

Newsletter of

# THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT

May 1977—Vol. V, No. 5



Edited by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

## A vision of what a city could be

by PETE HAMILL

*The following is an excerpt from remarks before the March New York Labor Forum.*

We are a rich city. If we were to get money from the federal government in the same ratio that Southern California gets it, we would have \$30 billion a year with which to deal decently with our citizens, repair our streets, clear our slums, house and feed our poor, and above all, create jobs for our jobless.

But we are not asking for double the money. We are asking for a decent break. I don't want this son of a bitch Michael Blumenthal telling us that "there is to be no free lunch" when the money he is loaning us, at extortionate interest rates, is money that belongs to us, that was created by the labor of New Yorkers, that was sent with almost no murmur to the federal government to keep their massive macho act going. I especially don't want Blumenthal lecturing us at all about anything, since he is the man who closed the Bendix plant in Long Island City several years ago, costing us 400 jobs. Blumenthal didn't want to pay Americans in this city \$2.50 an hour, so he closed the plant in 1972. And left town. And didn't even stop in the South, which is where they usually go to make their money. He kept going all the way to San Luis Potosí, Mexico where he is now paying—or his successors are now paying—workers 40 cents an hour to do what Americans once did. So we should tell Mr. Blumenthal to watch what the hell he says. That we find his words pretty god-damned cynical and insulting. We should remind him that it was people like him, in search of the almighty buck, who created the seeds of our crisis years ago. The people who caused the illness should not really be allowed to prescribe its solution.

But more than that, I believe the unions should begin to formulate their own plans for this city. They obviously cannot wait for the politicians to do so. And the union plan should be forged and constructed before this year's elections, so that no candidate can run for office without either endorsing the plan or opposing it.

Such a plan must include certain minimum requirement:

- An insistence that the federal government invest in the creation of goods-producing jobs in this city. This can be done in combine with private enterprise. But if it is, then to the extent that the Feds invest, the workers must own the companies. That is, if the Feds

put up half the money for the creation of a new business in this city, then the workers in that business must truly own half of that business. They must share in the company's decisions, they must help decide on the social use of what that company produces, and they must share in the profits that are made possible only by their labor.

- An insistence on the part of working people that something real be done about welfare and unemployment. As it stands now, welfare is the greatest subsidy to business ever devised in Washington. While pretending to be dealing with human misery, welfare is actually enriching the people who run grocery stores and supermarkets, the people who supply those stores, and the people who own property in slums. Remember, the unions in this country—through their pension funds

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## Gandhians win Gandhis are ousted

by STANLEY PLASTRIK

"The forthcoming poll constitutes the most crucial election that the country has had since Independence. The choice before the electorate is clear. It is a choice between freedom and slavery; between democracy and dictatorship; between abdicating the power of the people or asserting it; between the Gandhian path and the way that has led many nations down the precipice of dictatorship. . . ."

—Janata Party Election Manifesto

As further details of India's Sixth National General Election come in, the magnitude of the victory of the forces of democracy and socialism grows. The Janata (People's) Party has scored the most impressive electoral victory of any movement in recent history. An elemental tidal wave from below, representing the combined strength of at least 100 million voters, swept Indira Gandhi, her authoritarian regime and the Congress Party out of office, to be replaced by a broad coalition of democratic and socialist forces with a mandate to end at once the so-called Emergency, restore all previous democratic rights and institutions, and go forward with a new deal for the people of India. This is

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## India . . .

(Continued from page 1)

democracy's greatest triumph in many years; the jails of India have opened wide to release thousands of political prisoners held for almost two years; the Prime Ministership, seat of governing power, is occupied by the man whom Gandhi kept in solitary confinement for 19 months; she and her obnoxious son, Sanjay, have been retired from political life.

