new POLITICS

a journal of socialist thought

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From the Editors

PROGRESSIVES ARE CAUGHT IN A BIND: on the one hand, we are very disappointed with many of the initiatives — or lack of initiatives — that the Obama Administration and its Democratic congressional majority have taken (or not taken). On health care, the economy, don't-ask-don't-tell, Israeli settlements, and so much more, Obama has sold short his progressive supporters. On the other hand, we are appalled by the neofascist right wing assaults on Obama. Regarding those assaults, which have so much support from millions (though still not a majority), we are reminded of John Dos Passos' throwing up his hands after the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti and crying out, "they have clubbed us off the streets . . . all right we are two nations . . . we stand defeated America" (*The Big Money* [*USA,* v. III], "The Camera Eye," 50). Yet we also recall that some time after making this anguished lament, Dos Passos gave up and joined the right wing. We conclude that we must not despair, we must not give up resisting the right wing enemies of the Obama Administration — to do so would be to somewhat replicate the actions of many German leftists of the early 1930s who directed their main fire not at the Nazis, but others on the left; yet, at the same time, we must continue opposing strenuously the domestic and international failings of the Administration and Congress. Our opposition must demonstrate that the left has progressive alternatives to Obama's policies.

One of the biggest of the failings, in our view, is the failure to stop the Afghan war. In fact, the war has been extended to Pakistan. As Jane Mayer points out, "During his first 9 1/2 months in office (Obama) has authorized as many CIA aerial attacks in Pakistan as George Bush did in his final three years in office" (*The New Yorker*, 11-6-09). And Matthew Hoh, the former Marine captain and foreign service officer in charge of the most contested area, quit and said, "I fail to see the value or the worth in continued U.S. casualties . . . ." In the following pages, we have reprinted a clear and cogent statement by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy calling for an end to the U.S. Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Our special section this issue focuses on women's ongoing struggle for fairness, for justice in the home, at work, and in prison. Indeed, since women are the primary caregivers, for many of them the lack of paid family and medical leave keeps them away from home as effectively as any prison wall. Others who choose to stay at home when their dependents need them risk losing their jobs. Elsewhere, both Robert Fitch and Dan La Botz analyze U.S. labor's long battle. Other articles include Ravi Kumar's discussion of the Indian elections and neoliberalism; Rossen Vassilev's account of Bulgaria's rescue of its Jews in World War II; Yassamine Mather's report and analysis of the workers' movement in Iran; Richard Levy's questioning whether the village elections in China represent democracy or a façade; Ashley Dawson's call for a Global Green New Deal; and much more. Our talented artists of cartoons and graphics this issue are Lisa Lyons and Tom Kaczynski.

MARVIN AND BETTY

LETTERS

Revolutionary Socialist-Anarchism

A Response to Marvin Mandell's Review

MARVIN MANDELL HAS WRITTEN A review of my book, *The Abolition of the State: Anarchist and Marxist Perspectives.* He described it as "well considered, well researched, and well written," and says, "Price has given us much to chew on." He concluded, "Marxists and anarchists can learn from each other, and, in fact, need each other." I agree with this thought, and regard Mandell as a fellow believer in socialism-from-below. But limitations of space cause me to focus on our differences.

What Is the State?

IN MY BOOK, I define the state as a socially-alienated bureaucratic-military machine, with specialized layers of officials, police, and soldiers, which stand over and against the rest of society (Marxists should recognize the concept from Friedrich Engels). Inevitably such a social organization can only serve the interests of a minority class which exploits everyone else. Therefore, I conclude, there cannot be a "workers' state" (a workers' socially-alienated bureaucratic-military machine?).

In a democratic-cooperative economy, the state should be replaced by a federation of workplace and neighborhood assemblies and councils, affiliated to an armed people (a workers' militia). The workers and oppressed would "take power," but not establish a new state. This is the self-organization of the working class and all the formerly oppressed.

Some radical state-socialists have said that they want essentially what anarchists advocate and that it is a quibble whether to call this a "workers' state" or not. The meaning of our difference comes out when the same radicals also use "workers' state" to describe the one-party police state of Lenin and Trotsky or the Russian regime dominated by Stalin up until 1929 (Tony Cliff) or even 1936 (Max Shachtman).

The Engels' Quotation

MANDELL QUOTES FROM A LETTER by Engels, claiming that he "put his finger on the fundamental difference between anarchists and Marxists":

> Bakunin maintains that it is the state which has created capital . . . it is above all the state which must be done away with and then capitalism will go to blazes of itself. We, on the contrary, say: Do away with capital, the concentration of all means of production in the hands of the few, and the state will fall of itself. The difference is an essential one: . . . the abolition of capital is precisely the social revolution . . . Hence [for anarchists], complete abstention from all politics. To commit a political act, and especially to take part in an election, would be a betrayal of principle (Letter to Theodor Cuno, 1/24/1872).

In his desire to score points off the anarchists, Engels makes a simplistic statement of Marx's and his own views (as he sometimes did) and a false statement of Bakunin's views. Actually Marx believed that the state had played a major role in creating capitalism, in the epoch of primitive accumulation of capital (looting Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the enclosure acts in England, etc.). They had studied how, in their own time, the state became relatively autonomous from the bourgeoisie ("Bonapartism"), to hold capitalism together. Their work implied that the state would become ever more central to maintaining capitalism in its epoch of decay (of imperialism and state monopoly capitalism), as Lenin, Trotsky, and others found.

Further, their strategy was for the workers to overthrow the bourgeois state, to take power, and to establish a new, "workers' state." It was only that state which would "fall of itself." All of which implies that (as the anarchists claimed) the state is central to creating and maintaining capitalism and that a revolutionary strategy needs to focus on smashing the bourgeois state.

Or as Engels put it, in a different letter, "Why are we struggling for the political dictatorship of the proletariat, if political power has no economic effects[?] Force (i.e. the state authority) is also an economic power!" (Letter to Conrad Schmidt 10/27/1890).

Bakunin, and the broad anarchist tradition which came after him, have been clear on the need for a social revolution against capital and the capitalist class. Anarchists have never counterposed this to a revolution against the state. All aspects of oppression must be destroyed.

Mandell asks, "Does the state flow out of class struggle, or does class struggle flow out of the state?" Both. Class struggle is fundamental, but the state and class interact, in a reciprocal, spiral (if you wish, dialectical) fashion.

The Engels quotation claims that anarchists are for "complete abstention from all politics." Anarchists are not anti-political but are anti-electoralist (opposed to any illusions in a "parliamentary road to socialism"). The dismal and corrupt history of Marxist electoral parties (social democratic and Communist alike) should lead any revolutionary to reject electoralism as a strategy, with the advantages of hindsight. But anarchists are not anti-political. They have always engaged in building unions and antiwar movements and have participated in political strikes, mass demonstrations, and armed rebellions—all political activities. In the United States virtually all progress from the 30s on, against exploitation, racism, and war, was won through nonelectoral means: mass demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience and "riots". But attempts at leftist electoral action have invariably been failures, whether working in the Democratic Party or building independent middle class parties, from the 60s Peace and Freedom Party to today's Green Party.

A Civil War

To demonstrate that there is a need for a state, Mandell refers to the the U.S. Civil War and to Federal intervention to support Black civil rights in the 60s.

A stateless society would exist only after a social revolution in which the capitalist class had been overthrown, along with other oppressive institutions—that is, a libertarian socialist society. A society in the midst of civil war would replace the bureaucratic-military state with a coordinated militia and popular assemblies (as Ukraine did under Makhno) but would certainly use coercion against the counterrevolutionaries. No doubt, if the U.S. Civil War had been fought by a revolutionary anarchist federation (to be ahistorical), it would have had different institutions than the Northern capitalist state did. It would have armed the Southern slaves from the beginning, for one thing. But it would not have accepted "states' rights" as decentralized democracy, so long as whites ruled over enslaved Africans in those states.

Similar points could be made about the civil rights struggle in the U.S. South. Had the North been anarchist-communist, it would have had other possibilities (to say the least), but anarchists would have had no compunction about using coercion against the white racists, anymore than anarchists did against fascists in the Spanish revolution. As it was, the national government was no ally of Southern Blacks, but only did half-way decent things when pressured from below. The Black Liberation movement was organized largely on anarchist lines (decentralized, radically democratic, and flexible), as best to fight the racists and to pressure the liberals.

The Russian Revolution

Mandell criticizes my views on Lenin, the Bolsheviks, and the Russian Revolution. I do not have space here to repeat what I wrote in my chapter on the Russian Revolution. (I will have more on it in my next book, *Anarchism & Socialism: Reformism or Revolution*, coming in the fall.) But overall, he appears to agree that Lenin and Trotsky set up a one-party police state after the civil war was won, and that they should not have. That is, they definitively outlawed all other parties, as well as banished alternate caucuses in the one official party, and banned independent labor unions. He might have added that they did not describe this as a temporary measure but defended it as the proper form of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

Like most whose views descend from Trotskyism, Mandell makes excuses for Lenin and Trotsky. "To quote Lenin on centralization without mentioning that he wrote many of those passages in the midst of a civil war and a struggle against foreign invasion . . . seems to me disingenuous." By any reasonable evaluation, Lenin and Trotsky set up the framework for Stalin's totalitarian state. But Mandell blames their authoritarianism on objective pressures: the poverty of Russia, the peasant majority, the foreign invasions, the civil war, and the failure of the revolution to spread. All of these factors were real; I do not deny it. Perhaps the workers' and peasants' revolution would have failed in any case. But they do not excuse Bolshevik authoritarian actions.

Mandell argues that the Bolsheviks were necessary for winning the revolution and implies that this excuses their undemocratic practices up to the end of the civil war, because otherwise they would have been voted out of office. These claims are dubious. Even the "danger" of the Bolsheviks losing office might have been avoided if Lenin had promoted a sincere effort toward a united front with other revolutionary groupings.

Citing objective pressures, however real, does not disprove that Lenin and Trotsky had an authoritarian conception of socialism from the start. Did they, before the revolution, (in *State and Revolution* or elsewhere) advocate a multiparty/multitendency workers' democracy? No. Trotsky was to oppose Stalin while still defending the one-party state (up until the mid-30s, after the Trotskyists had been defeated).

Did they, before the revolution, advocate workplace democracy to manage industry? No. Instead, the conception which Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin had of a planned, collectivized, economy, was of one directed from a center by experts, with the people at most giving feedback but not managing it (a concept inherited from the social democrats). For Lenin, "workers' management" was only a step toward centralized state planning; his model, he wrote repeatedly, was war-time Prussian state-monopoly capitalism.

Mandell quotes from various sources to show that the Makhnovists (the anarchist-led Ukrainian partisans) shot Bolsheviks. This proves only that a war developed in Ukraine, between the Bolshevik armies and the partisans. Otherwise, it says nothing about the issues in the war nor who was in the right on the matter. One side fought for free, democratic, soviets based on the Ukrainian workers and peasants, and the other fought for a one-party dictatorship, based on Russian national domination of Ukrainians. I know who I think was the better side.

The question here is not one of historical accuracy. It a question of how to make a revolution which will overthrow traditional capitalism but does not result in a new statist tyranny.

WAYNE PRICE

PRICE *is a long-time activist in the NYC teachers' union and the antiwar movement. He has written on anarchism and Marxism and other subjects for the N*ortheastern Anarchist, The Utopian*, and www.Anarkismo.net. He has another book coming out in the fall,* Anarchism & Socialism: Reformism or Revolution.

A Response to Wayne Price

I AM DISAPPOINTED in Wayne Price's reply to my review of his book — not so much by what he says, but what he has left unsaid. Here is what I wrote in my review:

> [Price] claims that Lenin said, in his most libertarian work *State and Revolution*, "the state might exist indefinitely" (p.50). Nowhere in this work does Lenin say this. Again and again Lenin stresses the withering away of the state. "The more democratic the 'state . . . no longer a state in the proper sense of the word,' the more rapidly does *every* state begin to wither away" (emphasis Lenin's).[1]

Price fails to acknowledge his error. I emphasize this for three reasons:

• It is important. If Lenin had indeed said what Price claims he did, Price and other anarchists would have a stronger reason to believe that Lenin and Leninists never intended to move toward a stateless (and classless) society and to believe that the real causes of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution — the civil war, foreign invasion, lack of industry, the failure of the revolution in Western Europe — were secondary to Lenin's drive toward power.

• Second, again and again, Price reveals his tendentiousness. He won't admit even the most egregious error.

• Last, Price often makes an assertion – sometimes false or half-true, in this case false — and then accepts it as fact and refers back to it. An exercise in circular reasoning.

Another factual error that Price fails to acknowledge is his assertion that "Trotskyists became variants of social democrats or Stalinists or both" (p. 159). False! Were it true, this would be another proof of Leninists as top-down authoritarians. As I pointed out in my review, Price is quite familiar with Hal Draper and others in the Workers Party/Independent Socialist League. (I could have added the names of the founders and long-time editors of *New Politics*, Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, of my own, and of many others — a good many the readers of *New Politics*.) Again, a false assertion meant to help bolster his argument.

Price distorts Marx and Engels' view of Bonapartism. He is correct to say that, with it, the state became relatively autonomous from the bourgeoisie, but he neglects to add that it is a temporary situation. Engels wrote, "[P]eriods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, *for the moment*, a certain degree of independence of both . . . " (emphasis mine)[2].

Price makes a good case for anarchists' abstaining from electoral politics and, instead, participating in building unions and anti-war movements, as well as political strikes, mass demonstrations, etc., but he knows that Spanish anarchists during the Civil War refused the reins of political power (even though the power on the street was theirs) and instead accepted ministerial portfolios in the bourgeois/Stalinist government. To his credit, Price criticizes them for both the refusal and the collaboration. Price recognizes that the Russian Revolution was a bottom-up workers' revolution. Should the Bolsheviks have refused to accept the mantle of political power to defend that revolution? Clearly political power is a sticking point for anarchists.

Price preaches to the choir about the difference between responses of a putative anarchist-communist power and that of a capitalist state. I mentioned use of state power only in response to the examples he gives in his book about how anarchists would handle a rogue community's vicious action.

> What if [a rogue community] declares itself open only to white people, or it teaches creationism in its schools, or it dumps pollution into the river on which other communities are located?...What would a non-statist society do? (p.78)

He imagines a regional conference at which several proposals are brought forward:
(1) Leave the rogue community alone, let them stew in their own juice; (2) Organize a regional militia to march on the offending community; (3) Wage a propaganda campaign, organize an economic boycott, demonstrate nonviolently.
Notice that in his book he avoids mentioning the use of centralized force. Now, in his reply he mentions coercion and — irony of ironies — he uses as an example the Spanish anarchists fighting against fascism. I say this is ironic because he himself criticizes anarchist historians who denounce the anarchist Buenaventura Durruti's demand for a centralized defense council. Durruti, the greatest of the anti-fascist military leaders, knew that a centralized force (viz. a state force) was needed. Local militias would not do.

Another assertion: "By any reasonable evaluation" (viz. Price's) "Lenin and Trotsky set up the framework for Stalin's totalitarian state." If this is so, if Stalinism is a continuation of Leninism and its logical outgrowth, why did the Stalinists wage a relentless and merciless counter-revolution for years against the Old Bolsheviks?

Another distortion: "Mandell argues that the Bolsheviks were necessary for winning the revolution and implies that this excuses their undemocratic practices up to the end of the civil war, *because otherwise they would have been voted out of office*" (emphasis mine). I never said anything about the possibility of their being voted out of office during the civil war. The Bolsheviks, believing they were defending a workers' revolution, were fighting counter-revolutionaries and foreign invaders.

Price's treatment of the struggle between the (bad) Bolshevik army and the (good) Makhnovites reinforces a point I made in my review: "Price sometimes belittles the importance of the social forces involved: the conflict between urban workers and peasants. He calls this 'a dogmatic theory of class conflict.'" Starving Petrograd workers and soldiers struggling with peasants withholding food! Theoretical dogmatism or seeing things as they are?[3]

I have no problem with the anarchist concept of a federation of voluntary associations, but, as I pointed out in my review, we must remember that socialism will be birthed — if ever — in the womb of capitalism. Its institutions cannot be wished away. In any case, what is important is not whether we have a workers' state or a federation but whether such a system is democratically controlled from below.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks are not above reproach. Of course they erred. In my review I denounced both the crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion and the banning, by the tenth Party Congress in 1921, of internal dissension. (Both Rosa Luxemburg and Emma Goldman also made serious criticisms of Leninism.)

But . . . It is one thing to believe passionately in a cause. It is quite another to allow that belief to block your objectivity. That is tendentiousness. None of us has a patent on the truth.

MARVIN MANDELL

1. *State and Revolution* (N.Y.: International Publishers, 1971), 84.

2. "On the Origin of the State," in ed., Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1972), 653.

3. "The peasant insurgents had been brought up to regard townsmen as their enemies and conceived it their right to take what they wanted from towns." David Footman, *The Civil War in Russia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 286.

We Call for the United States to End Its Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan!

Campaign for Peace and Democracy

This may be a turning point for the expanding U.S./NATO wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a time when speaking out clearly and unambiguously against war can make a crucial difference. Today we see signs all too reminiscent of the step-by-step deepening of the U.S. commitment to the war in Vietnam in the 1960s. In response, we declare ourselves firmly against military escalation in the region and for the withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan and Pakistan now. We also call for an end to drone attacks in both countries.

There are currently 108,000 U.S./NATO troops in Afghanistan. President Obama has authorized increasing U.S. forces by 21,000, which will mean more than 68,000 U.S. troops by the end of 2009. In view of the war's growing unpopularity, Obama may very well abandon troop escalation. Reportedly, some in the Administration even recommended reducing U.S. forces and focusing more on strikes against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But even a scaled-back military presence constitutes an illegitimate occupation, one that wreaks havoc on the lives of innocent civilians and can only strengthen the Taliban and terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda.

Americans are increasingly disillusioned with the war. According to an August CNN poll, 57 percent oppose the Afghan war, a 9 percent increase since May, and there is growing unease in Congress. The cynical spectacle of Afghanistan's fraudulent presidential election has further eroded what little domestic and international credibility the corrupt Karzai regime retained.

In both Afghanistan and Pakistan the actions of the United States and its allies serve to strengthen fundamentalist forces. Fearing unpopular NATO troop casualties, the United States relies heavily on air power, which inevitably results in the death of innocent civilians. Far from eliminating terrorist networks, these air strikes only deepen popular hostility to the U.S./NATO war effort, pushing growing numbers of Afghans and Pakistanis toward the Taliban. Already fully a quarter of the Afghan population thinks that attacks on U.S./NATO forces are justified. In Pakistan, the war is now being fought with the open and heavy involvement of U.S. Predator and other drones. Because of the frequent killing of civilians by the drones, on top of the resentment caused by Washington's long support of the dictator Musharraf, Pakistani public opinion now rates the United States as the number one threat — ahead even of India, Pakistan's long time enemy.

U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan take place in the context of a global military system much more massive and far-flung than most Americans realize. Officially, over 190,000 troops and 115,000 civilian employees are stationed in approximately 900 military facilities in 46 countries and territories — and the actual numbers are far greater. U.S. military spending of more than $600 billion a year, in the words of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "adds up to about what the entire rest of the world combined spends on defense."

The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan have been part of a comprehensive effort to assert U.S. strategic power and credibility, in the Central and South Asian region and globally — the power to control energy supplies, to overawe rivals, to intervene wherever Washington deems necessary, and to engage other countries in U.S. power projection. Since 2001, the United States has established 19 new bases in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, inserting a military presence into an area that Russia and China also seek to influence.

Afghanistan was a devastated nation even before 2001, due to the destruction wrought by the Soviet occupation and the subsequent civil war. Since then the Afghan people have endured eight more years of war and misery. Many Afghans felt a sense of liberation when the Taliban was driven from power, but it soon became clear that one set of oppressors had been replaced by another: by the warlords and drug traffickers of the former Northern Alliance and the U.S. / NATO occupiers. The Taliban's misogyny was vicious and extreme, but the situation of women remains horrific. Although a large number of Afghan girls did go to primary school after 2001 and some of women did get elected to the parliament, the vast majority of women are still confined to their homes, unable to work, too fearful to attend school and forced into marriages, often as children. Many women who would prefer not to wear their burqas are afraid to be seen without them.

According to Afghan feminist leader Malalai Joya, "Victims of abuse and rape find no justice because the judiciary is dominated by fundamentalists. A growing number of women, seeing no way out of the suffering in their lives, have taken to suicide by self-immolation." President Karzai signed a disgraceful law earlier this year, applying to Shia women, that gives a husband the right to withdraw basic maintenance from his wife, including food, if she refuses to obey his sexual demands. It grants guardianship of children exclusively to their fathers and grandfathers, requires women to get permission from their husbands to work, and effectively allows a rapist to avoid prosecution by paying "blood money" to his victim. Most Afghans lack access to safe drinking water and medical care. The country remains one of the world's poorest. The United States has done virtually nothing to alleviate this terrible poverty; instead, it has added to the suffering of the Afghan people, women as well as men, the constant threat of military violence. The Taliban gains strength in response to the grossly inadequate amount of foreign aid, as well as to the brutalities of the U.S./NATO war.

The Pakistani military and intelligence have long played a double game, taking military aid from Washington while simultaneously fighting and backing the Taliban. While the majority of Pakistanis oppose the Taliban today, underlying conditions enable it to grow stronger. Many of the country's poor live in near-feudal conditions. In the Swat Valley the Taliban was able to exploit the grievances of landless rural tenants for its own reactionary purposes. Unwilling and unable to address the social and economic realities that create support for or at least acquiescence to the Taliban among many in the population, the Pakistani military and elite may well make further concessions to the fundamentalists.

If the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan have any chance of defeating fundamentalism, fighting misogyny, and winning genuine democracy, the United States can help mainly by calling off the inhumane and un-winnable "war on terror," by whatever name, and replacing it with a radically different policy of massive foreign aid and an end to support for elites and governments that perpetuate gross inequalities. Democratic forces may be weak, but they will never grow stronger while the United States occupies Afghanistan, sends missiles into Pakistan, and bolsters corrupt governments in both countries. Withdrawal should not mean that the United States abandons any effort to help the people of Afghanistan and neighboring states. Washington ought to lend political support to regional negotiations and to a broader settlement of the disputes between India and Pakistan, which continue to stoke the violence in Afghanistan. Above all, the United States should provide large-scale humanitarian aid to the desperately poor Afghan population — which, aid agencies note, is hindered by being intermingled with military operations.

Afghanistan is badly fragmented along ethnic lines. If there is any progressive solution to these divisions it probably lies in regional negotiations among Afghanistan's neighbors. We cannot foresee what form this solution might take, but we know it must not include any political dictation by Washington or the continuation of U.S. troops or military operations in Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Ending U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan and Pakistan now is not only right in itself; it is also indispensable as a way to begin countering the bitterness and hostility in Muslim countries that breeds terrorist threats to our own security, threats that arise from networks that are not limited to any specific geographic location. In addition to ending military intervention in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States should withdraw its forces from Iraq, Central Asia, and the Persian Gulf. It must end all support to Arab autocracies and police states and give real support to Palestinian statehood. A truly democratic U.S. foreign policy is desperately needed to address the misery and inequity in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and many other countries, but we can only begin to do so by diverting our country's vast wealth away from militarism and the drive for "full spectrum dominance" of the world. We, the undersigned, are dedicated to working for this new foreign policy.

NOTE: For references and a full list of signers, go to www.cpdweb.org

To: Joanne Landy and Thomas Harrison, Co-Directors, CPD

❑ Please add my name to the list of signers of the CPD statement on Afghanistan and Pakistan. You may use my name when the statement is published.

❑ I am sending a tax-deductible donation of $______ to help publish the statement in newspapers, magazines, and other media.

❑ I am sending my gift __ by mail __ on line (see below.)

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For further information, to sign on-line, and to see evolving full list of signers go to www.cpdweb.org

Checks payable to "Campaign for Peace and Democracy" or donate on line by going to our website www.cpdweb.org

Mail to Campaign for Peace and Democracy, 2790 Broadway, #12, NY, NY 10025

Women's Work, Mother's Poverty

Are Men's Wages the Best Cure for Women's Economic Insecurity?

Gwendolyn Mink

In the 2008 Democratic Party platform, the only provision with women in the title was one promising "Opportunity for Women." The provision pledged "that our daughters should have the same opportunities as our sons," confining measurement of women's equality to our access to men's jobs and men's wages. The nomination, then election, of the first African-American presidential candidate portended and promised great change. But through its platform, the Democratic Party looked backwards to an equality agenda drawn by women's exclusion from men's world. This agenda finds singular and transformative power in direct comparisons between women's and men's status, earnings, and opportunities. But to focus only on such comparisons misses many of the persistent inequalities imposed on women.

Certainly, women who enter men's world encounter signal inequalities: Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and Lilly Ledbetter's unequal wages are just two high-profile examples. But women who do the work historically assigned to women, whether in the labor market or in the family, face inequalities, as well — inequalities rooted in the low value ascribed to work performed primarily by women.

The low valuation of women manifests, whether women are labor market workers or caregivers in families. In the labor market, a gender-based earnings gap disfavors women and leads inextricably to a gender-based distribution of poverty that breeds misery for mothers and their children. In families, the lack of economic compensation for caregiving means inevitable poverty for mothers who cannot earn or depend on a male wage. Both the earnings gap in the labor market and the earnings vacuum for caregivers follow from the value we assign to women's work, whether it is performed for wages or for families.

Women's Work & Women's Poverty: Evidence of The Low Value of Women's Work in the Labor Market

Data on the wage gap document the depressed value of women's work in the labor market: work that is performed mostly by women earns low pay; work that usually is performed by men earns less pay when it is performed by women; and work that usually is performed by women earns more pay when it is performed by men.

Women who worked in the labor market full-time, year-round in 2007 earned only 78 cents for every dollar earned by men. Twenty-two cents is the wage differential for women as a whole in comparison to men as a whole. The Cadillac of all wages belongs to white men, however, so we really should measure wage inequality in terms of white men's wages. (See Table 1) In comparison to each dollar earned by white men, white women earned about 73 cents; Asian/Pacific women earned 70 cents; African-American women earned 62 cents; American Indian and Alaska Native women earned 57 cents; and Latinas earned only 51 cents.

The median annual income for full-time, year-round women workers of all races in 2007

Gwendolyn Mink *writes and teaches about U.S. equality law, poverty policy, gender issues, and American politics. She was on the faculty of the University of California-Santa Cruz from 1980-2001 and Smith College from 2001 to 2009. She is author of* Welfare's End *(1998; rev. ed. 2002).*

TABLE 1

Women's Earnings as a Percentage of White Men's Earnings

(full-time/full-year workers, 2007)

White	Asian Pacific	Black	American Indian	Latina & Alaska Native
73%	70%	62%	57.5%	51%

was $34,278 — as compared to $44,255 for their male counterparts of all races (an income gap of $10,000). Among men, whites earned the highest median income, $50,139. White women earned $14,000 less than white men in 2007 — or $36,398. Asian/Pacific women earned $15,000 less than white men, or $35,249. African-American women earned even less: their median wage was $31,035 — $19,000 less than white men's. Meanwhile, the earnings gap for American Indian and Alaska Native women was $22,000 and for Latinas was $25,000. (See Table 2)

TABLE 2

Median Annual Income

(full-time/full-year workers, 2007)

White Men	White	API	Black	AI&AN	Latinas
$50,139	$36,398	$35,249	31,035	$28,837	$25,454

Educational disparities do not explain these wage inequalities: the wage gap tracks within and across all educational levels. (See Table 3) In 2007, the median income for women who completed high school was $21,219, while for men it was $34,435. A two-year associate's degree garnered women $27,046, but got men $14,000 more ($41,035). A $19,000 wage gap takes hold at the Bachelor's degree level: women with BA's earned $38,628 in 2007 as compared to $57,397 for men. These income figures are for women and men of all races. If we compare white men's income to everyone else's, the gaps are even wider. In fact, in 2006, white men with just a high school diploma made almost as much ($36,539) as white women who had graduated from college ($39,006).

The wage gap data takes a snapshot of wage differences in a single year. If you compare men's and women's wages longitudinally — across time — the income gap is much larger than the 22 percent reported by the Census Bureau. The Institute for Women's Policy Research compared the income of female and male full-time/full-year workers over a fifteen-year period. Over fifteen years, the earnings gap favored men by 36 percent overall — that is, men's income was 36 percent higher than women's income. When the sample was broadened to look at everyone who was employed at all — not only those who were employed full-time/year-round, but also part-time and part-year workers — the gap was substantially larger, at 62 percent.

Across a lifetime, these disparities add up to huge losses. Among full-time/full-year workers, a woman with a high school diploma loses $700,000 in earnings as compared to a man with a high school diploma. A woman with a BA loses $1.2 million over her lifetime. A woman with an advanced degree loses $2 million.

Not surprisingly, the cost of inequality follows women into retirement, especially unmar-

TABLE 3

MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME BY EDUCATION

(full-time/full-year workers, 2007)

	All Men	All Women
HS degree	$34,435	$21,219
AS degree	$41,035	$34,435
BA degree	$57,397	$38,628

ried women. The retirement income gap averages about $8,000 each year for single women. Overall, single older women — widows and divorcees, as well as those who never married — share a poverty rate of approximately 20 percent.

Women's Poverty

THE WAGE STATISTICS show that women in general have lower incomes than men. Women's lower earnings, in turn, mean that women are more likely than men to be poor.

Today, more than 37 million people live below the poverty line — live on less than $16,530 per year for a family of three. Sixteen million people — slightly less than half of all those in poverty — live in what is called "extreme" poverty, meaning that they live on less than half the poverty line income, or $8250 a year for a family of three. Another 15 million people live just above the poverty line (125 percent, or about $20,000 a year for a family of two). Altogether, 50 million people are almost poor, officially poor, or extremely poor. Women figure disproportionately among them.

There has been a gender poverty gap every year since the official poverty line was drawn in the 1960s. While poverty statistics consistently have shown that women in general are somewhat more likely to be poor than men in general, they also reveal deep poverty gaps based on the race and marital status of women. Women of color are much more likely to be poor than white men and white women. (See Table 4) Women whose family incomes do not include a male wage are disproportionately poor, as well: only 20 percent of women in poverty are married.

TABLE 4
Poverty Rates by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, 2007

	women	men
all	13.8%	11.1%
African American	26.5%	22.3%
Latina/o	23.6%	19.6%
Asian American	10.7%	9.7%
White	11.6%	9.4%

TABLE 5
Poverty Rate and Median Income by Family Type, 2007

	poverty rate	median income
single mothers (all)	37%	$33,370
White	29.2%	
Black	43.9%	
Latina	46.6%	
single fathers (all)	17%	$49,839
married parents (all)	6.7%	$72,785

Among women, single mothers (with children under age 18) carry the greatest risk of poverty. (See Table 5). In 2007, more than one in three single mothers was officially poor — for a poverty rate of 37 percent. In contrast, the married parent poverty rate was 6.7 percent — or 1/6th the poverty rate of single mothers. For the population as a whole, the poverty rate was 12.3 percent. Race exacerbates the disproportionate poverty of single mothers: while white single mothers' poverty rate was 29.2 percent in 2007, for African-American single mothers the poverty rate was 43.9 percent and for Latina single mothers it was 46.6 percent.

Sixty-two percent of poor families with children in 2007 were single mother families, as compared to just 15 percent of non-poor families. In 83 percent of single mother families, at least one person (usually the mother) was in the labor force. Yet, even when single mothers are wage earners, the poverty rate for their families is 27.2 percent — more than twice the poverty rate of the general population.

Federal Policy and Women's Impoverishment Employment & Wages

IF FAMILIES THAT MUST SURVIVE on a woman's wage alone are more likely to be poor, then women's low wages must have something to do with women's disproportionate poverty. If poverty implicates low wages, both implicate employment inequality.

Forty-five years ago, Congress enacted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which forbids discrimination in employment — including sex discrimination. Over the years, Title VII has helped to open up the labor market to women — it ended job classifications based on sex, for example, and enabled women to challenge hiring, firing, and promotion decisions based on sex. But although Title VII has been a powerful weapon against workplace exclusion and abuse, it has provided relatively weak mechanisms for achieving income fairness for women workers.

Title VII is concerned with letting women into the labor market, and with ensuring that being female will not disadvantage a woman in her struggle to survive in the labor market. Title VII insists that women have access to employment and prohibits workplace discrimination, including wage discrimination. But Title VII does not insist that employment itself change to respond to the perspectives and circumstances women bring into the labor market. Nor does it recognize gender-based wage differentials as discrimination unless it can be proved that the differential was imposed deliberately "because of" a worker's sex.

Where wages are concerned, Title VII works in conjunction with the Equal Pay Act, which avows that women and men shall receive the same wages for the same work. This has turned out to be a very constrained guarantee, as courts have interpreted the Equal Pay Act to protect women against wage discrimination only where their jobs are identical to men's, and only in single workplaces or establishments, at that.

Even so, women who do perform the same job as men — as welders or engineers or gardeners, say — do not receive the same pay as men. This is because the Equal Pay Act allows pay differentials based on "factors other than sex" — which usually turn out to be factors related to sex, such as negotiating skills, or family interruptions, or unstated biases against women.

> The Cadillac of all wages belongs to white men, so we really should measure wage inequality in terms of white men's wages.

Wage gaps based on sex (and race) within job categories attest to wage discrimination that Title VII and the Equal Pay Act are supposed to prevent. But for various reasons, wage discrimination persists despite the law. Heinous as they are, discriminatory wage decisions do not by themselves account for the scale of the earnings gap I have just outlined.

Another factor that contributes to sex-based income inequality is sex-based occupational segregation. Occupational segregation manifests as the disproportionate clustering of women or men in particular jobs: most pilots are men, for example, while most nurses are women. Studies show that the more female a job, the lower the pay in comparison to similar jobs that require similar training but are performed mostly by men. So, for example, maids and housecleaners (mostly women) earn about $3000/year less than janitors (mostly men). At all levels of employment, from the best jobs to the least desirable ones, female jobs earn less pay.

Some people argue that the only way around the wage impasse that arises from occupational segregation is to get women into men's jobs, where they can earn men's pay. Women who want those jobs certainly should be able to get them; but I'm afraid that's not necessarily going to get them men's pay. Movement into traditionally male jobs is happening, if slowly; but unequal pay follows women into those jobs.

Take the legal profession, for example: in 2007, the median salary for men in law jobs (paralegals, attorneys, judges) was $105,233. For women, the median salary was $53,790. That's a nearly 50 percent gap! Among judges, there's a 36 percent wage gap, with male judges earning a median $108,100 while female judges earned a median $69,500. Looking just at lawyers narrows the gap, but a gap remains: $120,400 median annual income for men, as compared to $93,600 for women.

Focusing on wages attached to particular jobs reveals significant sex-based disparities. But focusing exclusively on the wage gap misses the bigger picture. Women's poverty does follow from the wage structure: women are more likely to earn low wages and low wages keep women poor. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women; and a full-time/year-round minimum wage income — $13,624 — barely brings a family of two to the poverty line. Thirty-one percent of full-time, continuously employed women earn less than $25,000 per year.

If we compare women's and men's earnings longitudinally, we can see gross disparities that exceed the disparities linked to particular jobs. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) study, among workers who had earnings in all fifteen years reviewed, men's average earnings were 57 percent higher than women's — $49,068 to $29,507. This income differential widens for the majority of women (52 percent, as compared to just 16 percent of men) who spend at least one calendar year without any earnings. Women who take time out of the labor force usually do so to care for children, parents, or a sick spouse. Among women who do not leave the labor force altogether, large numbers work part-time or part-year to accommodate similar care needs of their families. Even the most persistent women workers are in the labor market for fewer hours each year than are male workers — 21 percent fewer hours (1,766 for persistent women workers vs. 2,219 for male workers overall). Overall, women workers spend a third less time in labor market jobs each year, widening income disparities between women and men.

These income disparities are due in part to discrimination in the valuation of women's work, as well of women themselves. But they also reflect longstanding conflict between the time demands of labor force participation, on the one hand, and the care needs of families, on the other. The "work-family" conflict for women is not just psychological or emotional. It is tangibly economic, a fact that is most apparent when we consider the degree to which mothers are employed. In the IWPR study, whether married or single, all mothers with children in the home were employed on average for about 1331 hours per year — which is about 820 hours less than the average for fathers. Needless to say, fewer hours of employment mean less income. Lower wages for the jobs women do compounds the impoverishing effect of the current "work-family balance."

So far, policymakers have been reluctant to do what it will take to make the labor market friendly to the care concerns women bring into it. What it will take is, for starters: 1) universal, subsidized child care so that parents don't have to worry about meeting the routine care needs of children; 2) paid family leave and paid childbirth leave so that caregivers and pregnant women do not have to trade an income for a family; and 3) liberal leave policies at work — so that workers can take an occasional sick day or care day, or take time to deal with personal issues.

We came close to comprehensive child care in the early 1970s, but Nixon vetoed the legislation. We've been fighting over whether poor people deserve child care ever since. In 1996, welfare reform ended the child care entitlement for low-income families. So unless a family can afford $1,000 to $2,000 a month for child care, somebody in the family has to take responsibility for children's supervision and nurturance. Partly by default and partly by choice, that "somebody" usually is a woman.

The federal government enacted a family leave law in 1993, but 40 percent of workers are not covered because their firms employ fewer than 50 workers. For those who are covered, many cannot avail themselves of leave because the leave is unpaid. The Family Medical Leave Act does not provide income assistance to workers who leave jobs under its terms; nor does it require employers to do so. Our unemployment insurance system does not recognize family considerations as legitimate reasons to lose or leave a job, so unemployment compensation is not available when a worker takes family leave. It is not surprising that seventy-eight percent of the workers who have not been able to take family leave report that the reason is that they couldn't afford to go without an income.

> The devaluation of women's work in the labor market and in families destines women's families to economic insecurity.

Poverty & Policy

THE DISCRIMINATION AND UNFAIRNESS I've described affect all women who need an earned income. But they affect some women more than others — low-wage women workers more than elite women workers; women of color more than white women; and single mothers more than either single women or married mothers.

Women in general have a slightly higher poverty rate (13.8 percent) than men (11.1 percent), as measured by family income. But women who are single mothers have a whoppingly high poverty rate of 37 percent. All women face inequality in the labor market; the wage gap straddles the entire economy. So why are single mothers disproportionately poor?

Because they are single mothers.

That is, because they are raising children without a man's wage. According to the Census Bureau's income and poverty statistics (see Table 4), in 2007 the median family income for married couples was $72,785 and for male-headed households (no wife present) was $49,839. For female-headed households, by contrast, the median income was $33,370. The IWPR longitudinal study confirms that marriage vastly increases the family income and standard of living of women, cushioning them from the harsh reality of life on a woman's wage. According to the study, only 5 percent of consistently married women experienced chronically low family incomes, while 35 percent of single women did.

The income benefit of marriage for mothers is even more pronounced when there are children under age 18 in the family. Single mothers with children have the lowest of all individual earnings and an increased likelihood of living on a family income of less than $25,000/year for a period of time. Worse, the average income deficit for poor families — the dollar difference between a family's income and its poverty threshold — is highest for single mother families, at $9,059. While income deficits afflict all types of families in poverty, single father families and married families fare better than single mothers, with average income deficits of $7,780 and $7,937, respectively.

Raising kids on a woman's wage means economic hard times. Low and unequal wages are just part of the problem. The widespread assumption that employment and caregiving are trade-offs (rather than complementary aspects of family responsibility) contributes significantly to mothers' poverty both in the labor market and in families. The idea that "working mothers" trade caregiving for employment when they enter the labor market permits employers and government to refuse support for child care, paid family leave, and flexible personal days. At the same time, the idea that "at-home mothers" trade employment for caregiving permits employers and government to regard family work as part of a private economic calculus worthy of no public economic support at all.

Welfare

POWERFUL AND CONSISTENT empirical evidence shows that the devaluation of women's work in the labor market and in families destines women's families to economic insecurity. Public policy has responded to that insecurity primarily by goading mothers into low wage jobs and marriage. Rather than revalue and support women's work, the public policy designed to mitigate the economic insecurity of mothers' families actually disdains single mothers as labor market workers, as caregivers, and as unmarried women.

That public policy is what we call welfare — or what anti-welfare reformers of the mid-1990s named Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). At the time welfare reform policy was enacted, it was widely hailed for transforming single mothers into breadwinners by forcing them to take low wage jobs in the labor market. While compulsory labor market work is a feature of welfare reform, the reform equally emphasized the compulsory introduction of fathers into single mother families.

Indeed, the guiding principle of welfare policy is that the economic security of families requires mothers to have relationships with fathers. This is a privatizing move, tying the economic well-being of families to the presence of fathers' wages. It also is a patriarchal move, conferring economic security only to those mothers who conform to traditional father-mother norms.

The pro-patriarchal attributes of welfare policy are not accidental. The 1996 welfare law was rife with condemnation of single mothers and was concerted in its efforts to insert fathers into low-income single mother families. The preamble to the law began with the assertion that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society." It then proceeded to blame numerous social ills — among them child abuse, truancy, and crime — on nonmarital childbearing and single motherhood.

The law went on to tie the purposes of welfare to promoting marriage, preventing nonmarital childbearing, and fostering two-parent (heterosexual) family formation. While the law declared that one goal of welfare is to "provide assistance to needy families" with children, it conditioned assistance on reform of the reproductive and family decisions of such families. Program rules regulating teenage mothers, discouraging illegitimacy, promoting abstinence, and compelling mothers to identify biological fathers and cooperate with child support enforcement — all advance these goals.

The welfare reform law enacted in 1996 was revised and extended in 2006. The renewed welfare program fastens the economic security of single mothers ever more tightly to the end of single motherhood. The principal addition to welfare policy was the creation of funding streams dedicated to promoting married fatherhood: $1.5 billion over five years ($750 million each year) for pro-marriage, pro-father activities. Beyond dedicated federal spending, the renewed welfare law gives states incentive to spend their TANF block grants and their own state funds to support federal pro-marriage, pro-father activities.

Although married fatherhood promotion is a distinctive feature of the renewed welfare program, welfare is not the only federal policy arena to fund marriage and fatherhood promotion activities.

The Office of Child Support Enforcement has offered grants to promote married fatherhood, as well as to teach unmarried biological fathers that if they pay child support they can get access to their children. The Office of Refugee Resettlement also sponsors marriage promotion — to the tune of $4.4 million in 2006. Even Head Start has gotten involved — since 2004, the federal Head Start agency has encouraged local Head Start facilities to promote fatherhood. A federal Head Start bulletin tells program workers to make sure fathers feel welcome at Head Start centers by, among other things, removing posters and other materials about domestic violence, as well as by creating comfort zones for dads through events like "Guys Night Out" and masculine activities like "Dads' Day at Home Depot."

On the left as on the right, it is axiomatic that single motherhood is a bad thing.

The Easy Way to Get a Woman a Man's Wage: Find a Man

It should certainly come as no surprise that the Bush Administration used federal money to promote patriarchy. But the emphasis on marriage and the focus on fathers is not the provenance of conservatives alone. Indeed, marriage promotion got its start before Bush, when the Clinton Administration promoted marriage through incentive payments to states. Beginning in the late 1990s, many Democrats sponsored fatherhood promotion legislation; as Senator and now as President, Barack Obama energized the cause. No longer monopolized by Dan Quayle and the "family values" lobby, marriage and fatherhood are now widely regarded — by progressive and conservative alike — as the keys to ending poverty.

Many progressive anti-poverty advocates are uncomfortable with conservative-inspired marriage promotion, to be sure; but they have been equally uncomfortable with feminist arguments that single mothers should be able to bear and raise children on their own. In fact, I can't think of a single non-feminist progressive policy advocate or policymaker who affirms single mother family formation as the right of women — not the hard luck of such women — or as good for children. On the left as on the right, it is axiomatic that single motherhood is a bad thing. Liberals might pity single mothers, while conservatives chastise them; but either way, single mothers are defined as a social problem.

Some progressive anti-poverty advocates have even adopted the frame drawn by conservative proponents of the traditional married family. Some anti-poverty advocates now publicly endorse the claim that helping fathers enter mothers' families should be a goal of government and a cornerstone of anti-poverty policy.

The liberal Center for Law and Social Policy, for example, espouses "marriage-plus" to encourage two-parent family formation among the poor. While CLASP wants to "ensure that public policy helps all parents — whether never married, cohabiting, separated, divorced, or married," its bottom line is that married biological parenthood is a desirable public goal that should be advanced by government. As CLASP put it in a 2005 report, "public policy should try to help more children be born into, and grow up with, two biological married parents, who have a reasonably healthy, cooperative relationship."

This position continues to stigmatize single mothers as deficient and single mother families as disadvantaged — not because of economic status but because mothers are single. What's more, the emphasis on biological parenthood heightens the preferred status of heterosexual parents and supports longstanding impediments to gay and lesbian adoption and/or legally recognized de facto parenthood for nonbiological mothers or fathers.

To foster biological married parenthood, some anti-poverty advocates have called for programs focused on low-income men. The purpose of these programs is to make low-income men more marriageable father material, and so to advance the goal of heterosexual, biological family formation. For example, at a poverty summit convened by John Edwards in November 2005, several prominent anti-poverty advocates and researchers complained that "welfare reform focused on everybody but adult men" and argued that "we need to put men back on the agenda . . . and . . . support men in the same way that we do women." According to several anti-poverty advocates and researchers who spoke at the conference, we need to focus on men as fathers because "the growth of single [mother] families is a major cause of poverty." One speaker also justified investing in men as a way to get mothers to "play by the rules" — especially the "rule" against bearing and raising children outside of marriage.

Progressive anti-poverty advocates differ from their conservative counterparts in that most do not argue that "Life with Father" is intrinsically morally superior to growing up in other family forms. Nonetheless, the pro-father, "marriage-plus" approach does advance a heterosexist, two-parent essentialism in the name of what's best for children.

For progressive and mainstream marriage proponents, what makes married families "better" for children is that married families have more money — so children are better off financially when raised by married parents. This is empirically true: as I pointed out earlier, the median income for married families was $72,785 in 2007, as compared to $28,832 for single mothers. Pro-marriage poverty advocates reason that because children are financially secure when parents are married, children in married families do better in school and behave better than they do in single mother families.

Although advocates of this position claim to "follow the data" — their faith in married fatherhood produces cherry-picked data that evades important questions. For example: the number of single father families has risen exponentially since 1970 (from a half a million to 2 million) just as has the number of single mother families (from 3 million to 10 million). But no one singles out father-only families to show the harms of one-parent childraising and the benefits of married parenthood.

There's a huge income disparity between single mother and single father families (about $15,000/year). This is a gap we should expect from what we know about gender-based wage disparities. It is a gap that illuminates women's inequality, not women's inferiority either as workers or as parents.

