

# Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

## School desegregation



Farmers fight  
power companies

Tyson/Ronstadt  
reviewed

Gays and  
electoral politics



# Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

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## Letters

Dear MO:

Barbara Easton's review of Peggy Dennis' book AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN AMERICAN COMMUNIST, did not touch on one of its important aspects—feminism. While Dennis may never have identified herself as a socialist-feminist, her description of sexism both in the Communist Party and in her relationship with her husband (as well as her individual battle against it) is one of the most compelling demands for a feminist politics that I have ever read.

Private or personal life has become a source of oppression as well as support. Under capitalism, it has also become a commodity and hence a volatile political issue. Dennis' life is a good example of both aspects and the need to respond with a comprehensive political strategy. Her experiences raise many questions for us today. For instance, she comments in her book that when her first son was born, it never occurred to her or anyone else that taking care of him would be anything but her job. Most of us would no longer accept that position, either personally or politically, but we need to understand better what a different position around responsibility to children means. Even if she doesn't state it directly, Dennis asks how we deal with "personal life" in mass organizing and in our own organization?

Easton is right when she says that Dennis' book will help restore a history that is all but unknown to a younger generation. But history has to be more than "restored," it has to be learned from. Dennis teaches us, de facto, that a socialist politics without feminism ignores a large chunk of peoples' lives, something we can no longer afford to do.

Jan Breldenbach  
Los Angeles, CA

Dear MO:

The full employment program outlined by Steve Max (MOVING ON, Dec. 1977) ignored several crucial aspects of the unemployment problem. Max would create new jobs by indirect means: shortening the work week, building new houses, transferring funds from military to peacetime spending, ending tax breaks for foreign investment. All are laudable goals. But his program would do little or

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## Out of the closet — and into the legislature

by Christine Riddiough

The first gay elected official in America was probably in office shortly after the Constitution was drawn up. But that fact, like the sexual preference of the many gay office-holders since then, remained in the closet. Not until 1974 was the taboo broken, when Elaine Noble was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, making both gay history and the national news as the first openly gay person to win office.

Changing conditions of U.S. society and the rise of many liberation movements in the 1960's spawned the gay liberation movement and the opening of closet doors for many gay people. Efforts, sometimes successful, were made to enact legislation to protect the civil rights of gay people. It was only a matter of time before gay people ran openly for public office. This year, in the aftermath of Anita Bryant's campaign to defeat gay rights legislation in Dade County, there may be more gay candidates and officeholders than ever.

Elaine Noble, who was elected to a second term in 1976 by a 75% vote, will not seek a third term in the Massachusetts House. In the middle of her second term, her district was combined with that of her legislative ally, Barney Frank. Rather than run against him, she is withdrawing from the race and looking for alternative political routes.

As a representative, Noble worked for a gay rights bill which came close to passing in 1977. The bill failed following the Save Our Children campaign in Miami, Florida. Noble has made alliances with the Black and Women's Caucuses of the State Legislature. She

has also made friends within the Democratic party power structure, which has led to criticism by some independents. They were particularly angry when she sided with the machine on a reorganization question that put some independents out of their seats and stripped them of some seniority. However, her strategy gained her the support of the Speaker of the House and other Democratic powers for gay rights legislation.

Noble now stands at a crossroads in her political career. While some liberals and gay activists see her as a sell-out,



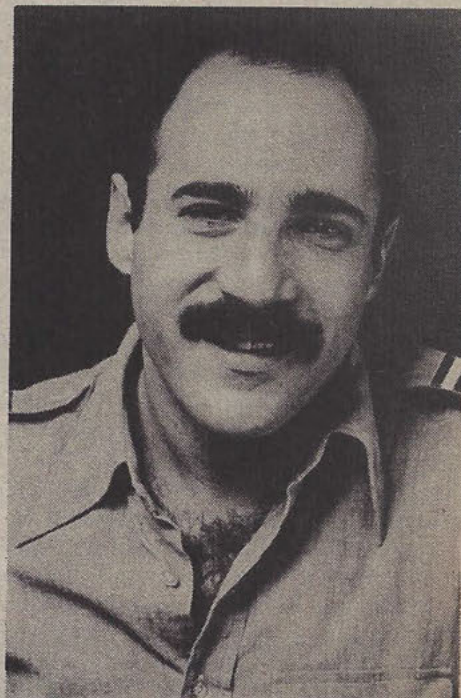
Elaine Noble

she still has the support of many from those ranks. She is reportedly considering other races, most prominent among them the democratic nomination for U.S. Senator. This would pit her against Republican Edward Brooke, the Senate's only black member. Massachusetts observers believe she could win the nomination, but winning the office would be more difficult.

Noble's staunchest supporters include many of the older people in her district. Typical in many ways is Louis, a local barber, who on her first election said to Noble, "If you do good, we'll move you on up." This year they may get the chance.

### Growing Numbers

The highest office held by any gay person is that of Alan Spear, a state senator in Minnesota. Elected in 1972, he announced his homosexuality in 1974, and was re-elected by a large majority in 1976. The Americans for Democratic Action named him the most liberal senator in the state and he has a long history of radical involvement in civil



Gary Nepon



rights and other causes.

Harvey Milk ran against 16 other candidates, including two other gay men, and won a seat on San Francisco's Board of Supervisors in 1977. His district includes the heavily gay Castro Street area, and is generally liberal. Another gay candidate, Rick Stokes, ran with the support of the *Advocate*, a local gay newspaper, and was known as the gay establishment candidate. Milk, whose image was more that of a gay "people's candidate," takes a populist stand on many issues.

Jim Yeadon, gay alderperson in Madison, Wisconsin, takes political stands similar to those of Madison's mayor, Paul Soglin. He was elected to a second term after serving out a partial term. As with Soglin, support for his progressive politics comes primarily from a student constituency.

After Elaine Noble's initial victory, it was expected that more lesbians might seek office. The proportion of women candidates among gays has turned out to be very similar to that of women in elections generally. One of the few is Ann Weld-Harrington, who will probably run for state legislature in Rhode Island. A New England gay rights activist, Weld-Harrington comes from Provincetown, a resort with a large, if transient, gay population.

Gary Nepon, 28, is a native Chicagoan and the first openly gay candidate for Illinois state legislature. He's running in the 13th district, an area that includes Chicago's "gay ghetto." All the district's incumbents, including a Republican, have sponsored gay rights legislation; the district includes wards that elect some of the few independents on Chicago's Democratic machine-controlled city council.

Nepon's experience in gay politics is limited and his candidacy came as a surprise to the gay community. He is, in some ways, an example of the post-Miami gay activist. His first public action was to participate in a demonstration against Anita Bryant last summer. Angered by the virulent anti-gay propaganda of Save Our Children, Nepon

decided to go further and run for political office—an ambition he had long harbored, but found difficult because of being in the closet.

His positions have been similar to those of other candidates in his district: support for all human rights, adamant opposition to nuclear power, and a somewhat conservative stance on fiscal questions.

Gay people running for office, like women and other minorities, are generally taken as spokespeople for all gays by both the media and the gay community. A victory for a gay individual is often seen as a victory for all gay people.

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## Gay people running for office are taken as spokespeople for all gays... So the gay community needs procedures to insure accountability.

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This is an added responsibility for the gay candidates who must then represent not just their own districts, but the gay community as a whole. Elaine Noble had extensive involvement in gay liberation and neighborhood politics before her election, so both constituencies were somewhat familiar with her. With other candidates, like Nepon, it is more difficult.

Candidates should not be elected simply because they are gay or support gay rights. Yet the defeat of any gay candidate would be viewed among non-gays as a defeat for gay rights, especially in today's political atmosphere. A partial solution is to have a strongly organized gay community that can demand accountability from its candidates—and get it. But the problem will only really disappear when a gay candidate is not such an oddity as is the case today.

Gay candidates tend to be progressive,

running in traditionally liberal districts. This stance is a reflection of the place of gay people in our society; most support, such as there is, for gay rights comes from liberals and progressives. Most anti-gay efforts are made by conservatives. Gay voters and candidates will tend to support those who are for, or at least not vehemently against, gay rights. This puts them in the liberal camp.

The women's movement has been among the strongest allies of gay activists. The International Women's Year conference in Houston came out strongly in support of gay rights. At this point it is almost unthinkable for a gay candidate to be against women's rights. The human rights orientation of the gay movement has also pushed it in many instances toward more progressive stands on other issues. Such stands are often taken by gay groups and candidates out of self-interest, but are becoming more and more a platform of the gay community.