Hovering over the victorious scene is the heroic and noble figure of Jayaprakash Narayan (J.P.), the *lok naik*, or People's Hero, and the architect of the movement. Not only did he initiate the struggle three years ago when he assumed leadership of the Bihar University students' movement against corruption and violence in the schools, not only did he suffer imprisonment and the wrath of Gandhi's denunciations, not only did he continue the struggle—sick and aging—after his release from prison, but he was the one leader who most clearly saw the issues and kept his confidence and faith that India's masses, despite the capitulation and surrender of the country's intellectuals and educated class, would rise to the occasion if given the opportunity. J. P. understood that, contrary to Western opinion and the skepticism of the Indian elite, the roots of democracy had worked their way deep into Indian soil. The vast, overwhelmingly illiterate and poor electorate displayed an amazingly high degree of sophistication; the villagers, workers and urban lower classes did care and did distinguish between parties and regimes. One of the major safeguards for the future development of the Janata program is the active participation of J.P. both in the formation of the new government and, to the limit of his physical ability, in his intended watchdog role in seeing that the program is carried out.

Gandhi and her entourage proved to be inept strategists, completely miscalculating their situation and proving their growing isolation from the nation. Her ever-narrowing base of support obliged her to turn to the electorate for a show of support, a renewal of her legitimacy. She had in mind a *plebiscite* in support of her authoritarian rule, not an authentic election. But once the process had begun, with the calling of the election, a flood-tide of revulsion, opposition, resentment, criticism and a powerful urge for the restoration of democracy took the movement completely out of her hands. She realized this, as her frantic running-about in the last week of the election indicated. But it was too late. The electoral commission indicated it would be a fair election, the teachers who form the presiding officials at the election polls indicated they would tolerate no cheating; Mrs. Gandhi's fate was sealed by the fact that the roots of political democracy were alive.

Our gratitude as socialists and democrats to the Indian people for their magnificent showing is increased when we compare this event with the election in neighboring Pakistan, or China's struggle over the succession to Chairman Mao. In Pakistan, Ali Bhutto rigged and stole an election, plunging the country into internal violence; in China, the successorship struggle began 10 years ago, continues to this day and takes place in

a complete void and with the silence of the Chinese people. In India, by contrast, a hated regime has been vanquished in an avalanche of paper ballots; mobilization of the Opposition assured a totally fair election; and the transfer of power to the choice of the people has taken place without a single reported incidence of violence. With all its notorious faults, what greater vindication can there be for the democratic path?

To be sure, the future is uncertain and the problems of India remain unresolved. In this vast country politics is the politics of poverty. The test of the party in power is its ability to deliver the goods to the people; in Mahatma Gandhi's words, "to feed the hungry and clothe the naked." The Janata Party must now meet that test. The new regime, made up of disparate elements with serious ideological and political disagreements, is off to a shaky beginning, but this is hardly surprising. Still, its component groups have already proven their ability to work together, not only in the election campaign but in the formulation of a broad program and approach to the nation's problems, as indicated in its lengthy election manifesto. If it will launch one-tenth of the proposals made in this document, the new government will be off to a dramatic and progressive start involving enforcement of land redistribution, a decrease in the mass unemployment rate, devolution of political and administrative power to smaller units in accord with Mahatma Gandhi's principles. If mass pressures develop in the form of strikes, peasant movements, etc., this all to the good (although Western intellectuals will point the finger and talk of a descent into "chaos"). It will indicate the people are tasting their victory and are eager to move forward.

Finally, one must hope that India's relations with the Carter Administration will show a marked improvement over past relations between the two countries. This victory for Indian democracy ought to be right up our President's alley! Not only will the Indira special relation with the Russians be dropped in favor of new attention to the West, but the events in India fit right into the orientation that Mr. Carter has been working to bring about in this country's policies. The State Department ought to drop its past coolness and considered indifference toward India in favor of open sympathy and an attitude of helpfulness. □

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# Full employment vital to elderly

by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

DENVER—I made belated contact with an extremely important social movement at the conference of the Western Gerontological Society here at the end of March. I had, of course, known about Senior Citizen activism before, and I had shared a microphone with some Gray Panthers during a teach-in organized by Harry Chapin last year. This was, however, the first time I got a sense of the movement as a movement and I was deeply impressed. Here, it seemed to me, was a very important constituency for a full employment coalition which is the pre-condition of all political progress in this country.

The Western Gerontological Society is not an organization composed solely of the aging. It includes professionals of all ages and young graduate students, as well as older people. But a significant portion of the 3000 people who gathered in the Ballroom of the Denver Hilton were over 65. More pertinently, there was a distinct "movement" atmosphere.

