

OCT 6 1978

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DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY USA

by Bob Schwarz

The present Socialist Party USA is descended from the break-up of U.S. social democracy in 1972. The old Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation (SP-SDF), lead by Michael Harrington, Max Shachtman, Bayard Rustin, etc., split into two major groups reflecting differences within the labor bureaucracy over whom to back in the 1972 Democratic Party presidential primaries.

A third group called the Debs Caucus existed in the SP-SDF throughout the late sixties. It seems to have been based mostly on the "radical pacifist" section of the party, including figures like Dave McReynolds of the War Resisters League, who opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Many of them participated as individuals in the anti-war movement. In Wisconsin, which was their base, leaders like former Milwaukee mayor Frank Zeidler supported and spoke at local anti-war demonstrations.

When the SP-SDF split the Debs Caucus decided to reconstitute itself as the SP and began reorganizing, picking up disgruntled former members here and there who had dropped away as the SP-SDF became more and more openly right-wing under the pressure of the radicalization of the sixties.

During the first few years the new SP seems to have been based on the old-timers and had several hundred members. Its national office and conventions were in Milwaukee, which seemed to be the only real, active base.

In 1976 this began to change, as a result both of the increased interest in socialism and their decision to run a presidential ticket of Zeidler and Quinn Brisben, a Chicago school teacher.

Their campaign was quite limited, as compared not only to our own but to the CP's and even the SLP's. They had no regular newspaper, issued very little campaign literature, were only able to have a few people on full time in Milwaukee and got on the ballot in only a handful of states.

But they did make some gains. Out of the ballot work in Iowa a few people were recruited in the Iowa City area, leading to the formation of a local of 15-20. They recruited a few people in a number of areas. They also benefited from the disintegration of petty-bourgeois electoral formations like the Peace and Freedom Party. When the Michigan Human Rights Party split, with its major leader Zolton Ferency and those around him going into DSOC and the Democratic Party, a small group of radicals in Ann Arbor joined the Socialist Party. Their 1977 convention reflected this increased recruitment of serious,

SP/2

radical-minded young people, although the convention was still dominated by old-time social democrats.

At the same time SWP branches and YSA chapters began to come into contact and work with individuals and groups from the SP. In some cases these were people who had been in for some time but were affected by the radicalization. For example, one member of the group in New York managed to get a motion passed endorsing the SWP campaign of Garza for Mayor in 1977.

In Morgantown, when our comrades moved there and began doing miners support work at the West Virginia University campus in late 1977, they were able to work closely with the small SP local which already had campus recognition and established contacts in the radical milieu. This group was quite new, recruited in the previous year by a new member who transferred to the university after joining the SP on another campus.

In Ann Arbor the YSA chapter has worked with the SP local on anti-nuclear, anti-Bakke and anti-apartheid work. Comrades there report that relations with this group are quite good and that YSAers have been able to have discussions with their members and win them over on some points, even attending a few of their meetings. They are considering endorsing our Michigan campaign (they are not running candidates of their own) although a resolution from a previous SP convention forbids working with any group classified as "totalitarian".

Our longest and most consistent contact with the SP has been in Milwaukee. We have sent observers to all of their conventions. One or more younger members of the Milwaukee SP has worked in coalitions with us since at least 1975 on issues including defense of a victim of a racist frameup, abortion rights defense, support for desegregation and affirmative action and opposition to apartheid.

Beginning in early 1977 the Milwaukee group seemed to get more active and young members and leaders and the old guard around Zeidler was less and less apparent. They worked closely with us on the Soweto tour and demonstration initiated by NSCAR. In August, 1977, the SP initiated and played a central role in a coalition to organize counter demonstrations at several Nazi anti-busing rallies. The political character of these was somewhat confused but the SPers played a generally positive role and we were able to work with them to some extent.

Following this we continued to work closely with them and were able to have increased discussion, first at a forum we sponsored on the fusion with the RMC, then at a forum they sponsored with In These Times editor James Weinstein which they urged us to attend, and at several social events we organized.

