

MAY/JUNE 1981

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# Moving On

MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT



EL SALVADOR,  
POLAND,  
AND THE U.S.

**Solidarity**  
**DEMOCRACY & RESISTANCE**

*Ecology as Politics*

*Unionizing Office Workers*

*National and Local News*

# Moving On

MAY/JUNE 1981

VOLUME V, NO. 2

*Towards a Socialist America*

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# ECOLOGY·AS·POLITICS

By Jeff McCourt

**E**COLOGY AS POLITICS, A COLLECTION of essays written by French thinker Andre Gorz in the early and middle 1970's, presents a bracing challenge to many of the traditional assumptions of the Left. In this book, Gorz presents a vision of socialism which sharply contrasts with the technological visions of unlimited abundance which characterized earlier versions of Marxism. Instead, following a tradition which covers thinkers as diverse as the Frankfurt school, Ivan Ilich, and Christopher Lasch—Gorz demonstrates how the proliferation of individualized consumer goods, along with the forms of social organization which facilitate this proliferation, degrades and destroys both the natural environment and human relationships as well.

In fact, Gorz sees an intimate connection between the growth of mass production and consumption, the development of ecological crises and shortages, and the social and economic crisis of capitalism of the past decade. Gorz describes how post World-War II consumer capitalism was developed to overcome the traditional over-accumulation

*Jeff McCourt is a member of Pittsburgh NAM and a long-time energy activist. He acknowledges Tom Hoffman for his valuable suggestions.*

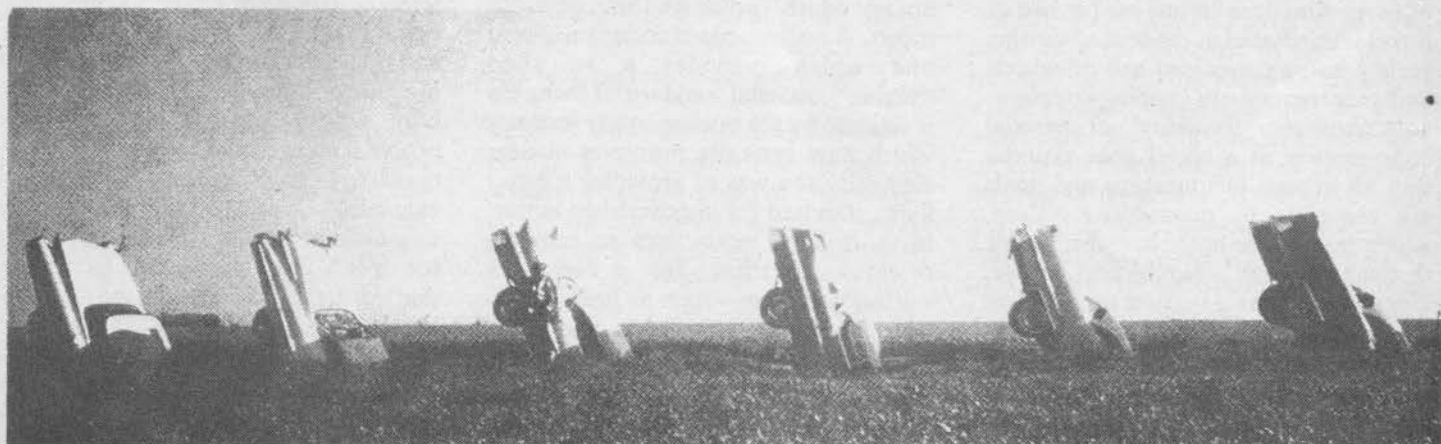
crises of earlier capitalism. (These were crises in which excess industrial capacity or unsaleable goods led to severe and destructive depressions—depressions which threatened to disrupt the entire social order.) But the “solutions” to older forms of crisis itself became a source of crisis.

## A Crisis of Over-Capacity

This happens, first of all, because the system seeks to universalize the “middle-class American Way of Life” across whole societies while sustaining both high consumption and high employment. To sustain these high consumption and employment levels, however, requires both planned obsolescence—that is, making goods which last a much shorter period than what is technically possible—and also the status-oriented consumption of new and unnecessary products. Because of this willful fostering of waste, however, the world's resources face imminent depletion. Even if this means new opportunities for attaching a price tag to formerly free goods—for example, polluted tap water helps create a polar water industry—it also means that capitalism must incorporate in the price of goods new costs like those for pollution control, as well as higher costs for once-cheap raw materials. Meanwhile, although capitalism has been undergoing a crisis of over-capacity, declining profit rates, and recession, it has also

been forced (or was until recently) to make expensive and unprofitable investments in more energy-efficient and less polluting manufacturing processes. It must also commit increasing, and increasingly expensive, amounts of borrowed capital to exploration for scarce resources, which have higher prices as a result. A situation of stagflation results, as the productivity of capital declines. It is this situation that Reagan—a little like Alexander the Great before the Gordian Knot—wants to correct by cutting environmental controls and by rapidly raising energy prices to increase and stabilize supply. But it seems likely that these so-called “supply-side economics” nostrums may be blunt instruments rather than the necessary sword which can unravel the current crisis.

This is, because, according to Gorz, the current economic and ecological crisis is deeply rooted in the social relationships of contemporary capitalism. In contrast with traditional conceptions of Marxism, which see in the development of giant corporations and huge, highly centralized production processes the pre-conditions for a socialism of unlimited material abundance, Gorz instead sees the degradation of working class skills and the creation of consumers who are utterly dependent on big companies or big government for goods and services. Deprived of meaningful community or work relationships, people instead try to validate themselves through



their ability to purchase increasingly expensive and increasingly unnecessary goods. But these goods cannot provide lasting satisfaction, since their real reason for being is to stimulate a distinctive status or class oriented consumption. Even as former luxury items become available to broader sections of the population, the class-stratified consumption standard is maintained with the addition of expensive novelties. Instead of reducing inequalities, then, individualistic, privatized, conspicuous consumption reproduces class inequalities (along with frustration, envy, and competitiveness), while sustaining a production system oriented towards profits rather than human needs. Natural resources meanwhile are systematically gutted to maintain a social system based on the promise that everyone can keep up with the Joneses—a promise which is repeatedly broken.

