

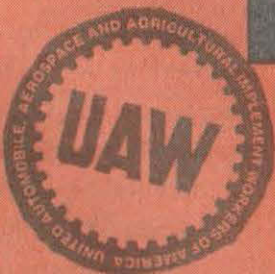
DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Elections 2000

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UNITE!

Labor: Not Just *Survivors*

Reasonable Differences

Electoral Perspective 2000

DSA's main goal for the left in the 2000 elections is to build progressive coalitions which can increase representation in the Congress and, importantly, state legislatures. Too much of the debate among ideological leftists about Gore versus Nader is purely theoretical. Not enough members of the democratic left *practice* grassroots electoral politics. If they do, they recognize that while volunteer efforts can make a difference in close local races, at the presidential level one needs money and infrastructure well beyond the capacity of DSA. Trade unionists involved in political action, and community activists in communities of color, can influence numbers of voters; but most white middle-strata leftists who obsess about Gore versus Nader overestimate their own role in electoral politics — if they do anything concrete in that arena — and radically underestimate how much hard organizing will be needed to build a grassroots left strong enough to matter in mainstream electoral arenas, let alone presidential politics.

DSA will measure its 2000 electoral success by how many of its members do coordinated electoral work, particularly in regards to Congressional and state legislative races. We recognize that our members are divided over presidential politics; but we are united in almost all the races below the top of the ticket. Some of us think a Bush victory over Gore will not be that much of a lesser evil — but many of us disagree. What we can all agree upon is that a Bush victory accompanied by Republican control of both chambers of Congress, and of the majority of state legislatures, would be a disaster, during reapportionment year.

Some DSAers argue that at the presidential level both parties are subordinate to corporate donors and to center-right ideology. Thus, a vote for Nader represents a protest against the Republocrats (should they cohere nationally) and 5 percent of the vote would enable the Green Party to play a viable third party

role in national politics. As long as the Democrats can take their core progressive constituencies for granted, the argument goes, they will continue to neglect and abuse them. Others contend that the “marginal differences” among the candidates — on education, Social Security, health care, labor law, occupational safety and environmental regulation — are by no means “marginal” for the interests of the least powerful. Thus, most progressive trade union activists and Black and Latino community organizers will be backing Gore, even if solely because the terrain for organizing will, in their judgment, be more favorable under a centrist Gore administration than a reactionary Bush regime. While one might argue about individual Supreme Court decisions, there is little arguing that twelve years of Reagan-Bush so transformed Federal Circuit and District courts that most reactionary decisions do not even get successfully appealed to the Supreme Court.

We could go on assessing these arguments. But what is clear is that DSA members and the broader ideological left are divided. Given the electoral college and the overly (and unfortunate) bi-coastal distribution of the socialist left, many DSAers will have a free vote on the presidential level. Half of our membership resides in California and New York. If Gore does not win these states handily, there is little hope for him to win nationally. DSAers in those states might vote for Nader and probably not worry about the consequences on the Gore-Bush race. But in key battleground states where we have significant membership — Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Washington state, the presidential choice will prove more vexing. We leave that choice to our divided membership. What DSA remains united upon is the task of building the broad democratic left with the organizational capacity — in our unions, community, and feminist groups and in DSA itself — so that next time around we have better choices.

LETTERS

The Elections

DL Editors:

Meyerson's lesser of three evils argument favoring Gore's candidacy is specious and slyly partisan. No doubt that Norman Thomas would have favored Nader. What is going on? I'd expect such a position from Maitlin or Carville or Morris, but not from the DSA.

WILLIAM M. CARSON
Forest Grove, OR

Dear Editors:

I thought when I subscribed to *Democratic Left* I would find a publication in agreement with my political philosophy. But when I finished reading "Electoral Politics as Tactic," which emphasizes grass roots approaches, I found myself at odds with the general gist of the article.

What will accelerate progress will be a vote for Nader and the defeat of Al Gore. Supporting Gore is not sup-

porting a Democrat. He is all big business, not a friend of labor, and a supporter of the deal with China and the WTO. These are not the leanings of a true Democrat, but a tried-and-true fence sitter. His fund raising history proves he is in the hands of big business, big money, and everyone opposed to social welfare programs, education, health, and a liveable minimum wage.

Nader can't win, but he can sure go a long way to accelerate the changes that must be instituted if we are to remain a democracy.

ROBERT E. BREIDSTER
Mahopac, NY

Dear Editors:

After reading the DSA statement on the 2000 Presidential election, and a piece by Barbara Ehrenreich where she takes to task those Leftists supporting Al Gore, I felt I had to make some response.

I am very concerned about the

continued on page 15

inside DL

- 2 Editorial
- 4 Labor Rising
Bill Fletcher Interview
- 8 Caribbean Challenge
Jose LaLuz Interview
- 10 Unions & Social Activism
John Hogan Interview
- 13 Unionists as Professionals
Leo Casey
- 14 Mu\$rooms and Justice
Nelson Carrasquillo
- 17 Locals Report
- 18 Mexican Elections
Clifton Poole & Amy Traub
- 22 Schroeder's Third Way
Stephan Peter
- 24 East Coast: R2K for GOP
Strauss, Hogan, Quinn
- 27 West Coast: DSA at LA
- 28 Howard Sherman Interview
- 30 *Today's Other America*
Filmmakers Library
- 32 Plan Columbia

DEMOCRATIC

LEFT

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FUTURE DLs:

The Other American

a review

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Labor Rising

Interview with Bill Fletcher, Jr.

Bill Fletcher is the assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO. A veteran radical and African-American labor and community organizer, Fletcher formerly served as Education Director of

the AFL-CIO. DSA National Political Committee member Joseph Schwartz recently interviewed him about the challenges involved in revitalizing the American labor movement.

DL: *I have read much of your published analysis of the state of the labor movement. One of the most provocative arguments you make is that simply devoting more funds to organizing will not alone enable labor to grow significantly in numbers and power. What other steps need to be taken in your opinion.*

BF: Devoting money to organizing members without making changes in the existing structure and functions of trade unionism might be analogous to doing a blood transfusion while the patient is hemorrhaging. Unions need to be transformed so they are operating on a different basis. The organizing which needs to be done would qualitatively transform the organizing capacity of unions. Twenty million workers will not get organized simply on the basis of NLRB campaigns. Mass recruitment would necessitate the igniting of a movement where workers themselves are seeking out unions, even forming unions on their own. We must rethink the role of the organizer and the social context in which they operate.

Some analysts then argue that we cannot succeed until if and when labor intersects with a mass social movement. But waiting for a mass movement to arise, akin to the 1930s or 60s, is a mistake folks make when they are feeling defeated. You can kick back and wait for the next upsurge, but the work we do now contributes to the very possibility of that upsurge. Of course, we can't know what form it will take; just as activists in the 20s did not know what form the labor upsurge of the 1930s would take . . .

Even on the smallest scale, winning immediate victories reinforces

hope and optimism.

DL: *Are there movements out there that hint at the type of broader social activism that would strengthen the union movement?*

BF: I see a few possibilities, some of which might come to fruition. There has been tremendous activism among immigrant workers, particularly in California. Latino immigrant dry-wallers literally self-organized themselves in Los Angeles. Various forms of community activism in new immigrant communities spontaneously connect up with trade union activity. A second possibility might be along the lines of what we saw in the South in the late 60s and early 1970s where we witnessed the fusion of the civil rights movement and trade union movement. In Memphis, St. Petersburg, Florida, Charleston, South Carolina, and elsewhere unions became a vehicle for prosecuting broader struggles for racial justice. The continuing struggle for African-American political power, particularly in the South, could fuse with the struggle for economic justice. The UNITE campaign in Greensboro, North Carolina, constructed a broad-based, community effort for economic justice and in support of unionization. Another conceivable possibility could be economic justice movements that do not take a traditional trade union form but enables conditions for trade union growth. Such movements as living-wage campaigns, struggles for universal health care, and the emerging anti-globalization movements. Such movements are not necessarily union-organized, but they could nevertheless play a crucial role in developing the social context for union

growth.

Let me add a caveat. Any union activist who has his or her ear to the ground in regards to the reconstruction of the global economy realizes that we have to consider new strategies and forms of organization in order to organize. For example, the computer industry may demand new forms of organizing. My wife and I have talked about organizing hair salons, which is an area of the huge beauty industry which involves lots of young African-Americans. Most unions are not structured in such a way that they could not even conceive how to do this. They would have to link up with African-American and Latino youth and their youth culture. The labor movement needs to come to grips with changes in objective conditions and in possible forms of self-organization. We need a higher-level of strategic thinking, bold, creative, and unapologetic strategic thinking at all levels. As a movement we are reluctant to engage in it; often we would rather do things we know how to do even if they fail.

DL: *You have also argued that "organizing the unorganized" will necessitate the mobilization and organization of the existing seventeen million trade union members. Would you explain to our readers what you mean that the trade union movement needs to pay more attention to organizing its existing membership.*

BF: I just got back from South Africa. The United States labor movement has much to learn from the South African movement, particularly about member control of unions. We are not talking only about the issue of workers being

mobilized to engage in contract campaigns and volunteer-organizing. We need to ensure that members truly control their unions. Short of achieving that we won't be able to access or unite with any major spontaneous movement which might emerge. The extent to which unions are perceived as alien, third-party bureaucracies is the extent to which ordinary folks will not gravitate in our direction. The mainstream labor movement has to look very coldly, very carefully at issues of worker control of unions.

We have to go beyond issues of formal democracy, as important as those may be. We can have direct elections of national officers — formal democratic structures can exist — and yet member control may not exist. It's similar to electoral politics; it's the difference between formal pluralism and substantive participation and real democratic distribution of power.

DL: You are the former education director of the AFL-CIO and now personal assistant to AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. You also are a national leader of the Black Radical Congress and maintain fraternal relations with left organizations such as DSA. Should we read this as a sign that parts of mainstream labor are open to having explicit leftists in their leadership and on staff?

BF: John Sweeney has been willing to work with the left. It's not that mainstream progressive labor leaders are consciously out to hire, say, DSA members. Rather, they hire left-wing staff as long as those staff do quality work. Their judgment is similar to that of John L. Lewis in the 1930s: smart, dedicated folks committed to workers are often ideological leftists. And the labor movement knows it must find new blood and new ideas. In an interview in *The Progressive* I argued that having some left-wing folks on staff is meaningless if there is not organizing going on at the base to strengthen left and progressive views within the union movement. In the absence of that type of organization and advancement of the left's politics, the position of leftists on trade

union staff becomes at best fragile and at worst tokenistic. I see my role as that of an advocate for positions that are often ignored by official trade unions. I feel a responsibility to be an advocate for constituencies that have been historically excluded from the halls of labor officialdom.

DL: Some on the left who are not knowledgeable about the structure of the United States labor movement may overestimate the importance of changes in top leadership of the AFL-CIO. How would you rate its significance?

BF: Certainly, the decentralized nature of the central labor federation in America means the AFL-CIO leadership can't transform the American labor movement by proclamations from on high. In our loose federation, affiliated international unions have a high degree of autonomy. But the significance of having folks such as John Sweeney, Linda Chavez-Thompson and Richard Trumka at the top of the AFL-CIO is that it creates a moral compass re: where trade unionism should go. It enables progressive activists to promote a different vision of trade unionism. Even though the AFL as an organization operates under real limitations, a more progressive national leadership has tremendous import.

DL: You have been involved in labor education for many years. What role do you think labor education and ideological work will play in revitalizing the labor movement?

BF: The AFL-CIO is not an anti-capitalist labor federation. Such federations do exist in South Africa in Brazil. It's important that the left know the parameters that we work under. There is tremendous room for anti-corporate, anti-neo-liberal, even anti-capitalist analysis within the labor movement. Workers unite in many cases based on their own experiences and anger at what the system is doing to them. At the AFL-CIO, our labor education through the Common Sense Economics program articulates anti-corporate and anti-

neo-liberal analysis. But we do not engage in explicitly anti-capitalist arguments as we do not have a political mandate to do so. As a staff person I do not control our political agenda. But my observations tell me that there is a hunger for an alternative analysis and directions towards transforming the current system

The U.S. union movement has by and large been unwilling to consider radical alternatives. It is now very willing to critique neo-liberal capitalism. But it has not been willing to embrace explicit anti-capitalist analysis and articulate a vision of an alternative way to organize an economy democratically. Some union leaders are more receptive to moving in such a direction, but we are not there yet in regards to official trade union education.

That is why it is so crucial to have a rooted, active, authentic left voice within the labor movement. It's unsatisfactory and insufficient to rely on the best of the current leadership to articulate an explicit left, yet alone socialist, politics. They operate under their own constraints. Some are in fact socialists, but in terms of changing the discourse within the labor movement, that will have to happen from below, so than from above.

DL: One principle of organizing that I've always subscribed to is first organize the person next to you. Thus, white progressives should fight racism within the white community; college professors should organize themselves as workers and participate in the struggles of much more exploited adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants. Yet many unions now are hiring college graduates straight off campus to organize workers whose life histories are often very different from their own. What are the strengths and weaknesses of that approach?

BF: You need all levels of activity to revitalize the labor movement. We welcome the entrance of folks from the middle strata who have decided to commit themselves to the interests of the working class. Taking union staff jobs or going into workplaces and organizing from within are both valuable endeavors. We need to

strengthen class-consciousness and help build rank-and-file worker leadership . . . and there are many ways to do that. One way to contribute is to go to work as a union organizer, whether a college grad or not. And we need to think of the working class who exist well beyond the current reach of formal trade union structures. The worker centers set up by UNITE and others, which target the needs of immigrant communities. Doing popular educational work or community organizing can help build class-consciousness.

We have to think beyond the narrow interests of currently organized workers and expand to serve the broader interests of all working people. The dynamics of capitalism force workers constantly onto the defensive. The labor movement is constantly responding to the initiatives of capitalists — increasing profits and degrading work. One key role for the left is to advance trade unionism that moves beyond defensive struggles. If all we do is strengthen existing trade union structures we will only be strengthening the defensive capacity of a segment of the working class.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Fifty-two million folks will not have health benefits this year. What's the role of unions in that struggle? Some leaders say by their actions that there is no role for the labor movement in this struggle. Many of our members are covered by the existing patchwork system, so it's not a central concern of ours. Now that's a narrow trade union leader speaking. A real labor leader would be trying to figure out how to mobilize working class strength around this issue; part of that mobilization would involve union members, but it would be a much broader working class mobilization.