The SP also showed signs of more serious organization. Their newspaper the Socialist Tribune began coming out more regularly (though this has stopped since the faction fight heated up) and it carried such articles as a friendly report of the Marroquin case, an article lauding Hugo Blanco, and an article on the Mideast that cited Intercontinental Press as a source.

For several years we had been unable to get the SP to respond to requests for endorsement of our suit against government spying. At their 1977 convention they finally passed a resolution of support. (Interestingly enough this was before we had established much contact with what emerged as the left wing.) When Hector Marroquin was first threatened with deportation their national secretary became one of the early endorsers and got a resolution of support through their next National Committee meeting.

At their Wisconsin state convention earlier in 1978 we began to get a picture of the faction situation inside the SP. Led by some of the people we had been working with in Milwaukee, a group emerged that challenged the old social democratic and pacifist politics of the Zeidler leadership. While they were out-mobilized by the more conservative elements, they clearly had a strong base in Milwaukee and support in Racine. (The SP has at-large members and one other local in Madison.)

Following the state convention the Milwaukee SWP decided to recommend that we give critical support to the campaign for Wisconsin State Senate of Joel Miller. Miller is the central figure in the radical group we had been working with and the person we had had most contact with.

This use of the tactic of critical support has proved useful in increasing discussion and collaboration with this section of the SP. The branch began by discussions with Miller and others in his campaign committee about the initial draft of a program they had put out and their campaign plans, trying to find opportunities for joint campaign activities. They also began to press SP members on supporting our candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. While we had extensive discussions on our disagreements with their platform, our statement of support emphasized our agreement on the need for independent political action against the capitalist parties and noted that our campaigns have different programs on various issues.

As a result of this work the people around Miller, and especially Miller himself, seem to have moved closer to us. The printed platform is a considerable improvement incorporating many of our criticisms. At least two Saturdays of joint door-to-door campaigning, distributing both SWP and SP platforms, have already been carried out and others are planned. While the Milwaukee group says they tried unsuccessfully to get their state executive committee to endorse our campaign, Miller has

publically identified himself with our campaign in several meetings. An SP representative spoke at the ACLU news conference announcing our suit for equal time in some League of Women Voters "debates". However, we have been unable to get any SP members to attend either the 1978 or 1977 Oberlin conferences.

At Miller's urging we sent observers to the SP convention this past August. This convention was held in Iowa City, the first time they have been strong enough to hold a convention outside Milwaukee. Approximately 80 SPers attended (all were allowed to vote), many of them from the midwest although some came from Florida, Texas, California and New York.

The SP claims a membership of more than 600, though only half are listed as having paid 1978 dues. It appears that their active membership is not over 200, concentrated in Ann Arbor, Milwaukee, Racine, Madison, Iowa City, Los Angeles, New York City, and Florida. Virtually all their members are white. Probably less than half are women.

Their organized groups in other cities seem quite small, although they do list a few members in quite a few other states. The membership sheet passed out at the convention indicates a growth of about 100 each year since 1976, but it does not indicate turnover and only gives those who paid their dues for 1978. It appears that the Morgantown group is no longer very active.

In most areas their activity is quite limited. The exceptions are areas composed totally or primarily of young members recruited in the past two years. These include the areas where we have worked with them as well as Iowa City, where they have fielded a full slate of candidates for state office, gathering several thousand signatures to get ballot status. In discussions with us at the SP convention the people from Iowa City said they would like to have SWP speakers come to their campaign events and wanted to arrange to put some of our books and pamphlets on their campaign tables.

At the convention Miller issued a leaflet calling for "reconstitution of the Debs Caucus" around a left-wing program. About 20-25 people seemed to identify with this caucus from Milwaukee, Racine, Ann Arbor, and New York. The people from Iowa City seemed neutral but at least some were probably inclined toward the Debs Caucus.

Two issues generated most discussion at the convention. One was the adoption of a new statement of principles and the other was whether or not to withdraw their application to join the Second International. DSOC and SDUSA already belong.

By a narrow margin the convention voted to withdraw the application and ask for observer status instead. While some who voted for this simply wanted more flexibility in dealing with "left" social democratic parties outside the S.I., people from the Debs Caucus denounced it as a betrayer of revolutions and listed many of its past and present crimes.

