some time to come "living wages" and environmental standards in the developing world will not be able to be as "high" as those in the First World.

■ Democratic internationalists can be for investment of capital in the Third World, provided it does not prevent those nations from developing an integrated, domestically-oriented economy which serves their people's needs.

■ New international regulatory institutions should be governed jointly by developing and developed nations. They should insure equitable terms of trade and interest rates so that Third World nations can overcome the disadvantageous terms-of-trade that their surplus rural labor and capital shortages impose upon them in a global market. Exporting to pay off onerous capital loans not only denies domestic populations of needed resources, but also attracts surplus rural labor to urban areas without job opportunities.

■ Stop corporations from patenting indigenous medical practices and the medicinal benefits of developing nations' biospecies. A just international economic order would allow indigenous peoples and developing nations to benefit from the contributions their own medical practices and local biospecies can make to the world's peoples.

■ Create equitable international regulation of global finance capital. Billions of dollars can now be transfered into and out of national financial markets-in a nano-second which allows finance to veto a nation's democratically determined economic strategy. Imposing a global "Tobin tax" on all transfers of liquid capital stock and bond market investments and short-term bank deposits would decrease the incentive for short-term capital flight aimed at disrupting sovereign nation-state policy.

The above reforms could all be instituted without a revolutionary abolition of global capitalism. Absent this kind of Global New Deal, the severe inequality and economic instability which governs the lives of the global majority may soon visit itself upon even the privileged sectors of the advanced industrial nations.

Joseph Schwartz teaches political theory at Temple University and is a member of the DSA's National Political Committee.

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A European Perspective

BY DANIEL SINGER

Ten years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the brief entry of the people on the political stage of eastern Europe, the establishment is repeating relentlessly and quite successfully that socialism is dead and buried, while capitalism will live for ever.

If we define socialism as the mastery of the people over their work and their fate, socialism could not die in eastern Europe, because it never lived there (or anywhere else, so far). If we must draw a lesson from the collapse of the Soviet empire and the disintegration of the USSR that followed, it is about the historical, ephemeral nature of a social formation and not about its eternity. When a regime no longer corresponds to the needs and the possibilities of a given epoch, sooner or later it will be brought down, because ultimately people shape their own history. This is a lesson we should apply at home. Their power rests on our weakness, on our acceptance of There Is No Alternative (TINA).

In western Europe, where I live, the immediate struggle is over the acceptance of the American economic model. For several years now, the international financial establishment has been telling Europeans that they must follow the example of the U. S. This is not the old "American dream" which dazzled Europeans immediately after the last war. It is a sort of "American nightmare." In the globalized, deregulated world you live in, Europeans are told, you can't afford national health services; a decent minimum wage; some security of tenure; public pensions and so on. But western Europeans are attached to their collective social conquests and the recent electoral unpopularity of conservative parties is largely due to their attempt to dismantle welfare states. Today, it will be objected, the situation is quite different, since out of the fifteen governments of the European Union eleven are dominated by members of the Socialist International and two of the most important prime ministers, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder, are apparently showing an alternative road. Alas, their "Third Way" has little to do with the one the so-called revisionists had in mind in eastern Europe in the fifties, when they were hoping to get rid of Stalinist repression without replacing it with capitalist exploitation. The new "Third Way" is nothing of the sort. It is not an alternative to the American model either. Lying somewhere between Reaganism and the old Social Democracy, it looks more like an attempt to adapt the American model to European tastes and to smuggle it across the Atlantic in new disguise.

If we accept the modern definition of Social Democracy as the reformist management of the existing society, then Social Democracy is now faced with a historic dilemma, because what its leaders are now being asked to preside over is the counter-reformist management of capitalist society. Blair and Schroeder seem quite willing to fulfil this function, even if the latter already has some trouble with his rank-and-file as a result. Lionel Jospin, the French prime min ister, gives the impression of hankering after the reformist past, though in actual practice he does little to play that part. His ambiguity is illustrated by his favorite formula, "market economy yes, market society no," which does not predict which will prevail when the two inevitably clash.

Actually, it is not surprising that Jospin should be the most reluctant since in the struggle to defend the welfare state the biggest battle so far was fought in France, in the "winter of discontent" of 1995. Paris was paralyzed by a transport strike and the whole country shaken by mass demonstrations. Indeed, future historians may treat that episode as an ideological turning point, as the first strike against TINA, because the French protesters were saying: "If this is the future you offer us and our children, to hell with your future, alternative or no alternative." This refusal is historically important since as long as we accept or internalize the assertion that no other solution is possible, we will not be looking seriously for one. But this negative stand is only the beginning, the foundation on which to begin the

search for a different society. A mass social movement will not gather real momentum unless guided by such a vision. The existing form of capitalism has its own logic and will only be swept aside by another system with a logic and coherence of its own.

The idea of socialism as a model, imported or otherwise, handed down to disciplined marchers or obedient voters is gone – one hopes forever. On the other hand, because of what has happened in the past, it is idle to expect people to embark on long-term action, unless they know where they are heading, how they will get there and what democratic guarantees they will have on the way. The apparent contradiction can be overcome if we view socialism not as a model or blueprint, but as a project, a draft that will be reshaped by people as they advance stage by stage and develop their political consciousness through action. The important thing is to link sporadic skirmishes into a general offensive against the system. Not just workers, but ecologists, feminists, gays and lesbians must discover in their ownstruggles that their demands, their aspirations, their dreams cannot be fulfilled within the confines of the existing society. Our common task is to trample TINA; to revive the belief that life can be altered by collective political action.

At this turn of the millennium, with models smashed and great expectations shattered, we must resume our struggle without illusions and certitudes but with the conviction that quite a lot can be done. My impression is that western Europe, for all sorts of reasons, may be the first terrain in this major confrontation. But the conflict, because of the interdependence of our world, is by its very nature global and you Americans have a potentially crucial role to play. There is no curse, after all, damning the United States to be forever the dominant model of capitalist exploitation.The other certainty is that our task is urgent, for if we do not rapidly provide progressive solutions, there are plenty of candidates with reactionary and irrational ones who can.

Daniel Singer, the European correspondent of "The Nation," is a left-wing socialist belonging to no party. A journalist, broadcaster and lecturer, he is the author of many books, of which the latest Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours? *has just been published by* Monthly Review Press

The Prison Industrial Complex

BY KEVIN PRANIS

One of the most stunning as pects of the WTO demon strations, especially as they appeared on television, was the military character of the police response, which evoked Americans' deepest fears of authoritarian government. While new to most middle class and white Americans, militarized policing has become quite common in some low income urban and occasionally suburban neighborhoods occupied by police checkpoints by day, and federally-funded SWAT teams with assault rifles, and infra-red scopes by night.

On the second day of the Battle of Seattle, according to news reports, local police fired tear gas, flash-bang grenades and rubber bullets at a peaceful march completely unrelated to the WTO that took place far away from the downtown "security zone." Angry diners, shoppers and neighborhood residents came out into the street to face off with the police, who reportedly answered the mediation efforts of a city councilman with more tear gas. What news reports failed to mention was that the event was held to protest the impending execution of Philadelphia journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, whose case has become a focal point for opposition to America's growing "prison-industrial complex."

Two years ago, (*DL* July/August 1997), I argued that the exploding prison industrial complex has had a devastating effect on progressive politics by draining public coffers, disempowering traditionally progressive constituencies, exacerbating racism and fear, and eroding support for social provision and civil liberties. I also argued that the effort to build a grassroots movement of prisoners' families, students, educators, community and religious organizations to oppose prison expansion must be a priority for us. Two years later, at the close of the Twentieth Century, the United States is still engaged in a deadly "war on crime" over which we have little control. Prison and jail populations in the U.S. have grown by 200,000, and the Justice Policy Institute estimates *that the number will reach 2,000,000 after Valentine's Day 2000.*

That's the bad news. The good news is the general public is just beginning to grasp the enormity of the prison industrial complex, and to understand its social consequences, as a result of an explosion of media coverage. Thanks in part to the work of increasingly media-savvy criminal justice think-tanks, reporters are beginning to understand the scale of the prison system and discover that there are literally thousands of compelling stories and scandals to be mined from the questionable use of police informants, to the burgeoning population of elderly prisoners and to the impact of felony convictions on the voting rights of African-Americans.

A grassroots movement against the prison industrial complex is being born, led by prisoners and their families working through organizations like Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM), Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), and the November Coalition. In a number of states, these groups have helped achieve modest but significant victories, like FAMM's successful fight against the most egregious Michigan sentencing laws. Other coalitions of criminal justice policy advocates, service providers, community organizations and some religious leaders have sprung up to work on specific policy issues, like New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws. While movement infrastructure is lacking, especially at the national level, the astounding success of the first Critical Resistance gathering, which drew more than 3,000 prison activists in September 1998, demonstrates the potential that exists.

There are hints that the struggle against the prison-industrial complex has the potential to fundamentally change thinking on race and class in America. The stark inequities and terrible abuses associated with the current criminal justice system seem to be provoking a crisis of conscience among some conservatives. Libertarians, in particular, have become active in efforts to reform drug laws, and while these efforts are consistent with libertarian principles, many have begun to recognize that the racial and class disparities in the effects of the laws go beyond the laws themselves.

The Prison Moratorium Project (PMP), which emerged from discussions between progressive students working with the DSA Youth Section, and former prisoners from the Harlem-based Community Justice Center, has been working to help build a broad national movement against prison expansion. Over the last four years, we have struggled to reign-in for-profit private prison corporations like Corrections Corporation of America, and food service giant Sodexho Alliance/Sodexho-Mariott Services, CCA's biggest investor. The PMP also worked with Hip Hop artists to educate youth through the forthcoming *No More Prisons* CD and we worked with unions and students to connect ncreased prison budgets to decreased funding for education.

By training and empowering young people, parents, educators and other allies to organize against the prison-industrial complex, and by creating bridges between youth and others that have a stake in a de-militarized future, we hope to help build the civil rights movement of the next millenium. We hope you will join us.

Kevin Pranis, former DSA Youth Section Organizer is Director of the Prison Moratorium Project.

An Interview with Francis Fox Piven

WITH ROB SAUTE

DL: *How did you come to be a radical?*

FP: Like a lot of people in the New York area, my parents were Russian Jewish immigrants. They were intuitive radicals even though they didn't have formal educations. I think they certainly influenced me. My father– when I saw him, which wasn't very often because he worked very long hours – always talked to me about world affairs. I remember him saying to me that you couldn't believe the capitalist press. So I asked him, "Then why do you read the newspaper all the time, Daddy?" And he said, "I read between the lines." Since I couldn't read at all yet – I was only about three or four – I studied between the lines to see what I could see, and I couldn't see a damn thing. That puzzled me – until I got it.

But I think that I actually really became a radical in the 1960s. Like so many people, I was very much influenced by the movements that welled up in the previous decade, and urban protests over issues like housing and welfare. I worked with tenant organizers and later I was very closely identified with the welfare rights movement. I continued through the 1970s to stay very close to the organizers that I had gotten to know in the 1960s. By that time, most were community organizers or had become union organizers. So that's how I became a radical. I think I was pre-disposed to it by my family, but then it was the actual experience. But what's also significant is that I have always enjoyed myself a lot.

DL: *Do you mean that you enjoy political work?*

FP: Yes. I think that the political stuff that I do is really where the joy comes from. I don't think I would find being an academic by itself especially enjoyable. I do what I do for *me* as well as a lot of other reasons. I do it fundamentally because that's the way I want to live and it gives me so much pleasure.

DL: *I'm interested in how the roles of being an academic and being a radical fit together. How do you deal with the tensions that arise?*

FP: The tensions are trivial. The basic fit is like a leather glove, but the tensions have to do with getting along with all of your colleagues, and getting just the job that you might want at the time that you want it, or getting nominated for this or that, or having your articles accepted by the main journals in your discipline. Those are tensions, I suppose, but they're really not very important. Especially not very important for somebody like me who came up occupationally at a time when there were a lot of jobs around. "It's easy for me to say," you might respond. And that's true. It's easy for me to say.

But the fit is that I study politics, and what I do is politics. And the fit is so good because the aspects of American politics that really interest me – I mainly study American politics, so I'm always interested in comparative references for American politics – have to do with power and equality and the potentialities for influence from below. Since that's also the kind of political activism that I engage in, I really do think that I learn something about what I'm trying to do from my academic world. And my academic world is informed by what I'm trying to do in the movement in which I participate.

DL: *What's a concrete example of the influence of one on the other?*

FP: I'll give you a concrete example from the 1960s. I became interested with Richard Cloward in the possibility of welfare rights organizing from some studies that we had done of the operations of the welfare department in New York City, which we later expanded to other cities. Partly those studies themselves were inspired by our knowledge of the Lower East Side and the poverty programs there. So we began to use survey data to estimate how many people who were formally eligible for welfare were not on welfare; who were in one way or another being repelled by welfare practices.

We came to the conclusion that the pool of eligible people was something in the order of two for every one that was on, so we began to think about what we could do with that. What kind of political momentum, political motion, could be generated out of that. We hit on the idea of trying to create a movement of people to ask for their full entitlements under welfare. Of course, everything gets shaped by many developments, and so the Welfare Rights Movement didn't take the form of helping people who were not on welfare get on welfare; it mainly took the form of helping people on welfare get their full benefits, and also helping them to repel home investigations and other intrusions. But the very fact that there were demonstrating crowds in the welfare centers helped change welfare practices and helped other people to get on the rolls. If you consider the other entitlement programs that were generated like the food stamp program, a lot of money was released to

poor people in the United States during that period.

Of course, many people would say, "Oh, but it was a failure because look what it led to in the end. It led to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996." But I think that that is a profoundly misleading observation, because it presumes that people can win institutional reforms once and for all. Nothing is ever won once and for all from below. What people get from below has to be fought for again and again and again. I'm reconciled to that conclusion.

DL: *When you wrote,* Poor People's Movements, *you were somewhat skeptical about the ability of permanent, political organizations to carry out social change. Has your thinking changed about that?*

FP: Properly considered, it's a complicated and differentiated argument about poor people and marginalized people. I'm not saying that an organization like DSA cannot be a permanent organization. Business people form permanent organizations, students can form quasi-permanent organizations that will last until they get out of school. So people in different positions can form political organizations that have more durability than the organizations that are formed at the bottom of society. It is also true that with a lot of grit and determination, activists or organizers can sustain relatively modest permanent organizations even during periods when there is little activism. the IAF, .and the faith-based PICO are examples of that. And we could go down the list of modest community organizing efforts that have managed to endure.

Maybe these organizations do some good in the sense that they keep alive certain ideals of self-empowerment and justice and so on. But the problem is that people don't win large gains through that kind of political influence. They win large gains at times when electoral instability combines with and encourages the rise of protest movements which are really threatening to power elites – political and economic elites. I think American history is just indisputable on that score. At those times, people who are committed to the model of building permanent organizations, member by member, incentive by incentive, can often be counted on to try to stop protests just because they have another model. They know the *right way* to do it. The people raging in the streets are the people ready to defy landlords, or defy the marshalls who are evicting people from their farms. But those people, they aremaking a mistake. "*We* know how to do it," is what the organizers say on those occasions, and that's not constructive.

DL: *So how do we move beyond that?*

FP: By becoming a little bit more humble about our knowledge and talent to construct institutions that will persist and solve the problems of this society – problems of terrible marginalization and inequality - without the need for protest from below. I think that too many people on the Left historically have thought that their institutional designs could be implemented once and for all. But there is no once and for all in politics – there just isn't.

DL: *It sounds like you are saying in part that change won't happen until certain conditions are met. So what should activists do in the meantime?*

FP: We test the waters. *We always act as though more is possible*, and every fortieth time or so more *will* be possible. Look at how many demonstrations occurred before protests erupted in Seattle. Partly at meetings of the WTO, and also at meetings of other international organizations. So we must keep trying. And that's the way radicals have always done it. They've always thought they could read the political situation, but only once in a while are they right.

DL: *Do you think radicals are only right about the political tides by accident?*

FP: Partly by accident. You know, social science is not very good at these things.