Thirty-seven percent of single mother families have incomes below the poverty level, as compared to 17 percent of single father families. Single mothers are 106 percent more likely to be poor than single fathers. This poverty arises not because single mothers refuse to work for wages in the labor market. Single mothers are in the labor force: in fact, they work at greater rates and for longer hours than single mothers anywhere in the advanced capitalist world; and they are employed at greater rates than are married mothers, especially married mothers with children under age 6.

So the problem isn't that single mothers are lazy or have less of a work ethic than married parents, or than single fathers. The problem isn't intrinsic to the structure of single mother families but to the low economic value assigned to women — both in the labor market and as caregivers in their own families.

Marriage promotion may indeed improve economic circumstances for many women. But it won't move us closer to equality for women, and it won't improve options for women and children whose safety and well-being is endangered by the presence of particular men in their families. Binding family economic security to men's earning power, not women's, may force wage-poor women to stay in abusive relationships; exposes mothers to poverty at divorce; and assures disproportionate poverty to mothers who never marry. Even for mothers who eke through these dependencies and disparities, economic inequality comes home to roost later on when fewer retirement assets and lower pension income spell high rates of poverty for elderly women who are on their own.

In their 2008 platform, Democrats congratulated themselves for "eighteen million cracks in the highest glass ceiling," yet economic equality for women seems like a wistful dream. Despite the new demographics of official power, the demographics of inequality persist. The Obama Administration retained marriage and fatherhood promotion funding in its first budget request; its Department of Health and Human Services continues marriage and fatherhood initiatives undertaken by the Bush Administration; and the new Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives makes supporting fathers "who stand by their families" one of four key priorities. The Obama economic recovery plan stresses work supports to the exclusion of direct poverty mitigation for poor families, such as the repeal of time limits on welfare eligibility and participation. The White House website's brief on poverty notices poor mothers only once, when it calls for "home visits to low-income, first-time parents by trained professionals."

Emblematic of incorrigible disregard for women's work in families and in the labor market, marriage and fatherhood promotion is the nail in the coffin of hope, the defeat of equality for women. Comparable worth for women? Raise the minimum wage to a living wage? Change unemployment insurance to take women's work patterns into account? Paid family leave? Universal child care? Provide income support to caregivers in economic recognition for the work of raising children and caring for family members? Why fight poverty the hard way when all women need is a man with a family wage?

Sources for all tables: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement; American Community Survey; Historical Poverty Tables, 1959-2007.

Editors' note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org

Paid Family and Medical Leave

RANDY ALBELDA AND BETTY REID MANDELL

HOW MANY PEOPLE can afford to take time off from work without being paid? Not many. When a worker gets sick or a child or parent gets sick; when a woman is giving birth or when a parent needs to go to a conference with a teacher, leaving work can not only cost a day's pay, but it can cost advancement in a career. Women, who do most of caregiving, are particularly disadvantaged.

There is intense interest in paid family and medical leave. Activists have been working for years to get it in their states, cities, and nation. A Google search of "Paid Family Leave" on March 3, 2009 showed 16,400,000 entries. The need is great.

Activists won a partial national victory in 1993 with the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The precursor of the FMLA, the Alternative Work Schedules Act (AWSA)* was originally intended as an energy conservation measure to decrease the traffic and the gasoline used in downtown Washington, D.C., but the efforts of advocates turned it into a family-friendly act. The act won the support of conservationists as well as work-life advocates.

The FMLA provides 12 weeks of unpaid leave for workers in companies that employ at least 50 employees. The leave is for the birth and care of a newborn child, for placement of a child for adoption or foster care, to care for an immediate family member with a serious health condition, or to take medical leave. In 2008, Congress amended it as the National Defense Authorization Act to permit a spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin to take up to 26 workweeks of leave to care for a member of the Armed Forces who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy. Importantly, however, the FMLA does not provide paid leave.

Activists have succeeded in getting paid family leave legislation in only three states: California, Washington, and New Jersey. They have fought to get it in many other states. In addition, three cities have passed paid sick days legislation (San Francisco, Washington, DC, and Milwaukee).

Five states (California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island) and Puerto Rico use their mandatory Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programs to provide paid sick leave for own health illnesses. In addition to the already established leave for one's own disability (including up to ten weeks of maternity disability), California and New Jersey have added programs that provide covered employees up to six weeks a year of paid leave to care for a seriously ill child, spouse, parent, domestic partner, or a new child.

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*Formally known as the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1982. The act does not require agencies to use the recommendations, but in 1994 President Clinton recommended each executive department and agency to establish procedures that encourage the expansion of family-friendly work arrangements.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act was an important first step, but is only a partial remedy to a larger problem of managing family and medical leaves that workers face. A Department of Labor study in 2000 found that 38 percent of workers are not eligible under the provisions of the FMLA due to their employer size or their recent work history. In addition, some workers who need leave to take care of family members are excluded because they are not a spouse, child, or parent of the person who needs their care. And millions of U.S. workers are excluded from coverage because they cannot afford unpaid leave. A study of paid leave by Robert Drago showed that "welfare policies, and particularly work requirements under TANF, are serving to reduce parental time investments in childcare for infants, and doing so for groups that have few resources and have historically experienced discrimination in the workplace and community." Expansion of paid leave "would disproportionately help the working poor, women with lower levels of education and lower status jobs, and women of color."

> Single mothers may not be able to afford to use either paid leave or reduced hours options if they involve even a minimal loss of income or, worse still, the loss of health insurance coverage. The resources provided to single mothers need to be enhanced if we desire an equitable distribution of policy utilization.

The benefits to employees of paid medical and family leave are obvious. At some point in all of our work lives, we need to take time off from work because of our own illness or the need to care for family members, including newborns. Being paid for that time off eases our anxieties and improves both our psychological and physical health. The benefits to family members are also obvious. In 1997, American pediatricians recommended that new mothers breast-feed for a full year. Ann Crittenden commented on this:

> This was a sick joke in a country that entitles new mothers to no paid leave at all. American mothers are guaranteed only three months' maternity leave without pay — forcing most working mothers to return to their jobs within a few weeks after giving birth, because they can't afford to take three months off without a pay check. As a consequence, poor mothers are far less likely to breast-feed than their better-off sisters, and infants as young as six weeks are going into day care, with some spending as many as ten hours a day in group settings.

> Some employers have a "give-them-an-inch-and-they'll-take-a-mile" attitude about workers' use of the benefit.

Crittenden recommends that mothers be granted at least one year of paid leave so they can breast-feed at home. Some people argue that working mothers who breast-feed don't need to stay home; they can use a breast pump when at work to save the milk for the infant. Many women do this, but they often have a problem with employers who don't want them to the take time off from work, or don't provide a private space for them to use the breast pump.

Comparing the U.S. to Other Countries

The United States is one of very few industrialized countries that do not have some form of universal, mandatory sick leave and paid maternity leave. Among 21 high-income economies, only Australia and the United States do not have legislative requirements to provide paid maternity leave and only the United States does not have paid time off for extended own-health leaves. Half of the other of these 21 countries offer paid paternity and/or sex-neutral parental leave as well. Several nations have implemented "right to request" policies. These permit employees to ask for flexible work arrangements or reduced hours employment. Twelve of the European Union nations provide for part-time employment upon return from parental leave, and those policies are limited to caregivers.

Sweden guarantees 11 months of generous paid maternity leave, followed by the statutory right to work no more than 30 hours per week until the child turns eight. Each local district has a list of child care crèches that provide family care for children under 2, and federal housing assistance increases after the baby is born.

Programs for paid leave in Europe are financed by social insurance, usually payroll taxes paid for by some combination of employee and employer contributions. "They are then pooled across enterprises, industries, and generations and between men and women, so when a worker goes out on leave, the bill isn't footed by the employer other than through a diffused tax burden." Some discussions of paid leave in the United States have proposed that the employer pay the full cost. Janet Gornick says, "I think that would be catastrophic; employers would protest, and rightly so, and their incentive to discriminate against young women would be quite intense."

In their study of parental leave policies in 21 countries, Janet Gornick and Rebecca Ray noted five best practices:

1. First, the most important element is that the leave needs to be paid, and at a generous rate.
2. Second, men and women need to have their own, nontransferable entitlements.
3. The coverage and eligibility should be broad.
4. Collective financing is crucial because it reduces the financial burden on individual employers which, in turn, reduces political opposition to these programs as well as the incentive to discriminate against young women.
5. The best-practice cases enabled parents to flexibly draw the benefits to which they are entitled. This flexibility in terms of timing is important, but no one argues that workers should have unlimited flexibility. Employers do need a reasonable notification period before employees take leave and, ideally, before they return. That's fair.

Employer Benefits

Some employers provide workers with paid leave for family or medical reasons through benefits such as sick leave, vacation time, parental leave, or medical leave, but they are not legally required to do so. Just over one-third of all those who took any type of family or medical leave received no pay. Fewer than half of all employed women received any paid leave during the first 12 weeks of their children's lives and only 7 percent of employers offered any paid paternity leave.

A national study of employers showed that 79 percent of employers say that they provide paid or unpaid time off for employees to provide elder care without jeopardizing their jobs. Only 6 percent provide direct financial support for local elder care programs. In general, there has been only a modest increase for employer support for family care assistance or flexible workplace policies over the last several years. "Small increases in policy adoption are being seen in the availability of elder care, adoption assistance, and access to long-term care insurance, which are now available to about 1 in 10 workers."

There are gaps in the implementation of FMLA. The National Study of Employers survey found that about a quarter of organizations offer less than 12 weeks of unpaid leave for maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption or foster care leave, and to care for a child with a serious illness. Thirty percent of organizations that fall under the FMLA do not offer the federally mandated 12 weeks of leave, and they are breaking the law. Another problem with FMLA is the lack of education for employees regarding their rights. Many employees did not know how the FMLA applied to their situation.

The limitations of our current voluntary income replacement programs are increasingly apparent. Typically, few if any family members are available to provide unlimited free care. Ironically, paid health providers want to keep patients in care facilities for less time than they did when unpaid care was more plentiful, requiring families to find and/or provide alternative care. Paid family and medical leave is a step toward acknowledging the way our families work. The vast majority of U.S. workers (85 percent) lack access to any formal paid work-family policies. We have a long way to go.

Benefits and Costs to Employees and Employers

NUMEROUS STUDIES DOCUMENT THE BENEFITS of paid family and medical leave to employees and to society: Employees who have paid family and medical leave are more likely to return to work and stay longer in jobs. Even unpaid leave has a large positive effect on the psychological well being of employees with elder care needs. Countries with longer parental leave have a more egalitarian gender division of housework, and lower wage gaps between women and men. Research bears out that full recovery from childbirth typically takes six months or longer. Longer leaves improve the quality of mother-infant interactions and reduce marital instability. Children whose mothers returned to work early (less than nine months after childbirth) scored less on child-cognitive scores than other children, even after adjusting for home environment. One study found a detrimental impact on children's cognitive development when mothers are employed in the first 12 weeks of a child's life, only somewhat mitigated by the increased income associated with employment. Being able to take time to deal appropriately with one's own health problems or the illness of a child, spouse, or parent is likely to speed recovery and reduce the need for relying on government-provided caregiving or health care. A study of 16 European countries over the years 1969 to 1994 found that more generous paid leaves reduced deaths among infants and young children.

The internet advocacy organization Moms Rising speaks to the anti-poverty effects of paid family and medical leave:

> Having a baby is a leading cause of "poverty spells" in this country (times when income dips below what's needed for basic living expenses like food and rent). Paid Family Leave helps families bridge the income gap caused by folks being unable to go to work because they have to care for a new baby or a sick parent or spouse. In fact, nearly half of working people report that an illness or injury in their family caused them to get behind on their bills, including mortgage payments. We need Paid Family Leave to help families stay out of poverty — especially in this time when so many families are already vulnerable.

Employers resist mandatory family and medical leave, both paid and unpaid. Yet they overestimate the costs and underestimate, or refuse to consider, the benefits. When paid family and medical leave legislation was introduced in the Massachusetts legislature in 2006, Randy Albelda and Alan Clayton-Matthews, economists at the University of Massachusetts Boston, studied the costs and benefits of the plan. Using a simulation model, they estimated the current employer and employee wage costs when employees take paid and unpaid family and medical leaves, and the new and redistributed wage-replacement costs of the proposed program. They estimated the current situation in Massachusetts as follows:

> • There are already significant costs borne by employers and employees of family and medical leave taking. In Massachusetts, just under 357,000 of 3.2 million employees take 442,570 leaves (some workers take more than one leave annually) and forego $1.36 billion in annual wages. Employers provide $372 million in wage replacement for a total wage cost of

$1.73 billion. The average cost to the worker who takes a leave is just over $3,000 annually while the average cost to his or her employer is close to $1,300.
• Fifty percent of current leaves in Massachusetts are for own-health reasons, 22 percent are for prenatal leave (including maternity disability) and 23 percent of leaves are for tending to an ill relative.
• The average length of leave for all leaves is 5.4 weeks.
• Currently 33.8 percent of all family and medical leaves are without any wage replacement.

When Albelda and Clayton-Matthews applied their simulation model to the proposed paid family and medical leave program that allowed for 12 weeks of paid leave, replacing all of weekly earnings up to $750/week, they estimated:

• The total number of family and medical leaves taken increases by just under 25,400 to a total of 467,962, a 5.7 increase. The total number of leaves using the proposed program will be 183,981 (assuming two-thirds of all eligible workers taking leave actually use it).
• The total cost of the proposed program is $389 million. Averaged across all employees, the annual cost is $120 per worker and the weekly cost is $2.31.
• Total costs of leaves (including lost wages, employer benefits, and the program costs) rise to $1.84 billion, an increase of 6.4 percent over current costs. The amount of employer wages foregone and employer benefits paid decrease with the proposed program. The new program results in some costs being shifted from employers to employees, and from individual workers taking leave to all workers.
• The average length of leave increases by one-half day from 5.4 weeks (based on a five-day week) to 5.5 weeks.
• The percentage of leaves with no wage replacement decreases to 24.0 percent.
• While the percentage of all leaves without pay decreases for all workers, the proposed program will disproportionately decrease the percentage without pay for leaves taken by workers in low-income households, non-white, younger, and less educated, helping to level a very unlevel employment playing field.

These estimates refute the arguments that paid leave programs are too costly. The estimates should also dispel fears about lengthy extensions of leave-taking due to a paid leave program. Indeed, there are important gains for employees and employers with paid family and medical leave. As a social insurance program, paid leave provides all covered workers the right to receive wage replacement for a limited amount of time when they need it at a relatively small annual price to individual workers. Employers will benefit by reduced use of employer-paid time off and reduced turnover. Furthermore, a universal paid leave program will provide some workers who currently do not have paid leave — typically those with the lowest wages — some form of wage replacement.

Albelda and Clayton-Matthews point out that paid job-protected leave might encourage workers to return to their jobs once the need for leave is over, instead of leaving the labor force altogether or finding work in a new workplace — just as the FMLA reinforces workers' job attachment now. This could have several effects:

• Returning to work reduces turnover, lowering employer costs — both the direct costs of advertising, interviewing, orientation, training, and processing (of both the exiting and the in-coming employee) and indirect costs associated with losing employees who understand internal networks, specific customers, or co-workers' abilities, and decreased morale or efficiency associated with working with inexperienced new employees.
• Workers who stay with their employers might see improved future earnings, since quitting a job can decrease workers' future earnings potential. In addition, workers will benefit from the continuation of any employer benefits offered.
• There might be government savings as well, since workers who quit instead of returning may need to rely on government support (like

Unemployment Insurance, TANF, or Medicaid) for longer than if they had retained their job because of using a paid leave program.

Because the plan would be financed by employee payroll deductions, a paid leave program — beyond administrative costs — will only marginally increase the current cost of leave taking. With an employee-based plan the largest share of the cost of leave taking will be borne by the workers who take those leaves; however, a portion of those costs will be shifted onto workers not taking leave.

Employer Opposition to FMLA

Employers and employees have fought each other over FMLA since it began. Some employers have a "give-them-an-inch-and-they'll-take-a-mile" attitude about workers' use of the benefit. Companies accuse workers of using the Act to take time off for vague and chronic maladies and are doing so intermittently, which makes scheduling harder. Some workers contend that companies are making it more difficult to qualify for leave, and are requiring second or third opinions from doctors.

Companies have spied on workers whom they suspect of fraudulent claims. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago has twice sided with employers who used surveillance to observe employees suspected of abusing the Family and Medical Leave Act. On July 21, 2008, they handed down a decision on the case of Diana L. Vail, who worked a night shift at the Raybestos Products Co., a car parts manufacturer in Crawfordsville, Ind. She was approved for 33 days of intermittent medical leave from May through September 2005 because of migraines. As the summer progressed, Ms. Vail's use of her leave became more frequent. Her supervisors became suspicious because they knew her husband had a lawn mowing business and that she would help him. Raybestos hired an off-duty police sergeant to investigate. Ms. Vail took medical leave for her Oct. 6, 2005 evening shift, and the next morning was observed mowing a lawn. She was terminated, and then filed suit, claiming, in part, that the termination violated FMLA. A lower court dismissed her case and a three-judge panel reviewing the case said that "the information gleaned from the reconnaissance was sufficient to give Raybestos an 'honest suspicion' that Ms. Vail was not using her leave for its intended purpose. While conducting surveillance of an employee 'may not be preferred employer behavior, employers have certainly gone further' and hired investigators to videotape employees on FMLA leave, the appeals court said in its ruling."

The second case before the Chicago appeals court was Harold Crouch vs. Whirlpool Corp. Mr. Crouch had been working at Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, Mich., since 2000, while his fiancée had been there since 1969. The couple attempted to coordinate their vacation times, which are based on seniority. While his fiancée received all of her requested vacation time, Mr. Crouch was denied most of his. In both 2002 and 2003, he filed for disability leave for the same periods for which he had unsuccessfully sought vacation time, both times claiming a knee injured during yard work. A supervisor noticed this and the company hired a private investigator, who videotaped Mr. Crouch doing yard work during the period he was out on disability. Mr. Crouch was terminated and sued, claiming violation of the FMLA. "Whirlpool's honest suspicion forecloses Crouch's FMLA claim," said the three-judge panel, which upheld a lower court ruling dismissing the case.

According to a *Business Insurance* article, businesses have become emboldened by these court suits and "a growing number of employers are turning to surveillance to catch employees suspected of abusing the Family Medical Leave Act." However, lawyers warn employers to respect privacy concerns and not become "overzealous and overreaching in their invasion of an employee's privacy." The FMLA regulations contain a prohibition against using aggressive surveillance or treating an employee on FMLA differently than other employees. The lawyer who successfully represented the employer in the Vail case, Matthew S. Effland, advised employers to hire trained private investigators or off-duty police officers rather than sending out someone from the security department with a video camera. Carl C. Bosland, managing director of the Denver-based Bosland Consulting Group, advised employers to be cautious about interpreting the results of surveillance. He said employees are eligible for FMLA leave if they are unable to perform a particular essential job function. This means they may still meet FMLA's technical requirement even if they are seen engaging in activities that make it "look like they're just malingering."

Should I just be grateful that I have FMLA and jump through these hoops, or should I start tracking this as a hostile work environment? It feels hostile.

A coalition of business groups lobbied to tighten the regulations. A spokesman for the National Association of Manufacturers said, "Our employers don't have any problem with employees using the leave for something like chemotherapy treatment or a pregnancy, but you can get it for a cold or migraine headaches. And that causes enormous scheduling and productivity problems." In support of their campaign to tighten regulations as proposed by the Labor Department in February 2008, employers claimed that employees as well as employers thought the FMLA was being misused. A group called the National Coalition to Protect Family Leave, which included the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Retail Federation, conducted a national telephone survey of 1,000 registered voters, which said that more than 60 percent of Americans thought the FMLA needed tightening to eliminate misuse. Some of the questions in the survey gave a worst-case scenario that was aimed at alarming people, such as: "vulnerable citizens, such as children waiting for a school bus or people in need of emergency 9-1-1 services, are left to themselves." Lisa Horn, a representative of the coalition, said that the potential for FMLA misuse is widely seen by Americans, particularly when it comes to sporadic, unscheduled leave. For example, she said, one in three workers say they can't get their job done when a co-worker takes unscheduled leave.

Debra Ness, president of the National Partnership for Women & Families, opposed the Labor Department's proposal to tighten regulations. She said, "For 15 years, the FMLA has worked well. Now, with the economy in trouble and families struggling, workers need its protection more than ever."

The Bush administration had issued regulations that watered down the FMLA just before President-elect Barack Obama was sworn in. In November 2008, the Department of Labor issued the new rules, which took effect January 16, 2009. The new rules allow employers to demand recertification of a medical condition every 30 days. If the employer has reason to doubt an employee's need for leave, the rules would require the employee to get a second opinion. A Human Resources department can directly contact an employee's health care provider. Employees taking leave must tell their supervisors the same day or the following day. Previously, notice could be delayed. Employers can deny "perfect attendance" awards to workers on FMLA leave and don't have to grant it in increments smaller than they allow other leave. Under the new rules, the time an employee spends in "light duty" work doesn't count against FMLA. Also, a company must explain in writing why it is denying leave. While they won some victories, employers didn't get everything they wanted, because the changes did not define "serious health condition," or iron out problems with intermittent leave.

Sharyn Tejani, senior policy counsel at the National Partnership for Women and Families, criticized the Department of Labor for not doing an empirical FMLA study, rather than just asking for comments. "You shouldn't change regulations for the entire country based on employer complaints," she said. A Congressional advocate of FMLA, Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-New York, wrote a letter to Obama's chief of staff Rahm Emanuel requesting "that the president-elect's transition team take a close look at how we may expeditiously redress any new regulations that undermine access to FMLA leave."

Employees worry about increasing employer scrutiny of their use of FMLA. They are concerned that the direct contact with medical providers would violate medical privacy. One employee asked the advice of Lily Garcia, who writes a column about employment law for the *Washington Post*.

> I have been certified for Family and Medical Leave Act time off for an ongoing problem that requires frequent tests and treatments (leaving an hour early twice a month, on average). My supervisor is not happy about this and is requiring me to submit proof that I attended the appointment and that I had the appointment. When I talk to the human resources department about this, they don't understand where she is coming from, but they are also not willing to get in the middle of it because it's a doable request. It is doable, but I am feeling harassed. Should I just be grateful that I have FMLA and jump through these hoops, or should I start tracking this as a hostile work environment? It feels hostile.

Garcia advised her that if her employer has reasons to doubt her need for leave, the law could require her to obtain a second medical opinion. "What your employer may not do is administer the FMLA in such a way that it amounts to retaliation against those who take advantage of the law." Since the employer's request was doable, she advised the woman to comply with it but to keep good notes of her employment relationship for possible future use.

The Road Ahead

The opposition against paid family and medical leave is strong. Business lobbies are well organized and have lots of money. The Bush Administration was strongly allied with business interests. During the presidential campaign, Democratic candidates indicated support for family leave. Barack Obama proposed expanding the 1993 family leave law to include businesses with fewer than 25 workers. He also proposed to give states $1.5 billion in incentives to start paid family leave programs, and he supported a federal guarantee of sick leave, saying he would "require that employers provide seven paid sick days per year." Michelle Obama has said that she is concerned about the problems of juggling work and family life.

In 2009, a bill was proposed in the U.S. House to grant Paid Family Leave for all federal workers, sponsored by Rep. Carolyn Maloney. The internet advocacy group Moms Rising was working hard for its passage. They argued that

> Policies for Federal employees can lead the nation! With more than 2.7 million civilian employees, the federal government is the nation's largest employer. Passing a standard of Paid Parental Leave for people who work for the nation's largest employer is a benchmark toward Paid Family Leave for all workers. It's time for the federal government to establish policies which support working families, and thus set an example for all other employers.

This bill was passed by the House on June 4, 2009 and awaited action by the Senate. Republicans opposed it. Republican Pete Sessions of Texas said, "Maybe we just ought to let federal employees take 16 years off. Hello! Hello!

Wake up, Washington! We're in a recession, and somebody is going to have to pay for this."

In March 2009, the Family Leave Insurance Act of 2009 was introduced in the House, co-sponsored by Representatives Pete Stark (D-CA), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). It would provide 12 weeks of paid benefits to workers who need to take time off to care to care for an ill family member, a new child, or because of their own illness. It would work like Unemployment Insurance, and would be funded by individuals and their employers paying 0.2 percent of employee's wages into an insurance fund. It would include employers who have two or more employees for 20 or more weeks during the year. Rep. Stark, Chair of the House Ways and Means Health Committee, said

> If we want to help people through the recession, we need to make sure that workers can maintain their incomes without sacrificing their families' needs. The Family Leave Insurance Act will provide paid family leave for workers, which will mean healthier children, stronger families, and more competitive businesses.

Rep. Stark expected to have a fight on his hands. He said, "Employers didn't step up on Medicare or Social Security. We made them do it and now it's part of the system." Moms Rising is urging people to work for the federal Family Leave Insurance Act.

A Congressional act to provide sick leave to employees, called the Healthy Families Act, was introduced in May 2009 by Senator Kennedy, in the Senate, and Rosa DeLauro, in the House. It would require employers of 15 or more employees to provide up to seven job-protected sick days each year.

As usual, business groups mobilized to block the legislation. Some employers cynically referred to HFA as the Paid Vacation Act because a doctor's certificate isn't required unless the employee is out for three or more consecutive days.

There is also a campaign to get more flexibility in work hours, in order to accommodate caregiving responsibilities. In 2007, the Working Families Flexibility Act was introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This act allows an employee who works for an employer with at least 15 employees to request a change in his or her scheduling, place of work, or number of hours worked. The employer is permitted to refuse the request as long as it provides a reason for doing so — such as a loss of productivity or the effect of the change on the employer's ability to meet customer demand.

Most countries with paid leave policies finance them through payroll taxes, although Canada uses its unemployment insurance system. A federal paid leave program could adopt similar mechanisms. For example, Heather Boushey from the Center for American Progress recently proposed a plan for paid family and medical leave through the already existing Social Security program, which is funded by payroll taxes. It could be funded either by adding a small increase to the payroll tax (about three-tenths of a percent), lifting the earning cap beyond its 2009 level of $106,800, or by allowing workers to trade future Social Security benefits for paid time to provide care during their working years. The bureaucracy to finance the system and to deliver checks (although they would have to be sent out quicker than the system currently functions) is already in place and Social Security already provides benefits to workers who become disabled and a worker's surviving family members. There is already a structure in place to establish the criteria for eligibility that takes into account a variety of circumstances.

Boushey believes that this is a good time to push for this plan, suggesting that "we leverage populist outrage over Wall Street bailouts to overcome past hurdles to secure family leave insurance for all workers, including low-wage workers. When corporate executives with tin ears whine about cuts to their multimillion-dollar pay packages amid a deep recession, now is the time for progressives to focus on inclusive labor-market solutions for all American families."

Federal legislation that establishes uniform policies for all the states is the best possible outcome. It is unfortunate that Obama's proposal would leave it up to the states, rather than enacting a uniform federal provisions. Even though activists have had notable success in winning and proposing state legislation, many states have no policy at all and those that do vary in their coverage.

Part-time workers are generally not covered by paid family and medical leave. For many of them, welfare also serves as family leave. Ellen Bravo, coordinator of the Multi-State Working Families Consortium, recommended that, in addition to using stimulus funds to expand Unemployment Insurance, Congress should use stimulus funds to help states set up Family Leave insurance funds for part-time as well as full-time workers.

The swine flu (H1N1) virus highlighted the dilemma of parents across the nation who found themselves in a bind when hundreds of schools closed. Nearly half of all workers — 59 million people — and 86 percent of food service workers do not have the right to paid sick days. President Obama was slow to acknowledge the problem, and only requested that parents and businesses think about "contingency plans" if kids get sick and must stay home. He urged employers to "allow infected employees to take as many sick days as necessary." Yet there is no penalty for employers who choose not to pay workers in this situation, or for those who refuse workers any time off at all.

The times seem ripe for expansion of paid family and medical leave. Middle-class people are affected by it as well as poor people, which gives it more political clout. Unions have crafted strategic plans to fight for legislation. Many academics are doing research and publicizing it. Many advocacy organizations are fighting for it. Moms Rising is using the internet creatively to organize. Public awareness is high. Activists have formed strong coalitions in their states and nationally. Activists need to just keep on keepin' on, in their long march for good federal legislation.

Editors' note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org

Feminism in "Waves": Useful Metaphor or Not?

LINDA NICHOLSON

BY THE EARLY 1990S, it had become clear that the kind of feminist activity that had blossomed from the late 1960s through the late 1980s in the United States was no longer present. Consequently, many began to ask: what was the present state of feminism? One idea put forth in the early 1990s was that feminism had not died but was merely in a "third wave" — a younger form of feminism that looked very different from earlier forms. Here I would like to turn to the question of the current state of feminism, not through asking whether we are in a "third wave," but through reflecting upon the general use of the wave metaphor in feminist self-understanding. In seeing what has been useful, or not, in this metaphor, we can generate some tools in understanding the contemporary state of U.S. feminism.

Let me begin then with some reflections on the wave metaphor. In the late 1960s, it was very useful for feminists to begin to describe their movement as the "second wave" of feminism. It was useful because it reminded people that the then current women's rights and women's liberation movements had a venerable past — that these movements were not historical aberrations but were part of a long tradition of activism. The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time when feminists began to rewrite U.S. history. Involved in that rewriting were new understandings of the suffrage movement, including the recognition that the suffrage movement was part of a larger nineteenth century movement around women's issues. One could expand the meaning of the suffrage movement and tie it to 1960s activism by referring to the former as the first wave of U.S. feminism and to the 1960s movement as the second wave. Thus the wave metaphor both showed the 1960s movement as something other than an historical aberration and also framed the nineteenth century movement as far larger and more historically significant than most of us had been taught.

But the wave metaphor has outlived its usefulness. For one, the places where it mostly gets mentioned, among those who are committed to some version or another of feminism, are those places where people mostly now know this history, i.e., know about the larger significance of the nineteenth century women's movement and know that 1960s activism emerged from a long history of struggle around women's issues. But it is not only that the wave metaphor has outlived its usefulness. It is also that the wave metaphor tends to have built into it an important metaphorical implication that is historically misleading and not helpful politically. That implication is that underlying certain historical differences, there is one phenomenon, feminism, that unites gender activism in the history of the United States, and that like a

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wave, peaks at certain times and recedes at others. In sum, the wave metaphor suggests the idea that gender activism in the history of the United States has been for the most part unified around one set of ideas, and that set of ideas can be called feminism.

But as the historical record has increasingly illustrated, that is not how best to understand the past in the United States. The different kinds of activism around gender that have taken place since the early nineteenth century in this country cannot be reduced to one term, feminism. That kind of reduction obfuscates the historical specificity of gender activism in the history of the United States. It obscures the differences in the ideas that have motivated different groups of people to pursue different kinds of political goals at different moments in time. For example, to call the nineteenth century movement "the first wave" suggests an underlying similarity between the political goals of this movement with those of the movements that began to emerge in the 1960s. But as Nancy Cott argued in her groundbreaking book, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism,* it is not even appropriate to call much of the activism around gender issues in the nineteenth century, and particularly the nineteenth century suffrage movement, a "feminist" movement. For one, those active in this movement did not use the term. Moreover, many who supported suffrage had more limited political goals than did those who began to use the word feminism in the early twentieth century. Many of those who supported suffrage did so not on the basis of a general idea of women's equality with men, or because they thought of women as individuals similar to men — ideas that would become important for many of those beginning to call themselves feminists in the early twentieth century — but because they believed, for a variety of reasons, that women should have the vote. As Cott quotes an early twentieth century feminist, "All feminists are suffragists, but not all suffragists are feminists."

Not recognizing these distinctions has led some scholars to be puzzled about why feminism "died" after the nineteenth amendment was passed. My own view is that it did not die because at that moment in time it had not yet been born, at least not as the type of large-scale social movement that suffrage had become. In the early twentieth century, while there were a large number of people who supported women's suffrage and who were working to improve women's situation in other ways, such as through supporting protective labor legislation for women, their support did not translate into what was then becoming understood as feminism. An important strand of the feminist vision of the time — that women and men were similar in fundamental ways and on that basis should be treated as equals — was the position of only a small number of women, mostly those in professional or gender neutral jobs. That kind of feminist position, as reflected in the National Women's Party endorsement of an Equal Rights Amendment, was strongly opposed by many who saw such an amendment undermining the protective labor legislation that women had only recently won. The relative isolation of this kind of feminist position remained the case up until the early 1960s.

The different kinds of activism around gender that have taken place since the early nineteenth century in this country cannot be reduced to one term, feminism.

But even in the period between the passage of the nineteenth amendment and the early 1960s, real changes in gender roles and relationships were taking place. During the 1920s and 1930s, ordinary women were challenging older notions of womanhood in a myriad number of ways, from cutting their hair, to adopting new norms about sexuality, to developing new understandings of their relationship to wage labor. Particularly in the post World War II period, a growing number of women were entering the paid labor force for a larger period of their lives. In the 1940s and 1950s, women in unions were beginning to make many of the same kinds of political demands that had become associated with the label feminism in the early part of the century — such as equal pay for equal work. Connections began to be made among those who occupied leadership positions in such unions with others who were arguing for women's rights in other arenas, laying the groundwork for the kind of political activism that began to surface in a more public way in the early 1960s. This complex history tends to be obscured by the use of the wave metaphor.

Moreover, the use of the wave metaphor becomes particularly unhelpful when we turn our attention back to the present. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, feminism began to expand its meaning, including not only those who supported what many now think of as a liberal understanding of feminism, but also those who took this worldview in new directions. The 1960s through the 1980s was a period of great theoretical and political creativity and activity, making possible a very broad understanding of feminism. But after that kind of creative activity began to die down in the 1990s, people began to wonder whether or not we were in a third wave of feminism. The appeal of this way of thinking was that it kept up the hope that gender activism had not really died down but merely had taken a somewhat different, more youthful and jazzier form. But when I think about what has transpired in the period from the 1990s to today, I don't think that the metaphor of a third wave is the best way to describe what has gone on. Instead, let me offer a different kind of analysis about what has happened.

Since the early 1990s, we have been in a period where the feminism that emerged in the1960s, 1970s, and 1980s has both flourished in many areas and stalled in others, and this complexity cannot be adequately captured by the metaphor of a wave. Rather, we need to understand the areas in which it has flourished and the areas in which it has stalled to have a realistic assessment both of where we are as well as to better figure out where we need to go.

Let me begin with the more optimistic perspective on how feminism has been flourishing. Following the mass transformation of consciousness that was the great legacy of the mass movements of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, feminism began the quiet, but very important job of institutionalizing itself. The phrase that has sometimes been used to describe this process is "the long walk through the institutions." We all are aware of many of the results of that process: the creation of women's studies programs, the establishment of rape crisis centers and shelters for the victims of domestic abuse, the creation of women's caucuses in many organizations, the formation of women's political organizations, such as Emily's List, etc., etc. What we tend to be less conscious of is how many of these institutionalized manifestations of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s feminism are not static but have continued to grow and develop, more quietly perhaps than was the case with their inauguration, but still happening. Women's Studies programs are no longer small isolated ghettos in liberal arts schools but have spread into law schools, medical schools, and schools of architecture and journalism. Emily's List has grown into a powerful organization that almost succeeded in helping make a woman president of the United States. The women's ordination movement in many religious denominations has either achieved its goals or, in the case of some churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, has continued to grow. Women make up an increasing percentage of those receiving doctorates in the United States, indeed surpassing the percentage of men in 2003. While employed women still do a disproportionate share of housework and childrearing, that share has decreased over time. And gender is talked about in more sophisticated and more public ways than would have been heard even in the glory days of the 1970s. Within Women's Studies settings, feminists recognize today in more conceptually developed ways than they did even in the 1980s, how phenomena such as gender, race, and class intersect in constituting an individual's social identity. Among the wider public, in the last presidential campaign, even conservative Republican women used the word sexism to disparage many of the criticisms Democrats were making of Sarah Palin. For all of the hypocrisy that one might see in their responses — when exactly did Phyliss Schafly change her mind about the appropriateness of a woman with a four-month-old baby entering the work force? — still, that these conservative women and men saw the adjective "sexist" as rhetorically powerful, meant that feminism was not only far from dead but was in a state of growth.

That is the good news. The bad news, however, is also not hard to find. The wage gap between women and men continues to exist. Rigid and narrow standards of beauty continue to dominate the lives of women, perhaps even more so today than even forty years ago. A sexual double standard among young women and men continues to be in place. And no one could claim that many of the other encompassing goals of the radical and socialist feminist movements of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s — such as for the elimination of racial and class inequality — have been attained.

The question then is why the feminism of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s has advanced so far in some ways and gone nowhere in others. And here again, this is a question for which the wave metaphor supplies little help. Instead, what we need to do is examine the reasons why we are where we are by looking at the very specific contexts of the lives of diverse groups of women. I can't come up with a full answer to this question, but instead let me offer a few reflections.

One of the reasons why 1960s, 1970s and 1980s feminism did generate the kind of mass attention that it did was because a lot of it spoke to the real conflicts many women were experiencing as they were entering the workforce. As I noted earlier, the post World War II period was one of an important change in the gendered nature of the paid labor force. Women had been entering the work force in increasing numbers since the early twentieth century. But prior to World War II, a lot of this labor had been associated with women who were poor, black, single, or childless. After World War II, more married women, more white women, more middle class women, more women with children at home, became part of the paid labor force. Moreover, they were entering jobs that were not as sex stereotyped as those in which most women had been employed before the war. The consequences of these changes were numerous. Among union women, it meant that while older demands such as protective labor legislation were still important, such legislation began to diminish in importance in relation to newer issues such as equal pay for equal work and the elimination of gender segregated seniority lists. Among middle class women, the older ideology that one was either a wife and mother or a career woman began to diminish in favor of the newer ideology that women could be both — a happy wife and mother and a successful contributor to the household economy. The consequence was that in the early 1960s, the ideology of liberal feminism — that women are equal to men, and that women, like men, should be judged as individuals — the very ideology that could <u>not</u> generate a mass following in the 1920s, could now begin to generate such a mass following. And because this understanding of feminism continues to speak to the real concerns of many women, this understanding of feminism continues to flourish in contemporary society.

But, as we know, liberal feminism was only one part of the feminist movement of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Also constituting an important part of this movement was radical feminism. In some respects, the radical feminism of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s also expressed ideas that responded to the conflicts of many. Radical feminism's slogan that "the personal is political" captured the tensions experienced by many women who found themselves subject to older sex role stereotypes within domestic settings as they were also beginning to negotiate a more equal economic arena. In bringing attention to the politics of housework or the phenomenon of domestic abuse, radical feminists were drawing attention to phenomena with which many could identify. In using such terminology as "sex roles," radical feminists were also employing the kind of psychological/sociological language that was becoming more prevalent in ordinary discourse. In all of these respects, radical feminism also has become a part of mainstream America.

The question then is why the feminism of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s has advanced so far in some ways and gone nowhere in others.

But there were aspects of radical feminism that could have been advanced only by a small group of relatively privileged women at a certain point in their lives and that therefore could not be sustained by many over time. The idea that women should separate from men could not appeal to the very large population of American heterosexual women who saw marriage and motherhood as representing some of the best of what life has to offer. And because so many American women have and still do see romantic relationships as central parts of their lives, other aspects of radical feminism also became impossible to implement in a mass way, for example that women should abandon the task of making themselves more beautiful or sexually desirable. These were ideas that young women in small radical enclaves might have adopted at a certain moment in their lives. But looking back now from the perspective of forty years later, it seems unlikely that these kinds of political ideals could have reached many or made themselves part of the general culture in any kind of sustained way.

And if many aspects of radical feminism could speak only to a small segment of the U.S. population, the same is even more true of an even smaller and less influential segment of the feminism of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, its Marxist and socialist wings. The ideals of this part of women's liberation — eliminating racism, sexism, and class inequality — while theoretically understandable given the heady sense of optimism of the time, did not resonate with a significant segment of the U.S. population. This point responds to one of the criticisms that sometimes has been made against women's liberation as well as against the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, that both "sold out," were "co-opted," or undermined the left because neither sufficiently advanced an economic agenda that would have pushed this country in a socialist direction. But this kind of criticism blames Black Power and women's liberation for failing to achieve what neither could have achieved given the political climate of the United States in that period. That socialist movements within both movements were always relatively small is only one sign of the fact that America in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s was not ready to make encompassing social structural changes either in terms of economic, racial, or gender relations.

In short, what I am saying is that the feminism of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s achieved and continues to achieve what it has to the extent its message has resonated with the felt needs of many. Certain aspects of those movements that did speak to problems and tensions expressed by many have continued to generate change, often in more extensive and sophisticated ways than was true of the earlier period. Others that were less in tune with the lives and desires of ordinary women and men have fared less well. In short, we are in a period now where the kind of feminism many of us experienced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s is both flourishing and quiescent. Gender is alive and well as a focus of attention in public discourse and public life even as some of the issues associated with the feminism of the earlier period have retreated from sight. That kind of complexity cannot be captured with the metaphor of a wave.

To be sure, there is one use that the wave metaphor is suited for — to identify those moments in history when issues of gender mobilize large numbers of people in very public, noisy, and challenging ways, that is, when such issues are able to generate large scale social or political movements. We are not in that kind of period, which makes the description of feminist activism today as a "third wave" even more questionable. But if we look back at other periods in U.S. history where that kind of activism was also not present, say, for example, in the period between the 1920s and the 1960s, the lack of such very public activity does not necessarily mean the lack of changes in gender norms and gender ideology. Consequently, younger feminists are correct in claiming that there are possibilities for gender activism today that are different from the forms of activism that flourished in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. We can acknowledge those differences and also acknowledge the connections such activism might have to the activism of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s without the use of the "wave" metaphor. A more useful way of thinking about these changes as well as other changes in activism over time can be suggested by the metaphor of a kaleidoscope. At any given moment in time, the view in a kaleidoscope is complex, showing distinct colors and patterns. With a turn of the kaleidoscope, some of these colors and patterns become more pronounced, others less so, and new patterns and colors have emerged. This kind of metaphor suggests a better way to think about the changes that have marked the history of gender activism in the United States than does one that likens such changes to an ocean's ebbs and swells.

I would like to thank Gretchen Arnold and Adrienne Davis for their very useful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. I would also like to thank the audience and my fellow co-panelist, Jennifer Baumgardner, for their comments at the New York SWIP meeting in April 2009 where I presented this essay as a talk. I want to thank Nanette Funk, in particular, for organizing this event.

Editors' Note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org.

Nor Meekly Serve Her Time

Riots and Resistance in Women's Prisons

VICTORIA LAW

IN 1974, WOMEN IMPRISONED at New York's maximum-security prison at Bedford Hills staged what is known as the August Rebellion. Prisoner organizer Carol Crooks had filed a lawsuit challenging the prison's practice of placing women in segregation without a hearing or 24-hour notice of charges. In July, a court had ruled in her favor. In August, guards retaliated by brutally beating Crooks and placing her in segregation without a hearing. The women protested, fighting off guards, taking over several sections of the prison, and holding seven staff members hostage for two and a half hours.

Male state troopers and (male) guards from men's prisons were brought in to suppress the uprising, resulting in twenty-five women being injured. In the aftermath, twenty-four women were transferred to the Matteawan Complex for the Criminally Insane.

Three years earlier, male prisoners in Attica, New York, captured headlines nationwide when they took over the prison for four days demanding better living and working conditions. The governor ordered the National Guard to retake the prison; 54 people (prisoners and guards) were killed. The rebellion catapulted prison issues into public awareness, becoming the symbol of prisoner organizing. In contrast, the August Rebellion is virtually forgotten today, leading to the widespread belief that women prisoners do not organize or resist.

Women prisoners have always resisted. When imprisoned in male penitentiaries and work camps, they refused to obey the rules. When states began housing them in separate facilities, they protested substandard conditions, sometimes violently. In 1835, New York State opened its first prison for women. The environment was so terrible that the women rioted, attacking and tearing the clothes off the prison matron and physically chasing away other officials with wooden food tubs.

A century later, women continued to protest horrifying prison conditions: In 1975, women imprisoned in North Carolina held a sit-down demonstration demanding better medical care, improved counseling services, and the closing of the prison laundry. When prison guards attempted to end the protest by herding them into the gymnasium and beating them, the women fought back. Using volleyball net poles, chunks of concrete, and hoe handles, they drove the guards out of the prison. Their rebellion was quashed only after the state called in over one hundred guards from other prisons.

Some instances of resistance remain little known outside the prison. Former political prisoner Rita "Bo" Brown recounts that women imprisoned in Nevada took action against the prison's psychiatrist who had been pushing psychotropic medication, even to women who did not need it. One woman died as a result. Her death unleashed the women's anger. The next time the psychiatrist visited the prison, the women threw chairs, tables, and anything they could lift, driving him not only off-premises but

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also off the job. Not only was the psychiatrist replaced (with the prison's first woman psychiatrist who did not share her predecessor's enthusiasm for drugging patients), but so were the prison's doctor, warden, assistant warden, and other higher-ups in the prison administration.

The women's action did not make the news. Brown learned of it only after arriving at the prison itself two months later. Former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn also recounted tales of resistance that, were she not outside telling them, would have remained buried behind prison walls. When she first arrived at the Baltimore City Jail in 1985, she quickly learned that she would have to fight for her rights, even those she was entitled to under jail regulations, state law, and the constitution. "As a white middle-class woman, I really hate waiting on lines. I didn't want to. But I had to learn the difference between making that an issue, which no one else there thought was the big issue, and fighting for things that were really important to people. And taking leadership from the women who knew better than I did what was important to resist."

She recounted that, like many other jails and prisons, the food was almost inedible. "We had been hoping that at Thanksgiving, we would get a piece of turkey, something that was decent," she recounted. "Come Thanksgiving, they [the guards and administration] hand out these, I don't know, they were dinosaur legs! You could break a window with them. And, in this prison, when you come in and you had dentures, they would take your teeth away. So most of the women didn't have teeth. *I* couldn't eat them with my big choppers and other women couldn't either. We were all furious. We marched out and we threw them all in the garbage and walked out. That was the first little bit of resistance around this issue.

"So me, with my 'We're going to make a revolution here,' I started talking to my friends. And I said, 'At Christmas, let's do a hunger strike,' or 'Let's throw the trays back at them' or something. And people were like, 'No, we don't want to do that.' And what they came up with, which was much better, was that we should not go to dinner that day. Just not go, and that we should organize the community people that came in, which were a nun, a teacher, a chaplain, and the decent guards to bring food and make a Christmas party. And so we got that. And the whole time I'm thinking 'Oh yeah, this is really revolutionary, a Christmas party.' Well, it was. Because it was saying 'Fuck you. You don't want to give us our rights but we're going to take them in this small way.' It was the most wonderful thing. It was really great."