In the debate over a new statement of principles three documents were presented. One defended the standard "third-camp" apology for imperialism. The other two, both by members of the Ann Arbor local and the Debs Caucus, offered more radical alternatives. Most people, even the more conservative, and the platform of the Debs Caucus, supported or were willing to go along with a compromise document which tried to be as vague as possible but talk about class struggle and revolution as one possibility.

The other document, identified by its author as "leninist", was a schematic restatement of ideas contained in the Communist Manifesto and Transitional Program. It argued for the SP to become democratic-centralist and said a socialist revolution had to be lead by a vanguard party. At one point in the debate its author called himself "a Leninist and a Trotskyist".

All three of the documents and the discussion were quite abstract. No attempt was made to address or connect the documents with the important questions of the day like the ERA, the coal strike, union democracy, independent working class political action, affirmative action or the struggle against apartheid. The platform of the Debs Caucus, which calls for SP involvement in many of these struggles, is much more concrete.

From that point of view this discussion could have taken place ten or fifteen years ago. The important point is that it didn't. Although many of these people do not understand how to translate their involvement in the class struggle into a programmatic discussion, they are moving fairly rapidly to the left and are open to our ideas. At this point the Debs Caucus is a very heterogenous group. Miller claims they have a majority of the active SPers. But it is hardly likely they can win a majority if the Zeidler leadership puts up a fight. But at this convention the Debs Caucus feels they won a substantial victory and they are convinced they can transform the SP. If we are to influence their development we have to proceed with this in mind.

The August convention narrowly avoided a split. It is clear that a section of the Zeidler group wants a purge. Another, delegated convention, "at least 500 miles from Milwaukee", is to be held in May 1979. The next eight months will thus be a period of intense discussion and a good time for us to talk with some of these SPers.

There are several measures we can take. We should publicize this development in our own ranks and encourage the kind of initiatives taken by comrades in Morgantown, Ann Arbor, and Milwaukee. It is likely that one or two individuals holding this point of view exist in other SP locals.

We should also continue to publicize results of this work, such as the campaign in Milwaukee, in the Militant. We might write about their Iowa campaign, perhaps in the context of a

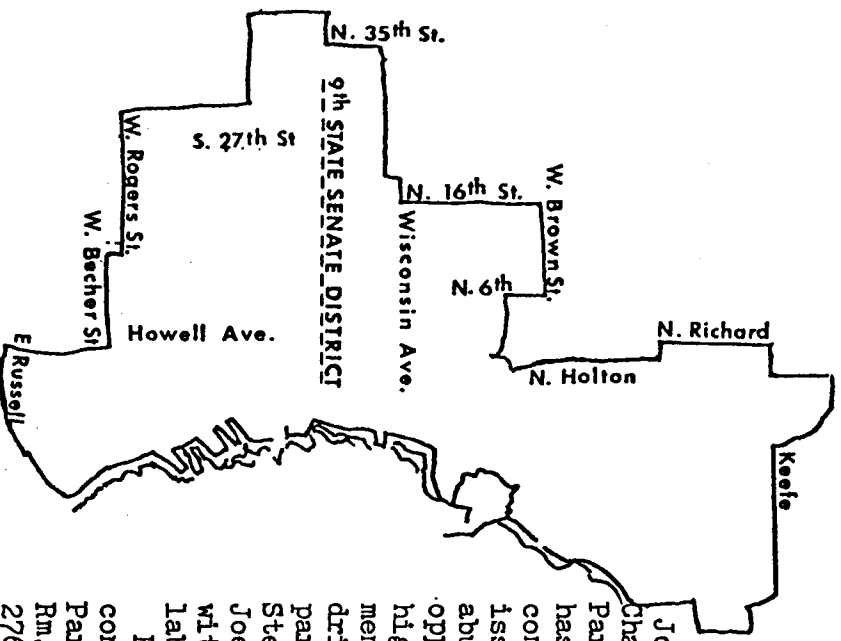
SP/6

trip there by a Wisconsin candidate.