DL: For pragmatic reasons,

even many radical activists within the labor movement will work for moderate-to-progressive Democratic Party candidates. But many Democratic elected officials have come to take labor, African-American, and other progressive support for granted. Without engaging in utopian finger-painting about a mass Labor Party arising tomorrow at 9am, are there ways that labor can increase its capacity for independent political action without losing its ability to stop the right from gaining political power?

BF: The immediate election that faces us poses the basic question of what do we do if we face the scenario of a Republican presidency and simultaneous Republican control of the House and Senate. We have to look at that as a serious possibility and face it head-on. The longer term and larger scale issue is that there needs to be debate within the union movement — an officially-sanctioned and well-organized one — about electoral politics.

We do see trade union activists dissatisfied with the two-party system and with the union movement's traditional alliance with the Democrats.

There is significant sentiment among activists to have a serious discussion about these issues and it needs to happen. But it won't happen on the basis of staff and political leaders saying we have to do a re-evaluation of our intervention in the electoral arena. I don't know if that will happen, but if it does strictly from the top, such a discussion would

run the risks of being out of touch of with the base. Remember, the New Voice leadership when it was elected in 1995 argued that our members were clearly not looking to be told by their unions whom to vote for, but rather were looking for unions to provide them with a real analysis of where candidates stood on crucial issues.

My own experience in the 1984 and 1988 Jackson presidential campaigns are that there are honest issues raised by the particular American constitutional and electoral structure. The key is how do we engage in independent working class politics on the terrain of American political reality.

DL: Many of us radicalized in the 1960s and early 1970s have gone into the labor movement full-time or as rank-and-file activists. Some, in fact, by their allocation of time and energy, implicitly view the labor movement as being almost synonymous with the progressive movement. In contrast, you have maintained a prominent independent radical activity through your work as a founder and leader of the Black Radical Congress and in your fraternal ties to various left organizations, such as DSA.

I like to think your actions indicate that you think the labor movement needs a vibrant independent left and visa-versa. Why do you think committed democratic socialists within labor should care about the health of not only other mass social movements, but also the health of the ideological

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left?

BF: I have little tolerance for the “laborist” point-of-view you just described above. It’s been a prevalent tendency among many on the left for quite some time. After the downturn in left organizational strength after the late 1970s and early 1980s, many decided the best road to take was to get involved in the labor movement. That’s fine and important. But some have come to believe — explicitly or implicitly — that we don’t really need an organized left presence in this country.

But history shows that there is always an objective, broader, left and a smaller, open, “subjective” left. We desperately need a strong “subjective,” self-conscious left articulating an independent alternative to global capitalism. When you confine yourself to trade unionism, you almost inevitably abandon strong ties to other social movements. Those social movements are not auxiliary appendages to the union movement. They are important independent forces from which the union movement can learn a great deal.

An additional problem is articulating a social mission for the “objective left,” composed of the mass social movements. We can prosecute countless resistance struggles to what capital does and we must. But the question remains: towards what end is the working class and other oppressed struggling. Are defensive struggles all we have to look forward to while the juggernaut of capitalism is crushing us? The role of the ideological left is to instill hope; the possibility that life can be different and that particular struggles can link up towards building a comprehensive, democratic alternative to the current inhumane system.

DL: I have been struck by the anarchistic and openly anti-statist, even anti-socialist strains among some of the younger (mostly

white) folk coming up in the anti-globalization movement. I’d be interested in your take on the non-labor wing of the anti-corporate globalization movement.

BF: There definitely is a spontaneous tendency within the opposition to globalization. Some of it reflects the overall weakness of the ideological left; so we should not look at the movement in its infancy as being all that it can be. There will be a struggle within the anti-globalization movement about the role of the nation-state and whether or not the fight for political power within nation-states is any longer relevant to people’s lives. There is a certain post-modern view out there that says the nation-state is irrelevant. But such an analysis fails to recognize that corporate globalization is being pushed by political actors, including capitalist nation-states and United States foreign policy, as well as by international financial institutions.

DL: Not only neo-liberal apologists for United States corporate capitalism such as New York Times columnists Thomas Friedman and Paul Krugman, but also some left critics of the AFL-CIO, argue that the labor’s response to globalization, particularly around Preferred Nation Trade Relations (PNTR) for China, is overly protectionist and hobbles the growth of labor-intensive manufacturing in the developing world. How would you respond to such criticisms?

BF: These criticisms caricature the labor movement’s positions. Tom Friedman takes the worst examples of union protectionism and generalizes. One can see in the aftermath of Seattle a real change in the labor movement’s discourse in regards to the international situation. The 1995 New Voice’s campaign for the AFL-CIO leadership broke with Cold War trade unionism. We’ve developed a deeper, stronger notion of a common front against neo-liberalism. Such solidarity efforts go on beyond the particular political tendencies which may be dominant within a given national labor federation. The AFL-Cio being involved in the

struggle for international debt relief through Jubilee 2000 is an important step forward. But obviously there are some retrograde, protectionist tendencies with the labor movement. They respond to visceral experiences that workers have against globalization and respond to anger that people feel at the insecurity of their situation caused by global economic restructuring. These are simplistic, irrational, and often racist approaches to that experience. The job of those of us on the left is to rearticulate these experiences in a progressive way. Workers in the rest of the world are not the enemy; neo-liberal capitalism is.

DL: One might argue that this is not a period for radical social transformation. Why then do you feel it is important to maintain not just a radical analysis, but also to build radical organizations such as the Black Radical Congress or DSA?

BF: It is not enough to have a left rap, but no organization to back it up. Organization is the key to advancing a program and to reshaping a discussion. So if we don’t have an organized presence on the left then all the left amounts to is talk and entertainment. We can give the best speeches in the world and folks may leave feeling good and feeling enlightened. But if such an analysis is not tied to a program of action then the afterglow will last a few minutes . . . and then folks are back in the old situation. It’s critically important that folks be involved in building a left project. Building the organized, ideological left is not an antithetical project to mass organizing; rather left organizations can contribute to social movements by contributing to discussions about the strategic orientation of such movements. Without a strong, Institutionalized left, the broader progressive movement suffers.

Caribbean Challenge

An Interview with Jose LaLuz

Jose LaLuz is the Executive Director of *Servidores Publicos Unidos de Puerto Rico/AFSCME* (United Public Employees of Puerto Rico). He has been on assignment in Puerto Rico since 1995, coordinating AFSCME's efforts to achieve collective bargaining rights and to organize more than 150,000 public service workers as part of a multiunion coordinated organizing project which includes SEIU, UAW, AFT, UFCW, AFGE—among other unions in the AFL-CIO. He had been a democratic socialist long before he joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Com-

mittee (DSOC) in 1977, when he became the Chair of the Hispanic Commission of DSOC, before the merger with the New American Movement that created DSA. He previously had been a leader of the U.S. Branch of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party and was responsible for organizational and trade union activities before he was expelled for being a "social democrat." From Washington, D.C., DL Editorial Committee Member Bill Mosley interviewed LaLuz in his San Juan, Puerto Rico, office.

DL: What role did you and your union play in last year's general strike over telephone privatization in Puerto Rico? Do you regard the fact that privatization went forward as a defeat, or is there something positive to be drawn from it?

JL: SPU/AFSCME was part of the effort led by the Puerto Rican Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, one of three labor centers in this island nation that coordinated solidarity activities with the telephone workers union, which are affiliated with the Congress of Puerto Rican Workers. The two-day general strike galvanized all tendencies in the organized labor movement, which is very small, organically speaking. Despite the fact that only 6 percent of the workforce is organized, the unified labor movement led a broad-based movement of the civil society in Puerto Rico to stop privatization. The movement achieved important results in that it forged a strategic alliance of critical forces in Puerto Rico civil society that has put economical and social rights at the forefront. These same forces came together to organize a social summit March 2-3, 2000, to develop a social agenda for Puerto Rico.

DL: The immigrant Latino population of the continental United States is growing, with disproportionate number in lower-wage, transient, hard-to-organize jobs. How can labor reach and organize these workers?

JL: Some unions have been organizing low-wage immigrant workers for

generations, particularly in the needle trades, but these efforts require a strategic approach which brings together the resources of multiple unions in a coordinated program. It calls for bold new organizing tactics that seek to build alliances with whole communities of new immigrants and people of color. The AFL-CIO adopted an enlightened policy regarding immigrant labor that will push these organizing efforts.

DL: There is a debate over the political future of Puerto Rico: continued commonwealth status vs. statehood or independence. What is labor's stake in this debate?

JL: The question of the colonial status of Puerto Rico has been debated long before Spain ceded the island as war booty to the U.S. after the Spanish-American War. Since the beginning of this century, when workers became organized in unions that gave rise to the Free Federation of Labor and a worker- and trade union-based Socialist Party, the character of the relationship of Puerto Rico to the U.S. has been of major interest to working people. Today workers — organized and unorganized — vote overwhelmingly for the two main political parties that favor a continued relationship with the U.S. either as a "free associated state" or as the 51st state of the Union.

All three labor centers — PRFL, CPT, CGT — representing different ideological tendencies favor self-deter-

mination for Puerto Rico, and many veteran labor leaders specifically favor national sovereignty for the island. There is a growing consciousness that Puerto Rico is in fact a "nation" although this doesn't translate in electoral support for the creation of a national sovereign state.

DL: Likewise the struggle to stop the military from using Vieques for target practice: Does labor have a stake in this expression of Puerto Rico's desire to control its own territory?

JL: The widespread and popular sentiment among workers of all political persuasions is that the U.S. Navy should stop military maneuvers in the tiny island of Vieques. The AFL-CIO adopted a policy supporting the struggle to stop these practices and unions have played a pivotal role in the growing social movement led by the clergy to end the military presence in Vieques.

DL: What approach should DSA take toward Puerto Rico's self-determination struggle?

JL: DSA should continue its policy of supporting the right to self-determination of the people of Puerto Rico and should educate its members and sympathizers about the need to end colonial rule in that island nation

DL: More broadly on the state of labor: In the five years since John Sweeney became

president of the AFL-CIO, do you see the promise of the "new" labor movement bearing fruit?

JL: I'm reminded of Jeremy Brecher's article *A New Labor Movement in the Shell of the Old* in which he raised some critical issues regarding the need to transform the culture of unions and the Federation when John Sweeney became elected President. I have the outmost respect and admiration for brother Sweeney and his leadership team, Linda Chavez-Thompson and Richard Trumka.

AFSCME's role, and more specifically Gerry McEntee's leadership, was instrumental in the "changing of the guard." In my opinion, the most important achievement of his team so far has been in the area of organizing the unorganized. The policies and programs enacted by the Federation are far-reaching in comparison with the more modest but important achievements in the area of political action and even international solidarity. Unions and their leaders are an expression of the "state of mind" of the working class. Their views, policies and practices are shaped by the same forces that pull the entire society in one direction or the other. Therefore, institutional change and cultural change in particular require a long-range vision and program. It may very well take a whole new generation of leaders and activists to put organized labor at the forefront of American society. But on the whole, President Sweeney's leadership has provided the impetus for reinvigorated and renewed effort that will put the "movement" back in labor.

DL: A higher percentage of public-sector workers are organized than private-sector workers. What lessons can the public sector teach its private-sector counterparts? And what are the limits of public-sector organizing?

JL: Here in Puerto Rico an alliance of AFSCME, SEIU and the UFCW secured passage of historic legislation granting public-service workers the right to organize and bargain collectively through large mobilizations of

workers in an unprecedented grassroots lobbying campaign. This paved the way for a mass-scale organizing drive, the largest in the AFL-CIO, which already has brought 70,000 new members to the ranks of organized labor. All of these efforts have engaged the continuous and growing support of President Sweeney and his team. In the end, the rate of unionization will increase to more than 30 percent in Puerto Rico!

The success of public-service organizing will provide the foundation to launch a similar offensive in the private sector, which is practically union-free in Puerto Rico. I gather the same could be true in other jurisdictions where coordinated organizing projects are being contemplated. My experience has taught some important lessons about organizing and union building. For instance, in the public sector employers are supposed to be neutral and not fight the unionization efforts and as a result, the union's campaign is not supposed to be as militant and aggressive as it could be in the private sector. Wrong!!

Nowadays with privatization and sub-contracting rampant in the public sector, public managers and elected officials are applying the same anti-union practices that have shaped the struggles to organize private sector workers. And public sector unions like AFSCME are having to readjust their organizing efforts towards the newly privatized services like corrections and former public utilities.

DL: Given that over one-third of the labor movement already consists of people of color, and that new workers will be over 70 percent women and people of color, what changes in leadership and internal union culture are necessary to give voice to these workers and build a movement that can recruit the workforce of the 21st century?

JL: I've been an advocate for a more integrated, multicultural approach to organizing and union-building that respects and embraces diversity by targeting whole communities of people of color in strategic and changing urban centers like New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Chicago, to name

a few. In my view, this effort will require the involvement of the major national regional and local civil rights organizations as well as the AFL-CIO's supported groupings like APRI, CBTU, APALA, CLWU and LCLAA in the formulation of the overall strategy and program. Perhaps the biggest challenge is changing the "banana stand" mindset that still dominates the leadership bodies of both unions and civil rights organizations with regards to organizing in general and who will ultimately reap the benefits of membership growth in particular.

DL: You've spoken about the need to halt the race to the bottom, of corporations playing off one country against the other to drive down wages. How can labor and its allies fight back?

JL: I've recently learned about the AFL-CIO's Global Fairness Campaign, which seems to be a more enlightened approach to trade policy. In my view, trade is an important tool for development as long as it promotes the kind of development that raises the standard of living of the Rodriguez family in Matamoros, Mexico and the Rodriguez family in the South Bronx. This can only be achieved by linking trade with labor, environmental and human rights standards. The Federation's newly adapted program is definitely a step in the right — or the left — direction. I only regret not being able to play a more active role in these critical efforts towards rebuilding the international movement of workers to confront the power of transnational corporations.