DL: *What have been the most important American political movements of the Twentieth Century?*

FP: The labor movement and the civil rights movement. Both of them are important for two reasons. One, because they did in fact secure very important changes. They really did reconstruct American institutional life, although in neither case in the enduring way that the participants hoped for or assumed. But the labor movement brought unionism and something of an ideology of class and class relations to American political life. And I think that the existence of unions until the 1980s, however tired, ossified, and corrupt they were, also created some space in regular politics (as opposed to movement politics) for the Left. It's good to have a space in regular politics for the Left, for an organized Left, for a normal, everyday Left. The labor movement was also important for the concessions that it won workers. It created a substantial morgage-holding working class – big, burly guys who thought they were really something. But before unions they were just as marginalized in a way as poor people are today. Every movement I know of has tried to imitate unions because unions really won something, something significant.

DL: *What specifically were the good and bad aspects of that?*

FP: Well, the bad is that not every movement can follow the model of the unions. Creating a permanent organization with the check-off. Unions only get the check-off from the company because they moderate the disruptive potential of workers. And the check-off is very harmful to the internal culture of unions because it orients union leadership to company management rather than to their own rank and file. In any case, you're not going to get a check-off from the welfare department for organizing welfare recipients. But don't think that

welfare rights leaders didn't try to do that. They did. Amazing! And that's the influence of the labor movement. That's a good influence.

The civil rights movement was at least as important as the union movement because the victories that the civil rights movement won destroyed forever the Southern pernicious, strangulating influence on national politics in the United States. Once Blacks won the vote and the elimination of at least legal apartheid in the South, the one-party South with its urban oligarchy was dead. And with that, its influence on the Democratic Party, its influence on national politics was dissipated. So the civil rights movement was enormously important, not just for black people, but it was enormously important for the *potential* maturation of American politics.

The second accomplishment of the civil rights movement is that it did significantly free Blacks. Not only in . the racist, feudal South, but in the development of a Left in the United States that was enormously inhibited by internal colonialism and internal racism. The civil rights movement also became a model, just like the union movement did, for a lot of the movements of the 1960s.. It was the mother movement for movements all over the world. Everybody – tstudents, village women in India – *everybody* was paying attention to the strategies, and the music, and the slogans of the American civil rights movement.

DL: *What do you think of the anti-WTO movement?*

FP: I think it's wonderful! I think that maybe, just maybe, we are on the cusp of a new period of protest. I've been saying that for at least a year because of various types of activism that I think are escalating. The sweatshop groups, the living wage campaigns, the students at undergraduate colleges who are – almost overnight – suddenly preoccupied with economic injustice issues. You can give a talk even at someplace like the Rochester Institute of Technology where I recently

Congressman Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.) addresses the delegates and guests at DSA's Convntion in San Diego.

spoke and students pop up and say, "Do you know that janitors only get six dollars an hour in this university?" That just would not have happened a few years ago. I think ...that the actual facts about inequality in the United States have become so extreme, so grotesque, so bizarre, that it's penetrating parts of society that are not directly affected, or that are even beneficiaries of that inequality.

DL: *Could it be a return to a 1960s mindset?*

FP: Yes, I think so.. I think they are affected by events around them, by news about inequality. High school students I've heard talk about Nike, and say, "*They* are wearing those sneakers that were made by slave laborers in Malasia." I think that that the sweatshop movement is encouraging; it is focused on things that students can do using their consumer power. And I think that helps a lot in encouraging activism. Its not just, "Oh, we can go around talking about the tragedy of apartheid in South Africa."

DL: *Are there strategices that DSA can pirsue that will further a progressive agenda?*

FP: I think DSA ought to be much more oriented toward these new protest movements. And DSA ought to be, not so much recruiting from them, but working with them and carrying news about them in its publications.

DL: *What do you think would help DSA become a more powerful, useful organization?*

FP: And I think that DSA and itspublications ought to be much more preoccupied with questions of movement strategy -- what movements are doing, what they can do – than they have been in the past. This is not to criticize what we've done in the past so much as to say that maybe we are entering a different period and something else is possible.

DL: *Do you think there are some new issues out there?*

FP: I think that identity politics is not over, but that it's being overshadowed by the rising new concern about economic injustice. And that's a good thing as far as I'm concerned because it will bring people together.

DL: *Do you have any advice or anything to say about the new millennium to activists?*

FP: Only this. Political struggle is *always* necessary, and it's *sometimes* possible, and we should always be trying to find out if this is the time that it's possible by undertaking the exemplary actions that test the waters.

Frances Fox Piven is a Vice-chair of Democratic Socialists of America

Cover Art

Barbara Smaller is a contract artist with the *New Yorker*. Her cartoons have also appeared in numerous other publications including *Utne Reader*, *Dollars and Sense* and *The New York Times Book Review*, as well as a weekly panel for *The Guardian*.

Class Matters

Economic Inequality and Black Politics

By Manning Marable

One of the primary litmus tests for evaluating the state of progressive politics throughout American history has been the character and viability of the black freedom movement. When African-American activism was at a high level, as in the desegregation struggles in the Jim Crow South of the 1960s, the most progressive currents within white American politics were inevitably strengthened. Protests around issues of racial inequality pushed forward the boundaries of democratic discourse, creating greater space for other progressive causes. Within the black freedom movement itself, there was a long and rich tradition of leaders and intellectuals who linked the politics of racial justice to the advocacy of socialism - such as W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Paul Robeson, Claudia Jones, Angela Y. Davis, Audre Lorde and Cornel West.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, black political activism has been defined largely by the struggle against racism. While issues of class were always seen as extremely important, there was a general recognition that race was the most powerful and pervasive social factor that determined the life chances of most African-Americans. The liberal integrationists sought to overcome that racism by assimilation into the cultural and political mainstream of white America; .black nationalists have usually pursued empowerment by self-segregation and the establishment of all-black socioeconomic institutions. Both strategies.are preoccupied with the primary of race in the articulation of politics.

At the dawn of the 21st century - more than a generation after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act -- the realities of black politics have fundamentally changed. The rapid growth of class stratification within black America is actually creating three very divergent "black communities": a black professional, managerial and entrepreneurial middle class that is doing remarkably well financially; a black working class that has been steadily losing ground; and the black poor -- undr or unemployed and unskilled -- with those working jsurviving near the official poverty levels in circumstances of socioeconomic devastation.

So it is impossible to talk about "black politics" unless one begins with the reality of class. The fundamental problem that will define U.S. politics in the first decades of the 21st century is the spiraling growth of inequality in American life.

One might say that inequality is not new in U.S. society, and has always existed. What is new is the degree of income stratification and class polarization we are now experiencing, which is really unlike anything since the Gilded Era of the 19th century.

Most Americans know that household income levels are sharply stratified by race. In 1998, the median household income for African Americans was $25,351, only 60 percent of median white household income of $42,439. According to a report by United For a Fair Economy entitled *Shifting Fortunes*, the average white household in 1995 had $18,000 in financial wealth (net worth minus equity in owner-occupied housing). By contrast, average African-American household's possessed a grand total of two hundred dollars. The typical Hispanic household's financial wealth was zero.

But these statistics don't reveal the growing class stratification that in many ways cuts across racial boundaries. Alan Wolfe, director of the Center for Religion and American Public Life, recently observed in the New York Times that *the 1990s will be remembered as a time of Reaganism without Reagan...the incomes of the best-off Americans have risen twice as fast as those of middle-class Americans."* Back in 1980, the average top corporate executive's salary was 42 times higher than the median income of a factory worker. By 1998, the top executives were taking home 419 times more than factory workers.

The fundamental problem that will define U.S. politics in the first decades of the 21st century is the spiraling growth of inequality in American life.

Wolfe makes some excellent points about the growing class hostility of most Americans about the wealthy. "The fact that Americans hope to become rich does not mean that they admire the rich," Wolfe states. Corporate executives' salaries, stock options and company perks deeply trouble people "because such rewards have become disconnected from the efforts that go into earning them." The upper one percent of all U.S. households has a greater combined net wealth than the bottom ninety-five percent of all households.

Most working Americans resent

this, because they know that they are working harder and for longer hours, but that their wages are smaller than a decade ago. Last August, the Economic Policy Institute reported that in 1997, the median inflation-adjusted earnings of the average worker were 3.1 percent lower than in 1989. Six out of ten U.S. workers earn either the same or less than they did ten years ago. The EPI also notes that the typical married couple family in the U.S. worked a total of 247 more hours in 1996 than in 1989 -- six additional weeks of work for less income.

There is a growing division between working class households whose incomes have held steady or slightly improved, vs. the "working poor," people just above the poverty line but below the levels considered a "living wage." Since the draconian Welfare Act of 1996, growing numbers of children are being trapped into poverty or near-poverty. In 1996, more than one in five children were poor, up from 16.4 percent in 1979. The EPI also notes that 39.9 percent of all African-American children and 40.3 percent of all Latino children live in poverty today.

The challenges for black politics and the left is that most liberals and Democrats don't want to talk about class. After all, it was Clinton who signed the 1996 Welfare Act. Both political parties, in varying degrees, pursue policies that directly contribute to class stratification and the vast concentrations of wealth among the upper two or three percent of all households. To reverse these devastating trends we should demand an increase and index in the minimum wage back to its 1968 level, which today would be $7.65 in inflation-adjusted dollars. We should also support the various campaigns for a living wage, defined as the amount of money necessary to support a family of four above the poverty level. In the past five years, living wage initiatives have been approved in 32 cities and counties nationwide, with over 70 other campaigns being waged currently. Some cities have now begun to establish a two-tiered living wage. In Detroit, for instance, jobs with benefits must be offered at a minimum of $8.25 per hour; for jobs without benefits, the living wage mandated is $10.29 per hour. In San Jose, city contractors are required to pay workers at least $9.50 per hour, double the minimum wage.

What does all this mean to the future of black politics? As powerful as race and racism are in determining the life chances to African-Americans, the politics of inequality will play a more significant and central role, both inside the black community, and in its relations with other groups. Class matters, and the battle for economic fairness will in many respects be the most fundamental factor in the future of African-American politics.

More than a century ago, conservative black educator Booker T. Washington proposed a strategy for black advancement within capitalism. Washington cautioned African-Americans not to agitate publicly for civil rights, arguing that white corporations and the Republican Party were black people's best friends. He called for building black capitalism, forging a close partnership between wealthy and powerful whites with the aspiring black entrepreneurial middle class.

It is a measure of the conservative times in which we live that many of the most articulate spokespersons within the black community regarding issues of social justice are gravitating toward this approach. This includes the Rev. Calvin Butts of Abyssinian Baptist Church, who has among other things publicly embraced reactionary New York City Mayor Giuliani, and aligned himself politically behind the administration of Republican Gov. Pataki. Former Congressman Floyd Flake became an unofficial Giuliani spokesman inside the black community during the 1997 mayoral campaign. Civil rights movement veterans like Rev. Wyatt T. Walker support the development of charter schools, which in the long run undermine the viability of public schools, which the vast majority of black children attend.

Leading the pack of black entrepreneurs headed to Wall Street is the Rev. Jesse Jackson. In January 1997, Jackson initiated the Wall Street Project—designed to assist entry of minority-owned firms into financial markets and corporate America.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Project has been widely endorsed by many government officials and corporate executives, such as Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Arthur Levitt, Jr., and Citigroup, Inc. co-chair Sandy Weill. Jackson's top point man in the project, attorney Thomas Hart, has "earned tens of thousands of dollars in consulting fees from minority-owned firms looking to cash in on some of the new financing opportunities."

To a considerable extent, Jackson's current strategy is a throwback to Operation PUSH's "corporate covenants" of twenty years ago. Now Jacson's Wall Street Project is campaigning against the racial hiring policies of Telecommunications Inc. (TCI), charging that the company deliberately prevented upgrades in cable service in poor communities. When AT&T then announced its intention to buy TCI, the Wall Street Project said that it would use all means to block the sale, unless there were real changes in workplace diversity and opportunities for black entrepreneurs.

AT&T chief executive C. Michael Armstrong, wanting to avoid bad publicity, and participated in several meetings initiated by Jackson. Armstrong agreed to retain several minority companies to underwrite the bonds for acquisition of TCI. More recently, Jackson's Wall Street Project forced MCI WorldCom to the negotiating table. It won an agreement that commits MCI WorldCom "to use minority-owned investment banking, pension fund and financial service companies."

Even the Rev. Al Sharpton, head of the National Action Network, has followed his political mentor's lead into corporate headquarters and investment banks. Sharpton is launching his own program to force Wall Street firms to do business with

black owned companies. Sharpton promises to shake things up on Wall Street: "I'm coming downtown, just like King Kong."

The problem with these minority-corporate partnerships is that they benefit only a tiny number of black executives, and foster the illusion that the corporate sector can be persuaded to "do the right thing" on race. The vast majority of African-Americans are working people, not investment bankers. Nearly one third of all African-American holdings actually have a zero or negative net worth; that is, a greater amount of debt that their combined financial assets. The poverty rate for blacks and Latinos at about 26 percent is more that three times higher than that of whites. How many working class and poor African American families will actually benefit from the successes of the Wall Street Project?

Don't get me wrong. I have absolutely nothing against black-owned businesses, so long as they provide goods and services with a degree of social responsibility to the black community. But Jesse and Al would make a more significant contribution to the black freedom movement if they placed greater emphasis on income distribution strategies, and the campaign for a living wage to support families.

Twenty years ago, sociologist William Julius Wilson predicted that. dismantling legal segregation structures would reduce race as a social force. .A decade later, Cornel West insisted that "race matters." Both scholars were correct. From the tragedies of Amadou Diallo and Abner Louima, to the death row case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, race clearly matters in the areas of criminal justice, access to housing, health services, transportation and in thousands of other ways. But a race-based politics, a strategy that defines political objectives in narrow racialized categories, will inevitably fail to transform U.S. society. It is not that race has so much declined in significance, but that class has greatly increased in its significance, as the fundamental factor affecting African-Americans, Latinos and millions of working people. Black and progressive political forces must construct an effective critique of the growing inequalities of class that can serve as the basis of the construction of a new democratic movement for social justice and economic fairness.

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An Exchange with Alisse Waterston

With Solveig Wilder

Much of the emphasis on the Left has shifted away from the human side of oppression to larger global economic issues. In many classrooms today, social science majors are being told to focus more on statistics and data and less on personal accounts. Alisse Waterston's Love, Sorrow and Rage: An Urban Ethnography for Our Times, *moves in the other direction.*

DL: *Why do you focus on the personal stories of homeless women in New York City?*

AW: I came to the writing of this book nearly twenty-five years ago as a young school teacher working in a poor Brooklyn neighborhood. Prior to that, my college studies taught me that deprivation and depravity are rooted in poverty culture. My own experiences did not fit with this explanation of the world, and I looked to anthropology for answers. For anthropologists, research means doing ethnographic fieldwork, getting to know intimately the subjects of your work. This allows us to question given assumptions, and so provides much-needed insights into human behavior and interactions. In writing this book, I want to share with readers what the women are like and my experiences with them. Take the time to know them, and discover people who share our same worries, our same desires and concerns. Their complex stories shatter our assumptions.

DL: *Why do you feel that the Left should focus more on the human side of suffering capitalism and conservative policies cause?*

AW: I think the portraits of the poor and theories of poverty that have received most attention during this century have to a large degree, succeeded in dehumanizing the poor, making it all too easy for the tabloid media and some politicians to further exploit the poor for ideological purposes. As we speak, New York's Mayor Giuliani has been doing just that. Building on well-established notions about the undeserving and disreputable poor, Mr. Giuliani has been blasting homeless New Yorkers as demons, pushing the poorest and most vulnerable among us further to the margins. In my view, these distorted portraits and explanations most favored by our mass media and reactionary leadership is purposeful misrepresentation -- a social and political project. Putting a human face on suffering might make it a little more difficult to sweep people away like so much garbage.

DL: *Is this an either/or, or can we emphasize both the personal and political sides of the capitalist condition?*

AW: It is absolutely *not* an either/or. However difficult it is to demonstrate the connections, *all* our individual life stories are linked to larger social and historical processes that are beyond the control of most people. I explore those connections in my book by taking up Paul Farmer's question, "By what mechanisms do social forces become *embodied* as individual experiences?" I believe quantitative data is very important here. In poverty research, for example, it is essential to look at hunger, housing, health, and so forth, as indicators of how well or poorly people are faring over time. As a researcher, my wish is to work collectively with other researchers to combine our findings and tell a more complete story.