We could also make special arrangements to help them get literature from Pathfinder Press. Both the Ann Arbor and Iowa City groups expressed interest in carrying some of our literature but would have trouble making payment in advance.

Note: I am attaching copies of the final platform put out by the Miller campaign, the platform of the Debs Caucus at the SP convention, and a reading list sent to us recently by the Ann Arbor YSA. It is identified as being from the Debs Caucus, though it may only reflect the Ann Arbor group.

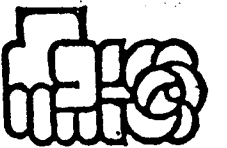
- Aprobación en el nivel estatal de derechos iguales.
- Acceso igual a servicios médicos a pesar de raza, clase, edad, y sexo. Esto incluye el derecho de mujeres pobres a abortos.
- Reconocimiento de los derechos de obreros sin documentación. Acabar con el acoso de obreros sin documentación.
- Reconocimiento de la soberanía de los nativos americanos.
- Integración igual de las escuelas públicas de Milwaukee bajo un proyecto "parear y agrupar." Educación bi-lingüe/bi-cultural.
- Termina acasamenta de policía de los latinos, negros, y homosexuales.
- No acremiento de imposición de contribuciones de posesiones, no reducción de servicios. Adopta programa Socialista de "necesidades humanas".
- Parada de construcción y uso de facilidades nucleares en el estado.



Joel A. Miller is chair of the Socialist Party of Milwaukee. He has been an outspoken community leader on such issues as sterilization abuse, minority rights, opposing the Nazis, and high taxes. As a former member of the taxi-driver's union and a participant in the J.P. Stevens boycott effort, Joel has become familiar with the problems of labor and working people. For more information contact the Socialist Party at 135 W. Wells, Rm. 325, Milwaukee. Call 276-0773.

JOEL A.

MILLER



**STATE SENATE
9th DISTRICT**



**VOTE
SOCIALIST**

None of the other candidates for State Senate in the Ninth District call for real solutions to the problems of our community. These are the problems of unemployment, inflation, high taxes, cut-backs in education and social services, and threats to the rights of women, labor, minorities, and gay people. Instead of addressing these and other problems, the other candidates either refuse to take meaningful stands or they seek to patch up the system so that it will work better for the corporations, the banks, and the government that have created these problems in the first place.

The Socialist Party challenges the corporations, banks, and government through its local, state, and national programs of community, labor, feminist, and minority mobilization. Socialists aim to take over the capitalist system and replace it with a democratic system of worker's control, through worker's councils in their industries, labor union democracy, and community organizations, cooperating to provide for human needs instead of the profits of private interests.

By electing Joel A. Miller, you will directly help in the struggle for socialism in Milwaukee and throughout the state. Joel and the Socialists welcome your involvement in the campaign and in the work of the Socialist Party.

AUTH. AND PAID FOR BY THE SOCIALIST FOR STATE SENATE COMMITTEE
NICHOLAS TOPPING, CHAIRPERSON / MARC SANDERS, TREASURER





Joel speaking
out against
Nazism and
racism.
September, 1977
Jackson Park

SOCIALISTS SUPPORT a program that is anti-racist, pro-feminist, socialist and democratic.

- Control of run-away shops through state and national legislation. State ownership and worker management of abandoned plants.
- 30 hour work-week for 40 hours pay, to help solve the unemployment problem.
- Public ownership and worker-consumer management of the energy, telephone, waste management, and rail industries, as well as the banking and credit institutions.
- End to sterilization abuse, practiced against poor and minority women.
- No increase in property taxes, no cutbacks in social services through adoption of Socialist "human needs" program.
- Expansion of affirmative action efforts in employment and education. No discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or sexual orientation in employment, education, or housing.
- Recognition of the rights of undocumented workers. End the harassment of undocumented workers.
- End the police harassment of the Latin, black, and gay communities.
- Equal integration of Milwaukee's schools under a "pairing and clustering" plan. Bi-lingual/bi-cultural education.
- Halt the construction and operation of all nuclear power facilities in the state.