Gray Panthers from Denver had picketed before the meeting began, protesting that the entrance fee was too high for older citizens. The leadership of the organization had agreed to work out a different payment schedule for future conferences. And there was vigorous discussion from the floor. Speaker after speaker challenged the concept of compulsory retirement at 65; others questioned my advocacy of senior citizen participation with the labor movement in a full employment coalition on the grounds that unions were committed to pushing older workers out of the labor market. One woman wanted to know how the society defined "work," i.e., was vigorous volunteer action by an older person excluded from the definition?

These were only a few of the comments. I cite them to give a brief impression of the vitality which permeated the proceedings, emanating from the Senior Citizens more than from anyone else.

In preparing my own presentation, I had realized that the professionals in attendance were better informed than I on the physiological, psychological and specific legislative aspects of aging in America. I sought to contribute to the proceedings by putting the problem in the context of the economy. There were, as I will note, some criticisms of what I said but on the whole the reception was extremely enthusiastic, a fact that has political significance.

## Subsidize people, not illness

I began by taking up a theme familiar to readers of the NEWSLETTER: the vicious, and inaccurate, attack on the welfare state launched by Nixon under the slogan that the 1960s "threw money at problems." In addition to debunking that notion in general I pointed out that fully two-thirds of the welfare state monies go to the aging, primarily in the form of social security and Medicare. Therefore I argued, that the Senior Citizens have a particular stake in refuting Nixon's pernicious myth.

A related point dealt with the recent attempt of the

Congressional Budget Office to define poverty out of existence by counting the cash value of in-kind services, priced at their cost to the federal government, as per-

## From CAUSE to campaign

This spring, a socialist may well be elected to the California State Legislature.

Burt Wilson, chair of the Los Angeles chapter of DSOC, is a Democratic candidate for the California Assembly from the 46th District. The seat was recently vacated when incumbent Charles Warren resigned to become chair of Carter's Council of Environmental Quality (one of Carter's best appointments).

Burt goes into the campaign with a good chance to become the first democratic socialist in the Legislature since God knows when. His credentials are impressive: he's the man who beat the phone company, the gas company, the oil company. As a consumer advocate working with groups like CAUSE (the Campaign Against Utility Service Exploitation), Burt has publicized such outrageous deals as the ARCO-SoCal Gas prepayment arrangement (which would have meant a monthly surcharge on all LA residents' gas bills for the next half-decade—see the NEWSLETTER, January and March, 1976), the phone company's directory assistance charge (you need thirteen phonebooks not to need directory assistance in LA), and the phone company's practice of giving out unlisted numbers to 250 governmental agencies—and the publicity he directed at these arrangements had the effect of terminating all of them.

As a result of his work in these struggles, Burt goes into this campaign as the best known of the candidates. The 46th is a working-class district which elects liberal Democrats, and Burt is campaigning on bread-and-butter issues. His program is one of increased public control of investment: a state bank, publicly-controlled insurance and oil and gas companies, public ownership of utilities. He already has the endorsement of the Campaign for Economic Democracy, an organization which emerged from the Hayden campaign, and some union support is likely.

The primary is scheduled for May 24 (not May 31, as was previously announced to some California DSOCers), with the runoff set for June 21. Those who would like to help with their time or their money—either or both of which would be put to good and immediate use—can appear at, or make out their checks to:

The Burt Wilson Assembly Campaign  
3708 Beverly Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90004  
(Phone 213-383-0203)

sonal income for those who receive them. Under such a definition, I noted, an impoverished aging person entitled to Medicare, who suffered a long terminal illness, could enter the middle class because of that fact, which is patent nonsense. And it was important to realize, I continued, that a good portion of Washington's medical outlays for older people are precisely for terminal illnesses. So this society often provides dignity for its citizens in their very last moment on the earth, but leaves them to lonely, inadequately supported "golden years" prior to that.

On this count, one of the panelists, Arthur Flemming, the U.S. Commissioner on Aging (and a member of the Civil Rights Commission) agreed emphatically.

More broadly, I argued that full employment was not only necessary to the funding of programs for the aging, but was required if this society is not to move toward generational conflicts in the coming years. In all likelihood the demographic patterns at the end of this century will see the proportion of the aging increasing while the relative number of the younger and middle aged population declines. This means that there must be full and productive employment if a proportionately smaller work force is going to provide income and other forms of security for the senior citizens.