The following is an excerpt from Alisse Waterston's book, Love, Sorrow and Rage: An Urban Ethnography for Our Times:

Annie Lafontant became homeless when she was just twenty-one years old. For most of the next three years, the young Haitian woman lived on the street and in subways, "but nobody around me knew I was homeless because of the way I look and keep myself," she tells me. It is easy to see how this is true, observing her fresh-faced look, her just-right lipstick, and the trim skirt and sweater set she always wears.

Annie is one among 50 poor women who live in Woodhouse, a facility designed to provide housing and other services for the destitute in New York City. Their life stories unfold as I sit with them at a kitchen table, preparing meals, talking, sharing intimacies.

This is the setting of my ethnographic research; in it, we hear from women like Annie, Hattie, and Dixie about what it is like to live on the street and how it feels to lose your mind, about the taste of crack cocaine and the sweetness of friendship.

The characteristics of the women of Woodhouse -- poor, homeless, mentally ill, "prostitutes" and "crack addicts" -- constitute that which the popular culture has handily demonized. Gendered and diseased, the women of Woodhouse represent collapse. In the popular imagination, these women make up the devil herself, to borrow from Frances Fox Piven's recent analytic description of poor women's role in America. We are well aware that economic restructuring has generated a surplus of poor people, though it is the poor who appear to be aberrant.

In these complacent times, the women of Woodhouse are particularly useful as an ideological tool. To be poor in America is first of all to be marked negatively. To be also homeless, mentally ill and drug addicted is to be thoroughly despised. Captured in stereotype, the women of Woodhouse are emblematic of all our social problems. Any one of their "attributes" signals the pressing social problems of the day; collected under one roof, they form its pow-

erful sign. Never mind that they are the results of a long process of impoverishment; they now signal disrepute and danger.

Ironically, the playing field started out with distinctions in political and economic power, inequalities rendered invisible by media propaganda and political rhetoric. In turn, these kinds of distinctions legitimate domination: we believe that those who rule deserve to, and "all the rest need supervision, guidance, reform, incarceration," as anthropologist Robert Crawford once wrote.

A Madness in Me

For the women of Woodhouse, each path has been different, but the anguish is all the same. Whether they were born into poverty or have fallen into it, theirs are stories about struggles for the rudiments of subsistence and the emotional struggles they face. In each story, we hear how fragile it is to have a home. For some, having no place to live is related to mental illness. For others, the "breakdown" comes later, after suffering one too many assaults. Others who seem to hang in the balance between emotional and material vulnerabilities are thrown over the edge by one last straw or another.

During the three years she was homeless, Annie frequented many a restaurant bathroom to keep clean and wash up. For the most part, she remained invisible and kept out of trouble. She was arrested only once. "You know," she begins the story, "those restaurants where you pay *after* you eat? Well, I went in and ordered lobster but I didn't have any money to pay for it." Annie's little splurge cost her two weeks in a Long Island jail.

Annie also tried staying in a couple of municipal shelters. She considers shelters "horrible and dangerous" and found the streets "a safer bet." Over several months last winter, Annie lived in the subway. "Oh my God," I blurt out, "I can't believe you lived in the subway in the *wintertime*." "It wasn't so bad," she answers, "the Number 7 train *is* pretty warm!"

Annie is tremendously concerned about living at Woodhouse. At times, she is overcome with a sense of dread and suffers a fear of being misunderstood and misinterpreted. "It's dangerous for me to live here because they can send you to a hospital or maybe prison," she says. She doesn't know exactly what she should do. One side of her says to drop everything and move to Haiti. But the other side of her says to stay where she is, let Woodhouse help her get through her current financial difficulties, and stick with her plan to finish school. Annie is already enrolled in a college program. She still hopes to complete her degree in a few years and become a schoolteacher. Annie resigns herself to reality. "I guess I'll stay here for now. I'm borrowing money from Woodhouse and waiting for my public assistance to come through." Annie is firm in her decision not to apply for SSI, monthly payments provided to disabled people, because "I don't want my name to be in the computer and I don't want to have problems in the future."

Annie has plenty of examples of just how risky living at Woodhouse can be. Recently, she met a young man who seemed interested in getting to know her better. When he called her at home, he got through to the main switchboard at Woodhouse. As he later reported to Annie, the young man made some inquiries about the residence and was told by the receptionist, "Woodhouse is a home for the mentally ill." Annie is devastated and deeply ashamed. "It should be up to me when and what I tell him about Woodhouse," Annie asserts, "and it's not that I was going to lie to him about my circumstances."

"I want to get out of here," Annie moans, "I can't stand institutional living." She reports more incidents. The other day, she had an argument with Teri. Annie says Teri yelled at her for no good reason. Annie argued back. It escalated, and Annie began screaming and cursing at Teri. "I used the 'f' curse," Annie confesses. "And then I got in trouble. The staff told me I can't use language like that and get into fights like that." In her own home, Annie explains, "I wouldn't have to answer to anybody. It's not that I like walking around cursing at people or yelling at people, but in my own home, I'd be able to, without there being 'consequences.'"

Annie sets herself apart from the other women at Woodhouse. She insists, "I'm not like them, and I'm not mentally ill." Annie says they've put her on Haldol, an antipsychotic medication. She tries to hold back the tears. "I don't like the medicine," Annie cries. "I don't like its side effects and I don't always take it, even though they think I am." When she started taking the medicine, Annie didn't get her period for two months. That tells *her* something's not right with it.

Annie's chart reads like a textbook case of schizophrenia, mostly having to do with delusions, hallucinations, incoherence and inappropriate affect. Annie believes her behavior is odd only to North Americans. She insists that "a Haitian psychiatrist, knowledgeable in 'psychologie de Loa' would understand that I'm not insane or crazy." Episodes interpreted and treated as psychosis by those around her are to Annie simply a reflection of "a spiritual problem I need to work through." Annie says that during these so-called psychotic episodes, she is perfectly aware of what she is doing and what is happening all through it. "When I speak to myself in Creole," Annie tells me, "I'm just getting into my spiritual self. Any Haitian psychiatrist would be able to confirm that."

"I hate the food at Woodhouse," Annie once comments, "It's *foreign* food to me."

One day, Annie fell apart, almost pletely. Her case manager discovered Annie had been "cheeking her meds for two months." Annie became hysterical, once again manifesting what those around her consider to be bizarre behavior -- shaking uncontrollably while hurling foul-mouthed insults at anyone in her path. That day, Annie was given the choice to take her medication or be hospitalized.

They say she's a paranoid schizophrenic. I hear that's the "best" kind of schizophrenia to have – the one with "the best outcome" and the one that "goes into remission more often than the other forms." I manage to get hold of the pay-phone number on Annie's floor in the "psyche ward" at Bellevue. The message is always the same. "Annie doesn't want to come to the phone," they tell me.

Odd Women Out

"Mental illness is part of the potential of the human condition," Professor of Psychiatry Sander Gilman observes, "It has many possible manifestations, many causes, many outcomes." That the women are captives of the mental health system as well as carriers of the stigma associated with mental illness are clearly two aspects of its many possible "outcomes."

Dixie tells us that people "think we're murderers." If not imagined as "mad-dog criminals," the mentally ill are, at the least, considered incompetent. "We are all afraid of these 'mad people,' as they have been called over and over in both the media and official pronouncements...and we must defend ourselves...against [them]," Gilman summarizes the prevailing attitude.

"Oh," Hattie sighs, "I'd like a man who is normal, not like me"; and Gilman notes, "No matter if we say that they live in their own world, the mentally ill do respond to this stereotyping of themselves." "I'm an odd woman," Felice tells us; and Gilman writes, "Since they must live in our world, the stereotype of madness dominates and shapes their realities." No wonder Annie is devastated, deeply ashamed when a gentleman caller is told "Woodhouse is a home for the mentally ill."

Given the heavy load of ideology attached to schizophrenia, Annie cannot accept this diagnosis of her condition. She insists she is not like the rest of "them" and borrows from notions of cultural relativism to argue her case. To Annie, this mental illness is nothing more than a social construction. Annie denies its reality for herself, and she must therefore also reject Woodhouse, the means through which this "illness" would be constructed and become real. Annie does what Gilman warns us against. "The palpable signs of illness, the pain and suffering of the patient, cannot be simply dismissed as a social construction."

There is more. Annie is not afraid only of stigma, but dreads other consequences that would follow diagnosis. She refuses to be entered "into the computer [because] I don't want to have problems in the future." Annie does not want to surrender the little freedom and autonomy she retains. To accept Woodhouse's offer of help would be to step into the system and lose all control. As she puts it, "It's dangerous for me to live here, because they can send you to a hospital or maybe prison." After all the illness and its pain are real, how these are understood and handled is socially determined. Annie has perfectly valid concerns about the consequences of her diagnosis, though these might easily be dismissed as her "paranoia." Among the everyday results for the mentally ill, according to Gilman, is their "isolation as if they had contagion...and the sense that they form another world that is beyond, or below, or outside of our own." If we can bear to hold onto this, Annie is at once mentally ill (schizophrenic, and she could benefit from the medication) and absolutely right to fear the institution and what its representatives can do to ruin the rest of her life. In the end, the pain of her illness cannot be denied (whether sheadmits it or not) and the system eventually takes her anyway. This is the tragic story of one young woman trapped by contradictions in the practice and ideology of mental illness.

The contradictions are dizzying. Woodhouse women are at once vulnerable and strong, failures and survivors. They are at once in need of "help," "healing," "teaching," which in turn is paternalistic and infantalizing, and, at the same time, they are in need of respect, freedom and autonomy, independence. Woodhouse is at once a home, nurturing, healing, caring, embracing and it is also an institution, precarious, naming and labeling, part and parcel of constructing otherness and essentializing women's experiences with poverty, homelessness, mental illness. Just as the women signify our social problems, Woodhouse is emblematic of our social solutions, always fragmented and partial.

Alisse Waterston is an urban anthropologist.

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The Social Democratic Welfare State: Achievements, Crisis and Future

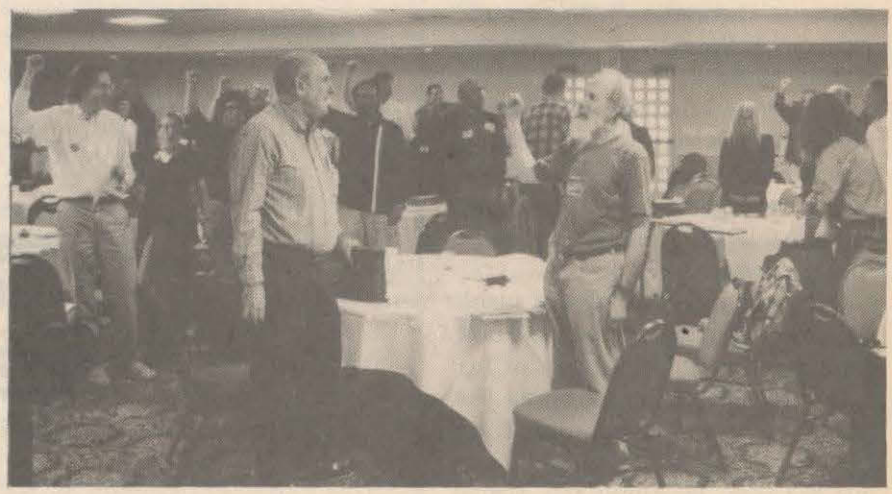
By John D. Stephens

Twenty years ago, when I wrote *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*, the radical transformation of capitalism was actually part of the agenda of European social democracy in many countries. After having effectively abandoned the vision of socialism in the early post war period, most social democratic parties moved to the Left in the 1970s, adopting proposals for greater worker control in the workplace and greater social or worker ownership of the means of production. The Swedish social democrats had adopted the wage earner fund proposal, which, in its original form, would have entailed the gradual socialization of production in the country, and the French Left had made extensive social ownership part of its common platform. With the election of Mitterrand in 1981 and the return of the Swedish social democrats to government the next year, it appeared for a fleeting moment that these radical dreams might be realized.

I do not need to remind *DL* readers that it was not long until the French socialist government reversed its course. The reversal of course was attributed to vulnerability of the country to international capital and currency flows. In Sweden, the social democrats watered down the wage earner fund proposal and what was passed was liquidated by the bourgeois government elected in 1991. While it is difficult to connect the demise of the wage earner funds directly to international capital flows, the economic difficulties of Sweden that led to the bourgeois election victory have been frequently linked to "globalization" by commentators on both the left and the right. On the right, neo-liberal critics of social democracy claimed that the internationalization of economic relations and of trade and financial markets, had exposed the costs imposed by generous welfare states and labor market regulations, and thus these had to be cut back to restore competitiveness or the country in question would suffer in terms of slowed growth and increased unemployment. On the Left, social democracy's defenders lamented that increased capital mobility had not only deprived social democracy of macroeconomic tools to fight unemployment and stimulate growth, it had also strengthened capital's hand vis-à-vis governments, making it possible for capital to demand lower taxes and less regulation. Thus, it was not primarily that globalization stood in the way of deepening social democracy's achievement but, rather, that the crowning achievement of post war social democracy, full employment and the universal and comprehensive welfare state, was now in danger.

It was the unemployment crisis of the early 1990s in Sweden and Finland and, to a lesser extent, Norway, that appeared to seal the case for the argument that the new era of globalization inevitably meant a rollback of social democracy's full employment welfare state. As of the late 1980s, these three countries seemed to have the formula for success as they had avoided the high unemployment characteristic of continental Europe, and had extremely high labor force participation rates due primarily to the high labor force participation of women, made possible by the extensive day care, parental leave, and other such policies cushioning parenting and work. By 1993-94, the situation had changed as unemployment had risen to 6% in Norway, 8% in Sweden, and 18% inFinland. It appeared that the social democratic model did not work anymore.

Based on extensive quantitative analysis and comparative case studies of welfare state reforms in advanced capitalist societies, Evelyne Huber and I have argued that the neo-liberal critics and pessimistic defenders of the social democratic welfare state were too quick to sound the death knell of social democracy. Given the latest glowing reports on the Swedish economy, we can say, with the benefit of hindsight, that we were correct. In fact we can lay to rest all that chatter heard once on the *Left* to denigrate the achievement of social democracy. Even among academics sym-



Convention delegates conclude session in song!

pathetic to social democracy, it was claimed that the movement had achieved nothing. The welfare state was not a distinctly social democratic project and, moreover, it did not redistribute income between classes, only between generations.

Today, almost no one defends this view. It is widely conceded among social scientists studying welfare states that social democratic governments, particularly in Nordic nations, not only were responsible for welfare state expansion, but also that they built a type of welfare state that is universalistic, solidaristic, and highly redistributive, both between classes *and* genders. One of the social scientific breakthroughs that has buttressed this conclusion was the closely comparable income distribution data compiled by Luxembourg Income Surveys (LIS). Conventional measures of income inequality are much lower for the social democratic welfare states and some of the Northern European continental welfare states where social democracy has also been influential. Poverty rates are lower for two vulnerable grooups, the aged and single mothers, are lower than in other industrial countries.

As *DL* readers know, income inequality has risen in the United States though mainly because of developments in the labor market, not welfare state retrenchment. The biggest increase in inequality, however, was in the United Kingdom, where Thatcher's attacks on unions and welfare state cuts helped push up levels of inequality. By contrast, a recent study of annual data comparable show that there has been hardly any increase in inequality in the Nordic countries *despite the large rise in unemployment.* In fact, poverty among single mothers actually declined in Sweden and Norway to 3% and 8% respectively. One could not ask for a better testament to the effectiveness of these countries welfare state safety nets.