> In July 2009, the suit [*Neal v. MDOC*] was settled. Male guards were prohibited from entering areas in which women would be partially or fully undressed.

More recently, women incarcerated in Arizona attempted to protest and draw public attention to the use of cages in Arizona prisons. The only coverage was a short article in the *Arizona Republic*. The incident might have been forgotten had blogger Peggy Plews not taken on the issue, reprinting the article on her blog, reaching out to other prisoner rights advocates, organizing protest actions, and demanding accountability from Arizona prison and elected officials. Arizona has more than 600 outdoor cages where prisoners are placed to confine or restrict their movement or to hold them while awaiting medical appointments, work, education, or treatment programs. On May 20, 2009, Marcia Powell, a mentally ill 48-year-old incarcerated in Perryville, died after being left in an unshaded cage for nearly four hours in 107 degree heat. Two and a half weeks later, three women at the same prison simultaneously set fire to their mattresses in an attempt to draw outside attention to these conditions.

Women have also resisted in less visibly dramatic ways. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 allows male guards to work in female prisons. Many states do not restrict guards' access to the women, often leading to sexual harassment, abuse, and assault. However, incarcerated women have resisted staff sexual abuse, both individually and collectively. One woman, incarcerated in Ohio during the early 1990s, recounted that a male officer constantly harassed her cellmate. "He'd make nasty insinuations about her breasts and what he would like to do to them and how he would like to do it and what he'd do to her." The guard threatened to place cocaine among their possessions if she or her friends reported his behavior. His threat worked; the women kept quiet about his harassment. One night, he assaulted his victim. Her cellmate and another prisoner heard her screams and found her with semen on her face. Despite their fears, the three filed a complaint with prison officials and later testified before a grand jury, leading to the officer's arrest and conviction. Their actions encouraged other women to resist male guards' abuse of power.

"It was a funny thing after that happened," the woman stated. "A lot of the nastiness and that vulgarness . . . was seeming to cease a little bit and to ease up a little bit, because they began to get nervous. And more women stood up, and two other officers were escorted off because the women found enough courage to stand up."

Laura Whitehorn has a similar story from her incarceration at the federal prison in Lexington, Kentucky.

> There was this one guard. We called him "John Wayne." . . . He would pat-search us. They're not supposed to put their hands on our breasts or in between our legs, they're supposed to just go around the area. But he grabbed my breasts and squeezed them and so I rammed my elbow into whatever [body part] was nearest behind me. And he tried to lock me up. I was taken to the lieutenant's office.
>
> One of the other dykes on the compound, who was a good friend, saw me. I said, "John Wayne just grabbed my breasts." She brought two others and they all stood outside the lieutenant's office, which is off-limits, and said, "We demand that this be taken seriously." And so they didn't lock me up . . .
>
> We then grieved it . . . And we lost. They said he had acted professionally. But the lieutenant . . . took two of us aside and said, "We want you to know that they're making John Wayne watch the training videos over and over again. And they didn't have him at the checkpoint where the most people go through."

Although the women's actions did not remove "John Wayne" from the prison, it did warn him that his behavior would no longer go unchecked and removed him from working in areas where he could do the most harm.

Women have also organized collectively to limit male guards' access and abuse. In 1996, 500 women who had been sexually assaulted by guards while incarcerated in Michigan filed *Neal v. MDOC*. In July 2009, the suit was settled. Male guards were prohibited from entering areas in which women would be partially or fully undressed (i.e., sleeping, shower, and toilet areas). The settlement also provided for a $100 million settlement for the women who had been assaulted and payment of all legal fees.

Another issue that women have organized around is education. Access to education is particularly important given that women in prison come from the groups least likely to finish high school or attend college: women in poverty, disproportionately African-American and Latina.

In 1973, Michigan was one of several states that provided basic education programs in male but not female prisons. In 1977, women imprisoned in Michigan's Huron Valley State Prison filed *Glover v. Johnson*, a class-action suit claiming that prison officials violated incarcerated women's rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment by denying them access to the vocational and educational programs that were available to their male counterparts. When asked what prompted her to file the suit, lead plaintiff Mary Glover stated, "I wanted to go to college." Both she and her husband had been sentenced to prison. Her husband had the opportunity to enroll in both college and vocational programming. Glover, who was sent to the women's prison, did not.

In 1979, the court ruled in their favor and ordered the state to establish a general education program for women that was the equivalent to the one offered to men.

The court also ordered that the prison offer a course on legal skills to the women "because skilled women inmates are needed to provide access to the courts." In the court's opinion, although the prison law library met constitutional standards, women still lacked the access to the courts guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause. Male prisoners had a tradition of jailhouse lawyering and thus had developed expertise in utilizing legal resources, but "the women do not have a history of self-help in the legal field; the evidence tends to show that until recently they have had little access to adequate resources." Some of these women, including Mary Glover, took these courses and then went on to file other suits against MDOC (including *Neal v. MDOC*).

Women have also organized to defend their access to educational programs. In 1972, radical feminists formed the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project (SCWPP), the first program to ever offer university courses in a women's prison. In contrast to the prison's existing vocational programs, such as hairdressing, sewing, and office work, the SCWPP offered courses that challenged students to analyze the social issues affecting their lives, such as Women and the Law, Drug Use in U.S. Culture, and an Ethnic Studies course which focused on the historical and sociological perspective on women of color in the United States.

The project also connected women inside with current events and foreign political struggles. After learning about the experiences of women in Vietnam, women at CIW wrote letters of solidarity to women political prisoners in Vietnam. The letters were not only delivered to the women imprisoned in South Vietnam, but also published as a pamphlet entitled *From Women in Prison Here to Women of Vietnam: We Are Sisters.*

In 1972, when one of the SCWPP founders was temporarily banned from the prison and the program suspended, students organized a work strike and a sit-in before the warden's office. When the project was barred again in 1973, the students circulated petitions, held work strikes, and met with the administration to protest the project's removal.

During one of the periods in which the project was banned, a woman who had been at the prison for years observed:

> I witnessed something I would have believed [three years ago] was impossible. We had an [illegal] meeting where Black and White were united, under one common cause. There were women there who in the past would never have spoken to each other but here they were standing together, agreeing, touching shoulders. The tone of the meeting was not loud or wild. It was a confident approach to bringing back the workshops. It is something we all want. It was beautiful. We elected a six-woman committee to speak for the group. We are not afraid.

The opportunity to critically examine issues affecting their lives and to challenge prevailing stereotypes built bridges between prisoners who had previously believed they had nothing in common. And, when this opportunity was threatened, these women already had the groundwork to set aside their differences and unite to pressure the prison to reinstate the program.

Even today, access to education has a tremendous impact on women behind bars, many of whom enter prison with low self-esteem, self-worth, and self confidence after years of physical and/or sexual abuse. Marcia Bunney, incarcerated in California, recounted, "Difficult experiences at school during my childhood and adolescence had left me with memories of loathing conventional education and everything connected with it." The abuse that she had suffered in previous relationships had implanted the idea that she was not smart enough to attend college: "I was skeptical of the idea of returning to school, certain that college was beyond my ability, ready to give up before I had given myself a chance to start."

During the 1970s, outside activists and organizers recognized that the injustices occurring on the inside were exaggerated mirrors of those on the outside

However, without the continual discouragement of abusive lovers and with the encouragement of her fellow prisoners and her prison work supervisor, Bunney overcame her doubts and fears about education, earning an associates degree. That was not her only lesson: "Beyond the specific components of the curriculum, I learned many valuable lessons, the greatest of which was that I was *capable.* After a lifetime of seeing myself as a failure and as inferior, this represented a complete reversal, one that admittedly required effort to accept and absorb."

How is education linked to resistance? Women with more education are often sought by their peers. Broomhall observed that less literate women rely on others to write their requests to staff members. "They are simply incapable of clear expression," she noted. Dawn, a woman incarcerated in Texas, concurred: "Frequently, I will hear women ask someone to help them write a grievance." She also noted that when a woman writes a grievance about a condition affecting all or most of the women on her unit, others will copy her complaint. "They believe that there is some right or wrong way to fill these [grievance forms] out and that somehow they are not qualified to write on this 'official form,'" she noted. "It's very daunting to some of them."

Education has also led women to challenge systemic abuses: both the writing skills and the self-confidence that Marcia Bunney gained during her college classes led her to learn to use the prison grievance system to dispute prison injustices. Prison officials transferred her to the Central California Women's Facility where she took advantage of her job as a library assistant and taught herself law. She joined the National Lawyers' Guild, becoming one of five prisoner representatives of the National Steering Committee of the Guild's Prison Law Project. She also initiated contact with an attorney known to be interested in litigating to change prison conditions: "Soon I was organizing the active acquisition of information to support claims of systematically inferior medical care, including the names and particulars of prisoners willing to come forward to be interviewed." In addition, Bunney began educating herself about civil litigation, again drawing on the skills she learned through her college classes: "My strong composition skills were an asset, and I grew adept at drafting clear, concise declarations as a means of documenting the serious medical problems of many women, including several who proceeded to file individual actions for damage."

During the 1970s, outside activists and organizers recognized that the injustices occurring on the inside were exaggerated mirrors of those on the outside and often worked in solidarity with people in prison to challenge and change prison conditions. Today, although many on the left are alarmed about the trend of mass incarceration, few are making the personal connections with people inside resisting and organizing. Why aren't we connecting the struggles for social justice outside with those on the inside?

Incarcerated women and their advocates have suggestions on how activists and organizers on the outside can support their resistance behind bars:

• Make contact with women in prison. As a woman incarcerated in Florida put it, "Visits, phone calls, and letter writing are essential. Only with a firm foundation, a strong foundation, can we together be able to build a greater movement."

• Speak out or write about prison issues, especially when they intersect with issues that are considered "non-prison" issues.

• Raise awareness in other creative ways. Activists infuriated by Marcia Powell's death have been placing "Free Marcia Powell" signs in well-trafficked areas, spreading the word not only about her death but also systemic prison atrocities.

• Send literature and news from the outside.

• Participate in support organizations that include the participation and leadership of currently and/or formerly incarcerated women.

• Peer education groups need up-to-date information on health issues and treatments! They also need outside people who are willing to provide services not available (but much needed) within the prison.

• For those connected to universities or other educational institutions: look into setting up a women's studies course or other program within a women's prison that helps articulate and challenge the dominant ways of thinking and the power structure.

A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org

CRUSADERS FOR JUSTICE

"No nation, savage or civilized, save only the United States of America, has confessed its inability to protect its women save by hanging, shooting, and burning alleged offenders." (1900)

"The alleged menace of universal suffrage having been avoided by the absolute suppression of the negro vote, the spirit of mob murder should have been satisfied and the butchery of negroes should have ceased." (1900)

"The appeal to the white man's pocket has ever been more effectual than all the appeals ever made to his conscience." (1892)

— Ida B. Wells
Anti-lynching crusader, suffragist, investigative journalist, co-founder NAACP

Birds and Cages

Reading Sex and the State in Janet Afary's Sexual Politics in Modern Iran

AMY LITTLEFIELD

JANET AFARY IS HOPEFUL about the future of women's rights in Iran. And she identifies many reasons to be so, from secret individual acts of resistance by women against husbands, fathers, and dictators to collective feminist struggle and today's One Million Signatures Campaign for equal rights. But *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* also reveals the full force of the cultural and political systems that the Iranian movement for gender equality confronts. Stories such as that of the teenage homosexual couple executed and tortured in 2006 and the sixteen-year-old girl publicly hanged for having extramarital sex in 2004 have garnered international outrage against Iran. But the stories cannot exist out of context, and Afary meticulously unravels the hundreds of years of power and patriarchy that have molded today's Iranian sexual and political landscape.

Sexual Politics in Modern Iran
JANET AFARY
N.Y., Cambridge U. Press, 2009
442 pages, $32.99 paperback;
$90 hardback

Afary, an Iranian native and Duncan and Suzanne Mellichamp Professor of Global Religion and Modernity at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), is a widely regarded historian who specializes on the rise of Islamism and theories of sexual politics. In particular, Afary's mastery of Foucault serves to center Iranian history in the context of larger questions about normative heterosexuality, modernity, and the family. In 2005, Afary, along with Kevin B. Anderson, co-authored *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, exploring the Revolution's centrality to Foucault's work. Her 1996 book, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism*, detailed the rise of the women's movement in Iran.

To write *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, Afary extracted relevant passages from a wide range of texts, from pre-modern Persian poetry to harem memoirs to contemporary women's magazines and underground activist texts. To each, she has applied a broader theoretical framework, all the while maintaining a focus on the details of Iranian life. Although the book constitutes a far-reaching survey of the history of sexuality and gender in the context of Iran's political and cultural changes, Afary avoids tedium with constant references to literature and personal anecdotes, at times even including the testimony of her own family members.

The book provides a firm foundation for the relatively new field of writing on Iranian women's experiences. It is a remarkably thorough analysis of Iranian culture and history, and is accessible for readers who have little grounding in either. With U.S. presidents and the media tending to fixate on Iran's "evilness," oversimplified notions of gender and sexuality have dominated U.S. discourse on Iran. And although shedding light on Western misconceptions was not Afary's central aim when she condensed several hundreds years of sexual history into one text, the deconstruction of stereotypes such as the passive, veiled Muslim woman is one important consequence of this exceptional work.

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This last issue seems particularly prescient given the re-emergence in recent years of the imperialist United States cast as the liberator of the Middle Eastern woman who is oppressed by a "backward" political and religious regime. Afary confronts the conflation of Western imperialism with women's liberation, an issue that has plagued the Iranian women's movement since its inception:

> For too long, Western imperialist powers, most recently the United States, have opportunistically used the issue of the rights of Middle Eastern women for their strategic interests and abandoned it just as opportunistically when it no longer fits their purposes. (372)

In Afary's analysis, Iranian feminism emerges as a movement in its own right, evolving alongside and yet distinct from Western feminism. Nor does Afary allow the reader to conclude that the conservative Islamist movement is a mere regressive effort by religious radicals. Islamism in modern Iran is revealed as a calculated response to deep-seated anxieties about shifting gender roles and the emergence of the financially and sexually empowered Iranian woman. As Afary stated in a phone interview, despite imperialist myths perpetrated by the West, Islamism is in fact a "very sophisticated, modern political movement that uses some traditional, cultural ideologies."

Efforts by the Islamist state to promote sexual education and birth control following a post-war population explosion in 1988 show the tremendous power of the government to achieve its ends. In a push to limit fertility, the state achieved almost universal sex education (which included a pleasure-focused component), birth control, and health care services. The success of the program also depended on the efforts of hundreds of thousands of women who leaped at the opportunity to promote birth control and health care, particularly in remote villages. What may have seemed like a feminist victory, however, was also a powerful example of state control over women's bodies.

Rather than conceding total victory to the state, Afary includes stories of individual women who resisted and survived against state-imposed power and control. From Forough Farrokhzad, a twentieth-century poet who wrote about women's daily experiences and described loveless marriage as a cage, to Mahvash, the cabaret singer who created a widely read erotic pamphlet in 1957 that celebrated the female orgasm, individual stories demonstrate how women stretched the bars that imprisoned them.

Islamism in modern Iran is revealed as a calculated response to deep-seated anxieties about shifting gender roles and the emergence of the financially and sexually empowered Iranian woman.

The example of Marziyeh Dabbagh provides a particularly fascinating picture of the complexities and contradictions of the rules that governed women's lives leading up to and following the 1979 Iranian Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini. Dabbagh became Khomeini's bodyguard and a top military commander, even as Khomeini was condemning the ability of women to function in public: "She wore modest modern clothes, drove a car, traveled, socialized, and spent much time away from her family, all without feeling guilty, since Khomeini himself had sanctioned her activities" (259). Dabbagh achieved a kind of individualized equality based on her proximity to the misogynist state and her compliance with the wishes of Khomeini.

From particular strategies used by women, Afary moves to generalizations that instruct the way the West and East have struggled to define gender and sexuality in the transition to modernity and capitalism. For example, her reading of the Iranian leftists who considered women's rights subservient to and separate from the cause of anti-imperialism — and thus supported the misogynist cleric Ayatollah Khomeini — rings all too familiar for those knowledgeable about the U.S. labor movement. A clear message about the intersectionality of human rights, sexual rights, women's rights, and anti-imperialist liberation rings out from Afary's analysis.

Sexual Politics in Modern Iran documents the rise and fall of various efforts by leftist, feminist, and other social movements that have ultimately failed to bring about lasting change for Iranian women and homosexuals. But Afary, who maintains ties to activist communities in Iran, ends on a hopeful note regarding the Campaign for Equality, a contemporary feminist movement that has founded the One Million Signatures Campaign, a movement to circulate a petition (gaining one million signatures) and raise awareness through online newsletters and door-to-door efforts about women's legal rights in Iran. One of the major accomplishments of the Campaign that emerges in her analysis is its avoidance of a singularly Western brand of feminism. With the emergence of a distinctly Iranian feminism today, we can see the struggle for self-definition solidifying in Iran, even in a persistently imperialist climate:

> The Campaign for Equality has broken new ground on several levels. Activists have moved beyond the sectarian and ideological divides that hampered the women's movement for much of the twentieth century. They have made common cause with women from many different social, religious, and ideological backgrounds, established a genuine two-way conversation that has broken with both elitism and populism, and formulated demands that appeal to women of all social classes. Soon they also reclaimed a number of national and religious rituals and festivals, giving them new feminist interpretations (Tohidi 2008). Most of all, they have tried to change not just the law, but also the culture itself, and to articulate an independent feminist voice that demarcates 'the women's movement from both the native Islamist and Western imperialist patriarchies' (Tohidi 2006). (Afary 372)

In the struggle against U.S. imperialism and the misogyny and homophobia of the state in both Iran and the United States, achieving an understanding of all of these "evils" is critical. Reading *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* is a necessary first step. Signing the One Million Signatures petition may be a second.

Still Fighting

Interview with Judi Chamberlin

Betty Reid Mandell

Judi Chamberlin is one of the founders of the mental patients' liberation movement. In 1988, she wrote *On Our Own*, a book about her own experience with depression 43 years ago, when she was hospitalized against her will. That book became a kind of bible for the mental patients' liberation movement. Now the 64-year-old activist is dying of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, an incurable lung disorder. Late last year she stopped hospitalizations and instead opted for home hospice care.

An article in the *Boston Globe*[1] talked about Judi's fight with her insurance company because they had discontinued coverage for hospice care. The article said that her insurance company recently told her that she had "used up" her hospice coverage, which was limited to $5,000. They told her that she could file an appeal, which she did. She said, "It seems so counterintuitive when you think about what the insurance company paid for me in 2008. They paid thousands of dollars for me to be in the hospital all the time. Hospice care will cost my insurance company much less." The representative from the insurance company, United Healthcare, offered to help her with the paperwork for an appeal. He said, "I wish there was a clearer process. Benefits do get used up."*

Her hospice (Visiting Nurse Association), has assured her that they won't abandon her, but she worries that her daughter and her partner may be saddled with thousands of dollars in unreimbursed hospice bills when she is gone.

*Later, the appeal was successful.

Betty Reid Mandell *is co-editor of* New Politics*, and a welfare rights activist.*

She said, "My mother had a gruesome hospital death" from breast cancer." She described her mother's struggle to breathe, miserable and surrounded by machines as specialists hovered over her, suctioning fluid from her lungs in the last hours of life. That experience persuaded her father to choose home hospice care six years ago as he rapidly declined from congestive heart failure. "He wanted to die in his bed. He was relaxed and at peace."

Judi said that in choosing to follow her father's footsteps, she never envisioned that her hospice path would include such a battle. Neither did her primary care provider.

The administrator at her physician's office, Arlington Family Practice, helped her with her appeal. She said, "I have never had an insurance company call me and say a patient has exhausted her hospice. I was devastated when they called me about her case. You mean this woman can't have hospice because she didn't die fast enough?"

Judi said, "Although I apparently haven't died fast enough, I wrote in the "reason for request" section of the appeal, "I do have a terminal illness and will need some method of care." And she added, "Since I become eligible for Medicare in October 2009, the plan's obligations would end then (providing I am still alive.)"

* * *

BRM: I first interviewed Judi in 1993 for my human service text.[2] Here is what she said in that interview:

JC: I have spoken at conferences all over the nation and the world. The best conferences have been those to which users of the mental health system are invited. A 1988 conference in England, for example, called "Common Concerns," was attended by an equal number of workers and users. In the United States, the National Institute of Mental Health sponsored a pioneering set of dialogues in Florida. Users and service providers explored issues together. The National Conference on Mental Health Statistics contacted me and asked me to participate in the first conference involving users as well as researchers. This surprised me, because people don't usually seek out the opinions of mental patients. They think, "If you're mentally ill, what do you know?" Whatever a person has to say is suspect.

People don't usually seek out the opinions of mental patients. They think, "If you're mentally ill, what do you know?" Whatever a person has to say is suspect.

When students learn about the mental health system, they only hear the views of the professionals. They seldom empathize with the mentally ill or try to understand how it feels to be on the receiving end. If they want to have an honest dialogue with the mentally ill and ex-patients, service providers have to be prepared to face their anger and mistrust. People who use services have been treated in paternalistic and controlling ways, and this understandably has made them angry.

The attitudes of service providers have caused a split between the Alliance for the Mentally Ill (AMI), a support group for relatives and friends of mentally ill people, and the Mental Patients' Liberation Front. Parents in the AMI argue, "We love our sons and daughters and want them to get help. We may trick them if we have to, whether they say they want it or not." The patient may not want to take drugs, but relatives often think they should and complain that patients don't take their medications. (Research has shown that a high percentage of all drugs, not just psychotropics, are not taken according to the doctor's prescription.)

I have tried to promote dialogue between AMI and MPLF. Ex-patients and families have one thing in common: They didn't choose to be in the system. Professionals choose to be there. It is important to recognize that families have a valid perspective.

Some people accuse the MPLF of being totally opposed to drugs, but I believe in choice. Patients need to have all the facts, which are often kept from them. The professionals sometimes feel that if they give patients information, they only scare them. I tried drugs but didn't find one that helped me. For me, drugs didn't work, but I wouldn't tell anyone else what to do.

Research on phenothiazines shows what happens when patients don't have all the information. Although it is now well known that phenothiazines cause tardive dyskinesia (involuntary tics), not until recently did it come to light that they also cause tardive dementia, a loss of brain function. Patients can deteriorate mentally when they take the drugs. Professionals had not realized this earlier because they assumed that mental patients were deteriorating because of their illness.

The average doctor knows very little about drugs, often only what the advertisers say. Journals are filled with drug ads, and at medical conferences drug salespeople are all over the place. The field is controlled by profitable pharmaceutical companies. For example, there are two identical drugs for a heart condition, one generic and one with a trade name. The trade drug is six times as expensive as the generic, and that is the one that doctors prescribe most. A tranquilizer called clozapine used to cost $9,000 a year but has come down in price because of so many complaints. It doesn't cause tardive dyskinesia, as do all of the phenothiazines, but it can kill users if not correctly monitored.

Almost everyone in the psychiatric field has gone into diagnosing and drugs. Most of the professionals doing talking therapy are psychologists and social workers. There is very little clinical psychological training for doctors anymore, except for long, arduous psychoanalytic training. The conventional psychiatric wisdom is that you can't talk with psychotics. Most psychiatrists, and the AMI, believe that mental illness is primarily biological and can be controlled or cured only with drugs. The Alliance quotes statistics by the World Health Organization, which indicate that schizophrenia affects 1 percent of the human population worldwide. The AMI denies that stress or trauma causes mental illness, yet there is a good deal of research that challenges this belief. Researchers have tracked unemployment and mental hospital admissions showing that mental illness rises with unemployment. Research about women in mental hospitals indicates that as many as 50 to 80 percent have been sexually abused.

Interestingly, the rate of recovery of mental patients is higher in third-world countries. I believe that is because they have stronger family and community ties. Also, traditional healers, who would be used more in third-world countries, sit with the patient, sometimes for days. In Africa, for example, a native healer spends several days observing the patient. That presence sets up a powerful therapeutic alliance. The healer does not think that it is important to ask questions but that it is important just to be there.

A few psychiatrists still believe in talk therapy and are cautious about using drugs. One of the best is Peter Breggin, who wrote an excellent book called *Toxic Psychiatry* (1991). Another important book is *Community Mental Health: Principles and Practice*, by Loren Mosher and Lorenzo Berti (1989), which proposes a blueprint for a comprehensive community mental health system. The authors maintain that before taking drugs, people should have a chance to get real community support. Once people start on drugs, they are likely to stay on them and have a hard time getting off. Mosher and Berti believe that a society can run mental health systems without hospitalizing anyone.

Drugs are used extensively all over the world. Most of the alternative mental health programs of the 1960s and 1970s have died, although a few proposals have been made for new ones. Although there has been a lot of talk about the innovative programs in Italy, where there are no long-term institutions, Italian practitioners still rely on drugs. Some community cooperatives have been set up there (not sheltered workshops, but co-ops actually owned and run by ex-patients).

* * *

[June 2009. I interviewed Judi for the second time at her home.]

BRM: Tell me about hospice care.

JC: They are on call 24/7 by phone. They provide my medication. A nurse visits twice a week, and a social worker visits. There are two volunteers who visit regularly. Hospice aims to help a person make the last part of life as good as possible. The hospital treats symptoms, and is not concerned with the quality of life. I pay for acupuncture, Reiki, and massage at home myself. The hospice organization that I had before included Reiki. It is very relaxing and helps me sleep.

I'm not religious, but a chaplain visits and she and I have good conversations. Lots of thoughts go through my head about dying. There are practical things to take care of, as well as philosophical thoughts. A lot of people don't want to talk about death and dying. A lot of people don't go into hospice until the last week of life. That is better than not going, but it would be better to go in earlier to work on issues of closure. A lot of families need to come to closure.

People's relatives and friends often have a memorial service after a person dies. I have thought about that a lot, and think I would rather have the memorial service before I die so I can enjoy it. That's one big project that I am planning. We will need to get a large hall because about 100 people will come. I will call it a "celebration of life." If I die before it takes place, people can still have it.

BRM: Are you the founder of the mental patients' liberation front?

JC: I'm one of the founders. During the 60s and 70s, there were people in different cities — San Francisco, Boston, — and there were people in Europe — England, Sweden, Japan. It bubbled up all over, along with other liberation movements. I think of it as like mushrooms sprouting up all over. Liberation was in the air. The groups that formed did different things. Some offered services, some worked to change legislation, some were more militant than others. There are still some groups around, but the militancy died down. We have been talking about reviving the militancy and it's beginning to happen. Alternative services are important, but there are things wrong with the system that need to be changed.

BRM: How have things changed with mental patients' liberation since I interviewed you in 1993? Do you think people are more respectful of the opinions of the mentally ill, and have more empathy now? Are service providers less patronizing? Is there less stigma about mental illness? What changes have you seen?

JC: The stigma has lessened somewhat, but it is still very strong. It's not politically correct to make jokes about blacks or gays, but it still considered o.k. to joke about the mentally ill. People still assume that the mentally ill are violent.

However, there is more recognition that ex-patients have a role to play and some expertise. There are a lot of different support groups. Younger people are doing a lot of organizing on the internet. One group is www.mindfreedom.org. David Oaks is the executive director. He is based in Eugene, Oregon. He is working with the World Health Organization and the World Psychiatric Association. Another is the National Empowerment Center, www.power2u.org. There a lot of other in-person and on-line support groups. People are reaching out and finding people who have had similar experiences. So many people say, "I'm so alone." They feel cast out of the human race. It's a very scary feeling. When you link up with other people with similar problems and find out you're not alone, it is very reassuring.

The mental health establishment believes in medication. Professionals say, "You have to take your medication." For us, it's about what works. We believe that people should have the opportunity to lead ordinary lives, with needed supports. The issue is not whether you take medication or not. The issue is whether you're leading the kind of life you want. The journalist Robert Whitaker wrote the book *Mad in America*. He investigated the statistics of mental illness and found that the number of people diagnosed with mental illness keeps going up and the number of people on disability keeps going up, despite all the claims that drug companies make about medication. A typical antipsychotic drug causes severe obesity —100 pounds or more — and diabetes. But it is very profitable for drug companies. The power of drug companies keeps growing. Lots of doctors are getting huge amounts of money from drug companies, and lying about it. They get hundreds of thousands of dollars. Drug companies and doctors have everyone convinced that the problem is biochemical, but we see it as psychosocial. Poverty is a factor. Life on SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is pretty miserable because the grant is so low. There is a "Ticket to Work" option to encourage people to try working, and to enable them to return to SSI if it doesn't work out. But people are wary of trying that because they know how hard it is to get on SSI, and they fear that they would be left with nothing if they were denied SSI.

A lot of people are scared, especially about health care. There have been deep cuts on programs that help people stay in the community. Mentally ill people are being sent to jail, and to emergency rooms. This country is spending billions to bail out banks and corporations. It is spending money for welfare for the rich, not for supports for the poor.

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There are new problems surfacing with teenagers and kids. A new generation of kids has been on some drug since grade school. Their issues are medication at home and at school. They are very angry. They are often diagnosed as bipolar. Psychiatrists are even prescribing anti-psychotics for little children, as young as 2 years old. A little girl who was taking anti-psychotics died under still-undetermined circumstances, but it is clear drugs played a role.

Ours is a strength-based model. It is important to teach people skills, and train people to be advocates and mentors. That changes how people think about themselves. Instead of making sickness his identity and saying, "I'm Joe, I'm schizophrenic," he can see himself as somebody with something to give others. We aim to put people in positions of power over their own lives. When people feel powerless, they are overwhelmed. When everyone is making decisions for them, it is not surprising that they don't have good outcomes.

BRM: What do you think about deinstitutionalization, that closed public hospitals and sent patients into the community?

JC: We no longer have many long-staying facilities. We have a lot of group homes, which are little institutions. There is a lot of homelessness among the mentally ill. People need their own homes, rather than an institution. We are looking at what kinds of supports people need. One support that people need is housing. There is no way to stabilize your life if you don't have a place to live. The Housing First program seems promising. The philosophy is to find an apartment for people first, and then offer social service supports that they need to stay in the home, on a voluntary basis.

BRM: Electroshock seems to be used more than before. What do you think of it?

JC: Psychiatrists' PR efforts during the 1970s and 1980s misled the government, the public, and the media into believing that shock therapy was safe, and if it caused memory loss at all, the loss was short-term. Yet there is a lot of evidence that memory loss is sometimes massive, and memory may not return. Linda Andre has written a book, *Doctors of Deception*, a history of electroshock in the U.S. She says that electroshock treatment caused massive memory loss and ruined her life. Marilyn Rice told of how after a series of shock treatments, she returned to her professional job and when she went to office to resume her job, she couldn't remember a thing about what to do. She became a crusader against shock treatment, and Linda Andre has succeeded her in this mission.

BRM: More women (proportionately) than men suffer depression. Do you have any thoughts about why this is?

JC: Women are more likely to be diagnosed with depression. Men are more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia or rage kinds of disorders, and are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. The country's military culture encourages macho aggression, and discourages men from talking about their problems. Women are more socialized to talk about their problems. We have enormous numbers of soldiers returning from war with PTSD who are reluctant to ask for help. Since there is no draft in this war, poor people are taking the burden. Middle class veterans had the GI bill after WWII, but that only worked for white people.

BRM: Does the mental health system treat gays and lesbians differently?

JC: Until fairly recently, homosexuality was considered a disorder that needed treatment. Lots of parents send their kids to boot camps because of their fears about their kids becoming a homosexual.

BRM: If any of our readers would like to contact you, could they e-mail you?

JC: Yes, I would be glad to have them contact me. My e-mail is Chamjudi@aol.com.

BRM: I have looked at your blog (http://judi-lifeasahospicepatient.blogspot.com). I notice that you had a craving for pea soup. Would you like me to make you some?

JC: Actually, other people have made some and we still have a big pot of it. What I really crave is baking powder biscuits. I read about some terrific southern biscuits and I went on line to see if I could buy some, but I couldn't find them.

BRM: I'll try my hand at making some, and I'll bring some fresh strawberries so you can make strawberry shortcake. Should I also bring whipped cream, or is that too fattening?

JC: Bring the whipped cream. I'm dying, so I might as well eat what I want.

NOTES

1. Kay Lazar, "Advocate for others fights to die at home," *Boston Globe*, May 22, 2009.
2. Betty Reid Mandell and Barbara Schram, "*Introduction to Human Services: Policy and Practice*, 7th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2008, pp. 47-51.

Card Check: Labor's Charlie Brown Moment?

ROBERT FITCH

The Passive Revolution

SOMETIMES THE STORY IS JUST AN appendage to the back-story. What it means for Sisyphus to watch his rock roll back down the hill can't be understood unless we know it was not exactly the first time. Organized labor's recent effort to move the Employee Free Choice Act — popularly known as "card check" — up Capitol Hill involves a similar back-story.

Jimmy Hoffa had only recently gone missing. Jimmy Carter sat in the White House. And unions still represented one of five private sector workers when the AFL-CIO began its lightning campaign to close the loopholes in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, loopholes that allowed employers to fire pro-union workers and forestall union representation by a Fabian strategy of endless legal delays.

Carter had not only pledged support, he even wrote the bill himself. His Labor Law Reform bill mandated elections in thirty days after unions obtained a majority by signing representation cards ("card check"). Yet Carter told Labor to be patient; he had other legislative priorities. (Like the Panama Canal Treaty.) And by 1978, when the bill was finally introduced, the Administration had lost its political capital. Republicans filibustered it to death.

In the twelve years of Republican rule following Carter, organized labor's private sector domain shrank to one in nine workers. But the election of Bill Clinton revived hopes for labor law reform — expectations that were only somewhat jarred when newly appointed Labor Secretary Robert Reich opined in the *New York Times* that "The jury is still out on whether the traditional union is necessary for the new workplace." Clinton insisted that he backed labor law reform; just not right away. So he appointed a panel of experts to study it. The Dunlop Commission labored twenty months before delivering a report providing only tepid support for reform, but barren in any case because by then the Republicans had taken over Congress.

Fourteen years passed. But at last, after the fall 2008 elections, labors' chiefs discerned a parting of the legislative waters. Now, for the first time in a generation, the Democrats had what was practically a filibuster proof majority. With organized labor down to just one out of 14 private sector workers, prospects for passage of what was now called the "Employee Free Choice Act" seemed brilliant. EFCA was a beefed up version of the Carter plan — only with triple penalties for employer violations; binding arbitration after 120 days of negotiations to get a first contract; and the card check option without having to hold secret ballot elections.

Union leaders, who'd spent $40 million lobbying Congress on card check in 2008, expressed confidence in their Capitol Hill clout. United Steelworkers President Leo Gerard noted that mass demonstrations are less needed in the United States than in Europe "because often all that is needed is some expert lobbying in Washington to line up the support of a half-dozen senators." And in Barack Obama, Labor had a Democratic President who had pledged while campaigning during the Iowa primary, "If a majority of workers want a union, they should get a union. It's that simple. We need to stand

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up to the business lobby and pass the Employee Free Choice Act. That's why I've been fighting for it in the Senate and that's why I'll make it the law of the land when I'm president of the United States."

But the business lobby had spent $80 million lobbying against card check in 2008 in a campaign that managed to put labor on the defensive. Led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce which had waged a furious but futile battle against passage of the original NLRA and sought afterwards to dilute it at every opportunity, the Lobby crafted a powerful if thoroughly hypocritical campaign. The Chamber now presented itself as the defender of Labor's Magna Carta and the supporter of workers' rights to a secret ballot election, which EFCA effectively bypassed.

> Like Carter and Clinton, (Obama) adopted a "not tonight, dear" strategy, refusing to make labor law reform a legislative priority.

Teamster president Jimmy Hoffa Jr. tried to downplay the problem. "Since when is the secret ballot a basic tenet of democracy?" he asked. Other EFCA supporters insisted card check wouldn't replace secret ballot elections. They started calling it "majority sign-up" instead of "card check." Under pressure from the business lobby, though, support from erstwhile Democratic Senatorial backers started melting away.

There had been a proleptic moment about a week before his inauguration, when President Obama announced: "There are going to be steps that we can take other than the Employee Free Choice Act that will make a difference." Like Carter and Clinton, he adopted a "not tonight, dear" strategy, refusing to make labor law reform a legislative priority. In April, SEIU chief Andy Stern, who enjoys unparalleled White House access for a labor leader, tactfully pointed out the delay. "The President has said he has a series of things — that we agree that he needs to get done — which are major for every man, woman, and child, like health care, like the budget, like financial." But Stern's subtle nudging didn't get Card Check back on the legislative track. In May, Obama effectively pronounced it dead.

As the summer recess approached, EFCA receded in legislative priority, marginalized by issues like health care, energy, and the Supreme Court nominee hearings. Senate leaders offered an unattractive compromise — "reform" without Card Check or perhaps even binding arbitration. Should labor accept legislative table scraps or go for the whole meal again after next years' mid-term election? Sounding more like an unruly game show audience than a coherent political force, labor leaders talked over each other. Some followed SEIU chief Andy Stern, shouting, "Take the deal!" Others, backing UNITE-HERE president John Wilhelm, insisted "No deal!" Evidently, organized labor had taken another beating. Over thirty years of failure to reform labor law — over sixty if you count the efforts to repeal Taft Hartley.

In the annals of futility, the most august name may be Sisyphus, but the most relevant to labor's predicament is probably Charlie Brown in *Peanuts*. Unlike Sisyphus, he is not condemned by the gods to repeat a hopeless ritual; he does so anyhow of his own free will. For decades Charlie Brown has tried to kick that football, but each time his designated holder, Lucy, pulls the football away, and Charlie Brown winds up taking an ignominious pratfall. ("Aaughh!) By now, Charlie is highly suspicious of Lucy, but she always manages to convince him that this time she won't pull the ball away.

It says something either about the breadth of Charles Schultz's vision in *Peanuts* or the narrowness of the labor honchos' perspectives that their world fits so snugly in his. Organized labor seems ever destined to play the role of Charlie Brown, the inevitable loser, while the Democratic occupant of the White House plays Lucy — doomed ever to disappoint. Lucy's younger brother, Linus, is often critical of Charlie Brown, still he sticks by him — very much like the relationship between the *bien pensant* labor Left and the AFL-CIO. Still, it's a telling fact about Linus' ability to judge character, that every Halloween, he sits in a pumpkin patch waiting for the Great Pumpkin to appear. It's a prospect only slightly less probable than the labor Left's long-held belief — going back to early 20th century figures like Victor Berger and Morris Hillquit — in the possibility of transforming the AFL into a genuine workers' movement.

Charlie Brown's quest ended after 50 years with the retirement of Schultz, but labor is an institution. The battle for election law reform as the virtual panacea to halt membership decline can go on practically indefinitely. Imagine the future! In 2039, with the unions down to 1.8 percent of the workforce and the labor movement constituted now by fifteen major federations, all under the titular leadership of Jimmy Hoffa III, legislation is proposed to allow employees to vote by telekinesis. The bill passes both houses of Congress but then succumbs to a Lucy-like *coup de grace* delivered this time by President Sasha Obama.

Understanding the meaning of organized labor's latest Charlie Brown moment can be enriched by comparing it to a "Machiavellian moment": that sudden awareness, described by J.G. A. Pocock in his 1975 eponymous classic, that the republic is seriously threatened by internal corruption and external enemies — requiring a mass mobilization of its citizens in its defense. The difference between a Charlie Brown and a Machiavellian moment is more than the difference between flight or fight. A Machiavellian moment demands both *rinnovazione* and *recorso*: on the one hand, *recorso* — a return to republican values — above all the resistance to despotism defined as the domination of sectional interests over common interests. And the almost instinctive revulsion of the republican for corruption — understood not simply as taking bribes, but as the loss of self-determination — as clientism, the sycophantic dependence on a boss; the incapacity for self-determination.

Yet the return to republican values never regresses to mere nostalgia because it is keyed to the recognition of the need for *rinnovazione* — the creation of new political forms to advance common interests subverted by corrupt institutions. Existing political forms have reduced citizens to dependence, fragmentation, apathy. New forms are required to confront the adversary and refocus on the pursuit of the common good.

Mastering a Machiavellian moment demands ruthless, unsparing self-scrutiny — the recognition of the need for the republican ideal of *vivere politico*: thinking and acting politically — that is, in ways that promote common interests — as opposed to sectional or corrupt interests. A Charlie Brown moment, by contrast, is anything but innovative; repeated failures are explained away; the blame externalized. Eventually, acting in the Charlie Brown mode leads to the near total incapacity for thinking and acting politically. Do we fail? Oh well, as the philosophical Linus observes, "It always rains on the unloved." After all, the business lobby is so powerful! What can possibly be done?

Antonio Gramsci, who self-consciously fuses Marxian and republican traditions furnishes an example. He was successively a journalist, an activist in the Turin workers' council movement during the *bienno rosso* (the two 'red years' of 1919-1921), a party leader, a Communist senator, and like Machiavelli whose republican resistance to the Spaniards and the

Medici landed him in jail, Gramsci's resisted Mussolini and the fascists, and this also earned him a prison sentence. It was there he wrote *Notes on Machiavelli* among other now influential works. In the 70's, he was in vogue on the U.S. and European Left as an exemplar of the cultural turn in politics away from labor and "economics." This is just as misleading as the commonplace notion of Machiavelli as a kind of Karl Rove to Renaissance despots. "Can there be," Gramsci asked in *The Modern Prince,* "cultural reform and can the position of the depressed strata of society be improved culturally, without a previous economic reform and a change in their position in social and economic fields?" No, he answered. "The program of economic reform is precisely the concrete form in which every intellectual and moral reformation presents itself."

Indeed, rather than the prophet of "the long march" through exclusively cultural institutions, Gramsci carries on the classical republican ideal of *vivere politico*; he deepens Machiavelli's breakthrough insight into the importance of furthering plebian struggles ("tumults") — as a means of transforming the state. He fuses Marxian analysis of capitalism with the republican political tradition; and he serves as a model of how to behave in a Machiavellian moment.

Facing the destruction of the Italian labor movement by fascism's passive revolution, Gramsci defined the Machiavelli moment of the 1920's Italian Left: "that a collective will, already in existence, has become nerveless and dispersed, has suffered a collapse which is dangerous and threatening but not definitive and catastrophic, and that is necessary to reconcentrate and reinforce it." (240)

Gramsci's response was a *ricorso* to Machiavellian discourse as a step towards *rinnovazione.* The notion of a political party of a new type, as the collective prince who strengthens and unifies the national popular will. In pre-prison writings, Gramsci had also emphasized innovation — seeing the labor movement in the form of workers' councils as potential expression of collective will — but which needs to break from an ossified form of union organization. He urged support for Turin's factory council movement, at the expense of the hierarchical CGL: "The factory council tends to spark off the class war at any moment," he observed, "while the trade union, by virtue of its bureaucratic form, tends to prevent class war from ever breaking out. " In other words Gramsci stood not for a withdrawal from the labor movement but a transformation of it.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to interpret Gramsci as a syndicalist. He criticized Europe's most famous syndicalist, Georges Sorel, who saw the union as the sole embodiment of collective will. The point here though, is not to try settle the argument over where the collective will of the working class ought to be primarily located — in unions, councils, or parties. It's rather is to understand and live up to the demands of our own Machiavellian moment.

At present this is not happening. As labor journalist David Bacon observed, "Each month for almost a year, over half a million people have lost their jobs. Meanwhile, banks have been showered with hundreds of millions of dollars to keep them afloat, while working families can't get their loans renegotiated so they can stay in their homes. Yet there has been no national demonstration called by either labor federation, demanding a direct federal jobs program or redirecting the bailout to workers instead of the wealthy."

In the same passive vein, what's telling is not that the card check provision of the Card Check bill — proclaimed as labor's most important legislative campaign of the last fifty years — went down. It's that the battle took almost entirely on a legislative plane, without any truly mass mobilizations much less mass strikes. "[We] could have done a lot of things," AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka acknowledged, in an interview with POLITICO, "but we didn't, and we are where we are."

"Coulda/shoulda" also characterizes the way the United Auto Workers accepted without audible resistance the Obama Administration's Auto Task Force mandate to shrink pay and benefits to non-union levels; (Actually, with bottom tier wages at $14 an hour, far below transplant levels); while stiffing resistance from its own rank-and-file opposition, the Soldiers of Solidarity. The December 2008 Republic Windows factory occupation in Chicago suggests that in the American working class, there exists ignitable human material for resistance. Surely there are millions who felt the way those 219 did. But the uniquely local structure of the American labor movement acts as a kind of foam retardant cooling the fire, coating the flame.

What took priority in 2009 over resisting the recession's 7 million lay-offs, the halving of union pay in the auto industry, or the backlash against EFCA was in house squabbling over union jurisdictions. As the merger between HERE and UNITE unraveled, SEIU and HERE battled over who would get control of organized labor's only wholly owned commercial bank, the $4.5 billion Amalgamated. And SEIU itself fought the leaders of its largest health care local for control of assets and jurisdictions in California.

Labor and its left allies are sleepwalking their way through a passive revolution that has left it "nerveless and dispersed" without any serious strategy for a counter-attack; without an adequate analysis of what needs to be changed or who should try to do what to change it.

Wrestling with Labor's Angels

Sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote *New Men of Power* in 1948 on the premise that organized labor represented "the chief social power upon which a genuine democracy can rest." So if labor's promise were to be realized, it was crucial to identify its "publics" — those who were politically active with informed, sophisticated ideas about the labor movement and its potential in American society. Mills identified four pro-labor publics: the far left, the independent Left, the liberal center; and the Communists. Sixty years later, just two remain recognizable and operational: the liberal center and the independent Left. Most importantly, the two surviving publics share a vital understanding: that the special agonies of American capitalism can be explained in terms of the deeply problematic status of organized labor.

Left-liberals. Today, as in Mills' era, liberals are Democrats who read *The Nation* and the *New Republic* both of which gave Card Check strong support. Now of course these main organs are supplemented by the *New York Review of Books*, the *American Prospect*, *Mother Jones, NPR*, Bill Moyers' *Journal*, innumerable websites, and blogs. But much of the rest of the furniture in the House of Liberalism remains eerily unchanged and and totally familiar. In social terms, it's still made up mainly of middle class professionals who identify unions with "the people." And who believe what helps them helps everybody. Just as Mills' liberals were touched by guilt for having departed from more radical postures assumed in college days, so too the left liberals of today, a sentiment which gives labor leaders the benefit of the doubt. "In many liberal minds," Mills notes, "there seems to be an undercurrent whispering, 'I will not criticize the union and their leaders. There I draw the line.'" Such restraint serves as the anchor of liberal political identity. Observes Mills, "Anyone who ventures to criticize labor is considered to be playing into the hands of reactionaries whose blackness makes the liberals seem so white."