This problem is exacerbated by the reactionary way in which Social Security is financed. We stick by our Bismarckian myth of an "insurance" program, refusing to recognize that it is the output of the working generations which determines our ability to provide adequate care for the aging. Moreover, Social Security taxes, one of the most regressive forms of taxation, account for an increasing portion of Federal revenues. They were 3½ percent of the total in 1947; they are 25 percent now. At the same time, during the past decade the corporate tax percentage has gone down in tandem with the Social Security rise. As a result, there are severe political limits on Social Security because of its reactionary mode of financing.

#### A coalition for full employment

The aging movement, I continued, thus has a stake in income redistribution through tax reform as well as in full employment. On both counts, the senior citizens should be part of a broad coalition which aims at achieving full employment by, among other policies, introducing social priorities into the tax system.

There was, as I noted, considerable enthusiasm for my point of view. Arthur Flemming endorsed the general thrust of my remarks; so did Ollie Randall, a militant woman in her eighties who has been a leading spirit in the movement for some time. But there were some disagreements, both from the panel and the audience, and they centered on the issue of compulsory retirement. Dr. Carl Eisdorfer, a psychiatrist from the University of Washington, raised the tactical issue of whether the aging could be part of a coalition with unionists who tended to favor early retirement as a means of creating more jobs for the young. And speakers from the floor made it very clear that one of the most important discontents among the senior citizens has to do with this issue.

In dealing with the question I tried to convey some sense of its complexity. On the tactical level, I noted that every constituency in the coalition should retain its specific identity and fight for its own special program. At the same time, one had to realize that none of the goals of any of the constituencies—labor, the minorities, women, youth as well as the aging—could be fully realized within an economy of chronic high joblessness, and that no one group was able to carry out a relatively radical full employment program by itself. The senior citizens should not surrender their concerns over compulsory retirement to enter the coalition, but should see the coalition as creating the conditions in which those concerns can be resolved.

Secondly, I argued that the issue should not be posed as an either-or: *either* compulsory retirement *or* having people work as they are physically able. In the Auto Workers and other unions older members have often come to the conclusion that the best solution to the problem of alienation in the factory is to get out of it as soon as possible with full retirement benefits. That, I commented, was an entirely progressive demand. At the same time, there were obviously others who wanted the option of working well past 65.

Finally, in response to the question about the nature of work, activities which are not now defined as "work"—various volunteer efforts, for instance—should be given status. The point, I concluded, was to create choices for people over 65, not to force them into or out of a job. And that, again, is only possible if there is genuine full employment. □

## Vision of the city...

(Continued from page 1)

and their labor—are now the linchpin of American capitalism. Those of us who want to transform American capitalism must insist that the key to the transformation is work. So the unions should insist that the government and the corporations must begin to expand the industrial goods-producing capacity of this country, sharing the wealth produced by that expansion with the people who make it possible—the workers.

As the first, and minimal step, the unions must insist on the nationalization of welfare. Perhaps if we redistributed poverty, the next step would be the redistribution of income. Once that Sun Belt had to start paying for this nation's poverty in a fair ratio perhaps everybody in every city and state in the nation would begin to work towards ridding us of poverty—once and for all.

● An absolute and total crackdown on the multinational corporations. In this city, outfits like General Motors, Texaco, Mobil and dozens of others have begun to move out of the city, the way so many other sections of their empires have moved out of the country. I think they must be told that when they move they must pay the price. First, they must compensate the workers they left behind under formulas set down in the law. Full salary for every year of lost employment to age 65 might be a good start. Second, they must be brought

under greater pressure by the unions who have pension money invested in their stocks. If any pension fund has money in an outfit like General Motors, they should immediately withdraw that money and invest it with companies that are more socially responsible. Third, unions must begin to use the boycott weapon. They must do what Cesar Chavez did to the grape growers: boycott all Mobil stations, make people feel they are committing crimes—which they are—if they buy automobiles made by General Motors (who is closing its Manhattan showrooms) or washing machines from Bendix. I believe that if any company pulls jobs out of this poor wounded city, that company is a cruel institution. And working people have the right to hurt the bastards back, with whatever non-violent weapon is available.