Nevertheless, welfare state cuts were pervasive if moderate in Northern continental Europe and the Nordic countries and, along with the rise in unemployment, developments

would seem to call these models into question. The developments are linked since the cutbacks were a response to the rise in unemployment. It is the timing and severity of the rollbacks that argues that they were largely unemployment driven. The countries where unemployment rose early initiated cuts in the mid-1970s; the countries where unemployment rose late continued to expand welfare state entitlements until the late 1980s. The countries where unemployment levels remained very high for a long time (e.g. the Netherlands) made deeper cuts than the countries where they remained more moderate (e.g. Norway). Quite simply, with the rise in unemployment, there were more people dependent on the welfare state and fewer people paying taxes to support it. Thus, benefits had to be cut or taxes had to be raised or both, and since it is difficult to increase taxes in hard economic times, the solution even under social democratic governments involved some benefit cuts.

Given the crucial role that the rise in unemployment has had in stimulating welfare state retrenchment, one has to seek to understand the reasons for the dramatic increases in unemployment in the eighties and early nineties. Here I can only summarize the arguments we make elsewhere at length. Let me dispense with the standard neo-liberal argument on trade openness, exposing the countries with generous welfare states and high wages to trade competition that made them uncompetitive in ever more open world markets. In fact, the generous welfare states of Northern Europe were developed in very trade-open economies in which the performance of the export sector was pivotal for the economic welfare of the country. These welfare states were constructed to be compatible with export competitiveness.

In the case of the Christian Democratic welfare states, the rise in unemployment was partly due to their inability to absorb the increasing entry of women into the labor force either through an expansion of low wage private service employment as in the liberal welfare states or through the expansion of public services as in the social democratic welfare states. In the cases of Finland, Sweden, and to a lesser extent Norway, government policy mistakes strongly contributed to, indeed may have created the crisis. All three countries deregulated their financial markets in the eighties which led to booms in consumer spending and skyrocketing real estate prices and to overheating of the domestic economy and wage inflation. In the bust that followed the boom, property values collapsed which caused bank insolvency and consumer retrenchment, which in turn aggravated the deep recession. The bank bailout cost the Swedish government 5% of GDP and the Finnish government 7% of GDP, greatly adding to the deficit in both countries.

The present employment crisis in Europe has a number of causes. One can begin with the contribution of the debt build-up of the seventies to the current high levels of interest rates. This legacy, plus the development of the European Monetary System, the collapse of the Soviet Union, German reunification, the Maastricht accord . and in combination, to the extremely austere monetary and fiscal policy

now prevalent in Europe. With open financial markets and the EMS system of fixed exchange rates, interest rates in European countries were determined by financial markets, and given the pivotal role of Germany in the European economy, this increasingly meant that the Bundesbank set European interest rates, imposing its traditional conservative policies on the rest of the region. The collapse of the Soviet Union and with it the Soviet economy sent a negative shock to all countries with exports to the Soviet Union, a shock which was a major blow to the Finnish economy, where Soviet trade accounted for 25% of exports, and a minor one to a number of others. The budget deficits caused by German reunification stimulated an exceptionally austere response on the part of the Bundesbank which was then communicated to the rest of Europe. The convergence criteria contained in the Maastricht accord pressed further austerity on all governments, including those not committed to becoming EMU members, such as Sweden, and even on those outside of the EU, such as Norway.

The recovery of the Nordic countries in the late 1990s despite the austere macro-economic policy followed by most European governments and central banks strongly supports our argument that policy mistakes and economic conjunctures were the main causes of the rise in unemployment and thus the welfare state crisis in the Nordic social democratic welfare states. Budgets are now balanced or in surplus in all four Scandinavian countries, interest rates have fallen, and interest differentials against the German Mark have shrunk or disappeared. Unemployment has fallen to under 6% in Denmark and Sweden, and Norway is experiencing labor shortages in many sectors. While Finland's unemployment rate remains at 10%, it has been brought down from a high of 18%. In Sweden, growth this year and the following two years is expected to be among the highest in the advanced industrial world and unemployment is projected to fall to 4% by 2001. While the Christian Democratic welfare states as a whole face serious employment problems, the two most generous welfare states on the continent, the Netherlands and Austria, have had unemployment rates of 6% in the last few years, which is substantially under the European average.

Does this mean the Golden Age is back and all the talk of globalization means nothing? Unfortunately, no. The deregulation of international capital flows has deprived governments of tools that they once used to promote growth and reduce unemployment. In the Golden Age of post war growth up to the early 1970s, Norway, Finland, Sweden and some continental countries, such as Austria and France, used capital controls to set interest rates below international market rates to stimulate investment, something they can no longer do without suffering a depreciation of their currency. As a result of decontrol of domestic financial markets stimulated by international financial deregulation, government's ability to privilege business investors over other borrowers became more limited. External financial decontrol also limits a government's ability to employ fiscal stimulation as a tool, as fiscal deficits are considered risky by financial markets and either require a risk premium on interest rates or put downward pressure on foreign exchange reserves. There is little doubt that globalization has also strengthened the hand of capital in negotiations over the configuration of taxation.

Nevertheless, it can be said that Nordic social democracy has successfully defended itsachievements..The discussion is no longer about what additional cuts must be introduced but rather about which cutbacks to restore, which new reforms should be introduced, and how the tax burden on ordinary workers might be lightened. I want to close by underlining the depth of the achievement of the social democratic welfare state in reducing class and gender inequalities. For our early social democratic forebears, social policy took second place to the quest for socialism in part because they could not imagine that so much could be achieved within the context of democratic capitalism.

John D. Stephens is a professor of political science, and has co-authored Capitalist Development and Democracy, *among other books. His writings have been used by the DSA Economics of Socialism Working Group.*

Opening session DSA National Convention.

Coming Attractions

In the autumn of 1958, two previously feuding groups on the Left — the Independent Socialist League (ISL) led by Max Shachtman, along with its youth affiliate the Young Socialist League (YSL), and the Socialist Party (SP) led by Norman Thomas, along with its youth affiliate the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) joined forces in a unity convention. Although this may seem a rather minor footnote to the history of American left-wing sectarianism, the event would profoundly affect the future career and outlook of one veteran of the YSL, a thirty year-old socialist named Michael Harrington, as described in an excerpt from Maurice Isserman's forthcoming biography of DSA's founding Chair. Editors Note.

In the months following the merger in 1958, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) numbers were still pitifully small: the group counted two hundred and thirty members in thirteen chapters nationwide: fifty-five in New York, twenty-five in Chicago, twenty each in Los Angeles and Berkeley. But promising reports of YPSL's potential for growth had begun to filter back to SP headquarters from across the country. From Los Angeles, Charles Curtiss wrote to Socialist Party national secretary Irwin Suall in October: "The good news is that at the local meeting yesterday nine—count them nine—people applied for membership.... You can imagine our jubilation. In the scale of history nine is not very much But in relation to our recent past and our needs, nine new members is a giant step forward."

Michael set off immediately after the unity convention on a campus tour that lasted from September through December 1958. It was, he would later recall, the "truly climactic and most emotional" of all the touring he did in the 1950s, a "voyage [that] was a personal and political epiphany." Everywhere he went that autumn he found signs that "the sixties were beginning to stir within the fifties and our tiny socialist movement was emerging from its sectarian isolation." The tour took him to the former centers of YSL strength— Chicago, Antioch, and Oberlin (at the latter, two hundred and fifty students, a third of the student body, turned out to hear him.) But he also traveled to previously unexplored political territory. From Chicago he flew to Denver, and borrowed a car to drive to the University of Colorado at Boulder. Then he flew on to Albuquerque to speak at the University of New Mexico, and from there to Los Angeles. At Berkeley he spoke before an audience of about a hundred students, the first time in decades that a socialist speaker had been allowed on campus. There he also met with members of SLATE, a left-wing campus political party founded in 1957 that was busily laying the groundwork for the emergence of the free speech movement at Berkeley a few years hence. From the Bay Area he went on to Portland and Seattle where, his hosts casually offered him marijuana from a sugarbowl. He drove through the Cascade Mountains to give speeches in Walla Walla and Chesney, Washington, ending with a speech at the University of British Columbia before returning to New York.

In February 1959 Michael reported to the YPSL national executive committee on his tour, a report issued as a pamphlet entitled *The New Left: The Relevance of Democratic Socialism in America.* The term "New Left" was just now coming into use in several countries that Michael looked to as political models - a loose grouping of independent radicals in France were being called the "Nouvelle Gauche," while in Britain the influential journal *New Left Review* had begun publishing in that year, and "New Left clubs" sprang up around the country. The European New Leftists occupied a political space, in the words of Stuart Hall, a West Indian student at Oxford and a key figures in the early New Left, "where Stalinism ends and Social Democratic reformism begins...." Everywhere he traveled in the United States that Fall, Michael reported, he found "a mood of change." He found evidence of an American New Left being born in the civil rights movement, in the labor movement, in the "growth of liberal opposition within the Democratic Party," and in "a renewal of concern with our disastrous foreign policy." Taken together these suggested the possibility for an im-

minent "political realignment," the harbinger "not of a third party of protest, but of a real second party of the people."

Michael had spent much of his tour on campuses, and it was there, he argued, that "the prospects for a New Left in the United States are... most immediate..." Students were rejecting the "compromise politics of American liberalism." In the place of the tepid reformism of the Stevenson campaigns in 1952 and 1956, Harrington believed that within the nation's colleges and university communities: "the possibility exists within the next year of developing a mass Civil Rights movement. If this does take place, its effect on all other areas of student life—general political discussion, the socialist discussion movement, the revitalization of the National Student Association, and so on—will be tremendous...."

Everywhere Michael looked, he saw confirmation of great changes in the making. Unrest in the Soviet bloc and the de-Stalinization crisis in the American Communist Party swept away the notion, popularized in the writings of George Orwell and Hannah Arendt in the 1940s and early 1950s, that totalitarianism was the wave of the future. Michael argued that it was time for American intellectuals to discard the equally mistaken notion that the spread of "mass culture" had destroyed the possibility of democratic radicalism in the United States. A decade earlier, as an undergraduate at Holy Cross, Michael had argued that religious conservatives were the true radicals, standing up for their beliefs in an era of rampant materialism. Now, drawing on his experiences as an itinerant socialist agitator, Michael concluded that an "other America" (this was the first time he had used that phrase in print), that is, an alternative America —a nation of generous democratic values and artistic and social creativity, a nation not "dominated by gadgets and mass media" - lay preserved beneath the surface of a homogenized, profit-driven mass culture. In Seattle, for instance, where he had recently visited: "the people live in the presence of Mount Rainier..... Driving in the city, one never knows when the turning of a corner will reveal the aspect of beauty. On a clear day, each hour, each period, is given a special definition by the mountain. And this geography enters into a culture. It is, of course, intermingled with the history of the region: logging, the IWW, the Seattle General Strike of 1919...the weatherbeaten and brawling tradition of a port. Thus the coffee cups in many restaurants in Washington are bigger than they are in the East. Their shape developed out of an outdoor, working world and they are part of the texture of life in the area. At the trucker's stop in the Cascade mountains where breakfast is ten strips of bacon, four eggs, and a pile of home fries, these coffee cups are one of the forms defining a history and a way of living. They are related to the towering fact of the mountain."

As an apprentice revolutionary in the 1950s, Michael had come to pride himself on his rigorous scientific socialism. But no stretch of dialectical materialism could get him from Mount Rainier, to oversized coffee cups, to the Wobblies. There was instead a kind of unabashed lyricism in the passage reflective of Michael's earliest career aspirations as a poet. Long after abandoning his laureate aspirations, he retained the habit of viewing his possibilities and surroundings through a literary lens, a sometimes romantic projection of what a world in which he might play a role commensurate with his talents could be and should be like. His weatherbeaten Seattle longshoremen were the literary brothers to the "husky boilermaker from Frisco" who, in John Dos Passos' *The Big Money*, hopped a freight car to join the protest against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Although he would later be a critic of the more extravagant claims made on behalf of the revolutionary potential of the "youth culture" of the 1960s, Harrington's own radicalism at the turn of the decade contained within it a distinct countercultural strain. Not that he expected the masses to drop out and move to Greenwich Village. But he saw no contradiction between the personal impulses that had led him to the bohemian quarters of lower Manhattan and the larger social transformation to which he was committed.

As in traditional Marxism, there was a teleological element to Michael's socialism, but it was no longer, if it had ever really been, based on his acceptance of some iron law about the falling rate of profit or the like. It was instead closely related to the outsider's stance that he had chosen for his own cultural orientation. His youthful bohemianism was not shaped primarily by a desire to shock or deride his elders or mainstream culture. Rather, he assumed that what most people wanted, and lacked even in "the affluent society"of the 1950s and early 1960s, was some version of what he had already achieved in his personal life -- that is, the power of self-definition. Socialism would come — not in Michael's lifetime perhaps, but someday and inevitably — as people awakened to the claims of "moral solidarity," and the joyous potential of "community and meaningful work." Michael's radicalism had become hopeful, generous, and expansive. Although steeped in European intellectual theory (both Catholic and Marxist), his cultural impulses reflected a distinctly indigenous tradition of radical individualism. On the eve of the 1960s he had come to believe that if the "other Americas"— the *alternative* America of intellectuals and students and artists and his Greenwich Village neighbors, and the *excluded* America of the poverty-stricken and the dispossessed — could unite in coalition with a democratic labor movement, they would represent a powerful redemptive force for social justice.

Maurice Isserman teaches history at Hamiliton College, A DSAer he is the author of If I had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and Birth of the New *and co-author of* Dorothy Healey Remembers: A life in the American Communist Party. *His biography of Michael Harrington is scheduled for publication this Spring.*

Rethinking the Theory and Politics of Christian Socialism

BY GARY DORRIEN

It is a truism, often lamented by neoconservatives, that modern Christian theology has been largely a social democratic tradition. Most of the major Christian theologians of the past century have shared the dream of a transformed economic order.

From the social gospel progressivism of Washington Gladden and Shailer Mathews to the social gospel socialism of Walter Rauschenbusch and George Herron, to the Anglican social democracy of William Temple and Charles Raven and to the neo-orthodox socialism of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, to the neo-Marxism of Paul Tillich and the early Reinhold Niebuhr on to the Catholic socialism of Johannes Metz, Daniel Maguire and Gregory Baum to the liberation theologies of Gustavo Gutierrez, Rosemary Reuther, and James Cone to the ecotheologies of Sallie McFague, John B. Cobb, Jr. and Jurgen Moltmann, most of this century's major theologians have called for progressive-structural alternatives to capitalism. Theologians like myself have inherited a tradition of transformational rhetoric from them. At the same time we have inherited a legacy of cultural accommodation from churches and religious thinkers who were anxious to secure a respectable place in the prevailing order. There is a puzzling contradiction between the lofty rhetoric and the practices of modern Christianity. Today these contradictions are magnified by the pitiable state of progressive politics and by the decline of mainline Christianity as a public force.

This century began with ringing social gospel hopes for economic democracy and a new "cooperative commonwealth." The end of the century that has witnessed the erosion of progressive religious energies and the apparent triumph of global capitalism poses the questions: how much of that vision is salvageable? How much can be redeemed in a political culture in which "socialism" mostly conjures up images of killing fields, prison camps, bureaucratic stagnation and economic backwardness? Is it possible to reclaim the democratic socialist and social Christian vision of democratized economic power at a time when corporate capitalism is turning the whole world into a single predatory market?

One of the key weaknesses of recent Christian socialism in addressing these questions has been its reluctance to define its subject and address the concrete problems that inhere in different strategies for economic democracy. Liberation theology in particular has produced a sizable Christian socialist literature, but precious little of it deals with the relationships between democracy and socialism or the trade-offs that different economic strategies present or even distinguish among different kinds of socialism. For example, a theologian like Gustavo Gutierrez is quite precise in describing the ideologies and economic order that he rejects, but, like Marx, his writings on political economy are consumed by his critique of capitalism. The parallel should be instructive, for it was precisely Marx's vagueness and utopianism with regard to the socialist alternative that allowed generations of totalitarian thugs to call themselves Marxists.