In terms of the embodiment of ultimate ideals, today's left liberal is no longer America-centered. (S)he looks to Europe as an exemplar of social democracy. The U.S. deviation from the European social market model — in areas such as inequality; overwork; poor health care outcomes and costs — is understood as due in no small part to the exceptional weakness of organized labor in comparison with Europe. Indeed, according to Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, writing in *Conscience of a Liberal*, the defining feature of our Second Gilded Age is that labor after its New Deal revival in the 1930s has been simply "crushed" by the big foot of capital.

The jackboot metaphor absolves liberals from concern with the internal workings of labor unions. The classic liberal study of American unions addresses the question "what do unions do? But not how they do it." That's because for most left-liberals, unions are black boxes whose institutional contents — the relations between members and leaders and its legal infrastructure — can be ignored in explaining their behavior. So that the problem with the unions has nothing to do with what's inside the box, but simply that the box labeled "labor" has shrunk. In a word, today's unions lack numbers. Because they're less numerous, unions can't exercise adequate market power; and so they can't do what unions ideally do — equalize wages, provide workers with a "voice" in determining conditions of employment while raising the overall share of wages in national income.

For Mills' era liberals, union power — "countervailing power" in John Kenneth Galbraith's terminology — shaped a benign political equilibrium. Three co-respective elites dominated American capitalism — one each from government, the corporations, and labor. What's upset the old equilibrium is the collapse of union power. How it happened, explains Paul Krugman, "is simple and brutal." Business interests emboldened by Republican rightists went on the offensive against unions beginning in the 1970s "firing one out of eight workers who voted for union representation."

Brutal, yes. But simple? If hundreds of thousands of workers have been fired during the last generation for exercising their legal rights, why are we just now learning about it? Couldn't the unions have launched a broad, public counter-offensive? More generally, why does the United States have what is arguably the advanced economies' weakest labor movement, whether the standard is the share of workers covered by contracts, basic labor rights, hours worked, income equality, union-nonunion premiums, strikes? Can it be simply that our employers are so much more beastly? If so, why do they behave so much more agreeably when they operate in Europe?

And what about the peculiar norms of American unions? As far back as the 1920s an Australian labor expert observed, "Unionism in America is not a political creed or a social movement. Each trade sought only its own material advantage and lost no time worrying about others." Noted another rather stunned union observer: "The amazing fact . . . is that American trade unions alone among all the trade unions in the world are engaged on a large scale in political jurisdictional disputes." Indeed, in one year, 1919, in the craft unions, between 80 and 90 percent of all strikes in major cities were launched not against employers but against other workers.

By banning jurisdictional strikes, the Taft-Hartley Act (1947) partially checked this penchant for forming circular firing squads. But it still breaks out at the most inopportune times, as it did in the many-sided battles for jurisdictional control that raged out of control during the EFCA debate. (See above.) There is no similar territorial competition among European unions because there are no exclusive jurisdictions to fight over.

The American labor movement has other inconvenient exceptionalisms. Despite the bottom-feeding rank of U.S. unions among the labor movements in advanced economies, its labor leaders still receive the world's highest pay. It's a liberal taboo to say so, but the U.S. movement is uniquely characterized by the extent and persistence of institutional — not just individual — corruption. For example, since the 1970s, when Teddy Maritas took charge, every boss of the New York City District Council of Carpenters has been either indicted, like the present chief officer, for racketeering, incarcerated like his predecessor, or like Maritas, presumed murdered. Exceptional? This year the head of New York's Central Labor Council was imprisoned for stealing millions and running a racketeering enterprise. The U.S. government is seeking to expel his chosen successor from the Teamsters on grounds that he ignored reports that officers of his local union were taking bribes in exchange for allowing employers to defraud the pension funds. The liberal response to evidence of unparalleled institutional corruption is to observe that corporation leaders steal more than labor leaders. Or that speaking about corruption only benefits the employers.

But such lame excuses are rarely necessary, since these exceptional features of American labor institutions are almost never discussed in *The Nation* or on *NPR*. Unions have 16 million members; yearly income somewhere between $4 and $6 billion; six of ten of the nation's largest campaign contributors since 1989 are unions. But in terms of agency, unions and their leaders are seen by left liberals as the equivalent of well-meaning, but helpless welfare moms: to question their actions or the makeup of their institutions is to behave like a churlish Bill Cosby criticizing single parent families.

Unions are simply the objects of bosses' actions which are portrayed as not only brutal, but actually perverse. Especially given liberals' belief that unions ought to be partners with corporations helping them achieve their goals by raising productivity and lowering employee turnover. Given these assumptions, the battle for Card Check represents not legislative class struggle, but a sensible and forceful remedy to get employers to do what's really in their own interest. Passage could spell the end of the Second Gilded Age the way breakthrough progressive labor legislation helped define the First.

In December 2008, Krugman joined twenty union presidents, 120 economists, and 100 progressive leaders, organized by the Institute for America's Future (IAF), calling for a new New Deal. Labor legislation — the Wagner Act (1935) and the Work Projects Administration, (1935) triggered the Second New Deal. Many of the new New Dealers hoped EFCA would similarly ignite the Obama Administration's reform agenda. The failure of organized labor to mount a serious campaign for EFCA's passage clearly represents a huge setback to liberal hopes for expansive reform. Less clear is whether it will lead to any revision in the liberals' assessment of American labor unionism. But American liberals will never get a French-style social democracy without a French-style labor movement.

The labor Left. Those Leftists without a genuine political home either in a party or even a monthly magazine constitute what Mills calls "the independent Left." "A powerless third camp of opinion oscillating between lament and indignation," is his acid description. "But," he concedes," when left organizations are on the move, the independent Leftists are not without considerable influence."

In social terms, the independent Left, like the center-Left, tends to be heavily middle class and professional — only with an even greater percentage of intellectuals. What differentiates them from the center-Left is the much greater likelihood that they joined a Marxist-Leninist party. That experience has left them permanently seared by sectarianism, but at the same time too inured to anti-capitalist norms to hook up with the Democrats. As a result, the independent Left operates in the organizational wilderness that stretches between two well-demarcated territories — the fragmented Marxist-Leninist *groupuscules* that border on the Left and the Democratic Party on the right.

Mills' independents traded freedom of thought and action for political leverage and even relevance. The independent Left is unable, he says, to address the essential political question — "Who do you want to do what?" Since Mills wrote, though, perhaps the biggest change in Labor's politics, after the almost total fade out of the CPUSA and far Left Marxist-Leninist groups, is the ability of the independent Left to answer Mills' basic question. With the collapse of the post Cold War barrier that existed between the independent Left and organized labor, desert-wandering independent Leftists have repositioned themselves as insiders — if sometimes prickly ones — within organized labor. When asked what should we do, the answer now rings out clearly: "Get a job in a progressive union or work within a reform union caucus to build a revitalized labor movement. *Labor Notes,* the *Nation* magazine of the labor Left, supported by a network of labor leaders and staffers, proclaims it is "putting movement back in the labor movement."

According to UC Santa Barbara Professor Nelson Lichtenstein, who is among the most prominent Left labor intellectuals, John Sweeney's 1995 successful AFL-CIO presidential campaign "opened the door to the cadres of the Left whose agenda closely resembled that of the Leftists of the 1930s." What he calls "the Sweeneyite revival" energized key elements in organized labor: "probably five to ten thousand people who hold the key staff positions and local union offices." They've been aided, he notes, by hundreds of others who teach, write and lecture on behalf of unions."

Sweeney's "New Voice," duly celebrated at the Columbia Teach-in co-chaired by Lichtenstein, represented less of a beginning than the culmination of twenty years of political base-building in the unions by the labor Left. It featured a steady migration of former 60s and 70s party-less radicals into staff jobs in the SEIU, AFSCME, AFT, CWA, UFCW as well as the "industrialization" of the Berkeley-based Independent Socialists who formed caucuses in auto, steel, transit, but above all and most lastingly in the IBT as Teamsters for a Democratic Union. The TDU'ers left Berkeley in the 70s as Third Camp Trotskyists but by the 80s they had publicly renounced socialism and dual unionism, transforming themselves into another type of vanguard — the advanced guard of union democratizers, who claimed many reform triumphs, securing an effective vote on contracts; the right to vote for general president; the victory of Ron Carey as General President; and above all the UPS strike — which looms now in labor Left chronicles of the 90s as a veritable Paris Commune.

In a sense, as Lichtenstein suggests, the labor Leftists could be understood as direct descendents of the 1930s Left: the Left which had existed up to the postmodern turn towards the Politics of Difference. The seeds of difference politics were sown in a period when a broad consensus on the Left became convinced that advanced capitalism had conquered the problem of scarcity. And that labor's big problem was "incorporation." In his foundational work, *One Dimensional Man* (1964), Herbert Marcuse reported a labor leader complaining: "All the things we fought for the corporation are now being given to the workers." True, workers had serious problems, as Stanley Aronowitz explained in his Marcusian *False Promises* (1971): reification, commodification, their own authoritarian personalities. But nothing that a labor movement could solve.

IT WAS NO WONDER that Aronowitz made his way from the regional directorship of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) to the editorial board of *Social Text,* one of America's most prominent journals of difference politics. In Weberian terms, the adepts of difference politics were concerned not with life chances growing out of class and market relations but with the status and "social honor" —

particularly of disfavored groups. Naturally they firmly quashed any idea of a labor-centered politics, promoting the advent of new social movements. Such movements according to Frankfurt School philosopher Jurgen Habermas were "not ignited by distribution problems (such as wage struggles) but by questions having to do with the grammar of forms of life."

In the United States, however, beginning in the 1970s, rationing, gas lines, falling wages, closing factories, urban arson, and stagflation scrambled the syntax of the Frankfurtian lifeworld. By 2006, the top 10 percent drew a greater share of U.S. national income than even during the fabled Gilded Age. Between 40 and 50 million had no health insurance. A politics purely focused on issues of group recognition and unconnected with vast income differences and life chances now seemed too detached from elementary human needs and remote from historical leftist norms. Surely, politics can't be reduced to money. But a politics that renounces incomes as an object for contention can't be taken seriously. Especially when such renunciation is a one-sided gesture by a mostly academic Left untouched by its impact. The unashamedly labor-centric labor Left at least could be seen as addressing the growing material crisis of U.S. society which couldn't be solved without income re-distribution — a task that unions were invented for.

The labor Left was well-positioned to exploit the larger Left's remoteness from plebian concerns. But gradually, as they achieved professional success and became vested in union pension plans, the party-less labor Leftists paid a price for their enhanced relevance: the loss of independence. Union staffers and consultants don't constitute a powerful bureaucracy who determine policy; they keep their jobs by doing whatever elected labor leaders tell them. Progressive labor journalists lose access to the leaders if they write critical stories. Even the most progressive elected officers who devoutly believe in bottom-up democracy, are unable to resist the temptations to rely on the inherent powers of compulsion and patronage afforded by union contracts, constitutions, and the American legal system. They can't reach out too far to independent rank-and-file movements without risking charges of dual unionism — a sin as unthinkable to AFL-CIO theologians as burning the Koran to the mullahs. Some progressive trade union leaders might like to form a genuine Labor Party, but they can't for the obvious reason that it would antagonize useful allies in the Democratic Party.

What's most troublesome about "union democracy" is that the vital distinction between the mechanical and organic forms of solidarity disappears. And what's promoted is a kind of Smithian view.

One symptom of the labor Leftists' incorporation problem — these are activists whose watchwords are "rank and file" and "union democracy" — is that despite some skepticism, they broadly supported EFCA, which would reform an undemocratic electoral process by taking away workers' right to strike; the rank-and-file's right to approve contracts; and although they vigorously deny it, effectively liquidate workers' rights to a secret ballot election.

Today's labor left, unlike the old independent Left but very much like organized labor's Democratic Party allies, no longer holds out the prospect of an alternative to capitalist society. Rather it seeks an alternative unionism. In giving up on the possibility of socialism, argues Bill Fletcher Jr., a former aide to John Sweeney and his co-author Fernando Gapasin, "segments of the left wing of labor tended to treat the organization of workers into unions as the central project." What's wrong with that?

IT WOULD BE TOO GLIB to say that the labor Left has replaced the old illusion of socialism in one country, by settling for democracy in one union local. First of all because a not insignificant swath of the labor Left — and the swath becomes wider the closer they get to union leadership — rejects union democracy. Even the very trimmed down version of democracy that defines it in terms of workers' Landrum-Griffin rights: to speak at union meetings; get their votes counted in fair elections, etc. Lichtenstein's Columbia Teach-in co-chair Steve Fraser, who also produced a well-received biography of another notable CIO labor leader, argues that unions are armies and soldiers can't hope to be generals. And as far as gifted labor generals are concerned, democracy wasn't worth "a rat's ass."

Moreover, the pro-democracy faction of the labor Left doesn't present their reform program as self-contained. They see the transformation of union locals from top down to bottom up institutions as the catalyst for the democratization of the entire country. "At stake," observes Lichtenstein, "is not just an effort to resolve America's labor question but the revitalization of democratic society itself."

"Reform labor, reform America" makes up the larger agenda of the labor Left. Some argue union reform begins with union democracy; then having democratized the unions, it will be possible to mobilize an energized rank-and-file for massive organizing campaigns. A greater share of the workforce (union density) will increase union bargaining leverage, raise wages, redistribute income. (Democracy first, the TDU model.) Others, particularly those who promote the SEIU model, say density must come first. Unions can't do anything to advance workplace democracy if they fall beneath 10 percent representation in their industry (density first). Nor, say the density advocates, need a revived labor movement derive its momentum exclusively from bottom-up energies. What's crucial are innovative tactics by the leadership (corporate campaigns, community outreach, social networking). Look, they say, at the now iconic LA janitors' struggle, the Bread and Roses movement of 1989-90. Where would the activists have been without Sweeney's investment of resources into organizing?

But the viability of either project depends a lot on suitability of the proposals to the task. As far as the density first strategy is concerned, do even the best-practice organizing strategies have serious potential to reverse the sixty-year decline in private sector density? SEIU's density in its signature industry — janitorial services — is below 10 percent. Nor, according to UNITE-HERE president John Wilhelm, has it fared very well in its other main private sector industry — it represents less than 10 percent in the private sector health care industry.

If the density first faction hasn't raised density, the democracy first faction aims only at a simulacrum of democracy. It leaves untouched the actual structures of domination along with the fragmented governance system, which anchors business unionism. "Union democracy" tends to be the bare bones model advocated by Association for Union Democracy's (AUD's) Herman Benson. It consists essentially of strict enforcement of the Landrum-Griffin Act (1959) the right to free speech at union meetings, and a fair count in local elections. Fair trials before impartial tribunals. The right to vote on contracts. It also includes a more top-down variant that stresses the need for leaders to act without membership consent to secure important progressive objectives; to form progressive machines ("caucuses") based on those who provided electoral support; and to make sure the staff is not a neutral bureaucracy, but serves as the political arm of the leadership.

Neither of these allows for what Gramsci calls "collective will formation" — collective in the broadest sense of creating a national-popular will. Such a will is formed in a project of moral and political reform for the entire nation, based on the common good of the working class, but which transcends the material interests of this or that local, trade, or industry. The labor Left, in contrast, remains hopelessly ensnared in the organizational limits of the localistic, job control business unionism they seek to transform.

Trapped in the structures of business unionism, the labor Left tends to define the phenomenon in the shallowest possible way. Business unionism becomes a set of leadership attitudes — thinking and acting like businessmen; adopting business norms. Talking in terms of "market shares" like Andy Stern. Or perhaps as frequently, as labor leaders acting in self-serving ways, using their office at the expense of the membership.

But in the deeper and more substantive meaning of business unionism, it takes place not at the expense of the membership, but in their interests narrowly conceived. As when the members of a craft union decide to exclude new members in order to push up their own wages; or the members of an industrial union vote to adopt a two tier wage system, shifting concessions to new hires ("killing the unborn"). Or the historic opposition to unemployment relief by the AFL on the grounds it would undermine private union plans. Or more universally, the union members who are totally preoccupied with the terms and conditions of their own contract and show indifference to what happens to other workers.

Robert Hoxie and E.H. Downey characterized the syndrome well in a work written nearly a century ago:

> Business unionism expresses the viewpoint and interests of the workers in a craft or industry rather than those of the working class as a whole. It aims chiefly at more here and now, for the organized workers of the craft or industry, in terms mainly of higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, regardless for the most part of the welfare of the workers outside the particular organic groups. When market conditions change — wage structure threatened tends to become more altruistic and stress the need to organize. But overall, the business unionist tends to be conservative and self-seeking (because they're acting in defense of a relatively privileged, market-protected minority — one well exemplified by the railroad brotherhoods.)

In a sense, as British sociologist Richard Hyman suggests, "sectionalism" — the British term for business unionism — represents the form of unionism natural to the early stages of capitalism. It's organization based on a kind of mechanical solidarity — workers who do the same kind of work, look like each other, and who seek to protect the same terms and conditions of work organize first. The problem, as John Stuart Mill classically observed of the unionism in his day, is that it becomes, instead of a means of redistribution from capital to labor, a means of re-distribution from the lower stratum of the working class to the higher which is able through "combination" to entrench itself to a degree against competition.

The "new unionism" of the late 19th century in Great Britain and on the continent — where it was more successful — represented a self-conscious attempt to transcend "mechanical solidarity" and achieve a more organic solidarity, based on common interests and the common good of the entire working class. It was a transition that the U.S. labor movement never fully achieved — not even by the CIO where bargaining was confined to single industries rather than single trades. And the point of bargaining was to advance the interests of particular workers ("enterprise egoism") — even if it undermined the interests of all, as with Walter Reuther's decision to scrap compaigning for national health insurance and go for private benefits.

What's most troublesome about "union democracy" is that the vital distinction between the mechanical and organic forms of solidarity disappears. And what's promoted is a kind of Smithian view of the labor movement in which the welfare of all is advanced by the democratic, participatory strivings of members in each local union aiming strictly at its own welfare.

"History," (much of it anyhow) "is the history of class struggle." But it doesn't take place between columns of figures drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It's a contest between institutionalized persons: parties, movements, corporations, unions. Insofar as we lose sight of the real structures of these institutions — the relations that explain who rules whom and how — we lose both the capacity to combat adversarial institutions and the ability to amplify the power of our own. If you can't explain how something works, you can't fix it.

For a generation, *Labor Notes* and cofounder Kim Moody have provided the sharpest criticism of organized labor's lack of union democracy, pervasive corruption, and failure to organize. This is no small thing. If the school bus has been driven into a ditch, it's important to say so. And not to keep insisting, as our labor press is wont to do, that it isn't in the ditch at all; or that if it is, it's playing the bosses' game to say so in public. What's missing in Moody is a plausible explanation of how the bus got in the ditch — what's not working — why unions don't organize; why democracy hasn't flourished. Why local union governance almost invariably takes the form of "one party rule." Why union principles ("An Injury to All") so rarely materialize. Because we share Moody's principles — unionism from the bottom up — and because in contrast with timid or actually sycophantic labor academics he dares to criticize the unions' main drift, his implausible analysis — that unions are run by bureaucrats — gets the benefit of the doubt. Along with his equally insufficient remedy. Moody does not suggest a restructuring of the 19th century American union model. He identifies but does not call for scrapping "the stabilizing institutions of American business unionism." Rather he advocates better leaders to replace the bureaucrats, leaders who will bring a more dynamic ideology, and elicit more member participation.

Crucially, however, bureaucrats do not run American unions. Bureaucrats are unelected staff persons who administer rules and carry out specialized functions. They do not make rules or set policy; they obey elected officials. (This is something you don't need to be told if you've ever worked for a union.) Unions are Schumpeterian, not Jeffersonian or Madisonian democracies. That is, the officials are elites who rule because they've won a competition — however narrow — for votes. The question is: Why is it that the competition in American unions tends to be a comparatively narrow one between ethnic groups, racial groups, personal and even family cliques? The short answer is because American unions, going back to the creation of the AFL, have been predominantly local rent-seeking institutions. So the problem of union governance was basically a question of which groups would get to share in the rent. This economic goal dictated a politics of closure rather than a politics of mass mobilization. Any effort to open up the union, to engage in mass organizing, to really democratize it would undermine the fundamental business union principle of exclusive bargaining — and result in a lesser share of rent. The problem is not so much an unrepresentative, overbearing autocracy trampling the members' rights and ignoring their interests. It's rather that the elected leadership tends to represent certain favored, higher paid strata in the split or dual labor market: whites over blacks; men over women; natives over immigrants; older over younger workers. It's an hegemony that's maintained less by outright violations of Landrum-Griffin rights than by the way union boundaries are drawn and maintained. And within the union by wage tiers; seniority systems; and by the creation of permanent temporary workers. Blaming "the bureaucrats" for the failures of business unionism ignores the powerful microeconomic forces that shape many members' immediate interests and therefore union political institutions.

Economic Foundations of Business Unionism

THE IDEA THAT UNIONS ARE ACTIVE in organizing but they're held back solely by bad labor laws and employer resistance is one of the most widely shared assumptions of the Card Check debate. In fact, a lot of the reason unions don't organize is that they don't try. While there's a lot of employer resistance, most unions don't try to overcome it. Just a handful of unions are at all active in elections — with the Teamsters alone contesting more than a quarter of all contests. U.S. unions no more seek to represent all the workers in the country than insurance companies seek to insure all the potential sick people. Whereas insurance companies concentrate on pools of the young and the healthy, the labor unions focus on workers in jurisdictions who are paid by employers with deep pockets who have a certain monopoly power. The restaurant workers union in New York City focuses on the midtown Manhattan venues where waiters can make $200 a night in tips. It ignores Chinatown where the dishwashers may make as little as $180 a week.

Historically, this selective concentration produced a high union premium. But as increased competition erodes employer monopoly, union ability to achieve the union premium declines too, calling into question the economic foundation of American business unionism.

The point here is not to support the Owenite John Weston's claim that unions can't raise wages; that wage increases are automatically followed by price increases. So that workers gain nothing and unions are pointless. In his famous response, Marx shattered Weston's assumption that wages were fixed. He went on to explain wage variations in terms of the cost of labor power, modified by historical factors — workers who ride bikes to work need less wages than workers who commute by car — and most importantly by fluctuations in supply and demand.

Variations in demand were determined chiefly by rate of accumulation and the share of wage capital in total capital, which tends to fall, while the supply of labor by the size of the labor force, all of which fluctuate, rather than remain fixed as Weston assumed.

Historically, Marx observed, the general tendency of wages, notwithstanding bursts of rising wages — e.g., 50s to the 70s in 19th century and the same period again in the 20th century, stagnation or even decline predominated — for supply outran demand. Recent studies and recent developments have justified Marx's skepticism. From 1500-1800 wages didn't rise, fluctuating with Malthusian forces around subsistence; nor is it clear that wages increased at all during the industrial revolution despite historic increases in productivity; true wages rose after 1850; certainly increased between 1940s and 1970s. Subsequently, U.S. median hourly wages for non-supervisory workers have stagnated or even fallen.

European unions are under the same competitive pressures as their American counterparts. But they've adapted better. Even in France, where the labor movement is often portrayed as having fared worse than the U.S. because it has fewer dues paying members, unions still bargain for more than 90 percent of the French workforce. Political action takes far more militant and broad scale forms; local "boss knappings" occur against the background of millions of workers demonstrating in nationwide actions against austerity. It's true that French unions lost the 35 hour week, but the French labor Left and its allies can still boast of universal childcare; universal health coverage; six week vacations, and a minimum wage is 8.71 euros an hour: $12.28 at current exchange rates. (the U.S. minimum in 2009 is $7.25)

The French as well as most other European unions share a common ancestor with their American counterparts in the 19th century monopolistic craft union, but in Europe, craft unionism was very early on absolutely suppressed. With the passage of *la loi Chapelier*, in 1791, the French Revolution banned all forms of workers' organizations. When unions emerged from illegality in 1886 it was as a contentious, competitive mass movement dominated by Marxists and anarchists, operating on a national scale, not as thousands of rent-seeking enclaves.

Just as the U.S. political system remained comparatively localized and patronage- ridden, never developing European style mass parties, American labor institutions haven't really evolved either. As comparative labor historian Gerald Friedman observes, "American unions abandoned inclusive and industrial organization just when these forms were replacing craft unions in France." They retain a suite of features from their 19th century forebearers which originally emerged by adapting strictly to the monopoly niches of the economy. Craft unionism in the U.S. had a clear field to exploit the ample locational rents generated by the newly created central business districts; industrial unionism could feed on the technological rents earned by U.S. manufacturing until the late 1960s when European and Japanese challengers arose. The third wave of American trade unions in the public sector has flourished while the others have languished because public sector workers lack competition. Of course it's been the whole point of the "re-inventing government school" of public administration to create competing labor markets for public services, most recently in the public schools by establishing charter schools, merit pay, and so forth.

Outside the public sector, for well-known reasons — deregulation, increased capital mobility, immigration, the growth of the Marxian industrial reserve army by about a billion since the fall of Communism in China, Russia, and Eastern Europe — monopoly enclaves have shrunk. Because of American deindustrialization, new monopolies haven't emerged. This is an a special problem for American unions, which are overly adapted to monopoly niches. The institutional adaptations they've developed to survive in monopoly environments militate against efforts to expand beyond them. Already, in the 1880s, Engels in a letter to August Bebel, a co-founder of the SPD, identified a few of the now familiar backward-looking, exclusionary, stand-pat characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon monopolistic craft unions:

> No doubt you suppose that the engineers, joiners, bricklayers, etc. will admit any worker into their trade without more ado! Not at all . . . Whoever wants admission must first have been attached an apprentice . . . This was intended to keep the number of workers limited . . . The economy produces as many "skilled" workers outside the unions as in the unions. But who can never become members. The fools want to reform society to suit themselves but not to reform themselves to suit the development of society. They cling to their traditional superstition which does them nothing but harm instead of getting quit of the rubbish and thus doubling their numbers and their power and really becoming again what at present they daily become less — associations of all workers in a trade against the capitalists.

Yet Engels only examines one side of monopoly union dilemma. If the engineers, et. al., had followed his advice to open their books and double the membership, it wouldn't have doubled the number of union jobs; union wages would have fallen to the average rate for skilled workers. Whereas the whole point of this model is to enable the members — or at least a politically decisive number of them — to earn labor rents.

Today's unions, whether in public sector, the construction trades, or the industrial sector still operate as monopolists. But labor monopolists face a choice: they can raise wages and reduce their membership. Or lower wages and increase the number of dues payers. The UAW best exemplifies the former strategy. In the last seven years, UAW membership has fallen from over 700,000 to about 431,000. Yet autoworker wages have risen — at least for those in the top tier who earn $28.50 — substantially above the median for production workers and double what autoworkers in the entry tier receive. The SEIU best exemplifies the strategy of increasing market share by price-cutting. In 1982, unionized Los Angeles Janitors earned $12.00 an hour — over $25.00 an hour in 2007 dollars. There were 5,000. Today the there are 4,700 unionized L.A. janitors earning between $8.30 and $13.00 an hour, depending on the area.

What Is to Be Undone?

The underdeveloped American variant of labor unionism distinguishes itself by three primary and interrelated institutional features: (i) the legal monopoly that serves as the foundation for (ii) the pursuit of the union premium. — (iii) On the basis of the union premium, a characteristic political superstructure arises: the fiefdom regime — which administers the "job trust" that is created by the union premium. It's these legal, economic, and political institutions that pose the real threat of extinction for unionism in America.

Legal monopoly. American unions claim absolute sovereignty ("jurisdiction") over certain portions of the planet. Local 608 of the New York City District Council of Carpenters is sovereign over the west side of Manhattan, Harlem, and the Bronx. It claims the right to represent everyone in those communities who seek work in carpentry — still a highly controversial concept and one that remains hotly contested — if not as intensely so as in the days before Taft Hartley (1946) when jurisdictional strikes were still allowed.

Sovereignty or jurisdiction means for a union what it means for a state: not only the right to represent subjects in negotiations with other sovereign entities; but also the right to tax its subjects. When the union's claim is recognized by an employer, it's automatically validated by the U.S. government in the form of a bargaining certificate. Further anchoring sovereign claims are three features of the standard collective bargaining agreement which transform the claim of absolute sovereignty into an effective legal monopoly.

(i) "Union security" provisions — prevalent outside Southern and Rocky Mountain states — require workers to join the union in 30 days or get fired. Becoming a union member entails mandatory dues. Usually about 2 percent of wages — although higher in craft unions. (ii) To reduce the effort of dues collection, contracts call for "automatic dues check-off," wherein the dues go straight from the employer to the union without passing through the workers' pocket. (iii) "Exclusive bargaining" compels employers to deal only with the sovereign union. Evidently, if workers can't join any other union; and employers can't hire workers from any other source but the union, the union functions as a monopoly agent for all those who would sell their labor power.

Only unions which operate on the basis of such compulsion are possible according to the late Mancur Olson, author of the highly influential *The Logic of Collective Action.* According to Olson, workers can't organize collectively without forced membership, forced dues, and exclusionary practices. This is because workers are rational — not in the Marxian sense of having the capacity to identify their collective interests — but in the utilitarian sense of pursuing their individual interest. And it's not in their interest to pay dues if they can get union benefits for nothing. So great is the free rider problem. Wrote Olson: "Large, national labor unions with the strength and durability of those that now exist in this country could not exist without some type of compulsory membership."

It's a familiar argument for those who recall the outlines of Hobbes' *Leviathan.* Individuals live in a state of nature — where there is no order and each becomes the natural enemy of the other. The only rational solution to end the intolerable bloody chaos is for each to give up his freedom and take orders from a supreme, order-creating sovereign. "In those nations whose Commonwealths have been long-lived," wrote Hobbes, "the Subjects never did dispute of the Sovereign Power."

As it turned out, Hobbes' powerful deductive reasoning notwithstanding, long-lasting republics with disputatious subjects are possible, while absolute monarchies of the kind favored by Hobbes have faded from the scene. Similarly, Olson's reasonings notwithstanding, American unions which rely on compulsion are obviously a lot less strong and durable than European unions which live off voluntary dues and which operate free of union security or exclusive bargaining clauses.

These features are absent on the continent in part because workers there resist the idea of compulsory unionism, which they associate with the historical experience of European fascism and national socialism; and more generally because of the belief that such provisions interfere with workers' rights of free association: the insistence that workers should be able to join any union they want; or none at all. Union security and exclusive bargaining provisions conflict with the rights proclaimed by both U.N. Charter and the ILO's 1948 Declaration on Freedom of Association.

In the absence of legal compulsion, European unions naturally compete for workers' allegiance in the workplace and in work council elections, just as political parties compete for voters. On the face of it, it's hard to see why there should be only one union any more than there should be one church or one political party. Or why any institution in civil society should have the right to force you to join, or pay taxes to support it. But perhaps because pro-employer conservatives, like the National Right to Work Committee, attack union security, present-day labor Leftists — unlike the Wobblies or the Debsian socialists — defend it uncritically.

What's inarguable is that monopolies raises wages — at least for a few — creating what used to be called "the job trust" whereby a legal monopoly is transformed into an economic monopoly which regularly gives rise to what is now known as the "union premium."

Union premium. "By improving the labor power of a few individuals and keeping them on the inside of a corral, keeping others out with initiation fees, and closing the books,"observed the IWW's Big Bill Haywood, "they form a little job trust." The job trust creates a union premium; a wage higher than that earned by non-union workers in the same industry.

Where does this increment come from? Three sources suggest themselves. In a competitive industry, it must come from the normal profits of the employer; but this will be a very unstable foundation, since businesses will not continue to invest in the absence of a normal return. In the case of a monopoly industry, costs involved in paying higher wages can be shifted to the consumer through higher prices; in which case the unionized workers and the employer share the surplus. Finally, higher wages in the monopoly sector may come at the expense of workers in the non-unionized, competitive sector. As wages increase, employers economize on labor, so that workers made redundant in the unionized sector move to the non-unionized sector where they further depress wages.

To point this out is not to oppose unionism, as some would have it, but a certain kind of unionism. It was after all, John Stuart Mill, feminist, socialist, and pioneer supporter of workers' collective rights, who first identified this "spillover effect." He regarded it as one of the principal drawbacks of the "new model unionism" exemplified by the Amalgamated

Society of Engineers, which would later serve as a model for both Samuel Gompers and Mancur Olson.

Of the Amalgamated, Mill wrote:

> While they continue to fix their hopes on hedging themselves in against competition and protecting their own wages by shutting out others from access to their employment, nothing better can be expected from them than that total absence of any large and generous aims, that almost open disregard of all other objects than high wages and little work for their own small body. It is time that the better paid classes of skilled artisans should seek their own advantage in common with, and not be the exclusion of their fellow laborers.

For most of their history, the unions that make up the core of organized labor in America have followed in the Amalgamated tradition. They no longer oppose minimum wage or social welfare programs. But their aims, their self-justification as well as their appeal to the unorganized is still narrow and individualistic: — vote for us and we'll deliver "the union advantage" they promise. And they back up this promise by pointing out their ample union premium. Recently, however, a tincture of ambivalence can be detected. As Elaine Bernard, Director of the Harvard Labor and Worklife Program, explains:

> Union workers are paid nearly *30 percent more* than those doing the same work in a nonunion environment. But the union advantage is a two-edged sword.

By one measure, she says, the 30 percent union wage premium, the U.S. union movement is the most successful in the world. No other labor movement has such a large union premium. But by another measure, the failure to socialize the gains of unions — whether through legislation, regulation, or extension of collective bargaining standards throughout the country — has resulted in the United States having the weakest labor movement of any advanced industrial country.

This is sort of like saying the United States has the strongest economy in the world because it has the most billionaires; but it also has the weakest because it has the most inequality. American capitalism can no more make all its citizens billionaires than American unionism can give every worker a 30 percent union premium. It's the existence of the premium as much as any single factor that explains why unions can't organize. And why they're shrinking — two different but related processes. Union sector losses regularly exceed union organizing gains. But why can't American unions restructure themselves, why is the latest "New Voice" always an echo of old voices. Why are the reform forces so weak? What blocks genuine change is a self-perpetuating fiefdom-like political system that administers the job trust and distributes the rewards of the union premium.

The fiefdom model. The problem of all democracy — whether in ancient or modern society — is how to make citizens who are unequal in economic terms, equal politically ("one person, one vote"). In American-style union governance, the problem is the reverse: how to take workers who are equal in economic terms and transform them into political unequals. And in the process, convert a stratum of ordinary workers into lifetime paid officials who can renounce the hardships of the workplace.

One reason why the medieval system of fiefdoms lasted a thousand years in Europe and even longer in Japan — despite protracted economic stagnation and nearly constant warfare — was that like American unions, it was highly decentralized. It's a lot easier to chop off one big head than 20,000 small ones. As Madison points out in the *Federalist Papers*, the more you subdivide a political body, the harder it is to change: "The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States." Subdividing American labor into 20,000 semi-autonomous locals not only slows down change, it subdivides the possibility of solidarity. Each local has its own contract; its own local grievances — it remains a tidy microcosm, self-sufficient to itself.

Another major source of stability is the extraordinary degree of control the local leadership has over the membership. Like the medieval vassals, local leaders collect compulsory dues from the workers who — like serfs — must pay for the right to work. Nor do they have much recourse. Serfs are tied to the manor. And workers can escape the union's control only if they give up their job.

But here a supporter of the U.S. model might argue, the analogy with serfdom goes too far. After all, the serfs didn't get to vote for the lord of the manor. And the workers? — ever since Landrum-Griffin (1959), passed over the howls of organized labor — mandates a local election (once every three years) if not for higher level officials. So, if workers can't exit, at least they have a voice.

But how effective a voice? Medieval fiefdoms were won through armed struggle and thereafter passed down through inheritance. Inheritance plays a not inconsiderable role in the rule of union fiefdoms but they are generally won through political struggle, a competition heavily weighted in favor of the incumbents, who have all resources: the union paper; the mailing list; the ability to schedule the election; and control of the staff which like the medieval retainers of the Lord must show absolute loyalty. In the classic AFL locals, add control over the hiring hall, whereby the leadership decides who works and how often. Who is going to campaign against a business agent who provides you with steady work?

Of course incumbents are not invincible. Opposition groups pledged to reform do overturn long lasting dynasties. But the most depressing feature of the fiefdom model is how incumbency transforms the reformers. ("They go in but they don't come out.") Some things change — salaries may be cut, along with perquisites; certainly there's more openness to the Left; progressive resolutions virtually fly out of union conventions. What remains though are the political institutions constitutive of the fiefdom model. Reformers keep the automatic dues check-off; exclusive bargaining; union security. The union paper remains a vehicle for self-promotion. Patronage and loyalty don't disappear; just who receives it. Nor do reformers give up the supervening aim of the institution — the union premium. Within a few years, yesterday's hero — Ron Carey, John Sweeney, Roger Toussaint, Martin Nesbitt, Brian McLaughlin, Bruce Raynor, Andy Stern — is today's embarrassment.

Conclusion

THERE'S NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE to know for sure, but it's probably not just a fluke that the botched campaign for EFCA coincides with sharpest drop in public approval for organized labor since 1937. Shifts in public approval of unions usually occur at a glacial pace. But according to Gallup, labor lost a nearly one fifth of its support within the last year. It stands now at its lowest level ever.

The Smithian principle that "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest," has long guided American business unionism. Labor history shows that the strategy of loosely affiliated, segmented unions each pursuing their own interest ultimately doesn't work for labor even in its own terms. From the Bakers union in the Bronx to the Autoworkers union in Flint, the high wage promontories jutting above the low wage sea are finally engulfed by competitive forces. Density falls. Legislative rescue from falling density fails because the public — which increasingly views labor as just another special interest — lacks any reason to pressure their representatives to act against corporate interests.

The retardation of the American labor movement, its fixation at what Engels called the "trade union" stage has long been evident. What's at stake is a lot more than the union premiums of the top 10-15 percent of the workforce. Left liberals need to understand they can't have a Rawlsian social democracy on the basis of a lot of separate individuals making ethical choices that ensure decent minima for the least well-off. It takes workers' power in civil society. The postmodern Left needs to recognize that organizing for micro power is not enough to establish a Left that's worthy of respect. Diversity and cultural recognition are fully compatible with exploitation and domination in life's material callings. And all Americans ought to recall that the rise and fall of republics coincide with the peaks and troughs in the progress of plebian rights and powers.

It's not enough, though, that the Machiavellian moment of recognition displaces the Charlie Brown moment of denial. Action must follow analysis. What should labor Leftists do? C. Wright Mills argued that isolated Leftists should always ask themselves "What would I do if I were a political party?"

A political party doesn't have to be a 20th century European-style mass party of millions or an American-style conglomerate of big interests driven by big money. At the outset, it can be an organization numbering a comparative handful of militants with shared convictions who agree to work together towards common goals — like those who led the nearly forgotten struggles that triggered the passage of the Wagner Act and the formation of the CIO in 1935, and in the process, raised the arc of the American labor movement for a generation.

1934 was the year micro-parties of young labor Leftists — not waiting for an okay by the AFL leadership — took the initiative in local union struggles that ignited a militant, mass labor movement in America. Harry Bridges, at the time a 33-year-old independent radical, merged his circle of followers with Communists in San Francisco. Together they campaigned against the ship-owners and their allies in the corrupt local that had forced even Bridges to pay a kickback for his job. The forty member Communist League in Minneapolis led by 26-year-old Trotskyist Farrell Dobbs and the Dunne brothers sought to expand Teamsters Local 574 beyond approved AFL jurisdictional lines. A. J. Muste's Workers' Party, which never numbered more than a few hundred members in the entire country, started out in Toledo organizing the unemployed. There somehow, marches of the unemployed grew into a general strike threat that forced employers to capitulate — the first crack in the nonunion barrier in the auto industry that had held since the beginning of the industry. Actual general strikes in San Francisco and Minneapolis growing out of local conflicts for quite limited objectives had a similar resounding impact.

What the struggles of that *annus mirabilis* show is that the question of whether labor Leftists should work inside or outside established unions is a purely tactical question. One of the first acts of the San Francisco militants was to tear up their union books and refuse to pay dues. Dobbs, on the other hand, remained ever-faithful to Teamsters Local 574, while totally transforming it. And Muste initiated a mass movement outside organized labor itself that would completely enflame it. What was decisive was not whether the action started inside or outside the organizational form, but clearing away the boundaries that separated employed, unemployed, union and non-union workers.

The struggles of the year 1934 also bear on the validity of the theories of social movements that insist on the decisive importance of organizational and financial resources. They would seem to disprove those radicals who think they can't advance without the airpower provided by the two big federations. Nor was it inevitable that what had been an independent labor Left had to be swallowed up after 1935 by the two main organizing centers of that period.

What ultimately counts in politics is passion, perspective . . . and what Machiavelli called "*fortuna*." In times of great crisis he argued, *fortuna* scrambles the political odds; it turns against the established order and favors those who would upset it. In retrospect, the Great Depression was obviously such a period. Whether the present "Great Recession" will offer another such opportunity for the labor Left is a question that of course can't be answered without taking the risk and making the effort.

Editor's Note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org

What Happened to the American Working Class?

Dan La Botz

The collapse of the financial sector of the United States detonated the current global economic crisis, and its auto industry was soon crumpling as well. Yet, though it all began here, American labor unions and workers have been slow to respond and their response has been weak. Millions of workers in hundreds of French cities have struck and demonstrated repeatedly against their government and against the banks and corporations throughout the spring of 2009, and the story was similar in Italy and Greece. Tens of thousands also protested the economic crisis in Iceland and Latvia. Throughout China there have been thousands of protests against layoffs, some of them violent. Only in the United States, the center of the storm, has the working class shown almost no signs of fight.

With the exception of a few street demonstrations in New York and San Francisco, some symbolic protests by a handful of rank-and-file auto workers, a small heroic strike and occupation by 300 Republic Window workers in Chicago, and a tour by the United Steel Workers calling for the creation of industrial jobs in Canada and the United States, the American working class took virtually no action in its own defense. Though unemployment reached 8.5 percent and over 13.2 million people were without jobs, virtually no strikes or work stoppages of any significant size were reported in the United States in the spring of 2009. As the crisis unfolded in late 2008 and early 2009, many wondered, what had happened to the American working class?

Steven Greenhouse, labor writer for *The New York Times*, surveyed a group of academics, union officials and labor activists who suggested that the reasons for the passivity of the U.S. working class were the American ethos of individualism, the workers' self-conception as part of the middle class, and the general weakness of the labor unions. While there is some truth in all of those, the explanation has to be sought in deeper structural changes in American capitalism and the working class itself as seen in historical perspective.

The 1930s Upheaval

While the great labor upheaval of the 1930s has now almost faded from living memory, still the successes and failures of those events some seventy years ago continue to influence the course of contemporary developments. The great strikes of 1934 in San Francisco, Toledo, and Minneapolis, the sit-down strikes of 1936-1938 in rubber and auto, and the entire labor rebellion of that period were led on the ground by and large by labor leftists, Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists and others. The revolutionary left provided not only strategic leadership for the large scale struggles, but also the local militants who had established relationships in workplace and communities.

Strategically important to the industrial union movement as it developed and spread were the Communists who had established strong relationships with small groups of African-American workers. With African-Americans living and working in cities throughout the North since the Great Migration of World War

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I, the left-black alliance proved key to the victories in the industrial unions. The Communists' commitment to advancing blacks' civil and political rights, as well as the their social acceptance of African Americans within the Party and its various party and non-party organizations, established a model for the CIO, though it was only unevenly adopted within the new labor congress.

> What distinguished the CIO period was the brief period of left leadership in the early 1930s.

The leftist organizers began in the early 1930s with three goals: the organization of industrial unions, the building of a working class political party, and the establishment of socialism in America. Those goals would not be realized because of rival leaderships in the working class, because of the role of the Democratic Party and Roosevelt, and because of the growing power of state institutions over labor. We should not forget that during the heyday of CIO organizing, not only left political parties, but also forces as distinct as the Catholic Church, the Democratic Party, and even Ku Klux Klan members could be found involved in various organizing efforts. The American working class has never been homogenous, and not all workers followed the most radical leaders. But what distinguished the CIO era was the brief period of left leadership in the early 1930s, gradually ceding control to bureaucratic and business union forces.

John L. Lewis, the conservative leader of the United Mine Workers union, seeing the beginning of a great labor movement in the making, ran to put himself at the head of it. Lewis led the fight to separate from the AFL, established the CIO, and hired leftists to work for it as organizers. Lewis shared the leftist organizers' desire for industrial unions, but he had much less interest in building a working class political party and no desire whatsoever to create a socialist America. Rather he hoped to see the CIO transformed into a business union different from the AFL principally in its scale and scope.

Meanwhile, Senator Robert F. Wagner, Democrat, and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins from New York crafted the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which for the first time legalized labor unions and also brought their activities under clearly defined government procedures and institutions. The new state structures and regulations tended to strengthen the emerging labor bureaucracy which was the sole collective bargaining agent in each workplace. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which provided for a minimum wage and maximum workweek, also formed part of the New Deal labor legislation.

While Lewis worked to tame the new unions' workers in their relations with the employers, Roosevelt succeeded in domesticating them politically, drawing them into the Democratic Party. With his New Deal social programs, Roosevelt succeeded in capturing the support of the Socialists and Communists as well as the unions of the old AFL and the new CIO. The Communist Party, then in its Popular Front phase, turned from militant opposition to Roosevelt to tacit support. While the Communist Party put up its own candidates in the elections, it threw its political weight behind Roosevelt and the Democrats. By the late 1930s the Communists were dissolving their workplace cell structure and instructing their members to participate in Democratic Party organizations. Given their influential labor organization and their close ties to black activists, the Communists' support for FDR and the Democrats played an important role in redirecting the radical labor movement back into traditional capitalist politics.

With the CIO Political Action Committee leading the way in the 1936 election, the unions entered the New Deal coalition and with that gave up their political independence. The Roosevelt administration then in effect negotiated between capital and labor a new social pact based fundamentally on the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), Fair Labor Standards Act, and Social Security. While about a third of American workers, particularly industrial workers, saw dramatic improvement in their lives, many other working people did not fully share the benefits of the reforms. The New Deal pact would prove to be a durable social contract that would last into the 1970s, cementing the relationship between capital and labor, between the bourgeoisie and society at large.

Similarly, Roosevelt's success, with the help of the Communist Party, in capturing the new workers' movement, represented a key turning point in modern American history. With labor and the left supporting Roosevelt, the possibility of building a working class political party became virtually impossible. Without their own party, American workers would find it difficult to chart their own course and to learn from their own mistakes. That fundamental failure of the 1930s means that today, 70 some years later, workers still have no political vehicle for their aspirations.

Class Solidarity, Unity and Consciousness?