DL: You've spoken about the need to use the "language of liberation," to speak in the authentic idiom of people's struggles. How can DSA activists across the United States learn to speak this language?

JL: I've been very inspired and invigorated throughout my life as a social and trade union activist by the life and teachings of people like Paulo Freire, the Brazilian adult and popular educator, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Center. I was always

Local Unions and Social Activism

John Hogan talks with Kathy Quinn

John Hogan, a library technical worker at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, has been a member of AFSCME Local 590 for 12 years and its Treasurer for 5 years. He edited AFSCME District Council 47's newsletter and represents DC 47 in the Philadelphia

AFL-CIO delegate assembly. He is also Co-Chair of Greater Philadelphia DSA. DL editors Kathy Quinn and John Strauss interviewed him about local union issues, and progressive activism.



DL: Given that you come from a white-collar background, how did you get involved with unions, particularly to the degree that you are?

JH: It's hard to say why I became an activist. I really just don't like bosses. It felt like a way to resist unwarranted, arbitrary authority.

DL: What do you see as union problems in your own particular local?

JH: Penn, like a lot of other universities and non profits, is moving toward a more corporate model of organizing its affairs. They're starting to act like private-sector bosses in that respect, and it has been more of a struggle to keep getting good contracts, keep protecting the members' interests...and more of a struggle to generate activity and militancy especially among the newer members. It's an interesting problem that when unions aren't doing new organizing, more and more of their members have never been involved in an organizing drive, and probably never have and never will be involved in a strike. And without that experience it's harder to reproduce and pass on the energy that's required to keep a union militant and strong and growing.

DL: What do you think is behind the low motivation of your members?

JH: Growing up in a culture that doesn't know much about unions, doesn't know much about their history, what they do and why they do it. And maybe just not having had to

struggle to have a union in the first place. It's another permanent institution. Most people coming in don't know that it has a history; that it wasn't just always there; that we had an organizing drive that was fought by the university. We had a least one strike in the early 70s.

DL: There are a lot of parallels between a socialist outlook and a union mentality. Do you see any sort of ramifications in what you were just talking about—about not having to have that union struggle—in terms of the appeal of socialist ideas on a broader level?

JH: I do. I think the lack of a sense of why unions are needed is connected to a sense that capitalism basically works: "Private ownership of the means of production and commodification of labor power can be okay." The less open struggle you see, in the union or in general, the less you're aware of exploitation and immiseration and the general need to organize and resist.

DL: Philadelphia is seen as a predominantly

LaLuz Interview / continued from page 9

struck by their devotion to the process of how common, ordinary people learn and construct their knowledge, or the collective construction of knowledge to use a more "fancy" term. This has more to do with the practice of learning from and with people whose struggles of knowledge challenge oppression and injustices. Obviously one has to be involved in people's struggle to learn and speak their language — which doesn't mean that one glorifies and develop myths about people and their

wisdom. I refer to the experience of the revitalized social movements in Brazil and South Africa which are led and driven by workers and their organizations in their workplaces and communities. I also draw inspiration from the communities of faith such as the ones rooted in the traditions of the "theology of liberation."

DL: Do you find being an open leftist and socialist helps or hinders your union work?

JL: I don't mean my convictions are on my forehead as a label. My prac-

tices and my actions are always driven by strong values about the need to build a more just and humane world. But I find myself in contradiction with people who call themselves socialists who are so ideologically driven that they fail to acknowledge people for who they are, and as a result violate their dignity. Having said that, I'm proud of being referred to as a socialist.

a Democratic city. It has unions, but I don't know whether it is a union town like someplace like say Detroit or Chicago.

JH: It thinks of itself as a union town — or at least its unions see it as a union town. It's a union town in the sense that a lot of unions and union leaders have been assimilated into the power structure. And in the sense that the president of the Philadelphia AFL-CIO is on the board of the United Way. In the sense that of the three field operations that made sure that John Street got elected mayor of Philadelphia last year; one was the building trades, especially the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 98. And their president, John Dougherty, now a major player in the City Democratic Party.

Apparently that local is now scabbing on the Verizon employees which includes another IBEW local. Verizon has been outsourcing work to a union contractor that uses Local 98, crossing picket lines. So there are union towns and union towns.

DL: How about local labor strengths?

JH: I don't how distinctive this is, but the residency requirement for city employees means that AFSCME members and PFT teachers, who are among the more progressive elements in the local labor movement, have to stay in the city. The ones who can move out—building trades—are the ones most likely to vote Republican. I think that there is a larger core of progressive labor Democrats in the city than people realize. They don't realize it because we've never been able to mobilize them.

DL: What about the role of unions in social activism?

JH: I think the Republican National Convention activities are a good way to talk about that. The two permitted events—the healthcare march and the UNITY2000 march—could not have happened without support, and they got a lot of labor support. The healthcare march got a lot of support from AFSCME 1199C (National Union of Hospital and Health Care

Employees), including office space, staff time, and straight-up money donations, and a strong effort to mobilize their members to turn up for the march. Same thing for UNITY2000. They got a lot of support from United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776 and from DC47.

Maybe what we need is more events like that, to get people into the habit of turning out for stuff like that. And maybe another problem is that progressives in the labor movement have gotten used to doing a lot of their work through other groups. I think there were a lot of labor people at UNITY2000 who were not marching with their unions.

DL: Do you have any sense of labor's role in the day-to-day events? Do you think that that's hidden or that it seems to be more organized, or...?

JH: I think it needs to be broadcast more, and maybe that's a bias of mine as a former editor of labor newsletters who just got way too busy to keep doing it. There are a lot of things that the leadership know about and are involved in that the rank and file might just never hear about because certain channels of communication are so—well, haven't been a priority. As a volunteer editor for the DC47 newsletter, I ran into the problem of getting copy from the president and from the vice president, who does the political action work, and from the presidents of the larger locals... all of whom are really busy, all of whom have a lot to do just doing the basics of union work: contract negotiation, contract enforcement, talking to members about actual union issues, and just didn't have the time to produce articles for a newsletter.

DL: Do you think that the general mem-

bership is receptive to activism?

JH: I think a lot of them can be persuaded, but they will need to be persuaded. Political activity is regarded as a threat by most people, and I don't think that people who are members of unions are exempt from this. They don't spontaneously see the connection between union and social activism. That's part of the process of persuasion. I've seen Tom Cronin do that in delegate assembly meetings and other types of meetings, but those are usually fairly small groups compared to the number of people that would need to be reached for a real rank-and-file mobilization.

DL: If the leadership does something like that, pushes some sort of ongoing educational outreach, would the rank and file tend to go along?

JH: It would take a certain amount of that. And I think it also usually helps to have some kind of long-term plan—a sense that this is going somewhere other than just the next campaign.

DL: The question underlying is this several fold: One, do they care? Is there any sort of altruism in there at all? Is there any sort of identification between them and the less fortunate or a sense of systemic issues? And then the big question: Is there hope to connect with labor as a force for social activism for organized change?

JH: I suspect the pool of altruism is fairly small, and it's probably already being tapped to its capacity. The people who are doing it out of identification with the issues of the less fortunate are already doing it in some way. The way to frame it to bring more people in is an enlarged perception of their self-interest. I suspect that one reason that AFSCME is such a politi-

Future DLs

*It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the U.S.
Why Americans Still Don't Vote
an update with authors Fran Piven and Richard Cloward*

cally active and, by large union standards, progressive union is that its members are the ones most directly affected by political decisions, budgets and allocations of resources. They're the ones who deliver public services to the poor. They're social workers and the people in welfare offices—the people who are on the front lines, who are most familiar with the people affected and who are also affected themselves when budgets are cut and offices are closed. So both of those things are important to public-sector unions. I think the tougher sell on issues like that is to private-sector unions and to building trade unions who have a different kind of relationship with the public sector. They're not free of it at all. Most of their work, or a lot of their work, comes from public contracts and that's why they're such enthusiastic supporters of things like public money for stadium construction. That's their money; that's their work. And the bigger and more elaborate the project, the more work they're going to get. If you're demolishing the old stadium as well as building a new one, that's even more work for them. And if they don't live in the city, then the questions of priorities, budgets and money is really a dead issue for them. It doesn't matter; it's not their money. And in Philadelphia at least, there's been a very weak sense

of an overarching movement in which differences like that would be worked out somehow. The City AFL-CIO is not going to be building solidarity and adjusting differences between interests like that.

DL: So clearly there are some major differences in outlook between public, service sector AFSCME unions and private, primarily building trades, in Philadelphia because of the nature of the players. Any ideas of what could be done?

JH: There is now a Jobs With Justice chapter in Philadelphia. It started about a year and a half ago. And that can be a really important vehicle for bringing together progressive unions outside of the central labor council setting and putting them in contact with community groups involved in local and even neighborhood level struggles—putting them to work with each other and giving the sense of collective interest that comes out of the only place that it really ever comes out of, which is collective struggle—doing things together.

DL: The AFL-CIO has made a big effort, on the national level, to try to get to the unorganized, to make that a priority. Do you think that unions would be into that sort of thing? Or do you think they need to be shown that it is in their interest?

JH: If they can be convinced that unions succeed or fail as part of a movement and not as individual blocks of people, then those unions can be enlisted for those efforts. I think the historical record is really clear on that: The movement grows when it's in motion. When it's struggling, reaching out and trying to bring in more people, then we prosper not only internally but in other ways. It gives us more political leverage. It gives us a chance to change the ground rules. There's a strong ten-

dency, I think, among a lot of leaders and a lot of members to think of labor struggles as legal struggles. Because of the way the NLRA was written, and because of legal protections given to grievance procedures, it looks like the law is the area where labor and management fight things out, and that's not; that's a disguise. You put a legal veil over what is really a political struggle. And to point people past the veil, you've got the grievance procedure, you've got hearings, you've got formalities, but that's not really what's going on there. What's really going on there is a power struggle. And ultimately that's going to have to be worked out among the two people who are struggling. There isn't any neutral third party who's going to decide what's right and what's fair. You're not going to get what you want and what you're entitled to just because it's fair. You're going to get it because you take it, and you're going to have to take it from people who are determined not to give it to you.

DL: All of this sounds like DSA talk. What would you see as a DSA role in this and how can we get that happening?

JH: I think socialists in general and DSA in particular can and should be more aggressive about their perspective on labor struggles. We don't really have in DSA a vehicle for that. We have our our paper labor commission but, again, the people who could do that are often doing other things. No one has really made that a priority. There are probably things on the local level as well to try to bring together and form networks among labor socialists across unions. And to start talking to each other. To start with, to have better information. There are no good sources of information about what's going on in other unions.

DL: Is there anything you'd like to add about unions and socialist ideas?

JH: No, just that I think democratic unions are a natural breeding ground for the idea that workers can run their own affairs.

Hospitality Opportunities! Will you host?

DSA conducts conferences, meetings and activities throughout the country. Our members, organizers, leaders and guests need places to stay. If you are willing to consider putting up a DSAer who is passing through please let us know.

E-mail to itzhak.epstein@worldnet.att.net (make the title "DSA Hospitality") or write to Volunteers Coordinator, DSA, 180 Varick Street 12th Floor, New York, NY 10014.

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We will contact you.

Unionists as Professionals

BY LEO CASEY

In the last few decades, dramatic and far-reaching changes in the global economy present radical and fundamental challenges to trade union movements in the United States and the rest of the Western world. These movements had developed into significant political and economic forces in the context of an ascendent industrial capitalism, and were largely organized in the form of industrial unions. As a knowledge economy marked by unprecedented global integration began to replace that industrial order, and as an aggressive politics of laissez-faire market rule became hegemonic throughout the world, this industrial form of unionism has shown itself to be increasingly maladroit at advancing the interests of working people. Indeed, trade union movements here in the United States and in most of the west have seen their membership stagnate or significantly shrink, and have been restricted to fighting defensive and rearguard actions, attempting to limit the size of their losses.

There is much to be done to revitalize and renew the trade union movement in the United States, and the 'New Visions' Sweeney leadership of the AFL-CIO has taken important steps forward in its focus on new organizing and reinvigorated political action. Yet when we consider the problems facing trade unionism on a global scale, and the extent to which they have been visited on all manner of national trade union movements, it becomes evident that more organizing and more effective political action will not, by themselves, reverse the declining fortunes of American unions. As centralized and bureaucratic modes of industrial organization give way to more "flexible" economies with much contingent labor, the demand for educated labor increases, and questions of the con-

trol of knowledge and skill become increasingly prominent, trade unions will have to rethink and reshape the very institutional forms of unionism.

Knowledge economy unionism will not take one universal form, as the case of American teacher unionism may indicate. Like other public sector unions that have emerged since the 1960s, teacher unions modeled themselves after progressive industrial unions such as the UAW, and were initially very successful in pursuing that model, organizing the great majority of the teaching workforce and winning substantial salary and working condition improvements. But in the last decades, these gains have slowed to a trickle, and conservative anti-union forces have mounted a frontal assault on public education itself, with a combination of underfunding and privatization initiatives such as vouchers. Teacher unionism has reached a particularly critical juncture, and the blind pursuit of the industrial union model will not serve it — and public education — well.

Efforts to renew American teacher unionism should not start with abstract political notions drawn from outside of the world of teaching, such as social unionism, but, I contend, from the very social practices, through which teachers understand and practice together their work. (1) *Professionalism*: teacher as professional and teaching as a profession; (2) *labor*: teacher as artisan and teaching as a craft; (3) *vocation*: teacher as democratic public intellectual and teaching as a calling; (4) *nurturance*: teacher as parent and teaching as a loving and caring activity. It is through these courses that educators express their collective aspirations for teaching.

In an era when the 'factory' model of public education which arose with the industrial order has proven increasingly dysfunctional, it has be-

come necessary to break with its notions of facsimile schools run by central bureaucracies and staffed by assembly line educators. Professionalism, with its emphasis on the knowledge and expertise of the teacher, transcends the characterization of teachers as de-skilled laborers, who simply perform rote, mechanical tasks designed by outside "experts." In professional language and practice, teachers are understood to be "reflective practitioners," actively shaping pedagogical practice through critical consideration of what works. To this end, they need — and teacher unions must advocate for — time and space for their professional development, and professional autonomy. This must be combined with standards of teaching excellence, such as those developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a project for identifying and certifying excellence in teaching supported by both national teacher unions.