### Alienated Hell on Wheels

Gorz's description of the connection between the materialistic, competitive dynamic of contemporary society and ecological crisis leads him into a brilliant critique of one of the left's most cherished notions, that of material "equality." From the labor movement to the civil rights and women's movement, the basic right of everyone to an "equal" share of the fruits of society's production has been a basic theme. But Gorz suggests that these fruits are becoming increasingly poisoned. The right of every American to one car (or two or three) is purchased at the cost of turning society into an alienated hell on wheels and of progressively sapping irreplaceable resources. "Equality" of material consumption as a social goal assumes that all human relationships and goals are reducible to quantitative values, which can then be made interchangeable through "equal" purchasing power. Gorz thus rejects a version of socialism which aims at the consumption of material goods at some uniform "high" living standard. Instead, he proposes a socialism where *only* people's most basic human and social needs are satis-

fied by society's productive powers. In the context of a shortened work week and a social production system oriented to need, and not conspicuous consumption, people can use their abundant free time to create *any* standard of living for themselves they choose. One community may devote its resources to a "luxurious" living standard it creates *for itself*, while another devotes itself to cultural interests. In short, socialism would enable people to create their lives freely, according to their own chosen values. This means people would be more diverse, rather than less, in the socialist society Gorz describes.

### Toward an Anti-statist Socialism

This alternative vision of socialism also presupposes the restoration of civil society—rich, complex, human relationships which sustain themselves without the intermediaries of money or the state. In a time when the New Right is exalting the initiative of citizens freed from governmental restraint (while it actually facilitates the concentration of economic power by removing the last shreds of regulation), Gorz's version of a self-activating, anti-statist socialism can be usefully compared with the independent-mindedness of American populist traditions.

Along with the diminution of the so-called "middle-class life style" as a social ideal, and the restoration of the autonomous social creativity of human beings, there must be developed a technology which facilitates these developments. A nuclear-based socialism—even one which provides a so-called "higher" material standard of living (as is claimed by the nuclear utility industry which now cynically promotes nuclear electricity as a way of providing a better living standard for impoverished minorities)—will be *worse* than an ecology-oriented capitalism. This is because a nuclear socialism—such as being developed in the USSR, Cuba, and other authoritarian "socialist" countries—will need a highly centralized security and production system, even while it threatens irrevocable damage to

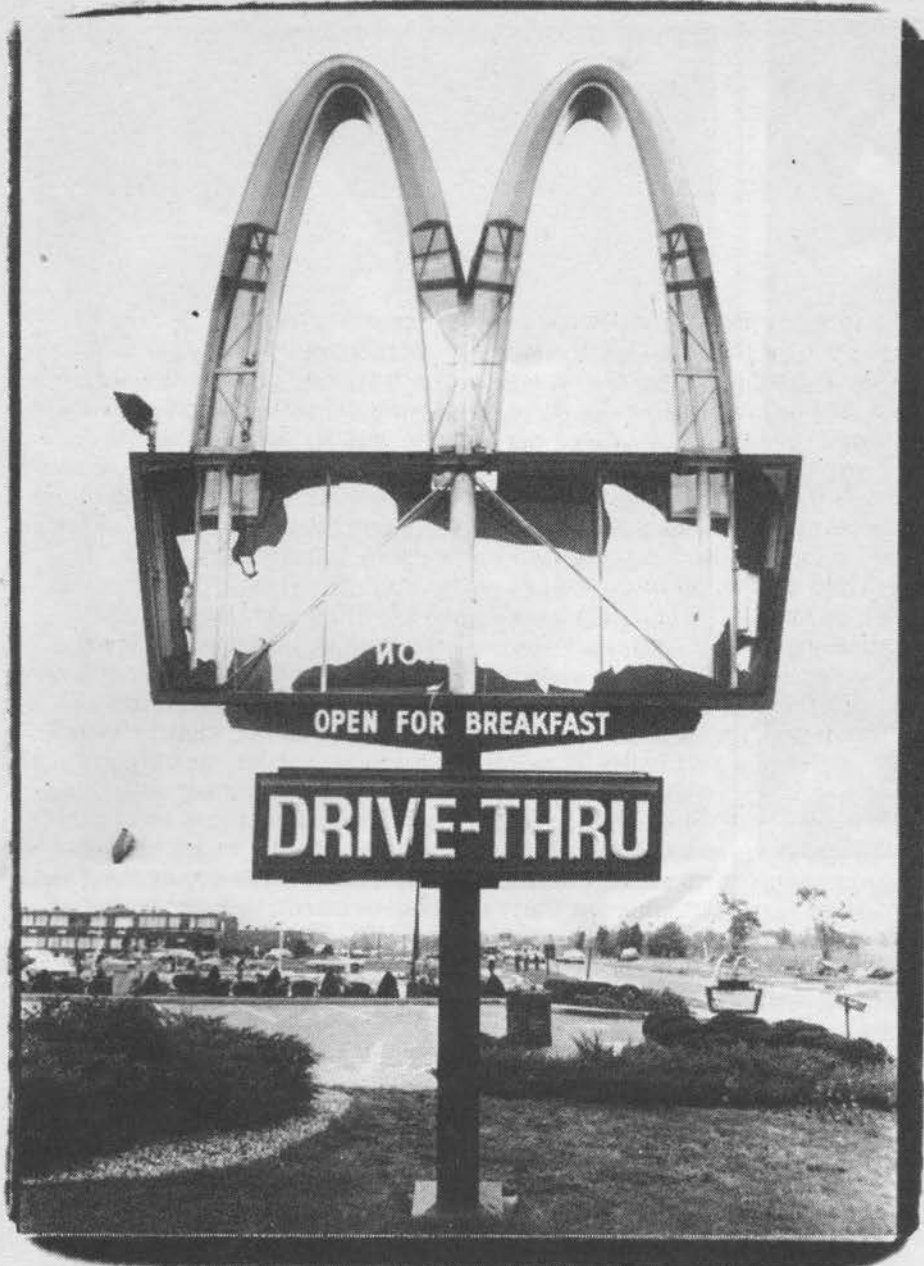
the environment.

Gorz is not however, calling for a return to some utopian pre-technology "apolitical" state. Gorz's context has a clear political dimension, which can either pre-suppose and reinforce authoritarian, corporate or statist domination, or which can foster individual initiative and creativity.

### Re-thinking Socialism

Over-arching Gorz's comprehensive re-thinking of socialism is an altered vision of the relationship of nature and the economy. Gorz describes economics—and presumably he means particularly Marxist political economy—as dealing with the unwanted and unforeseen collective results of the individual's activity. Ecology, on the other hand focuses upon the absolute external constraints produced by economic activity. Here Gorz joins non-Marxists like Herman Daly in putting the economy in a larger natural framework which is not completely subject to human control. His doing so raises some interesting questions. For example, does the continuing presence of scarcity—even under socialism—of natural limits which people must respect imply a role for ethics, in the sense that people will internalize a sense of "obligation" which perpetually reminds them of how their actions affect other people?