In liberation theology this predisposition has heightened in recent years with the ascendancy of postmodern and multiculturalist theory. As in postmodern discourse theory as a whole, there is a pronounced tendency in current liberation theology to emphasize cultural criticism and various kinds of identity politics while avoiding any discussion of economic alternatives. Certainly these forms of criti cism have raised issues that cannot be merely added to an inherited Christian socialism. The effort to democratize power must take place not only at the point of production (as in Marxism), or in the electoral arena (as in liberalism), but also in what Manning Marable calls "the living place" – the post industrial community where people struggle to create environments that are more diverse and ecological and hospitable than those in which most of us live. Democratic socialism today requires a multi-cultural, feminist, ecological consciousness that challenges and transforms its

inherited economism. But at the same time, it is a mistake to think that any serious challenge to existing relations of power can ignore the factors of production. Cultural theory may appear to be more manageable and rewarding than the seemingly hopeless problem of equality, but every struggle for social justice has an economic dimension. Gains toward social and economic democracy are needed today for the same fundamental reason that political democracy is necessary: to restrain the abuse of unequal power.

Today we need, and are slowly getting, work that explores the politics and economics of cooperative ownership, mixed forms of decentralized worker and community ownership, and especially, the problems and possibilities of mutual fund ownership strategies. We need work that takes on the problems of external finance, innovation, and competitiveness that worker-ownership strategies present. With regard to mutual fund strategies, we need work that spells out the possible functions of the holding companies that would invest collectively owned social capital. Mutual fund models typically establish holding companies in which ownership of productive capital is vested. How much control should these companies possess over their client enterprises? Is it feasible to separate entrepreneurial and production risks? Is it feasible to expect holding companies to bear capital risks without sharing in the profits they help to generate?

The trend in democratic socialist theory is toward the mutual fund approach, which seeks to mitigate the various problems that worker-owned firms confront in the entrepreneurial field. A critical problem with the mutual fund approach is that it weakens the democratic power of workers at the firm level. Economic democracy theorists typically try to deal with this problem by placing as much control as possible in decentralized holding companies that work closely with firm managements. This "politically correct" preference has its own problems, however. To the extent that the holding companies are kept in a weak position, the entrepreneurial advantages of the mutual fund model are traded off as the client enterprises essentially become cooperatives. Apart from the fundamental question of control, the most serious question that needs to be addressed is whether the holding companies posited in social market theory are too decentralized to compete in markets dominated by large, ruthless, integrated corporations.

The upshot of these problems for me is not that we should forget about democratizing economic power, but that no single scheme to redistribute power should be universalized or enshrined as the next object of faith. Economic democracy is a project that must be built from the group up, piece by piece, operating new choices, creating new forms of democratic power, seeking to build a new social order that is more egalitarian, cooperative and ecological than the prevailing order. It is a project that breaks from the universalizing logic of state socialism. No political economy worth building would force workers into cooperatives that they don't want to join. As David Belkin observes, however, a politics that expands the cooperative and social ownership sectors could give new opportunities to workers. It could create the preconditions of economic democracy by creating choices that neoclassical theory promises, but doesn't deliver.

The figure who has been most helpful to me in sorting out the relationship between progressive Christianity and the politics of economic democracy is William Temple, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury during World War II. Temple assumed, as I do, that Christian ethics must struggle, fallibly and provisionally, to theorize and practice the best attainable politics of the common good without sacralizing this construction. Though he produced some of the most creative and programmatic Christian socialist thinking of this century, in his later work Temple firmly resisted the tendency of his movement to equate social Christianity with democratic socialism, and he generally avoided the rhetoric of socialism. He worried in the early 1940s that "socialism" was already unalterably associated with left-authoritarian politics, partly because democratic socialist economic strategies were typically difficult to distinguish from authoritarian state socialism. He opposed state socialism while appreciating that for most people "socialism" meant economic nationalization and centralized state government. He therefore avoided socialist language and ideology in making his case for decentralized economic democracy. As he explained in *Christianity and the Social Order*, he fervently hoped to convince everyone of the need for greater social and economic democracy, but he judged that few people outside the trade unions and the activist political Left would ever embrace socialism.

Temple was not interested in bolstering socialist ideology with the prestige of Christian faith. He vigorously promoted economic democracy as a Christian ethical project while rejecting the progressive Christian tendency to sacralize socialist ideology. The difference is crucial. Though socialist theory has provided a seemingly indispensable conceptual framework and vocabulary for much of modern religious social thought, progressive Christianity cannot attribute divine sanction to any ideology, including democratic socialism, without implicating itself in idolatry.

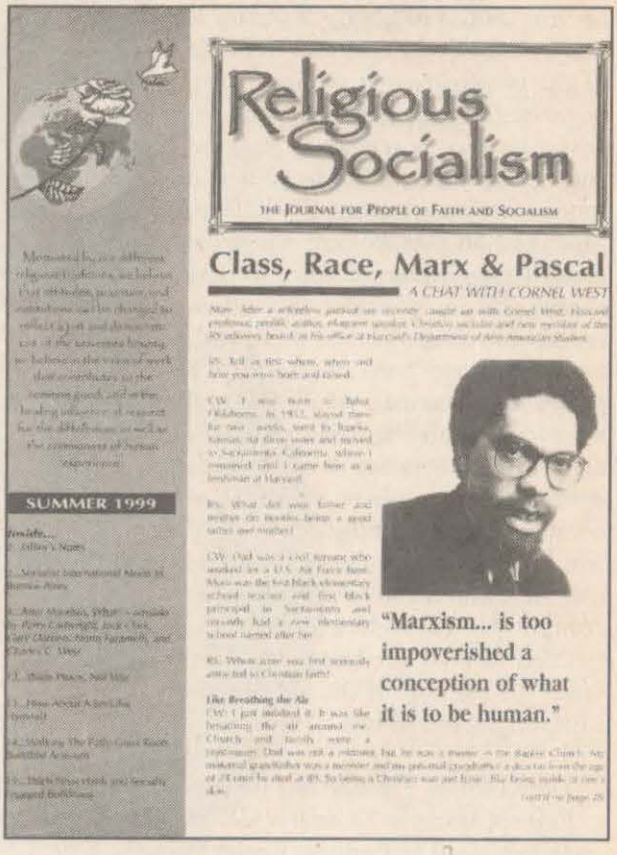
Perhaps the most influential approach to religious political engagement devised in this century is Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism. As the last theologian to make a significant impact on American politics, Niebuhr is repeatedly held up as the model of how nonfundamentalist Christianity should speak to the dominant culture and seek to influence it. In a generation that experienced the apparent futility of the liberal social gospel, he gave American Christianity an alternative rhetoric, politics, and theology. His first attacks on Christian liberalism called the church to throw off its moralism to join the class struggle against a dying capitalist order. He later called the church to

throw off its moralism to join the military struggle against fascism. He enlisted Christian support for America's world-embracing cold war against communism. His dialectical realism defined for his theological generation what the "realities" of politics and ethics were. More than any theologian of this century, he made American Christianity face the question of what it means to exercise power in a morally responsible way.

For Niebuhr theology has to translate the moral, social and even religious meaning of Christian commitment into secular terms. This project of translation would enable Christians to play a role in the political sphere and enable others to make sense of Christian claims. Niebuhr drew a crucial distinction between Christian moral identity and the social mission of the church. The Christian social mission was not to transform the social order in the light of the biblical vision of justice, community and peace, as the social gospelers claimed, but rather to provide religious support for a secular liberal agenda that served the social struggle for justice.

Christian realism made an enormously valuable contribution to social ethics through its emphasis on the pervasive, indwelling, and systemic reality of evil in individuals and especially in all social institutions. Niebuhr's writings persistently drove home the point that every social gain creates the possibility of new forms of social evil. But this belief ultimately eviscerated Niebuhr's vision of a good society that transcends the prevailing order. The passion for economic justice that fueled his early work gave way to the status quo politics of the "Vital Center" Democratic establishment. Niebuhr's later thinking became an example of the truism that without a normative vision of a good society, social ethics remains captive to the dominant order. Lacking an imaginative forward-looking dimension, his influential "realism" restricted itself to marginal reforms within the existing system. The borders to possibility remained untested.

Niebuhr tried to save a place for the church by accepting the liberal bourgeois dichotomy between a virtue-producing private realm and an instrumental/technocratic public realm. But the practical effect of this strategy – for all of Niebuhr's greatness, his passion for justice, and his enormous influence – was to deepen the accommodation of mainline Protestantism to the dominant order. The churches gave up whatever remained of an identity that resisted or distinguished them from the dominant culture. Under the terms of Niebuhrian realism, liberal Protestantism claimed no voice or vision of its own in the public sphere. It was reduced to support work for anti-communism and other causes endorsed by the secular liberal establishment. Christian realism propounded an understanding of politics that kept the churches *as churches* out of the public arena. But if the meaning of religious faith can be translated into secular terms, why bother with religion?



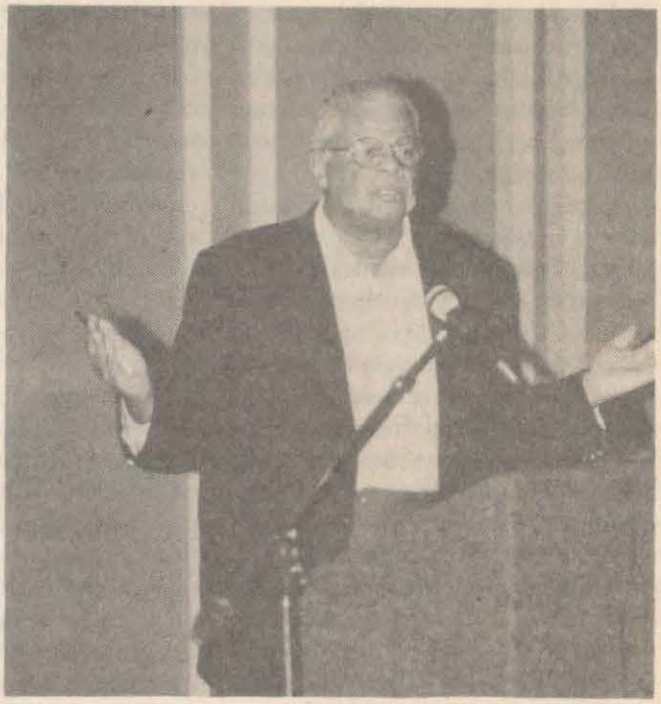
Niebuhr underestimated the need for religious communities that take up the public struggle for justice in their own language, in their own way and for their own reasons. In *his* own way, Michael Harrington's thinking about religion also undercut the role that he wanted progressive religious communities to play in American politics. As a reasonably good Marxist, Mike believed that religion was passing into oblivion, but he also worried that the passing of legitimizing religious authority was leaving Western societies without a moral basis to inspire virtue or define common values. He proposed that the job of providing a legitimizing, integrating principle of Western culture should be taken up by democratic socialism. Specifically, in *The Politics at God's Funeral* he called for a new "united front" of religious and secular socialists to redeem the values of religious socialism and fill the void left by terminal Western religions. The new socialist united front would recover the values of progressive Judaism and Christianity, he wrote, "but not in religious form." It would require the religious wing to subordinate its religious concerns to the needs of the movement in order to promote the values it held in common with other socialists. Mike believed that progressive religious values could survive without religion and he assumed that religion was dying anyway. Socialism was therefore a vehicle to keep progressive religious values alive.

"But Mike," I would say, "what if religion isn't dying after all? What if the survival of religion is far more certain than the survival of socialism? And what if the socialist movement

that you want actually needs living, vital religious currents to sustain itself?" I never got very far with him on this subject. Mike was good at beginning a discussion of religion, but he quickly became uneasy in talking about it. It was evident that he was an example of the possibility that he hoped for, however. Though not a religious believer, he was as religiously musical and as deeply influenced by Christian moral teaching as anyone I've known. Mike had an eschatology, which he offered many times at the end of a speech. "If you consider your country capable of democratic socialism," he would say, "you must do two things. First, you must deeply love and trust your country. You must sense the dignity and humanity of the people who survive and grow within your country despite the injustice of its system. And second, you must recognize that the social vision to which you are committing yourself will never be fulfilled in your lifetime." Scripture says, "the memory of the righteous is a blessing." And so it is.

Gary Dorrien, Professor and Chair of Religious Studies at Kalamazoo College, just published The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons *(Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). This article is adapted from his lecture at a 1996 conference on "The Future of the Welfare State" at City College of New York Graduate Center, which honored the memory of Michael Harrington*

Honorary Chair Barbara Eherenreich addresses pre-convention public meeting: *Facing Off Against The Global Economy.*



Former Berkeley, California Mayor and newly elected DSA Honorary Chair Gus Newport spoke at the pre-convention public meeting too.

Philadelphia DSA delegates to San Diego National Convention hard at work.

Talkin' About a Revolution:

How Being Online Has Changed Our Lives

BY ANDREW HAMMER

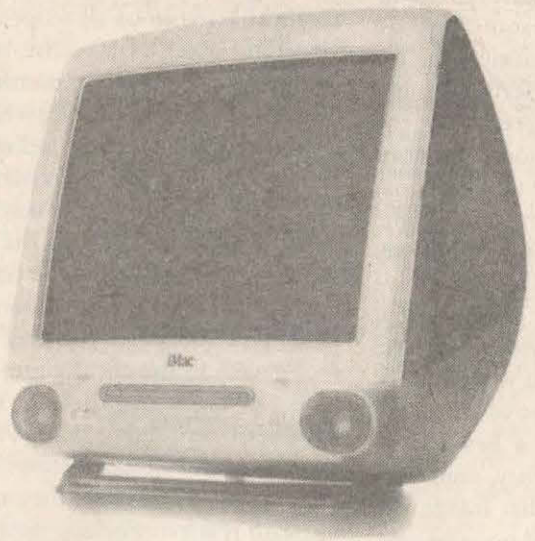
In the past ten years, the Internet has gone from being a novel invention used by universities, scientists, government agencies, and a few people in the know, to a center of communication, ideas, and commerce now used millions round the globe. Part library, part television, the World Wide Web (WWW, or 'the Web' -- a graphically-based multimedia method of providing information through the Internet) has made it possible for anyone interested in anything to simply enter a word into a search page, and find something somewhere on the Internet that addresses that topic.

For the socialist movement, the WWW has in some ways been the greatest equalizer we have ever had, in that our ideas are made as accessible to the public as major news outlets. But as with any new technological development, there are both light and dark sides to the Internet's entry into our lives.

World Without Borders

The ability of the Web to make information available without regard to time or space has meant that anyone with an idea can publish it and put it in front of our faces just as easily as corporations and major media outlets. The obvious benefit of this for socialists and others on the left is that we are finally able to break out of the financial constraints on our ability to reach the public by conventional means (printing costs, broadcast and print media access, travel, etc.), and can now reach millions from one computer to another. The accessibility of an idea no longer hinges on what CNN or *The New York Times* will tell us, or what books and publications our libraries and shops choose (or more significantly for our movement, don't choose) to stock. In the online world, CNN and DSA both come over the same phone lines and use the same computer screen, and ultimately we are all looking at the same glowing box in our offices and homes. The difference is that we program this network ourselves.

At the same time, the use of e-mail means that communication about those ideas can occur between people in a way that has never before been possible. The creation of the online campaign, in which people use Web-based petitions, e-mail lists, and e-mail letter-writing campaigns to raise awareness about a particular issue, has allowed people to participate in political activism instantaneously from anywhere on the planet. While it's more common to have an ongoing political campaign brought onto the Internet, the past few years have seen campaigns on issues originated online, such as the Free Burma Coalition. In the case of the Jubilee 2000 campaign to relieve world debt, the Web was used to expand the movement by helping to create new international branches of a movement that had started out in Britain.



Yet more important is the ability not only to discover and join in with existing ideas, but to use the Internet to participate in the creation of new ones. It is now possible for someone in New York and someone in New Zealand to have a daily correspondence, or even a real-time written discussion, on the drafting of a political document. E-mail lists (which connect any number of users to the same string of messages through one central address) and chat rooms abound, where issues of the day as well as the politics of particular organizations are discussed and debated.

The fact that so many people are now connected, with far more to connect in the future, has given rise to the idea of online democracy, where people are actually able to vote throughtheir computer. That's crucial in more ways than one, because along with ideas, and the ability to shape them, comes the accessibility *to* those ideas by people who may have felt excluded in the past. People with disabilities who may find it difficult to have their ideas heard in a traditional setting, elderly people who find travel difficult, or simply people whose lives or income level make it difficult to attend face-to-face meetings or public forums are now enabled to take a seat at the discussion table through online forums.