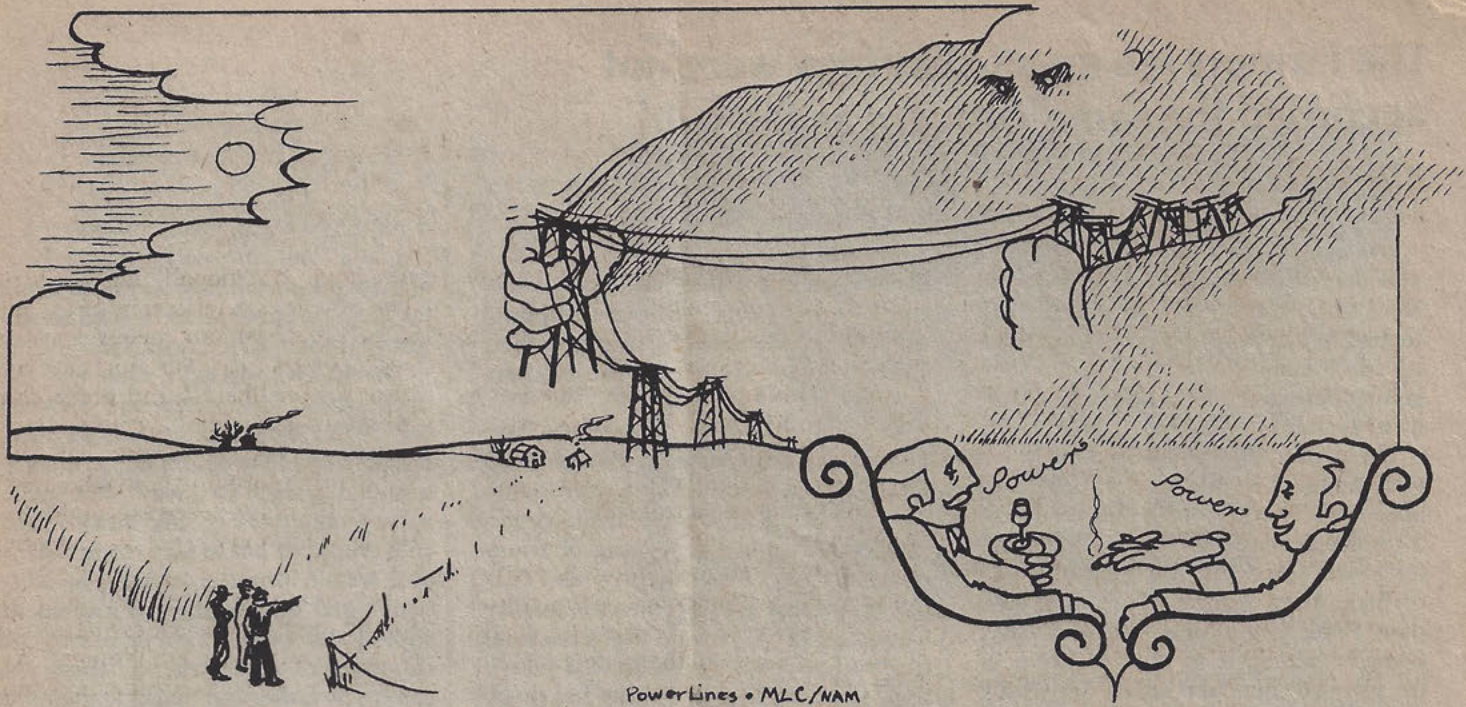
Gay candidates are still a novelty, but gay electoral activity goes beyond running for office. Much energy goes into lobbying for gay rights bills and pressuring non-gay candidates to support gay rights issues. In some cities Gay Democratic Clubs have been organized, from the Gertrude Stein Club in Washington, D.C. to the Alice B. Toklas Club in San Francisco. These groups work within the Democratic Party to promote support of gay rights and to promote gay participation.

This work has paid off in various ways. In Philadelphia, the Walt Whitman Democratic Club elected five people to party offices and plans to run candidates in the future. Richard Hongisto, former sheriff of San Francisco, campaigned at gay bars and encouraged gay employees to come out. Newly elected New York Mayor Koch made front page headlines throughout the country when he recommended non-discrimination against gays in the police and fire departments during his first days in office.

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drawing by Mary Clark



## Dangerous harvest — Tractor power vs. power companies

by Paul Wellstone and Monty Tarbox

The recent tractor rallies around the country show that farmers can organize dramatic demonstrations when they are fighting for their livelihood. The farmers' strike is a result of pressures on each producer that have built up over the last several years. Costs of production have been climbing and the price received for farm goods declining, so that many farmers feel threatened with extinction.

In western Minnesota a different threat emerged several years ago—high voltage power lines—and the farmers there organized to stop the lines. Citizen groups, involving hundreds of families, have sprung up in several counties. Farmers have testified at local and state hearings. They have raised large sums of money to hire a battery of lawyers to explore all possible legal channels for stopping the line. They have influenced the state legislature to pass a new law covering the routing of future power lines. The farmers have even obstructed the work of

utility survey and construction crews in the fields, destroyed equipment, and gone to jail to keep the lines off their lands.

The conflict began in 1974 when two large electrical utility coops—Cooperative Power Association (CPA) and United Power Association (UPA) proposed to build a massive power line across prime cropland in western Minnesota. The proposed line is part of a large project by the utilities to meet the projected demand for electricity in Minnesota in the 1980's. They plan to strip-mine coal in North Dakota, build electrical generating plants there, and then send the power to Minnesota via gigantic overhead transmission lines. The project is expected to cost CPA-UPA at least \$800 million.

The transmission line towers, if built, will rise 150 feet above the ground and will cross 8,000 acres of Minnesota farm

land. The size of the line and the amount of current flowing through it create special problems not associated with smaller power lines. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) claims that deer will not pass under the line and birds will not nest near it because of the build-up of static electricity in the air. As a consequence, all DNR-owned wildlife areas have been exempted from the proposed route.

The farmers are upset that they were not accorded the same concern as the wild animals. They feel their problems resulting from the line are at least as important. They are worried that the massive electrical current will cause large scale chemical reactions in the air around the line, creating dangerously high concentrations of ozone. They are also concerned about a number of other potential problems: large pieces of equipment, buildings and fences may have to be grounded to prevent static electricity from building up and a current jumping from the line to the ground; advanced irrigation systems may be unuseable and aerial spraying will be curtailed; the line may create noticeable noise, bother livestock,

# GettingTogether



## The farmers are upset that they were not accorded the same concern as the wild animals.

and decrease the value of farm lands. Most importantly, they are deeply disturbed by the way the power companies have steam-rolled the process of getting permission to build the line from local and state officials.

The utility companies first went before the local county board for zoning approval. They assumed this would be a routine process. However, some farmers heard about the line and were concerned about the problems it would pose. Pope, Grant, and Stearns County farmers managed to obtain copies of the planned route and began canvassing their neighbors to warn them the line was coming. When the utilities came to farmers to get easements signed giving them title to the necessary land, they found them unwilling to sign away their land.

When many farmers were first contacted by their neighbors, they hesitated to get involved, but the visits by utility representatives convinced them that the power line was a serious prospect. Grant County farmers organized NO POWER LINE (NPL) in the summer of 1974. Their first meeting brought an initial membership of 150 families and each family contributed \$25 to \$50. KEEP TOWERS OUT (KTO) was formed in Stearns County that winter, and a similar group arose in Pope County called TOWERS OUT OF POPE ASSOCIATION (TOOPA).

The farmers organized effectively. They attended, en masse, local county commissioner, zoning board, and planning board meetings. They traveled to meetings in other counties to testify against the line and show support for each other. The various groups eventually came together in March 1976 to form COUNTIES UNITED FOR A RURAL ENVIRONMENT (CURE) in order to present a united opposition and carry on legal battles in the courts.

Grassroots organizing paid off in Grant and Pope counties. The Grant County Commissioners granted the permits but with a number of important limitations such as keeping the line 500

yards from farmsteads. In Pope County the County Commissioners opposed the line so the utilities changed their strategy to avoid the need for local approval.

In April of 1974 the Minnesota State Legislature had passed a Power Plant Siting Act in response to controversies over the siting of new electrical generating plants and the routing of transmission lines. The Act provided that the Minnesota Environmental Quality Council (MEQC) would make the final determination of the route of a power line after extensive public hearings. The Act required that: a "certificate of need" be acquired from the Minnesota Energy Agency; hearings be held to establish a 20-mile corridor which would contain several possible routes for the power line; hearings be held to determine the actual route of the line; an Environmental Impact Statement be made. The utilities initially maintained they were outside the jurisdiction of the MEQC. However, when faced with massive local opposition in Pope County, they requested that the MEQC take over jurisdiction of the line. The MEQC accepted and the nature of the struggle shifted from the local to the state level.

### Changing Rules

The farmers felt the rules had been changed just when it appeared they would win. The decision of whether or not to approve the line was unfairly removed from local control and taken over by a state agency that seemed unlikely to be accountable to them.

Their fear were not lessened when it was discovered that the transcripts of one hearing held by the MEQC omitted two-thirds of the testimony presented, most of it in opposition to the power line. The MEQC also ignored its Citizens Advisory Committee recommendations on a power line route in favor of a route very similar to the one proposed by the utility companies. One MEQC official explained this action: "Many

of these people felt they were not listened to. They certainly were listened to—it is just that their advice was bad."

The MEQC selected a route and gave the go-ahead for construction in December, 1975. The following summer survey crews went to work. The farmers responded in their own way. Whenever a survey crew was spotted in the fields, calls would go out to farmers in the area and within minutes a sizeable crowd converged on the crew. Farmers disrupted the work of surveyors by surrounding them, distracting them with chain saw noise, and blocking their view with grain trucks.

The anger that had been building among farmers now burst out against the first tangible presence of the power companies in their fields and fights broke out between the survey crews and farmers. The most dramatic incident occurred when Virgil Fuchs drove his tractor over some surveying equipment on his land and was arrested for aggravated criminal damage. These confrontations prompted Governor Wendell Anderson to intervene and persuade the companies temporarily to halt survey work in Stearns County.

In Pope County a local judge issued an injunction against the farmers' demonstrations. The Sheriff was ordered to protect the crews, but he claimed he lacked manpower and money for the job. When some additional funding was made available to hire deputies, few local people applied for the job. There was speculation that the Governor might send in the National Guard, but Anderson, about to replace Walter Mondale as United States Senator from Minnesota, was not, as his last act, going to send in the Guard against the farmers.

Militant protest cemented the farmers together in a time of uncertainty about how to carry their struggle forward. It produced "martyrs," jailed for their civil disobedience, who became leaders. Alice Tripp of Stearns County said, "Virg (Fuchs) is quite a hero around here because he was the first one who physically accosted the



survey crews.... Ever since he's been a leader." The confrontations and arrests galvanized the farmers at a crucial moment in the struggle. Statewide attention was focused on the controversy and they felt a heightened sense of strength. Most importantly, they counted the protest as a clear victory because the surveyors were withdrawn from the fields.

In March of 1977 the farmers took the utilities and the MEQC to court. They challenged the way the MEQC assumed jurisdiction over the project and asked the Court to consider various health issues involved with the power line. After a three-judge panel ruled against them, the farmers appealed to the State Supreme Court. On September 30 the appeal was rejected. The Court, applying a very narrow procedural test, found the MEQC had proceeded properly and ruled the companies could proceed with construction. The legal process never took into account the farmers' substantive concerns about fairness and equity.