The tradition of craft unionism, with its notion of the worker as artisan and its stress on craft skill and quality, provides the basis for an alternative model of teacher unionism. This tradition allows us to conceptualize teaching as a craft, a complex set of skills that one learns gradually over time by practicing them with the guidance of experienced, accomplished mentors. In this context it is possible to rethink models of teacher education which are now dominant in the academy, models which do so little to prepare their students for actual teaching. In their stead, apprenticeship models based on practice teaching in actual classrooms in real schools can be developed, drawing heavily on the precedent of teacher union mentor programs. In ground-breaking 'peer review and evaluation' programs, different teacher union locals across the

continued on page 14

Mu\$hrooms and Justice

BY NELSON CARRASQUILLO

One morning, June 19, 1998, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents raided Blue Mountain Mushroom Company in Reading, Pennsylvania. After detaining all Mexican and Central American workers for several hours, they arrested and jailed 76 workers — men, women and children — for not having work permits. Although the INS could have fined the company thousands of dollars for each undocumented worker, the company received no penalties from the INS.

This incident shows the plight of

farmworkers who are forced by necessity to migrate to this country and who are willing to work in jobs that U.S. citizens reject. What was particularly significant in the INS raid was that the workers had recently won an election to be recognized as a union in order to reduce workplace abuses. The INS knew of the workers' organizing efforts when it carried out the raid and deported almost all of the union leaders. The raid sent a message to the migrant community — if they try to organize to be treated with dignity, they will be treated as criminals and deported.

The United States government promotes itself as the champion of human rights worldwide, but it treats its farmworkers as criminals. These workers are the ones who put food on our tables while constantly exposing themselves to chemicals and pesticides and toiling under conditions that other people are not willing to endure.

Farmworkers are excluded from the protections of most labor and employment laws that other workers take for granted. For example, when Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), it made a com-

Unionists as Professionals / *continued from page 13*

country have shown how this communitarian inheritance can be put into practice; break sharply with established and poorly working hierarchical patterns of industrial management supervision, and place responsibility for ensuring the quality of teaching upon the community of organized teachers. As the battle over the future of public education proceeds, the craft union combination of a focus on craft quality with the struggle for better wages and working conditions will prove particularly felicitous.

While teacher unions must retain an unapologetic emphasis on the remuneration of their members, they must also recognize that few of their members choose to teach solely to earn a living. Many teachers enter the field out of a sense of a calling to public service, a vocation to realize the full democratic potential of public education. The identification of teacher unions with this calling goes back to one of its first members, the democratic socialist John Dewey. In the pursuit of this vocation, teachers function as democratic public intellectuals, making the vital connection between education of the young and

the future of our public life, our common good. In an era of the decline of our public square, this discourse assumes growing importance.

Nurturance, teaching as a loving and caring activity, finds the familial quality in particular teacher-student relationships. In opposition to the culture of bureaucratic anonymity generated by the sheer numbers of large, factory model schools, the discourse of nurturance focuses on an 'ethic of care' for students. Its living metaphor of classroom as family resonates strongly with dedicated teachers of poor and working class students, especially teachers of color serving their own communities. It speaks strongly to the cultural world built by elementary school teachers, still predominantly female. The small school movement and the move to reduce class size, both supported by teacher unions, embody practical initiatives to create the conditions for supporting such relationships.

In moving toward this post-industrial, knowledge form of teacher unionism, the institutional forms of teacher unionism, the collective bargaining agreement, developed in a format taken lock, stock and barrel from

industrial unionism, will have to be fundamentally redrawn. In its classical form the contract laid out in exacting detail the unvarying form schools must take, as part of prescriptions originally designed to protect teachers from arbitrary management; as a consequence, one finds formulas, such as the demand that teachers teach x periods of y length in every given school day, which unduly restrict the development of educational innovation and diversity. It is now necessary to develop streamlined teacher contracts that allow schools to democratically develop their own distinctive educational philosophy and program, restricted only by general parameters such as a total workload. The school unit can then become more and more central within teacher union life.

The most forward thinking of union activists and leaders are grappling with the type of ideas and programs discussed above in our efforts to 'reinvent' a form of unionism which will once again successfully promote the interests of working people and the society they inhabit.

Leo Casey is a long-time education/union activist.

promise to exclude agricultural workers, of whom a large percentage at the time were African Americans. With that decision, Congress legalized discrimination against farmworkers to an extent that would prevent them from earning a living sufficient to support a family.

As a result, most farmworkers in our country today are non-citizens who come to this country hoping for a life better than the desperate one that they are leaving. When they arrive, they are in a country whose food system is based upon cheap, exploited labor made possible by a discriminatory labor system in which agricultural workers have fewer rights than other workers. Instead of recognizing the obvious injustice in such a system and rectifying it, there is an increasing organized effort by agricultural employers to strip farmworkers of even the very few protections they have.

The Pennsylvania mushroom workers, although excluded from the

NLRA, currently have protection under the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Act (PLRA). One mushroom company, Vlastic Foods International (owned by Money's Mushrooms from Canada), is fighting a court battle to strip all Pennsylvania mushroom workers of their PLRA protections, and consequently their right under law to organize for better working conditions. On top of that, Pennsylvania growers are lobbying for H.B. 1522 which would exclude mushroom workers from their current protection under the Pennsylvania Seasonal Farm Labor Act, would remove thousands of farmworkers from minimum wage protections under the Act, and would limit the right of nonprofit organizations to enter farm labor camps to provide advocacy for farmworkers.

On a national level, agribusiness is lobbying for guestworker legislation that would do away with wage and housing protections for farmworkers who enter this country under the H-

2A visa program. This program was created to allow farmers to import temporary contract workers during labor shortages. Agribusiness is now loudly proclaiming labor shortages and desperation, even in spite of a 1997 General Accounting Office report which documented labor surpluses in farm labor and a 1999 Congressional Research Services report which showed farm labor unemployment rates at roughly twice the national average and showed that farmworker wages have decreased in real dollars in the past 12 years.

If it is true that a country is judged by how it treats its poorest citizens, then should we not judge our agricultural system by the well-being of the workers who put food on our tables?

Nelson Carrasquillo is the Executive Director of el Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA) (The Farmworkers Support Committee).

Letters / continued from page 3

position that DSA has taken on the election and the fact that many DSAers are working for Ralph Nader's campaign. Haven't we learned anything from our flirtations with third party politics in the past century? While I can understand the attraction of Ralph Nader and recognize that he speaks our language, I am afraid that all he will do is take votes away from Gore in crucial areas like New York and California. Some people on the Left are even saying that a Bush presidency would provide the Left with an opportunity. I think they are nuts!

I am also bothered by the statements' failure to recognize that there are some very important differences between the parties. The current administration hasn't launched into the union busting crusade that the Reagan-Bush team did. Labor has been revitalized, and there is more union organizing activity going on in my state than at anytime I can remember. Certainly this administration has been no picnic on the beach. Clinton should never have signed the welfare bill. But whose

fault really was it? There was *no* mass based support for single mothers with children to help Clinton fight off the Republican Congress. Where were those nice middle class kids who are so concerned with sea turtles when it came to single women trying to raise their families? Before we start pointing fingers at Democratic politicians, let's take a look at our own attitudes and failures.

While Gore's recent populist stance may be window dressing, it might also provide the Left with an opportunity to *hold the Democrats' feet to the fire*. When Gore talks about families standing up to the corporations, we should hold the Democrats to their rhetoric. It is also crucial that DSAers get involved in the local races where there are some real progressive candidates running for office. It was heartening to see that Boston DSA is doing this.

HARLAN BAKER
Portland, ME

This is a particularly difficult — and exciting — Presidential election because of a relatively well-known progressive third party can-

didate. DSA members and the NPC are largely divided on the race. Some agree with the above criticisms of Gore, and will therefore support and vote for Ralph Nader or Socialist Party candidate David McReynolds. Others feel that a Bush presidency would be extremely dangerous and call for Gore.

Presidential politics should not, however, divert our political energies away from building a Left presence on the municipal, state, or social movement level.

To the Editors of DL:

I don't know what was more discouraging in your last issue — Harold Meyerson's anemic defense of Al Gore for President, or DSA's solicitation of stocks from its members. I thought we were supposed to be socialists! Since when do socialists, and socialist organizations, speculate in the capitalist stock market? Since when do socialists vote for defenders of the status quo like Al Gore? When will DSA start living up to its ideals? And when will we start rallying around our own? Let's run Bernie Sanders for President and stand proud for a change!

JOHN STAFFORD
Nashville, TN

DSA would not accept stock in particularly egregious companies. But it takes money to run a successful organization (for salaries, travel, printing and mailing costs, rent, etc.), and dues and donations are not enough to cover everything. Interestingly, although Norman Thomas did raise some money through speaking and writing (which he usually gave back to the Socialist Party), what largely enabled him to be a full-time Socialist activist was his wife's inheritance — not something with which he was totally comfortable. We long for the day when we don't have to search for money.

Fannie Lou Hamer

Dear DSA:

I was quite puzzled by the name Fannie Lou Hamer that was added to the Harrington Institute. Who is Fannie Lou Hamer? Has she ever been a member of DSOC or DSA? I feel strongly that the institute should only carry Harrington's name, our founder and intellectual leader. I am sure that Fannie was a fine person, but I see absolutely no reason to add her name to the institute.

DON FANDETTI
Columbia, MD

Fannie Lou Hamer was a civil rights leader, activist, and member of Mississippi's "Freedom Democratic Party" delegation to the 1964 Democratic National Convention, the African-American group that attempted to bring a more socialist-oriented stance to the Democratic platform. Her inclusion in the name of the Institute adds racial and gender diversity, and marries two historic strains of the American Democratic Left.

Castro Quip

DL Editors:

I was dismayed by your pictorial joke in the Spring issue of *Democratic Left* — a photo of Fidel Castro with the caption, "Gusanos keep me here." Why are you joining the mainstream press in trivializing the Cuban situation and reducing its leaders to laughable marionettes? Gusanos may be responsible for perpetuating the blockade, but if you think that the blockade is the only thing keeping Castro in power you are seriously — and dangerously — mistaken.

ADA BELLOW
Philadelphia, PA

DSA Action Network

Dear DSA:

I joined the DSA Action Network some while ago, but I have heard nothing from anyone about activities. Please advise.

FRANCES GOULART
Ridgefield, CT

When we moved our Washington, DC office, some things fell to the wayside. We hope to get the DSA Action Network functioning again in 2001. For all those who have submitted their names, please hold tight!

Bush and Social Security

Dear DSA

We received notice yesterday that Health Partners is increasing our premiums \$10.95 per month, \$21.95 for both of us. Eleven years ago when I retired, it cost \$37.00 a month; now it will be \$119.95 a month, \$239.90 for both of us. Health Partners is also offering prescription coverage of 80 percent, but at \$270 per month.

George W. Bush is on TV now saying he is for Social Security, but his stocks and bonds improvements will destroy it. We need to live on Social Security. We are hanging by a thread.

ALPHONSE EIDEN
Eden Prairie, MN

DSA Logo

Dear DSA:

I recently joined DSA and I am

happy. But I want to share with you what I have learned about the DSA logo (a rose with two leaves and a white and black hand shaking.) When I wear the button with DSA's logo on it, people have no idea what it stands for. I have to explain it, and when I do, I still see inquiring looks on their faces. More than one person has told me that it looks to them like I am a member of a partially integrated gardening club. I live in a rural county. Maybe that's why horticulture is on our minds. And minorities in our area are Hmong and Native Americans. I guess that's why they think of "partial" integration when they see black and white. But even still, I'm not sure that it is a very clear symbol for a socialist organization.

HENK NEWENHOUSE
& LINDA GENTES
Lone Rock, WI

The symbol has a history: a single fist and rose is the international symbol for democratic socialism and is used by socialist parties of different countries and by the Socialist International; the American Socialist Party/SP-USA, from its earliest days, has used an image of two clasped hands superimposed over the world to illustrate the accompanying slogan, "Workers of the World Unite." DSA's symbol combines the two, adding the hand of color to include that huge proportion of the world and U.S. population that is not Caucasian.



Dear Democratic Left Readers:

We want to ensure that our members and subscribers have more opportunities for shaping the content of *Democratic Left*. Concise, popular journalistic articles submitted by members and subscribers related to DSA's national programs and ideological or political dilemmas, will receive serious consideration. In addition, preference for book reviews will be given to DSA members and subscribers, particularly if the author is willing to write a short essay based on their title, or submit to a telephone or in-person interview. We would also like DSA members and subscribers to submit photos, letters to the editor, and notices of births, marriages, deaths, and important birthdays, to: *Democratic Left*, Editor — 180 Varick Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10014; or e-mail us: dsa@dsausa.org.

DSA Activism at the Grassroots



Central Ohio

Central Ohio DSA has regular monthly business meetings, with longer ones called “retreats” twice a year; has monthly educational meetings, a number of regular annual events and a quarterly newsletter. We also sent a contingent to Washington for the A-16 rally/demonstration.

Local Contact: George Boas (georgenancy@earthlink.net; (614) 297-0710)

Chicago

The Gore/Nader conundrum is a subject of discussion among Chicago DSAers. At press Nader’s campaign just survived legal challenges to get on the Illinois ballot. The local’s publication, *New Ground*, is now available in webtext archive form back to 1992. Chicago DSA joined the Campaign for Justice in Colombia, and is co-organizing a Tribunal on Human Rights in Columbia at Northwestern Law School for January, with public hearings. The local also co-sponsored a conference called “The Takeover of Our Rights” at Loyola University with Chicago Media Watch. Courses are planned with the Open University of the Left, and new Chicago DSA branches are being reorganized based more on interest areas than geography. Chicago DSAer Jack Metzger’s new book on labor, *Striking Steel*, will be published by Temple University Press in the Spring.