THE PERIOD FROM 1933 TO 1939 represented the high point of working class militancy and organization in the history of the American labor movement. The Communist Party and other left groups leading sections of the working class achieved a real breakthrough in terms of workers' organization, combativeness, and class consciousness. Yet the initial breakthrough did not lead on either to the completion of the process of unionization, nor to the building of a labor party, and certainly not to a struggle for socialism.

Many factors impeded the realization of working class unity: American individualism, the acquisitive culture, ethnic divisions, the sense of craft pride or industrial identity to the exclusion of class identity, the divisions between the AFL and the CIO, the still subordinate role of women, the failure of the unions to reach many industries and workers, and the fact that the South had not yet been organized. Yet the greatest barrier to class solidarity and class consciousness remained race. The system of racial segregation in both South and North, the deep penetration into the society and popular consciousness of Social Darwinism and pseudo-scientific racism together with simple race hatred, and, above all, white workers' sense of race privilege and the unwillingness of many to work with blacks as well as the AFL's historic practice of excluding them from the craft unions, acted as powerful barriers to solidarity.

The CIO began in some places to overcome those barriers, especially where the Communist Party and its black allies had formed the core of an interracial working class movement, but the process never became complete, never became common to the working class as a whole. The American working class never succeeded in completing the tasks on the agenda in the 1930s because white workers, except in specific industries and regions during brief periods of union upheaval and organization, could not imagine a common interracial working class project to remake the nation together for the benefit of all. Both the idea of interracial cooperation and the goal of common benefit for all represented a step beyond the existing consciousness of white workers at that time. A step they could not take. That such a step was possible is shown by those areas where black and white unity was achieved under the Communist-black leadership in the 1930s. Race remained the American working class's Achilles heel and white racism the fundamental impediment to social progress.

The New Unions Tamed

THE NEW UNIONS CAME OUT OF THE 1930S as

powerful organizations made up of militant, battle-tested workers, many with radical leaders in leftwing parties. World War II transformed the unions as both the AFL and the new CIO entered into partnership with the government and the employers to win the war. Most labor officials worked to subordinate the union to the goals of government and the demands of the employers. The Communists, supporters of the Allies, became the most ardent enforcers of the wartime no-strike pledge.

With the war over, working class demands for higher pay led to strikes throughout industry in 1946, the largest in the nation's history. The 1946 strike wave, however, failed to rekindle the militant labor movement of the 1930s, in part because unions failed to convey the sense that they were fighting for all working people. Beginning in the late 1940s unions began for the first time to fight for pensions and health and welfare plans for their members. The perception developed that union workers were a privileged section of the working class. The privileges and the perception would over the following decades undermine the unions' ability to claim to speak for all working class and poor people.

The turning point for the radical labor movement that had arisen in the 1930s came with the failure of Operation Dixie, the campaign to organize workers in the South. The CIO's right wing led the campaign, excluded left wing organizers, declined to reach out to black workers, and hesitated to tackle the racist character of the Democratic Party in the South. The CIO leadership even attempted to appeal to the race prejudice of white workers in order to get them to sign up with the new unions. But, organized on that basis, Operation Dixie proved an utter failure, with fewer unionized workers in the South at the end of the 1940s than there had been at the beginning. The failure of Operation Dixie not only retarded social progress in the South and stopped the forward motion of the labor movement, it also established the basis for a white power reaction first in the form of the Dixiecrats (1948), later in the George Wallace Campaign (1968), and finally in Nixon's strategy of winning Southern white voters to the Republican Party.

The opening of the Cold War in the late 1940s led to the anti-Communist crusade, what came to be called, after Senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthyism involved the purging of many Communists and other radicals from the unions and from the workplace. The CIO's rightwing not only knuckled under to anti-Communist politicians, but itself also joined in the frenzied attack on the reds. The CIO's rightwing and the AFL together joined, for example, in the dismantling of the United Electrical Workers (UE), some of its members going to a new anti-Communist CIO union, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE-CIO) or to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW-AFL). Thus the Communist Party's dream of being incorporated into the nascent labor bureaucracy, failed to materialize, though in a few CIO and AFL unions Communists still held on to leadership posts, and the dwindling numbers of Communists remained active in the unions.

By 1955, when the AFL and the CIO merged, American unions had become thoroughly institutionalized in their relationship to both government and the employers. The union officialdom had become a union bureaucracy, a caste apart with its own perks and privileges, its rising salaries and status, and it own ideology, at best an arbiter between employers and workers, at worst the employers' enforcer. Whether one looked at George Meaney and the AFL-CIO, Walter Reuther and the United Auto Workers, or Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters, one encountered variations on the theme. With the entrenchment of this powerful labor bureaucracy, the remnants of the working class activist networks in the unions found their latitude of action reduced, their power limited. The unions the workers had built slipped out of their hands.

During the period from roughly 1950 to 1980, collective bargaining became largely ritualized as employers were often willing to trade higher wages and increased benefits for guarantees of labor peace and management's increasingly free hand on the shop floor. The labor bureaucracy's unquestioned and unquestioning support for the Democratic Party led inevitably to the depoliticization of the unions. The domestication of the labor union officialdom and the institutionalization of labor relations, together with the passage of time and the passing of the "greatest generation" in labor, resulted in the gradual stifling of the layer of working class activists whose shop floor organization in the workplace had not only been the source of the union's power but also represented the social milieu crucial to nurturing a revolutionary socialist left. Without its leftist yeast, the working class loaf fell flat. With its social environment dying, the left also declined.

> The greatest barrier to class solidarity and class consciousness remained race.

The Rank-and-File Rebellion of the 1970s

The rise of the Civil Rights movement beginning in the late 1950s, followed by the growth of the anti-Vietnam War movement in the late 1960s, was paralleled by a growth in a counterculture critical of capitalist consumerism, racism, and war, and a new era of labor revolt which began in the late 1960s and continued into the 1970s. César Chávez organized the United Farm Workers in California, teachers organized into the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, while public employees joined the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Authorities, all of these often accompanied by political struggles for the right to organize and by strikes to achieve recognition and first contracts.

At the same time movements for union democracy arose, attempting to take the unions back from gangsters, or conservative, do-nothing bureaucrats, or racist union machines: Miners for Democracy, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, Steelworker Fightback and the Ed Sadlowski campaign for Steelworkers president, and the Dodge Revolutionary Union (DRM) movement (and other such black power movements) in the United Auto Workers union. Workers became more militant carrying out strikes for higher wages, for better conditions, or for greater workers' power in the workplace. In 1971 there were a remarkable 298 strikes in workplaces of more than 1,000 workers, involving a total of 2,516,000 workers that year. Hundreds of thousands of workers engaged in strikes, many of them wildcat strikes, against the Bell Telephone Company, the U.S. Post Office, trucking employers, and the auto companies.

Several small socialist groups emerged rising out of the social movements, their activists converted into revolutionary party builders, and they participated in all of these movements, but in most cases their vanguardist approach—attempting to build their small groups at the expense of the movement—often proved a barrier to any meaningful synergy between the revolutionaries and the small, new layer of worker activists. The decline of the social movements and the deep recessions of 1974-75 and 1979-80 ended that period of working class upheaval without a decisive victory for rank-and-file workers anywhere except in the United Mine Workers. Despite these democratic movements and strikes, the unions in several industries—mining and trucking most notably—began to lose their dominant role in the core industries.

Deindustrialization and Restructuring

Already by the late 1960s, American corporations faced a profit squeeze exacerbated by growing foreign competition throughout the 1970s, above all from Germany and Japan. In response, U.S. employers initiated a policy that would come to be called "deindustrialization," a series of shakeouts, particularly in the steel industry and to a lesser extent in auto. The steel companies closed or drastically down-sized older, less productive plants, particularly in the Great Lakes industrial region, while many other employers restructured, moving from the "rust belt" to the "sun belt," setting up on green fields new plants filled with non-union workers.

The decline of industrial manufacturing particularly in the auto and steel industries in the Great Lakes industrial region that stretches from Duluth to Buffalo and includes Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh, all linked together by a dense network of waterways, railroads, and highways, began to break the industrial links that had made that area for 50 years one of the greatest industrial centers on the planet. The unions' power had been rooted in the social texture—the neighborhoods, schools, churches, bars, social clubs, and little league teams—of the descendants of the Eastern and Southern European immigrants who arrived at the opening of the century and of the offspring of African-Americans who had made the great migration from the plantations of the South.

All of that was ripped apart as employers began to move production to the West and to expand in the South, establishing more efficient greenfield plants in those areas leading to the rise of new urban centers such as San Jose, California, Houston, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. The industrial developments were accompanied by the breakdown in the social fabric of those Northern cities where racial conflict and white flight had already in the late 1960s and early 1970s carried away much of the capital to the suburbs. The unions' power had been rooted in people's everyday existence, and that way of life had been based on work; when the work ended, so did the union, so did their community, and so their culture. No doubt this culture was often racist, parochial (literally and figuratively), patriarchal, and socially conservative, but it also maintained a kind of working class community solidarity against the employers.

Deindustrialization and the runaway to the South dealt a blow to those unions as they lost tens and then hundreds of thousands of members, breaking up social relationships, weakening workplace culture and organization, and often erasing the activist memory of the working class. However, because those industries had union contracts and a seniority-based layoff system, older workers tended to keep their jobs while young workers were laid off. In many plants during the period from the 1970s to the 2000s, the average age of the workforce rose into the 50s, and many workers, some who had lived through an earlier era of union activism, were nearing retirement and they kept often a low profile for fear of jeopardizing their pensions. African-American workers concentrated in Great Lakes region and in industries like steel and auto suffered disproportionately the loss of union jobs, though other black workers would be hired in non-union plants in the South.

Carter, Reagan and Neoliberalism

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the government and the employers had also launched a new political and industrial relations offensive that would later come to be known as neoliberalism. The result was the deterioration of the social compact negotiated by Roosevelt in the 1930s. Democrats and Republicans shared responsibility for the attack on workers. The change began under President Jimmy Carter who oversaw the Chrysler bailout which forced concessions on the United Auto Workers union that broke its big three pattern contract. Carter and Ted Kennedy also promoted deregulation of airlines and trucking with devastating results for unions in those industries. The Reagan government continued the push, advocating privatization, deregulation, open markets, and cuts in the social welfare budget. Reagan's crushing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers (PATCP) and the firing of all 13,000 unionized workers signaled the beginning of an onslaught against unions. Workers became more reluctant to strike as employers turned to "replacement workers," that is, scabs.

After the recession of 1979-1980, with employment shaky and jobs scarce, unions and workers grew more hesitant to strike. The number of strikes involving 1,000 or more workers fell from 298 strikes involving 2,516,000 workers in 1971, the highpoint, to just 145 strikes involving 729,000 workers in 1981. Throughout this period, union density, the percentage of workers in unions, declined from 29.3 percent in 1964, to 19.1 percent in 1984, and then to only 13.6 percent in 2000. While the American working class faced the greatest employer assault since the 1930s, the union officialdom proved uninterested, unwilling, or unable to mount a resistance to the attack and instead bargained concessionary contracts that eventually undermined the industrial unions even further. A few attempts by rank-and-file groups to build anti-concessions movements in the auto workers, the Teamsters and other unions could only slightly slow the unions' retreat.

Restructuring and Offshoring

U.S. CORPORATIONS CONTINUED TO restructure, and in doing so they transformed the American working class. Restructuring was driven by the falling rate of profit in manufacturing, by foreign competition, by the past success and institutional gains of labor organization, by the labor upsurges of the 1970s, and by the opportunities offered by either relocating plants to other countries (offshoring) or the use of immigrant labor. Particular corporations opportunistically seized upon the various alternatives, though their individual corporate decisions emerged as patterns of industrial restructuring and working class reconfiguration.

Employment in industrial manufacturing in the United States has declined over the last few decades both as a result of increased mechanization and of the movement of plants offshore. The two factors are, of course, interrelated: increasing competition from low-wage plants overseas leads U.S. corporations either to move their plants offshore to low-wage countries or forces them to introduce more mechanization to make their U.S. plants more productive and therefore more competitive. Both solutions tend to reduce the number of manufacturing workers.

Already in the 1950s and 1960s employers had begun to move their plants to the South, made attractive by right-to-work laws, infinitesimally low levels of unionization, and historically low wages, legacies of slavery and debt peonage. Clothing manufacturers first headed to the South and then moved still further south, right on out of the country to the Caribbean, some to Puerto Rico and some to the island nations. The creation by the U.S. and Mexican governments of the maquiladora program in 1965, through which U.S. plants were encouraged by tax abatements to move south of the border where they could pay wages about one-tenth those paid in the United States, led many manufacturers to move factories to Mexico. Televisions, auto parts, and medical supplies previously manufactured in the United States were now manufactured by American companies in the maquiladora zone. U.S. auto companies established auto assembly plants (not under the maquiladora regime) in green field areas in northern Mexico. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada which took effect in 1994 both ratified the process of the redistribution of industrial manufacturing and encouraged it.

Since the 1980s, international production has been changed by the evolution of complex global manufacturing chains representing a "new wave" of globalization with quantitative and qualitative changes in international trade. Trade reduced U.S. manufacturing employment by 5.7 percent in 1990 alone. The decline of net exports between 2001 and 2006 cost the U.S. the equivalent of 1.8 million jobs. The offshoring that began in Puerto Rico and Mexico soon moved to China, driven in part by Walmart and other U.S. retailers that began to produce commodities of virtually every sort, particularly in the southern province of Guangdong. The problem was not only that individual corporations moved their operations to foreign countries, but also that, in the larger picture, many things once produced in the United States were now as likely or more likely to be produced abroad.

The Decline of Manufacturing and the Industrial Worker

THE KEY FACTOR IN THE DECLINE of the American working class as a social force has been above all the dramatic reduction in the size and weight of the industrial working class, that is, those workers engaged in manufacturing. The industrial working class includes construction workers, electric power and other utility workers, warehousemen, dockworkers, and truck drivers—altogether about 20 percent of the U.S. working class—but at its core is the factory worker. Factory workers, because they produce commodities for sale on the market and are concentrated in great numbers, have economic power unlike any other group of workers. While manufacturing has been declining as a percentage of all workers since the 1920s, it was the period of deindustrialization and runaway shops in the 1970s and 1980s that marked the most significant decline. The new balance between manufacturing, services, and public employment began to fundamentally reshape American capitalism and the working class.

The industrial worker core had been declining for some time, a result of both new technology and offshoring, and now its decline became precipitous. The statistics tell the story. In 1960 out of a total non-farm workforce of 54,274,000, there were 15,687,000 manufacturing workers representing 29 percent of the total. By 2009 out of a total of 134,333,000 nonfarm workers, there were only 12,640,000 manufacturing, representing just 9 percent of the total. That is, manufacturing workers fell in the last fifty years from almost one-third of all workers to less than 10 percent.

Manufacturing workers, especially those in heavy industries such as steel, auto, rubber, glass, and electrical industries, had been among the most highly unionized workers in the country. Such industrial workers often had higher wages than other workers such as those in professions like teaching, in health care, or in services. The industrial shakeouts and manufacturing relocation to the South or offshore devastated the unions, reducing union density and weakening union power. In 1973, 38.8 percent of manufacturing workers were in unions; by 1979 that percentage and fallen to 32.3; by 1990 it was only 20.6 percent; and by 1995 just 17.6 percent.

Despite their deteriorating situation, some workers did resist the employer offensive, such as those at the Hormel plant in Austin, Minnesota, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union which struck in 1985-86, and those at the A.E. Staley corn processing plant in Decatur, Illinois in 1992. However, they were the exception. The loss of industrial jobs, together with the government's anti-labor policies and the employer anti-union practices, dampened workers' willingness to fight, and strikes continued to decline, so that by 1991 there were only 40 strikes involving 392,000 workers and in 2001 only 29 strikes involving 99,000 workers. The class struggle seemed to be withering away.

Changes in the Labor Process

THE NATURE OF WORK in both industry and

services changed in ways that affected unions and their power. The Taylor-Ford model of industrial production, in particular the mechanized assembly line, gave way to the Japanese model of lean production or what union critics called "management by stress." Employers created "Total Quality Management" (TQM), "quality circles" and developed the "team concept," forms of work organization which both challenged the union and reached down to the shop floor and into the workers' consciousness. Management's new commitment to the Japanese model led it to confront the unions, demanding an end to rigid job descriptions in preference to more flexible contracts where workers might be multi-tasked. The corporations reduced the union workforce by bringing in part-time and temporary contract workers. Much of this so-called new model of work organization was, however, simply a matter of speed up.

At the same time, a whole series of transformations of the industrial workplace and its equipment through automation, from numerical control in the 1940s and 1950s to computerization and programmable logical controls in the 1980s and 1990s led to a dramatic increase in worker productivity that accompanied the decline in the industrial workforce, the weakening of its unions, and the stagnation of workers' wages and benefits.

The Increase in the Service Sector

WORKERS FOUND OTHER JOBS, particularly in the private service sector. Once again, the statistics tell the story. In 1960 there were 26,476,000 service workers or 44 percent out of a total non-farm workforce of 54,274,000. By 2009 they numbered 91,666,000 or 68 percent of a total workforce of 134,333,000. That is, service workers went in half a century from making up less than half of the workforce to comprising more than two-thirds of the workforce. The change was important.

Manufacturing workers had power because their labor produced the commodities sold in the marketplace produced the profit that enriched the corporations. The manufacturing workers' power existed at the point of production, in the concentrated numbers of the huge workforce of the factory, and in the organization of that force in the union with its capacity to strike. Service workers might provide important services of various sorts, but their work was less central to the production of commodities and wealth in a capitalist society. While they had some power at something analogous to the point of production, the moment of the delivery of some services, their workplaces tended to be smaller, and their unions weaker. They were consequently historically less well organized than industrial workers, with unions often representing a much smaller percentage of the workforce. Such unions were historically weak and consequently service workers generally received lower wages and had fewer benefits.

Public Sector Workers

PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS, expanding on the foundation laid by the strikes and organizing campaigns of the late 1960s and early 1970s, came to represent the most unionized sector of the working class. In 2008, while unions represented only 7.6 percent of workers in the private sector, they represented 36.8 percent of public sector workers. Public administration—government clerks, welfare workers, police officers and many others—numbered 8.0 million workers in 2006. Health and education employed 19 million workers. In education there are over 4.0 million preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and secondary school teachers (excluding special education). Health care (not all public workers) was actually designated the largest industry in the country, providing 14 million jobs—13.6 million jobs for wage and salary workers and about 438,000 jobs for the self-employed.

Public sector workers have a weaker position in the economy than private sector workers for both economic and legal-political reasons. Public workers provide public services, often essential services, and consequently public workers often hesitate to strike. Medical workers reluctantly strike when they may affect patients; teachers may hesitate to affect children and parents; water workers recognize the essential nature of the service they provide to all. Moreover, an ethic of professionalism and sense of status may inhibit some public employees. And, if they do strike, the result is often that they save their employers' money.

> Socialists will prove successful only if we can project a vision of socialism that has freed itself of the history of Stalinism and Social Democracy.

In legal terms, most public employees do not enjoy the same basic labor union rights enjoyed by workers in the private sector, and may be denied the right to strike or have their collective bargaining rights limited. Since they form part of large government bureaucracies, bargaining for public sector workers tends to take place in the public arena and in the city, state, or federal legislatures, usually under the pressure of clients, public advocacy groups and political parties, as well as labor unions. Yet, because school districts and public hospitals often operate more like private employers, teachers and public sector hospital workers unions often behave more like private sector workers in terms of conflict and struggle. Public employee unions have opportunities and the necessity to form worker-client or union-community alliances which can give them a natural political platform that private sector workers do not have.

The largest unions in these sectors—AFSCME and AFGE, the AFT and NEA, and SEIU and the CNA, and the Teamsters and CWA—have been aggressively organizing public sector workers. These same unions have sometimes engaged in competition and hostile raiding of each other's members, with some of them, such as the Teamsters, attempting to recoup in the public sector members they have lost in the private sector. By the 1990s the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE) had begun to make progress in the organization of janitors and hotel maids, though not rapidly enough to compensate for the decline of the labor movement as a whole.

The Demographic Transformation of the Working Class

WHILE INDUSTRY WAS DECLINING and service and public employment expanding, important demographic developments also occurred. The American industrial working class had historically been made up mostly of white, European immigrants and African-American males, but in the late twentieth century greater numbers of women and new Latino, Asian, and African immigrants began to enter the workforce in ever greater numbers. Women's participation in the workforce rose from 34 percent in 1950 to 60 percent by 2000, and women held down more year-round full-time jobs. Their share of the total workforce rose from 30 percent in 1950 to 47 percent in 2000. Latinos, particularly Latino immigrants, many of them undocumented, also entered the workforce in large numbers, coming to comprise 13 percent of the U.S. workers by 2006 but also accounting for about 40 percent of all workers newly entering the workforce.

Today white workers make up less than 75 percent of the labor force, with Hispanics comprising 13 percent and African Americans 12 percent and Asians 5 percent. Almost one-third of the workforce today is non-white, while women make up almost half of all workers. As women had fewer children and the baby boom generation aged, the average age of the workforce has risen and that too became a factor in the workforce of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Older workers with more to lose might well find it harder to take militant action against their employers.

Such a profound demographic transformation of the working class could not help but present new challenges. The entrance of African-Americans into new professions, trades, and jobs with victories of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s, accompanied by the rising numbers of women, and followed shortly after by Latino and Asian immigrants created tensions around culture and gender, and led to rifts and sometimes conflicts both in the workforce and in society. The labor movement, whose members and leaders had been overwhelmingly white men, often proved unequal to the challenge. The unions, which had resisted incorporating African-Americans into their memberships and into leadership positions, often proved equally inept at the organization of the rising numbers of women workers and Latino and Asian immigrants. All of this meant that the solidarity and unity so important to working class consciousness and action had to be reconstructed on the basis of new groups with new experiences and relationships.

The Ideological Transformation of the Working Class

When during the 1930s workers joined together to engage in collective action including strikes, the establishment of unions, and the negotiation of contracts, their sense of working class identity found expression in politics as well, in a few rare cases in independent working class candidates or local parties, but most often in the New Deal coalition of the Democratic Party. Many workers of the 1930s and early 1940s saw their union action and their Democratic votes as contributing to the improvement of workers' lives. The sense of working class political identity—if not exactly working class consciousness—became to some extent subsumed in World War II in a broader sense of national identity and patriotic feelings, though many still saw the unions and the Democrats as representing their interests as working people. The post-war prosperity and Cold War, however, reshaped American patriotism once again, now defining it as a struggle against the un-American, above all the Communist Party, radicals, and social critics.

The post-war period with its combination anti-Communism, the expansion of the consumer culture, and the emphasis on achieving a middle class lifestyle tended to erode the sense of working class identity. The big city ethnic working class began in the late 1940s to move to the suburbs where both their ethnic and their class identities often became dissolved and then submerged in the broader sense of middle class life represented by the acquisition of house, appliances, and automobile that constituted the center of the consumer's world. White flight from the cities in response to the black ghetto rebellions of the 1960s only accelerated the tendency for many workers to break with their urban past and relocate themselves physically and psychologically in the world of the homogenous white "middle class" suburbs. Some black workers were able to flee the city for black suburbs that offered them a segregated version of the suburban lifestyle.

For some workers, the move was not only out of the city, but also out of the Midwest or the Northeast as they headed for new job opportunities in the West and South. Wherever they went it was the freeway, the suburb, and the shopping mall that formed the geographical landmarks of the new consumer culture. For many, the credit card replaced the union card as their principal sense of identity as suburban consumers. For some, the American middle class individualist ethos replaced the ethnic and working class collective identity. Beginning in the 1970s as American workers' wages stagnated and family incomes proved inadequate to support that consumer lifestyle even with additional female wage earners, the great middle class—mostly now professional, technical, and service workers, though also including industrial workers—turned to the credit card to preserve their standard of living and status. Debt—the house, the car, the weekly shopping trip—became a way of life.

White Backlash

Unions, meanwhile, their membership shrinking and those members often unwilling to strike, continued to lose economic power vis-à-vis the employer. Consequently, the labor movement also experienced the erosion of its political power as its members began to escape the unions' control, and wandered out of the Democratic Party, with white male union members in particular voting in large numbers for Republican candidates. One study found that in the period from the 1980s to the 2000s about 35 to 50 percent of union members voted for Republican presidential candidates, even though their unions with few exceptions supported Democrats.

The unions' loss of influence over many of their members reflected the influence of a new more conservative news media, from right wing radio talk show hosts to television networks like CNN and FOX. Another factor was the growth of the conservative evangelical churches which often appealed to the white working class. The evangelicals emphasized a version of family values which elided into middle class consumer values, with personal salvation accompanying the acquisitive individualism. A set of conservative principles offered a moral compass for workers disoriented by rapidly changing cultural values, in particular the changing place of women in society. The right wing succeeded in some regions of the country in providing a constellation of issues—opposition to abortion and gay rights, opposition to gun control and Latino immigrants, and support for Christian patriarchal values—that provided a cultural-political alternative for some mostly white workers in the Lower Midwest, the South, and the Southwest. Fear and resentment of the other—independent women, gays, immigrants, and blacks—became the class consciousness of some white workers whose loss of status was even more painful to them than their loss of jobs, unions, and incomes.

By the twenty-first century, the working class in America was different from what it had been even thirty years ago, and certainly different from what it had been 50 or 100 years before. Perhaps the most important change is that industrial zones (the most important being the Great Lakes region) lost their specific gravity in the national economy while at the same time industrial production decreased and the number of industrial workers declined. The decline of the role of the industrial working in the working class, not only factory workers but also miners, utility workers, construction, and transportation workers, weakened the economic and social power of workers. The objective decline of the working class was also accompanied by a subjective decline. The working class at the same time faced the enormous task of assimilating the large numbers of African-Americans, women, and immigrants into the workplace and into union organizations, a task that was often mishandled by unions. Tremendous efforts were necessary to create a new multi-ethnic and multi-cultural union identity, something achieved by only some organizations. The government and employer attack on unions from the late 1970s into the 1990s proved devastating to union organization and to union consciousness. When the attack came on in full force in the 1980s, union leaders had proven lacking in foresight, in skills, and in courage. Workers had always been suspicious of the pork-choppers and the pie-cards, that is, of the full-time union officials, but now by and large they simply had no faith in the union. Workers' centers and other new forms of worker organization, while exciting experiments, remained marginal and small, and proved incapable of substituting for a real union movement. The organized American working class, the real militants, found themselves once again, as in the 1920s, reduced to a small band, deeply committed to the fight and waiting for an opening.

Which Way Forward?

HISTORY SUGGESTS that the current crisis will sooner or later set American workers in motion, though whether or not they will be able to reconstruct a labor movement remains to be seen. Today, there are only quite small militant minorities in labor and social movements, the sorts of activists who participate in the biannual Labor Notes Conferences and local Jobs with Justice chapters. Those hundreds of activists, mostly young people, people of color and women, and many more like them in other unions, workers' centers, and social movements have the capacity to begin to rebuild the social movements and the workers' movement. Key to that will be the willingness to take up radical tactics: civil disobedience, direct action, sitdown strikes and occupations, militant confrontations with the employers and government.

Eventually the militant minorities will have to set millions in motion, in struggle against employers and government policies, if they are to have an impact. To do so, militant tactics will have to be combined with efforts to extend solidarity: among workers at different firms or government offices, between workers and communities, among working class movements and social movements, between the workers' movement and the movements of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and other oppressed groups. The creation of a solidarity consciousness and the building of a social movement unionism will be essential to re-creating class consciousness.

Even if millions go into motion, however, there is no guarantee that they will not be brought back under the control of the labor bureaucracy and the influence of the Democratic Party. If we in the labor movement are not to recapitulate some of the sorrier chapters in our recent past, we will need to fight to build actions that escape the unions' bureaucratic control and to struggle within the unions for an independent politics of the working class. Key to being able to carry out such a fight will be the existence of a socialist organization involved in those movements and providing leadership at every level.

Today the socialist left remains small, disunited, and often too little involved in the ongoing concerns and struggles of working people. The left must be known as the principled idealists, the strategic thinkers, and the wily tacticians of the movement. The sect and the self-proclaimed vanguard party prove to be obstacles both to left unity and to the reconstruction of a layer of working class militants. Yet, at the same time, the left has to rebuild as a movement independent of the labor bureaucracy, the Democratic Party, the foundations, the NGOs, and the institutes. If we are to make progress though, the left will have to be able to overcome its division and create first projects for discussion and cooperation in action, and down the road a new socialist organization. Socialists, however, will prove successful only if we can project a vision of socialism that has freed itself of the history of Stalinism and Social Democracy, and drawing upon the experiences of the feminists, environmentalists, the GLBT movement, and people of color, can make clear that the essential element in socialism is democracy, the voice and vote of working people in every aspect of society, the economy, and political power.

Editor's note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org

Why We Need a Global Green New Deal

ASHLEY DAWSON

THE UNITED STATES, AND WITH IT THE REST of the world, is experiencing the initial stages of an unprecedented emergency brought on by three intertwined factors: a credit-fueled financial crisis, gyrating energy prices linked to speculation about the future peaking of oil supplies, and an accelerating climate crisis. Although the news has been filled over the last year with reports of the sub-prime mortgage crisis, vertiginously spiking and declining gas prices, and the melting of the polar ice caps, these alarming phenomena are seldom linked to one another. As a result, it is extremely difficult to gain a clear sense of the origins, true character, and gravity of the crisis we face. In addition, since little risk analysis has been done to explore the implications of this triple crisis, public discourse is characterized by remarkable complacency about the future.

Not to say that Americans today aren't alarmed. Indeed, we live in a state of perpetual fear. Yet this anxiety is largely misplaced. While today's War On Terror may be quite lucrative for the fat cats who run what Naomi Klein calls the disaster capitalism complex, it hardly constitutes a viable long-term foundation for global security. The Pentagon's own Office of Net Assessment has in fact identified climate change as a threat that vastly eclipses terrorism. One fifth of the world's population, for example, inhabits coastal zones that are threatened by rising sea levels and climate change-related disasters. Add to the looming crises associated with the displacement of millions of people the depletion of fresh water supplies around the world, desertification, soil erosion, and deforestation, to name only a few of the environmental problems humanity increasingly faces, and it should be clear that we are confronting an unstable world utterly different from that of the fast-receding fossil fuel era.

We are singularly ill prepared to address these unparalleled challenges. Several decades of neo-liberal hegemony have spread a paralyzing sense of economic insecurity and opened up gaping inequalities within and between nations. In addition, neo-liberalism has destroyed our faith, in Pierre Bourdieu's words, in the "collective institutions capable of standing up to the effects of the infernal machine — the forefront of which is the state." In the face of this corrosive neo-liberal cynicism, we must rebuild our sense of collective possibility, and, with it, a state oriented to positive rather than merely punitive ends on a local, national, and global scale. The hour is late; according to a recent report by the New Economics Foundation, as of August 1, 2008, we have less than one hundred months before the planet's natural feedback systems take our destiny out of our hands. In what follows, I outline the program of environmental Keynesianism that I believe offers our best possibility for addressing this emergency.

ON JUNE 23, 2008, NASA climate scientist James Hansen appeared before a House select committee twenty years to the day since his history-making public announcement of global warming to Congress. Although he repeated his original assertions concerning an-

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thropogenic climate change, one major difference set off this reappearance: Hansen asserted in the starkest language that the world has almost run out of time to prevent the Earth's feedback mechanisms from triggering runaway climate change. According to new research presented by Hansen during his recent testimony, the atmosphere is far more sensitive to carbon dioxide emissions than the most recent work of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) supposed. As a result, according to Hansen, a safe level of carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere would be no more than 350 parts per million (ppm). Currently, the CO2 amount is 385ppm, with a rise of over 2ppm per year. We need, in other words, not simply to freeze carbon dioxide emissions, but to remove significant amounts from the atmosphere through massive projects such as reforestation. A corollary of Hansen's alarming findings is the fact that the now nearly universally accepted target of maintaining warming below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is a recipe for disaster rather than salvation.

Needless to say, policymakers have not absorbed these findings adequately. Indeed, one of the British government's chief scientific advisors made headlines some time ago by publicly urging ministers to prepare the nation to adapt to four degrees Celsius of warming. While it clearly makes sense to seek to adapt to the intensified climatic instability already triggered by greenhouse gas emissions, what precisely would it mean to try to adapt to 4 C warming? An answer can be gleaned from recent reports commissioned by tough-minded (and hardly bleeding-heart liberal) entities such as the Pentagon and the European Council. These agencies increasingly view climate change in terms of a threat to collective security rather than simply as an environmental or even humanitarian problem.

For example, in his March 2008 report to the European Council, High Representative Javier Solana lists seven major areas in which climate change is likely to impact European security over this century: conflict over increasingly scarce resources, economic damage and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure, loss of territories and border disputes as a result of inundation, environmentally-induced

We need, in other words, not simply to freeze carbon dioxide emissions, but to remove significant amounts from the atmosphere through massive projects such as reforestation.

migration, situations of political fragility and radicalization, tensions over energy supply, and, finally, pressure on institutions of international governance. Examples of regional impacts help flesh out Solana's predictions. Forty percent of Asia's population, for instance, lives within sixty kilometers of the sea. If conservative scientific estimates of 25 feet of sea-level increase as a result of the collapse of either the Greenland or the west Antartic ice shelves prove true, this means that one quarter of humanity is likely to be displaced by the end of this century. At the same time, the disappearance of melt water from the Himalayan glaciers threatens one billion people with drought and famine. The massive migration flows that will be catalyzed by climate change are certain to increase conflicts in both transit and destination areas, resulting in heightened security threats to the developed nations in the form of failed states, political radicalization, and refugee streams to the global North.

In addition, as James Hansen pointed out in his Congressional testimony, the Earth is moving quickly through a series of dangerous tipping points that were not included in the

IPCC's calculations concerning global warming. As the planet warms, that is, feedback mechanisms such as the melting of the Arctic ice cap and the release of methane from melting permafrost are likely to push the Earth into runaway cycles of climate change. Recent estimates predict that there will be no ice in the Arctic by the summer of 2013. Perhaps one of the most dramatic but least publicized of these feedback mechanisms is the probable fate of the Amazon rainforest if four degrees of warming take place. Under such conditions, the ecologically delicate rainforest would likely collapse and burn, releasing massive quantities of carbon into the atmosphere in a reversal of the current virtuous patterns in which vegetation and soils absorb significant portions of current annual carbon emissions.

If present levels of greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated, concentrations will pass 400ppm — the level beyond which it will be impossible to limit temperature rises to 2° C — in less than one hundred months. This is why pledges such as that of President Barack Obama to reduce carbon emissions eighty percent by 2050 using a cap-and-trade program are largely meaningless. We have less than ten years to establish a zero-emissions economy. If we allot ourselves forty years to make the necessary reductions, any beneficent behavior on our part that might be provoked by increasingly alarming evidence of climate change toward the end of this span will be too late, given the Earth's feedback mechanisms. We will have passed the point of no return. That is why we need to draft and begin implementing a Green New Deal over the next year.

As scientists such as James Hansen have repeatedly pointed out, the impending climate crisis means that we should make a transition to a zero-carbon economy with the greatest possible dispatch. Were it not for the power of the fossil fuel lobby and their formidable PR machine, we might be much further along this road already. The achievements of European nations such as Denmark, whose population enjoys a standard of living that surpasses that of the United States despite the fact that the country has adopted strategies to achieve energy independence, suggests that the obstacles we confront are political rather than technological. But even if we lack the political will to address global warming, we will be compelled to change. Unlike the climate crisis, the effects of which are building up gradually and do not yet represent a threat to most nations' security, the energy crisis will constrain us to transform our behavior over the next decade. This shift in behavior is likely to follow one of two possible paths.

On the one hand, the United States could decide to intensify its current strategy of gaining military control over energy reserves in the Middle East in an attempt to sustain our current habits of hyper-consumption. Such an aggressive, unilateralist policy is likely to provoke increasing opposition from current and developing regional powers such as the EU and China. This would not, however, be the first time in history that elites have elected to pursue such an apparently perilous path. The embrace of aggressive nationalism and imperialism by nineteenth century European powers such as Britain and France resulted from the unwillingness of the bourgeoisie to give up any of their class privileges and engage in a project of social reform and economic redistribution domestically. Such a project might have offered a solution to the crisis of over-accumulation that characterized the period. Refusing such forms of redistribution, however, Victorian-era elites were constrained to turn outwards to find a spatio-temporal fix. The imperial project they elected to pursue cracked open non-capitalist zones of the planet and thereby made available cheap labor power, abundant raw materials, low-cost land, and new opportunities for trade. It also triggered Great Power rivalries that led eventually to the conflagrations of World War

I and II. We have progressed a fair distance down a similar road today. As the worldwide opposition generated by the occupation of Iraq has made clear, this strategy is likely to intensify already apparent trends towards the kind of inter-imperialist rivalry that produced the global imperial conflicts of the previous century.

An alternative resolution to the crisis we confront would involve rejecting the racially coded "clash of civilizations" ideology that underlies the current War on Terror in order to forge a new geopolitics for an era of peak oil and climate change. The crisis of financialization we are currently weathering offers us a perfect opportunity for such a move. This crisis stems from the stagnation of the real economy caused by failure to re-invest capital, stagnation which the volatile boom-and-bust cycles of the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (FIRE) economy only deepens. In addition, the turn to neo-liberal doctrine over the last several decades has been accompanied by strategies of privatization and debt-fueled "structural adjustment" imposed on poor nations. Such strategies are being met with increasingly radical resistance around the globe, from grassroots movements such as the Global Justice Movement to developing nations such as China and India, which recently torpedoed the World Trade Organization's Doha Round in response to the organization's skewed policies of agricultural liberalization.

Given the fact that we have less than 100 months left before energy depletion and climate change rob us of the capacity for systemic change, we need to take advantage of the current crisis conditions in order to articulate and act on a coordinated and substantial transitional program. Key to this transition will be taking steps to insure global equity. During the heated presidential campaigns of 2008, various think tanks and activist groups tabled a raft of forward thinking environmental proposals. Activists such as Van Jones published calls for a shift to a green collar economy. Not so surprisingly, most of these proposals tended to concentrate on making positive changes within the US.

While regulation of the economy designed to rein in the speculative power of capital is important in order to address the economic crisis, it must be yoked to a sweeping program of environmental regulation and state-led domestic reinvestment aimed at the swiftest possible transition to a zero-carbon economy. This Keynesian environmentalism would deal with the crisis of financialization by re-directing over-accumulated capital into the creation of green infrastructure and social programs. In order to coordinate such a program, activists need to push for the drafting not simply of a national action plan that evaluates the risks created by the crisis and sketches out the best responses to this crisis. We also need to push for programs which foreground issues of global ecological equity. This will involve evaluating carbon emissions-trading programs with an extremely critical eye.

Instead of forcing countries or companies to cut down their greenhouse gas emissions, for example, the Kyoto Protocol designers gave countries a minimal reduction target of 5 percent from 1990 emissions levels, a target that was to be achieved by 2012. Countries were then allowed to allocate their quota of credits on a nation-wide basis, most commonly by "grandfathering," so that the most polluting industries received the largest share of credits. Countries and companies could then meet their emissions targets in one of three ways: 1) they could reduce their own pollution; 2) they could purchase emission credits from other countries or firms that reduced their own greenhouse gasses beyond their target level; or, 3) they could invest in pollution reduction schemes elsewhere. Credit-earning schemes that took place in countries with no reduction targets — almost by definition non-industrialized countries in the global South — were administered under the World Bank's so-called Clean Development

Mechanism (CDM). The CDM hinged on the notion that emissions from a polluting source could be "nullified" through investments in renewable energy or "carbon sinks" such as tree plantations in the developing world.

There are a number of fairly obvious scams associated with the CDM. First of all, there's plenty of evidence to suggest that carbon stored above ground in massive monocultural tree plantations is not equivalent to carbon stored below-ground as fossil fuels. After all, trees eventually fall down and rot, releasing their stored carbon back into the atmosphere, while fossil fuels store their carbon until we dig them up and burn them. So-called carbon sinks are thus nothing more than a temporary solution, which, by suggesting that emissions have been nullified, actually encourage emissions. In addition, as Heidi Bachram explains,

> The amount of credits earned by each project is calculated as the difference between the level of emissions with the project and the level of emissions that would occur in an imagined alternative future without the project. With such an imagined alternative future in mind, a corporate polluter can conjure up huge estimates of the emissions that would be supposedly produced without the company's CDM or JI project. This stratagem allows for a high (almost limitless) number of pollution credits that can be earned for each project. It allows the company to pollute more at other sites, to sell its credits to other polluters, or to engage in a combination of these lucrative tactics. Its long-term consequences are (1) increased greenhouse gas emissions and (2) increased corporate profit obtained from their production.

But pollution doesn't just turn into a source of profit for companies under the CDM. In addition, the program plays directly into the hands of global and local elites since "carbon sinks" can qualify for emissions reductions only if they are managed by an entity with official status. This means that an old-growth rainforest husbanded by an indigenous group for thousands of years is not likely to qualify as "managed" and therefore will not get credits, whereas a massive plantation of eucalyptus trees such as the one operated by the transnational Plantar company in the impoverished Brazilian state of Minas Gerais will qualify. Since the Kyoto Protocol provided for access to over 10 million hectares of land per year to act as carbon sinks, carbon trading encouraged neo-colonial land grabbing by local and foreign elites.

> The problem lies, then, not in the lack of feasible plans, but in the unwillingness of the world's most advanced countries to adopt such programs.

In Britain, in contrast with such globally inequitable carbon trading schemes, environmentalists have for some time been discussing the need for carbon rationing. When and if the international community agrees on a cap for atmospheric carbon concentrations, rationing would allow emissions to be doled out on an equitable basis between and within countries based on their populations. The advantage to such a system lies in its fairness and in its invocation of the collective good. Unlike energy taxes, which will disproportionately affect the poor since they spend a greater percentage of their income on fuel, rationing would constrain everyone to cut their consumption. Rationing could also allow frugal consumers of carbon to sell their excess credits on the open market during an initial phase-in period, and would, therefore, constitute a significant means of redistribution. Similarly, if the government retains sixty percent of the carbon allocation as George Monbiot has suggested, it could auction off carbon emission rights to companies. The proceeds would be used to fund many of the other necessary programs in the Global Green New Deal. Finally, such measures would head off yet another devastating speculative bubble, the kind that would likely be created by a capitalist market in emissions credits such as the one established by the European Union.

One of the major benefits of carbon rationing would, of course, be the curbing of energy intensive activities. The more consumption is curbed, the easier it will be to use a greater percentage of renewable energy sources. More than any other nation, the United States is built on the assumption of endless horizons for energy consumption. The national highway system, product of the symbiotic relation of the Cold War national security state and the automobile industry, is a perfect example of the infrastructure of a fast-receding fossil fuel era. The highway-automobile complex of course helped facilitate the suburban and exurban sprawl that has come to characterize most U.S. cities. In addition, these assumptions about endless energy horizons also help explain the global commodity chains that U.S. corporations such as Wal-Mart pioneered during the neo-liberal era. As the nation moves towards a zero-carbon state, production and consumption will have to become far more localized and efficient in order to conserve energy and resources. Cities will need to be re-engineered through careful and coordinated planning in order to emphasize the kind of compact living that makes public transportation viable and facilitates combined heat and power generation arrangements. Our automobile and bus fleet will have to be switched from gasoline to electricity.

In the post-carbon age, it simply will be impossible to move our food, clothes, and other commodities across continents. The doctrine of subsidiarity, which dictates local production for local consumption whenever possible, is likely to be a fundamental aspect of a new ecologically stable and democratic society. Achieving subsidiarity will, however, mean transforming or even dismantling international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which use the debt burden carried by developing countries since the 1970s to coerce those nations into producing for export markets in order to accumulate capital with which to pay interest on their borrowings. Challenging the unjust aspects of globalization will involve increasing local democratic control over economic and environmental resources, so that developing nations are no longer forced to turn over their land to massive agricultural corporations growing homogeneous crop varieties largely for export to the global North. A Green New Deal for the global South will therefore mean supporting the many peasant groups calling for policies of land redistribution in order to promote re-ruralization and coping with the socially and environmentally unsustainable growth of mega-cities in which the majority of people eke out a living in the highly unstable informal economy.

One of the major infrastructural tasks to be accomplished by the Green New Deal involves the rebuilding of our nation's aging energy grid. This project must be coordinated on a national level since new technologies of energy transmission and storage will have to be developed and integrated into the new system. Renewable energy sources such as wind, sun, biomass, geothermal, tides, and waves are often intermittent and are obviously not appropriate in every place. Northern states receive relatively limited solar radiation, for example, while wind power is only appropriate in certain parts of the country. High voltage direct current cables offer a solution to the problem of transmitting energy over long distances (alternating current cables lose increasing amounts of power over increasing distances), but such cables need to be hooked into a national grid capable of coordinating storage so that the system doesn't crash during moments of peak demand or slack local power generation.

Despite such national coordination, however, the reengineering of the national energy grid should aim to decentralize and diversify energy sources. As with many other aspects of the Green New Deal, the key is to move away from the centrally controlled energy production systems of the fossil fuel age towards more local, appropriate solutions to energy generation. Of course, rebuilding the energy infrastructure also involves retrofitting U.S. housing stock, which is responsible for at least half of the nation's carbon emissions. There is room for massive improvement in this regard; in Europe, the spread of zero-carbon passive houses offers a source of inspiration and a challenge to the United States. Carrying out all this work will require the creation of a Green Corps, a millions-strong army of workers trained in environmental stewardship and the creation and deployment of green technology. Finally, new energy infrastructure must be global in scope. Developing nations have a right to lift their citizens out of poverty, a prerogative acknowledged in the important Greenhouse Development Rights protocol around which ecological equity activists are beginning to rally.

None of these achievements within the global North will mean much unless the United States also takes the lead in negotiating a meaningful successor to the Kyoto Protocol in Copenhagen in 2009. As the nation most responsible for global carbon emissions, we have the responsibility to forge a just and effective agreement that charts paths to alternative, low-carbon development. The models for such a pact already exist. Interesting recent proposals include reaching agreement on a global cap on emissions that would be applied "upstream" (e.g. at oil refineries or cement factories), with permits to emit up to the cap auctioned off. The proceeds would be used to finance transition measures. The problem lies, then, not in the lack of feasible plans, but in the unwillingness of the world's most advanced countries to adopt such programs. The G8 meeting in June, for example, represented a significant setback for efforts to craft an effective post-Kyoto climate strategy, despite the confusing declarations of good intent that emanated from the gathering. Sustained political pressure similar to the kind of critique and direct action with which the Global Justice Movement has bombarded institutions such as the World Bank and the WTO needs to be brought to bear on the elite summits where climate treaties are negotiated.