A brief review can hardly more than touch upon the rich group of themes which Gorz uses to illuminate a whole series of aspects of modern life—education, medicine, the roles of multinational corporations, of science, of the consumer culture. Similarly, one can only suggest possible weaknesses or problem areas in Gorz's argument, particularly as they apply to the U.S. For example, Gorz's conception of the economic-ecological crisis perhaps gives too much credence to the lucidity or unified strategy of even the most sophisticated sectors of capital. Thus, Gorz seems most afraid of the threat of an "ecological revolution from above," in the form of a highly authoritarian "ecofascism" which preserves capitalist (or



Lionel Dellevigne

authoritarian socialist) social relations in the context of growing absolute scarcity and increasing curbs on individual freedoms. But Gorz ignores the possibility of efforts to merely ignore the crisis. Thus, the dinosaurian anti-environmentalism of the Reagan administration, with its naive faith in the possibility of simply *producing* our way out of our current dilemma—and to hell with ecology!—is something Gorz does not seem to anticipate. Similarly, while Gorz stresses how complex divisions within the working class preclude a program based on common material interests, but instead requires one based on a much broader social vision, he greatly underestimates the dominance of traditional pro-capitalist ideology in the U.S.A. Thus he sees the traditional authority of American bourgeois institu-

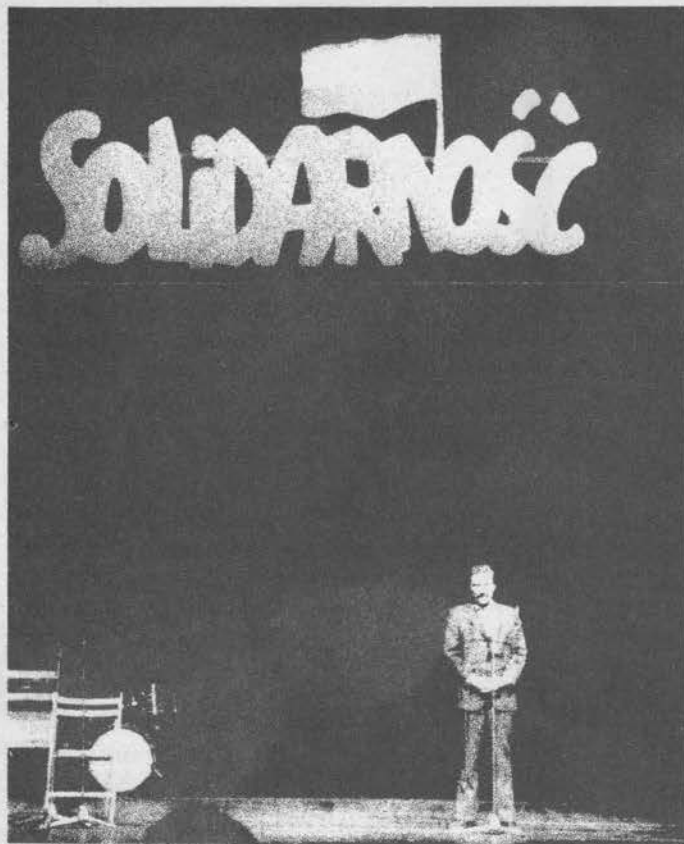
tions and values as having been thoroughly undermined by the advent of Vietnam, Watergate, and social and economic crisis. The superficiality of such views—unfortunately still cherished by much of the left—hardly needs comment here, in the context of resurgent and aggressive conservatism.

### Against Souped-up Capitalism

Finally, while Gorz's conception of socialism as a new model of civilization and of human social relationships (as opposed to a souped-up capitalism) is extremely powerful, he insufficiently specifies the social forces working towards such a vision. The problem this presents in a country like the United States is clear. As is well known, in the 1960's the New Left and hippie movement—with many of the participants in

that movement coming from middle- or upper-middle class backgrounds—presented both political and practical critiques of the culture of affluence. But while many of the themes of these critiques were and remain compelling, they often fell on deaf ears when addressed to racial minorities and impoverished peoples who were still undergoing real physical and mental deprivation, or to more highly-paid workers who compensated for meaningless work through the endlessly renewed purchase of consumer goods. The tasks of integrating the critique of “affluence” with movements for social justice remains an unresolved one for the left, which either tends to remain mired in a closed-off sub-culture or which implicitly reduces its politics to merely working for economic improvements within the system. Solving this task becomes increasingly important, however, as the on-going economic crisis creates more and more of the “new poor”—working class people for whom “middle-class” affluence has become a receding goal.

Despite these unresolved problems, Gorz's clearly written and intensely stimulating book (beautifully printed by South End Press) is essential reading for democratic socialists who are attempting to project an idea of socialism which is distinct from the brutality and dull uniformity associated with so-called state socialist countries, and which still suggests an alternative to the isolation, meretriciousness, and inhumanity of contemporary capitalist society. Gorz's book suggests the need to look more seriously at the traditions of English socialists like William Morris or Edward Carpenter, who linked a romantic conception of nature with an emphasis on creative labor and on the social centrality of human sexuality. Gorz's un-sentimental but compelling image of a society of self-activated people constructing communities adjusted to human need and potential—not unlike that portrayed in Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*—can sustain us in the difficult—if also promising—times ahead. □



Lech Walesa in Warsaw.

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# POLAND AND DEMOCRACY

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By the NAM Political Committee

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**T**HE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM in Poland continues. The actions of Solidarity have demonstrated the fundamental commitment of the vast majority of Polish working class to creating popular institutions as the basis for socialist democracy. For us in NAM the events in Poland confirm both our understanding of how a truly democratic socialism must be constructed and our hopes for the transformation of East European and Soviet society.

In our *Political Perspective*, our public statements (such as our analysis of the Polish events last August), and our resolutions, we have stressed the importance of autonomous organizations of workers, women, minorities, students, etc. These autonomous organizations form the basis for a democratic socialism and for a democratic struggle for socialism. No party can replace these organizations and no party should attempt to subsume these autonomous organizations. It is equally important

to emphasize the political pluralism necessary for a democratic socialist society. Thus it is extremely unlikely that any single party can legitimately claim to be the sole interpreter of the aspirations of all sectors of the population.

What has Solidarity done? While there have been previous efforts to democratize Eastern Europe (e.g. Czechoslovakia in 1968), Solidarity has, to an unprecedented extent, rooted the demands for democracy in the consciousness and life of the working class. Of course, (as interviews with Walesa and other leaders of Solidarity make clear), this consciousness and life, and thus the politics of Solidarity, are entwined with Polish nationalism and Catholicism, and shaped by the specifics of Polish historical development. Solidarity's goals are those that any democratic socialist must gladly support: freedom of speech, of access to the media, of religion, democratization of all political institutions, etc. In their demands to form trade unions not controlled by the Communist Party or the government, to form autonomous political and civic organizations, Solidarity is saying that democracy in Poland can only be built through popular institutions.