Local Contact: Bob Roman (robertmroman@earthlink.net)

Boston DSA

The local organized to defeat regressive tax Proposition 4, and has been active in state legislative races this election cycle. Boston DSA endorsed Jim Leary, a progressive in a Worcester district with the biggest housing project in Massachusetts, and four other candidates, including Frank Smizik in

Brookline, and DSA’s own Judy Deutsch— running in Sudbury/Wayland against an entrenched Republican. Go Judy!

Local Contact: Harris Gruman (yankeeradical@aolcom)

Greater Detroit

Detroit DSA hosted National Director Horace Small, YDS organizer Daraka Larimore-Hall, and development expert Sue Karant at an organizing weekend, coinciding with the Black Radical Congress national meetings. The goal of this workshop was to train local DSA members in the rudiments of organizing local campaigns and fundraising so that we may expand our efforts on Living Wage, Universal Health Care, and Globalization campaigns. The workshop presentations were excellent, followed by a house party/fundraiser for DSA in which we raised \$2400. On Sunday, we held a conference on “The Future of Socialism in the Context of Corporate Globalization” at which the main speakers were University of Michigan economists Suzanne Bergeron and Bruce Pietrykowski. This discussion brought in some more members and addressed the controversy of what we are doing as a local. Are we doing the work of liberals, now that the liberals are missing from the political scene? And is this what we should be doing?

This election year, our local is committed to retaking the state legislature from Republicans. We targeted five races in which the efforts of a small group might prove decisive. One race was a primary, and the left candidate lost, but DSA made good contacts that will probably result in a future successful living wage campaign in Westland. The remaining four are general elections. In return for our assistance with phone banking, door-to-door campaigning, and mailings, the Democratic candidates in these races have agreed to the following demands: 1) endorse-

ment of the Universal Health Care 2000 campaign, 2) co-sponsorship of the state single-payer health insurance bill in the next state legislature, 3) support for Living Wage and raising the state minimum wage, and 4) help in establishing a Progressive Caucus in the next state legislature.

Meanwhile Greater Detroit DSA is pursuing ongoing Living Wage campaigns in Madison Heights and Ferndale. These are our fifth and sixth such campaigns and are close to passing.

Detroit-DSA is still trying to hire an organizer for our local. We are also planning our annual Douglass-Debs Dinner with honorees will be Maryann Mahaffey, a City Council member and DSA member in Detroit, and Richard Shoemaker, National UAW Vice President.

Local Contact: David Green (DSAGreen@aol.com)

Ithaca

The Ithaca local has been working on issues of globalization for a long time, leading local opposition to NAFTA back in 1993 and opposition to MAI in 1998 and producing several videos on globalization. So, when we heard about the upcoming WTO meeting to be held in Seattle last fall, we already had background and strong networks. We invited an activist, Raj Patel, to speak on grassroots resistance to the WTO at our October meeting, joined in welcoming the People’s Global Action Caravan, made a video of the Cornell campus November 30 rally against the WTO - and had it playing on community access cable TV within a week. Our February meeting with another speaker on globalization was the catalyst for the formation of the Ithaca Coalition for Global Justice, which in turn organized a contingent of nearly 100 for the April 16 demonstrations in Washington against the

continued on page 30

Mexican Elections 2000

BY CLIFTON POOLE AND AMY TRAUB

Machetearte, a widely read radical magazine sold in the subways of Mexico City, is sounding the alarm about *el Cocacolero* their name for the former Coca-Cola Company manager and current President-elect of Mexico: Vicente Fox. Fox, the magazine warns, will privatize the nation's oil and electric industries, impose new taxes on food and medicines, and is already cozying up to the same corrupt insider networks of Mexican politics which he was elected to replace. "Is this what you voted for?" Machetearte asks colloquially "or did they pull a fast one on you?" [¿Votaste por esto? O ¡Ya te madrugaron!]

It's clear that what Mexicans *did* vote for this past July 2nd is an end to the hegemony of the PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party) which has governed Mexico for 71 years with a mixture of cooptation, repression, and populist gestures. Members of the PRI were ousted from governorships, legislative seats, and for the first time in more than a half-century — even the presidency. Change was the unmistakable watchword of the election cycle, with Fox's coalition calling itself the Alliance for Change, the PRI candidate (unconvincingly) trumpeting "the new PRI" which is "changing along with Mexico," and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, candidate of the left opposition, promising "the change that Mexico needs." But why did Mexicans opt for the kind of change they did? Was the election really a mandate for the conservative social policies and intensified neoliberalism of Fox and his party? And what do the 2000 elections mean for the Mexican Left?

Fall of PRI, Rise of Fox

The electoral defeat of the PRI is certainly a tremendously exciting occasion, and the absence of the substan-

tial ballot fraud that has marked Mexican elections in years past is admirable. For the first time in recent history, none of the parties has challenged the results of the presidential election. Much of the credit for this clean process goes to the Federal Electoral Institute, a newly independent government agency which has emerged from the election cycle with enormous prestige.

Yet despite the U.S. government's endorsement of the elections as "free and fair," the fact that ballots were cast relatively freely and counted honestly does not mean pre-election voter intimidation and vote-buying were entirely absent. In rural areas, there were various allegations that the PRI had engaged in such traditional practices as giving away washing machines in exchange for votes and threatening a loss of government benefits if political support was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, these activities seem to have occurred less than in the past.

It is also significant that in the wake of Fox's victory the ruling party has agreed to work for an orderly transfer of power rather than trying to cling to their positions and resources. While the result of this historic handover remains to be seen, sitting President Ernesto Zedillo certainly deserves praise for his role in putting the welfare of Mexican democracy above the narrow interests of his party. [Zedillo has faced substantial criticism from within the PRI and even threats of exclusion from his own party because of his early public acknowledgement of Fox's victory.]

Why did Vicente Fox win? One reason which cannot be ignored is his superior control of the mechanics of public image. With a charismatic and folksy presence in television ads and radio spots, Fox was simply more effective at creating a fresh and positive impression than his opponents. A



powerful and memorable series of campaign slogans, which declared with hopeful bravado "we've already won!" helped to create a sense of confidence in the possibility of defeating the PRI, and even the inevitability of a Fox victory.

Another factor which aided Fox was the idea of the *voto útil* or "useful vote," a notion very familiar in concept, if not in name, in the U.S. In the period before the elections, opinion polls began to report that Fox and the PRI candidate, Francisco Labastida, were tied in the race for the presidency. Meanwhile, left opposition candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas was trailing behind. Although analysts argued that poll data was not entirely trustworthy because of some citizens' lingering fears of retaliation if they stated an intention to vote against the PRI, the polls were nevertheless widely followed. As a result, the prevailing wisdom came to be that only Fox could defeat Labastida and bring about the end of the PRI's unbroken reign. A vote for Cardenas began to be perceived as a spoiler which would serve only to throw the election back to the PRI. Despite Cardenas' best efforts to present himself as a viable candidate and an alternative to the neoliberal economic orientation shared by both Labastida and Fox, the concept of the *voto útil* proved too potent to surmount. Election day results showed that many otherwise progressive voters who cast ballots for

leftist candidates at the local level and in the legislature, supported Fox for the presidency.

Fox in Sheep's Clothing?

One of the major appeals of the Fox campaign was Fox's image as an alternative to the entrenched patronage-oriented structure of the PRI, as well as PRI officials' more blatantly corrupt ties to international drug traffickers. Fox's party, National Action, or PAN, lacks many of the institutions of patronage and co-optation that its predecessor party built up during its decades of rule. Moreover, the legitimacy of the PAN in office depends on the shift away from this traditional style of politics. Yet the PAN is embroiled in an extensive financial scandal; there are separate allegations that the Fox campaign received illegal foreign donations; and indications abound that the PAN government in the state of Baja California has protected drug lords who use the state as a point of entry to the U.S. Yet Fox, enveloped in a cult of personality, has, to a large extent, been elevated above the sordid dealings of politics. Shielded from the threat of guilt by association with his party, Fox has largely succeeded in portraying himself as a man who, as his campaign literature states, "began from below and has earned his position as the result of his own honorable work." This appeal to individualist "bootstrap" morality, so familiar in the U.S., is a recent import to Mexican political rhetoric.

There is no doubt that the Fox presidency will be a boon to "business confidence" in the Mexican economy. Reassuring investors the day after his election, Fox said, "My obligation is to serve you, to support you, to create confidence inside you." Meanwhile, the PRI, despite its turn toward neoliberalism in the 80's, was always obliged to maintain at least the appearance of serving its popular base first, rather than international capital. Thus Mexico's stock exchange gained more than 6 percent on the news of Fox's victory, and the peso has been steadily gaining against the dollar since

the election. Fox has let foreign investors know that they can expect the acceleration and deepening of privatization, deregulation, and free trade policies begun by the previous government. Many Mexicans perceive this as nothing more than "selling the country off to the gringos" — fearing the auctioning off of such deeply cherished symbols of national sovereignty as museums and national monuments, public universities, and the nation's oil industry (not only a vital export but, since its nationalization in 1938, the premier symbol of Mexican national sovereignty). While he has also promised to pursue reforms to free up much needed credit in support of small business, Fox's overall economic plan seems to have little to offer Mexico's many desperately poor inhabitants. Many of these are former members the nation's middle class, devastated by the neoliberal policies which did so much to exacerbate economic inequality over the past two decades, turning Mexico into a nation with millions in poverty and dozens of billionaires. While Fox has announced that he will not *reduce* social spending, he plans to obtain new financing for the government's anti-poverty programs by levying taxes on food and medicines, products which have previously remained untaxed in order to keep prices low for the poorest Mexicans. The PRD, Mexico's main left opposition party, has protested fiercely, denouncing as ludicrous any scheme which would tax the poor to alleviate poverty. Rosario Robles, PRD governor of Mexico City, has announced that she will not enforce the new taxes within her jurisdiction. Fox has often boasted of his success at reducing unemployment during his term as governor of the state of Guanajuato, yet the new jobs created are among the lowest paid and require some of the longest working hours in the country. These fruits of his governorship offer a disturbing glimpse into Mexico's possible future under Fox's leadership.

Labor Pains, Labor Gains

Fox's election will certainly bring

changes for organized labor in Mexico. While the strongly pro-business stance of the president elect would not seem to hold much promise for unions, the particular role that labor has played in the PRI regime may mean that Fox's victory will ultimately provide vital opportunities for Mexican workers to form democratic and independent organizations. Organized labor was one of the four major sectors of society that were incorporated into the state through sectoral organizations when the foundations of the PRI were laid by President Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s. The other sectors were peasants, the popular sector, which included the self-employed and government employees, and the military (later phased out as a sector of the party). Capitalists were explicitly excluded by Cardenas from having formal power in the party or the state. The unions and state-sponsored peasant organizations were the government's foothold in the economy, and capitalists were bluntly informed that if they did not wish to cooperate with the state unions, their businesses would be expropriated. Since the days of Cardenas, however, the unions have served mainly to keep workers from seeking better wages or conditions, and to turn them out on election day to support the PRI. Leadership positions in the unions have been patronage jobs, doled out by the party, and union members do not even have the right to know who their officers are, much less elect them.

Mexico's largest official labor federation, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM), with its stronghold in the Mexico's older industrial zone concentrated around Mexico City, has the most to lose from the PRI's defeat. If Fox makes a serious effort at dismantling (rather than trying to take over) the corporatist system of the PRI, the official unions will be cut off from their traditional source of patronage, and will have to find new ways to maintain and justify their existence. Fox recently held a closed-door meeting with the leadership of the CTM, leading some to speculate that in spite of his reform-

ist record and rhetoric, the president-elect might be making an attempt to cut an insider deal with the union federation. This however, is not the most likely scenario, given Fox's neoliberal orientation. Instead, Fox may try to entice investors by cutting labor out of the picture entirely. This would entail a move to dilute Mexico's vigorous labor laws, which, while irregularly enforced in practice, are among the best in the world on the books. Meanwhile, the left has a competing proposal for modifying Mexico's labor law, bringing it up-to-date and opening up space for independent union organizing without sacrificing the strong protections the current legislation affords. The eventual outcome of the conflicting proposals to modify Mexican labor law is further made uncertain by the new division of power in the legislature. For the first time, no party has an absolute majority in either house of Mexico's bicameral legislature, so no new legislation can be passed without interparty compromise. The PAN has the largest delegations, followed by the PRI, which has declared that protecting the rights of labor (which may mean nothing more than preserving hierarchy and party control over the PRI unions) will be central to its agenda as an opposition party. In the past, the Mexican political system has been dominated by the power of the Presidency, although this is another area in which Fox has promised reforms. In conclusion, the coming six years of the Fox presidency will probably mean a decline in power of the PRI-controlled unions, but it remains to be seen whether this will bring about a space for the growth of more independent and democratic unions (which already exist, but are small and subject to repression), a repressive climate for labor in general, or the expansion of the company-controlled unions which have begun to proliferate in the maquiladora zone along the U.S. border. In any case, U.S. and Canadian solidarity efforts have the potential to play a positive role in encouraging the development of a strong and independent workers'

movement, so urgently needed in Mexico.

Foxy Proposals

Many of Fox's plans are exactly what the U.S. government and business would like to see, but the Mexican president-elect has taken a few stands thus far that show some independence from the "Colossus of the North". For example, Fox has stated that he favors an open-border immigration policy between the United States and Mexico. With U.S. unemployment at a historic low, the American government may be more receptive to negotiations that would allow more Mexicans to work in the U.S. Clinton's planned meeting with Fox is certain to shed more light on the future of this issue. Fox has also expressed a desire for more equal cooperation between the two nations on the issue of narcotics control. Rather than the U.S. certifying Mexico's progress on fighting illegal drugs, he has suggested, a mutual evaluation process should be constructed. Finally, Fox has already completed a tour of Latin America, replete with the symbolism of a choice to travel south before making a visit to the U.S. At the top of the agenda have been proposals to link Mexico's economy to Mercosur, the South American trading block that includes Argentina, Brazil and Chile. This trade accord, if realized, could significantly diversify Mexico's foreign trade and reduce its economic dependence on the United States. While Fox is a dyed-in-the-wool neoliberal and free trade advocate, he has taken care to demonstrate that he is not just a U.S. puppet.