Finally, education has a vital role to play in the Green New Deal. In addition to training members of the Green Corps, educators and other public intellectuals must counter the climate change denial industry. The crisis promises to worsen all the major problems currently confronting global society, from the food crisis to state failure, from terrorism to mass migration. Educators must find ways not simply to situate particular instances of peak energy and climate change within a broader narrative, but to communicate in a holistic manner the gravity of the challenge we face. Moreover, we need to play a role in proposing and debating solutions to the crisis; the aim should be to counter the toxic cynicism that has infected public life during the neo-liberal era. Like the original New Deal, an environmental Keynesianism will become a reality only if a broad variety of social movements make connections between the different aspects of the triple crisis and force through changes on local, national, and global levels. The political odds are truly daunting in this regard. But so was the battle against economic collapse, social dislocation, and fascism during the 1930s. And what alternative do we have but to engage in this greatest of all struggles? We face, after all, a fairly simple choice: a global Green New Deal or an intensification of the present barbarism, leading to the inexorable collapse of life as we know it.

Editors' Note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, newpolitics.mayfirst.org.

India: General Elections 2009 and the Neoliberal Consensus[1]

Ravi Kumar

The General Elections 2009 have further entrenched the rule of neoliberal capital. This entrenchment has happened due to certain factors, two discussed here in detail. These two factors include the distancing of the Left from working class politics towards electoralism, which resulted in absence of a long term mobilizational politics along class lines; and the role played by identity politics in the consolidation of the neoliberal regime. The electoral decimation of the Left Front, the "unexpected" results for the Bahujan Samaj Party[2] in Uttar Pradesh and the electoral triumph of Janata Dal (United)[3] in Bihar or the outstanding performance of Congress Party in decades have been the headlines that the media has delivered us. The most vocal representatives of the neoliberal order — the Indian media across the spectrum — have exulted at the defeat of the Left and celebrated the possibility of an unhindered march of neoliberalism. No doubt these developments are significant. And their significance becomes more apparent if one locates them as moments in the long political trajectory that started with Independence. The desperate support expressed by different political formations to the Congress Party are not merely salutes to its triumph or tactical moves, but reveal how political homogeneity has come to characterize the ostensibly heterogeneous political atmosphere in the country. The current political atmosphere in India represents the neoliberal consensus, which demonstrates the fear of the Left (howsoever social democratic it has become) and the effective use of different identities, ranging from caste to tribe, in consolidation of the rule of capital.

The General Elections 2009 should have compelled the Left to ponder over its debacle but, alas, they again seem to be thinking more in terms of calculating how to muster more votes, asking West Bengal Ministries to implement the different programs to be implemented by the State machinery (as it has been pointed out by many that even the government-run welfare programs are in bad shape despite the fact that it has been the Communist Party provincial government for last thirty years or so) so that the electoral defeat is not repeated in 2011 elections to the state assembly. Going a step further, arguments are being put forward within a section of the Left about how the Left should have gone with the Congress to win maximum possible seats and should not have withdrawn from the government. It is rather the time to think how a politics of coalition that has put class politics on the backburner has led to the pauperization of the working class during neoliberalism's rampage of privatizing and informalizing the economy. The health and education sectors continue to be under heavy pressure to privatize themselves, creating stark discrimination in health care and access to education. The neoliberal consensus has played on the religious- and caste- based identities in India with the National Rural Health Mission, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan[4], the pending Right to Education Bill, and making workers' safety/security and rights prey to the ravaging hunger

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of private capital. There was a fear of an emergence of the right-wing created consensus, so that all the political formations decided to work for a "secular" government (which unabashedly pushed forward the neoliberal agenda of the

> The neoliberal consensus has played on the religious- and caste-based identities in India.

capital) under the guardianship of Manmohan Singh. By the time the Left decided to quit the government, consolidation of neoliberalism's political army had occurred, a situation encouraged by the failure of the Left to take up the working class politics or to put forth an agenda which would consider paramount the interests of the working class. The flaw on the Left has persisted: since 1989 they thought that forming short term opportunistic alliances would work wonders for them to settle scores with the Congress Party. The agenda or a program that would mobilize people on lines of building an anti-neoliberal capitalist force has been lacking.

The idea of Frontal politics[5] in fact has only strengthened capital vis-à-vis labor in India, and it is now the high time for the Left to introspect and abandon its urge to remain in power through electoral politics under any circumstances. History shows that there have been problems with this kind of politics: the opposition triumphs and decimates the Left forces. Specific states such as Bihar as well as the National scenario now provide us ample proof. While the process of frontal politics took away the sharpness of class politics that the Left is supposed to have, it has also allowed for the degeneration of party structures as well as individuals (though many would argue, and with some grain of truth, that there have been historically certain problems inherent with the organization of the communist parties itself). Result has been the loss of any radical programmatic alternative after the land reforms[6] and, therefore, loss of popular support and its gradual distancing from mobilizational politics and a move towards electoralism. At this hour a critical introspection into the kind of politics that the Left has been pursuing becomes the highest agenda.

The basis of alliances and coalitions since 1989 has been either to oust the Congress Party or the BJP. While in 1989 the Left supported the V.P. Singh government from "outside" along with BJP and, later on, in 2004, it supported the Congress Party. In between it supported the governments led by I.K. Gujral and H.D. Deve Gowda as well so that the right wing could not come to power. No doubt the electoral alliances delayed the process but BJP did come to power. And in 2004 the Manmohan Singh government was formed with the support of the Left. What has happened since 1991 has been the unbridled march of neoliberalism — irrespective of whose government was in power, and obviously the Left was also a party to it. And the argument was obvious: it was more important to keep the danger of religious hatred at bay than to oppose a neoliberal onslaught. Keeping the right wing at bay rather than opposing a neoliberal onslaught emerged largely from a conception that saw emergence of right wing politics in disjunct from the class politics. The violence in which thousands of Muslims were killed at different points of time also needed to be located in the political economy of times. Hence, it was not a tacit argument but a failure to give primacy to working class politics to understand the developments that led to the emergence of right wing politics.

Neoliberalism and the right wing's emergence are seen as two disjunct developments, rather than as aspects of the same rule of capital. The consolidation of the rule of capital has happened whether the government is Right wing or a so-called centrist or a "Left-of-Center" government. Secondly, communalism was, myopically, not seen as a class issue. The salience of class has now been amply proven, as the right wing has been taking up the "developmental" agenda, retaining its colors of hatred as mere tools of mobilization. Thirdly, within all this cacophony of secular vs. communal rhetoric, the working class was left out. The Labor unions, student organizations, the landless agricultural worker movement have been weakened, or they have been siding with capital on policies that result in reduction in services, such as denying education and doing away with the system of pension and basic health care facilities, etc.

Coalitional politics itself has been mired in contradictions. The same partners in coalition have been supporting right-wing politics at one time and Left-wing politics at another. The problem of such a contradiction has not been so serious for those parties who are anti-working class and regionally focused. It is rather problematic for Left politics, which bases itself on the premise of mobilizing the working class for dismantling the capitalist state. Becoming part of such coalitions runs counter to the aspirations of the working class and destroys the integrity of politics itself. The Left in India will have to engage in serious debate regarding its politics before building strategies to contest and win elections, and this debate will have to be carried out within those spheres which have a firm commitment in working class politics and which believe that the issue confronting us will be resolved only through the abolition of capital.

Identity Politics and the Neoliberal Consensus

The General Elections 2009 have also shown how the relevance of identity politics based on caste and religion diminishes when its utility to capital is over. This is not to deny the momentary relevance of identity-based mobilizations but one needs to look at identity formation as a process that is characterized by constant flux.

At the national level, the virtual rejection of BJP shows that its usefulness to capital as a political platform that would have provided much needed "stability" to the neoliberal onslaught in an era of coalitional politics is over. There is a general consensus now on the kind of politics that every political formation needs to practice — the politics of "development." In this consensus lies the mantra of a Left revival as well as the possibility of a complete decimation. The end of a hatred-based right wing mobilization that provided fodder for development of coalitions of the "secularists" has created a space in which the distinctions of political formations are blurred. The sporadic emergence of Varun Gandhi is symptomatic of political formations that are fighting to keep their distinctions alive (which may again become relevant at some point as per the needs of capital) as well as trying to demonstrate who is a better agent of capital (the contest over kind of "development" that Modi has initiated in Gujarat, Nitish in Bihar, or Manmohan in India). The Backward caste are primarily poor peasantry and landless workers; and politics in pre-independence Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were products of a long drawn mobilization on the basis of caste (visible in the form of caste-based associations). The struggles of the Backward caste were not demanding very radical alternatives to replace the existing Hindu social order but were, rather, demanding a higher place in Hindu hierarchy (the demand for *kshatritya*[7] status or the "Janeu"[8] movement). Their radicalism in systemic terms was manifested in a sometimes demand for withdrawal of the "*begari*"system (forced labor) or mobilization against an unfair system of taxation. The post-independence Backward caste mobilization was largely an effort to catapult the emergent elite to political power. The ideas and policies of distributive justice, like land reforms, facilitated the emergence of this elite, which was desperate for a share in political power. The 1960s and 1970s were witness to consistent switching over of parties by the leaders representing this process. Ultimately, the Mandal Commission provided that historical moment when a backward caste elite could capture power.

The Mandal Commission paved the way for violent conflict in the state of Bihar between the Backward castes and the entrenched hegemonic interests represented by the *dwija* castes (twice born castes). It was not a caste conflict, as various analysts have shown but rather a struggle between the emergent elite of Backward castes and the entrenched hegemonic interests which did not want to part with political power. The Backward caste elite gradually realized the need to transcend its narrow identitarianism and forged alliances with the entrenched interests — the so-called upper castes.

During the subsequent regimes (of Laloo Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar) integration of neoliberalism occurred. The Backward Castes, which are primarily poor peasantry and landless workers, could only get the confidence that for the first time somebody from their own caste (and this was also a result of constant use of caste as an ideological apparatus) became a cabinet or Chief Minister, nothing beyond that. The ten years of Laloo-Rabri[9] rule provided sufficient avenues for the elite of the backward castes to muster strength to enter into competition with the entrenched interests. But that, obviously, does not mean that the whole of the Backward caste population became elite. The new elite which had acquired sufficient capital through enhanced access to political, administrative and economic machinery needed to go beyond, transcend, the stagnant economy that Laloo Yadav and company had created. A more vigorous development of infrastructure, expansion of the market, and aggressive consumerism were required. The existing regime could not understand that they needed to move beyond to the next stage. It was then that Nitish came on stage through his dextrous alliance with interests across caste. Caste was no longer the consideration for him and the fact that he relied, extensively, on bureaucrats; and provided ministerial representation to different castes proved it. There is always a possibility for Laloo Prasad Yadav to come back to power and Nitish Kumar may stand defeated electorally. However, in the end, irrespective of the defeat or triumph of particular political parties, it will be the triumph of the capital because they would represent the interests of the capital under the rhetoric of social justice. Nitish Kumar appeared as a perfect flag bearer of neoliberalism. The General Elections 2009 in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have shown how collective caste-based identitarian politics failed to perform in expected electoral terms. Consequently, it has been the Congress in Uttar Pradesh and Janata Dal (United) in Bihar which capitalized electorally on the limitations of identitarian politics.

The point that is important here is not the way election results have shown how identity politics is weakening but that even if the identity politics had triumphed in electoral results, it would have been nothing more than the victory of the neoliberal consensus. Identity politics that bases itself on the rhetoric of social justice has failed to represent its own constituency or, in fact, it cannot represent that constituency because of its inherent political understanding that rejects class and does not see the dialectic of the capitalism and repressions of Dalits etc. Results of such an understanding have been obvious — capital escapes our attention as the perpetrator, and the enemy is constructed through the obvious and apparent "other," which is no doubt the perpetrator but which needs to be seen as an embodiment of its social identity as well as the economic location. Because the current forms and stage of identity politics is not based on such an analysis and is more cultural and social (as autonomous categories) the ultimate resort will be to side with capital, rather than work towards its abolition. And that is very well happening.

This development has occurred not only in the state of Bihar but even at the national level. Backward caste politicians, such as Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav, try to be staunch proponents of neoliberal capital under the façade of social justice and defense of the welfare of the downtrodden. The not-so-powerful Dalit leaders like Ramvilas Paswan have been no different except that their strength has diminished. This is not to deny the radical role that the mobilizations based on caste identity have shown at particular historical conjunctures, highlighting the oppression in the society and the contradictions of our system. However, beyond these mobilizations, they have not been able to consistently take the sides of the constituency that they represent. Their politics has seldom raised the demand for economic reforms, land to tillers, employment, or decommodification of the social sector. Struggles are reduced to the more symbolic issues of dignity and social recognition, as if they are autonomous.

The General Elections 2009 is the culmination of such a politics. It shows the building up of consensus across political formations in favour of neoliberalism. The rule of capital is more firmly entrenched now and it is carried forward without any semblance of questioning the injustice that it fosters. The desperate letters of support by all to the Congress Party point to the fact. Every political formation focuses on "developmental" agenda, and even the right-winger BJP had to downplay its rhetoric of *mandir* (temple) and *masjid* (mosque). One cannot differentiate between the developmental programs of these political formations because there is an underlying homogeneity of commitment to capital. From where would the counter-agenda of development emanate? It has to emerge from a practice rooted in a working class politics, which breaks away from the idea of frontal politics and which realizes that the time is for consolidation of the Left forces in the country, or India will sink further into the neoliberal swamplands.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to the editorial committee for comments on the article.

2. BSP — It is the political party which emerged as a representative of the Dalits (or the castes which have been at he lowest rung of the caste hierarchy) claiming to be imbued with the ideas of Bhim Rao Ambedkar. It has argued for social justice for these sections and believes that the repressive so-called upper castes have been responsible for the plight of the Dalits. However, they emerged victorious in elections in Uttar Pradesh and had a successful alliance with the so-called upper castes. Many people see it as the death of social justice agenda of such political formations.

3. It is a political formation active primarily in the province of Bihar and currently holds the political power in Bihar with the aid of Bhartiya Jananta Party. JD (U) is an offshoot of the Janata Dal, a political formation that came into being around late 1980s offering an alternative to the Congress regime and came to limelight with the formation of a non-Congress government in 1989 with the support of the Left and the right wing Bhartiya Janata Party. Later Janata Dal disintegrated, and many regional parties emerged out of it. Most of these new regional parties championed the cause of Backward castes.

4. These are piecemeal programs run by the State in partnership with non-State actors. This has allowed the State to absolve itself of its responsibilities.

5. The frontal politics here refers to the nature of politics that became the order of the day after 1989 when coalitions were formed on certain temporary, momentous grounds such as in 1989 Left and the Right wing supported National Front government to keep Congress Party out of power and then in 2004 Left supported Congress Party to keep Right wing out of power. The formation of such fronts has been justified on grounds that "it is important to defeat the more dangerous enemy." However, whatever the argument be, it is the working class politics that has suffered. Even when the governments supported by the Left have been in power they could not have been more nakedly neoliberal.

6. When one talks of land reforms in an Indian context it differed from state to state. In case of West Bengal where, in fact, it brought CPI(M) to power, it meant land distribution. A ceiling was fixed beyond which a landowner cannot own land and the surplus land was distributed among the landless and also the right of

the share-croppers was enforced on land because s/he was the actual tiller of the land.

7. In the traditional *varna* or caste hierarchy the *Kshatriyas* were the warriors or the rulers who were provided intellectual support by the *Brahmanas*. It was always the alliance of these castes that led to the sustenance of the caste system in India. Many Marxist historians such as D.D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, or Irfan Habib have shown how caste was an instrument of economic exploitation as well, for instance an extra-coercive means to exploit the landless and poor who belonged to the so-called lower castes. The Backward castes of today come from the traditional *Vaishya* and *Shudra* category of *varnas*, who were the lower castes.

8. *Janeu* is a sacred thread worn by the *dwija* or twice born castes, which denotes their higher status in the caste hierarchy. It was largely the prerogative of the Kshatriyas and the Brahamanas.

9. After ten years of rule Laloo Yadav had to resign because of a corruption case, and he made his wife Rabri Devi the Chief Minister for the next five years. Due to this it is mentioned as Laloo-Rabri.

Andrés Nin

DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR the Stalinists planned a show trial of the POUM (a socialist organization) like the Moscow trials in which the leading Bolsheviks — notably Bukharin — “confessed” to working with the Nazis. They selected the POUM leader Andrés Nin to “confess” to working with Franco. But Nin, a sick man whom they tortured, refused to cooperate. So they murdered him.

Let us remember Andrés Nin as a socialist hero.

See also

Pierre Broué and Emile Terminé, *The Revolution and Civil War in Spain* (1970)
Andy Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War* (2007)
Felix Morrow, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* (1938)
George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), especially ch. 9
Leon Trotsky, *The Spanish Revolution* (1973)

Village Elections in China — Democracy or Façade

Richard Levy

Do elections of self-governing Village Committees in China's signify a major step towards democracy? How, if at all, do these elections affect power relations among various groups, class strata, and nascent or even actual classes in the Chinese countryside? Inside and outside of the villages, who makes decisions about how the village will evolve or develop?

These are important issues to consider in evaluating China's democratic prospects. Some sixty percent of China's population lives in its rural villages, and the villages are the only level at which direct elections are regularly held. What happens at this level could well influence the degree to which elections and/or democracy develop at higher levels throughout China.

Elections of Village Committees and Village Leaders in China's approximately 950,000 villages began in 1989 as part of a wider village self-government movement. The Village Committee and Village Leader are entrusted with managing the public affairs of the village. This includes managing any collective enterprises including land (the use of which is most frequently subcontracted out to villagers), building and repairing roads, maintaining public security, administering family planning issues, and helping the village to develop economically, socially, and environmentally. As self-governing institutions, they receive little direct support from the state. As a result, in poor villages they have few resources while in richer villages they have considerably more. Election to the Village Committee, and even more so as Village Leader, can increase one's linkage to — and status with — higher level government and commercial leaders, and, particularly in wealthy villages, provide access to the village's resources. This helps to account for both the continuing anger against corrupt cadres who steal from the villages and the more recent increase in vote-buying as candidates vie to control these positions.

Much energy has been focused on analyzing the degree to which these elections are fair and competitive, i.e., are there multiple candidates for each office, how many people vote, is voting secret, is ballot counting fair and transparent, etc.? While this is certainly important, the key issues regarding democracy are much deeper than this.

Village elections in China provide some key insights into contemporary China, such as the meaningfulness of elections, the increasing role of entrepreneurs in elections and in the continuingly dominant Party, and the continuing male domination of the process.

How meaningful are elections? Many village elections are pro-forma. In some cases, there is no real competition and the results are known by all in advance. In others, the elections are "managed."

For example, in Guanmen Village, the long-term Party Secretary decided it was his obligation to "manage" the election to get a "desirable" outcome. This is in line with the position stated by many analysts and officials in documents about village elections concerning "the low quality of the voters."

This "management" involved removing the

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incumbent Village Leader, a private entrepreneur who had angered many villagers with his autocratic and perhaps corrupt methods. To accomplish this, the Party Secretary ran in and won both the primary and final election for Village Leader by a large majority, while "arranging" for the prior Village Leader, who had good business connections and was a member of the largest family lineage in the village, to be elected Deputy Village Leader. This meant "persuading" the two top vote getters in the primary election for Deputy Village Leader to drop out (largely by arranging other positions for them). However, this "management" seemed to provoke a protest vote, as the Party Secretary received considerably fewer votes, in the final election than in the primary while his competitor and the competitor for Deputy Village Leader each increased their votes many fold from the primary.

But some elections are competitive.

Almost everyone in Pingshanan Village shares the same lineage. In 2005, after the incumbent village Party Secretary was alleged to have manipulated the primary election, the Township Party Secretary (the next level above the village) intervened to force a new primary. In that second primary, the incumbent village Party Secretary withdrew from the race for Village Leader after coming in behind his cousin, a wealthy Party member and team leader who had offered to serve as Village Leader without pay and was eventually elected with no meaningful challenger.

In Damoling, the competition occurred in the final election with two relatively wealthy entrepreneurs competing for Village Leader. One, Mr. Li, lived in the village and was a member of the Village Committee. The other, while still officially registered as a village resident, worked outside the village.

Achieving a bottom up form of democracy would have to come from a movement from the bottom. At present there are few indicators that this is likely.

The election was run in a most scrupulous fashion. The candidates each gave a brief speech, with Mr. Li making more specific promises to advance the economic development of the village. The speeches were recorded to allow subsequent evaluation of the winner's performance. Each voter's name was checked against the list of eligible voters. Proxy votes were limited, and the ballots were publicly counted (twice) with township cadres assuring the objectivity of the process and with Public Security officials available in case of any disturbances. Mr. Li won the election with about two thirds of the vote.

But a competitive election in one cycle does not mean that there will be a competitive or even functioning election the next cycle.

In Pingshanan, the entrepreneur who had been elected Village Leader in 2005 had subsequently become Party Secretary (in line with the Party policy of having the same person hold both positions where possible). Having helped to accomplish a number of key goals for the village, some of which was facilitated by donations of his own funds, he was re-elected as Village Leader in 2008 without any competition.

The change in Damoling was even more extreme. After the 2005 election, it was beset with contradictions. Mr. Li was accused of trying to manipulate village finances. Although under his leadership the Village Committee offices were renovated and its courtyard paved and one road was built (largely with higher level government financing), his other promises were not — including resolving the water problem, creating a commercial vegetable growing venture, and building another road. As a result, the Deputy Village Leader decided to challenge Mr. Li in the 2008 election and received some 90 percent of the votes. But since the Deputy Village Leader was also the brother-in-law of the new Party Secretary, who himself had problems working with Mr. Li, Mr. Li's neighbors and clan members saw this as potential manipulation and boycotted the election. Consequently the election was declared void (although there is nothing in the national village election law about this). As a result, incumbents remain in power until the issue is resolved, meaning that the village is politically paralyzed.

In short, there are many cases of well organized and scrupulously well run elections. Some meet all these criteria but are still neither competitive nor meaningful. Some, although fewer, are truly competitive. But competitive elections are far from institutionalized in China's villages.

The Role of Entrepreneurs, the Newly Wealthy, and the Party

The role of the newly wealthy in village government is increasing. This is clear anecdotally, statistically, and as a logical outcome of Party policy.

For example, the Village Leader elected in 2002 in Pingshanan was a truck driver. However, unable to sustain himself on the salary of a Village Leader, which was often paid months late, he quit the position and left to seek work in a nearby city. In Damoling, the Village Leader/Party Secretary in 2002, who had been seen as a fair man but was not an entrepreneur, was on a downward path since having lost a bid for Deputy Village Leader in 2005. By 2008 he was no longer on the Village Committee and had fallen from Party Secretary to a member of the Party Village Committee. In contrast, the new Party Secretary in Damoling is a wealthy entrepreneur and the Village Leader/Party Secretary whom I interviewed in a nearby village runs a factory with 500 employees.

Overall, in the five villages I visited in Henan

Voting in Henan Village Election 2005

in 2005, 80 percent of the Village Leaders and a significant portion of the Village Committee members were entrepreneurs or newly wealthy. This is in line with Party policies to increase the number of entrepreneurs, the newly wealthy, and those with economic skills (*nengren* or “able people” in Chinese) in village leadership. The Party in many provinces suggests that candidates for village leadership positions in the Party and the Village Committee should have “two strengths,” that is, the ability to do well at both Party work and business” and/or “the ability to lead the village to prosperity.” As a result, the number of people in village leadership with these qualifications has reached as high as 50 percent or even 90 percent (among the province reporting such data).

This reflects what Gramsci called a hegemonic view that the wealthy are skilled, virtuous, and deserving of the leadership of society, a view that is shared by the dominant group, which profits from it, and a dominated group, which does not. Within this context, even those Village Leaders who use their own resources to help villages, as did several Village Leaders I met, reinforce this hegemony as it becomes apparent that the village will progress only by reliance on the generosity of the newly rich.

But the election of newcomers or entrepreneurs does not threaten Party leadership. In fact, in line with Party’s presentation of China as a classless and “harmonious” society, in 2002 it began to officially admit capitalists into the Party. In coordination with that, the Party has been advocating recruiting entrepreneurs and non-Party members who are elected as Village Leaders into the Party. Consequently, after the most recent round of elections, 66 percent of Village Committee members and 78 percent of Village Leaders were Party members.

A Male-Dominated Process

THE CONTINUING MALE DOMINATION of the power structure in rural China should not be a surprise. Multiple factors contribute to it: traditional attitudes in the countryside, the historical male dominance within the Party, and male dominance in the business world. Although there are counter trends, both in the cities and — as market forces draw young men and women out of the villages and undermine the traditional male-dominated family structure — at the village level. All the Village Leaders I met in Henan were male. Nationally only some 2-3 percent of Village Leaders are women and only some 18 percent of Village Committee members are women. Since Village Committees frequently only have three to five members, this means that many Committees lack any women despite a provision in the Organic Law on Village Committees that each Committee have an “appropriate number” of women.

Where women are on Village Committees — and in some provinces there are affirmative action policies to make sure that there is at least one woman on the Committee — they are most frequently in the “woman’s slot” which is responsible for family planning and cultural issues. This does not always translate into significant authority or respect. In one amazing example, I was invited to a village Party Secretary’s house for lunch. After the meal, we found out that since his wife was away for the day, he had asked the female member of the Village Committee to come to cook the dinner (but not join the discussion).

Conclusions and Implications for Democracy in China

THE MOST OBVIOUS CONCLUSIONS to be drawn are that the local election process continues to be largely under the control of the male-dominated Party with an increasing role for entrepreneurs and the newly wealthy. At present, village elections are likely to reinforce the power of the rural new rich who are creating networks throughout the political and economic structure as their relatives take positions in the government and Party township, county and municipal structures.

While these elections do create what the Chinese have called "sprouts" of (some form of) democracy in local social structures, they are very contradictory phenomena. On the one hand, they do strengthen notions of voting and citizens' rights. But competitive elections seem more the exception than the rule and, where they do exist, they are far from institutionalized. On the other, they also allow the Party-state to legitimate itself by maintaining Party leadership through a popular rather than top-down process.

To the extent that elections have created some of the procedural elements of democracy, it is still unclear whether these can provide a basis for meaningful democracy in light of several factors.

First are China's authoritarian and neoliberal tendencies. These were clearly manifest in late March 2009 when the reformist Governor of the People's Bank of China, Zhou Xiaochuan, argued that China's ability to rapidly develop policies to address the international economic downturn, including the U.S. $586 billion stimulus package, "demonstrat(ed) its superior system advantage when it comes to making vital policy decisions," and called on other government bodies to increase the power of government financial leaders to allow them to "act boldly and expeditiously without having to go through a lengthy or even painful approval process."

Second, the increasing strength of capitalists and the newly wealthy within society and within the Party will be a key factor. They will play a key role in the continuing transformation of the Party, its role and its policies. Will they play a role in advocating for democracy, as

Interviewing Members of Xiaoying Natural Village Parliament, 2009 suggested by many Western theories, or will they be content to create or support non-democratic structures that meet their needs as suggested in Chile, Brazil, Honduras, and perhaps the United States and China as well?

Where, then, does this all lead? Before drawing any general conclusions, one must also consider issues which are frequently ignored and go beyond the procedural elements of democracy, namely, increasing polarization within a context of generally rising incomes, the absence of nationwide non-Party organizations, China's increasing integration into the global economy, and the related departure of youth from rural areas and, most basically, the nature of meaningful democracy.

In this context, the older, more politically-based elite and the newer, more economically-based elite, both of whom are increasingly linked, economically and culturally, to political and economic elites around the world, are engaged in a complex struggle to dominate and/or co-opt each other. This suggests a situation of continuing struggle and contradictions influencing, among other things, village self-government, and potentially leading to further integration of the elites at the expense of ordinary villagers, none of which bodes well for a bottom-up form of democracy with significant input into major decisions from the majority.

However, many Chinese analysts still argue that village elections are acting as a school for democracy as villagers develop at least a limited sense of rights and higher level officials come to see the legitimizing benefits of electing local officials As long as these growing rights come within a paradigm of continuing elite leadership with an increasingly entrepreneurial element, accepted by both the Party and increasing numbers of villagers, it is likely that competitive village elections will increase and perhaps elections will even move up to the township and higher levels, although China's notion of a more "efficient" authoritarian system may undermine upper level support for such an upward trend. However, even if elections move up to higher levels, if this occurs within a context of an increasingly polarized society with an increasingly powerless, unorganized, and depoliticized majority, the degree to which meaningful democratization, as opposed to voting per se, or voting to choose among candidates of competing elites, must be questioned..

Are there any prospects for greater meaningful democratic input for the poor and unorganized, the original base of the Chinese Revolution, or should the fact that their standard of living has generally increased significantly since the beginning of the reforms under Deng Xiaoping be adequate?

Achieving a bottom up form of democracy would have to come from a movement from the bottom, although links to higher-ups in the Party would facilitate such a development. At present there are few indicators that this is likely. However, there are democratic innovations, including spontaneous self-governing organizations at the lowest levels in the countryside in Nanjing and public input into township level budgeting in Wenling City in Jiangsu Province. But these processes are not institutionalized. Each has and still requires individual sponsors in the township Party and state structure.

There are pro-democracy elements among the dissident intellectuals. Some lawyers defend political dissidents and injured workers. While this contributes to the notion of individual rights vis-à-vis the state, these actions are largely limited, by some combination of choice and fear of repression, to individual-based cases within the court system. Perhaps more significant are those who signed Charter 08, which included demands, among other things, for election of public officials at all levels, freedom to form independent groups, and freedom of assembly and expression, along with protection of private property. Although signed by some middle-level officials and rural leaders, it is unclear how great a base in China's countryside such groups or demands have, although the linkages can perhaps be developed. Moreover it is unclear how much the Charter actually supports bottom-up democracy at the economic and political levels.

But without even such limited developments, as in many other societies, voting (even more so in local elections only) and voting to choose from within the elites, is unlikely to provide a true opening for input from the majority in a society in which they are marginalized at the structural level.

Iranian Workers say: "We have nothing to lose but our unpaid wages"

Yassamine Mather

Half a year after the demonstrations of June, 2009 in Iran, it is probably easier to examine in more depth the events that changed the country's political landscape. The bourgeois media in Iran and abroad is unanimous: the presidential elections of June 2009 and predictions of a Moussavi victory gave hope that change within the exiting regime was possible; millions of Iranians took part in the elections; the regime rigged the results; the rest is history.

Activists in the Iranian working class have a slightly different take on this. Of course they agree that the majority of the population, many of whom are under the age of 30, are opponents of the regime. And they acknowledge that the relative freedoms of the short-lived "election period" and the subsequent escalation of conflict between the various factions of the regime, exposing each other's corruption, repression and duplicity, have presented a unique opportunity for the opposition. However these workers also remind us that sham elections, electoral fraud, repression are not recent phenomena of Iran's Islamic regime. They point out that what is different this time, not just in the initial stages of the protests but also in the continuation of defiance against the regime in workplaces and universities, stems from the dire economic situation facing Iranians.

These workers tell us that the current protests should indeed be seen in the light of the world economic crisis — the effects of which have been felt far worse in the countries of the periphery — as well as the impact of sanctions.[1] They are adamant that the economic situation, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, high rates of unemployment, etc. are the main reasons why protests have continued and evolved after the mass demonstrations of June 2009, despite the suffocating silence of the leaders of the Green movement.

Reformists and Elections in the Islamic Republic of Iran

We should be clear that Iran's presidential elections were a charade from the day they started. All four candidates were supporters of the existing system. All supported the existing neoliberal economic policies and privatizations. All four were in favor of Iran's nuclear program. Moussavi has criticized Ahmadinejad for the outcome of Iran's talks with world powers in October 2009, making clear he is against a proposal to send Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium abroad, as part of a UN-drafted plan meant to ease tensions over Tehran's nuclear drive.[2]

It was therefore no surprise that until early June, most Iranians had shown little interest in these elections, as they knew that neither candidate would lead to real change. But it was the live TV debates that changed the apathy. The debates between Ahmadinejad and Moussavi and Ahmadinejad and Karroubi were unique events in the history of the official media of

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the Islamic Republic. They confirmed what most Iranians knew through their personal experiences but which they had not yet heard on the official media: Ahmadinejad stated that Iran had been ruled for 24 years (up to his presidency) by a clique akin to an economic and political mafia. "Elite" clerics such as the reformers Rafsanjani and Khatami had forgotten their constituents and were corrupt; Moussavi, Karoubi, and Rezai stated that the economy had been in a terrible state, particularly in the last four years

In the words of those at Wagon Pars, who went on hunger strike in October, workers have nothing to lose but their unpaid wages.

The first mistake of the regime (the Supreme Leader and the network of un-elected officials around him) was to allow such debates to take place. The second mistake was the declaration of Ahmadinejad as the winner and the way this "victory" was announced: Ahmadinejad was declared the winner by the official media even before some polling stations had closed; his final result was almost identical to what the (rigged) polls predicted all the way through the elections. This percentage did not ever vary by more than three percent. The third mistake was to underestimate the anger of the Iranian population at this blatant manipulation of the results. Iranians had to choose between the lesser of two evils — and when the worse was declared the winner, they showed their contempt for the system by huge demonstrations culminating in the massive protests of June, 2009 and September, 2009.

However we should not forget that in terms of the current situation Moussavi and Karoubi are weak characters who had already shown the limits of their political outlook. They do not consider the nine previous presidential elections, most of them with very dubious results, a charade. In the 2009 election, they did not bat an eyelid when the Council of Guardians disqualified over 400 candidates. They did not think the process was a charade when the Supreme Leader intervened time and time again to defend Ahmadinejad.

Even now, although they are furious about losing the elections, they are not calling on the Iranian people to mount a fundamental challenge to the Islamic Republic. While Moussavi did urge people to join the Nov. 4 protests, he also urged them not to use "radical" slogans against Khamemei or call for the overthrow of the Islamic regime. In most of the major demonstrations, the leaders of the Green Movement have been among the last to arrive. Instead, during the first two months after the elections they addressed the "Religious Centers of Guidance" (elite Shia ayatollahs),[3] in denouncing the electoral results, and they are now cooperating with the "national unity plan."[4] Neither Moussavi nor Karoubi is a fan of democracy or mass movements. Like Iran's reformist ex-president Mohammad Khatami, they are well aware that the survival of the "Islamic order" is in their interests. That is why, even when they are clearly victims of the Supreme Leader's lunacy, they cannot rock the boat.

After all, irrespective of the illusions of their supporters, Moussavi and Karroubi are no radical opponents of the regime. For eight years, Moussavi served as prime minister of the Islamic republic, during some of the darkest days of this regime. He was deeply involved in the arms-for-hostages deals with the Reagan administration in the1980s — what came to be known as Irangate. He also bears some responsibility for the brutal wave of repression in the 1980s that killed a generation of Iranian leftists. During this period, thousands of socialists and communists were jailed, with many of them executed while in prison.

Over the last few months Ahmadinejad's

government and the security forces have done all in their power to stop the protests through repression and intimidation, at times assisted by the suffocating silence of the leaders of the Green Movement. Hundreds have been arrested; at least 70 protesters have died during demonstrations or in custody; show trials have been televised; yet none of these efforts have succeeded in silencing the opposition. Almost daily Iranian workers have been protesting, at times in the thousands, at their workplaces and outside government offices, complaining about job losses, non-payment of wages, privatization. Universities have been the scene of daily protests and ordinary people have used every opportunity, even football matches, to express their opposition to the regime. The massive demonstrations of Sept. 18 and Nov. 4 are proof of the continued confrontation between the regime and its opponents.

The Iranian Working Class and the Current Protests

Some have claimed that only the middle classes have been protesting against the regime. Nothing could be further from the truth. Iranian workers believe it was their protests, factory occupations, and sit-ins over the last three or four years that paved the way for the mass demonstration of this summer.

If you live in a country where the ministry of labor states that over 80 percent of the workforce are employed on limited contracts and reassures capitalists that by 2010 the figure will have reached 100 percent, is it surprising that workers will join protest demonstrations? If you live in a country where in the year ending March, 2009, despite the repression, there were more than 4,000 workers' actions against privatization and job losses (unemployment stands at 30 percent while inflation moves between 15 and 25 percent), including sit-ins and the kidnapping of managers, as well as strikes, is it any wonder that workers will join protest demonstrations? If you live in a country that has been praised by the International Monetary Fund for its firm pursuit of neoliberal economic policies, all under a certain Mr. Ahmadinejad, is it not to be expected that workers will join protest demonstrations?

Teachers and nurses have waged major strikes in the last two years against their government's economic and political stance, and they were among the first groups that joined this summer's protests.

On June 18, Iran Khodro car workers issued the following statement:

> We declare our solidarity with the movement of the people of Iran. Autoworkers, fellow workers, what we witness today is an insult to the intelligence of the people and disregard for their votes, the trampling of the principles of the constitution by the government. It is our duty to join this people's movement. We, the workers of Iran Khodro, will stop working for half an hour on every shift to protest against the suppression of students, workers, and women and declare our solidarity with the movement of the people of Iran.

Similarly, the union of Vahed bus workers declared on June 19:

> In recent days, we continue witnessing the magnificent demonstration of millions of people from all ages, genders and national and religious minorities in Iran. They request that their basic human rights, particularly the right to freedom and to choose independently and without deception, be recognized. These rights are not only constitutional in most countries, but also have been protected against all odds.

The statement went on to condemn the threats, arrests, murders, and brutal suppression and called for support for the protests, demanding a response from each responsible individual and institution.

In today's Iran, millions of wage earners have no choice but to continue their struggles against the regime in their daily confrontation with factory owners and the religious state that backs them. In the words of those at Wagon Pars, who went on hunger strike in October, workers have nothing to lose but their unpaid wages. The 1,700 employees of Wagon Pars, manufacturer of freight wagons and passenger coaches, have been in dispute with management and the state for months over unpaid wages. In August 2009, these workers went on strike and staged a sit-in protest on factory grounds, locking the gates and preventing managers from entering.

Positive change can only happen from below, and from inside Iran.

The factory had been privatized as a subsidiary of troubled car maker Iran Khodro, after Iran's Supreme Leader changed article 44 of the constitution, removing the guarantee of public ownership for key industries. Protests and threats of strike by Iran Khodro workers forced the government to retreat, showing the vulnerability of the rulers when confronted by united working class action. Iran Khodro workers have now won five of their demands, including an overtime pay raise of 20 percent for all workers on the production line.

In late October there were also major workers' protests over non-payment of wages in Louleh Sazi Khouzestan (manufacturers of pipelines) and a demonstration by Tractor Sazi workers in Kurdistan, where tens of workers were sacked, while others are expected to work longer hours. Managers in most of these disputes blame the world economic downturn for the new wave of job losses. Nearly four months after the huge demonstrations of June, the continuation of protests in workplaces and universities proves that opposition to the regime goes well beyond the issue of the sham presidential elections.

Nowhere is the state's control more severe than in the oil industry. Worker activists discussing possible strike action are moved from their regular posts to other areas. Yet none of the increasingly repressive measures seem to deter the Iranian working class, who are turning the defensive actions of last year into more aggressive forms of protest, establishing road blocks, taking managers hostage, bringing their families to occupy closed factories and workplaces. In order to overcome the lack of news coverage of their struggles, Iranian workers are setting up their own means of communication through internet sites and email.

But the combination of proposed new sanctions and the new economic policies of the regime will make life even harder for the majority. Just when it became clear that the United States has begun passing legislation to impose new unilateral sanctions, the *Majles* (Islamic parliament) discussed regulations that would sharply reduce energy and food subsidies, in compliance with long-term demands of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.[5]

Nothing Will Ever Be the Same Again

The dramatic events of summer/autumn, 2009 will have a lasting effect in Iran and almost everyone agrees that nothing will be the same again, yet our supreme religious leader Ayatollah Khamenei is still deluding himself: conspiracies are all around us and, just as in colonial times, the British are behind it all. Of course, the expulsion of foreign reporters and banning of many newspapers have reduced media coverage of the protests. In the foreign press there is nothing about the changing nature of the demonstrations, workers' protests and the new slogans. However, even those that have not followed recent developments in Iran agree that the very existence of the Islamic Republic regime is being challenged. The slogans "death to dictator" and "death to the Islamic Republic" are no longer limited to the events following the presidential elections. Iranian workers are unlikely to return to passive, defensive opposition. Students, youth, women, and national minorities will make sure demonstrations and protests continue. Arrests, summary executions, torture, show trials have all failed to silence this most serious threat to the religious state in Iran. Those of us who combine opposition to imperialist war and sanctions with calling for the overthrow of the Islamic regime were vindicated by recent events. Imagine what would have happened if during the last year we had witnessed a military strike by Israel against Iran's nuclear industry, or if various U.S. plans for regime change from above had materialized. Political Islam in Iran and the region would have been the undisputed winner of such a scenario. We were right to argue that positive change can only happen from below, and from inside Iran, and we will continue to maintain this position.

NOTES

1. Iranian oil workers www.etehadchap/naft88.html
2. Iran's Mousavi criticises nuclear fuel plan http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-43523720091029
3. Response of the Grand Ayotollah Saanei to Mir Hossein Mousavi's letter www.irannewsdigest.com/2009/09/25/response-of-the-grand-ayotollah-saanei-sanei-to-mir-hossein-mousavi%E2%80%99s-letter/
4. Cleric MPs to examine Council of Experts national unity plan www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=204451
5. Majlis approves subsidy cut bill www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=205841

A Modest Proposal

Bill Littlefield

Let's first dispose of the potential objection that a sports commentator has no business weighing in on casino gambling.

In casino gambling, there is a winner and a loser. That suggests that what goes on in those places is sport of a sort, even though the customer is always the loser.

Okay, then. I'm here to suggest how the states eager to license casino gambling in order to address their deficits can deal with the problem more efficiently and at less expense . . . and there is a sports connection.

First, put all the large, young men who've been unable to find jobs on the state payroll. This will instantly transform them from thugs and riff-raff into taxpayers.

Next, the sports connection: provide that workforce with cracked baseball bats. These could be obtained for a pittance from Major League teams, the employees of which crack bats frequently. If the teams are reluctant to part with the bats, the states in which they play could threaten to withhold public money for new ballparks. It would be a bluff, but it might work.

Finally, set the large, young men loose on the poor. Perhaps they wouldn't have to actually whack anybody with the bats. In many cases, maybe most, menacing would be sufficient. Once they had whatever money they could shake loose from those least able to afford the loss, the men with the bats would turn that money over to the state.

The advantages of this plan are many and obvious.

First, whereas the plan to raise money by building casinos would necessarily be delayed until the casinos were built, my plan could be implemented tomorrow.

Beyond that, there would be no worry about whether the people upon whom the states are counting to patronize the casinos would actually do so. What if medical expenses, food, shelter, and transportation have already emptied the pockets of the previously dependable losers? Where would your casinos be then?

But nobody holds out on a gang of large, young men with baseball bats. The messy variables of choice and chance are taken out of the equation.

The money comes from the same source as it would have if the casinos had been built: those most desperate and least likely to have the ear of the politicians. Said money goes directly to the government. The more enlightened states might even spend it on helping the poor.

Bill Littlefield *hosts National Public Radio's weekly sports magazine program,* Only A Game*. His most recent book is also titled* Only A Game*.*

The Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews in World War II

Rossen Vassilev

On February 13, 1998, Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov accepted on behalf of his ex-Communist nation the Courage to Care Award, which the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) had bestowed upon Bulgaria in recognition of the heroism of its people in saving Bulgarian Jews during World War II. Speaking at a meeting of the League's National Executive Committee in Palm Beach, Florida, the ADL National Director Abraham Foxman presented this prestigious award to President Stoyanov with words of deep gratitude: "Today I am here to say thank you — thank you to a people and a nation that unanimously said 'no' to the Nazi killing machine, 'no' to the deportation trains and concentration camps, and 'yes' to its 48,000 Jews."[1] He praised the Bulgarian people who heroically saved the local Jews by preventing their deportation to Hitler's death camps, even though the Bulgarian government was allied with Nazi Germany during World War II. According to Mr. Foxman, this miraculous salvation of Bulgaria's Jewish community was made possible by the courageous leadership of Bulgarian King Boris III, "whose personal defiance of Hitler and refusal to supply troops to the Russian front or to cooperate with deportation requests set an example for his country."[2] Thanking his host for this high honor, President Stoyanov replied with some modesty, "What happened then should not be seen as a miracle. My nation did what any decent nation, human being, man or woman, would have done in those circumstances . . . . The events of World War II have made the Bulgarian Jews forever the closest friends of my people."[3] On March 11, 2003, Bulgaria's international image got an even bigger boost, when the U.S. Congress passed unanimously a resolution which praised Bulgarians and King Boris III for the wartime rescue of 50,000 local Jews.

This article will deal with a rather obscure historical event — the survival of Bulgaria's Jewish minority during World War II — that is little known even to those Americans who are more knowledgeable about the grim history of the Holocaust.[4] Here, in a nutshell, are the basic facts of this extraordinary story: despite strong pressure from Berlin, none of prewar Bulgaria's 48,000 Jews were sent to die in the Nazi death camps (where, by contrast, at least 270,000 Jews from neighboring Rumania alone perished). While there can be no doubt that the compassion, decency, altruism, sense of justice, and bravery of the Bulgarian people were responsible for this remarkable feat, many other details are still in dispute, especially the controversial role played by Bulgaria's former monarch, Tsar (Bulgarian for king) Boris III (despite Mr. Foxman's rather effusive but perhaps unmerited praise for him). Even President Stoyanov's personal acceptance of the Anti-Defamation League's award is not without some historical irony as his father was a leading member of the Union of Bulgarian National Legions (better known as the Union of Legionnaires) in Bulgaria's second largest city of Plovdiv (the birthplace of the future president). The Union of Legionnaires was a notorious fascist organization, founded in 1933 after Hitler's rise in

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Germany, which strongly supported the pro-Nazi Bulgarian government's plans to deport all local Jews to concentration camps in the Third Reich's new "Eastern Territories" (in this case, Nazi-occupied Poland). Hence, this article will attempt to render historical justice by giving credit only to those honorable and noble individuals who were genuinely responsible for this charitable act and to whom praise is indeed due.

The Historical Background

IN 1940, THE KINGDOM OF BULGARIA had a total population of around 6.2 million, which consisted of 85 percent Slavic Bulgarians, 10 percent Muslim Turks, 1.5 percent Muslim Bulgarians known as Pomaks (Slavic Bulgarians who had been converted by force to Islam during the Ottoman Turkish rule of the country from 1396 to 1878), a very large but unknown number of Gypsies, and other minority groups. The majority of the population were Eastern Orthodox Christians (87.5 percent), while the rest consisted mostly of Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Most Bulgarian Jews (numbering about 48,400 and making up 0.8 percent of Bulgaria's population, according to the 1934 national census) were Sephardic Jews who had arrived in the Balkan peninsula after being forcibly evicted from Catholic Spain in 1492. Ninety-seven percent of Bulgarian Jews lived in the cities, almost half of them in the capital Sofia. Their main occupation was in retail trade (Jews accounted for half of all retail merchants in Sofia) and in the liberal professions (lawyers, medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, teachers, etc.), but the majority were poor street vendors, manual workers, artisans, and public-sector employees.