- The Mayor must commit himself to the creation of an Urban Homestead Act, funded by the Feds, which would allow us to begin the desperate task of holding on to the housing we do have and making it habitable. Years ago, the government gave farms to farmers under the terms of the Homestead Act. An Urban Homestead Act would give apartments to New Yorkers. Those buildings which are starting to decay would be given to the people who live in them, reorganized as cooperatives, given technical assistance on maintenance problems, given grants for what is now called sweat equity, and assured of subsidy in the event that fuel costs go beyond the means of the new owners to pay.

- A program, called equal time for equal crime. This would mean an insistence that people with white collars who commit crimes should do the same kind of prison time as people with blue collars. We have seen case after case, from Lockheed to Penn Central, of hoodlums with nice shiny Protestant faces committing crimes and not paying the price for those crimes. A desperate man from a slum robs a grocery store and goes to Attica. Richard Nixon heists the Constitution and goes into retirement in a palatial estate in California, where he can play golf with Moe Annenberg's son. But there on the golf course, or in the editorial board meetings of the *New York Times*, they can grumble that a sanitation man's pension is too large. That is, a man who has spent his life at dirty, difficult work, making the city cleaner and healthier than it would be without him. But the sanitation man, who committed no crime, measures his pension in four figures. Richard Nixon is getting \$150,000 a year. The values implicit in those numbers are what I am talking about. I think the people who work the hardest, at the jobs nobody else wants, should get paid the highest. I think a fireman or a sanitation man contributes more to society than a corporation lawyer. And if we are ever to make this a nation of justice and true prosperity, we must work a lot harder at reminding people of the truth of that statement.

#### **A city that vibrates with life**

These are specific ideas. I am neither a politician nor an economist, so I can give you no details about the specifics. Perhaps after free, democratic debate such ideas might prove unworkable. But as a democratic

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## *Capital quotes*

“Businessmen aren't exactly wild about Jimmy, and the Carter Administration can't quite understand it. Administration officials troop around the country assuring business groups that they do, indeed, mean well: that they are, too, worried about the slow pace of business investment; that they are, too, concerned about inflation. . . .

The fact that the Administration is concerned about business sentiments is itself somewhat reassuring. Mr. Carter, moreover, has taken several steps that might be expected to improve business-government relations.

A. Gary Shilling, director of the White Weld Economic Services, commented recently that the President has appointed mostly people with managerial experience to Cabinet level positions. . . .

The Carter Administration has, moreover, shown itself to be less than totally subservient to organized labor, a development that must be rather heartening to businessmen. . . .

It wasn't exactly inspiring to hear that Labor Secretary Ray Marshall had early been considered for the job of top economist of the AFL-CIO.”

*Wall Street Journal*, April 12

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socialist, I believe that all of us, those who work on newspapers and those of us who work at tougher jobs, must join to forge a vision of this society. I want no grim Eastern European dictatorship. I want a city that vibrates with life, a city whose citizens are free of drugs and dissolution, a city where the rats and roaches have finally been defeated, where working men can listen to Beethoven and their children can listen to Elton John. I want a city where every young girl can dream of growing up to be President of the United States—or even better, Mayor of New York. I want a city whose waterfront bustles with commerce and hard labor, a city where privilege has been eliminated along with The Mob. I want a city where flowers bloom in the spring on the rooftops of working class homes. I want a city where the schools open the brains of children to the precise glories of mathematics, the extraordinary power of an English sentence, where the tale of New York is told in its glory, and where you could also learn about the Count of Monte Cristo and Eugene V. Debs. I want a city that is multi-racial, where salsa mixes with Irish reels, and a street is named for Charlie Parker, where black kids learn about Jewish poverty and Jewish kids learn about black roots. I want a city full of noise, and tumult, and peace and serenity, a city where there are more libraries than junkies' shooting galleries, a city free of welfare and humiliation, a city of proud and strong men and women, who know they live in a place where there is social justice, and a racetrack too.