- Recognition of Native American sovereignty.
- Passage of a state Equal Rights Amendment.
- Expanded state-funded daycare facilities for working parents.
- Equal access to medical care without regard to race, sex, age, or class. Including the right of poor women to abortions.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY JOEL AND THE SOCIALISTS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AREAS NOT COVERED IN THIS BRIEF LEAFLET, PLEASE CONTACT JOEL AND THE SOCIALIST PARTY.



Joel exchanging
views with for-
mer Milwaukee
Mayor Frank P.
Zeidler.
November, 1977
Terre Haute, Ind.

Lo que Joel y los Socialistas representan:

- Controlar las fábricas que se van de la región por medio de leyes en el nivel estatal tan bien como en el nacional. El derecho del estado de tomar posesión de fábricas abandonadas, las que los obreros dirigen.
- La ampliación de esfuerzos "acción afirmativa" en el empleo y en la educación a base de raza, sexo ni preferencia sexual, cuando se trata de conseguir empleo, domicilio o educación.
- Una semana de trabajo de 30 horas por el pago de 40, para ayudar en resolver el problema de cesantía.
- Las industrias de energía, teléfonos, y ferrocarriles tan bien como las instituciones de crédito y los bancos estarán en posesión del público y dirigidos por los obreros y los consumidores.
- Poner fin a los abusos de esterilización, practicados contra las mujeres pobres y las de minoría.
- Ampliación de facilidades para cuidar de los niños cuyas madres trabajan durante el día. Esto con fondos suministrados por el estado.

A CALL TO RECONSTITUTE THE DEBS CAUCUS

By

Joel Asa Miller

Socialist Party (Milwaukee)

September 1, 1978

Since re-constitution in 1973, the Socialist Party has consistently failed to establish a concrete and unambiguous set of organizational, political, and strategic principles to guide its work in the process of bringing about socialism. Consequently, the party has become an amalgamation of different socialist and non-socialist ideologies. This has resulted in diffuse and mediocre work in many diverse areas. The S.P. has shown that it can only temporarily attract a few people new to socialism, only to loose those people to other groups on the left or to capitalist politics as a result of the frustration with the ineffectiveness of the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party must recognize the mistakes of the past five years and rectify them. Through this process we must emerge a revolutionary party. That is a party that can effectively respond to the political situation by injecting itself into the class struggle especially when the grip of the capitalist class gets tighter around the throats of the working and oppressed classes. Generally speaking, we need an activist party that understands how to participate effectively in class struggle, that avoids sectarianism and ultra-leftism through direct involvement in mass struggles, in communities, and in elections. Additionally, we need a party that has a high level of internal education and discussion as well as criticism of mistakes that will inevitably be made in the course of socialist agitation.

It is clear that under the form the party is taking at the present time, and with the majority of the leadership of the party, we are only treading water. At best we are a parlor club of socialists and at worst a paper organization. To remedy this problem, we propose the reconstitution of the Eugene V. Debs Caucus.

Principles of the Debs Caucus

The original Debs Caucus was organized in the pre-1973 (old) Socialist Party as a means to fight the class collaborationists who either supported or acquiesced to U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, and who felt that an effective socialist movement can develop within the framework of capitalist political parties. The Debs Caucus played a progressive role in the old party and was the core of the new one. Once again it is time to push the stagnating party forward, to remedy old mistakes, and to build a strong, united, "class struggle" Socialist Party.

The following are proposed as principles of unity for the Debs Caucus:

1) We support a revised draft of Comrade Carroll's document on "Party Principles".

2) The S.P. should be directly involved in mass struggles for labor, feminism, and against sexism and racism. We recognize both that these are the three prime areas of attack by the capitalist class, and that

our efforts in these areas have been dismally poor.

3) We recognize that U.S. imperialism is the dominant world system and the greatest threat to world peace and self-determination. We reject both Comrade Zeidler's contention that the U.S.S.R. is the greatest threat to self-determination and world peace as well as Comrade Kissell's assertion that both U.S. imperialism and the foreign practices of the U.S.S.R. are equally "evil" and both should be equally opposed. We feel that both positions are anachronistic and are objectively complicit with U.S. imperialism.