Utility crews returned to the fields in late October to begin construction of the lines, but the farmers renewed their protest. Vernon Ehlers, an "organic farmer," parked his truck with the key broken off in the ignition to block several concrete trucks. One Stearns farmer, Matt Woida, is being sued by the power companies for driving his tractor upwind of a utility crew and then switching on his manure spreader. Farmers in ski masks and mounted on horses have chased surveyors off the land.

The companies have responded by filing \$500,000 civil damage suits against several farmers, all key leaders, for "harassment" and "causing work delays." Local judges have handed down Restraining Orders prohibiting protest that delays work on the power line. The farmers have filed a \$5 million suit in U.S. district court claiming their civil rights along with constitutional guarantees of free speech and peaceful assembly have been violated by these court decisions which they brand as "official lawlessness." More



to the point, they have ignored these court orders. "You know what they can do with that blasted restraining order?" said Gloria Woida of rural Sauk Centre. "They can use it for toilet paper."

The farmers have been disappointed by the role the State has played in support of the power companies. John Tripp said, "People have a distrust now for government that has never existed before." They question the impartiality of state agencies and the courts where big companies are concerned, and they have learned other lessons as well—especially the value of organization and collective action. There have been no professional organizers involved in the struggle. The farmers worked out their own strategies and they came to see disruption and civil disobedience as the best way to fight the power lines.

Virgil Fuchs said farmers have come to consider protest in a new light: "The things that the '60s people were demonstrating against wasn't all wrong." Dennis Rutledge explained why the farmers resorted to civil disobedience, "It showed that we were strong in our convictions but also sensible and law-abiding citizens as much as the law was going to let us be. The law stepped on us and forced us to that hill out there, but we weren't going to go so far as to seriously break the law. We were only going to break it enough to show that we were serious. And that's exactly what we did."

Governor Perpich has suggested the utilities and farmers resolve their con-

flict through a "Science Court," an impartial panel of scientists who would rule on health and safety questions. The Science Court is a technical forum and may not serve the farmers well if it deals with only a narrow set of technical questions. They sense this, insisting on a moratorium on construction as a necessary condition for Science Court proceedings. They have made it abundantly clear they will not stop the disruption and protest until construction on the line stops. Even if the farmers eventually accept the Science Court proposal, they are determined to keep up the disruptive protest. Recently 250 farmers attended a rally at Lowry Town Hall; after the rally, they went out to the fields in order to chase construction workers off the land.

It is difficult to anticipate the outcome of this struggle. Regardless of the outcome, however, the farmers have succeeded in organizing to make their voice heard. The power companies did not expect the resistance. They will be less arrogant in the future when new projects are undertaken. The State government has also seen the determination of the farmers when their land is threatened. In the end, though, it seems that the farmers have learned the most.

*Paul David Wellstone has worked as a community organizer and is currently teaching Political Science at Carlton College. He is the author of an upcoming book: **How the Rural Poor Got Power: Narrative of a Grassroots Organizer.** Monty Tarbox is a student at Carlton College.*



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In April of 1974 the Min

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by Sara Spence

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White students boycott their high school because blacks are coming. Parents harass elementary school students, black and white, arriving by bus. Violence marks school integration. This familiar pattern was not repeated in Milwaukee, despite rapid massive desegregation in the past two years. An important factor has been the Coalition for Peaceful Schools.

The battle against segregated education in Milwaukee began in the early 1960's when black and white civil rights activists organized demonstrations and school boycotts protesting "intact busing" and other segregationist policies. (Intact busing was a procedure adopted by the Milwaukee School Board to relieve overcrowding in all black inner city schools. Classrooms of black students and their teachers were transported to white outlying schools and kept in isolation not only in the classroom but also on the playgrounds, sometimes even being bussed back to their home schools for lunch.)

In 1963 the policy of intact busing, as well as other policies such as gerrymandered school boundary lines and unequal facilities, became the basis of a suit filed against the Milwaukee Board of School Directors. Over twelve years later, on January 19, 1976, Federal Judge John Reynolds ruled that the Milwaukee Public Schools were in fact unconstitutionally segregated and ordered the Milwaukee School Board to come up with a desegregation plan.

In the intervening period little had happened to change the conditions that had given rise to the suit. However, three important factors combined to make the impact of the court order less threat-

ening than similar orders in cities such as Boston and Louisville.

The first of these factors was the action of the judge himself. In most cities when a federal judge rules that a school system must desegregate, he or she also prescribes how it must be done. Judge Reynolds ordered that one-third of the

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### While many serious question can be raised about the quality of education black children are receiving in the new schools, progress has been made.

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schools be desegregated by September of 1976, two-thirds by September of 1977 and all of the schools by September 1978, but he let the district devise its own plan for meeting these requirements.

The second important factor involved the actions of the school board. The majority of the school board was, and is, conservative and opposed to desegregation. But in 1975 they hired a relatively progressive superintendent, Dr. Lee McMurrin. After the court order was issued, it was McMurrin who suggested to the board that a community-based advisory committee be created that would assist in preparing the desegregation plan and would make recommendations to the board on all desegregation matters.

The final factor that contributed to

the relative quiet with which Milwaukee met the desegregation order came from the community itself. Even before the court order, organizations in the community, especially church groups, were meeting and making plans to aid orderly and peaceful desegregation.

#### Coalition Formed

Following the court order the Greater Milwaukee Conference on Religion and Urban Affairs (the social action agency of the major religious denominations) organized a one-day conference on community involvement in desegregation, featuring speakers from Detroit and Louisville. The gathering was attended by over 300 people from a variety of community, religious and civic organizations. Throughout Spring of 1976 individuals and groups discussed how best to stimulate community involvement in the desegregation process.

By the middle of May, the Urban League, the Conference on Religion, the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, the City Wide Council of PTA's and a number of other organizations decided to form a coalition to foster such involvement. The Coalition for Peaceful Schools was born. The member organizations agreed that they wanted the implementation of the court order to be peaceful, and they promised to support any desegregation plan ordered by the court.

Toward the end of June, 1976, the court accepted the plan for the first phase of desegregation submitted by the Milwaukee School Board. It called for voluntary desegregation using educational incentives with provision for mandatory assignments if voluntary methods did not meet the assigned quotas (one-third of the schools had to be 25-50% black). The first year plan also called for community involvement in planning phases two and three by means of a "Committee of 100," set up at McMurrin's initiative. This committee was composed of parents and staff chosen by election in each of the fifteen high



school clusters. (A cluster was defined as a high school and the elementary and junior high schools in its feeder pattern.) The Committee of 100 became the School Board's official citizen advisory body on desegregation matters and promptly joined the Coalition for Peaceful Schools.

During the summer of 1976 the Coalition prepared for the opening of school in the fall and the first phase of court-ordered desegregation. It disseminated information, organized a speakers' bureau, began publishing a monthly newsletter, sponsored a human relations resource guide, and helped to recruit students for a number of specialty schools.

In the fall, when planning began for phases II and III, the Coalition produced a packet of information for community planners that included possible strategies for achieving desegregation as well as the names of resource people who had skills or information that could be helpful in the planning process.

### Outreach

In January 1977 a proposal was submitted to the U.S. Office of Education under Title VII of the Emergency School Aid Act which provides funding for non-profit organizations to carry out projects that support the local school system's desegregation efforts. To be eligible for this funding a non-profit organization must be located in a school system that has a plan to enhance racial balance and must represent a cross-section of the local community.

At the end of June the Coalition received formal approval of funding for \$111,000.

In the interim the Coalition had accomplished a number of things in response to the issues and problems that had arisen during the second half of the school year. It helped to create an independent community monitoring board to oversee the implementation of the desegregation plan and organized a city-wide two-day human relations event for children and parents that used



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visual and performing artists to increase intercultural and interracial understanding. In addition, the Coalition met regularly with the superintendent and other staff of the central administration of the school system to communicate community concerns.

In August of 1977 the Coalition received its federal funding and hired a staff of five people. Three additional staff were hired with CETA funds obtained through the Milwaukee County Manpower Program.

This staff of three whites, three blacks, and two latinos reflects a broad range of organizing experience and knowledge of the Milwaukee community. Its multiracial composition has been vital to increasing minority involvement in the Coalition's work and changing its image

as a primarily white organization.

The Coalition now publishes a twelve-page bilingual newsletter each month, as well as pamphlets on such topics as how to organize a parents' meeting, questions and answers about busing, and who is responsible for what in the Milwaukee public school administration.

In order to further community involvement the Coalition is organizing three interracial teams of "Community Leadership Specialists." The teams are divided on a geographic basis according to zones that cover the entire city of Milwaukee. They help to organize parent groups or human relations councils in local schools and serve as advocates for individual parents and students who are having problems related



to desegregation or with the school system in general.

### Positive Effects

It is two years since the court order was issued. Two-thirds of Milwaukee's public schools have been desegregated. A few of these were formerly all-black schools that were integrated through the creation of specialty programs. Most, however, were white schools that black students began to attend because their neighborhood schools were closed, overcrowded, or cleared to make room for specialties. While many serious questions can be raised about the equity of the desegregation process and the quality of education black children are receiving in their new schools, there is little doubt that progress has been made. The Coalition has played a valuable role in bringing together parents from diverse backgrounds to work for better education for all.

Local struggles that it has fostered include: the demands of latino parents for bilingual-bicultural education, the work of black parents for equal educational opportunities, and the efforts of other progressive parents for different modes of instruction such as open education and Montessori. Parents who have struggled so long isolated in their communities have met, exchanged

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## The communication network extends throughout the city, across class, racial and ethnic lines.

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strategies, and are now working together. This communication network extends throughout the city, across class, racial, and ethnic lines, fostering an interchange that has served to enrich each group's understanding of the others as

well as effecting educational change.

The Coalition's staff and executive committee have also acted as advocates for the community's concerns in meetings with the central school administration. Since many of these issues deal with administrative procedures rather than with school board policies, the administration can act on them directly. For example, in August of 1977 the Coalition was able to persuade the administration to hold open houses in every school before the opening day of class so that parents would have an opportunity to visit their children's new schools. Through building supportive contacts with school administrative personnel, the Coalition has been able to get direct results for parents and community groups, bypassing the conservative school board.