As we cross over into a new century, we may have achieved the faint beginnings of a form of democracy that heretofore was only imagined by science fiction writers. The world is smaller, the barriers between us are theoretically shrinking, and our potential to build a truly international movement is great. But before we get too carried away with all of the wonder-

ful things this new technology can do, let's take a look at some of the problems we've already encountered.

Ivory Terminals and 'Offline Masses'

While lower prices and aggressive programs by both business and governments have worked to make computers more available to the masses, most people in the world remain offline. Of those who are online, the demographic is still predominately middle to upper class males in industrialized nations. To be sure, there are thousands of people actively using the Internet in Bolivia, Azerbaijan, and Ghana, but the concern that the Internet excludes developing nations is certainly valid. And even within nations that are highly connected to the Net, class, gender and race are issues that have to be considered when we start talking about how great it is that "everyone" is online. They're not, and you can be assured that this article is not the only place where you will read about the danger of a brave new online world of creativity, conversation, and commerce that leaves out millions of working and poor people.

And women. They are going online in increasing numbers, but that brings us to another issue regarding how the Internet has worked in practice as opposed to the ideal. As I mentioned above, the text of an e-mail list takes away all of the physical characteristics by which we would normally judge the various authors of messages. But what it does not take away is the socialization of men and women into roles given to us long ago. Many of us have seen the television studies of classrooms that show boys constantly raising their hands to answer questions (even when they're not sure they know the answer), while the girls wait to be called upon. Unfortunately, the Internet hasn't changed that at all, and it's not likely to as long as so many of the men online continue to feel that each one of their many contributions is essential reading for us all. To their credit, women have sought out and created places online where they can exchange ideas among themselves, much as they have had to do in the real world. However, the goal for those of us online should be to check the way we are communicating, to make sure that there is the more important human dimension.

Not far from that problem is one that affects not only our movement, but all organizations that involve some sort of appeal to their members and the general public. The level of discourse on the Net is so quick, so fascinating, that it becomes very easy for political activists of all stripes to develop and attach a false sense of meaning to their online communications. We in the American left are well aware that we have historically lacked a significant base in our communities—that is, any kind of real day to day political involvement with the people we claim to represent. The danger is that for some of us, the Internet has become a substitute for that face to face action in the community. Those who are more comfortable venting their brain on a screen (where they are ensconced in a virtual, Platonic "round table" of intellects) than they are dealing with real live working people, run the risk of getting lost in a sea of online pontificating that becomes an ivory moat around the proverbial ivory tower. The virtual community replaces the actual one, talk itself becomes a substitute for action, and people see their online musings as accomplishments when they are really nothing more than parts of the same ongoing conversation we always seem to carry on among ourselves.

Across the political spectrum, we have seen online communities spring up where a particular group of people around one organization begin talking about that organization, drafting policy, and making decisions without even realising that 50 people engaged in an online forum is not the organization, and is not properly representative of that organization. The result is that the number of active participants in an already small organization is shrunk even more by what becomes an *online ghetto* composed only of those who have computers, spend a great deal of time online, and have either the stamina or stubbornness to argue endlessly amongst themselves about the minutiae of their organization. The larger issues, the whole membership, and the community we advocate for are left behind for the sake of the cyber-jockies, who may not even be members of the organization the forum is based upon. Things like mentoring, and the acquisition of knowledge in the context of life experience, are often replaced by naked opinion derived from sweet-sounding documents of position and principle not based in any real social practice. The problem is that for better or worse, none of this contemplating and philosophising makes it out into the real world, and even it does, words alone do not translate themselves into actions. It's *people* who do the translating. So while the Internet does provide us a marvelous opportunity to reach out to the world around us like never before, we have to guard against becoming so absorbed in the community online that we disappear from the other community; the one that supplies the phone lines and electricity, as well as water, underfunded transport and education, and almost no health care except for those lucky enough to have insurance. More than the telephone or radio or television, the personal computer is changing the way we work, think, learn, buy, and communicate. It's an opportunity to build a truly global village, and in the process of coming closer together, to reshape the ways of the world. But in order to do it we need to decommodify and democratize the new web order.

Andrew Hammer is the Webmaster for DSA, and has designed a number of Web sites for the socialist movement, including Socialist International Women. He is the Communications Director for the International League of Religious Socialists, and a writer.

Interview: Stephen Eric Bronner

With Michael J. Thompson

DL: *What gives social democracy, or liberalism in general, validity or ethical primacy over other traditions?*

SB: I think there are many ways you can talk about this. You can try to set up some kind of philosophic foundation, or you can do it by making reference to the supposed certainty of science. But I think that the primacy of the liberal and the social democratic view is actually very simple: it stems from the character of its commitment to constrain the arbitrary exercise of power. What is arbitrary is that which occurs when one group receives unjust privilege or another one is picked out for punishment, exclusion or domination by another group. What is not arbitrary is that which is universal and equal to all. So in some way what you want to do is make the state and all institutions in society that are without accountability, accountable to all.

DL: *How does that differ from the neoconservative argument?*

SB: I think that liberalism and conservatism start from the assumption that property is something that simply belongs to the individual and there is no public accountability necessary whereas from the socialist standpoint the argument would be that capital is an institution like any other and is just as accountable to the public as the state is.

DL: *If democratic theory has become "neutral" and has not given impetus to progressive movements in recent years, to what would you attribute this failure: is it inherent in the logic of democratic theory or in the manner it has been executed?*

SB: Democratic theory in a certain way served as a kind of safe haven to which people with more radical positions could retreat and find shelter during the 1970's and 1980's. There was a time when democratic theory meant something radical – this was during the 60's when people like Phillip Green and Christian Bay talked about the need for more participation and attempted to connect the idea of democracy with a burgeoning movement. They demanded recognition and more inclusion from the government and, above all, more participation. What's happened since then, in the 1980's and 90's, is that democratic theory has come to mean everything possible to any number of different people. To me, some of these positions seem to be basically abstract. If one wants to talk about rendering the basic institutions of society accountable, and particularly capital, than I think that one has to begin with some understanding of class politics.

DL: *How do you see the legacy of the 60's and the triumph of identity politics?*

SB: Many central gains have been achieved since the decline of the civil rights and anti-war movements. In time, however, the economic and political power of working people radically declined. I think the reason is clear cut; the rise of particularist forms of identity politics thatobserve class division and substitute symbolic politics for a politics of class power. It is still the case that the power that capital exerts depends upon the degree of ideological and organizational disunity among workers. So if you want to push for class unity, you must talk about what is common to working people within all of the social movements, but privileges none of the social movements.

DL: *You speak of the need to make the connection between democracy and socialism "explicit." What is the connection? Is it purely political, or more in the domain of political economy?*

SB: Well, I think that the connection between democracy and socialism lies in the very core of the tradition of socialism itself. The reason for making it explicit is that ever since 1917 socialism has been tainted by authoritarianism and communist sophistry, as well as a frightful tone of conformist dogma. Socialism has been besodded by opportunism and the prospect of power for its own sake. Socialists must come to terms with all this and move beyond this; that is why I titled one of my books, *Socialism Unbound.*

Socialism has been linked to religion, ethnic politics and what not, so that the term itself has virtually lost its meaning. It is necessary to reaffirm the past in order to move into the future. And, in this regard, we must appeal anew to the democratic tradition of political theory as they derive from the Enlightenment. Indeed, the socialist movement, when it was a workers movement, always directly saw its enterprise as standing in direct connection with the political theory of the Enlightenment, its commitment to republicanism, and internationalism. Indeed the step that socialists made was to connect these values of internationalism and republicanism with the notion of social and economic equality.

DL: *"Genuine critique," you argue, "is the product of an ethical decision. It requires resisting a complete capitulation to what is to what should be." Since the left has no monopoly on ethics, what are the ethics of socialism grounded upon which distinguishes it as a tradition?*

SB: Originally the power and allure of Marxism was that it provided a connection between theory and prac-

tice. In the 20th century, as one prominent leader of the labor movement once stated, "We can see the socialist future appearing as present." In other words, you could literally see the connection between an ideal and the way it was being realized. When Marx and Marxism became popular it was believed that the working class was growing and you could see this through the rise of the great social democratic parties. In Germany around 1875, there were about 30,000 organized Marxist workers. By 1912 there were over four million. This was something that rang true throughout Europe and so, any working class person could say, capitalism is indeed creating its gravediggers. I think that the belief in an inevitable revolution which would bring about a society in which the free development of each is a precondition for the free development of all has lost all its guarantees. This is no longer a fixed goal which can inform our practice. It's true, of course, that even orthodox Marxists spoke of there being a choice between socialism and barbarism. But the fact of the matter was that everyone at that time believed they knew which would win out. And that was the great success of Marxism. Its teleology guaranteed commitment; people knew that down the road the creation of a just society would validate their political sacrifices. No one canguarantee, any longer, that the sacrifices people make in their everyday lives can ever be validated.

And what that means is that you can no longer begin with the traditional assumption that you join a movement, or take a position, because you think it will be successful. Instead, you join a movement, you take a position, you stake a claim, because you think it's the right thing to do. That's the primacy of ethics for any form of emancipatory form of socialist politics.

DL: *What informs that act, to take a stance and make that claim?*

SB: From where it derives no one can say; it retains an existential element. But it is also true that the way people are educated, the movies they see, the books they read, the music they hear can either foster political action or inhibit it. Ultimately, however, a point comes when you say to yourself: the arbitrary exercise of power simply isn't just and something has to be done to quell that.

Now, that's what I mean by saying that the type of theory you choose is a function of a certain moment of practical decision. Mine is a very weak position; it doesn't offer the certitude of historical materialism. It obviously puts socialism on the defensive, and so it must since all it has is an ethical claim backing it up. But I think that's simply true. I believe my philosophical position reflects the practical situation we're in and I don't think there's a party any longer which still works with the assumption that capitalism is going to collapse on "scientific grounds." By the same token – given the rise of the Greens, the refashioning of old communist parties, and the growth of oppositional factions within the social democratic mainstream – it no longer really matters what party you're in whether it's as a feminist or as a member of the NAACP or as an ecologist. Is an individual willing to foster the class ideal; and work for working people within all groups by working for it within one's own group?

DL: *You outline how the new social movements fail to live up to the progressive tradition of which socialism is a part. What, would a newsocialist movement consist of?*

SB: It makes no sense to simply castigate all social movements. Most of them have progressive tendencies, obviously some more than others. My paradigmatic movement would be the Civil Rights movement and the tradition of Martin Luther King. If you think of where King began with getting blacks the vote, getting them into office, attempting to change the political landscape. He linked civil rights with the anti-war movement and developed a vision of foreign policy that would strengthen the UN, foster a new sense of obligation to the Third World and also bring the Vietnam War to an end. When King was killed, it was at Memphis at a strike of sanitation workers and he was trying to develop the poor people's movement, a movement concerned with economic equality and social justice in the United States.

If you think of these three moments brought together I think you have the framework in which your new movement should operate. Now, what institution will bring this about? My sense is that this is a question that, to a certain extent, has to remain open. It would be nice to have a party. But bringing a party about is not that easy, especially in the US where, shall we say, existing laws provide a disincentive to the formation of third parties. I can envision an organization, something like the poor people's movement, that is neither reducible to a collection of single interests nor a political party.

The key point is to move beyond the fragmentation we are currently experiencing because I fear that the current problem with the left is that we are in a situation where the whole is less than the sum of its parts.

DL: *Does one dispense with the notion of crisis as the starting point for one's critique of capitalism, either economic or political?*

SB: You can no longer work from the assumption that the economic crisis is linked to political crisis. The working class has become more diversified, the idea of a structural conflict between classes no longer leads to any prescribed political response. The response can go to the left and to the right. Indeed, if only for this reason, it seems that one must privilege the class ideal in theory and organized politics in practice. We must once again begin to unify the common interests of workers in a concrete way. I don't see any other alternative.

Stephen Eric Bronner teaches politics and comparative literature at Rutgers University. His most recent book is Camus: Portrait of a Moralist

Tragedy and Hope in American Labor

BY PAUL BUHLE

Just a few years ago, the story of American labor seemed like one of those oversold movies which start out grandly, drift into heavy action with special effects, and wind down as the audience heads for the exits. Several mini-generations of young idealists, many of them in DSA or like-minded feminist and labor reform organizations, had thrown their energies into the labor movement only to face odds so daunting that most drifted out again. Practically a whole generation of radical historians, heading to graduate school on the wave of anti-war campus uprisings, had dedicated itself to rediscovering the secret history of working class life "from below," in forgotten strikes and the turmoil of daily struggles for bread and dignity. Not unlike their activist cousins, they produced a library of solidly researched and insightful volumes – for fewer and fewer readers.

The outright decline of the contemporary labor movement and its special failure to engage poorer and nonwhite workers; the consuming Cold War conservatism of AFL-CIO leaders on issues ranging from Central America to feminism, affirmative action and environmentalism; and perhaps most of all, the success of the bureaucratic lock-step against reform and reinvigoration, had together taken their toll. By the middle 1980s and in the face of constant denials, the Lane Kirkland leadership had reached something like a dead end. Progressives had successfully eroded the previously unchallenged authority of conservative labor chiefs, especially on Third World human rights issues, and also the mobilization of service workers, but had little luck.

Only a few years later, in 1995, the failed and morally tainted AFL-CIO leadership was outmaneuvered (in part by DSAers), outvoted and out the door, replaced by self-described reformers. Meanwhile, thousands of graduate students formed unions, and yet more undergraduates looked to labor causes, especially the international sweatshop, as a prime campus issue. Labor teach-ins brought progressive unionists and campus audiences back together in ways unforeseen a decade earlier. In 1997, "Scholars, Artists and Writers for Social Justice" (SAWSJ) formed, with a very DSA-like program and the blessings of the John Sweeney administration. Even labor history looked more interesting again. Never, in fact, had things looked better for democratic socialists since the Cold War purge of Leftwing unions and unionists a half-century ago.

Things were, and are, regrettably not so wonderful. An AFL-CIO united behind progressive social movements (peace, antiracism, feminism and ecology) of the 1960s-80s would surely have changed labor and might have changed the world, but it didn't happen that way, and we are more than forty years behind. The grand project of labor reform, twin to potential labor alliances with students, women, minorities and others near the bottom of society, has far to go and many well-placed opponents, some of them within the AFL-CIO.

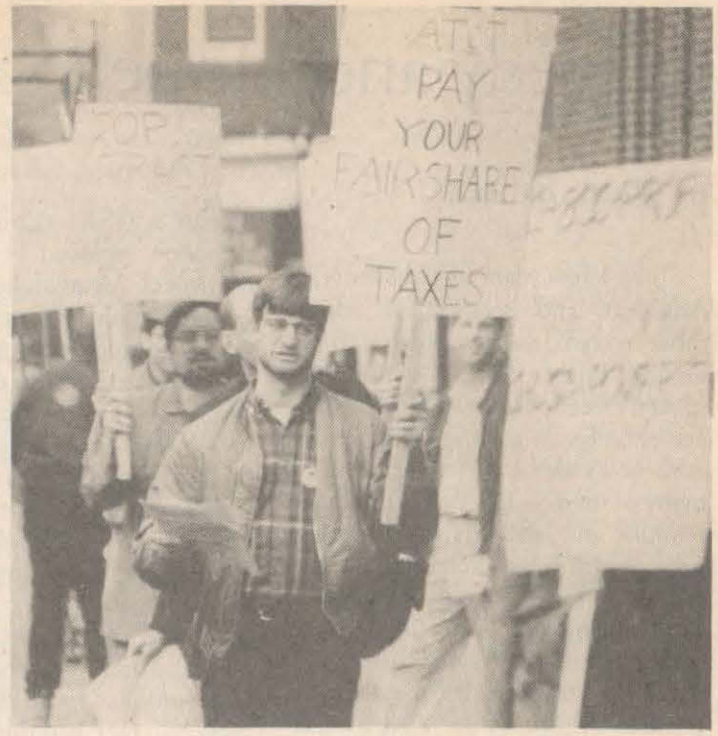
A staff writer for *Forward*, a newspaper which long saw itself intimately allied with a socialist or, later, reformist section of labor, recently commented that organized labor's pro-business faction had indeed been temporarily defeated, but that success in a heralded drive to "organize high-wage workers in Silicon Valley and across the information technology" could eventually overcome momentum in the direction of what the writer contemptuously called "the likes of strawberry workers." At that point, the old Cold War labor leadership would "have the

votes needed to turn the tables on Mr. Sweeney."