But Solidarity has done more than this. In a previous editorial position (August 1980), we expressed the hope that the demands of the Polish trade union movement would be extended to include the interests of the entire Polish people. It is perhaps here that the example of Solidarity has been the most inspirational: rather than remaining the political expression of a limited sector of the Polish population, Solidarity has expanded to include virtually the entire Polish working class. Further, Solidarity has provided a model for other sectors of Polish society, particularly farmers and students. Both have demanded their own form of "solidarity," a farmers' union and a students' union.

## A Spectre Haunting Europe

Beyond the frontiers of Poland, of course, Solidarity now haunts the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. After all, if the Polish working class can do it, why not the Hungarian, the East German, even the Russian? This possibility must excite democratic socialists throughout the world. We support efforts for democratic unions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the larger democratic movements of which they are a part.

But the questions raised by Solidarity do not stop at the borders of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. After all, what Solidarity has done is to say, most emphatically, that the goals and aspirations of the union movement go beyond the questions of wages and hours, beyond even

*Continued on page 8.*



*Death mark left on door by a right-wing paramilitary group.*

# EL SALVADOR IS AND IS NOT ANOTHER VIETNAM

**By Rick Kunnes**

**E**L SALVADOR HAS MANY IMPORTANT PARALLELS with Viet Nam. As in the case of Viet Nam, El Salvador is a Third World country dominated and exploited by major capitalist countries, ruled by a local, crudely dictatorial power. The U.S. has attempted to suppress liberation struggles in both countries. The

*Rick Kunnes is the National Secretary of the New American Movement. For more information write NAM, 3244 N. Clark, Chicago, IL. 60657 and USCISPES, POBox 12056, Washington, DC 20005. Also, NAM has just published a new booklet, El Salvador...No Middle Ground. Individual copies are 90 cents. Bulk rates available.*

process of suppression has been one of seemingly gradual escalation by military and economic means, and simultaneously a not-so-gradual escalation of lies and deceptions dispensed to the American public. There are many more similarities. But the differences in fact may be more important than the similarities, and may be a source of optimism. For example, the potential for building a broader and deeper anti-war movement now, compared to '63-'64 is greater. This appears to be true for a number of inter-related factors and dynamics:

First of all, the role of the Church is obviously quite different. The Church now gives a respectability, legitimacy and visibility to the anti-war movement that was never available in the '60s. On a world-wide basis the Church's membership is increasingly people of color. This has been a major contributing factor in shifting the Church politically, as opposed to socially, leftward. We see this in the Church's role in its support for unionization drives in Brazil, its support for democracy in the Phillipines, its support for the IRA and Solidarity, and last, but distinctly not least, its support for liberation struggles in Latin America, most recently in El Salvador. This in turn has had an effect on U.S. minorities. We see for example, with Hispanics living in the U.S. who are also Church based, and most are, a great increase in opposition to the U.S. role in El Salvador.

A second reason for optimism: The role of the Socialist International and its constituent countries and parties in general, and most recently, Mitterand's election in France, will continue to help isolate at least some important aspects of U.S. imperial policy in Latin America. A large banner at Mitterand's election celebration said "Mitterand save El Salvador!" Given the necessity for Mitterand to build a very broad-based coalition, it will be very difficult for him to move very far leftward in his domestic economic policy. However, vis-a-vis U.S. imperialism, he will have broad and deep multi-class support.

Third, the U.S. government's role in both Viet Nam and Watergate created tremendous credibility problems and popular cynicism. It's at least more difficult for the government to lie as routinely and as facily as it did in the '60s. For example, compare the response to the Tonkin Bay situation and the more current State Dept. White Paper on El Salvador. Note for example, that there are now almost 90 co-sponsors of HR 1509, the Studs bill to cut off aid to the Junta in the House of Representatives, and that this support increased immediately after the issuing of the White Paper. This kind of response would be totally inconceivable in '65.

## **A Basis for Optimism**

Fourth, part of this credibility and cynicism problem for the U.S. government is very clearly reflected in the media,

which was so burned and discredited by their uncritical early responses to Viet Nam and Watergate. This time around the media is, at least in many important ways, much more critical, or at least, as they say, more "balanced". Even a comparison of media humor between the two periods, ie, '64 and '81, shows a fairly dramatic political difference. For example, the Doonesbury comic strip had a whole series attacking the myths of U.S. policy in El Salvador. The TV network show *Fridays* has attacked at least twice U.S. policy in El Salvador in such a devastating and humorous way, that the left itself could not have done a better job.

Fifth, unlike '63-'64, the Viet Nameese struggle was in a sense isolated in that it had no recent examples of successful Third World liberation struggles. El Salvador, on the other hand has the recent examples in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, with concurrent and contiguous incipient insurrections in Guatemala and Honduras. It's also important to note that the victories in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe, in spite of having Marxists in key leadership positions, did not lead to "socialist-like" or even socialist-in-name states, as it did in Viet Nam. Rather, in Nicaragua and Zimbabwe a much more broadly based coalition came to power with some overt capitalist elements in it. This presumably would be the model for El Salvador as well.

Sixth, with Viet Nam, the U.S. left feared and then faced a massive U.S. land invasion. This is not likely at this time in El Salvador, in part because of draft resistance movements in this country. There are however two more immediate more likely prospects we need to confront than a U.S. land invasion, especially if the liberation forces get any closer to victory:

1. A U.S. financed invasion by Honduras of Nicaragua to cut off military, political and moral support to El Salvador. The invasion might not only have that effect, but also the conflagration such an invasion would precipitate would become a greater pretext for more U.S. involvement.

2. A one day, quick, "surgical" air strike, where one or two liberated provinces are completely eliminated. This may not be hard to do, as El Salvador is only the size of Massachusetts, where El Salvador is not adjacent to a large, liberated "friendly" country, as Viet Nam was to China, nor is the left in El Salvador as strong militarily as was the NLF in Viet Nam.

### New Tasks

Having suggested that there exist all these differences between the '63-'64 situation in Viet Nam and the current situation in El Salvador, and that these differences constitute a basis for relative optimism, what do we actually do?

Within the U.S. left, it is increasingly accepted that the most important variable in terms of influencing the outcome of the struggle in El Salvador, is the U.S. mass, popular response to U.S. policy, given that neither side can win at the present time, in the present context. The progressive forces in El Salvador, primarily grouped around the Democratic Revolutionary Front can however win, if U.S. aid to the Junta is cut off. And that aid will be removed only if there is massive American opposition to it. A U.S., very broadly-based, anti-war movement is literally essential for the Front to win. And time is a critical factor.

The U.S. mass movement against support for the Junta will be successful only if it is as quickly formed and as broadly representative as possible. This means minimally that the movement must include both labor rank and file formations and a significant section of the national labor leadership; it must include prominent local and national elected officials; it must include important religious leaders. And the activities of these coalitions must be very broadly diverse and complementary.