The Coalition has had ongoing contact with hundreds of parents both directly and through the Coalition member organizations. Parents throughout the city are beginning to see the necessity of influencing the professionals who run the school system. They are starting to make demands on the school system. And they are working together so that those demands are taken seriously. A few parents have even started to talk about the idea of a "parents' union" that would be structured like a labor union and would represent the interests of parents and their children with the administration and the teachers union.

On the other hand, there are segments of the Milwaukee community that the Coalition has not been able to reach effectively. While it has some contacts in white working class neighborhoods, the Coalition's influence has been weakest in those sectors, both black and white, that oppose desegregation. In a sense, the Coalition has had the least impact in those sections of the city in which it ought to be working the hardest.

Another weakness of the Coalition's work has been its lack of influence on the conservative school board. The Coalition has been fairly effective in dealing with the administration, but it

has never been able to influence decisions made by the Board of School Directors. Even more disappointing, the city-wide network the Coalition put together could not affect the outcome of

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## Parents are starting to make demands on the school system. A few talk about a "parents' union" structured like a labor union.

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the elections held in the spring of 1977: more conservatives were elected in that election than held seats prior to it.

The future of Milwaukee's desegregation effort remains in doubt because in September of 1977 the Circuit Court in Chicago, at the request of the U.S. Supreme Court, remanded the case to Judge Reynolds for a retrial. This retrial, which began in January of 1978, could leave Milwaukee without a desegregation plan. It is possible that even if the decision favors continued desegregation it will not be made in time for phase III to progress on schedule. And given the conservative nature of the school board, the status of their so-called "commitment to voluntary desegregation" is highly questionable, especially if desegregation opponents are able to organize effectively.

Despite these problems, pro-desegregation forces are stronger in Milwaukee than they were two years ago. And at least a small part of the credit for this should go to the Coalition for Peaceful Schools. A large number of parents have had experience with desegregated education. More important, many have come together to help determine the course of desegregation and have learned how they can act collectively to affect their children's education.

*Sara Spence is a member of Milwaukee NAM who is active in the Coalition for Peaceful Schools.*



# Song of Solomon—the earthbound take flight

**Song of Solomon**  
Toni Morrison  
Knopf, \$8.95

In a time when black folk be scouring the earth, beating the bushes, even scaling Kilimanjaro in far-reaching attempts to find their origins, Toni Morrison sinks her roots ever-deeper into the region of her birth: the midwest. Ohio and Michigan. The Frontier, really, known for the persistence of Amerindian place-names and tree-colors; the waters carrying the memories of slave-crossings and Klan lynchings. The land of trappers, hunters, and bounties of varying kinds, connected for purposes of commerce, but never wholly settled. Trading territory.

“A good white farmer promised freedom and a piece of bottom land to his slave if he would perform some very difficult chores. When the slave completed the work, he asked the farmer to keep his end of the bargain. Freedom was easy—the farmer had no objection to that. But he didn’t want to give up any land. So he told the slave that he was very sorry that he had to give him valley land. He had hoped to give him a piece of the bottom. The slave blinked and said he thought valley land was bottom land. The master said, “Oh no. See those hills? That’s bottom land, rich and fertile.”

“But, it’s high up in the hills,” said the slave.

“High up from us,” said the master, “but when God looks down, it’s the bottom. That’s why we call it so. It’s the bottom of heaven—best land there is.”

So the slave pressed his master to try to get him some. He preferred it to the valley. And it was done. The nigger got the hilly land, where planting was backbreaking, where the soil slid down and washed away the seeds, and where the wind lingered all through the winter.

Which accounted for the fact that white people lived on the rich valley floor in that little river town in Ohio, and the blacks populated the hills above it, taking small consolation in the fact that every day they could literally look down on the white folks.”

So writes Toni Morrison in her previous novel, *Sula*. Fact? Fiction? Certainly the kind of truth legends are made of, and a dispossessed people’s history.

The midwest that we live in is a region known today to industrialists as the Fertile Crescent, for its ability to yield as many smoke-stacks as trees, as much steel as fruit, as much



Toni Morrison

photo by Yale Joel

profit as leaves. It is where, too, the South lives in the North, minus manners.

For black folk in this situation, life, itself, becomes improvisational. No set of rules or customs, however prejudicially defined, are uniformly applied. Even the weather is too changeable to set store by. And human relationships? Chancey.

In a region wedded to transport—by rail, boat, auto—Midwesterners learn to be both drivers and driven, even when they be standing still. Those who live without heat, water, or electricity and who act as though “progress was a word that meant walking a little farther down the road” exist side by side with blacks and whites who must own the newest models of everything. Indeed, they are often related by blood, though all society is designed to mask that fact. The relatives, themselves, spend most of their time trying to forget.

Sad to say, we even lose clarity sometimes about what shore we are on. In *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison reminds us how “the people living in the Great Lakes region are confused by their place on the country’s edge—an edge that is border but not coast.... But those five Great Lakes which the St. Lawrence feeds with memories of the sea are themselves landlocked, in spite of the wandering river that connects them to the Atlantic.... Once the people of the lake region discover this, the longing to leave becomes acute...”

*Song of Solomon* is about this longing to leave, the illusions prompting the journey, the breaks along the way, and the bonding that occurs when the past and present fuse.

turn to p. 20

## Looking For America



# Linda Ronstadt and Willie Tyson reviewed

## The music is the message

by Elayne Rapping

I recently bought two new albums—Linda Ronstadt's *Simple Dreams* and Willie Tyson's *Debutante*—which have two things in common. They're both by, and largely about, women; and they're both really fine. But the similarities end there, for a lot of cultural and political reasons that are worth speculating about.

First, and most obviously, Linda Ronstadt is a name. She's a tremendous commercial success both in concert and on the air. You can hear her music every day on every kind of radio station, from pop to country to progressive rock.

Willie Tyson, on the other hand, is not by any means a household word. Most people have never heard of her and are not likely to. Her reputation, such as it is, exists only among people aware of, and into, what's come to be called "women's culture." She records on an independent label whose name, Wise Women Enterprises, tells it all. She, and the growing number of women artists recording for independent labels, are not going to make the Top 40 or the cover of *Newsweek*. In fact, they'll be doing well if they continue to support themselves by their music.

I think that's a shame because they are not only terrific musicians, but they are also singing about important things. Important, that is, to anyone who takes seriously the changing roles of women (and men) in our society and feels increasingly schizophrenic about the discrepancies between the music we listen to for pleasure, and the things we really feel, talk about and work on in our private and public lives.

Lots of people who like good strong women singers are going to be buying and enjoying *Simple Dreams*. Not so many will buy *Debutante*. And yet, the bulk of the material on both albums is about the same thing—male/female re-

lations gone sour. The biggest difference is that Ronstadt takes a traditional blues-y attitude toward it all. "My man done me wrong and I'm suffering bad. Boo hoo, poor me." I'm not taking this lightly because almost all women have been there some time or other and we can relate to it as a real and serious experience.

### Something Stronger

But, while misery may *love* company, it *needs* something a little stronger. And that's what Willie Tyson provides. In both style and content her songs approach the problem in a far more useful way. No boo-hoos for Willie. Her songs are as biting and angry as Ronstadt's are sad and resigned.

For example, both albums have songs about marriage. Ronstadt sings the traditional "I Never Will Marry" which has an encouraging chorus:

*I never will marry  
I'll be no man's wife  
I expect to live single  
All the days of my life.*

But far from being a statement of the legitimate and positive aspects of living independently, the song is actually about a broken heart that will never heal. Her man just left on the morning train. He doesn't love her anymore. But, while "There's many a change in a young man's heart," there's "never a change in mine."

Now let's listen to Willie Tyson on the theme of love and marriage gone wrong: "Did You Say Love?" starts with "Bridal veils, wedding bells, three-tiered cakes and rice" and ends with "Deterioration, degradation... divorce, remorse, a month in court." You know the story. But between the happy beginning and the sad end is a lot of serious, but very humorous analysis of what went wrong and why. My favorite stanza sums up a lot about the classic male/female relationship:

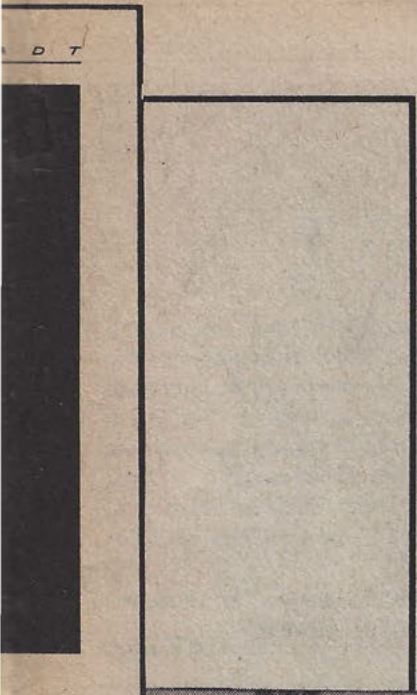
*I call it a tree and call you to see*



*And you call it a bush  
I ask you to help get me off of the shelf  
And you come and give me a push  
Fallin', callin', on my knees and  
crawlin'  
It's relatively easy to see  
When I say love and you say shove  
Why we can't agree.*

Another common subject for Ronstadt and Tyson is the battle of the sexes. In fact, one of the best cuts on each album is about just that. Ronstadt's "Poor, Poor Pitiful Me" actually does have a lot of humor and even anger. It's about a series of encounters with rotten





Tyson's contribution to this common theme is funnier and tougher. It's about a figurative encounter, portrayed in thoroughly military terms, between a man called "big, bad Tank" and a woman described as "a hairpin hand grenade." Here's how Tyson's woman deals with skunks like Ronstadt's Hollywood hero, for example: "But when he let down his guard she kicked him real hard and jumped him like a rubber dart/And with a knowing grin she put her hand on her pin and slid into his metal heart." Pretty heavy stuff, isn't it? Even if it is only a metaphor.