That city is possible. That city can be made on the ruins of the old New York. All it takes is will, and hope, and courage, and heart. And you, the working people of this city, must lead the way. Let's do it. □

## Socialist notes . . .

NOTABLE ADDITIONS to our membership rolls. For the first time in more than 50 years, a member of a democratic socialist organization sits in the United States Congress. Ron Dellums, the black Representative from Oakland, California, recently joined DSOC. He had previously described himself publicly as a democratic socialist, but this is the first time he or any other member of Congress has joined a socialist organization. So far as we know, the last socialist to sit in Congress was Meyer London of New York City, who was defeated for re-election in 1926 by a Republican named Fiorello LaGuardia. Dellums is not the only luminary to sign up recently. Others include: feminist editor Gloria Steinem; Ed Donahue, vice president of the Graphic Arts International Union; Patrick Gorman, chair of the board of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters union; and former Representative Charles Porter of Eugene, Oregon . . .

OUTREACH: Our Washington D.C. comrades are organizing successfully in and around the Capital area. Local activities planned and held include a public meeting featuring author Michael McCoby (*The Gamesman*), a forum on "Is There a Democratic Left in Congress?", a labor luncheon featuring incoming UAW President Doug Fraser, and a May Day picnic. With Alex Spinrad doing much of the coordinating, too. Prospects are bright for student-faculty chapters at the University of Maryland and George Washington U. The newly-chartered Virginia local has done some fund-raising, is working on building up a Charlottesville group and is planning a state-wide conference this month . . . Our metropolitan Boston chapter is reaching out to help organizers in other areas of New England. Activists in Springfield, Mass. and Nashua, N.H. held recent organizing meetings with speakers from Boston DSOC. At the urging of Vermonter Bill Kemsley, the Boston Local is organizing a speakers' bureau to serve the region. This summer New England DSOC will be holding a region-wide "socialist weekend" . . . In the Midwest, organizing opportunities in Dekalb, Ill.; Madison, Wisconsin and Chicago are keeping Midwest organizer Harlan Baker busy . . .

DINNERS: The biggest DSOC event since our February convention occurred in Dallas, Texas on March 18. Socialist activists there, led by Gray McBride and Dwight Norris, organized a testimonial for the grand old man of almost every progressive cause in Texas, Carl Brannin. More than 400 people came to honor the former Socialist Party gubernatorial candidate, staunch supporter of Texas labor, founder of the Texas Civil Liberties Union and active Unitarian. The City Council declared "Carl Brannin Appreciation Day" in honor of the 88-year-old activist. The elan and the atmosphere impressed guest speaker Mike Harrington who kept busy during his short stay with two campus appearances, the dinner and an address before the Central Labor Council . . . Of course, the two traditional

DSOC dinners are coming soon in Chicago on May 1 and in New York on June 2. Meatcutters V.P. and black trade union leader, Charles Hayes, will be honored at the Chicago dinner, and DSOC National Board member Robert Lekachman will be the guest speaker. More information on that dinner is available from Carl Shier, PO Box 59422, Chicago, Ill. 60659. In New York, Martin Gerber, director of UAW Region 9 and candidate for UAW vice-president, will receive this year's award from new UAW President Doug Fraser. Gloria Steinem, another new member of the DSOC National Board, will be the guest speaker. More information on the dinner is available from Frank Ilewellyn, 853 Broadway, Room 617, NYC 10003.

HERE AND THERE: San Francisco Bay Area DSOC is publishing a pamphlet on politics, labor relations and the city crisis in S.F. It's been written by member/novelist Larry Swaim, a postal workers' activist and member of the local DSOC executive committee . . . Massachusetts socialists are planning to work for a strong full employment plank in the state Democratic platform this year . . . DSOC Vice Chair Carl Shier made news in Chicago wearing one of his different organizational hats. The Chicago *Sun-Times* picked up his statement on negotiated disarmament made on behalf of the Midwest World Without War Council . . . Oregon and Texas were recently visited by national officers as National Chair Mike Harrington hit Portland and Eugene on a West Coast visit, and National Secretary Jack Clark went to Houston and Dallas. In May, Harrington will visit with socialists in British Columbia and meet with many DSOC members at the UAW convention in Los Angeles.