If it appears that Vicente Fox has already staked out many policies for a man who was only elected at the beginning of July and will not take office until December, that perception is largely accurate. However, there are two critical issues which he largely ducked while campaigning, and has continued to avoid since the election. The first is the Mexican military's campaign of low intensity warfare against the indigenous Zapatista guerrilla movement in the southern state of

Chiapas. During the election, Fox famously stated that he could solve the conflict in Chiapas in fifteen minutes. Since then, he has made the encouraging announcement that he would be willing to withdraw troops from the heavily-militarized area, but his pronouncements remain vague and the substantive social and economic demands made by the Zapatistas have gone unaddressed. Also overlooked is the simmering dispute at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), which last year erupted into a student strike that shut down the largest university in Latin America for nearly ten months. While the strike was ended by the incursion of troops on campus, the issues — concerning constitutional guarantees, opportunities for social mobility for the children of peasants and workers, the hierarchical structure of the university, and the very nature of public education amidst the onslaught of neoliberal reforms — are far from being resolved.

Religious Right

The PAN's historic ties to the Catholic Church may produce the Fox presidency's most significant break from the PRI and its secular orientation. Since its founding in the 1930s as Mexico's first opposition party, the PAN was both part of a bourgeois reaction against President Cardenas' subordination of the business class and a religious reaction against the PRI's secularism. As such, the party has suffered periodic internal disputes and identity crises between its tendencies as business party and as a Catholic party. While the pro-business wing of the party, of which Fox is a part, has been in ascendancy since the 1980s, the religious roots remain strong. In the state of Guanajuato, the local party recently passed a law outlawing abortion even in cases of rape, the only circumstance under which abortion had previously been legally permitted there. In the face of outcry by feminists and the members of the PRD, Fox has pledged not to pass similar legislation on the national level, but also declined to intervene in the

case of Guanajuato. At the same time, however, one of his early picks for a cabinet appointment was a key conservative figure in the controversial case of a 14 year old rape victim who was denied an abortion. Fears about the separation of church and state in Mexico under the PAN have been further aggravated by church officials' hopeful suggestions of a larger role for the Catholic Church in providing public education. Meanwhile, the nation's growing population of evangelical Christians have raised concerns about religious tolerance and pluralism. Like much else about the Fox presidency, the future role of religion in public life has yet to be determined.

What's Left?

In addition to Fox's ascendance, the July 2nd Mexican elections created other important shifts in the political landscape. Mexico's beleaguered natural environment may benefit from the actions of the ecologically-oriented Green party, swept into the legislature as part of the PAN coalition. The PAN, meanwhile, won not only the presidency but two governorships and a substantial plurality in the national legislature. The PRI, ousted from the presidency for the first time, is suffering internal divisions and must remake itself as one competitive party among many.

The bad news is that the left-leaning Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) along with its coalition, suffered serious electoral setbacks. Members of the PRD convincingly argue that it was their candidate, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who dealt the fatal blows against the PRI's hegemony in his earlier runs for President in 1988 and 1994, and that Fox benefitted from this in the most recent electoral cycle. But if this is the case, why was the PAN the beneficiary of the democratic opening created by the left? Post-electoral assessments have placed the blame on everything from the party's failure to address the issues important to peasants, to the wide-ranging but weak coalition with which the PRD campaigned. Another major line of argument says that, faced

with the PRI's blatant electoral fraud back in 1988, Cardenas and the PRD should have mobilized their popular base to defend their de facto victory; their failure to do so had irrevocable costs in terms of the critical momentum and popular confidence which they had in the early days of the party. Others argue that triggering a popular uprising would only have served to destabilize the country, creating a scenario far worse than accepting the fraudulent election that brought Carlos Salinas de Gortari to the presidency. In any case, by the 2000 elections, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas was already a fixture of the Mexican political scene, an "old face" at a time when Mexicans were longing for change. This impression was reinforced by Cardenas' background as the son of the PRI's populist founder, Lazaro Cardenas, and Cuauhtemoc's status as a former PRIista himself. Fox, to some extent, succeeded in portraying his PRD opponent as a man who had inherited his position and represented the past rather than the future.

Indeed, this was a problem for the PRD as a whole, whose redistributional policies were attacked as the vestiges of an outmoded populism, as opposed to the PAN's "progressive" reformism, more perfectly in step with the "realities" of the globalized capitalist world. The PRD's biggest shortcoming, some argue, was that it did little to effectively combat this image by setting out a broad, coherent, and positive alternative to the savage, neoliberal capitalism PRDistas denounced. Of course, this is a problem that the contemporary left struggles with throughout the world — if leftist parties are unwilling or unable to articulate a coherent and concrete socialist vision, they cannot provide a genuine alternative to the system they criticize. But in the case of the PRD, the issue becomes even more difficult, because the party has, from its inception, lacked a unifying ideology. The party began as a democratic movement within the PRI, to resist a top-down coup by neoliberal technocrats, which began in 1982. When it split to become an opposition party, the PRD

picked up support from old left communist and socialist formations, as well as popular organizations, in addition to its social democratic and nationalist base, inherited from the PRI.

The lack of a coherent guiding ideology has meant that the PRD has had particular difficulties in relating to popular social movements. Once again, the quandries facing a left party in a position of limited institutional power which is forced to confront left social movements — which may adopt illegal tactics and include undemocratic elements — are to some extent universal. For the PRD, the greatest challenges have arisen with regard to the radical student movement and prolonged strike at the national university. While the PRD largely sympathized with the aims of the strike movement (chief among these being the defense of the constitutional right to free public higher education), the party had no consistent plan for dealing with the movement when a line more radical than it was prepared to support emerged among the students. The approaching elections created additional pressure for the party to quickly resolve the conflict even when many students did not feel that their issues had been satisfactorily addressed. Combined with the PRI's outright attempts to use the university conflict to sabotage the PRD, these challenges proved overwhelming, and the party made critical mistakes which hurt the student movement and cost the PRD support and confidence, particularly among Mexican youth. One of the party's major challenges in the coming years will be to earn the confidence of disillusioned — yet politically-engaged — youth who view it as opportunistically using social movements and popular struggles to gain electoral power. The PRD still has a broad popular base, but if it wants to prevent further erosion and regain support it will have to get beyond the cult of personality surrounding its leaders, to define a coherent programmatic

continued on page 22

Schroeder's Third Way and DSA

BY STEPHAN PETER

Some 20 years ago, Gerhard Schroeder and a dozen "Jungsozialisten" — myself included — sat down in the back room of a bar to strategize. Gerhard had just been elected national chair of the "Jungsozialisten," and he was affiliated with its radical anti-revisionist wing. Today, Gerhard is German chancellor and is quoted as saying that he wants to prevent the revolution that he promoted in his youth. Schroeder's centrist revolution from above became possible only after he won the 1999 power struggle against charismatic party leader Oskar Lafontaine who — with his progressive ideas of curbing speculative international finance capital, rejection of supply-side economics, and emphasis on building a bridge to the solar age — was close to where DSA is today. Oskar, as everybody called him, resigned from all posts, and more conservative party members such as Wolfgang Clement, Prime Minister of North-Rhine Westphalia, were given top party positions.

Ideology

Gerhard Schroeder launched two

ideological initiatives. In the summer of 1999, Gerhard co-sponsored a manifesto with British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the future of Europe's Social Democrats, commonly referred to as the "Third Way." The manifesto was unprecedented in that it was made public without prior party discussion, allowed speculation regarding the degree to which Germany still valued the German-French alliance as the core of Europe, and seemed to suggest that American modern liberalism was the answer to the future of German democratic socialism. Then, in the early summer of 2000, Gerhard published an article entitled "Civil Society — The Social Democratic Project to Foster Renewed Social Integration and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization" in the social democratic monthly, *Die Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte*. Here, civil society appears to be defined as the proper balancing of the three sectors of government, markets, and civil associations, as described by some communitarian thinkers. Implicitly, the conservative idea of civil society (i.e., less government and regulation and more self-help) is as much

rejected as the socialist concept of a *società civile à la Gramsci* (i.e., to create a hegemonial democratic culture to check big business)

Policies

Ideology aside, the Schroeder government track record regarding concrete policies is harder to evaluate. Renewable energy is promoted much more now, and a consensus with industry will result in the gradual phasing out of nuclear energy. Indeed, the traveler through Germany will detect large windmills all over that have been sprouting up in the past few years.

These changes will take several decades. Immigration reform will make it easier for foreigners living in Germany to adopt German citizenship. Original party proposals for dual citizenship, however, were rejected. A so-called "Green Card" will help with German industry's needs for computer experts and may even change for the better public attitudes towards foreigners. Yet the term "Green Card," borrowed from the U.S., is misleading in that it is far more restrictive than the American Green Card.

Cont. next page

Mexican Elections / continued from page 21

alternative to neoliberalism. This task is even more pressing given the PRI's new status as an opposition party, since one of the contending visions within the PRI involves the party reasserting its traditional role as defender of the popular classes.

In the short term, the recent elections have not been a total defeat for Mexico's democratic left. The PRD managed to maintain a partial hold on the hotly contested government of Mexico City. This victory included electing long-time social crusader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to head the urban behemoth, one of the

largest cities in the world. Lopez Obrador was elected on a platform of concrete and unambiguously leftist policy goals, which some argue was why he was the exception to the PRD's setbacks, and may offer a model for the future success of the party. Having kept its distance from the conservative PAN and maintained a presence, albeit much reduced, in the national legislature, the PRD has the potential to overcome its difficulties and offer a progressive alternative in Mexican politics. As engaged observers, the American left must pay critical attention to the changing situation,

working to forge creative strategies for solidarity and mutual support.

Amy Traub is a graduate student in Political Science at Columbia University. Clifton Poole is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago. They spent the past summer in Mexico City, and are both members of the Young Democratic Socialists.

Portions of this article have previously appeared in Streetwise newspaper.

An agreement has been reached between government, industry, and Nazi victims (especially forced laborers) which set up a foundation to pay compensation, but how big the loopholes are is unclear. Social security reform necessitated by changing ratios between contributors and beneficiaries is going forward despite the fact that it is an issue embedded in land mines. Yet, as Lafontaine observes, current plans mainly hurt employees and thus are socially unjust. It is here where in the coming months Schroeder may move closer towards many of the alienated labor unions like "IG Metall" which have strongly criticized current social security reform.

But it was really Schroeder's recent tax reform plan which illustrates the current state of German politics. When Schroeder won over part of the conservative opposition in a crucial vote in the "Bundesrat" legislative chamber in support of his plan, the mainstream media nearly unanimously praised him as a mover and shaker, a modernizer, a clever strategist, and the likely winner of the 2002 federal elections. Media and industry hailed the reform as an invitation for global capital to invest and create jobs. Questions over which social groups would actually be the winners and losers of the tax reform were downplayed. The small Free Democratic Party (FDP), formerly in coalition with Kohl's conservative party, quickly detected new common ground with Schroeder's SPD. The FDP now says "the SPD is moving in *our* direction — that is, the direction of Adam Smith and supply side economics." This warming of relations could afford Schroeder the opportunity in 2002 to dump the Greens, the junior partner in the green-red coalition government. Overall, Schroeder's reforms are reminiscent of the Clinton years. Yes, the welfare rolls are rescinding; yes, the unemployment figures are coming down — but don't look too close! Reforms also reflect Schroeder's famous 1999 statement that you can do politics not against but only with big business.

Effects

The price of success? Over the past year and a half, many members of the Greens and the SPD have left their parties. Some have gone to the PDS, the post-communists with a stronghold in what used to be East Germany. More just don't vote any longer. The Greens are increasingly threatened as a political force since they must garner 5 percent at state and national elections to be represented in parliaments. For many activists who remain in the SPD, the party has lost its soul. And the party fails to attract new members, especially young ones. While over 30 percent of SPD members in 1976 were under 35, today fewer than 10 percent of the members are under 35. Others have accommodated themselves to the new situation. In fact, the considerable number of prominent party representatives applauding the shift from the movement SPD to the "New SPD," and the speed with which it happened, raises questions. What was the role of the mass media? What were the effects of globalization? How did the party's organization structure figure in? Could something like this ever happen to DSA?

DSA's Task

The SPD's shift probably also has to

do with economic and political developments in the U.S., which figure prominently in German public debate. For eight years now, the message to the German ear has been that Clinton's New Democrats are where it's at. People have little knowledge that the Seattle protests have continued in other cities and states, and know little about the Nader Campaign, John Sweeney, the Progressive Caucus, or the rich diversity of co-ops in the upper Midwest. It is these things which DSA must stress internationally in order to show that there are alternatives to the Clinton Democrats. And this is why the Harrington-Hamer Institute is so important. If DSA can better formulate progressive alternatives in the age of economic globalization and develop a North American perspective that contrasts with Third Way models, people in Europe will listen. DSA's new International Committee can also play a role here by meeting with Canadian NDP and Mexican PRD members, identifying political commonalities, and interjecting them into debates within the Socialist International. *Glueck auf.*

Stephan Peter is a member of DSA International Committee and the German SDP, and is on the executive committee of Twin Cities DSA.

1953

Yochanan (John) Lorwin

1999

Yochanan (John) Lorwin died in a flash flood while hiking with colleagues in a valley near Jericho. Born in the United States, Lorwin built a respected reputation in his adopted nation of Israel.

Lorwin was dedicated to the the causes of peace, equality and human rights in the Middle East. As an observant member of the Yedidya Congregation, he helped set up a dialogue group with residents and activists of the Palestinian town of Beit Sahour. He was able to effectively straddle religious and secular worlds, and let both influence his worldview.

As an editor and translator of the English language publication *News from Within* (published by the Alternative Information Center, an Israeli-Palestinian non-governmental human rights organization), Yochanan Lorwin was considered by his colleagues and readers an elegant translator, whose work allowed Hebrew language writers to shine in English. He was also an eloquent voice for humane values in a region where such a stance requires much personal sacrifice. He was dedicated to the cause of peace and human rights, not only in the Mideast but around the planet.