#### Different Blues

Ronstadt and Tyson also do a lot of blues, but again, with big differences. Ronstadt is too often begging men to be nice to her. "Well in some ways I'm like a child," she sings, "but you never seem to know it/And if a kind word ever crossed your mind, you never tried to show it."

Needless to say, that's not Tyson's style at all. Not only is she unconcerned with whether or not she hears a kind male word, she's downright belligerent about seeking male approval:

*Can't make no doughnut  
Can't bake no cherry pie  
And the next man says "Hey, Jelly Roll"*

*Gets the whole damn oven in his eye.*

What fills up the rest of the two albums isn't at all similar. Ronstadt sings classic rock songs by male writers like Buddy Holly and Mick Jagger, and she does them as well as the originals. Tyson, of course, doesn't sing such songs. Instead her album contains several cuts that put women's experiences in a broader social context. The title song, for example, makes an outrageous comparison between the functions of a cattle auction and a debutante ball, with lines like these:

*What am I bid for this well developed kid  
There's not a thought or rotten tooth  
in her head*

*She's a feeder and a breeder and if  
you think you need her  
You can lead her like a milk cow to  
your bed.*

You're not likely to hear that song on AM radio and the reasons are obvious. Pop music stations, for the most part, can deal with women's problems only as long as they're represented in terms of suffering and inevitability. Women have wept and wailed their way to fame in the music industry for decades.

But when you start talking about women standing up for themselves in a militant way, well that's another story. And when you go even further and make fun of the male games that keep women down, then you're really in trouble. Because then you're talking about more than personal suffering. You're talking about a whole cultural and social system that encourages unhealthy power relationships, not just between men and women, but between anyone who happens to have enough power or money to make someone else dependent and therefore subservient.

Since I happen to play my stereo a lot and have a special taste for strong women singers, I look forward to new albums by people like Linda Ronstadt and Loretta Lynn who treat common women's problems in an honest, down to earth way.

But I wish more women knew about and had access to the very different kind of music being produced by women on small labels like Olivia and Wise Women. Because that's the kind of music that goes beyond stating and sympathizing with women's problems to suggest alternative attitudes and solutions. It's the kind of music that can inspire you to change things and help keep you going while you're trying.

*Debutante can be ordered from Wise Women Records, P.O. Box 297, West Station, New York, N.Y. 10014.*

*Elayne Rapping is a member of Pittsburgh NAM. She teaches literature at a local junior college.*

men, the kind we've all known and sometimes loved. The first stanza, for example, is about a Hollywood type who:

*...really worked me over good  
He was a credit to his gender  
He put me through some changes, Lord  
Sort of like a Waring blender,*

But the chorus, which repeats the main theme of the song, takes the bite out of it and brings us back to resignation and self-pity:

*Poor, poor pitiful me...  
Lord have mercy on me  
Woe is me.*



## Work humanization — the greening of capitalism

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### Introduction

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Each month in this section of MOVING ON, we feature analyses of social and economic trends or discussion of political problems in order to help socialists develop a "long view" on the state of American society and the prospects for a socialist movement.

But socialists are not the only ones engaging in such analysis and strategizing. The corporate class also understands the importance of taking the pulse of the people and developing appropriate responses. In their case, however, it is not to the end of eliminating the profit system, but rather of stifling dissent and maintaining the present economic order.

In the 1930's and 40's, in the wake of widespread social protest and with considerable prodding from the federal government, a major segment of the corporations accepted industrial unionism—and many of its demands—and began a new era of employee-management relations. Today, discontent is not as visible or aggressive, but it bubbles fiercely beneath the surface, and it breaks through in the form of worker absenteeism, a decline in productivity, and deep-rooted cynicism. The much-vaunted partnership of American management and labor spawned by that earlier era of protest has proven unable to meet the material or psychological needs of the majority of working people.

As corporate leaders themselves begin to recognize the potentially disruptive effects of this failure, they are also beginning to cast about for solutions. As always, some will simply turn to even more repressive measures. But others,

like the forward-looking capitalists of the 30's, are searching for more effective and long-term measures. It is from their ranks that the new investigation of "work humanization" is coming.

In 1971 Malcolm Denice, then Personnel Director of the Ford Motor Company gave a hand-wringing speech at a national conference of personnel managers. He spoke of the difficulties that Ford and others were having in disciplining young workers. Drugs, absenteeism, and turnover were growing phenomena that made it difficult to maintain productivity. He attributed these problems to a kind of cultural revolution among the working population that had led to growing resentment against meaningless work.

His speech was a signal to middle and top corporate management throughout the country that their problems are no longer simply ones of efficiency, increased costs of labor, or even union organization, but workers' response itself. Prompted by successful experiences with work reorganization at Volvo plants in Sweden and frightened by the militant and lengthy strike at Lordstown, Ohio, a number of corporations began experiments to involve workers in decisions concerning both the pace and the organization of work.

The following article is an edited version of a speech by J.F. Bere, the chief executive officer of Borg-Warner, a multi-national conglomerate, which presents, admittedly in public relations terms, the thinking behind these attempts. We are reprinting it here because we believe that in order for the left to clarify its ideas about challenging American capitalism, we need to be

aware of the "long view" of those who are seeking to preserve it. The Editors

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*Comments by J.F. Bere,  
Chairman and  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Borg-Warner Corporation*

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Corporate management today operates in a world of narrowing autonomy. We are pressed from all sides by the demands of constituencies we must heed, but cannot control. Maybe it's a class action suit, or a crackdown on some aspect of affirmative action. Maybe it's some new ukase from OSHA or the EEOC, or another of the multiplying bureaucracies which create administrative law.

Change is coming; the future casts its shadow. In Japan, Germany, France, Britain and elsewhere in the world, a tide is swelling. That tide brings broader worker participation in management...increased job security...greater attention to health and safety.

We in America live in a society considered to be more free, open and innovative than theirs; should we not respond to these trends with an even wider range of choices?

The trends themselves have already surfaced here...and a few of you have begun to respond. Every year, every month, we hear of new experiments in job security, income security, in restructuring work to make it more rewarding and meaningful. Whether it is a Procter and Gamble plant in Lima, Ohio, or a Firestone pilot plant in North Carolina, both kept under tight security...an Inland Steel in Chicago,



a Johnson's Wax in Wisconsin, a Cummins Engine in Indiana...little by little, the structure is rearing. A brick here, a brick there; a new program begun, or an older one going companywide....

All of us have heard glowing reports from such well-publicized personnel experiments as the Volvo plan in Sweden, and one at General Foods in Topeka. We have also heard of problems that have developed in these plans since those first reports appeared.

By contrast, few of us know much about either the Firestone or Procter and Gamble plans I mentioned. Neither company permits observation or outside reporting of these activities; yet from all we can gather, their successes are not only remarkable but continuing.

What seems to be at work here is the so-called "uncertainty principle": "the mere observation of a process changes the process itself." All the publicity given, all the attention paid to the Volvo and General Foods innovations may have upset the balance of the relationships their success depended on....

Anyway, the prime test is not whether we can create a showcase organization here and there...but whether we can take such concepts past the pilot stage, and suffuse them through the organization; in other words, can we make them work at our established plants as well?...

I could cite many examples of the payoff from such programs—and so, I suspect, could many of you. Let me

tell you just one, from the Accounts Payable office of the Inland Steel East Chicago plant.

That office, paying a third of a billion dollars a year to Inland's vendors, was having trouble with a rising workload, and considering adding more people. Invoices were being handled in five separate processing steps, giving the workers almost no personal involvement. The people were working excessive overtime, there was a rising backlog, and turnover was high.

Inland sent in consultants from the corporate personnel staff, who gathered facts and defined the problem. They trained the local supervisors in job enrichment principles, helping them to redesign the jobs...an effort that also involved the workers in feeding back what worked, and what didn't.

Under the new system that evolved, each worker became more than a clerk, a self-managed administrator, controlling the nature, timing and flow of the work. And they love the change; productivity, in terms of invoices processed, went up by 27 percent; overtime all but disappeared; and turnover declined from 52 percent annually to zero, in a single year!

In our "new industrial society," I believe the chief tenet will be a management policy giving employees much greater job security. Today most businesses are chained to the peaks and val-

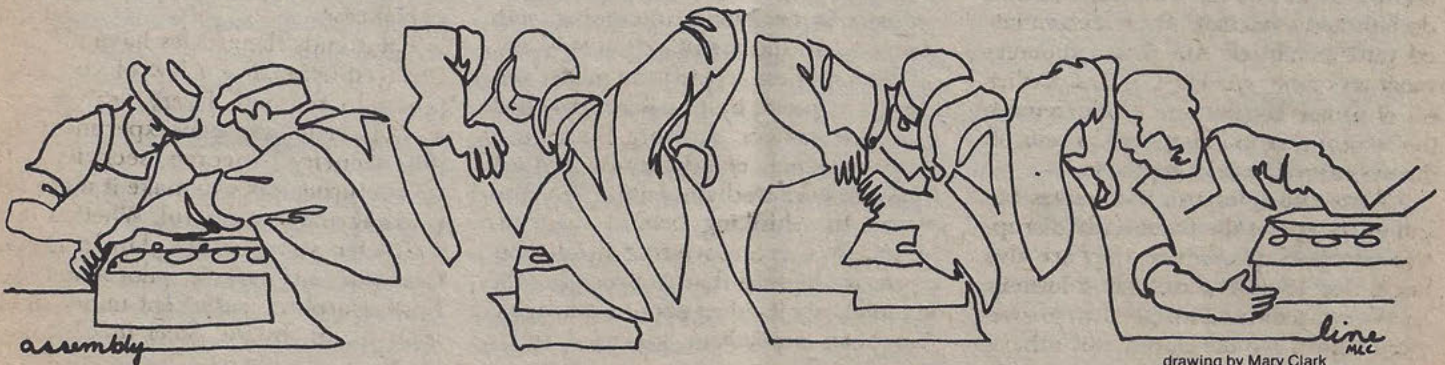
leys of the economy; we tool our organizations for the peaks and lay off people when the valleys come along.