SAVE THE DATES: November 12 and 13. That's when we'll hold "The Democratic Agenda" conference in Washington, D.C. We're meeting a year after Carter's election to demand full employment and to help, if necessary, push the Carter Administration in fulfilling the Democratic Platform commitments. Watch the NEWSLETTER for further details.

MORE RESOURCE: "The Capitolist," the excellent bulletin of the Washington, D.C. area DSOC, is available by writing Washington DSOC, 1901 Wyoming Ave., Washington, D.C. 20009 . . . And for those interested in socialist education, newly-elected National Board member George Wood has pulled together a task force to prepare study guides, bibliographies, articles and other materials for socialist education. For more information, write directly to George Wood, 1212 W. Springfield Ave., Urbana, Ill. 61801.

RELIGIOUS SOCIALISTS will meet in Chicago June 11. Midwest organizer Harlan Baker is helping to pull the conference together, and Rosemary Ruether and James Will, both noted theologians, are acting as the steering committee for the conference. More information is available from Chicago DSOC, PO Box 59422, Chicago, Ill. 60659.

# Two journals seek broader left audience

by FRED SIEGAL

Two new left-wing journals, *In These Times* and *Seven Days*, have begun publication in recent months. Both face the problem of how to retain the audiences of the now defunct *Ramparts* and the rapidly fading *Liberation* and also attract a new and wider readership.

*In These Times*, which began publication in November, '76, is a 24 page weekly published in Chicago under James Weinstein's editorship. Its strategy for holding the committed leftist audience and attracting new readers has been to create a jargon-free and basically non-sectarian journal.

Avowedly democratic and socialist in orientation, the paper's editorials have focused on the problem faced by socialists trying to influence electoral politics. The editors, who have begun a colloquy with DSOC on this crucial subject, have argued strongly against socialist participation in Presidential as opposed to Congressional and local politics. The editors have argued that while the post-election Presidency is necessarily beholden to the corporate powers for their cooperation in making "effective" government possible, Congressional and local offices may be susceptible to the kind of popular influences which can act as a counterbalance to the power of big business. The paper has provided excellent coverage of local and national politics, including features on Sam Brown and the Madison mayoralty race.

The other major focus of the journal has been its extended and sympathetic, though critical, coverage of labor and union affairs. Issue number four (Dec. 6-12) contained five articles on labor affairs, including a lengthy survey of union attitudes towards wage and price controls which was a section of an eight part series on the unions written by David Moberg. In recent issues there have been followup articles which have tried to analyze the reasons for Ed Sadlowski's defeat.

The journal's weaknesses have been in its cultural affairs section which often reads as if it were edited by at 1930s proletarian realist, and its uneven coverage of foreign affairs. The coverage of England by Mervyn Jones and Kenneth Coates, and of the U.S.S.R., Eastern Europe and the dissidents by Louis Menashe has been interesting, but the writing on the Middle East has revealed a kind of petrified mentality generally absent from the paper. The articles on the Middle East have emphasized alleged Zionist original sin without even re-evaluating PLO claims in the harsh light of the war in Lebanon and the current intra-Arab squabbles. Consequently, the articles have the quality of a chess game with only one player.

While *In these Times* has attempted to expand the audience for left wing journalism by in general reevaluating the New Left's stances in light of past failures and changed circumstances, *Seven Days'* strategy has been to extend its appeal through stylistic innovations. These innovations are designed, in the magazine's own words, to make *Seven Days* a competitor of *Time* and *Newsweek*. Despite its name it appears bi-weekly. Like its putative competitors, it tries to present lively, fast

paced stories, often clearly coded with good guys and bad guys.

Throughout the magazine there is an uneasy balance between presenting stories from a hard hitting "radical" perspective and delving into the complexities of the situations being described. Thus while *Seven Days* has featured broad coverage of and support for liberation movements in Africa, the editors have been unwilling to criticize Field Marshall Amin. A piece on Entebbe, by regular columnist Noam Chomsky had little to say about Amin but argued that the real issue in the raid was Israeli racism, not Palestinian terrorism. Similarly a recent article on Uganda argued that the British and the Israelis are truly to blame for Uganda's current problems, while skirting Amin's reign of terror. In columns and articles, the readily personalizable and genuinely ominous Trilateral Commission threatens to become the magazine's all purpose bogeyman. The one major story on Eastern European dissidents dealt with them only briefly and moved on to discuss the Tri-lateral group.