DSA is extremely grateful for the gift received in his memory. DSA members around the world extend their condolences to the Lorwin family.

East Coast: R2K for GOP

By JOHN STRAUSS, JOHN HOGAN AND KATHY QUINN

One of the major events of the summer was R2K, a series of demonstrations and other actions during the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, because of poor media coverage, the general public — nationally and even in Philadelphia — know very little about it. DSA, particularly the Greater Philadelphia Local, was deeply involved in the organizing of most facets of R2K.

When the convention was announced last fall, a coalition of groups convened by Mike Morrill, Reading DSA member and executive director of the Pennsylvania Consumer Action Network (PCAN), decided to work together to create one large event, a march and rally, under the banner of UNITY2000.

At the same time, several other events were being planned. The Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Health Care planned a march and rally to promote single-payer national health insurance; DSA National Steering Committee Chair Kathy Quinn served on the steering committee for this event. The Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU), a group that advocates for the rights of welfare recipients and the poor in general, called for a march for economic justice. Finally, the Philadelphia Direct Action Group (P-DAG) planned civil disobedience direct actions.

When the Ad Hoc Committee and the UNITY2000 coalition applied to the City for permits, their applications were initially denied on the

tional march route, the day before the beginning of the Convention.

In spite of a timely application, KWRU, which wanted to march from City Hall to the site of the Convention on its opening day, never received a permit. Nevertheless, KWRU continued with its plans for the march, despite pleas from police officials and thinly veiled threats against the tent encampment on a vacant lot in North Philadelphia at which KWRU was housing out-of-towners coming in for their march.

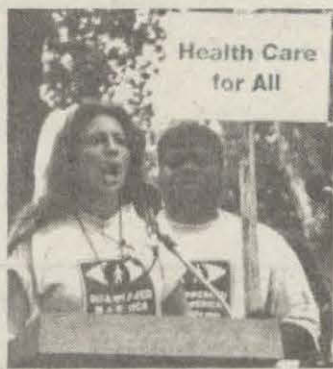


grounds that, under a contract with the City, the Republicans had reserved all the public space in the city for several weeks leading up to the convention. With the help of the Philadelphia ACLU, Ad Hoc and UNITY took the city to court and, only weeks before the Convention, just prior to a scheduled court date, both groups reached settlements with the City. The Ad

H o c
C o m -
m i t t e e

was granted a permit to rally at Franklin Square on the eastern edge of town and to march to Love Park, a common rally site, where there would be another, larger rally. UNITY2000 won the right to march up the Ben Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia's tradi-

Because of the nature of its actions, P-DAG did not apply for permits or announce its plans aside from naming the themes of its days of "disruption." Local press covered the controversies of the denied permits — rarely explaining anything about the reasons for the protests — and made quite a production of the city's "bracing itself" for the onslaught of protesters and of police preparations. A month or so before the event, activists attending meetings of the R2K Network (where all the groups could exchange information and share resources) observed people on rooftops watching and photographing them. When the police denied involvement, a Philadelphia Inquirer reporter traced the license plate of a car being used by photographers and found it belonged to the Philadelphia Police Department. Groups were also infil-



Cheri Honkala of KWRU speaking at the morning rally during March for Universal Healthcare.



DSA's Kathy Quinn at the podium.

trated by Pennsylvania state police (details of that infiltration are only now becoming public).

March for Universal Healthcare

On Saturday, July 29, the Health Care rally and march went off without a hitch. Speakers at the opening rally, who included healthcare providers, patients and patient advocates, and the representatives of some of the organizations that had endorsed the march, told personal stories of people suffering needlessly because they were unable to afford care or having to choose between food and medication. DSA's Kathy Quinn focused on the international implications of the march, pointing out that one of the reasons that the U.S. was seeking to expand the coverage of the World Trade Organization to include services, was that for-profit U.S. healthcare firms wanted "to take their show on the road." The inclusion of services in the WTO would give those firms a basis for making claims of discriminatory treatment against countries with universal healthcare systems.

DSAers from New York, Ithaca, James Madison University, Detroit, and more marched with the Greater Philadelphia DSA contingent in the peaceful procession through the downtown shopping district, under the curious gaze of onlookers. Afterwards, the crowd, estimated at be-



Ralph Nader addresses afternoon rally.

tween 2,500 and 4,000, gathered to hear speakers, including Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader, talk about the problems of a corporate orientation to health care, giving shocking figures about the waste involved in our present system — \$110 billion in billing errors and \$140 billion in administrative costs. Speakers from Canada also debunked the myths being spread by the U.S. media about the Canadian single-payer system of healthcare. Others took issue with the Gore and Bush healthcare plans, which both fall far short of offering universal healthcare.

UNITY2000

Sunday's UNITY2000 march (by this point endorsed by over 200 local, national, and international organizations) brought together 25,000-30,000 people, according to an estimate by the

Fairmount Park Commissioner, whose agency oversees the rally site. Endorsing organizations included such diverse groups as ACT-UP, the Pennsylvania Consumer Action Network, NOW, the Philadelphia NAACP, AFSCME District Council 47, the Women's Inter-

national League for Peace and Freedom, the International Socialist Organization, United Students Against Sweatshops, the Green Party, the Communist Party, the Industrial Workers of the World, School of the Americas Watch, the Interfaith Coalition for the General Welfare and, of course, DSA and Greater Philadelphia DSA.

Marchers carried placards and banners dealing with globalization, capitalism, the death penalty, the military industrial complex, Mumia Abu-Jamal, the environment, unionizing, the growing divide between rich and poor, and more. Street theater portrayed Bush and Gore mudwrestling for corporate dollars under a capitalist pig; "Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)," a street theater group associated with United for a Fair Economy, swaggered down the street in tuxedos and gowns, satirically proclaiming "Cut taxes for the rich" and "Plutocracy, not Democracy!"; and someone wearing a box on his head with life-size photos of George W.

on each side begged passersby to "Stop me before I kill again."

disenfranchisement of real people in politics, and more, and urged a movement toward true democracy, here and abroad. Educator/author Jonathan Kozol indicted the "racism of conservatives and the schools"; a representative of the United Students against Sweatshops said that "we are pro-

testing Democrats and Republicans for both being part of creating sweatshops, here and abroad... We've put globalization and corporate greed on the agenda." Dr. Ahmed Shawki of



Jonathan Kozol speaking at UNITY2000.

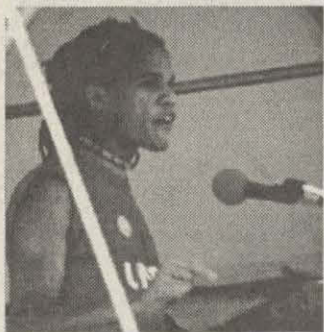


The Greater Philadelphia DSA banner in the midst of the March for Universal Healthcare.



Police lined up across from the March for Economic Human Rights.

the ISO cited former UAW President Doug Fraser's observation that we are involved in a "one-sided class war" and noted that "a movement is beginning here that understands what's happened over the last 20 years." And Philadelphia's AFSCME DC 47 president Thomas Paine Cronin concluded: "The only thing the Republicans have in common with



Students Against Sweatshops spokeswoman.

the party of Lincoln is the name . . . They are the sworn enemy of the organized working class — with evidence to prove it. Bush is their perfect representative . . . To offer him as a candidate means they think we're either stupid or asleep . . . They would subvert education, health, and welfare. 'Compassionate conservatism' is an oxymoron. Conservatism is about preservation of privilege; that's it . . . Gore isn't appealing either; the only good thing about him is that he's not a Republican. We have only our own strength to rely on. We need a real opposition movement, with the

general public — failed to see any common, coherent theme to the rally, instead describing it as a smattering of different groups each hawking its own cause, made up of people without commitment who were really out there because protesting has become trendy. Nothing could be further from the truth. As John

Hogan pointed out at a press conference a week before the protest — a press conference covered by Philadelphia's major TV networks and major papers and broadcast in its entirety on C-SPAN — the protesting organizations were united by their opposition to the status quo, to a "democratic" government driven by money, not by votes, and to policies that benefit the few, not the many. All the varied protest themes fit under these issues. Somehow, the newspapers and local net-

strength of labor and the energy to challenge corporate government."

Interestingly, the mainstream press — and thus the



Street theater during UNITY2000.

works managed to miss this, claiming instead that there was no unifying theme.

The Independent Media Center of Philadelphia was set up specifically to address the problems of mainstream media coverage. Local media activists began working on the idea of a media center even before Independent Media Centers came into existence in Seattle last November. After months of intensive planning, IMC-Philly

came to life shortly before the convention, with a website (www.phillyimc.org; it's still on line), its own radio and video shows that were aired on several local stations as well as on the website, and a daily newspaper. It also

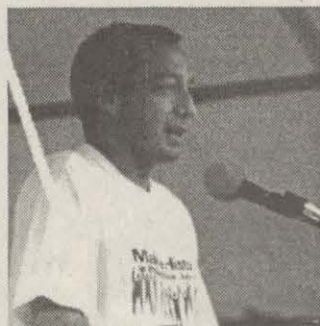
operated as a resource for and hosted out-of-town media, including Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now* radio show. IMC media gave protesters the forum that the mainstream media denied them and covered things — such as police mistreatment of protesters — that were otherwise buried. DSA's John Strauss served on the IMC steering and print groups.



Billionaires for Bush (or Gore) hold a candelabra vigil for corporate welfare.



The start of the March for Economic Human Rights.



Mike Morrill, lead organizer of UNITY2000.

West Coast: DSA at LA



Editors extraordinaire: L.A. homeboy Harold Meyerson (LAWeekly) and John Nichols of Madison's Capital Times assess Gore's show.

Cornel West, Jolene Larimore and YDS Organizer Daraka Larimore-Hall bring socialist fresh air to the stage-managed smog of the Democratic convention.

Photos: Courtesy LAURIE HILL

DSA kicked off events at the Democratic National Convention by organizing a major panel on the 2000 presidential and congressional elections. National Director Horace Small played host to DSA leaders Harold Meyerson, of *LA Weekly*, who was doing double duty putting out a daily for conventioners, Barbara Ehrenreich, who has been stumping for Nader, Cornel West, who was a co-chair of the Bill Bradley primary campaign, and DSA youth organizer Daraka Larimore-Hall—a big hit with the audience. They were joined by panelists Maria Elena Durazo, president of H.E.R.E in LA, John Nichols of the Madison daily *Capital Times*, Antonio Villa, Speaker Emeritus of California's Assembly, and William Monroe Campbell, of Ministers Against Global Injustice. Lynn Shaw longtime DSA member and vice-chair of the LA County Democrats, chaired the event — giving up personal time from her own wedding! Thanks Lynn!! The event, at the University of Southern California,

resulted in a revitalized Los Angeles local. USC professor Bettine Berge, professor of East Asian Studies, was instrumental in getting us the fine auditorium. Lynn Chancer and Frank Llewellyn were also key to making the event a success. KPFK, the Pacifica station, provided air time. Attendees were impressed with the scope and content of DSA's production, given the relative resources of our organization and the Arianna Huffington Show that started a few days later.

DSAers also organized participation in the labor-community demonstration against Loews Hotels, owned by a major donor to the DNC. The hotel has been a target of organizers for their employment practices and attitudes to unionization. LA has been a site of union victories in the last two years, and DSA is committed to seeing that union organizing drives in the Southland grow and consolidate gains.

At the street demonstrations, Laurie Hill, a member, noted that the LA Police Department well deserved their reputation for civic "hospitality."

Mike Dolan, of Public Citizen, offered similar comments about the "seeming militarization of the whole city."

Small had a chance to update Californians and DSA delegates/protesters about our five upcoming DSA regional training sessions for activists. From his vantage point as a native Philadelphian, who observed Ralph Reed's door-to-door outreach to poor Christians during the GOP convention, and use of effective training methods developed by the left, Horace said that we simply have to be more aggressive about giving our DSA members and coalition partners on the broad left the tools to move political agendas. He noted the sometimes inchoate politics of the eager, not-too-diverse crowds of young people calling themselves "anarchists," (without a real grounding in the history of anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism), and expressed pleasure that our youth section activists were so much better prepared for these kinds of events.

Interview with Howard Sherman

If you're like me, you read a great deal searching for theories that you can apply to your activism. I recently discovered a book called, Reinventing Marxism, which succinctly covers so many of the questions that I've grappled with about Democratic Socialism. Au-

thor and DSA member Howard Sherman agreed to give me an interview so that other DSAers could find out about this useful resource.

—Solweig Wilder

DL: You give an autobiographical account of your life as a "heretic" which was extremely interesting. Would you share some of those reflections with your fellow DSAers?

HS: I spent many years as a student activist while struggling through various university degrees. I have never believed that one could be an academic theorist of socialism without being an activist at the same time — purely academic theorizing about socialism tends to be useless because it has no focus on real issues. My main education came from fighting McCarthyism in the 1950s (including a court case against the U.S. Army's loyalty oath program) and fighting against the Vietnam War in the 1960s. That is the foundation for all of my writing about socialism.

DL: You say that being a democratic socialist means being a supporter of political democracy and economic democracy. Can you elaborate on that?

HS: For many decades socialism was associated with the Soviet Union, which was undemocratic. Conservatives used this as an opportunity to make capitalism equal democracy and make socialism equal dictatorship. So it is vital that we stress that we not only favor certain economic policies, but also the political policy of democracy. We can point out that capitalism is undemocratic in that it is the rule of a small elite over millions of employees, and that capitalism means that U.S. democracy is very limited because wealth greatly influences the political process. And we must stress that socialism means democratic control of the economy, through democratic elections by employees in each firm and/or through democratically elected

local, state, and federal governments.

DL: While reading, Reinventing Marxism, it became quite obvious that you are a Professor Emeritus. You summarize theories in economics, political science, philosophy, and ethics with remarkable acumen. But to be honest, it was rough reading at times. Did you have a particular audience in mind when you wrote this book?

HS: I wrote the book for knowledgeable laypersons and college students. I made it as simple as possible, but the issues are complex; people do not deserve over-simplifications.

DL: I feel Rescuing Marxism might be a better name for your book than Reinventing Marxism because, for the most part, it seems to me that you mainly chip away at misconceptions and distortions rather than offer revisions.