That simply has to change. Job insecurity is a liability; a barrier to innovation, to communication, to mutual trust. It is wrong when, time after time, we have to force people to take vacations, simply because they have no feeling of security. And it's wrong when people take early retirement, and a life of tedium and boredom, when all they really craved was a few months "away from it all."...

Of course, few of us are prepared for the massive changes that job security must bring. Mandatory retirement at 65 is almost a thing of the past—and we're not ready. Pension systems are geared to retirement at age 65; and that has to be changed. At the same time, if people are to spend their whole lives with us, we must provide them with jobs that are in themselves motivating; and obviously we must be more selective in choosing these employees to start with.

Security can exact a cruel price; we'll have to tell people early when they've gone as far as they can, and must adjust to a limited future. We owe them frequent, realistic appraisals, empathic counseling, and a chance for training and self-development.

Together, we must surmount some difficult obstacles—solving as we go,



drawing by Mary Clark





not only the human problems, but new problems of cost accounting, tax policy and labor relations, brought by these solutions. But I am an optimist, and I am willing to stick my neck out and predict these problems will be solved. I'll stick it out even farther and describe to you the kind of industrial society I think we can have before the end of the next decade.

The new society I see ahead will incorporate:

- First, a new kind of cost accounting: One that treats people as the prime asset of the business, and deals with their job security, their income security, their health and welfare, not as a variable cost that is adjustable to the ups and downs of the enterprise, but as a fixed charge of doing business. Improved tax laws will be needed to encourage that practice.

- Second, a steady job and an assured annual wage for every employee. The result will be freedom from fear: from the apprehension that higher output per workers means speedups and lower employment...that an honest mistake can get you fired from your job...and from the dread that the company, which asks for your loyalty, in a crunch will return none of its own. Lifting these psychological burdens can release enormous potentials for innovation and achievement.

- Third, participative management. Our employees, including production workers, will sit on management committees and on boards of directors, and the decisions they live by in the future will be partly their own.

- Fourth, participative ownership. Through profitsharing, and other ways to acquire a stake in the business, employees will have an ownership inter-

est; and, as shareholders, they will strive to increase the take-home pay of all shareholders.

- Fifth, self-renewal. Every employee will be able to leave the job on sabbatical—or what Arjay Miller called “re-potting”—to try that “other kind of thing” that in the past was only a dream ...whether it be deep-sea fishing, having a go at painting or politics, or just getting to know one’s family.

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## No matter how much workers are supposed to participate in deciding how they'll produce and at what rate, there are no plans to give them a voice in deciding what they'll produce.

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- Sixth, a new production partnership. Big business and big labor will no longer be co-abettors of inflation, swapping tacit support of outsize price rises for tacit acceptance of outsize wage hikes. They can become true “partners in production”—jointly harvesting, from increased productivity, real gains both in income and profits, to the benefit of all society.

Government, too, will be part of this cooperative effort, with business, labor and government together achieving social objectives that none of us has accomplished by pulling separately.

- And finally, meaningful work. The need to earn one’s own bread by the sweat of his brow will continue—since good work is always hard work, and not a form of recreation. But that work will be structured to call forth from each individual his or her potential for creativity, for independent judgment and self-management...so work need no longer be that “Monday-through-Friday kind of dying”...but fulfilling in itself, and spiced with the joy of achievement.

In this new society, the Marxist vision of capitalism destroying itself through class war and revolution will be as quaint as the notion that the world is flat, with the sun revolving around it. And yet the change we seek must be a revolution; a second industrial revolution to right the wrongs of the first....

We in this room, friends of the current industrial establishment, are not the only ones discussing revolutionary ideas; not the only ones who recognize the need for change.

Politicians know it; so do labor leaders; anyone attuned to the thinking of working people has to be picking up the signs. We see them in the grievances and issues that come up in every work group, and they are obvious from the opinion polls.

When Arthur White had finished presenting his research data to our managers, he summed it up this way: “This is the profile of a public that wants a change...and the only questions are: what kind of change will it be, and what role will you play in shaping it?” That is the question I would ask of every one of you.

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## Conclusion

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Can it work? And how should we respond to this phenomenon?

To begin, it’s necessary to point out that American management has long been possessive of its prerogatives, preferring to trade off increased wage gains or benefits than to relinquish any



of its authority over the production process itself. It's unclear whether this deeply-ingrained approach could easily be overcome.

In addition, there is considerable doubt as to whether changes of this magnitude could be instituted in a period of economic difficulty for American capitalism. Even in better times, this course would present a bumpy road for corporations. Now, when competition from abroad is getting more fierce and requiring "hard-nosed" business practices, the bumps may become mountainous.

Finally, there is the profound question of whether such a program really could succeed in meeting the needs of working people—both as producers and consumers. Given the problems that are endemic to capitalism the answer must be a resounding no.

No matter how much workers are supposed to participate in deciding how they'll produce and at what rate, there are no plans to give them a voice in deciding *what* they'll produce. They will still be making junk cars, or junk cereals, or junk vaginal deodorants—commodities that do not meet their needs as consumers and that maintain their alienation from the products of their labor.

And what about wages? Bere makes no mention of whether such plans would significantly increase current pay scales (because they wouldn't). Yet most working people today do not make enough to support themselves and their families. And the cost of living continues to rise faster than income. There is little chance that workers would ever be "handed" a big enough voice in corporate affairs to bring about a fundamental redistribution of wealth.

Moreover, it is unlikely that the present corporate structure can maintain its present rate of profit (which it is deeply committed to doing) and meet what would surely be some of the most basic demands of workers—such as a safe and non-toxic work environment.

So far the majority of the left's response to moves toward "work human-

ization" has been understandable but inadequate: it is seen simply as an attempt to coopt workers and get them to produce more. While this is true (and corporate leaders readily admit it), it is not the point. We have to understand that the working class itself will be divided in its response to these plans—and with good reason. For those who must work eight hours a day, five (or six) days a week, the transition to a work-team approach with a collectively-determined schedule may be a vast improvement over the pressures of the machine-appendage nature of the assembly line.

In addition, if worker participation attempts in Europe are any indication, it is likely that the experience can do as much to stimulate class consciousness as it does to coopt it. Workers begin to see and resent their managing of their own exploitation, as none of the fundamental social relations have been altered, and profit is still the final determinant of production.

Certainly there are dangers of cooptation, particularly if unions begin to preach social peace for the good of the corporation or if strikes are squelched in the interests of making the program work. But if traditional union struggles continue and union gains are protected, then we should investigate what new possibilities would be opened up through these plans.

Can we use this new form to expand consciousness and struggle? If corporations want to encourage workers to discuss how to produce, can we introduce questions of whose right it is to decide what to produce? If corporations want workers to discuss their right to control their jobs, can we introduce discussions of the right to a job and challenge capitalist investment policies, runaway shops, plant shut-downs, etc.? Can we use this terrain to discuss how to expand and make real workers' control and self-management? Can we make this latest scheme for labor peace into a Pandora's box from which will emerge the struggle for true workers' control...the struggle for socialism? The Editors

## More Letters

*from p. 2*

nothing to close the unemployment gap which separates black people from whites, women from men, and the "poorly educated" from those with more schooling.

At least three factors combine to keep unemployment rates high. One is the economic stagnation Max describes so well. A second is the rapid decrease in the number of jobs available to those without specialized skills or long years of schooling, leaving many people without work while some jobs go unfilled. The continued discriminatory exclusion of minority and women workers from many kinds of employment is a third important factor.

Max's proposals are designed to counteract the effects of stagnation on the unemployment rate. But they will do relatively little to create jobs for workers who don't have the skills or background employers demand.

A study prepared last year by the Congressional Budget Office showed that general stimulation of the economy for job creation will leave unemployment rates twice as high for blacks as for whites. Even government "make work" programs won't close the gap, unless the jobs are set aside for those who have the hardest time finding private employment: the poor, the long-term unemployed, and people with relatively few years of schooling.

In view of the long history of racism and sexism in building trades employment, construction job creation must be coupled with a strong affirmative action program—including strictly enforced numerical requirements for the employment of women and non-whites—or it will perpetuate inequality.

If we could eliminate all unemployment and all income inequality in one stroke, there would be no reason to include special references to any group in a full employment program. However, under capitalism, moves toward full employment will be piecemeal at best. Because full employment won't be won today or tomorrow, those of us who aim to build a mass movement for socialism must fight now for reforms that will reduce inequal-



# Moving On

NOVEMBER 1977

Immigration politics

Pink collar power

Detroit victory

Campus stirrings



The viability of the electoral arena for socialist mass work depends critically on how it is used. In this case, it was simply not used: NAM members were programmatically indistinguishable from non-socialist campaign workers.

The real work, of course, lies ahead. It is our hope—no doubt shared by Detroit NAM—that now that Cockrel is elected, the real issues can be raised and programs developed. This hope too will be dashed, however, if socialists content themselves with mere self-congratulation rather than assuming political leadership.

Dan Luria and Norm Bowers  
Detroit, MI

Rothschild responds: Many of the statements in Luria and Bowers' letter are either untrue or taken out of context, misleading the reader and creating an erroneous impression of the Cockrel campaign.

First, they charge that the campaign was short on politics. As it turned out, issue development didn't come up to the level many in the campaign had thought it would. But this was because we frequently found ourselves caught between the need to raise issues in a socialist context that could relate to the people we wanted to reach and the constant pressure of the day-to-day campaign tasks simply to reach people at all. (The campaign started from scratch in March.)

And Luria and Bowers' examples are simply untrue. Cockrel's position on unemployment was more developed than simply saying it was "too high." And the statement on "shoddy goods" was made in reference to consumer rights, not inflation.

Second, while it's true that Cockrel's position is against any form of legalizing heroin, Luria and Bowers use quotes of campaign workers at a forum to discuss issues, not Cockrel's analysis or position.

ity and antagonism within the working class.