Demonstrations at local and national levels are very important. But demonstrations alone will not do it for El Salvador, anymore than demonstrations alone did it for Viet Nam. We must do lobbying at all levels of government; we must do petitioning; we must do electoral work within the Democratic Party and in some cases perhaps even within the Republican Party. We should leave no stone unturned in our support for liberation in El Salvador

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## POLAND

*Continued from page 6.*

the most militant form of trade unionism. They must, as NAM member Stanley Aronowitz argued last year in *Socialist Review*, encompass the whole of society, from runaway capital to the problems of the American family, from health and safety conditions of the workplace to the revitalization of community life. We should be clear: many of the people in the U.S. who cheer Solidarity the loudest would be appalled if American unions took the example of Solidarity seriously. We, however, think precisely that: Solidarity is making a revolution that should be exported not only to the rest of Eastern Europe but to Western Europe and the U.S. as well. Thus repression of Solidarity by the Polish government or by Soviet intervention would be a tragedy not only for the Polish people but for democratic socialists around the world.



# A NEW PAGE IN LABOR HISTORY

**A** NEW PAGE IN LABOR HISTORY was written when in early March, Working Women, a national organization of office workers, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) announced that they are jointly sponsoring a new project to unionize the nation's office workers. They created SEIU District 925, a nationwide local with divisions across the country.

This project is aimed at the largest single occupation in the country, 20 million office workers of whom 90% are unorganized. Its goal is to combine the unique organizing approach of Working Women with the strengths of organized labor.

The past few years have seen increased interest in unionizing woman office workers on the part of organized labor, including the Teamsters, UAW, Retail Clerks, and Steelworkers. But few, if any, of the traditional unions have the understanding of the clerical workforce and the women organizers to do the job.

## From Organization to Unionization

Working Women, on the other hand, has successfully combined the demand for equality of the women's movement

with a focus on workplace issues. In this way, it has organized 10,000 women office workers nationwide to make demands of their employers and the government for improvements on the job. Such demands include pay increases, job posting, an end to sex, race, and age discrimination, an end to sexual harassment and the necessity to do personal chores for the boss, and more respect on the job. Most of these demands are the same issues which a union contract would cover.

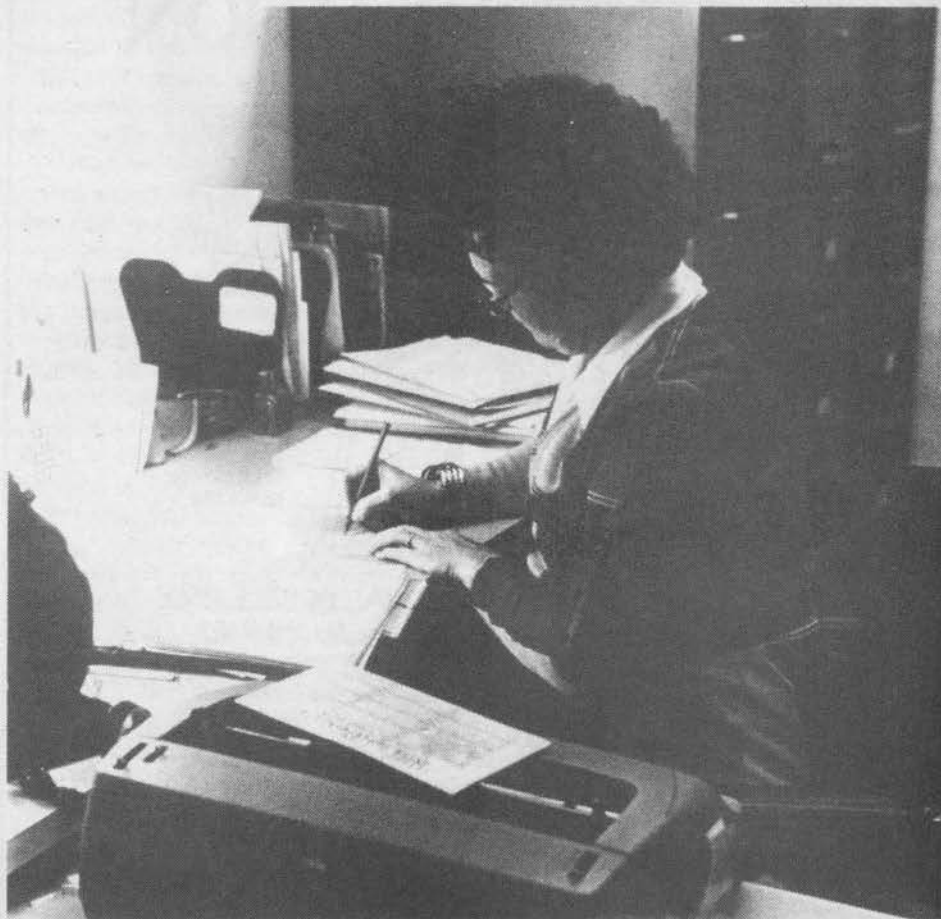
Through Working Women, office workers have learned to organize and struggle together. They have also learned that any victories which they win can quite easily be taken away by the employer as the public pressure which they create wanes with time. Many are coming to recognize through this pro-

cess the necessity for a negotiated and legally binding contract between employer and employees.

Working Women's strategy has been based on the premise that women office workers will unionize more readily when they have some history of organization, social relations, and leaders—all of which were sorely lacking until the working women's movement began in the early 1970's. That history is still very young and the need to build on it is crucial. Working Women will continue to play this role even while separate unionization efforts by District 925 begin.

## Why SEIU?

Why was SEIU the union with which Working Women chose to enter into such a project? And why was SEIU so interested? SEIU is a growing union



Steve Cogan

## TOWARD SOCIALISM IN AMERICA

by

HAROLD FREEMAN

A BOOK THAT SPEAKS OUT FOR  
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whose members work in the expanding sectors of the economy. It is the 7th largest AFL-CIO union with over 650,000 members, and the largest hospital union in the country. It originally represented only building maintenance workers, social service agency workers, taxi workers, jewelry workers, various paraprofessionals and 50,000 clerical workers. Half of its membership is public employees and half private employees.

Beginning with its former president George Hardy and continuing with current President John Sweeney, SEIU has emphasized both new organizing campaigns and has been flexible in negotiating affiliation agreements with independent unions.

Another advantage of SEIU for women office workers is its decentralized character. While the national organization is active and provides resources and training for its locals in addition to financial support when needed, the locals are afforded a great deal of autonomy in setting their dues, negotiating their contracts, creating their by-laws, etc. This decentralized structure makes affiliations more attractive to independent locals. It also affords women office workers who are new to the union movement a place of their own over which they can exercise a great deal of control.