*Seven Days'* umbilical tie to the halcyon days of the '60s is seen clearly in its domestic coverage. Major attention was devoted to the Weather Underground, but labor receives scant coverage except for some superficial reporting on the Sadlowski campaign. Electoral politics similarly gets short shrift. On the positive side the magazines cultural section has been lively, and the articles by Eric Foner on how "Roots" fits into the tradition of Heroic nobility was perhaps the most interesting of the published commentaries on that TV special.

There is certainly a need for left-wing journals which reach out beyond the tried and true readerships, but whether *Seven Days* is able to fill that bill may well depend on its ability to learn something from the people it's trying to attract—union members, voters, and ordinary Americans too politically sophisticated for radical slick magazines. □

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# Jimmy Higgins reports . . .

THE WELFARE MESS YOU HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS, or at least until the end of the second Carter term. So said Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Henry Aaron in a meeting with members of Congress last month. Aaron told the group that while the President might espouse some general principles for welfare reform soon, no changes with substantial budgetary impact should be expected before fiscal year 1986, possibly fiscal 1985. Any real reform will cost the federal government some money (have substantial budgetary impact). So the Administration elected by poor people and working people, by city dwellers and residents of the most financially-beleaguered states, is telling us all to make do. New York City can continue spending \$1.1 billion out of its own treasury each year. Or it and other financially-pressed cities and states can pursue more cutbacks, greater austerity and punitive measures against the poor. Who knows? It might even improve their business climates.

**IN THE WAKE OF THE DEFEAT OF SITUS PICKETING and successive Carter Administration rebuffs on the minimum wage and trade policy, there's a new tone of militance coming from the Meany leadership of the AFL-CIO. In early April, for instance, Lane Kirkland, AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer and Meany's heir-apparent, issued the following statement: "When the Republicans are in, business wins because it owns the party. When the Democrats are in, business wins because it extracts the price of 'business confidence.' That price usually includes the sacrifice of the main elements of the Democratic platform and of labor's program." And in response to the aggressive campaign by the National Right to Work Committee (NRTWC) against situs picketing, "Memo from COPE," the federation's political action newsletter, published a special issue exposing links among the NRTWC, corporations and far-Right organizations like the John Birch Society. A new labor legislative program is being developed, and Meany is pushing affiliated unions and state and central labor councils to become actively involved in fighting for it. Some unionists and many friends of labor were privately critical of the AFL-CIO's choice of situs picketing, which**

**they called a narrow trade union issue, as the top legislative priority. Better to lead with the broadest possible social program, they argued, and thus present labor as a broad public interest lobby, not another "special interest."**

**MEANWHILE THERE ARE SOME CHANGES coming internally. After the situs picketing defeat, there was widespread talk in the labor movement and even in the daily press about bad legislative leadership. There will be some additions to the Federation lobbying staff and a greater push for involvement by a wide cross-section of the trade union movement in lobbying activities. The political action arm, COPE, is losing its status as a department in the federation as its staff is merged with the organizing department. The head of that department, Alan Kistler, is reportedly gaining strength and prestige within the Federation. With the political action apparatus under his command, Kistler should gain further. Considering his recent comments on organizing the unorganized in the Sunbelt and among white collar workers, Kistler's rise could well mark new vitality around AFL-CIO headquarters.**

**LIBERAL UNIONISTS LIKE THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH last year's Labor Coalition effort have been less critical of the Carter Administration than, for example, Lane Kirkland has been. But that is not necessarily a sign that all is well between the White House and those unions which backed Carter early. Two of the largest liberal unions, the Machinists and the UAW, are in the midst of changing leaderships. It's generally conceded that William Winpinger and Doug Fraser are to the left of Floyd Smith and Leonard Woodcock, the presidents they'll replace. Another of the liberal unionists, Jerry Wurf from AFSCME, has been absorbed by a fight with a different Georgia politician, Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, who fired union sanitation workers instead of bargaining with them. *The Wall Street Journal* has characterized Carter's policies as a moderate Republican program. If that continues to be the direction of his Administration, Carter could find himself facing fierce—and united—labor opposition.**

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