HS: I think that Marx was a smart old fellow, who asked some good questions and even gave some good answers. But there have been very different interpretations of Marx during the twentieth century — and the So-

viet brand was a distortion intended to apologize for dictatorship. My own brand of socialism takes much from Marx, but also from people like Thorstein Veblen and Eugene Debs.

DL: You spell out in great detail the "relational-historical method," which you feel is the optimal paradigm. Could you briefly describe this approach?

HS: A "relational" approach means not looking at any social problem in isolation, but asking how it relates to the rest of society. For example, crime is not caused by biologically deviant individuals, but can only be understood in relation to the basic institutions of society. A "historical" approach means not looking at problems as if they are eternal, but asking how they have developed. For example, discrimination against African Americans can only be understood in terms of the history of slavery and Jim Crow laws lasting till the 1960s.

DL: I thought some of the examples you gave in the appendixes really helped to clarify how the relational-historical method works.

Godfrey Emerson Boehm

Godfrey Emerson Boehm was a founding member of the Newspaper Guild and devoted a lifetime to journalism and labor organizing. He died of congestive heart failure on May 23rd at his home in Santa Rosa. He was 93. Boehm interrupted his work as a journalist to serve as a combat pilot during World War II. He spent 15 months in a German prison camp after being shot down over Italy. After his return, he was blacklisted and forced to work as a janitor for several years. Ten years later, Boehm returned to journalism and co-founded the *Union Gazette*, where he worked until his retirement in 1983. In 1957, he received the International Labor Press Association award for excellence in journalism. Boehm was also awarded the Purple Heart and an Air Medal for his valor in service, but Boehm returned the Air Medal in 1986 to protest US foreign policy. Boehm is survived by his wife, Marjorie, his two sons, Eric Boehm and Richard Rubenstein, his daughter, Johanna Thorpe, and six grandchildren.

in practice. Can you apply the relational-historical method to labor relations in America today?

HS: To understand labor relations in the United States means examining not only the relationship of employees to employers in each enterprise (including strikes), but also their relationship in political struggles (such as national health care) and in ideological battles (such as defining a “living wage”). It also means examining these relationships at each new stage of historical development, such as the new global context of labor conflicts.

DL: Reinventing Marxism was published in 1995. Do you mind if I shoot some of your own questions back at you to bring the analysis up-to-date?

HS: Okay.

DL: How are class conflicts (and other conflicts) being played out in the 2000 elections?

HS: Any brief, simple answer is wrong. But one can certainly claim that the Republicans represent a one hundred percent business viewpoint, as well as particular reactionary groups, such as the NRA or the Right to Life fanatics. The Democrats are a very complex mix — also getting very large amounts of money from big business and having many pro-business attitudes, such as Clinton’s support of the IMF and WTO. But the Democrats also try hard to appeal to organized labor, so they are a party of mild reform capitalism, with some hope of better conditions for employees, for minorities, and for women. Ralph Nader represents the very weak left wing of the labor movement, as well as the left wing of environment, minority rights, and women’s rights groups — without being a socialist (though sympathetic in many ways to the basic anti-corporate message).

DL: Are there any ominous “internal dynamics” that we should be on the look out for in our “booming economy”?

HS: I have spent most of my life studying business cycles, so I must say that we are at the end of a long boom.

There are basic weaknesses in the very high level of inequality (which limits consumer demand), in the weak banking system, and in the fact that any U.S. recession will spread like wild fire throughout the globe.

DL: What do you think about the IMF and WTO?

HS: They don’t cause financial crises. However, their cures are always from the viewpoint of international capital and finance, so they always make the burden fall primarily on the working and middle classes of those countries as well as on some of the native businesses.

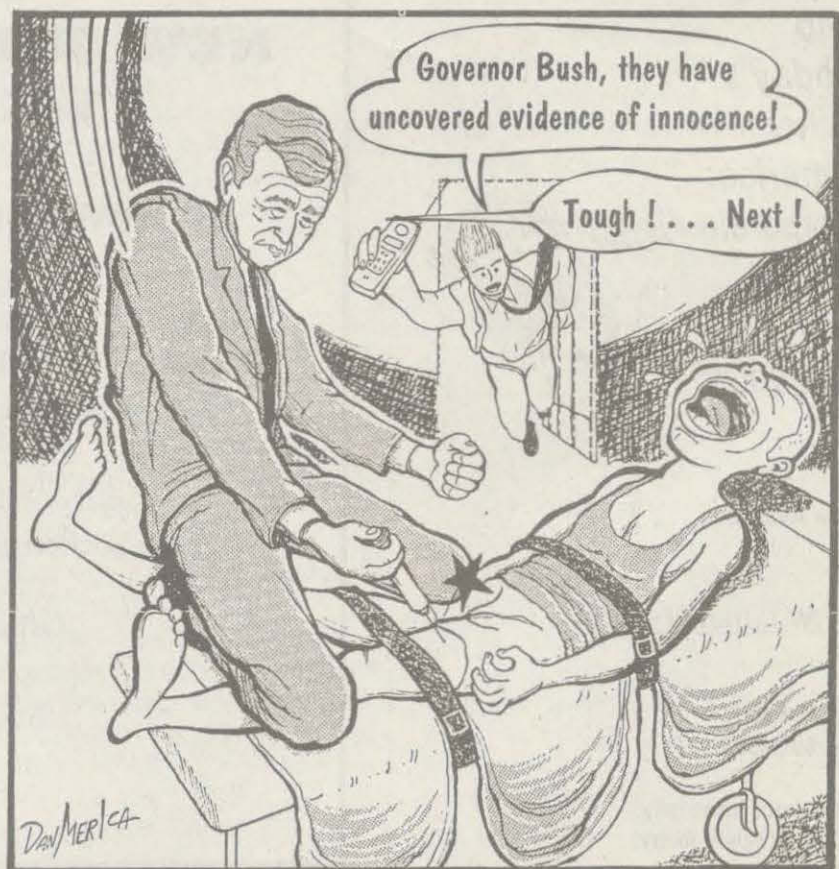
DL: Do you see any trends or incremental changes at present that may lead to major changes in the future?

HS: I remember in the 1950s we seemed doomed forever to live under a reactionary and repressive government, yet all of that changed within a few years. Since the most obvious

trend at present is earth-shaking and astonishingly rapid change in information and other technology, it is likely that major social conflict and change will follow in the near future.

DL: Finally, you derive short, medium, and long-range goals from the lessons learned from the relational-historical method. Along with curbing the influence of elites, full employment, and free public goods and services, you say that worker and public control of corporate enterprises should be steadily increased. What role do you think unions can and should play to help bring that about?

HS: Any successful major movement for economic democracy must be built on union support. But that support cannot do much at the purely economic level, nor can it succeed without allies. So it must be expressed through a political vehicle — whether a third party or a re-made Democratic party — which includes minorities, women, environmentalists, and other progressive groups.



WHERE'S THE COMPASSION ?

World Bank and IMF. The Ithaca DSA video team was there and helped tell the community about it.

Several of our members traveled to Cuba and then held a fascinating discussion on the question of whether Cuba would be able to preserve its egalitarian values and its organic agriculture once it becomes part of the globalized economy.

YDS has been active at Ithaca College, holding meetings on globalization and other topics. The members were a contingent at A-16 in Washington. Several were instrumental in bringing other Ithacans to Philadelphia for R2K. Horace Small and Daraka Larrimore-Hall were big hits at a public event here.

Local contact: Petra Hepburn,

President (petra@ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us)

Madison

The major activities sponsored by our local this spring were five days of public events involving Horace Small and Sue Karant. Mr. Small gave presentations and broadcast on the *Tom Clark Show* on Wisconsin Public Radio, spoke to audiences at Labor Temple, the Haven Center, and the Socialist Potluck. He offered a workshop on making activist leaders, Sue Karant lead a workshop on fund raising. Most of our activities are in coalitions, including the Coalition for Wisconsin Health, Network for Peace and Justice, Gray Panthers, Democratic Party, Progres-

sive Dane, and the Progressive Roundtable.

Local Contact: George Robson (george@lodiumc.org)

New York DSA

NY DSA and YDS members canvassed for the Working Families Party, the new official statewide ballot line cosponsored by DSA, Citizen Action and major unions. Our members went door-to-door in a very class-conscious election for Town Trustees in a northern suburb of New York City. Both the official Democratic and Republican parties conspired to keep fairly progressive local officials from seeking election or reelection on their ballot lines, so the WFP stepped up

continued on page 31

Michael Harrington and Today's Other America: Corporate Power and Inequality



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DSA Locals / continued from page 27

to the political plate—a departure from our usual practice of using NY State cross-endorsement laws to push Democrats to the left.

A DSA delegation, with members from across the state, attended the first annual Convention of the Working Families Party, at which major policy questions were debated, including endorsement of Al Gore for President (the Nader/McReynolds-debate going strong in a Gore electoral state), and new New Yorker Hillary Rodham Clinton for U.S. Senate. Ms. Clinton agreed to support the WFP demands for a larger state minimum wage as the price of our endorsement. The NY local also sponsored a successful forum on the national and local electoral situation with DSA Vice-Chair Jim Chapin, and welcomes young socialists from around the world to the U.N. Millennium meetings.

Local Contact: Steve Oliver (theol@worldnet.att.net)

North Central Florida

North Central Florida DSA has been deeply involved in a living wage campaign for almost two years.

Local Contact: Emily Browne (dsa-nocenf1@hotmail.com)

Greater Philadelphia

Greater Philadelphia DSA was central to much of the action

around the Republican Convention in August. The Local Executive Committee met recently with representatives of other “tendencies” and activist orientations to discuss strategies for the upcoming year.

Local Contact: John Hogan, Co-Chair (jhogan@law.upenn.edu; (215) 351-0151)

South Florida DSA Organizing Committee

The South Florida DSA Organizing Committee will be holding a General Meeting in September to formally constitute itself as a DSA Local and will soon have a website up and running. We have identified several key people for the five-member coordinating committee that will be the platform and medium for our action plan, including one congresswoman from Miami, Carrie Meek, who is a Steering Committee member of the Progressive Caucus. Our immediate goal is to deal with the overall problem of a lack of a forceful and thriving, public political left in the Sunshine State. We want to focus our attention on providing a voice for democratic socialism as an alternative to the single-issue organizations that sap our strength, and divert attention from the real problem of a corporate America.

Local Contact: Donald Donato (obidos@bellsouth.net)

Plan Colombia / continued from page 32

Our European comrades have refused to endorse Plan Colombia because of the serious danger it poses to innocent people as well as because of Colombia's dismal human rights record. The Brazilian government has raised deep concerns about Latin American sovereignty and the possibility of the spillover of the conflict into its borders. Thousands of Colombians have already fled ratified neighboring nations. Even the right-wing regime in Peru has voiced its skepticism that Plan Colombia can have any effect on the drug trade. But

more important, representatives of the human rights community as well as various local government officials and peasant representatives in Colombia have voiced their fear that this plan will only worsen the conflict.

For these reasons, DSA joins the many international voices condemning the reasoning and methods behind Plan Colombia. Instead we favor the proposals of alternative development already put forth by the European Union and the United Nations, which offer hospitals, schools, and support for democratic institutions in exchange for the farmers' agreement to

no longer grow drug crops. We propose that the 1.3 billion of U.S. funds should be redirected to reduce domestic demand here in the U.S., through education and addiction treatment programs, as has been advocated in part by Sen. Paul Wellstone.

Along with social and economic development in Colombia, an aggressive domestic program to treat our own nation's drug problem as a health issue, not a criminal one, would be the best plan the U.S. could advocate for Colombia.

Plan Colombia

The National Political Committee of the Democratic Socialists of America condemns the decision by the Clinton Administration to give 1.3 billion dollars to Plan Colombia, the joint Colombian-U.S. scheme ostensibly aimed at combating the drug trade in that nation. This is an issue of great concern not only to progressive movements in the U.S., but also to the international community. Plan Colombia, which involves the training by U.S. special forces of three special Colombian Army battalions, along with 60 U.S. helicopters, foreshadows what may become a deeper and more dangerous intervention by the U.S. into the civil and political strife that has plagued Colombia for over half a century. The plan is just another step in escalating the failed U.S. military "drug enforcement" policy in Colombia — a policy which DSA has already condemned.

It is difficult to find a 'side' to support in the conflict in Colombia. The Colombian people have consistently been the victims not only of their nation's instability, but of atrocities committed by all sides, on both the left and right. The proliferation of the drug trade is only the most recent ex-

ample of how the economic hardships brought about by the global inequality between North and South have affected Colombia. Any plan for Colombia must first address the needs of its people, not of its warring factions.

Plan Colombia will only continue the suffering. While only 25 percent of the plan calls for interdiction efforts, it is that part of the plan which the U.S. aid is going to support. The first phase, we are told, will be the fumigation of coca fields in the Putamayo region. Past fumigation experiments have resulted in the deaths of peasant farmers, through contamination of both their food crops and the water supply. The destruction of these fields means starvation and more environmental damage, as farmers only clear more rainforest in order to plant new crops, not just for coca but for their own food. These drastic measures will in no way address, much less do anything to alleviate, the economic conditions which have forced farmers to grow coca for their own survival. The remaining 75 percent of the plan, which is supposed to be allocated for development of infrastructure, is unclear (the Colombian

government has promised infrastructure development before), and likely to be useless following the consequences of that first phase.

This reckless U.S. aid package is being handed off to a Colombian government which is not in control of its army, 50 percent of which is known to be in some form of collaboration with the right-wing AUC paramilitary death squads. Despite U.S. guarantees to the contrary, the army (some of whose officers were trained at the School of the Americas) will most assuredly use whatever resources it can to combat rebel armies which currently have legal control of 40 percent of the nation. It is no coincidence that these military resources are being put into the Putamayo region, controlled by FARC rebels, who like the AUC, are making money from the drug trade on the backs of the peasant farmers. That raises the question of whether this plan, rather than ending the drug trade, is merely intended to take the share of it now controlled by leftist rebels and consolidate it in the hands of the paramilitary groups and the army.

continued on page 31

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