Leave aside for the moment that many high-technology workers are anything but high-wage workers; the issue is clearer in that ringing phrase, "the likes of strawberry workers." Not only does it resound with the historic quest of American craft unionism and its leaders for 'respectability' in society, but with the assignment of dominant racial and cultural categories to one sector of workers over others. It also returns us to the very making of the America Federation of Labor and Samuel Gompers, business unionism's iconic figure.

Recent scholars have pinpointed the moment of Gompers' rise to his identification of the Chinese as objects for exclusion. The very notion of the union label, although used subsequently for better purposes, was the "white label," designating products free of the Chinese immigrant touch and yellow labor, not contract labor, that Gompers and the early AFL resisted. For forty years Gompers and his coterie sought to limit organized labor to the distinct minority of craft workers, excluding the overwhelming majority of women workers and nonwhite workers. During those years, Gompers worked effectively, with employers, the press and the government, to destroy the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World, which is to say those movements which sought to embrace all workers and to create an "industrial commonwealth" in place of aggressive capitalism. It should be no surprise that Gompers also clamped down on democracy within the AFL, ruthlessly centralizing power, punishing dissidents, ignoring constitutional provisions in order to quash progressive impulses of all kinds.

Why would an American labor leader abandon the working class at large, and what kind of forces within American labor did Gompers represent? These large questions cannot be exhaustively answered in brief space. But the most important issue is *empire*. No other modern empire, not even the British, has shown the same capacity to shape its society or its labor leaders to such uniform purpose. The familiar liberal praise of American *exceptionalism* operating in a labor movement which pragmatically refused socialist alternatives, not only ignores the manipulative grasp of Gompers and his successors for the next century, but also ignores the hierarchy of race and nation which designated certain Americans (and white American males in general) as the aristocrats of the planet. Overlaid with other factors including ethnic hierarchies, the changing rules of industrial production and the compelling need of leaderships to put down or co-opt challenges to authority, empire and law have demanded an "iron triangle" against bottom-up, inclusive labor democracy, a mind-set accompanied by oceans of anti-socialist, meritocratic, or pseudo-egalitarian rhetoric dividing "worthy" workers from the "unworthy" poor.



Gompers had good cause, in the narrow sense. No labor movement ever faced a capitalist class so powerful, so concentrated, or so framed within a national tradition of territorial and economic expansion at the expense of nonwhite peoples. The steady advance of colonialism had commanded the destruction of existing labor and social frameworks, including an often sophisticated division of labor among Indians and Hispanics. The slave system was the backbone of the emerging economy, and notwithstanding the abolition of slavery, the expansion of U.S. economic power overseas continued the same basic program. Indeed, if the demands for global democracy have usually (not always) been mere rationalizations for territorial expansion and economic supremacy as the answer to all domestic social problems, then Gompers did not intend to be left out of the imperial feast.

Secondly, any labor movement faced the daunting power of the State. The American legal system from the Constitution onward, has placed property rights in the hands of the courts. Chosen from the elites of business and the law, the judiciary consistently defined "republicanism" in ways to exclude redistribution of power or rights to the lower classes. Massive legal injunctions and the use of court-supported police and militia threatened more radical efforts.

To buck the system meant inviting trouble; accommodation to it permitted a privileged minority of labor to operate safely and respectably, perhaps even to prove beneficial to the system as a whole by restraining radical "troublemakers" within the working class. Gompers thereby seized opportunities offered him by the courts and the corporations to legitimate his vision of unionism, much as

George Meany and Lane Kirkland would use global realities to gain assistance of corporations and intelligence agencies to crush radical or egalitarian challenges at home and abroad.

And yet such interpretations do not fully explain the tragic misdirection of the American labor mainstream. We need to consider briefly the anti-Gompers alternatives. The turning point of American labor was about a century ago. If the American working class up to that point had been deeply divided by race and ethnicity, it was nonetheless impressive in its sometimes ferocious militancy and the willingness of considerable sections to take on realities, like the organization of African-American workers that European counterparts did not face. The Knights of Labor, a half-million strong with female *majorities* in many factories, had begun to throw labor's weight against the economic authoritarianism of corporations by simply taking over daily operation of producing goods. A labor party, following the rise of the Republican Party organized just thirty years earlier, was next on the agenda.

Then came ferocious repression, following the explosion of a bomb in Chicago's Haymarket, releasing police and industry thugs against radicals' offices, beating and arresting activists, especially the foreign-born, blacklisting good unionists and spreading "red scares" through the press and politicians' rhetoric. It was this brutalization, along with appeals to race and ethnic prejudice, which doomed the Knights and the labor party movement. A Democratic Party which then represented the revanchist South, triumphing over a racially mixed Populist movement by playing the "race card" even as lynchings accelerated, along with exclusion of African-Americans from jobs and residences taken over by new European immigrants in northern states, brought Gompers home to the idea of a political coalition suited to his purposes. Thereafter, the notion of a labor ticket or even the demand that Democrats embrace small "d" democratic principles in race, gender or true class terms, were viewed with extreme hostility. Gompers demanded his "cut" from the electoral spoils, although he consistently exaggerated the real effects of labor legislation within Congress, and ignored the influence of industrial unionists propelling politicians to make concessions to the "safe" union movement so as to uproot the dangerous ones.

Gompers did not succeed in building a global labor empire, the fondest dream of his last years and also the fondest dream of his successors. The Pan American Federation of Labor, launched with secret government funding, and the intellectual assistance of turncoat former socialists, was intended to place control of all Latin American unions in Gompers' hands. By the time of his death it was a dead letter, and the attempts during the 1930s to establish U.S.-controlled unions supporting American oil corporations in Mexico also failed.

Gompers also failed American labor, including the AFL itself, in another key regard. When the First World War brought a sudden shortage of labor, working people and experienced unionists, including many socialists, mobilized to strike in unprecedented numbers, and to organize so successfully that by 1919 industrial unionism seemed around the corner. Gompers so successfully demobilized militants that when business howled "Bolshevism," and President Woodrow Wilson's reign of oppression spread from vigilante violence to police raids to lengthy jail sentences, labor caved in before the coming corporate counteroffensive. By the middle 1920s, nearly everything won had been lost, especially for unskilled industrial workers.

History does not really repeat itself, and yet so much of labor history remains largely trapped within this tragic framework. We forget too easily how thousands of craft workers, from highly skilled German woodworkers at the center of Chicago's 1880s anarchist movement, to railroad men and machinists following Eugene Debs, to the needletrades women workers of the 1909 "Uprising of the 20,000" sought to make their own way toward a generous, egalitarian, inclusive labor movement. We forget even more easily the crucial role of thousands of pro-Communist immigrants rallying grassroots support for industrial unionism during the 1920s-30s and urging racial equality. We forget how much positive influence labor wielded within the political world from 1936 through 1944, and how close it came during the 1940s to breakthroughs in organizing

And in Part Two:

Part Two of *DL's* special Millennium Issue will include articles by: Joanne Barkan, Paul Berman, Billy Bragg, Martin Duberman, Barbara Ehrenreich, Paul Loeb, David Moberg, Richard Rorty and many more...!

southerners, women and nonwhite workers – until the Cold War and Harry Truman ended the dream.

We forget because the bland and defeated AFL-CIO, at the two organizations' merger in 1956, had effectively rewritten the past with the help of prestigious scholars and journalists, and minimized or marginalized every alternative to Gompersism. The cooperation of the New Deal administration – sometimes tacit, sometimes real – in legitimating industrial unions was now seen as a gift from above rather than won through labor power expressed in direct action of mass strikes and sit-ins. More important, the major political goals were viewed as completed by the welfare (and warfare) state politics that included influential union leaders. Now, organized labor mainly wanted adjustments, and mainly for itself. Workers outside unions, except those in government, were essentially written off as too much trouble to reach and probably not worth the effort. The popular labor opposition to the weapons industry ("Merchants of Death") during the 1930s was repressed from memory, and the determined antifascism of leftwing unions now treated as a mere preface to anti-communism and the job-creating arms race. Antiracism, nominally a centerpiece of the AFL-CIO political program, was never to be applied within unions themselves; anything approaching affirmative action would be resisted, with resentful comments about the ingratitude of those who dared to ask.

The dual or multiple labor market, a constant in America, where the ratio between the best paid and worst paid workers has long been the largest in the world, thus took on new meaning in the second half of the century. The veterans of 1930s and 1940s unions, by now looking ahead to retirement, had become the favored workers in a factory workforce increasingly nonwhite and in numeric decline. The blue-collar towns of the South, Southwest and far West, practically brought into being by the federal defense and water subsidies harbored the mulch of future Reagan Democrats. In a larger sense, the suburbs, created twice over by tax dollars for the highways and mortgage benefits, offered what only the streetcar suburbs had made possible for the labor aristocrats of the 1890s: distance from the unwashed masses.

Unions, for all their failures and weaknesses, nevertheless alone possessed the potential power to mediate these differences, to bring together the variegated sections of a working class which even under the most favorable conditions still faced work five days a week, if not more. Self-satisfied and deeply conservative, AFL-CIO leaders (with honorable exceptions) pulled members in the opposite direction, toward imperial —and more subtly, race— claims upon the lives of peoples in the ghettos and around the globe, toward macho war-posturing, toward an indifference and worse about the inherently undemocratic choices, ecological costs, the community destruction and sheer ugliness of economic development-at-any-price.

Other choices were not even considered; to be more positive, they were *all* considered by labor reformers, tried out and defeated each time until the last time, in October 1995. In retrospect, the Meany and Kirkland administrations' meanness of spirit, their unwillingness to countenance the mildest retreat from Cold War global strategies even after the Cold War, their organizational blundering and missed cues for potential organizing breakthroughs may have contributed less to the final defeat of the Kirkland team than the willingness of long-distancerunners, many from DSA, to stick out the disappointments and keep coming back for more. What we need is more long-distance runners, and quite a few more upsets.

In that sense, American labor history, a long-running tragedy, may yet have a happy ending. At least an especially unhappy act has ended, and the future is open for something a thousand times more interesting, something dramatically more inspiring, and altogether better.

Paul Buhle teaches labor history at Brown University, was co-chair of Section Providence. His latest works are Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland and the Tragedy of American Labor *(Monthly Review); and* Images of American Radicalism *(Christopher Publishing House)*

Socialist Forum Number 31 is to be published this January. It will contain a complete record of the proceedings of DSA's National Convention in San Diego.

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1900 and 2000

The Rebirth of Progressivism

BY ALAN DAWLEY

One-time cheerleaders for capitalism-without-borders, like George Soros and James Goldsmith, now cheer instead for international regulations. Financial wizards call for restraints on capital to prevent a recurrence of the global financial crisis that plunged Asian countries into economic and political chaos, rippled out to Latin America and Russia, and threw investors into a big scare in the U.S.

In eastern Europe, disenchantment with the consequences of unregulated capitalism has been spreading for several years, while in western Europe, center-left governments have come to power in several countries.

In the Anglo-American heartland of neoliberalism, the apostles of the Third Way welcomed other western leaders to Florence last November, for a conference on Progressive Government. People who used to call themselves social democrats (Gerhard Schroeder) and even communists (Italy's D'Alema) jumped on the progressive bandwagon and headed off to find a path between neoliberalism and social democracy.

Watching global elites change their minds, progressive activists possess mixed emotions. Although it is gratifying to hear the language of reform being spoken again in the public square, it is hard to accept the notion that progressive politics starts and ends in the Third Way. Movements for economic and racial justice, international peace and feminism haven't been holding the progressive fort through many years of the Cold War and its aftermath only to surrender their goals now. Some of these movements staged a global rally in Seattle at the end of 1999 to protest the World Trade Organization.

So the question at the dawn of the twenty-first century is not whether to reign in the market, but how.

The early Progressive era in the twentieth century began with a reaction against the consequences of the global capitalism of the Gilded Age. As money flowed around the world under the protection of the Gold Standard and the British navy, great imbalances arose in the forms of uneven development, big business, cycles of boom and bust, and extreme polarizations of wealth. The resulting suffering and dislocation engendered what Karl Polanyi described as a defensive reaction of society against the market. The whole spectrum of political forces was engaged, from socialists, anarchists and populists on the left to liberals and enlightened conservatives. In the U. S., progressivism emerged as part of this larger reaction. Espousing a new social ethos, social reformers such as Jane Addams called for new ethical standards that put social needs and world peace at the forefront. Speaking for the public interest over private interests, politicians such as Robert A. "Fighting Bob" La Follette of Wisconsin revitalized the tradition of Jeffersonian republicanism, and did battle with plutocracy and the dragon of economic imperialism. Demanding equal rights and love rights, feminists such as Crystal Eastman campaigned for women's rights as human rights. Embracing social reality over national myth and economic orthodoxy, journalists such as Lincoln Steffens and intellectuals such as John Dewey helped bring social realism into a culture wallowing in Victorian sentimentality. Against the grain of competition and independence, they stressed cooperation and interdependence.

To be sure, they were not out to abolish private property. They hoped, instead, to tie down the Gulliver of the giant corporation with a maze of Lilliputian regulations. To stop business run amok, they sought hours laws, factory inspection, women's protections, conservation, and a host of other measures intended to make business the servant of society.

The fact that they did not seek to dispossess the tycoons of their securities put them at odds with the left. At a time when revolution was in the air over Mexico and Russia and socialist parties were gaining strength in Germany and elsewhere, socialist revolutionaries such as Eugene Debs and the anarcho-syndicalists of the I.W.W. had little patience for republican reformers. To these battle-hardened leftists, it often appeared that progressives, far from being realists, were just wooly-headed idealists wedded to an illusion of incremental improvement and given to foolish crusades for temperance.

But progressives and socialists did overlap at many points.Florence Kelley, who was both, exemplified the collaboration among reformers and radicals around legislation to abolish child labor, reduce hours, and otherwise uplift the condition of working people. The same cooperation was evident on both sides of the Atlantic on every worthwhile social or economic cause of the day. From municipal ownership and public housing

to unemployment compensation and health insurance, progressives and radicals worked as allies.

A different side of the same relationship appeared in the Progressive party of 1912. The first of three forays under the same name, the Bull Moose Progressives were led by Teddy Roosevelt, whose pugnacious personality and presidential popularity helped make this the most successful third party in American history (after the Republican party of the 1850s). As Roosevelt saw it, the Progressive objective was to quiet popular clamor for reform by giving voters some mild social legislation and business regulation before they demanded anything more far-reaching.

In this way, progressivism *contained* socialism, in both senses of the word. That is, by incorporating some socialist elements within it, and then offering a less radical alternative, progressive reforms changed the system while keeping it fundamentally intact. Any recipe for progressive politics in the first half of the century would have to include a big measure of republicanism, plus a significant portion of socialism (minus revolution); the mixture was then poured into the stew of capitalist society, stirred with the prominent issues of the day, and put on the stove to boil off the scum.

Today's progressive revival takes place under different circumstances. Few people around the world, if asked for the name of our desire, would say Socialism. With the collapse of communism and the severe weakening of leftist movements everywhere, the prospects for major structural reform from below, let alone revolution, seem more remote today.

Any revival is affected by the parlous state of liberalism. Ever since Ronald Reagan made "liberal" a dirty word, the heirs of the New Deal/ Great Society have been running for political cover. Many found their camouflage in being "progressive," but while they were in hiding, an unregenerate form of liberalism was making a comeback. Just as Franklin Roosevelt had stolen the liberal mantle in the 1930s to cloak state intervention in the garb of the dominant liberal tradition, now Reagan supporters stole it back. Liberalism, or at least neoliberalism, reverted to its original nineteenth century meaning of laissez-faire.