SEIU has made a commitment to organizing women and providing women opportunities for training and leadership within the national union. In addition to District 925, it has created a Clerical Division (much like its Hospital Division) which will serve all the clerical employees within SEIU. And it has set up a Women's Conference for training and special programs, including SEIU's first women's conference to be held in May. □

At its 1979 national convention, the New American Movement formally recognized the important of unionizing women office workers. Several NAM members became active in clerical unionizing drives and later with Working Women. We in NAM welcome the new District 925 as a major step forward for both the labor movement and the women's movement.

For more information about District 925 or Working Women, contact Anne Hill, (216) 566-0117. Anne has left the national staff of Working Women to be the Midwest General Organizer for District 925. Anne is a member of Cleveland NAM.

# FACING REACTION



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# All the News

## NAM National News

NAM is currently engaged in a **major national membership drive**. This includes a direct mail drive to over 20,000 people. Even within the first week of the mailing, we were able to add scores of new members. Simultaneously, NAM chapters around the country have initiated local membership drives. This too has been very successful and when taken with the above numbers places us at an all time high of over 1500 members.

NAM members were active and visible participants at the **New Jewish Agenda Conference** in Washington, D.C. Since then, in many cities around the country, NAM members have worked to build local groupings of the New Jewish Agenda.

We want to welcome **Osceola NAM** of Tallahassee, Fla. as NAM's newest chapter.

**New Publications:** Three of NAM's periodicals, the *Health Activist Digest*, *Women Organizing*, and the *Plant Closings Bulletin* have all published new issues this month. And NAM's Anti-racist Commission has just published a new and excellent booklet, "Retreat from Justice." All are available from the National Office.

Comic **Robin Tyler** is planning a Fall tour to ten cities where there are NAM chapters, where she will be sponsored by NAM in each city.

Over a dozen NAM chapters sponsored forums for **Carl Marzani**, author of *The Promise of Eurocommunism*.

### First National El Salvador Teach-In

On April 1-3, Detroit NAM members helped initiate the first National Teach-In on El Salvador. Over 2800 people attended. The teach-in covered a very wide diversity of subjects including the

role of the Church, the labor movement, Reagan's military policy and how it affects domestic policy. Speakers included former U.S. Ambassador Robert White, Congressperson George Crockett, Jr., members of the Detroit City Council, a representative of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, Helen Kramer, director of International Affairs for the Machinists' Union, and NAM National Secretary, Rick Kunnies.

### San Francisco Urban Politics School

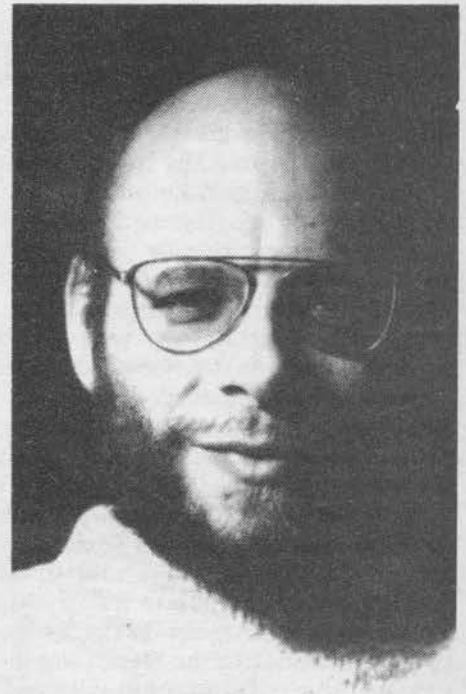
The West Coast Urban Politics School brought over 350 people to San Francisco on the weekend of March 14-15. The School was initiated by NAM's Urban and Community Commission and organized by San Francisco NAM and Bay Area DSOC. The weekend agenda integrated urban political theory with discussions of organizing and ranged from rent control fights in U.S. cities to comparative perspectives on urban political insurgencies.

Urban political economist Ann Markusen sketched the regional economic and demographic shifts in the U.S. that are remaking urban politics. French urbanologist Manuel Castells discussed the range of urban political movements in advanced capitalist societies. In the closing address, NAM member Jim Shoch developed the programmatic and coalition implications of the larger shifts in the national and international political economy.

Participants at the school showed strong interest in the political arenas that will provide early confrontations with the Reagan administration's urban policies. Workshops on housing and urban fiscal policy drew over 100 people each and the employment workshop was also well attended. Everyone recognized the threats to the lives of the urban population that Reagan's supply side economics represents. However, workshop discussion stressed the new opportunities for broad coalitions that bring together labor, community organ-

izations, women, minorities, etc., to resist the Reagan cutbacks and to formulate alternative urban policies.

Although the majority of school participants were from the Bay Area, NAM chapters as far away as Portland and San Diego were represented. The school gave NAM new political visibility while contributing to the growth of the Urban and Community Commission.



Ron Aronson

### Sartre Comes to Detroit

Detroit usually has little to celebrate these days. The local chapter of the New American Movement, however, recently orchestrated a celebration that highlighted a major accomplishment of one of its leading members and brightened the lives of members of Detroit's left and academic communities.

Recently, 200 friends of NAM member and Professor Ron Aronson gathered at the Alumni House at Wayne State University to celebrate the publication of his long-awaited book, *Jean-Paul Sartre—Philosophy in the World*.

Sartre, one of the great intellectuals of this century, was a socialist thinker who was respected by people of widely different viewpoints. When he died last year, 50,000 Parisians spontaneously accompanied his body to the cemetery in Montparnasse, where it was cremated.

A skilled and able teacher, Aronson helps us to understand the ideas of the great philosophers of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Kant, Hegel and Heidegger—philosophers who influenced the great social thinkers of later generations, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre. The book cannot be read in one sitting, but only over a long period of time. It must be read to think, argue, or even just to contemplate; otherwise, Sartre's journey of idea changes and development cannot be appreciated.

Sartre's existentialist views and his detachment from the event of the twenties and early thirties changed under the outbreak of World War II and with his active participation in the French underground resistance to the Nazi occupation. The euphoria of victory over Hitler; the sharp turnabout with the Cold War; the dilemma of how to react to the revelation of labor camps in the Soviet Union; opposition to the French war in Vietnam; the execution of the Rosenbergs; the insurrection in Budapest; the support to the Algerian war for independence; DeGaulle's return to power—all had an impact on Sartre's perspective and philosophy.

In the 1960s, he was influenced by the Cuban revolution; he tried to effect the American war in Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, to name but a few. Through involvement in these actions, Sartre matured into one of this century's most brilliant socialist thinkers.

The evening was grand affair for Ron's colleagues at Wayne State University, former students, labor activists, and friends and comrades in NAM and the Detroit left. As guests enjoyed wine

and cheese, Ron autographed copies of his books, while classical melodies from a grand piano and a flute filled the room.