4) We support real internal democracy in the S.P. The constant assertion by many of the social-democrats and other non-Marxist Socialists that they are the only ones who can engage in democratic practice only illustrates the contradictions in their ideology. We propose an anti-red baiting provision to the Constitution of the Socialist Party, U.S.A., repeal of the vicious, red baiting document called "Totalitarianism on the Left" authored by Virgil J. Vogel at the 1975 National Convention. We believe in free uninhibited discussion of anything that comrades want to discuss including Leninism, leadership mistakes, etc. Furthermore, we recognize the rights of Leninists to function as full members of the S.P.

5) We propose that the membership pledge be re-written to ban membership in capitalist political parties, to commit members to activism, and to their long term involvement in all areas of party work.

6) We give unqualified support to National Secretary Spiro and recognize his outstanding organizational talent and the value of the work he has done in the past eleven months to push this party ahead.

7) We support intensive internal education on socialism including S.P. positions, present day political issues and other left groups.

8) We support the development of a non-sectarian and anti-ultra-left political action perspective. This can only come about through intensive struggle around issues outside the party and constant internal reassessment of our external work.

9) We oppose the efforts of Virgil J. Vogel and William O. Hart to split the Socialist Party from the outside. We further oppose those who have shown and offered support to their effort. We support a unified Socialist Party and will fight all such efforts to split the party in any way.

10) We must elect officers and National Committee members that agree with the principles, program and general analytical line contained in this document. We must draft a slate for all national leadership positions and take up procedures to guarantee the election of our slate.

11) In our work, we recognize that unjustified attacks made upon any member of this caucus must be defended by all members. We further recognize that in order to bring the party over to the class struggle positions embodied in this document, we must act in unity and in comradeship. By signing this document we so pledge.

READINGS FOR REVOLUTIONARIES - I Debs Caucus, SPUSA

I. BASIC

- ✓ Marx--*Communist Manifesto
- "--*1850 Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League
- "--Critique of the Gotha Programme
- Debs--1918 Canton Speech (unexpurgated)
- Trotsky--Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution

II. THE PARTY

- Lenin--*What is to be Done?
- "--*State and Revolution
- "--Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder
- Trotsky--*In Defense of Marxism
- Cannon--*The Struggle for the Proletarian Party

III. ECONOMICS AND PHILOSOPHY

- Marx--*Wage Labor and Capital
- "--Capital, Vol. I
- Engels--*Anti-Duhring (incl. "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific")
- Lenin--*Imperialism
- Mao--Four Essays on Philosophy (incl. "On Contradiction")

IV. INTERNATIONALISM AND STALINISM

- Trotsky--*Third International after Lenin
- "--The Revolution Betrayed
- Carillo--Eurocommunism and the State
- Mandel--From Stalinism to Eurocommunism

V. SOCIALIST FEMINISM AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

- Engels--*Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State
- Lenin--On the Emancipation of Women
- Rowbotham--Woman's Consciousness, Man's World
- Zaretsky--Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life

VI. DISARMAMENT

- Lenin--The Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution (In "Selected Works", vol. I)
- Trotsky--War and the Fourth International (in "Writings 1933-34")

VII. THE NATIONAL QUESTION

- Lenin--The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (in "Selected Works", vol. I)

Works marked with a "*" are particularly important and probably should be read first.

ADDENDA

More advanced works which should probably not be read until the above list is completed:

- Marx--The German Ideology (fundamental philosophy of Marxism--historical materialism)
- Lenin--One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (on the Party)
- Trotsky--The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany (on the united front)
- Sweezy--Monopoly Capital (economics of the modern US)

Very basic works (pre-Manifesto readings):

- Marx--Preface to "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (very short & often found in anthologies)

Sweezy & Huberman--Introduction to Socialism (simplified and Stalinist, but good reading)

Cannon--America's Road to Socialism (Trotskyist alternative to Sweezy)

Cannon--The Revolutionary Party (short pamphlet)

9/8/78