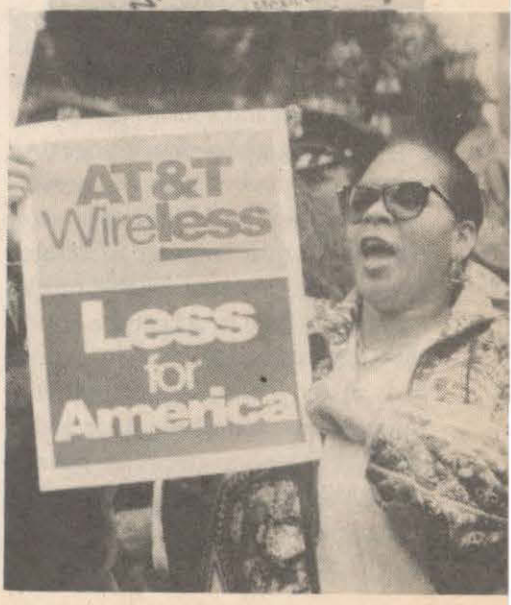
During the conservative ascendancy of Thatcher and Reagan, progressive movements remained alive by mounting some of the biggest protest marches in the nation's history, including Solidarity Day, the largest labor rally ever organized in Washington; the June 1982 march in New York against the nuclear arms build-up, the biggest peace demonstration in America history; and numerous rallies against intervention in Central America. The closest thing to a reincarnation of the three earlier Progressive campaigns was Jesse Jackson's electrifying run for president in 1988.

Although more often called a populist, his main themes of anti-imperialism and economic justice resonated perfectly with the Wallace and La Follette campaigns, while his attention to gender and race —from the racial battle ground to economic common ground— showed the impact of the Sixties.

Jackson may have helped pave the way for Bill Clinton, just as La Follette opened doors for Roosevelt, but this time the election of a Democrat did not end conservative ascendancy. Health care reform was defeated; the mid-term election was a debacle; and the best that could be said of the 1996 election is that things stopped getting worse. Progressives were thought to be a dying breed. To one author, they had been left for dead. To another, in what passed for optimism, they only look dead.

So the current rebirth of progressivism comes as something of a surprise, facing a most dangerous time, swaddled in a blanket of uncertainty. Will it be strong enough to survive? Will the socialist legacy keep it on the left, or will it be co-opted by liberalism? Will it link up with movements in other countries and mount a serious challenge to global capitalism? Who knows, but the exciting thing is that for the first time in a generation it is possible to ask such questions.

Alan Dawley has written Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State, *and was Photographer for* Working for Democracy: American Workers from the Revolution to the Present.



Signs of Life

American History, Memory and Democracy

By Harvey J. Kaye

In October 1999, on the eve of the new century, we lost another link to the Revolution of 1776 when work crews on the St. John's College campus in Annapolis, Maryland brought down the last of the original Liberty Trees. Beneath those trees, Americans fashioned a liberation movement against British rule, and turned themselves into citizens.

The Liberty Tree's removal saddened me, but my sadness had to do with more than the demise of a great tree. The tree's final destruction seemed a warning about the condition of American public life and the prospects for radical-democratic politics. The words of one arborist sounded like a metaphor for the state of American democracy: "The entire tree now consists of a hollow shell of wood..."

We have witnessed conservative political ascendance, expanding corporate hegemony, and the subjection of public goods to market priorities. The rich have grown grossly richer and working people and the poor poorer. And we of the democratic left find ourselves relegated to the margins of public debate. Even the most foolish of optimists could not fail to appreciate the daunting character of the challenges we face.

Yet we should not allow our perennial pessimism of the intellect to obscure critical signs of democratic life. If we look closely, we will find significant grounds for hope and action. I leave it to my activist comrades to survey our social movements and render prognoses for their reinvigoration. I write as a historian, one who studies and obsesses about American historical memory, consciousness and imagination, and about the grand narrative by which we understand and speak of ourselves as a people.

As Benjamin Barber observes in *An Aristocracy of Everyone*, "The story we tell about ourselves defines not just us but our possibilities." Forget the postmodernists' hostilities towards grand narrative. As Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob point out in *Telling the Truth about History*: "narratives and meta-narratives are the kinds of stories that make action in the world possible. They make action possible because they make it meaningful."

For the past thirty years radical historians have engaged in a struggle to shape - better, reshape - America's historical understandings. Inspired by the movements of the day, many of us entered the historical profession intent upon recovering the lives and struggles that our predecessors had ignored *and* refashioning the prevailing grand narrative in light of those recoveries. We hoped to contribute to the reformation of public thinking, deliberation, and agency - and, thereby, to the very making of history. We wrote and wrote volumes, and our labors did not go unappreciated, most notably by the right.

The very formation and rise of the New Right entailed the aggressive use and abuse of history. Eager to both combat our work and promote a new conservative understanding of past, present and possible futures, the Reagan Republicans, in their pursuit of the culture wars, regularly targeted for attack our teaching and research. The climax of their campaigns came in the battles over the National Standards for History. Commissioned by the Bush Administration, but published during the Clinton presidency, the Standards did not fulfill conservative ambitions. In fact, they tendered a far more critical and promising set of ideas than the right could stomach, and conservatives quickly sought to bury them in an avalanche of hostile rhetoric. The ensuing conflict, from the AM radio airwaves to the floor of Congress, clearly demonstrated the right's public power and influence, but also, the left's strength in academe.

However climactic the Standards conflict, the issue of the narrative persists. Indeed, it reverberates throughout American public *and* private life. In 1981, Herbert Gutman challenged us to remember our original aspirations and take the lead in refashioning America's narrative, to more effectively connect with our fellow citizens. In the twenty years since, many other historians from varied backgrounds have repeated Gutman's call. African-American scholar Nathan Huggins insists in *Revelations: American History, American Myths* that "we should not forget that the end of our study of history is no less than the reconstruction of American history... We all need to be calling for a new narrative... It is especially important for Afro-American historians." Introducing *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, Sara Evans writes: "Now we have many histories, and the historian's task is to integrate these experiences into the dominant narrative of the American past, the main story we tell ourselves about who we have been as a nation."

Not just historians agonize. In *The One and the Many*, professor of religious studies Martin E. Marty ad.r

dresses the problem of "our common story". Poet laureate Robert Pinsky commences "Poetry and American Memory" by stating that "Though the United States is assuredly a great nation, the question remains open whether we are a great people or are still engaged in the undertaking of becoming a great people. A people is defined and unified not by blood but by shared memory", and he goes on to "seek a vision of our future in the poetry of our past." And, in *The Real American* dream literary scholar Andrew Delbanco starts, as well, by asserting the necessity of a narrative and then advances one focussing on Americans' changing beliefs about hope and transcendence. The matter doesn't only agitate academics. In *The Party's Not Over Yet*, public policy analyst Jeff Faux decries that we have become trapped in a conservative public discourse and he urges liberals and leftists to develop a new narrative to escape the right's hold. Former conservative Michael Lind ponders "The Liberal Search for a Usable Past", and makes a major effort to outline a new grand narrative in *The Next American Nation*. More entertaining, but no less serious, Steve Darnall and Alex Ross have authored and illustrated *U.S.*, a two-volume comic book in which a confused Uncle Sam seeks to "remember his true identity" while memories and voices propel him on a time-travel journey through America's past. Hell, even the conservative faithful feel apprehensive. One vocal participant at a January 1999 Republican gathering called "The Weekend", implored the party's leadership to "Tell a better story...the story of what America is supposed to be, the story of what America is going to be."

Anxiety about America's grand narrative seems universal. Reacting to claims that Americans have no interest in the past, historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen surveyed and interviewed 1500 people about their "connection to the past and its continuing influence on their present lives and hopes". As Rosenzweig and Thelen report in *The Presence of the Past*, they discovered that while Americans take their relationship to the past quite seriously and, in their respective ways, actively seek to engage history, most do not readily connect their own intimate pasts with any overarching collective or national story. Americans do, however, recognize and affirm the value and import of just such a narrative.

We definitely should not fail to attend to and appreciate our conservative compatriots' continuing anxieties and fears regarding the grand narrative. Their writings may tell us things we have forgotten or not even realized - at the least, they should serve to remind us that the struggle continues.

In *American Epic: Then and Now*, neo-conservative Nathan Glazer defines an epic as "a story recounting great deeds." Observing how "Epic...comes up everywhere when one thinks about America," he rightly connects "America as epic" to the idea of "American exceptionalism." He notes that the epic which long dominated American consciousness spoke of "the American idea...the American dream...Manifest Destiny." It emphasized the newness, the vastness, the openness of America – the freedom thereby granted Americans". Moreover, it told a story of "Americanization" – of later immigrant generations pursuing the dream and, in the process, transforming themselves into Americans.

Yet, Glazer explains, in recent decades a more problematic narrative has superceded the original: "The one grand epic has been succeeded by many fragmentary little epics... The new fragments create epics that celebrate the destruction of a domineering and false oneness by a manyness; and we wonder whether that means also the fragmenting of a nation." Glazer does not discount how the narrative suppressed or marginalized experiences; nor does he yearn for restoration of the older epic. Nonetheless, his words express loss and lamentation. He relates a tale of declension. He mourns the fragmentation of a grand unifying epic and distresses over what it might portend: "Of course, we can live without an American epic. But that does diminish us, and it is easy to understand why some of our poets, artists, writers, and historians keep on trying."

One does not have to subscribe to Glazer's politics to sympathize with his general argument. However, his apparently reasonable sentiments deceive. While sideswiping the academic left for promoting race, ethnic, and women studies, he refuses to acknowledge the work of a generation of historians who have directed their efforts at transforming, not destroying America's grand narrative. By way of omission, Glazer essentially repeats Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s accusations in *The Disuniting of America* that the left advocates fragmentation, a claim that necessarily involved conflating the work of Afro-centrists and other particularists with that of the academic left as a whole.

If our efforts perturb them so, conservatives must get all the more distressed to learn that our work actually seems to have had an influence. We have far from triumphed, but - contrary to what we ourselves have usually assumed - it appears we have had *some* impact on recent generations' historical memory. The 1996 Survey of American Political Culture shows that the overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens recognize that the nation "expanded at the cost of much suffering", "betrayed its principles by the cruel mistreatment of Blacks and American Indians", and "subjected women to a male-dominated culture". At the same time, Americans continue to subscribe to the "American creed" - understood as a "commitment to

liberty, equality, democracy, and the 'melting pot' theory of national identity"- *and* they continue to understand the nation's history as entailing the "expansion of freedom". Furthermore, they want that grand narrative and those critical understandings taught to their children. ote the success of Joy Hakim's *A History of US*, a ten-volume study of American history for children and young people. Its truly extraordinary sales history clearly indicates the popular demand for a well-written critical interpretation of American experience. Parents want their children to learn America's exceptional story.

Like our fellow citizens, we must avoid one-dimensional thinking. Inspired by the revolutionary promise of the Founders', the American radical tradition has imbued American life with experiences, images and figures that resonate across historical generations. Don't accuse me of praising the corporately owned media, but I cannot resist recounting my surprise and delight in coming across a recent *Life* mgazine "collector's edition." The editors had dedicated the issue to "Celebrating Our Heroes". *And* their twenty-five member "Hall of Heroes" included sixteen progressives and radicals: Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., Tecumseh, Thomas Jefferson, Margaret Sanger, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Cesar Chavez, Helen Keller, Rachel Carson, Jacob Riis, and Mother Jones.

We need to take seriously this complex of anxious yearnings and democratic memories. They represent critical possibilities *and* resources. If we don't engage them, others will. "Hardly anyone, it seems, is chanting a slogan of 'progress' anymore." But will they wait for lefty? Unfortunately, whilehistorians can write epic works, they cannot alone craft grand narratives. The democratic left needs not only to write good history, but also to make it. I just hope that along with the obstacles, we appreciate the possibilities.

I opened with the death of the last Liberty Tree. I close on a more promising note. In the course of the same year, the Federal government announced that as a consequence of the banning of D.D.T. and the passage of the Endangered Species Act back in the early 1970s, the American bald eagle no longer stands on the brink of extinction.

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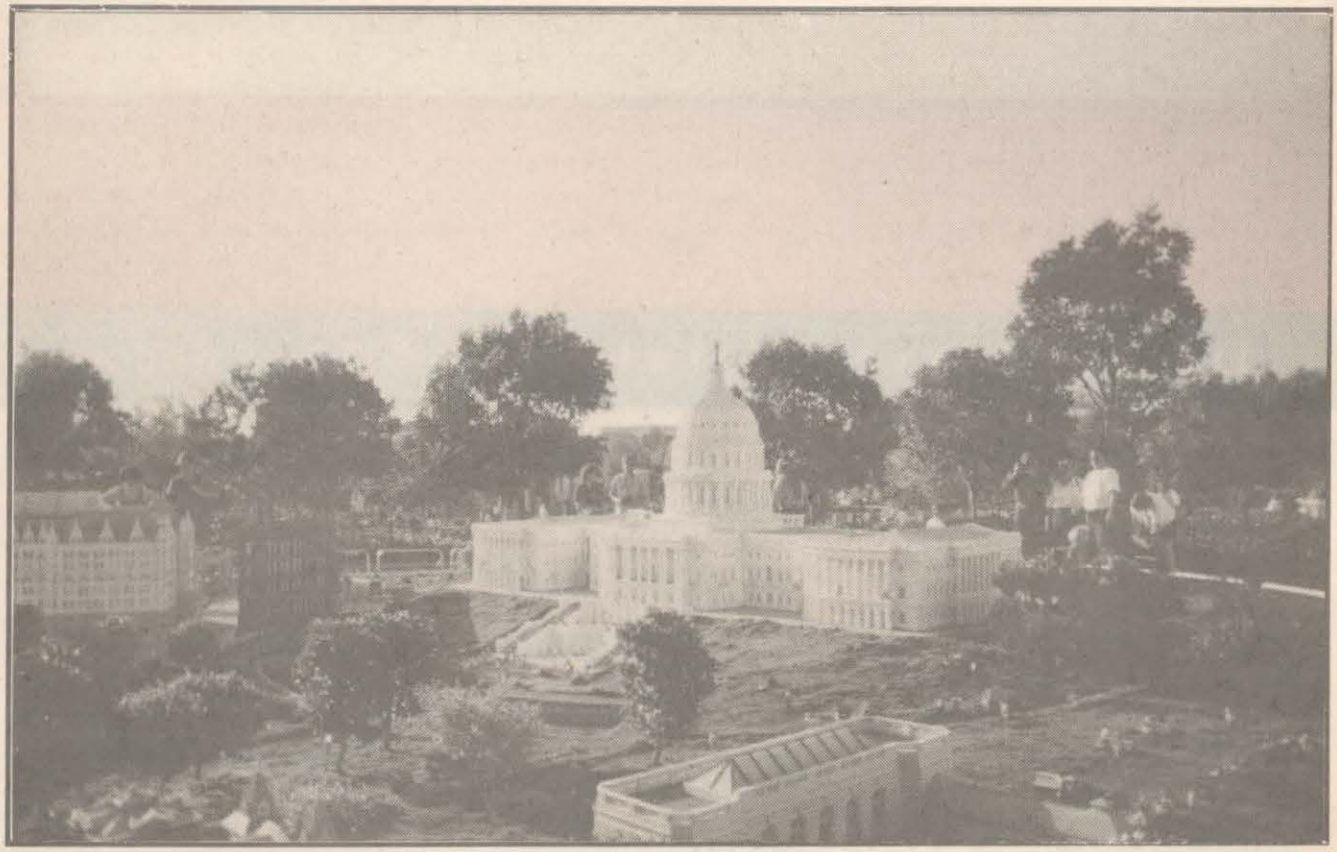

The fact that DSA exists in the land of opportunity (for some) and equality (for some) and greed (for more than some) is a great testament to its validity and meaningfulness. Democratic Socialism and its antecedent movements have produced great progressive advances in spite of the vicious enmity of the greedy few, and it will remain as the motivating force, the seedbed for future advances when they come. And they will come.
To solidarity!

-Edward Asner

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