On March 1, 1941, Bulgaria joined the Tripartite or Axis Pact (Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, Imperial Japan, Franco's Spain, and several other, mostly East European, countries) in the hope of reclaiming the territories which it had lost to its neighbors Rumania, Greece, and Serbia (later Yugoslavia) as a result of its military defeats in the Second Balkan War (1913) and again in World War I. The decision to throw in Bulgaria's lot with the Tripartite Pact

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was made by the Germanophile and German-descended Boris III (1894-1943), who was married to Queen Giovanna (the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel of Italy), and who ruled Bulgaria as nearly an absolute monarch after a royalist coup in 1935. Boris ascended the Bulgarian throne in 1918 when his Austrian-born father, Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1861-1948), abdicated and fled abroad following defeat in World War I, in which Bulgaria fought on the side of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire).

The very day that Boris III joined the Axis Pact, Rumania, another of Hitler's Axis allies, finally returned to Bulgaria southern Dobrudzha (a region which his father, Tsar Ferdinand I, had lost in the Second Balkan War) under the terms of a German-arbitrated treaty between the two countries signed on September 7, 1940 in the Rumanian city of Craiova. Two days later German troops entered Bulgaria and in April 1941 invaded and occupied Greece and Yugoslavia with active assistance from the Bulgarian military. By the end of that year, Bulgaria had declared war on both the British Empire and the United States. But Boris III refused to declare war also on the Soviet Union given the strongly Russophile sentiments of ordinary Bulgarians and the leftist sympathies of most of the Bulgarian intelligentsia. Thus, Bulgaria remained the only Axis country throughout the war that never sent troops to the Eastern front.

As early as July 1940 the pro-German and anti-Semitic Prime Minister Bogdan Filov, appointed and controlled by Boris III, announced that his government would take steps to regulate and restrain the activities of the local Jewry. On October 8, 1940, the disgraceful Law for the Protection of the Nation (ZZN) was introduced in the National Assembly (Narodno Subranie), Bulgaria's supreme legislative body which at that time was dominated by the monarch's supporters. Although ostensibly designed to curb Communist subversion and other anti-government activities, some of the bill's provisions specifically targeted the Jews. Deliberately modeled on Germany's infamous Nuremberg laws of 1935, the new legislation restricted the rights of the Jews to vote, hold public office, serve in the military, marry ethnic Bulgarians, use Slavic Bulgarian names, choose their place of residence, own businesses or commercial property (including landholdings), and practice certain professions (especially in the civil service and in the cultural sector). It also levied extraordinary new taxes targeting only the Jews and established quotas that limited the number of Jews that could be admitted to Bulgarian universities. This legislation was hardly unique at the time, since not only Nazi Germany, but also fascist Italy, Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and other European countries (including even France) had adopted similar racial measures since the mid-1930s.

A number of professional organizations such as the Association of Bulgarian Lawyers, the Physicians' Union, the Union of Artists' Societies, and the Association of Craftsmen, sent letters and petitions to the Prime Minister, protesting the proposed law as unconstitutional and morally degrading to the Jewish minority. Several deputies from the parliamentary opposition (Communists and non-Communists alike) and even former cabinet ministers like Dimo Kazasov, Yanko Sakazov, and Stoyan Kosturkov spoke out against turning the Jews into oppressed second-class citizens. The Holy Synod, the highest body of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, was also quite critical, with high clergy such as Archbishop Stefan of Sofia (the Church's nominal head) and bishops Neofit of Vidin, Kyril of Plovdiv, and Sofronii of Vratza publicly speaking out or writing against the draft bill's anti-Semitic provisions. On the other hand, the new law was supported by militant fascist groups like the Union of Legionnaires, Ratnik (Warrior), Brannik (Defender), a Bulgarian version of Nazi Germany's Hitlerjugend or Hitler Youth, and other right-wing conservative organizations such as the Federation of Reserve Officers, the Federation of Reserve Sergeants and Soldiers, the Merchants' Association, the Students' Union, the Bulgarian Youth League, and the Pharmacists' Association.

Despite a nation-wide wave of protests and outspoken opposition, including an open letter to the Prime Minister by the Bulgarian Writers' Union, signed by twenty-one of Bulgaria's best known non-Communist authors led by Elin Pelin (a close friend and favorite of Boris III), the Law for the Protection of the Nation was approved on November 20, 1940 and went into effect on January 21, 1941. In vain did Yosif Geron, chairman of the Central Jewish Consistory[5] in Sofia, and other members of its executive board, seek an audience with King Boris to plead with him not to sign the controversial legislation. But even though the law passed, Boris must have realized just how difficult solving the "Jewish question" was going to be. After Hitler's Wermacht occupied Greece and Yugoslavia in April 1941, Bulgaria assumed full administrative control of Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot (a town in eastern Serbia), decreeing on June 5, 1942 that all Yugoslav and Greek residents of these "liberated" territories would be made Bulgarian citizens, except for the local Jewry. Many Bulgarians, who now hailed Boris III as the "Unifier Tsar," failed to anticipate the fatal consequences of this exclusion for the Jews in these areas.

"Unified" Bulgaria's Jews

BETWEEN 1941 AND 1943, the living conditions of Bulgarian Jews, whose freedom of movement was constrained by a strictly enforced curfew, continued to deteriorate as a result of the introduction of new, even more draconian restrictions. By 1943, there were a total of 63,403 Jews in the so-called "Unified" or "Greater" Bulgaria (which comprised pre-1941 Bulgaria and the conquered territories of Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot), constituting nearly 1 percent of the combined population. All Jews were required to wear in public the yellow Star of David on their lapels (thus marking them for insults and physical abuse by local fascist thugs) and post it on their houses and businesses as well. Some of them lost their jobs, others were evicted from their homes, many saw their businesses, cars, bicycles, radios, and jewelry confiscated. Jews were also not allowed to frequent cinemas and cafes, nor use the main streets and roads. Prime Minister Filov and Minister of Internal Affairs Petar Gabrovsky had promised Berlin that all Bulgarian Jews would soon be turned over to Nazi Germany. In August 1942 the cabinet issued a decree, imposing new legal restrictions on the political, civil, and property rights of the Jews, including heavy new taxes on their professional and economic activities and on their private property. The decree also established a Commissariat for Jewish Questions which, as the central executive body in charge of implementing the Law for the Protection of the Nation, was attached to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and headed by Aleksandar Belev, an anti-Semitic, Nazi-trained lawyer and fascist.

A high-ranking SS official, Theodore Dannecker, arrived in Sofia in January 1943 as Adolf Eichmann's special envoy to coordinate with his Bulgarian counterpart, Commissar for Jewish Questions Belev, the first phase of the deportation of the Bulgarian Jewry. Belev and Dannecker together decided that 8,000 Macedonian Jews, 6,000 Thracian Jews, and 6,000 Jews from the "old," prewar Bulgaria — about 20,000 in number altogether — would be shipped to Germany in the first wave of deportations. In February 1943, both the king and the cabinet (the Council of Ministers) approved Belev's secret plan. A propaganda campaign was launched in the government-controlled media, calling for tightening the repressive measures against the Jews. Members of the fascist Brannik youth group had already organized at least one "pogrom" in Sofia's Jewish neighborhoods at the beginning of February, resulting in many wounded and several deaths. Starting in early March 1943, at least 11,343 Jews were rounded up by the Bulgarian Army and police in Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot, and delivered to various detention centers in Bulgaria proper. By the end of March all of them were transferred, mostly by train, to the dreaded extermination camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka, where nearly all subsequently perished (only twelve of the deportees survived the Holocaust).

Resistance to the Holocaust

THE NEWS OF THE TRANSPORTATION of the Macedonian and Thracian Jews to Germany provoked widespread dismay and disapproval in Bulgaria. Archbishop Stefan of Sofia, who had by chance come upon a sealed boxcar train carrying Thracian Jews in most horrific conditions, sent several urgent telegrams and personal appeals to the monarch, expressing his shock and in vain pleading with him to stop the deportations. Letters, petitions, appeals, and entreaties from other top Orthodox clergymen were similarly ignored. Even the protest voices of several parliamentary deputies from both the government majority (like Dimitar Ikonomov) and the opposition parties (like Professor Petko Stainov) fell on deaf ears. But when the police started rounding up thousands of Jews within Bulgaria's prewar borders, the resulting public outcry and backlash stopped the Filov government in its tracks. When Archbishop Stefan learned that at least 800 Jews from Sofia were about to be "evacuated," he rushed to the royal palace and refused to leave until the king finally agreed to hear him out. Bishop Kyril of Plovdiv (a future head of the Orthodox Church) sent several telegrams to the monarch and, in a defiant act of civil disobedience, allowed local Jews to take refuge in his church and in his own home. He prevented the deportation of between 1,500 and 1,600 Jews from his diocese, who had been ordered to assemble at Plovdiv's train station during the night of March 9, by vowing to lie across the rails in the path of the first train transport taking them out of the country.

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When about a thousand Jews from Kyustendil (a town about 65 miles southwest of Sofia) were ordered on March 7 to leave their homes with only a few belongings, the alarmed local citizenry formed a delegation of forty-four people to travel to Sofia and ask the authorities to rescind the evacuation order. In the end, a smaller delegation of only four prominent men, all of them ethnic Bulgarians, arrived in Sofia the next day and met with their parliamentary representative, Dimitar Peshev, who happened to be the vice-chairman of the National Assembly. Upon hearing their urgent pleas, Peshev and nine other Assembly deputies tried in vain to speak to Prime Minister Filov but could only meet on March 9 with Minister of Internal Affairs Gabrovsky, who at first denied any knowledge of the ongoing "evacuations." When pressured by his agitated visitors, who refused to leave his office until he agreed to intervene, a visibly shaken Gabrovsky finally ordered by telephone the release of all Jews who had been detained. Incredibly, the new orders were not countermanded, so thousands of Jewish men, women and children, who had been waiting in school buildings and warehouses to board trains bound for the death camps in Poland, were allowed to return home.

Dimitar Peshev, a former minister of justice, decided to keep up the pressure on the cabinet and thus became a pivotal figure in the campaign to save the Bulgarian Jewry.[6] Even though he had voted for the Law for the Protection of the Nation, Peshev reacted with consternation, outrage, and deep sympathy when his parliamentary colleague Dimitar Ikonomov told him about the forced removal of the Macedonian and Thracian Jews, which Ikonomov had personally witnessed. Faced now with the attempted mass "evacuation" of the Jews from his own electoral district, Peshev composed a letter of protest addressed to Prime Minister Filov, attacking the cabinet's anti-Semitic steps as "cruel measures" leading to "mass murder" and demanding that they be immediately revoked. He persuaded forty-one other parliamentary deputies (out of the Assembly's total of 160) — all of them from the government majority — to sign it. To avoid accusations of siding with the anti-government parties on this issue, he decided not to have any deputies from the parliamentary opposition sign the statement. Before several other deputies from the ruling majority could add their signatures, Peshev had to hastily deposit his protest letter with the chairman of the National Assembly, after Filov asked him through an intermediary not to make it public.

Enraged by this open challenge to his prestige and authority, the Prime Minister demanded that all forty-two deputies who had signed the now published letter — no less than a third of the government majority's members — withdraw their signatures, thus openly humiliating them and also isolating Peshev. Despite Filov's threat to eject from the majority's ranks any deputies who did not withdraw their signatures, at least thirty of the co-signers refused to do so. Filov also demanded that Peshev, the main signatory, resign from his post as vice-chairman of the Assembly, but the latter refused, declaring that he had done absolutely nothing wrong. With support from the king, the Prime Minister then organized a vote of censure, removing Peshev from the vice-chairmanship of the Assembly for insubordination. The motion passed on March 30, but this rebuke from within its own parliamentary ranks — coming on top of other public protests and widespread opposition to Hitler's genocidal policies — forced the cabinet to put on hold its plans to hand over the rest of Bulgaria's Jews. Peshev was not allowed to take the floor and defend himself in the Assembly, nor was any parliamentary debate ever held concerning his protest petition, but the planned expulsions to Poland were suspended, at least temporarily, and would never resume.[7]

Confronted with a groundswell of public opposition to his unpopular anti-Jewish measures, Boris III obviously felt that it would be politically too risky to deliver any more Jews to the Germans. But he could hardly be given credit for the failed extradition of the remaining Jews, let alone be hailed as a gallant hero who saved the local Jewish population from Hitler's gas chambers, as his hand was clearly forced by the storm of public protests and the private interventions of many members of Bulgaria's leading moral and religious authorities. At a special plenary session in April 1943, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church officially rejected the government's anti-Semitic policy. In response, the monarch openly criticized the Church leadership during his April 15 speech to the Holy Synod, in which he also blamed "the profiteering spirit" of the Jews for inflicting enormous damage over the centuries to the Bulgarian nation and to all mankind as well, including the outbreak of World War II.

Following the government majority's open rebellion in the Assembly and amidst a rising tide of public concern and indignation, on May 20 the king ordered the evacuation of Sofia's 20,000 Jews and their internment in the countryside which was the first step in transporting them out of the country, according to the Dannecker-Belev plan. The monarch postponed for the time being any new deportations to Poland, but never cancelled them. All able-bodied Jewish men were conscripted and sent to forced labor camps throughout Bulgaria where they were organized in slave-like working gangs. Now Boris could simply tell the Germans that he needed his Jews to build and maintain Bulgaria's roads and railways (whether he believed him or not, there was not much that Hitler — beset with a succession of military calamities on the Russian front — could do).

No "Final Solution" in "Old" Bulgaria

Popular opposition and resistance continued, leaving little doubt that public opinion was decisively against the persecution of the Jews. On May 24, 1943, the traditional parade in the streets of Sofia to celebrate the National Holiday of Slavic Letters and Culture ("Cyril and Methodius' Day") turned into a demonstration against the government's evacuation and internment orders, which were forcing

20,000 Jews to abandon their homes in the capital. The police arrested over 400 demonstrators, mostly Jews, during this mass protest, organized and led by leaders of the Jewish community (mainly Rabbi Daniel Zion) as well as by Jewish members of the Workers' Party (a front organization for the outlawed Bulgarian Communist Party). When the government threatened to prosecute Archbishop Stefan for his appeals, letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and other public and private intercessions on behalf of the Jewish minority and the police raided his office, Stefan responded by giving Rabbi Zion and Bulgaria's Chief Rabbi, Dr. Asher Hananel of Sofia, refuge at his home and declaring the doors of every Orthodox church and monastery open to all Jews. A number of prominent independent politicians and parliamentary deputies such as Nikola Petkov, Dimo Kazasov, Nikola Mushanov, Krustyo Pastukhov, Damyan Velchev, Tzviatko Boboshevsky, and Petko Stainov co-signed a letter addressed to the king, denouncing on behalf of the non-Communist opposition the evacuation and internment of Sofia's Jews. The evacuation order was nevertheless carried out in May and June 1943 with many brutalities perpetrated by thousands of heavily-armed policemen and Branniks.

On August 28, 1943, shortly after returning from one of his visits with Hitler, Boris suddenly died of a heart attack. As Crown Prince Simeon was still a minor, three regents, including Bogdan Filov, were appointed to rule in his name. A new cabinet was formed under another German puppet, Dobri Bozhilov, but without Aleksandar Belev and Petar Gabrovsky. As it had already become obvious that Hitler was losing the war, the new Prime Minister had little stomach for any more Jewish expulsions to Germany. In fact, Sofia's Jews were allowed to return to their homes in October 1943. On August 31, 1944, just days before the Soviet Army overran and occupied the country, the cabinet finally revoked the Law for the Protection of the Nation.

After September 9, 1944, Filov, Bozhilov, and other leading members of the deposed fascist regime were arrested, tried, sentenced to death for collaboration with the Germans, and executed. Nearly all deputies of the wartime National Assembly's government majorities were also put on trial and many received the death penalty, including even Dimitar Ikonomov and several other signatories of Peshev's letter. Peshev was himself prosecuted and sentenced to fifteen years of imprisonment for his role in passing the Law for the Protection of the Nation, but was released after only a year due to his critical contribution to defending the Jews. After 1948, the majority of Bulgaria's Jewish survivors (reportedly as many as 45,000) emigrated to Palestine and became citizens of the newly created state of Israel.

The recently elected right wing government of ex-general Boyko Borisov has angered the few remaining Jews in Bulgaria by naming one of Sofia's central streets after their former nemesis and ex-Prime Minister, the late Bogdan Filov.

Conclusion

WHAT LED THIS SMALL AND RATHER helpless nation to defy Hitler for the sake of saving the lives of its fellow citizens of Jewish origin? Very different historical interpretations have been offered about who was responsible for the partial rescue of Bulgaria's Jewish minority. The Communists, for example, used this tragic episode to condemn the treachery, inhumanity, and anti-Semitism of King Boris and his fascist regime, blaming them for the extermination of the defenseless Jews from Bulgarian-controlled Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot. In their self-serving explanation of these events, it was the valiant and heroic struggle waged by the Bulgarian Communist Party (today renamed the Socialist Party) and many ordinary Bulgarians from all walks of life but especially from the working class, that saved the lives of the

Jews in Bulgaria proper. On the other hand, Bulgarians on the political Right (such as ex-President Petar Stoyanov) claim to this day that it was Boris III who saved Bulgaria's Jewish population from certain death in the gas chambers, hailing the king as the hero of heroes in this untold drama.[8] Under their influence, a monument was erected at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, to honor Boris and his wife, Queen Giovanna, for sparing the Bulgarian Jews during the war. But that controversial monument was removed in 2000, following vigorous protests by many Bulgarian-born Jews and after a semi-official Israeli inquiry established that the king had personally approved the deportation of more than 11,000 doomed Jews from wartime Bulgaria's annexed territories. And, of course, all of Bulgaria's post-Communist governments have shamelessly exploited these grisly events either to score political points at home or to ingratiate themselves in the eyes of their Western mentors and patrons in a campaign to obtain foreign economic assistance and investments as well as membership in coveted Euro-Atlantic institutions such as NATO and the EU.[9]

NOTES

1. "ADL Honors Bulgaria for Saving Jews from Holocaust," an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) press release dated February 13, 1998.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. While a lot of Americans seem to know the story of how wartime Danes saved 8,000 Danish Jews from the Nazi occupation authorities by smuggling them to Sweden in fishing boats, relatively few appear to have heard of the comparable Bulgarian case.

5. The Central Jewish Consistory was a self-governing council of the Jewish community in Bulgaria, which enjoyed considerable administrative and financial autonomy from the Bulgarian government.

6. Dimitar Peshev (1894-1973) is one of a dozen or so Bulgarians officially honored by the State of Israel (in the so-called "Bulgaria Forest" at Yad Vashem's "Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations") for their role in saving the Bulgarian Jews.

7. For more details about this episode, see Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940-1944* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1974); Christo Boyadjiev, *Saving the Bulgarian Jews in World War II* (Ottawa: Free Bulgarian Center, 1989); Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media Corp, 1998); and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust*, tr. by Arthur Denner (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

8. Those who defend King Boris and his role in this high drama tend to contradict themselves when they insist, on one hand, that he was powerless to prevent sending the Jews from Bulgarian-ruled Macedonia, Aegean Thrace, and Pirot to their deaths in the concentration camps but that, on the other hand, the deportation of the Jews from Bulgaria proper could not have been suspended without the monarch's blessing and crucial intervention.

9. Many Bulgarian-born Jews were outraged when Bulgarian Ambassador Elena Poptodorova falsely claimed in a May 1, 2003 speech delivered during the Holocaust Days of Remembrance at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington, D.C. that Bulgaria's Jewish population actually increased during World War II and that in those years many Slavic Bulgarians wore the yellow Star of David in a show of solidarity with their Jewish friends and neighbors.

B A C K   O F   T H E   B O O K

Chronicling the Thirty Years War

MICHAEL HIRSCH

Embedded With Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home
STEVE EARLY
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SAYING THERE IS NO CLASS STRUGGLE is like denying gravity exists. Corporate America knows the stakes in a class war. So does Steve Early and readers of *New Politics*. Does U.S. labor?

In one sense the question is nonsensical. Unions are by nature class institutions. They work to secure member interests in a conflict-riddled if not homicidal economic environment. But what workers' interests are actually secured? How generalized are the benefits? What role do workers play in their own defense? And how goes the fight?

Even the noisy debate between the AFL-CIO and Change to Win — at least as it surfaced publicly — was never framed in terms of class war. No fertile engagement in ideas and counterpoised initiatives over how best to build up labor's power was ever launched, if such an engagement was even intended. The debate, such as it was, was tactical. Not good.

Meanwhile, the class war against American workers and their families has raged unabated since the days of Jimmy Carter's unfortunate administration. Where once labor-management cooperation got lip service, and where labor was treated as junior partners with business in what was sold as a mutually advantageous social compact, the terrain is changed. After the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, fang-and-claw industrial relations returned. Some say they never left.

Whatever the context, labor's been hammered. The inviolate Treaty of Detroit, like the treaties the U.S. government signed with Native Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries, was repeatedly violated; even as early as the late 1950s when shop floor conditions declined, fear was the real face of workers under scientific management; and the Steelworkers launched a three-month strike, with mixed results. From the collapse of industries once the hallmark of the American Century — textiles in the 1950s, shipping in the 1960s, steel in the 1980s — to concession bargaining, business outsourcing to the "developing countries" abetted by free-trade agreements and the collapse of the U.S. auto industry today, labor is on the defensive and its ranks have thinned. Before John Sweeney was

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elected AFL-CIO president in 1995, even labor's rhetoric was stilted. As business waged a scorched earth campaign, labor mostly settled for a Christmas truce.

Today, with the union movement talking a tougher line, the percentage of unionized workers in the general population is declining in all states but California. When the AFL merged with the CIO in 1955, some one third of the American labor force was unionized. In 2009, even with more labor leaders talking left, speaking at DSA functions and proposing what in any other country would be called social democratic policies, just 12 percent of the U.S. workforce is represented by collective bargaining agreements. Worse, less than 8 percent of the private sector workforce is unionized. New York State, with just 25 percent of its workforce in unions — largely in New York City and its surrounding suburbs — has the nation's largest concentration of unionists.

The lack of a critical mass of organized workers who can humanize industry work standards hobbles not just workplace agitation and job security but political action, too. A labor reform bill President Carter was elected to pass — and didn't — and that bears a striking resemblance to the possibly stillborn Employee Free Choice Act of today, died absent Carter's spending needed political capital on its passage. Hundred-million-dollar electoral campaigns by both union federations in 2008 resulted in a Congress that can't seem to pass a healthcare reform package worthy of the name.

Nearly two generations of workers have suffered under a National Labor Relations Board that was more interested in pursuing duty of fair representation charges against unions than unfair labor practices against business.

The rash of daily newspaper closings nationwide affects not only journalists but printers, truckers, clericals, and retailers, too. With even the once mighty construction trades retreating in the face of nonunion contractors, it's been one long, defensive war. Now even the Ford Motor Company, with its relatively small losses, wants the same sweet stimulus taste offered to the broken General Motors. And GM wants to be stimulated again.

> One theme cuts through each essay: that the best way to revitalize the labor movement is to empower its members.

To compete internationally, domestic food processors increasingly subcontract to temp hiring agencies who offer below-standard wages and no job security or benefits to a growing number of new immigrants with or without documentation.

MEANWHILE, INCOME INEQUALITY just in this decade alone has worsened, the transfer of wealth from the working class to capital creating a financial gulf wider than anything seen since the gilded age. It's small comfort that it took Wall Street's bubble burst and a full-blown recession to narrow the gap.

The face of labor may be changing with more women and people of color joining the workforce, but business' visage is the same old death's head.

Embedded on labor's side the whole time was Steve Early, who held the sometimes tenuous positions of being both a New England representative for a major AFL-CIO union and a close observer and sympathizer of progressive and rank and file movements. His new book, *Embedded with Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home,* is a compendium of some of the savviest writing on working men and women written over the last 20 years. His writing evinces a feel not just for the politics of labor vs. capital, but the tactile realities of work and status in America. In breadth it ranks with C. Wright Mills' *The New Men of Power*. The difference: Early is no academic.

One theme cuts through each essay: that the best way to revitalize the labor movement is to empower its members. Early would jettison the in-vogue brand of "progressive managerialism" for an "organizational transformation that puts members in charge of their own unions." He would nix using members as film extras, or so many feet to be mobilized in the streets and state capitals, and instead give workers a stake not only in the outcome of union campaigns, but in their planning and execution, too. Do that and they will come in the millions. He'd also take a chance on union democracy, because U.S. culture already has enough condescending saviors.

Ranging from a close reading of labor's history during the second half of the twentieth century to contract reporting, the persistence of racism and ethnic discrimination in industry, the plight of undocumented workers and the political jousting between the competing labor federations, Early even manages to cull some of the best bits from others' work, as when he cites historian Nelson Lichtenstein writing that "the treaty of Detroit was less a mutually satisfactory concordat" than "a limited and unstable truce, largely confined to a well-defined set of regions and industries; a product of defeat, not victory." It was indeed.

Early's book isn't only about traditional unions. He includes a fine essay on community-based worker centers, too, showing both the strengths of organizing new immigrants on the basis of their common plight as marginalized ethnics and the weaknesses inherent in the huge potential for employers to play off one racial and ethnic group against another.

Now a quibble. The title, *Embedded with Organized Labor*, isn't quite right, in part because almost all of the book's essays are reviews of others' books. As it only incidentally contains dispatches from the war zone, a more fitting title would be "Embedded in the labor section of the Library of Congress." Even in "Reuther Redux," his lengthy essay on the AFL-CIO imbroglio with its rival Change to Win, and in "Afterthoughts on Sweeney," which are among the strongest essays in the book, what Early is doing is critiquing key books on labor. Still, it's a boost to know that someone with Early's competence is bookspotting, given that more than half of the some 64 works under review — all but the two by the execrable Linda Chavez worth a read — are from academic houses with small press runs and limited distribution capacity. Just 10 are from major publishers.

Saying it's for the most part a collection of reviews is also no slam on Early for failing to write the book he didn't write; the pieces easily stand on their own. Early, almost singular among journalists (David Bacon is another, as is Jane Slaughter), writes from the standpoint of knowing the terrain first hand. He's uniquely qualified to treat others' material well, and he does. The book also should be required reading for a new generation of union organizers who, in my experience, tend to treat unions as if they are Edenic institutions instead of After-The-Fall political arenas.

That brush with reality comes across sharply in his discussion of the "democracy vs. density" debate, where Early faults Change to Win (and particularly the Service Employees International Union) for staking its fortunes on union mergers and mammoth locals. Traditional trade union servicing and a regard for members' opinions, Early says, get short shrift. He sees the wholesale trusteeing of locals as payback for local leaders refusing to be team players, not as acts of vigilance to end corruption or mismanagement. And he reads the move toward multistate mega-locals with appointed officers — marketed as putative efforts to streamline operations — as politically motivated, and with nothing in common with internal union reform.

For Early, the real agenda of appointed leaders — those coming out of a social movement background as well as those former workers in their industries — is to build a job base for themselves while institutionalizing international union control. Democracy and member empowerment don't even compute for these officials, who could easily turn their organizations into the kind of "cartel unionism" that Mexican workers chafe against. Even so, the density argument Change to Win makes — that increased membership numbers give unions power in particular industries — has some veracity to it, and something I think Early underplays. What is the point of a democratic union that can't bring employers to heel, or that is the plaything of any coterie capable of cobbling together an election plurality? For Early, the results that Change to Win touts don't guarantee influence, either, and he gives numerous examples of sweetheart contracts signed and militants burned by the new leaders. It's a poor substitute for shop-floor militancy and direct action.

Still, there are any number of public sector unions — top down as they may be — that serve their members well, if only as clients and not as partners. Sometimes clients just want to be served. Sometimes authoritarian leaders do get the job done, and Early and other rank and file boosters such as the insurgents' monthly *Labor Notes* should acknowledge it. The better question is how much longer can even successful unions — like the benighted Kaiser Wilhelm II, who kept his High Seas Fleet out of battle — squander their strongest weapon.

Of course, the battle between empowerment and effectiveness isn't new, nor is it a zero-sum game. In the mid-1920s, A.J. Muste observed (in an essay sorely absent from Nat Hentoff's one-volume edit of Muste's collected works) that unions necessarily perform two roles: that of a mobilizing army and that of a democratic town meeting. As Muste noted, the two don't easily fit together, but they must.

Interested in meeting Early? He will be book-touring through at least February. Go to www.monthlyreview.org/books/event_steveearly.php for the schedule or call Scott at the book publisher's number: 212-691-2555.

Terrorists and Their Foes

MELVIN DUBOFSKY

The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror
BEVERLY GAGE
New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 400 pp. Notes and index. $27.95

BEVERLY GAGE'S HISTORY OF THE TERROR that gripped the United States in the aftermath of a series of bombings in 1919 and 1920 that culminated on September 16, 1920, with an explosion on Wall Street directly across from the headquarters of J. P. Morgan and Company illustrates that historians are shaped by their own times as much as by the past that they seek to reconstruct. Gage studied for her doctorate at Columbia University after the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, some six miles south of the campus. The hysteria that followed in the wake of the Twin Towers' destruction and George W. Bush's ensuing "war on terror" prompted Gage to study a previous moment in United States history when terrorist acts by attempted assassinations and bombings, including the Wall Street explosion unleashed an earlier era of national panic, free-floating fears, and an international hunt for the perpetrators of terrorism.

Gage has actually written three books or narratives in one. Her first story sets the stage for the climactic events of the years 1919-1920. It traces the violence unleashed by the railroad strikes of 1877, a moment one historian has characterized as the "year of violence," through the Haymarket bombing of 1886, the Homestead steel strike of 1892, the Pullman boycott and strike of 1894, numerous less notable but equally violent labor-capital conflicts, and the assassinations of two presidents, James A. Garfield and William McKinley. Here her cast of characters includes Johan Most, Albert Parsons, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Eugene V. Debs, "Big Bill' Haywood, the McNamara brothers (perpetrators of the 1911 *Los Angeles Times* bombing and numerous other dynamitings on behalf of the Structural Iron Workers' Union), and Tom Mooney and Warren Billings (convicted of bombing a 1916 war preparedness parade in San Francisco). For this part of her book Gage draws heavily on the research and writings of a number of historians and scholars, including me and most notably Paul Avrich, who was the late twentieth-century's leading authority on anarchism in Europe and the Americas. And here she tells a story familiar to most people knowledgeable about late nineteenth-early twentieth century United States history. It is a story in which out-gunned if not out-numbered workers fall before a united front of corporate foes and their allies in executive offices, legislative corridors, and legal chambers. It is a tale in which the mass media, mostly daily newspapers, denounce strikers as "communards" (every major strike of the late nineteenth century summoned journalists and editors to imagine a Paris Commune reborn in Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Chicago, Baltimore, or New York City), describe union members as violent brutes, and see

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a bearded, bomb-carrying anarchist behind every bush (the book's profuse illustrations bring all those images to vivid life). And, finally, it is a story in which the state and its agents at all levels of government seek to close the nation's gates to foreign radicals and anarchists, to eliminate subversive speech and print, and to imprison the practitioners of violence and propaganda by the deed.

Gage's second narrative follows the events in the aftermath of the First World War that culminated in the day Wall Street exploded. Here we read about how a Western world at war precipitated a wave of revolutions, events that shattered Second International socialism and buttressed the prestige of the Soviet Bolsheviks and their concept of revolutionary violence. For a time in 1919 communists ruled Bavaria and Hungary; revolutionaries and Freikorps members battled in the streets of Berlin; Italian workers occupied their factories; and workers in the United States participated in a massive nationwide strike wave that culminated in the great steel strike begun in September 1919. Corporate leaders saw unions and their members as the enemy, but federal bureau of investigation agents, military intelligence officials, state police forces, municipal police agencies, and legislators perceived the real foe as Bolshevik revolutionaries and violent anarchists who had created an alliance among radical workers, Irish nationalists, black liberationists, and anti-colonialists, all underwritten by Comintern agents armed with Soviet gold. A wave of strikes that flowed from the beginning of 1919 to its end and the founding of two separate United States Communist parties convinced authorities that violent revolution was imminent. When on May Day a number of bombs were directed at financiers, judges, and public officials, and the following month further bombings threatened seven cities, talk of terrorism evolved from rumor to reality.

Such fears precipitated the infamous Palmer raids, warrantless invasions of the offices and residences of alleged alien radicals (many were in fact naturalized citizens), in which those arrested by Palmer's federal agents were incarcerated without access to legal counsel prior to their deportation. Among those rounded up for deportation were Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, two of the hundreds of involuntary passengers deported on the USS Buford, better known as the "Soviet Ark." (New York State had its own miniversion of the Palmer raids in the subversive-hunting-and-exposing activities of the infamous Lusk Legislative Committee). The Palmer raids and their state and local offspring were a form of preventive war, a means to rid the nation of its alien undesirables before they threw another bomb. Or as the dean of the Northwestern University Law School remarked: "If some of the deportees were victims of their own ignorance or of subordinate officials' harshness — well, every soldier knows that such things will happen in war; and this was really war against an enemy. Mr. Palmer saved the country, in my opinion" (p. 238). Sound familiar?

It is a story in which the state and its agents at all levels of government seek to close the nation's gates to foreign radicals and anarchists, to eliminate subversive speech and print, and to imprison the practitioners of violence and propaganda by the deed.

The third and by far the longest tale, consuming a full two-thirds of the text, describes the hunt for the perpetrator of the Wall Street bombing. Here Gage does her finest sleuthing as an historian. Making excellent use of Department of Justice and War Department files in the National Archives as well as New York City municipal police records, Gage tells a story of gross incompetence and ineptitude. Her cast of official and unofficial sleuths are more Inspector Clouseaus than Marlowes or Spades, Dalgleishs or Wallenders. The only official who evinces competency is the young J. Edgar Hoover, who already was demonstrating a genius for protecting his own rear, and for classifying or eliminating reports that reflected unfavorably upon his activities. Otherwise William J. Flynn, who initially headed the Justice Department bureau of investigation, William J. Burns, of the eponymous detective agency and later Flynn's replacement as head of the bureau of investigation, and Arthur Woods, New York City police commissioner, spent more time competing with each other for the honor of apprehending the Wall Street bomber and following false trails than drawing the logical connection between the bombing and the clues available about its sources.

As Gage makes clear, and here she is heavily dependent on Avrich's writings about Italian anarchism by the deed and its immigrant practitioners in America, it took little imagination or forensic skill to link the Wall Street bombing to the trial and conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti. As Avrich established, Sacco and Vanzetti were dedicated Galleanisti, followers of the Italian anarchist, Luigi Galleani, who believed that because the state and capitalism were built on the practice of everyday violence, the only way to destroy such an enemy was through retaliatory violence, whether by assassinations or bombings, or even bank robberies to amass the resources necessary to practice more efficient violence. The conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti and their sentence to execution offered more proof of violence as practiced by a repressive state and of the need to fight violence with violence. What better target for a retaliatory strike against the capitalist state than the corner of Wall and Broad streets, the epicenter of financial capitalism. From the first, Flynn, Burns, and Woods should have combined their forces and resources to penetrate the network of Galleanisti in the United States. Instead, they each went their separate way, equally ignorant of the competing versions of anarchism or precisely where the Galleanisti fit into the picture. Quite early on, Flynn and Woods realized that the most likely suspect would be an Italian immigrant anarchist but they did not have the slightest idea how to distinguish among the suspects whose names came to their attention or which of their suspects were actual followers of Galleani. Burns, meanwhile, operating privately and eager to burnish the reputation of his detective agency, desperately sought to link the bombing to Soviet Communists and placed on his payroll a disreputable self-proclaimed associate of leading Bolsheviks who reported to Burns from Poland and the Soviet Union. As the three "detectives" pursued their myriad false leads, they supplied reporters with "intelligence" about likely suspects that resulted in newspaper stories that confused rather than enlightened readers. It was truly a case of the blind leading the blind.

As was also the case with the Haymarket bomber, the authorities failed to identify or to apprehend the author of the Wall Street explosion. Instead, they hounded and persecuted the innocent, in the process playing fast and loose with the Constitution. Only Hoover came out of the manhunt with his clothes and reputation unsoiled. Ever the consummate bureaucrat, he watched as his predecessors as directors of the bureau of investigation, Flynn and Burns, stumbled and bumbled their way to failure. When it came his turn to surveil and to repress "violent subversives" and "domestic terrorists" during the Cold-War years and the upheavals of the 1960s, Hoover's FBI violated the Constitution and due process with a vigor and craftiness that would have made Palmer, Flynn, and Burns envious. From the mistakes made by the latter three, Hoover learned his lessons in how to seduce ever credulous and inside-scoop hungry reporters, to court the favor of power-hungry and egotistical legislators, and to cover his all too often dirty footprints.

It took a scholar-historian to identify the likely perpetrator of the Wall Street explosion. As he did with the Haymarket bomber but far more conclusively in the Wall Street case, Paul Avrich fingered the villain, one Mario Buda, a Galleanisti and a friend to Sacco and Vanzetti. Herself no expert on the history and ideology of anarchism, Gage fully accepts Avrich's verdict. So, too, does Mike Davis, who entitled his popular history of modern era bomb-related violence, *Buda's Wagon*. In 1920, it took the act of just one Italian immigrant anarchist, himself a product of Western world radicalism and its hyper-secularism, not ten Islamic "terrorists" to set the nation's nerves on edge, to spread fear, and to precipitate a preventive war against "terrorism."

Yet, are there lessons to be found in the Wall Street explosion and its aftermath from which we can learn today, as is implied by the subject Gage chose for her dissertation and first book? To be candid, I doubt that the past offers lessons for the present; instead I believe that those who choose to use history instrumentally usually lead us astray. Aside from the reality that Mario Buda and Osama Bin Laden both chose to attack a citadel of financial capitalism, the differences seem far greater than the similarities. In the Wall Street case a horse-drawn vehicle was the instrument of delivery; in the case of the World Trade towers, it was jet airplanes. Buda certainly took to heart the anarchist epigram, "No master, no God." The World Trade Center attackers claimed to be acting on behalf of Allah and his messenger Mohammed. The Wall Street bombing claimed the lives of thirty-eight innocent victims and seriously injured one hundred and forty-three. Nearly all the victims were young, and only one was of identifiably south or east European origin, a Jewish-American messenger boy, this in a city that in 1920 numbered Jewish and Italian immigrants and their children as its two largest ethnic groups. In short, a far different cast of victims and also a far smaller one than those who lost their lives or a part of their health on 9/11/2001. Only a decade earlier than 1921 in the same city, the loss of more than three times as many innocent lives, all of them of Jewish or Italian immigrant extraction, in the Triangle Fire caused no comparable "manhunt" by the authorities for those responsible for the deaths, and when the city finally brought the owners of the clothing company to trial for criminal negligence, a jury acquitted the defendants. In 1921, had the authorities brought any of the Italian anarchists on their suspect list before a jury, however skimpy the evidence, can we imagine a verdict of not guilty?

Yes, in some ways, the world and the United States were far more innocent places in 1921 despite the millions who died during the Great War and its tumultuous aftermath. Yet aspects of life before the Holocaust and since bear a resemblance. Rather than being the first draft of history, daily journalism is more often a source for self-serving official leaks and wild rumors. That was true in 1921 and its remains true today. The sources of those leaks and rumors, usually military intelligence, justice department officials, municipal police authorities, and politicians, are as unreliable as the stories that appear in newspapers. Is there any good reason to believe that the "intelligence" that leads to leaks and that derives from unattributed sources is any more reliable today? For nearly half a century from the 1870s to the 1920s anarchist assassinations, bombings, and violence caused numerous innocent deaths, yet brought down no existing governments nor precipitated any revolutions. Is there any reason to believe that the violence practiced by today's putative "terrorists" is any more likely to bring down a government that actually functions (not non-states the likes of Afghanistan, Somalia, the Congo, Haiti)? Does anyone really believe that Pushtan tribalists, the so-called Taliban, have the ability to defeat the Pakistani military and topple the state of Pakistan? War is the greatest single promoter of state collapse and revolution as we should have known before we chose to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. Mario Buda died an ordinary death as a free man as so too will likely Osama bin Laden. The cause to which Buda remained true, one that caused so much fear in the distant past, exited the world stage with more of a whimper than a bang. If we can retain our equanimity and resist going to war against imaginary dragons overseas, our contemporary agents of terror are just as likely to exit the stage without a big bang. And perhaps eighty-eight years from today, 9/11 will seem as much a footnote to history as 9/16/1920 had become before Beverly Gage wrote her riveting narrative of the event.

Mixed Bag
Insightful Ecological Muckraking Tainted with Political Correctness

GEORGE FISH

Born Under a Bad Sky: Notes from the Dark Side of the Earth
JEFFREY ST. CLAIR
Petrolia, CA and Oakland, CA: CounterPunch and AK Press, 2008
459 pp., $19.95

JEFFREY ST. CLAIR HAS WRITTEN an admirable yet mixed screed on environmentalism and environmental depredation *in Born Under a Bad Sky*. The special strong points of *Born Under a Bad Sky* are the "Prelude" and first three sections of the book, "Enter the Dragon," "Way Out West," and "Politicians and Other Strangers," which are environmental muckraking journalism at its very best, articles taken from his writings for *CounterPunch* that reveal and expose the environmental devastation imposed in the United States under the administrations of Reagan, Clinton, and the two Bushes, under the aegis of promoting specifically corporate capitalist forms of economic development. (We may parenthetically note that variations of these "corporate capitalist forms" also led to serious environmental destruction not only in the "already existing socialisms" of the former U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe, but in Maoist China as well.[1])

The "Prelude" and first three sections of *Born Under a Bad Sky* are where Jeffrey St. Clair truly shines, both in incisive concrete reporting and in well-crafted and frequently colorful use of language. The 52 short but pithy and self-contained articles of his from *CounterPunch* are packed thoroughly with crucial information and necessary detail, and provide through their organization three interlocked narratives of specific abuses and abusers. They represent some of the best of what Lenin so vitally insisted on, "concrete analysis of concrete conditions."

The first section of reportage, "Enter the Dragon," details the dangers to life, civil liberties, and habitat perpetrated by the various industrial complexes of contemporary U.S. corporate capitalism, from the pork-on-the-hoof factories of St. Clair's native Indiana to the Indian Point nuclear power plant just outside New York City; from intimidating environmental whistleblowers in Louisiana to "blood mining" prisoners in Arkansas through a commercial blood bank awarded a contract; from sweatshops in Honduras to nuclear tailings in Iraq; and more. It is a panoramic sweep of the many depredations foisted on our lives and natural environment by corporate greed, and their social consequences, as promulgated by a truly bipartisan connivance of politicians with corporate bigwigs and their lobbyists. And most worthy of note, this connivance is truly bipartisan, comprising politicians of the Democratic as well

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as the Republican Parties, and crisscrossing ideological lines to embrace both putative liberals as well as conservatives. This bipartisan connivance is the bright crimson thread that runs through all three sections of reportage in *Born Under a Bad Sky*, and rightly stands, as St. Clair demonstrates, as both portent and template of U.S. politics and how both Democrats and Republicans conduct business-as-usual.

This bipartisan connivance is the bright crimson thread that runs through all three sections of reportage in *Born Under a Bad Sky.*

The second section, "Way Out West," focuses specifically on the Rocky Mountain States and the intertwined workings and rotten compromises of the Department of the Interior, the major environmental groups, and the commercial logging, mining, and irrigation interests there. This section demonstrates in a most concrete way the extent to which Western "rugged individualism" comes at the expense of both massive government subsidies ("socialism" when given niggardly to non-commercial interests) and the commercial opening-up of the last vestiges of the truly "wild" in the lower 48 states to corporate capitalist "development." St. Clair portrays here what he regards as a crucial last stand for the environment, natural beauty, and the protection of endangered species against the unbarred triumph of such "development."

The third section, "Politicians and Other Rank Strangers,"[2] focuses specifically on the major politicians of the Democratic and Republican Parties themselves, from the disingenuously sublime, Al Gore, to the fatuously ridiculous, bombastic former California Congressman Richard Pombo. This is where the Democratic political actors of the Clinton Administration and Kerry Presidential-run days are rightly skewered, along with their openly right-wing Republican colleagues, and it also contains some devastating portraits of leading bureaucrats at the Department of the Interior. There is a deliciously undermining portrait of the floundering Howard Dean, and a most apt exposé of another floundering, that of the Green Party and its compromised "safe state" Presidential run against John Kerry in 2004 — trenchant reminders of the pitfalls of "support the lesser evil" politics that all left electoral politics activists should take to heart.

The last section, "The Beautiful and the Damned," is a 117-page recounting of St. Clair's two expeditionary runs on the Green River with friends, which weren't such arcadian treks as one might have supposed: St. Clair and his friends were outfitted in excellent rubber rafts and state-of-the-art riggings, and stocked with a food larder that not only gave them gourmet pasta meals, smoked salmon, and other delicacies at their campsites, but even Tecate Mexican beer and tequila. However, while these two long tales of discovering the true wilderness are engagingly written, and at times suggest a loving regard of nature à là Thoreau and Edward Abbey — they also suggest at other times a trite and tinny indignation à là John Denver!

At the front of the book, in "Prelude: The Once and Future Environmental Movement," St. Clair lays out the political implications of his environmentalist stance:

> Environmentalism was once a people's cause, unaligned with any political party and independent from the demands of the shadowy syndicate of mega-foundations (Pew, Rockefeller, Ford) that now hold the mortgage on the movement — those high priests of what Foucault called "condescending philanthropy." Environmentalism was once driven by a desire for social justice and an unremitting passion for the wild. We need to tap back into those populist currents. Let the vision attract the money and don't allow it to be refracted through the ideological prism of

> neoliberal foundations.
>
> The power of the environmental movement derives from its essential and shared imagery, its sensual tangibilities. Simply put: the destruction of the wild sparks militancy in the heart. At least it does for me. Wild places communicate their own passion and power, sensations that are the antithesis of political abstractions. (p. 7)

St. Clair also cites in the book, as illustrative of his environmental bête noire, the following quote from John Ward Thomas, head of the Department of the Interior's Forest Service under Clinton: "We cannot expect to sustain human life on this planet without exploitation of natural resources. The question is how it will be done." (p. 242) Further, on the opposite page, St. Clair acerbically comments on the supposed implications of this viewpoint:

> The terrain of our terminology has been colonized by industrial foresters, pork-barrel politicians, and federal bureaucrats. Ecosystem management. Biodiversity. The very meaning of these terms has already been corrupted to the point where they now become the justification for environmentally destructive and economically disastrous activities. It's going to be a hard fight winning them back. (p. 243).