Max's individual proposals are worthy of support. But some major additions are needed to transform them into an adequate full employment program.

Steve Askin  
Chicago, IL

Dear MO:

We are writing to register our dismay at Tony Rothschild's article "Going the Distance in Detroit" (MOVING ON, Nov. 1977).

We have no argument with Rothschild's claim as to the symbolic importance of Cockrel's victory: the election of a candidate widely identified as a Marxist is good news indeed. Nor are we opposed to participation in electoral politics per se. We also recognize the hard work of many Detroit NAM members in the Cockrel campaign.

But there the accord ends. We too worked in the campaign, and we see Rothschild's uncritical plaudits as politically naive and self-serving. First, the campaign was short on politics. Cockrel's campaign literature, for example, blamed inflation on "shoddy goods"; the position on unemployment was that "unemployment is too high." When we raised these points within the campaign, we were told that "We're in this race to win, not to raise issues."

Second, the issue about which Cockrel "feels particularly strongly"—heroin and drug abuse—was presented as follows: Upon the arrest of a first-offender heroin addict, the addict should be given a choice between turning in his or her dealer and a long prison term. When campaign workers asked why not a pilot heroin maintenance program, we were told that "China got rid of it, so we can too."

Third, Rothschild misrepresents Detroit NAM's relationship to the campaign. Detroit NAM did not participate in the campaign; some of its members did. It was made clear at the start of the race that "people participate in this campaign as individuals only" and that organizational involvement was not allowed.

Fourth, Cockrel's "independent(ce) from the ... Democratic Party and the UAW" was somewhat accidental: he sought their endorsements and was turned down.

Third, there is the issue of NAM's relationship to the campaign. The fact is that NAM was invited as an organization to participate. Our chapter made the decision to participate as individuals, and as an organization where appropriate. I find it odd for Luria and Bowers to interpret NAM's role without ever participating in any of our chapter's discussions.

Fourth, Luria and Bowers criticize the campaign's independence as "accidental." The campaign was always conceived of as a popular front, seeking all support except that of the Detroit Police Officers Association. The

## And more letters

important point is that a socialist candidate won in the face of opposition from the Democratic Party and the UAW—a rare political happening in Detroit.

The real work, of course, lies ahead. It is my hope—no doubt shared by Luria and Bowers—that now that Cockrel is elected, the real issues can be raised and programs developed. (Without his victory this would not be possible.) NAM and other socialists active in the campaign plan to continue to participate in the process of issue development and organization-building—difficult tasks for which no one has yet found a magic formula.

Dear MO:

The article by Dick Flacks in the November issue of MOVING ON was an excellent article and provided a focus on an area which much of the Left has ignored in recent years—campus organizing. Although I think Flacks' article is a step in the right direction, I also see the remnants of an analysis which results in the mystification of students and their role in social change. Flacks' statement that "Students can be particularly effective in catalysing social



action around issues that may be remote from the immediacy of daily life, that embody some technical complexity..." reveals an ignorance of the kind of struggles that have been waged in the last few years on most campuses.

From my own experience, and that of other campus activists I have been in touch with through state-wide coalitions, these struggles have been ones which affect the every-day lives of students. Such issues as cut-backs in financial aid, access to birth control at campus health centers, student and worker control of campus facilities, establishment and expansion of Third World and women studies programs, unionization of graduate students and workers on campus...are ones that students have been organizing around.

We found this to be especially true in our work last spring in the Coalition Against Institutionalized Racism. The demonstrations in Santa Cruz (one which included over a thousand people—students, workers and faculty—and in which 401 people were arrested for sitting-in) was not, as Flack indicates in his article, only around South Africa. It focused on a broad set of demands which included racist policies in allocation of funds to Third World studies and admission procedures. It would be a mistake for socialists to assume that students will not work on day-to-day kinds of issues, but are only concerned with more abstract issues.

Tootie Ackerman  
Santa Cruz, CA

Dear MO:

Steve Max's article "Priming the Pump" (MOVING ON, Dec. 1977) makes important points about the effects of unemployment, which I fully agree with. But his analysis of the causes of unemployment strikes me as incomplete. Max writes that the "basic weakness built into our type of economy" is that "working people never get paid enough to buy everything they produce." Therefore "the ability of the population to consume always lags behind the ability of the economy to produce," leading to overproduction, stagnation and unemployment.

In all economic systems, socialist ones included, working people aren't paid enough to buy everything they produce. Part of what's produced must be set aside

for new investment in new machinery, for instance. The real question is: Will the amount that workers consume, plus the amount that capitalists choose to invest, equal the total amount the economy



can produce? If not, then there will be stagnation and unemployment. The basic weakness of our economy is that capitalists control production and investment on the basis of private profit, not human need. This affects both how much is produced (usually not enough to keep everyone working) and what is produced (often the wrong things for any purpose except profit).

There are at least three major types of capitalist crises that lead to massive unemployment. In the classic Marxist "falling rate of profit" crisis, capitalists are investing all the money they can get their hands on, but the cost of new investments, which they are forced by competition to make, is rising faster than the amount of profit they can extract from the workers. Therefore, profit as a percent of total capital invested is declining, and eventually capitalists will cut back production because it is no longer profitable enough, leading to a crisis.

In the underconsumptionist theory, implicitly adopted by Max, capitalists don't want to invest nearly as much money as they could, because the low level of workers' consumption doesn't

justify investment in expanding production. The government steps in to absorb the excess production in unproductive areas such as military spending, but the government can't go on taking up all the slack forever, and the private sector's tendency toward underconsumption (and underinvestment) keeps reappearing.

Finally, in the wage squeeze theory, even a period of near-full employment leads to crisis and unemployment. With relatively few people unemployed, there is less competition for jobs, and employed workers can win bigger wage gains than capitalists want to give, cutting into profits. As profit rates drop, capitalists will cut back production, throwing people out of work and increasing competition for jobs, which limits further wage gains.

Each of these types of crisis has appeared at different times in the history of capitalism. The common thread in all types of crisis is not underconsumption, but rather the fickleness of capitalists' profit-based production and investment decisions.

This analysis leads to different political conclusions than Max reaches, as well. Full employment requires social control over investment decisions; a legislative program for solving the economic crisis should address investment as well as employment issues. While not on this year's congressional agenda, some measures to control investment are possible under capitalism—Sweden has experimented with incentives for companies that set the timing and geographical location of new investments according to government priorities, and penalties for those that don't. Similar proposals for the U.S. should accompany a full employment program.

We might as well be clear about such questions, and gain whatever advantages there are in clarity, since any of our legislative proposals are going to have very limited influence in Washington in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, our ideas about restructuring the economy are going to play only a quasi-utopian role, until the left and the mass movement are much stronger: at best we can convince people that we have a coherent plan for how to run things. Attempts to do more than that, on central economic issues, will lead only to gutless wonders like the final version of



## And more...

the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. The Vietnamese didn't start with an attack on Saigon, and there is no reason to think that we can start with an attack on capitalist control of production, investment and employment decisions.

Frank Ackerman  
Somerville, MA

Dear MO:

After reading Barbara Ehrenreich's analysis of the anti-feminist movement (MOVING ON, Dec. 1977), I decided I shouldn't miss any more of MOVING ON—so here's \$5 for a subscription. Please continue to print analyses as clear as hers! Also, I'd like to see articles on how lesbian feminism and socialist feminism

can influence and include one another, and on the importance of women's culture.

Aimee Sands  
Somerville, MA

## Gay legislators

from p. 4

A poll taken by a Chicago newspaper, *Gay Life*, showed gays to be overwhelmingly liberal, with three percent declaring themselves "concerned socialists." So far gay candidates have run mostly within the framework of the Democratic Party, with traditionally liberal stances. In the absence of a large so-

cialist movement, it is hard to expect more, especially since gays are already fighting one entrenched set of prejudices. Yet socialists should not dismiss gay candidates as merely reformist; the gay movement represents an important force on the left of the American political spectrum. Gay candidates with generally progressive politics should be supported now. Much has happened in the few years since gay rights surfaced as a political issue. But there is still much to be done before gay politics becomes an accepted and respected part of the American political scene.

*Christine Riddiough is a member of the Blazing Star Women's Chapter of NAM and chairperson of the Chicago Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights.*

## Song of Solomon

from p. 11

The process of liberating the past in the present is the *Song of Solomon*. The book asks the questions: What survives, and who? By what means and on what terms? It takes the oldest mythic memory among African peoples in diaspora—freedom in flight—and gives it shape through the story of one family, women and men alike. It traces the development of narrow acquisitiveness among black folk who resort to the methods of the thieves who originally stole from them; the desperation of those who can only even the score by keeping the black/white death ratio in balance. But most significantly, *Song of Solomon* indicates the continuation and the morality of those who survive by refusing to get caught up in the immediate chaos, whose lives trace a larger arc, and for whom the only unnatural things in the world are the ways we come to die before our time.

Those who are used to evaluating family chronicles in terms of "success" and "failure" will find *Song of Solomon* un-

satisfying. It approaches a much deeper issue: self-knowledge. How do we find the "stuff we are made of?" Stripped of stylish clothes, cars, money, property, titles, even name—every legal tender this society equates with legitimacy—how is an "I" fashioned, a "we" recognized, a home created, freedom gained? Starting out marked for death, how do we live?

In this sense, *Song of Solomon* is a mystery. And, as in life, the answer is right before us, once the veils of convention are scaled from our eyes, the roar of social static cleared from our ears, the phlegm of small-talk dissolved in our throats. As familiar as the one tree, year after year, that continues to bear fruit; the abandoned dog that continues to find its way home; the coming of spring; the truth emerges, against all odds. Miraculously.

Although *Song of Solomon* is firmly rooted in history, opening precisely at 3 pm, Wednesday, the 18th of February, 1931, it does not shy away from miracles. Indeed, it is about everything and everyone that history books deny. It is about the promise of flight in the middle of the Depression, the power of the powerless, the humor forged in denial. The life of the Dead family, the dark side of the moon, the underground knowledge

and actions of black folk who, by all rights, ought to be long gone.