The Detroit Chapter of NAM was pleased to organize yet another successful event uniting Detroit socialists with other progressive segments of the community. At a time when Detroit NAM is reorienting itself to the crises of the 1980s, Ron's triumph became a victory for us all.

—Saul Wellman & Steve Shank

### **Baltimore Urban School**

Over 170 socialists and activists attended NAM's Conference on Urban Organizing held in Baltimore March 21-22. The conference featured both theoretical and practical organizing perspectives, with workshops on a variety of topics related to several major speeches.

As the keynote speaker, Roberta Lynch traced the development of the conception of the city under capitalism and emphasized urban problems as an intersection of the personal and political realms. A recurring topic of the conference was the effect of proposed budget cuts on social programs and the need to form broad alliances to oppose cutbacks. Chester Hartman spoke of massive cuts in housing programs, while Maryland tenant organizer Carl Snowden dealt with the need for multi-racial coalitions based on trust.

Speaking on the urban fiscal crisis, David Harvey discussed the developments of the last few decades leading to the current economic situation. Similarly, Stanley Aronowitz showed the roots of Reagan's urban policy from the Truman era, a transfer of wealth to the private sector. Joy Ann Grune, who spoke about challenges to the labor movement, and Aronowitz, each stressed the importance of going beyond protest politics: not simply defending past gains, but developing alternatives to present policies.

Most of the conference participants came from the Baltimore-Washington

area, although a total of about eight NAM chapters were represented. The conference was important for potential NAM recruitment and visibility, as well as the growth of NAM's Urban Commission. The major Baltimore daily newspaper, *The Sun*, covered the conference, which was partially funded by a grant from the Baltimore Charitable Trust No. 2.

—Claudia Leight



*Maurice Jackson speaking at the Baltimore NAM Urban School.*

### **Anti-Draft Conference**

From an opening plenary rules fight to a bitter eleventh hour structure dispute, struggle was the order of the day at the first National Anti-Draft Conference held in Detroit in mid-February. The Conference was sponsored by CARD (the Committee Against Registration and the Draft), a coalition of 56 national organizations (including NAM) which has been the national voice of the anti-draft movement for the past year.

Conference organizers, who had hoped to attract as many as 500 partici-

pants, were overjoyed at the turnout of more than 1200. Despite the seemingly endless debate throughout the weekend, the Conference was able to accomplish its major goals of 1) agreeing to Principles of Unity on which to build the anti-draft movement, 2) deciding on a plan of action for the current period, and 3) developing a structure to bring local anti-draft groups into CARD's decision-making process. Despite these accomplishments, serious debate continues in the Board of CARD over how to implement the Detroit resolutions.

NAM participants at the Detroit conference included Bob DeVorse (Milwaukee), Gerry Gaeng (Baltimore), Jim Miller (Cleveland), and Fran Shor (Detroit). Persons interested in NAM's involvement in CARD can contact Bill Barclay at the National Office or Gerry Gaeng c/o Baltimore NAM.

### **Conference for Democratic Socialists in the South**

In April of 1939 almost 40 activists from around the South came to Rochdale, Mississippi for a Southern Socialist Conference. In April of 1981, 41 years later, the second conference for democratic socialists in the South was held, this time at the Highlander Center near New Market, Tennessee. The 1981 conference was sponsored by NAM and DSOC and drew over 65 activists from the states of the Old Confederacy. While both NAM and DSOC were well-represented, almost half the participants came from more than 20 other groups from across the South.

NAM's political Secretary Bill Barclay and DSOC National Director Jim Chapin talked about the future of democratic socialist politics in the South under the Reagan administration. The political economic growth of the South gives Southern socialists the opportunity to link struggles for democratic rights to visions of socialist transformation. The success of these efforts are crucial, not only for the future of socialist politics in the South but for the hopes of

any socialist politics to be national in scope. National Interim Committee member Glenn Scott (Austin NAM) and H.L. Mitchell, a participant at the 1939 conference and a joint NAM/DSOC member, gave personal accounts of their democratic socialist activities in the South. Scott pointed to the often obscured traditions of radical politics in the South and urged Southern socialists to build upon these traditions in their contemporary work.

A well-attended energy workshop discussed a recently released study of land ownership in the South that reveals the growing penetration of energy conglomerates into Southern land. Labor organizers talked about working with woodcutters in Mississippi, public employees in Texas, and the UMW strike. Other workshops ranged from feminism to racism and the rise of the right to organizing around issues of war and peace. NAM and DSOC members at the conference established an on-going communication network and laid initial plans for a larger conference in 1982. (The next issue of *Moving On* will have a more extensive account of the conference).

### **NAM/DSOC Negotiations**

NAM and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) have been engaged in formal merger negotiations the past few months. On April 4-5 the Negotiating Committees from NAM and DSOC met in New York City and reached a political agreement for the unification of NAM and DSOC acceptable to a large majority of both Committees. This political agreement will be voted on at the DSOC Convention in May and the NAM convention in July. If both Conventions approve this agreement, NAM and DSOC will engage in final negotiations on structural matters in the Fall and look forward to a unity Convention next spring. Between now and our July Convention, NAM members will be studying the political agreement and evaluating the extensive

joint work that NAM chapters and DSOC locals have done. This joint work has covered a multitude of areas and issues, such as socialist schools, plant closings, anti-draft work, health, feminism, et. al.

### **Job Announcement**

The National Office is now accepting applications for Business Manager. This position involves working closely with the Political Committee in the Chicago National Office.

Responsibilities include financial management: stock and supply literature, all class mailings, office supplies. Special Assignments: Moving On, direct mail, liason at conferences, special interests.

You must have at least the following minimum qualifications:

1. Ability to balance check book.
2. Some office experience is highly desirable.
3. Curiosity about Midwestern habits and traditions.

All applicants are encouraged to call or write the Political Committee immediately. Deadline for all applications is June 30th.

Free advice on career planning and job placement available from Craig Merriees, current Office Manager: (312) 871-7700.

### **Fire Sale!!!**

NAM literature is always hot, but we're trying to spark an inferno of orders. Our profit margins are going up in smoke. For a limited time, we're slashing the price of our literature by 50% on some items. Act fast, quantities are limited. Payment must accompany order, \$5 minimum purchase. Include 10% for postage.

**Working Papers on Socialism and Feminism:** was \$1, now .50¢.

**Working Papers on Energy:** was \$1, now .50¢.

**Working Papers on Gay & Lesbian Liberation:** was \$1, now .50¢.

Discussion Bulletins #22, 28, 30, 32, 34: were \$2, now \$1.

- Gramsci Notecards & Postcards: were \$2 pack, now \$1.

## NAM Local News

by Craig Merrilees

**Boulder NAM** took on the U.S. Army in a quick maneuver that sent an entire Armored Division running for cover. Recruiters had planned a display of American and Soviet arms aimed at recruiting youngsters for "Today's Army." NAM members let their fingers do the walking; made a few phone calls to the local shopping center where the event was to take place.

"I was really shocked and disappointed to find the Army in full-retreat when we arrived to picket," said NAM member Mary Sell to the local newspaper reporter.

When they aren't beating up on the Army, Boulder NAM members settle back into a more usual activist routine. They sold \$430 worth of literature at a recent anti-nuke rally. Community organizing through the Renters Rights Project and Boulder Alliance for Community Awareness continue to make progress.

**St. Louis NAM** made anti-racist work the focus of recent chapter activity. They joined the Campaign for Human Dignity, a group working with the Black community to reopen a badly-needed hospital through a ballot initiative.

The Homer G. Phillips, which has served the Black community for many years, was recently closed. Another public hospital serving the white neighborhood remained open.

Anysley Baur, Jim Kendall, and David Parker helped with organizing work, some of it in the heart of all-white neighborhoods. Five other NAM members joined in for canvassing and literature drops.

On election day, 56% of the voters

asked to reopen the hospital. But the City declared 60% was necessary to pass, so the effort failed by a slim margin.

**Cleveland NAM's** big project is the *Cleveland Beacon*, a magazine started four months ago by the chapter. Each month they publish and distribute 1,000 copies, with most expenses recovered from advertising, contributions, and a growing list of subscribers. The upcoming June issue will focus on religion and social change. Subscriptions are \$10/10 issues: P.O. Box 91093, Cleveland, OH, 44106.

Cleveland NAM has helped build a local coalition to fight the Reagan budget and foreign policy. A chapter member was an organizer for a regional conference on El Salvador which attracted 400 participants. An evening rally featured speakers from the Machinists Union, the Vincentian Sisters, the Frente Democratico Revolucionario (El Salvador), and representative Dennis Eckart.

Other chapter members are working on two upcoming conferences on occupational safety and health.

**Pittsburgh NAM** held a very successful "10th Anniversary & Recruitment Party" which attracted many new members. The party culminated a month-long recruitment drive in Pittsburgh.

Electoral work is underway to put the Consumers Party candidate on the City Council this year. The Consumers Party is a local branch of the Citizens Party, which is opposing machine Democrats in that city.

Ongoing work continues around plant closings, workplace organizing, energy, reproductive rights, and disarmament issues.

**Los Angeles NAM** is proud to announce a new member of the chapter. Mercie Josina Sheldon-Tarzynski was born on March 17. Congratulations go to Kathie Sheldon and Steve Tarzynski.

A tremendous testimonial dinner is planned for this June in honor of veteran activist and NAM member Ben Dobbs. For more information contact Donna Wilkinson at (213) 385-0650.

**The Westside Branch** of LA NAM worked hard on the recent municipal elections in Santa Monica. NAM members worked with a coalition of neighborhood and community groups called SMRR (Santa Monicans for Renters Rights) which won all four open seats on the City Council. Five of the seven Council members are now close to SMRR, giving the majority a mandate to develop progressive legislation and select the next Mayor.

**Dayton NAM** co-sponsored a recent visit of the San Francisco Mime Troup which drew over 1,000 people. They also sponsored a successful forum featuring an ex-nuclear industry official who defected after learning more than he cared to know about nuclear safety.

Chapter members are working on a campaign to elect a progressive democrat, and Dayton's first woman Commissioner, as Mayor. Pat Roach is running with strong backing from the Black community, along with support of some labor activists. She was passed up by the local Democratic Party for an endorsement, but is running a strong campaign to be tested in the June primary.

Chapter members continue to participate in the Dayton El Salvador Committee.

**Santa Cruz NAM** member Allan Brill was elected President of the United Transit Workers Union Local #23 in a recent election. Brill had led initial union organizing drives, and was active in negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with the city.

Local NAM members are helping to place two initiatives on the November ballot. One measure involves an anti-race and violence against women program, the other is a referendum concerning U.S. involvement in El Salva-

dor. NAM members and supporters are now gathering signatures using "state of the art" technology provided by NAM Associate Tim Jenkins.

The chapter's Local Politics Project is now studying the City Budget in preparation for June Budget Hearings.

**Austin NAM** members were part of a coalition effort that put three candidates on the City Council. Another three candidates are facing a runoff election. All the progressives developed good stands around issues of development and growth, and nuclear power.

The University Employees Union was successful in winning back the job of NAM member Cindy Stewart with full back pay. NAM members continue to be very active in that union.

**San Francisco NAM** was at the center of a coalition effort aimed at gathering revenues for public transit from the downtown corporate and financial district. A group of 37 organizations including labor, seniors, community groups, and NAM, formed the San Francisco Budget Task Force. A proposal was brought before the Board of Supervisors which could generate up to \$30 million in revenue, thus freeing General Funds to support other important services.

The NAM Housing Committee is producing educational materials through their Tenant Information Project (TIP) which summarize existing laws and tenant rights. The group is also working on a slide show to document and explore the nature of the local housing crisis.

The San Francisco Socialist School has started up the Spring term with a full complement of classes and workshops.

The Socialist Feminist Committee is active in reproductive rights organizing through the Committee to Defend Reproductive Rights. NAM members are looking into possible work with the

local chapter of NOW (National Organization for Women).

The Anti-Militarism Committee is the newest addition to the San Francisco chapter. The committee was active in organizing the May 3rd West Coast demonstration against U.S. involvement in El Salvador.

**Baltimore NAM** participated in a large demonstration that drew 1,000 people to a candlelight march marking the one year anniversary of the assassination of Salvadorean Archbishop Oscar Romero. The event was given extensive coverage in both newspapers and television. NAM was well represented, and continues to participate in El Salvador solidarity work.

NAM members travelled from Baltimore to the Harrisburg anti-nuclear

demonstration where they joined other NAM activists in the region who attended the protest which drew significant support from organized labor.

**Wyoming NAM** has been leading activities in Laramie aimed at focusing attention on U.S. involvement in El Salvador. The chapter has been active in the Laramie Alliance for Justice in El Salvador. This group has done educational work in their community, and has organized several actions.

Chapter members continue to participate in the Wyoming Citizens Alliance. The Alliance is a grassroots organization based on work for environmental and community concerns. □

*Craig Merilees manages NAM's National Office in Chicago.*

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This will be NAM's 10th Convention. And it will be a special celebration. We will have major sessions on the Right, the growing Latin American anti-imperialist movement, the decimation of public and social services, the women's movement and the new moral vision, and a great diversity of other issues and sessions. The Convention will feature many prominent and experienced activists from the labor, women's, energy, urban, anti-racist and peace movements.

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