*Song of Solomon* is about the black men who take flight and the black women who take root. It is about the possibility of creating our own plane of existence in spite of all that is designed to drag us down or pull us up from where we want to be.

Though incredible, it is nonetheless fitting that *Song of Solomon* is the first novel by a black writer to be chosen as a Book of the Month Club selection since Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. It is the complement to that story, attaining an equilibrium in its telling that Richard Wright never knew in his life or work; that few, if any, black men are permitted once their existence is recognized as a threat to the prevailing order. *Song of Solomon*, without being didactic, is a teaching book; without being theoretical, is a political book; without being doctrinaire, is true to certain fundamental principles. Once we read it, the significance of how we live our own lives becomes clearer.

*Michelle Russell is an author and longtime Detroit political activist.*



# NAM perspective

There are few questions more difficult than that of how this vast, contradictory, and complex capitalist society can be transformed into a socialist America. But there are enough indications—both that the present socio-economic structure cannot meet people's needs and that discontent with its failings is growing—to confirm the conviction that it can be done.

While the socialist movement is yet too small and narrowly based to project precisely the course that such a transformation will take, it is possible to suggest some general directions. Looking at the history of our country and at its current situation, we see certain steps that can help to build a movement that will be more representative and more capable of affecting power relationships.

We find ourselves in a nation with a strong tradition of *formal* democracy, but little practice of *active* democracy. From the time we are in the first grade, we learn of electing presidents and vice-presidents.

Yet we have no experience throughout our lives of being active participants, involved in choosing who will be the candidates or insuring that they are accountable to our needs once elected. We live in a political system that has many of the trappings of democracy—but lacks the substance. It is intimately related to the economic structure that concentrates wealth, power, and decision-making in the hands of an elite few, while discouraging the involvement of the majority of its citizens.

There have been exceptional periods like the 1930's or '60's when activism flared in forms that acted not just on legislators, but on corporate leaders as well, that affected not just specific laws, but the entire quality of how we as a nation lived and worked. Such direct action is vital. The development of a socialist movement will require that new life be breathed into the democratic commitments that are part of this country's heritage.

The 1970's have been a time of declining expectations, of confusion and withdrawal. Yet even today there are attempts to foster active democracy that builds the power of working people: in the women's movement, in community organizations, among elements within the labor movement, and by certain progressives in the electoral arena. These are important developments for socialists to analyze, learn from, and participate in. They provide experiences that can lead those in-

volved to see that their efforts to gain greater control over their lives are incompatible with the control of our country by capital. And they give practice in evolving a decision-making process that really does inform and involve people—the kind of process that a socialist America will have to make a reality for all its citizens.

A socialist movement will only succeed in the United States if a majority of people support its goals—and many of them are willing to work to achieve them. It will have to involve people who work in industry, making all the products that we use, in a central role. But in a complex society like ours, many other groups must be included as well: office workers, teachers, technical workers, housewives. And it will have to involve the poor, those who have been shut out of the economy altogether.

Finally, it is not sufficient simply to say that it will have to include women and minorities. In order for this to happen, the socialist movement must have a deep commitment to overcoming all racial prejudice and discrimination. And it must be feminist as well, in the sense that it works for the full liberation of women.

We need a public socialist movement that can break down the legacy of anti-communism that still burdens our country. Working people need to meet up with socialists in their own lives—socialists who are active with

them on the job or in the neighborhoods. And these socialists need a public organization that advocates their politics, so that they can point to something larger than themselves when they talk about what they believe. A large public socialist organization has to become as much a fixed part of the American scene as the NOW or the NAACP. Its ideas, hopes, and demands, have to become what people read in newspapers, and eventually what gets debated in legislatures.

There are no blueprints for this future. And while we can learn from the experiences of those in other countries, there are no models for us either. An American socialist movement will have to chart its own course based on our own unique history and conditions. It is a future that cannot be created without dedication, vision, and hard work. But it is not simply a dream. It is a practical and realizable alternative—really the only alternative—to the present inhumane social order.

NAM Political Committee





# NAM News

**SOUTHERN AFRICA** In December, the University of Oregon became the first state university system in the country to agree to divest itself of stock in corporations that invest in Southern Africa. The campaign was spearheaded by People for Southern African Freedom, a student group at the University of Oregon at Eugene that includes members of **Willamette Valley NAM**.

It began last spring with demonstrations against recruiters from corporations with Southern African investments. The group persuaded the student government to hold a referendum, and the campus voted 5 to 1 against the recruiters and for the University divesting itself of the stocks. The student government then began to work on the issue.

The State Board of Education studied the matter all summer; by October its finance committee was recommending keeping the stocks. People for Southern African Freedom and the student government organized a lobbying effort. At the Board's monthly meeting in December, 30 students, faculty members, administrators and clergy testified against the investments. NAM member Bruce Bowers gave testimony. He told the Board that revelations such as those about ITT in Chile show that corporations can't be trusted to act in a progressive way on their own. Only popular pressure will force them to stop supporting racist governments, he said. Bowers said the most persuasive testimony of the meeting was given by Tamiz Lambiso, representative to the UN from the African National Congress.

The campaign brought campus blacks and whites together in coalition for the first time in recent memory. "Some people think you can't influence a body like the State Board. But with hard work and good testimony, you can be listened to," says Bowers.

The final outcome, however, is still in doubt. Groups upset by the board's ruling have found a state law, unenforced in the past, which says the State Board can't set policy on the University system's investments. The Board has asked the state Attorney General for an opinion.

**SHUTOFFS** "How Many People Will Freeze to Death This Winter?" asked Lansing Energy Action Project at a press conference launching a petition drive to stop shutoffs by Consumers Power Company. Nelson Brown, member of LEAP and of **Red Cedar Valley NAM**, told reporters, "The bedrock proposition is that nobody should have utilities shut off in winter. A minimum level of utility services is a fundamental right."

The group hopes to generate enough pressure through petitions and publicity to persuade the Public Service Commission to stop all shutoffs this winter.

**BUFFALO ENERGY** Buffalo, New York's People's Power Coalition (PPC) won some concessions from National Fuel

Gas on their shutoff policy in December. Members of **Buffalo NAM** are part of the coalition.

Coalition actions against the gas company resulted in the Public Service Commission investigating the company's method of cutting off gas service. They found the PPC's charges were correct: that National Fuel Gas was so understaffed that people who received shutoff notices could not get through when they tried to phone the company and that shutoffs were being done in an arbitrary and slipshod manner. Further, the company's accounting was so far behind that many people who had paid their bills had their gas shut off anyway.

The PSC ruled the company must hire 20% more staff to see that payments are credited, phones answered, and people who are threatened with shutoffs are notified personally. They failed to rule on the coalition's demand that a moratorium on shutoffs be granted until warmer weather.

**NUCLEAR POWER** When 200 protesters were arrested for civil disobedience at the Trojan nuclear power plant in Rainer, Oregon last fall, their trials threatened to swamp the Columbia County court system. The protesters, members of the Trojan Decommissioning Alliance, were asked to agree to a mass trial. They did, but only if they could present testimony on the dangers of nuclear power.

Under an Oregon law, a person may break the law if by doing so she/he commits "the lesser of two evils." The volunteer National Lawyers Guild legal team, which included a NAM member, Bev Stein, presented a week of expert testimony, arguing that nuclear power is an "imminent danger" to human life and therefore a greater evil than trespassing. The trial was widely publicized, becoming a week-long forum on the dangers of nuclear power.

At the close of the testimony, the judge instructed the jury to ignore all references to nuclear power and rule only on the trespassing charge. The defense then pointed out that the protest was not on Portland General Electric property as charged, but on nearby railroad property. On December 16, the jury acquitted the protesters, including members of **Willamette Valley NAM** and **Portland NAM**. Afterwards jurors told the press they were annoyed at not being able to make the nuclear danger issue part of their decision. The railroad property argument apparently gave them the technicality they needed to render the verdict they wanted to give.

**WOMEN ORGANIZE** "Violence Against Women: Towards A Socialist Strategy" was the theme of a conference sponsored by **East Bay NAM** December 10. The conference brought together 300 people, mostly women working on anti-rape, battered women and other anti-violence projects.

Speakers included Angela Davis, who traced the roots of violence against women in the U.S. to violence by white



men against black women, and Ellen Reier, a NAM member who stressed that socialists should become part of the movement against violence against women. Pat Lumas, from Women Against Violence and Pornography in the Media, said that what distinguishes her group from right wing forces opposing pornography is her group's concern for the question of the power relations reflected in porn.

The conference resulted in the formation of a network of Bay Area groups, including several minority women's groups, who work against violence against women.

**RENT CONTROL** The Santa Barbara NAM chapter has helped organize the local Rent Control Alliance, which gathered over 8,000 signatures to place a rent control ordinance before the voters in June, 1978. The Alliance's literature states, "What's more important? The rights of a few

people to unlimited super profits, or every person's right to a decent affordable home?"

The Rent Control Alliance has brought together young people and senior citizens. The Alliance has also been working on developing ties with the Black and Chicano communities of Santa Barbara.

**COMMUNITY CENTER** The Worker's Community Center, a project of Chico NAM, provides resources and services for working people and the progressive/feminist/socialist community in Chico, California. Staffed by volunteers, the center includes a bookstore, library and meeting rooms.

Meetings, classes and films take place almost every night. Winter socialist classes include Feminist Thought and "Socialist Analysis of Energy Conservation from Garbage." A children's hour is held every Saturday. Projects such as strike support for Coors workers are also headquartered there.

## What is NAM?

The **New American Movement** is a nationwide organization of socialists in nearly forty chapters. It is committed to organizing a majority movement for a social and economic system that is thoroughly democratic, in which the wealth and resources of the nation are publicly owned and democratically controlled by all Americans, in which the decisions which shape our lives are decentralized and coordinated in a way that permits us all to have control over them. Membership in **NAM** is open to anyone who agrees with its basic principles.

**New American Movement**

## We've moved!

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# Moving On

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT

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