Taken together, both the "Prelude" and "The Beautiful and the Damned" strongly, and in detail, portray an environmental vision that has little or no place for homo sapiens, unless s/he is only an awed onlooker to the majesties of pristine nature.

THESE TWO SECTIONS CERTAINLY LAY OUT a coherent philosophical view of environmentalism and environmental activism; however, it is one from which I must demur, must demur as one who is every bit as concerned about the environment and its destruction as St. Clair, but who, as a socialist humanist, is definitely unwilling to read homo sapiens out of any desired and desirable system of ecological balance and sustainability. So this writer must regard St. Clair's environmental philosophy, limned above, as not only apocalyptic and overstated, but driven by an all-too-fashionable irrationalism that would privilege the "wild" over that all-too-human (and thus allegedly destructive) "tamed." While I will gladly concede that much of human history and current practice seriously compromises the claim that there exists intelligent life on earth, my view of the foibles of humanity generally, as well as regards the environment, is more that of Kurt Vonnegut: bemused, ironic, but essentially loving of his fellow species-members. St. Clair's, on the other hand, smacks more of Savonarola's.

This requires elaboration. First, this writer finds the above a non sequitur to the excellent and scarily informative reportage. Contrary to St. Clair, this writer has no objection abstractly to the notions propounded above in the John Ward Thomas quote. The question is not whether to manage or not, but how to manage. That's a "tactical" question as much as it is a matter of principle, and Noam Chomsky said it best on tactics:

> Talk of tactics sounds sort of trivial, but it is not. Tactical choices are the ones that have real human consequences. We can try to go beyond the more general strategic choices—speculatively and with open minds—but beyond that we descend into abstract generalities. Tactics have to do with decisions about what to do next, they have real human consequences. (*Chomsky on Anarchism*, Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007, p. 237).

Appropriate tactics, then, for the environmental movement would thus involve not only a strategy of resistance to environmental depredation, but also the advocacy and implementation of positive measures to protect and sustain the ecological balance that include, preserve, and protect both non-human and human life-forms. Tactics that steer clear of both the Scylla of caving in to neoliberalism by the major established environmental groups (which St. Clair documents well in this book), but also the

Charybdis of primitivism and Green anarchism that seem to dominate the "left" end of the environmental movement's ideological spectrum (which St. Clair romanticizes).

Moreover, St. Clair's reinvigorated populist environmental movement, given what he's written in the "Prelude," smacks of that obnoxious notion of Proudhon: "I love humanity, but I spit on men." The environmental movement needs not to be gulled into that false and facile Hobson's Choice that the anti-environmentalists project: save the grizzly and the spotted owl or eliminate jobs for humans; exploit the forests through logging to the hilt or drive out industries that will economically sustain human communities; eliminate power-generating dams and nuclear power from consideration or reduce human standards of living to a basically subsistence level. Let humans take their "stewardship" of nature more seriously, and let the environmental movement be more infused with science (which is, after all, the application of rigorous analysis, proper experimentation and hypothesis-testing, and rationality to the problems humans encounter) rather than contenting itself with various forms of often-reactive political advocacy and ideology. After all, ecology is a science, same as biology or physics; and in this regard, economic science can also play a crucial role in guiding us to rational decisions. The Left, it seems to me, has been corrupted long enough with the irrationalism of postmodernism, strictly intuitive and "sensibility" approaches, and the substitution of "militant" forms of activism in lieu of serious medium- and long-term strategy.

But back to the book itself. *Born Under a Bad Sky* also features a 21-page bibliography of the American West, a helpful index, and an excellent photo of a howling, all-too-rare Mexican wolf taken by wildlife photographer Robin Silver on the cover. The book could've used better proofreading, as there were a number of typos, but none serious enough to cause confusion as to what was being written. This writer gives an overall thumbs-up to *Born Under a Bad Sky*, especially for the fine reportage.

NOTES

1. For the environmental destruction that took place in Maoist China, see Elizabeth C. Economy, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 47-57, as well as George Fish's review essay on this book, "A Massive Destruction of Nature: China's Ecological Crisis," *Against the Current 116*, May/June 2005, Vol. XX, No. 2 (new series).

2. As listed on the frontispiece page of this section: the Table of Contents lists it as "Politicians and Other Strangers."

Letters from Barcelona

MICHAEL LÖWY

Letters from Barcelona. An American Woman in Revolution and Civil War
GERD-RAINER HORN (ED.)
N.Y.: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009, 209 pp., $50

IN THE SUMMER OF 1936, Lois Orr, a 19-year-old American woman from Louisville, Kentucky, and her husband, 30-year-old Charles Orr, were spending their honeymoon in Europe; upon hearing news of the outbreak of the Spanish Revolution (July 1936), they decided to hike to Barcelona and join the struggle. Both had been active in the left wing of the American Socialist Party, and in Spain their sympathies immediately went to the radical POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista), led by anti-Stalinist Marxists, and to the Anarchist CNT-FAI (Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo; Federacion Anarquista Iberica). Charles became an editor for the POUM's English-language bulletin, *The Spanish Revolution*, and broadcast English-language news at the POUM Radio, while Lois worked for the Catalan Regional Government's Propaganda Office (English section). Lois's letters to her family and some by Charles, as well as other documents from those years, are kept in the Labadie Collection at Ann Arbor (Michigan University). Thanks to labor historian Gerd-Rainer Horn, this fascinating material is now published, giving us an unusual glimpse on revolutionary Barcelona, a kind of complement to George Orwell's celebrated *Homage to Catalonia*. The letters are preceded by a very useful introduction by G.-R. Horn, presenting a general view of the Catalan Revolution.

Lois's letters are rich in details, and packed with insightful political comments. In spite of her young age, she was able to grasp the main issue confronting the Catalan left : how to fight fascism? By developing the revolution, as the Anarchists and the POUM believed, or by keeping the (bourgeois) democratic order, as the Stalinists (the Spanish Communist Party and their Soviet inspirers) and other moderate Social-Democratic and Republican forces insisted? Mary Low, a British revolutionary and surrealist poet, who worked for the POUM with Lois Orr in Barcelona, described her, in a letter to Gerd-Rainer Horn, as "a far better-prepared Marxist and revolutionary than I could ever hope to be."

Lois's first letters document her enthusiasm with the Catalan revolution: "This is a gloriously exciting place to be . . . the most interesting spot in the world at this particular moment." Although working for the POUM, she doesn't hide her admiration for the Anarchists, "really the most revolutionary of all parties," whose convictions about liberty nourish her hopes that the struggle would lead to "a real workers' democracy." In her eyes, the FAI is a "wonderful organization," and "Every time I see an anarchist with a gun, I feel good." In short, "If Barcelona has a soul, it's an anarchist one."

The main handicap of the young Orrs was their ignorance of the Spanish and Catalan languages. Lois's attitude to Catalan culture is quite

MICHAEL LOWY, *Marxist scholar and activist, born in Brazil, lives in France. Last book* Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism *(Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009).*

naïve : "Catalan culture is only Spanish culture under a different flag." Neither seriously tried to learn the language, and only after several months Lois wonders if she should not spend "a week or more in some village to learn Catalan, and get to know a little more about the people." In fact, virtually all her personal contacts were with foreign volunteers who came to Barcelona

> Lois Orr: "If Barcelona has a soul, it's an anarchist one."

to support the Revolution, and her information on the events was second hand, provided by them. This was of course a problem, since, as she wittily puts it in a letter to her family, "Most foreigners here come from little fraction groups that have the whole course of the revolution mapped out according to pp. 293, 277, 231 of *Capital*, and other pages of Engels and Lenin." Among the volunteers were also many interesting people, such as George Orwell and his wife Eileen (who worked as secretary to Charles Orr), the German Trotskyist Hans Freund ("Moulin") — soon to be murdered by GPU agents — the poetess Mary Low Bréa, the Belgian volunteer Georges Kopp, Commander of the POUM unit at the Aragon front where Orwell fought, John dos Passos (whom Charles introduced to Andres Nin, the POUM leader), Emma Goldman, and many others.

The tragic dilemma of the revolutionary left was well captured by Lois: on one side, "It's fatal to be all cutting each other's throats while the fascists come closer and closer"; on the other hand, "Should not one resist the Stalinists and their allies' attempt to stifle the revolutionary process?"

Charles became a member of the POUM, while Lois, who lost her job at the Generalitat of Catalonia because of her work for the POUM, became increasingly sympathetic to the left dissidents of this party, to the Trotskyist opposition, as well as to the most radical Anarchists (the Amigos de Durruti) .

Of course, the letters are not only about politics: there is a lot about food, about the Catalan "spicy tomato sauce" and the delicious *nata* (cream with sugar); also about the cold temperature, and no heating, so that "the only place where you can be really comfortable, all good revolutionaries agree, is in bed."

The end of the high revolutionary hopes came soon enough, in the fateful May Days of 1937, when, reacting to an attempt by the Stalinists to seize the central telephonic exchange — in the hands of the Anarchists since July 1936 — thousands of Anarchist and POUM militants took to the streets and built barricades; fighting lasted four days, and ended by an inconclusive compromise. Soon afterwards the POUM was outlawed, its leaders jailed, and Andres Nin murdered by GPU agents. Lois and Charles Orr were among the many foreign POUM sympathizers imprisoned, accused by the Stalinists of being "a ring of fascist spies." Thanks to their American passports, and the protests of the American Consul in Barcelona, they were released after a few days, and were able to travel to Paris, where they tried to build solidarity with their jailed comrades.

Back in the United States, the Orrs joined Max Shachtman's Workers Party, and visited Leon Trotsky in Mexico in 1940. But that is altogether another story. . . .

Crossing the Stream Together

Alice and Staughton Lynd's Stepping Stones

AUSTIN MCCOY

I FIRST LEARNED of the release of Alice and Staughton Lynd's *Stepping Stones: A Memoir of a Life Together* through rather unusual circumstances. On Thursday, February 26, I received a mass email message from Staughton Lynd encouraging everyone to urge their local academic libraries to order copies of *Stepping Stones*. If the publisher would authorize a paperback printing, interested people would be able to afford the book. The current hardback edition, he explained, costs $70, too expensive for any person to purchase during these tough economic times.

Stepping Stones:
A Memoir of a Life Together
ALICE LYND AND STAUGHTON LYND
New York: Lexington Books, 2009,
191 pp., hard cover, $70.00

Although Alice and Staughton would have been well justified, *Stepping Stones* is not a literary victory lap. Their memoir represents one activist couple's attempt to restore and emphasize partnership, critical self reflection, empathy, and wisdom, values often deemphasized in the midst of political debates and organizing in activist communities and American politics at large. Written in the spirit of accompaniment, the Lynds seek to pass those aforementioned values on to a younger generation of activists. They open *Stepping Stones* by addressing the youth: "We assume that this book will be read by our children and grandchildren. Beyond that precious circle, we hope that other young persons who are seeking a better world will find something useful here" (1). I am confident in my assertion that the Lynds successfully present a piece of work that is accessible, informative, and relevant.

Stepping Stones is divided into seven chapters revolving around various themes such as their upbringing ("Beginnings"), experiences living in the Macedonia Cooperative Community ("Community"), political organizing during the 1960s ("The Sixties"), practice of oral history and law in the service of labor organizing ("Accompaniment"), confrontations with the prison-industrial complex ("The Worst of the Worst"), and final thoughts ("Afterwords"). Each chapter consists of both individually and co-authored sections. It is possible students of history and activism may crave a more detailed and traditional narrative, but those readers would soon find the Lynds' structure reflects their thematic intentions. For the Lynds, reading *Stepping Stones* ought to resmble exploring a "drawer of loose photographs" and trying to cross a stream where "the hiker looks for rocks above the surface of the water on which to step, one after another, to get to the other side" while "there is no way to know in advance whether a particular rock will turn under one's foot" (2). Thus, one should see their stories and insights as those stepping stones small and large. Much of their memoir will provide readers with steady stones needed to cross the stream.

Conscientious Beginnings

THE REASON I ANTICIPATED READING Alice

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and Staughton Lynd's *Stepping Stones* was the prospect of learning why and how the two chose their activist paths. The first chapter, "Beginnings," a composite of Alice and Staughton's formative experiences, lays this groundwork. Here, readers learn of Staughton and Alice's upbringing in New York City. Both were born to and raised by educated parents. Staughton is, as he opened the chapter, the "Son of Middletown." In 1929, his parents, sociologists Helen and Robert S. Lynd, published the groundbreaking community study of Muncie, Indiana, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. Alice's parents studied economics, and her mother also studied the piano at the Peabody Conservatory of Music.

[Staughton] thought Yale's decision [against tenuring him] was hypocritical since many American academics led political lives inside and outside the academy.

As one could imagine living in educated households, both Staughton and Alice discuss how issues of race played out in their homes and in their experiences growing up. Staughton remarks how his father grew up in New Albany, Indiana, and Louisville, Kentucky, cities "saturated with racism." He discusses his parents' decision to choose Muncie, a virtually all-white town, as the location for their study in Middletown. Staughton also reflects on how his father and he were often unaware of the subtleness of racially-tinged terminology. Staughton even admits using racial terminology in a note to a high school classmate, and Alice remembers "there were strong racist overtones in what I heard as a child" (22).

More explicitly than Alice, Staughton reflects upon how gender and class figured in his upbringing. He concludes his father "came to feel deeply humiliated as a male" because he "felt rejected" by Helen, despite the fact that he strove for a rugged masculine ideal (16). Staughton says of the issue of class and his parents: "Of course my parents' own radicalism, such as it was, prepared the way for my comradeship with these working-class friends. But there was more to it than that. Somehow, WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) though I assuredly was and am, I felt myself at the very deepest levels of my being in conflict with members of the U.S. ruling class" (26-27). Although the Lynds do not include the type of analytical detail about the impact of race, class, and gender on their upbringing as scholars of those subjects might like, their discussion of these issues reveals their pervasiveness. In an era where many white ethnic Americans present themselves as "not racist," the Lynds present themselves and their families as not just products of their time, but as equally susceptible to these systems of thought as any American. Just as racism and heterosexism are learned, Alice and Staughton demonstrate the importance of reflecting on these issues and on learning from their experiences rather than denying and forgetting them, as goes with most Americans today.

Political Organizing and Social Change

ALICE AND STAUGHTON'S RUMINATIONS on political organizing and social movements are some of the strengths of *Stepping Stones*. They successfully locate their nascent political thinking in their formative years. Alice learned from studying dance that students, and later counselees, could also be leaders and experts in their own right. She attributes the concept of "spontaneous leadership by 'natural authority'" in her practices of creative dance to her teacher, Barbara Mettler (37). And one of my favorite anecdotes that Staughton identifies as a consciousness altering moment is the story of an anarchist leader during the Spanish Civil War. This story deserves to be quoted at length because it reiterates what everyday justice should look like:

> It seems that one day during the Spanish Civil War there was a long line waiting for lunch. Far back in the line was a well-known anarchist. A colleague urged him: "Comrade, come to the front of the line and get your lunch. Your time is too valuable to be wasted this way. Your work is too important for you to stand at the back of the line. Think of the Revolution!" Remaining where he was in line, the anarchist leader replied: 'This is the revolution" (32).

Even though Staughton does not fully explain exactly how and why this story affected him, one gathers a sense of its impact based on the humility permeating the text.

Most students of history will read the Lynds' chapter on the 1960s with great interest. Although ardent historians may crave a more comprehensive recollection of the era, the Lynds hit the high notes of their experience during this turbulent period. Staughton discusses his encounter with Howard Zinn, his experiences teaching at Spelman College in Atlanta, and his role as an administrator of the Freedom Schools.

Staughton addresses at considerable length the controversy sparked by his infamous trip to Hanoi with Communist Party theoretician Herbert Aptheker and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) founder and leader, Tom Hayden. Staughton maintains his tenure decision at Yale was decided on nonacademic and political grounds. He also thought Yale's decision was hypocritical since many American academics led political lives inside and outside the academy. He reflects, "It was acceptable for Yale faculty and alumni to manage the Bay of Pigs invasion for the CIA (Richard Bissell), repeatedly to advocate the invasion of North Vietnam (Walt Rostow), and to plan an unprovoked invasion of Iraq (Paul Wolfowitz), but it was unacceptable for me to be arrested on the steps of the Capitol in a symbolic effort to declare peace with the people of Vietnam, or to make an unauthorized trip to Hanoi with a member of the American Communist Party and a founder of SDS" (84). Staughton's statements force one to confront the role our universities have played not in upholding "academic freedom," but with contributing directly to America's empire building.

Alice also recounts her experience as a draft counselor in their chapter on the 1960s. Here she brings the lessons of her upbringing to bear on her goal of collaboration. She states, "When I was counseling . . . there were two experts in the room: I was an expert on the Selective Service regulations and what was required to support a particular kind of claim; the counselee was an expert on what he had experienced, what he thought, and what he was willing to do. We put our expertise together" (87). Again, the theme and merits of collaboration between equals surfaces. Ultimately, Alice collected interviews from conscientious objectors and published *We Won't Go: Personal Accounts of War Objectors* in 1968. She produced this work in the same spirit as *Stepping Stones*. She wanted it to be "useful for resisters to give their parents as a way of showing that they weren't the only ones who were doing such strange things" (86).

Readers are also treated to a discussion of one of the Lynds' central political organizing concepts — accompaniment. I was first introduced to this idea while reading Staughton's *Living Inside Our Hope: A Steadfast Radical's Thoughts on Rebuilding the Movement,* where he defines the idea as "a political theory that empowered ordinary people to speak for themselves, a pedagogy in which the student helped define what should be learned."* The Lynds address critics who may have questioned this concept because of its implications for the development of a social, cultural, and/or political relativism. They argue that this is not the case

*Staughton Lynd, *Living Inside Our Hope: A Steadfast Radical's Thoughts on Rebuilding the Movement* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1997), 6.

because "uncritical deference to another's vision of the truth can be equally misguided" (95). The Lynds also express their reservations about Alinsky-style community organizing. Staughton questions the "machismo" implied in Saul Alinsky's model, and Alice wonders whether the Alinsky belief in self-interest and guilt are the only motivations for community organizing and participation in social movements. Staughton also criticizes the bureaucratization of unions governing workers and structuring their demands and collective actions. Lastly, he castigated the vitriolic rhetoric of the Black Panther Party and the increasingly hierarchical structure of the SDS.

Partnership in the "Two Person Community"

THE SUBTITLE OF THE BOOK, "A Memoir of a Life Together," rightfully underscores the role of partnership in fighting for justice and leading productive lives. Staughton tells the story of how they met in an apartment on Story Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1950 and were married shortly thereafter. As Tom Hayden wrote in the "Foreword," "Staughton and Alice were 'a two-person community.' [. . .] It has been that way for fifty years, as their moving narrative reveals to us" (vii). Ironically, it was the separation from the utopian community at Macedonia that strengthened their bond. "The separation from intentional community was one of our most profound experiences. Alice considers it the most difficult period of her life. Thereafter, despite moments of deep fellowship in civil rights, antiwar, labor, and prison work, we would function in the cold outside world as a couple, a two-person community" (52).

Of course, their fifty year marriage has not been entirely smooth. There were moments of hardship. The Lynds recount living in "a converted chicken coop" when Alice was pregnant with their second child (54). They also recalled their moments of physical separation because they agreed to "follow his or her best light" (54). But with adversity came support as they both supported each other in all their movement endeavors, and especially in their pursuit of legal education during the 1970s and 1980s.

As many people familiar with the Lynds know, their companionship also produced a number of co-authored books. They discuss the production of their collaborative oral histories in the third chapter, "Accompaniment." Here students of oral history will learn some of the Lynds' thoughts on the method of practicing oral history generally, dealing with publishers, as well as their writing process in composing the first edition of *The Rank and File*. Interested readers and students will be pleased about the Lynds' including a selected bibliography of their publications.

Partnership may be underrated when one considers the nuts and bolts of political organizing. However, if one were to refer to the composition of a social movement as a string of productive relationships, then partnership is a foundational and integral part of the network holding a movement together. In any case, the Lynds provide a model of a long-lasting, tested, and productive marriage, one that even some of our mainstream politicians, church-goers, the clergy, and other members of the elite could learn from.

It is evident Alice and Staughton Lynd composed *Stepping Stones* in a spirit of relevance, partnership, accompaniment, critical reflection, and wisdom. Unfortunately most of these ideals have taken a back seat to our penchant for political cynicism, sectionalism, orthodoxy, and spectacle in American culture, as well as the contradictory impulses of anti-intellectualism of some activists and intellectual excess by others. Alice and Staughton Lynd could have used this book to be self-congratulatory but they chose to present themselves in all of their humanity. Maybe this is the reason their memoir is short on dates and resists a conventional narrative structure: they wanted to offer us stepping stones so we could cross the stream ourselves.

A Hard-Nosed Case for Ethical Socialism

JOHN P. PITTMAN

> Why Not Socialism?
> G. A. COHEN
> Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, 83 pp., $14.95

G. A. COHEN WAS, UNTIL HIS SUDDEN death in August, the Chichele Professor of Social and Political Philosophy at All Soul's College, Oxford, a chair notably held formerly by Isaiah Berlin and later by Charles Taylor. Cohen's reputation was established by his first book, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense* (1978). That ground-breaking and very influential book was central to the development of 'Analytical Marxism,' the attempt to further the social and political aims of Marxist theory by recourse to the conceptual tools of analytical philosophy. Having "settled his accounts with" Marxism, Cohen became immersed in forging a philosophical response to the widely influential work of the Harvard philosopher, Robert Nozick, who, in his *Anarchy, State, & Utopia* (1974), had formulated principles for the justification of a radically individualist and libertarian (anti-socialist) political agenda. (Nozick had, himself, been provoked into writing that book by the appearance of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971), perhaps the most important of the three books, and one which is sometimes credited with single-handedly initiating a renaissance of analytic political philosophy, dormant for much of the 20th century. Rawls' and Nozick's books defined the field in late 20th century analytic debates, Rawls presenting a distinctive and highly sophisticated, left-liberal and redistributivist position and Nozick presenting an elaborate philosophical defense of a radical capitalist ideology.) Cohen's critique of Nozick in a number of widely-read articles, can be found in his *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality* (1995). He then turned his attention to Rawls' position, producing his own response in *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (2008).

The present book, Cohen's last publishing project, is a short text published as a small hardcover book. *Why Not Socialism?* is a revision of an essay published in 2001. Organized into four short chapters and a coda, this text presents an ethical case for socialism. To say "ethical case" means two things, here: first, what Cohen argues for explicitly is a set of principles that together define the sort of thing a socialist — in this case, Cohen himself — wants to see realized, and, second, that the argument proceeds from hypothetical examples and by means of appeals to the sorts of things we're likely to think and feel about the various hypotheticals. The "we" is not identified nor questioned, nor are the hypotheticals themselves taken materially, but only for the sake of argument. It's the argumentation, and where it ends up, that counts, and not so much the starting point.

Still, the starting point in this case is not a bad one: the short first chapter presents "The Camping Trip." When on a camping trip — or other such "non-massive context" — people cooperate, sharing both the labors and tasks involved in keeping camp, and the means of consumption and recreation (pots and pans, flashlights, beach balls) that they use. All this is in keeping with the spirit of the trip, what

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Cohen describes as the "norms of equality and reciprocity," that are shared in an unspoken way, taken for granted by the campers. Cohen admits, in the middle of this, that he's not much of a fan of camping trips himself, given his love of modern plumbing. But the point isn't whether one likes camping trips, but rather, if one did like them, what "spirit" would one want them taken in. "[I]sn't this, the socialist way, with collective property and planned mutual giving, rather obviously the best way to run a camping trip, whether or not you actually like camping?" If the answer to that question is "yes," then we can move on to the next question, namely, why not run a society that way, too, or, succinctly, "why not socialism?"

> Thus, while every society "is a network of mutual provision," only in a socialist society are mutuality and reciprocity pervasive motives fueling production and exchange.

The second step of the argument is the task of formulating "The Principles Realized on the Camping Trip," the subject of chapter two. Here there is a presentation of what Cohen calls "the socialist principle of equality of opportunity," which he presents in contrast to two less thoroughgoing principles, which he calls "bourgeois" and "left-liberal." While the bourgeois principle attempts to disallow and eliminate the consequences of inequalities due to "status restrictions," both formal and informal — Cohen's examples here involve racist laws and racist consciousness — the left-liberal principle goes further by attempting to account for and overcome the effects of social inequalities — here Cohen cites "head start education for children from deprived backgrounds." The effect of implementing even the more radical of these two principles is to fully bring to realization the bourgeois goal of creating a society of "careers open to talents." Cohen's socialist principle goes beyond both of these by attempting to equalize for all "inborn" and "unchosen" inequalities. So, just as on the camping trip, the born angler doesn't get more fish for dinner because of his native ability with a fishing pole than the dishwasher who's never even tried to fish, the socialist principle adjusts for differences in native endowment and other accidents of fortune. So only differences in preference distinguish the lived outcomes of members of a society based on the socialist principle of equality of opportunity, as Cohen formulates it. Unless, that is, such inequalities are due to regrettable choices or option luck.

When someone loses out because of poor judgment, a foolish choice, or just bad luck, the resulting inequality is not unjust, even by the socialist principle of equal opportunity, since the unequal outcome doesn't arise in such cases from unequal opportunities. Cohen thinks that despite the justice of such inequalities, they are "repugnant to socialists when they obtain on a sufficiently large scale...." because such inequalities strain the ties of community. He illustrates this by suggesting that car owners should not expect the sympathy of the straphangers they end up standing next to on the subway when their cars are unavailable to them, even when socialist equality of opportunity broadly obtains in society. And so Cohen thinks the socialist is committed to a second principle, that of community. The value socialists attach to community prompts a prohibition on gambling, the expunging of lotteries and of inequalities based on "option luck" — luck that operates through agents' uncoerced choices, as in casino gambling. Such gambling creates inequalities that militate against a spirit of cooperation — what he calls "communal reciprocity" — that he takes to be essential to the socialist ideal. For socialists, people should care about one another, and, where necessary, for one another; socialism is a society in which people find cooperation and serving one another, valuable in themselves.

Cohen characterizes this attitude of the "nonmarket cooperator" by contrasting it with that of the typical 'marketeer,' and the corresponding society based on cooperation with a society dominated by the market. A society dominated by markets is one in which social actors are typically motivated by "some mixture of greed and fear." A market-driven society is like a "casino from which it is difficult to escape," and Cohen notes that the difficulty adds an additional element of injustice to such societies. Such a society may (appear to) give its members choices, but the choice to withdraw from markets completely is not one of them. Cohen writes that "the yawning gulf between rich and poor in capitalist countries" is thus the result of "unavoidable gambling" rather than option luck. This is in stark contrast to a society founded on communal reciprocity, an "antimarket principle," "a spirit of commitment to my fellow human beings." Thus, while every society "is a network of mutual provision," only in a socialist society are mutuality and reciprocity pervasive motives fueling production and exchange.

Cohen doesn't avoid the question whether forbidding transactions and other activities that result in dramatic income inequalities would itself involve an injustice, but he doesn't actually answer it, either. "I do not know the answer to that question," he pleads, adding that it would be "a considerable pity" if the ideals of justice and community were incompatible in this way. The possibility that there is such a diversity of political values, divergent and requiring balancing against one another, has been the basis for much political theorizing, and part of the basis for arguments of an anti-socialist orientation. For that reason it's somewhat disappointing for Cohen to have so little to say about the issue.

WHAT HE DOES SAY, in his brief answer to the question "Is the Ideal Desirable?" (Chap. III), is that community is a good thing, and that, if it can be so arranged, a society animated by care and a principle of reciprocity would be welcomed by "all people of goodwill." He rejects the argument that such radical egalitarianism undercuts the significance of private choice, observing that the hypothetical camping trip allows considerable scope for personal choice. Cohen distinguishes between friendship itself and the reciprocity characteristic of it, suggesting that the latter can be extended far beyond the ambit of friends and family, constituting a kind of "general social friendship." This feeling, he thinks, is an indispensable glue of a socialist society.

The penultimate, and second-longest chapter of *Why Not Socialism?* is an attempt to defend the feasibility of socialism. This defense ultimately takes the form of the assertion that, while we do not currently know how to implement the socialist ideal in a real-world society, we do not know that it is not possible to do so. Cohen speaks of "our lack of a suitable organizational technology," and claims that the main challenge confronting the socialist ideal is a "design problem." The design problem cannot be solved by centralized planning, according to Cohen, because, apparently, the planners' need for information essential to planning a complex economy cannot be satisfied centrally (he doesn't say this, but seems to think it). But market mechanisms are repugnant because of what Cohen calls "the moral shabbiness of market motivation" (Cohen notes approvingly that Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees,* an early argument for "free" markets, was subtitled *Private Vices, Public Benefits*). And so socialists must confront the design problem squarely.

Cohen presents brief accounts of two recent theoretical approaches to this problem. Crucial to the first is the distinction between the informative function of a market and its motivating function. Market prices provide information about the demand for various goods as well as a motivation for a producer to supply that demand. Cohen presents Joseph Carens' scheme for delinking the information function from the motivating one: that scheme has the effect of utilizing market mechanisms to assure efficiency while radically progressive taxation eliminates the resulting inequalities of income. The motivation in this system is that one's contribution to the social pie is measured by pretax income, and consequently the market fosters virtuous, rather than vicious, motives. Another scheme Cohen presents is John Roemer's version of market socialism, in which a rigid separation of capital markets from markets for consumer goods prevents the development of dramatic inequalities in personal wealth while stimulating the growth of social wealth.

Cohen presents these examples not to endorse either of them, but, it seems, to show that the sorts of "social technology" needed to make socialism more than an ideal are not as far from our grasp as the right-wing defenders of the market would have us think. Still, the design problem remains. In discussing it, Cohen tries to steer a middle course between the "old-style socialists" who condemn markets absolutely, despite what he identifies as their instrumental value in matching supply to demand, and assuring efficiencies in production, and "overenthusiastic" market socialists, who seem blinded to markets' relying on and fostering "low-grade motives" and producing unjust inequalities. Because he thinks "[e]very market, even a socialist market, is a system of predation," Cohen is loath to bring them into the socialist mix. His reasoning seems to be that, since socialism requires "social friendship" and a widespread, even pervasive, sense of mutuality, and any market form in such a society would impinge against, and tend to weaken, the strength and universality of such sentiments, markets are incompatible with socialism. Indeed, the further you read in the little book, the clearer it is that what Cohen has in his sights is not capitalism per se but markets. To ask, "What's the difference?" is to beg the question concerning market socialism.

As I've tried to indicate above, Cohen certainly doesn't do that — he acknowledges the seriousness of market socialist proposals. But he clearly hesitates, wanting some more robust version of socialism shown to be feasible, as if resisting inwardly his own acknowledgment that, so far, that hasn't happened. And so this text has something of a wistful tone to it. Near the end of the too-short chapter on the desirability of the socialist ideal, Cohen characterizes his own radical egalitarian "intuitions" by citing the words of a song he learned as a child, in the red Yiddishkeit home in which he came up: "if we should consider one another, a neighbor, a friend, or a brother, it could be a wonderful, wonderful world…."

I find this a poignant, if perhaps unintended, indication of a tension between Cohen's fondest social hopes and the analytic vise-grip of the argumentation he erects. (It also suggests to me the quip, "a good man fallen among the analysts," to paraphrase Lenin's characterization of an earlier socialist, Shaw.) Clear-eyed as he is about the difficulties, Cohen can honestly present only a very modest analytical case for socialism, a case hedged round with qualifications. It is a case that will not, I'm afraid, convince many. I will point out only two reasons why not.

When Cohen claims that every market is "a system of predation," he seems to go well beyond his more careful claim that capitalist markets rely on greed and fear for their operation. Even the latter claim seems to me somewhat an exaggeration. Walking through my local farmers' market, I do not find evidence of widespread fear, nor of systematic predation. Perhaps it's true that it's a small-scale, informal market, in a different category from the large, complex, technologically sophisticated markets that dominate the globalized societies of contemporary capitalism. But that's just the point: there are markets and then there are markets. Cohen seems to me to overreach in condemning all markets in the stark terms he does.

I also think it's something of a fudge for Cohen to place so much weight in his argument on the concept of community, or, as he has it, "general social friendship." His conception of it seems thin and superficial to me, certainly in need of elaboration. Sometimes it seems the animating prime mover of the whole socialist ideal, sometimes as a product of the "social technology" socialist theorists must come up with. Indeed, Cohen imagines, when trying to show socialism's desirability, that "people of goodwill" would "welcome the news" that "some economists had invented clever ways of harnessing and organizing our generosity" as the driving force of society. Of course it might be that the structural conditions of socialist relations would be synergistically interdependent with a way of living finding its expression in reciprocity and caring. But the camping trip metaphor is inadequate in helping us specify that "form of life," and, I take it, Cohen's use of a conception of community akin to that of "fellow feeling" serves only as a place holder for some more definite account of a socialist "form of life."

Cohen has usefully identified some necessary distinctions and conceptual issues that surround his titular question. The first sentence of this short book claims that this question "is not intended rhetorically." As the difficulties multiply, and the design problem goes seemingly unsolved, the central rhetorical pivot of the book — that socialism is like a camping trip — has, by the end of it, lost almost all its capacity for movement. Yet Cohen's passionate faith in socialism shines through to the end, and in his last words, he bids us not to give up.

Challenging "American Exceptionalism"

JASON SCHULMAN

> Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?
> ROBIN ARCHER
> Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, 368 pp. $38.50

THE TRADITIONAL EXPLANATIONS as to why the United States is the only "advanced capitalist" country with no labor-based party have probably been heard by every reader of *New Politics* at least once. In the late nineteenth century the level of prosperity in the United States ensured that economic grievances were inadequate to support the founding of a labor party — so goes Werner Sombart's famous argument in *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* Anti-Black and anti-Chinese racism by white workers in the 1890s also supposedly reduced the viability of a movement for a workers' party. The early presence of universal manhood suffrage for whites is also said to have removed the kind of class-based political grievance that led to the formation of labor parties elsewhere, and the basic institutional features of the American political system (federalism, presidentialism, and single district, winner-take-all electoral districts) simply made it too difficult for most trade union leaders to see a labor party as an electorally viable project. And then, of course, there is the "liberalism thesis" made famous by Louis Hartz in *The Liberal Tradition in America:* that the prevalence of an egalitarianism of social status minimized or eliminated the status-based grievances and class-consciousness that would have made a labor party possible, that the dominant liberal ethos of the United States was so "socialist" that "Americanism" effectively became a "substitute socialism" which ensured that American workers would see no need for a party that was explicitly of their social class.

Political sociologist Robin Archer, of the London School of Economics and Political Science, seeks to explode these explanations in *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?* The problem with the conventional wisdom on this question, Archer claims, is that it relies on comparison with Europe — the "Old World." Arthur opts to compare the United States with its most similar New World counterpart, Australia. In the 1890s both countries suffered from the worst depression of the nineteenth century and the unions of both countries were utterly defeated in a series of major industrial confrontations. Yet Australian unions' response was to establish one of the earliest and most electorally successful labor parties in the world. The nation-wide Australian Labor Party took office for the first time in 1904 and again in 1908. These were short-lived minority governments, but in 1910 the ALP formed a majority government with the support of exactly 50 percent of the electorate. This level of support for a social-democratic party would not be equaled in any other countries until the New Zealand Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democrats took office in 1938 and 1940, respectively. In the United States, however, the American Federation of Labor retained its commitment to "pure-and-simple" unionism and the Democratic Party, despite the best efforts of labor party advocates. When the U.S. union move-

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ment as a whole rejected the option of building a party, it became firmly entrenched as settled official policy.

Archer does a very impressive job in refuting the traditional explanations for the lack of a U.S. labor party. While it is true that American workers enjoyed high living standards in comparison to their European counterparts in the 1890s, the living standards of Australian workers were higher still, and yet Australian workers built a labor party. Australian unionists also shared the "basic racial antipathies as their American counterparts," and yet "this was quite compatible with the establishment of new industry-wide unions and a labor party" (p. 55) — indeed, it encouraged unity among white workers against immigrant "colored labour," and for years the ALP was officially in favor of "the cultivation of an Australian sentiment based on the maintenance of racial purity . . . "[1] This populist championing of White Australia enabled Labor "to pose as the party of Australian nationalism" and win support among middle-class racists.[2] Nor was racism a particularly influential factor in dividing American workers in that era, as the labor movement had not yet fully embraced racial hostility towards southern and eastern European immigrants, and the great migration of black workers to northern factories, in any event, had not yet occurred. The "early" achievement of manhood suffrage for whites in the United States also fails as an explanation for the lack of an American labor party; as Archer documents, the same was true for Australia, but this did not impair efforts to create the Australian LP. In both cases the prior achievement of suffrage "achieved legitimized efforts to engage in political mobilization, and provided a ready-made electoral arena in which to undertake this task" (p. 91). The dominance of liberal values was also a feature of late-nineteenth century Australia, just as in the U.S., but in Australia labor leaders and the pro-labor press saw this "as an opportunity rather than as a constraint. They saw themselves as defenders of these values, which, they argued, were being threatened by contemporary social developments" (p. 175). In a rejoinder to arguments offered by everyone from Seymour Martin Lipset to Michael Harrington, Archer writes:

> One of the strangest versions of the liberalism thesis is the claim that labor and socialist movements have been weak in the United States because the ideological content of its dominant liberal values was so similar to that of socialism. . . .What this fails to see is that, because of the gap between the promise of these values and actual social practices, the prevalence of liberal values gave labor leaders in the United States some important advantages. Unlike their counterparts in countries where feudal values remained influential, they did not have to defend the desirability per se of social equality or freedom for all. Their goals could be presented...as the completion of the American project and the fulfillment of its promise. (p. 176)

Perhaps most powerful is Archer's destruction of the idea of the overwhelming significance of the U.S. electoral system on the failure of unions to launch a labor party. In the late nineteenth century both the United States and Australia had a first-past-the-post system based primarily on single-member districts, and the tendency of working class voters to be geographically concentrated allowed labor parties to commonly overcome such high thresholds in both Australia and Europe. Federalism also fails as an explanation; though federalism made it harder to achieve systematic nationwide change in the early twentieth century, it made it easier for the labor movement to establish a

> Ethno-religious cleavages were more politically relevant in the United States than in Australia.

political foothold, as the Australian case soon proved. Nor was the presidential (or gubernatorial) nature of the U.S. executive the barrier that some believe it to be, as sufficient geographically concentrated support in the legislature (federal or state level) by a labor party could have won the balance of power in Congress and used it to substantially influence legislation, and even veto executive appointments. Given that U.S. workers often lived in very concentrated areas, the electoral system would not have ensured the failure of a labor party to achieve political relevance.

With American exceptionalism discredited, Archer moves on to provide more credible reasons for the lack of a labor party in the United States and the presence of one in Australia. First, the level of armed repression in the United States was greater. While such repression also occurred in Australia, where it convinced many unionists that they needed to form a party and contest parliamentary elections, the difference is that in the United States those unions which were subject to the greatest repression were not merely defeated but destroyed, removing the "new union" base of semi-skilled and unskilled workers that would have made a labor party credible, and scaring craft union leaders into opposition to forming such a party.[3] Secondly — and here Archer's reasoning will resonate well with the experiences of many U.S. leftists — ethno-religious cleavages were more politically relevant in the United States than in Australia, creating "a hurdle that Australian unions did not have to jump" (p. 192). American Federation of Labor leaders feared that establishing a labor party would force their members to choose "between union solidarity and loyalties rooted in conflicting religious commitments. They concluded that, in such a contest, God would prevail and the unions would be destroyed" (p. 200). Lastly, AFL leaders also feared socialist sectarianism among certain union activists would run rampant.[4] Fights between Marxists and Lasalleans raged in the United States but found no equivalent in the Australian labor movement. Ironically, it was avowed Marxists who took a "pure and simple unionist" perspective that viewed the idea of establishing a labor party "as an overt or covert attempt to undermine the unions" (p. 240). Personal recriminations, deep distrust of opponents and dogmatic certainty characterized both sides, but Archer claims that it was the paradoxical strength of a sectarian version of Marxism which helped to undermine the possibility of a U.S. labor party.

Archer's discrediting of traditional "American exceptionalist" arguments and the alternative explanations he offers are mostly convincing. The use of Australia in place of the usual comparisons to Europe is commendable and certainly gives it a distinctive character in American eyes. However, as Neville Kirk has illustrated in *Comrades and Cousins: Globalization, Workers and Labour Movements in Britain, the USA and Australia from the 1880s to 1914*, the Australian union movement was far more united in its commitment to a labor party than were its U.S. (and UK) equivalents. Also, Archer fails to explicitly answer the questions that inevitably arise from his line of reasoning: Why was state repression so much more violent in the United States than in Australia? Why were religious issues so much more important — and so much more tied to political parties — than in Australia? Why were American socialists so very dogmatic and sectarian? Nor does Archer offer any information whatsoever about the failure of a nationwide labor party to emerge after the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s — which, admittedly, is a question which has been examined elsewhere.[5]

These minor failings aside, Archer's book is one that American socialists and historians ought to read. Though it provides no advice as to how an electoral class politics from below might be furthered in the U.S. today, *Why Is*

There No Labor Party in the United States? does an effective job in demolishing arguments which generations of American socialists have absorbed as "common sense."

NOTES

1. Quoted in Dean Jaensch, *The Politics of Australia* (South Melbourne: MacMillan Education, 1992), p. 217.

2. Mick Armstrong, *The Origins of the Australian Labor Party* (Sydney: Socialist Alternative, 1998), p. 59.

3. In Archer's clever phrase: "While troops in Australia faced outwards towards imaginary foreign threats, troops in the United States faced inwards towards imaginary domestic threats" (p. 141).

4. I admit to being easily persuaded by this explanation because it fits with my experience in the Metro New York branch of the ill-fated Labor Party founded in the 1990s. As one comrade once said to me, even the union leadership which was financially supporting the LP "will never really let it get off the ground because they're scared to death of letting Trots run wild."

5. See Eric Davin, "The Last Hurrah? The Defeat of the Labor Party Idea, 1934-36," in Staughton Lynd, ed., *We Are All Leaders: The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

Eternal Hostility to Bunk!

MICHAEL WRESZIN

American Radical: The Life and Times of I. F. Stone
D. D. GUTTENPLAN
N.Y.: Farrar, Straux, and Giroux, 2009, 546 pp., $35

I BEGIN WITH A PUBLIC DISCLOSURE. On receiving this volume I did what most authors of related subjects do. I checked the index, the bibliography, and the notes to see if my biography of the dissenting journalist Dwight Macdonald was noted. Not finding it, as a typical academic, I immediately assumed the author was both careless and unacquainted with the obviously important sources. I was mistaken. Stone has already received at least three other extensive studies, but this is the most comprehensive and detailed social history and biography of Stone. Guttenplan focuses on Stone's role as a major figure in the history of American radical dissent.

D.D Guttenplan, London correspondent for *The Nation*, is well versed in American social, cultural, and intellectual history. He has produced in this biography a history of the period from the beginning of the 20th century until Stone's death in 1989. He ends the volume with a brief discussion of the more recent witch hunters who are intent on slandering Stone's reputation by asserting that Stone was employed as an agent of the Soviet Union, an absurd accusation that only adds to the insane longevity of cold war fanaticism.

Isidore Finestein was born of Russian immigrants in 1907 and by the age of 14 he was publishing a high school newspaper, *Progress*. The first edition in 1922 contained an attack on the Hearst newspaper chain for "malignant propaganda against Japan." Its editor was already reading the classics, including *Moby Dick*, Heraclitus, Hart Crane, Milton, and Jack London. It was London he claimed as his introduction to radicalism and the book, *Martin Eden* that inspired him. From London he went on to Spencer, Darwin, and Kropotkin — all this as a teenager.

The young Isidore went on to college at the University of Pennsylvania, but he found it boring and dropped out in his junior year to take a job on the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. He already had considerable experience working summers on J. David Stern's *Camden Courier*. This provided the beginning of a long journalist career, always as a troublemaker and dissenting radical who remained completely independent. He walked off several jobs after disagreement with chief editors or the owner. He wrote for the *Public Press,* the *New York Star,* the *Philadelphia Record,* the *Daily Compass, PM,* and the *New York Post.* Stone also appeared frequently in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post.*

On the front page of the *Philadelphia Record* for October 15, 1931 an editorial headline urged the paper to "Tell the Truth About the Banks." It was a short step to a piece by Abelard Stone in V.F. Calverton's *Modern Monthly* declaring that "Roosevelt Moves Toward Fascism." He used the pseudonym to hide the growing leftist stance that irked Stern. Stone had embraced the Communist position by the early thirties. However, he never joined the party, as did his

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two brothers and his sister, because he insisted on his own independent decision-making, and refused to adhere to any party line.

However, during the first years of the Depression he often echoed the party line. His causes were many. He denounced police brutality; he opposed union corruption; he attacked the Supreme Court as favoring the rich and wellborn; and he wrote *The Court Disposes* (1937), which was praised by leading New Dealers. He covered the Harlan County Miners' strike and was outraged by the coal company's brutal tactics against the miners. He ridiculed the Dos Passos and Dreiser investigation of the strike for its ineffectiveness. But later in the decade as the Roosevelt Administration supported the Lafollette Committee investigations and sided with the unions, Stone lost much of his previous skepticism concerning F.D.R. and the New Deal.

All through this period Stone identified with the Popular Front, unlike many intellectuals who saw it as crude Communist propaganda. He felt the Popular Front gave voice to genuine democracy against the very real threat of fascism coming to the United States. With that growing threat he was, for a time, more in tune with the Roosevelt Administration.

Attacks on Roosevelt for collaborating with Communist supporters only brought Stone to a more vociferous defense of the New Dealers. Even when the non-aggression pact was agreed to by the Stalinist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Stone would not repudiate the Soviet anti-fascist struggles. They had contributed a good deal more than rhetoric against fascism. After reading George Orwell on the Spanish Civil War, he later regretted his silence on the Stalinist role in the conflict. He refused to see the thirties in Auden's view as a "low dishonest decade." On the contrary, he saw a period of valiant struggle against fascism on the march.

Israel Feinstein changed his name to I. F. Stone in a *Nation* article of October, 1937, defending Christianity as sympathetic to the poor. He told a friend he did so to protect his children against the scourge of anti Semitism. Stone moved to Washington in September 1940 to write for the *Nation*. No stranger to Washington, he had extraordinary access to many New Dealers. He was appalled by the anti-Communism of the Dies Committee investigations and when the American Civil Liberties Union, under great pressure, felt it could no longer tolerate the presence on their board of the flamboyant communist, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Izzy came to her defense and attacked the Union. He organized a coalition to protest the Union's action, which illustrated the clout he had in left wing circles. His contacts ran the gamut of the left from Trotskyists to the Communist Party, Socialists, and Anarchists. He felt that despite disagreements they were all fighting the same enemies.

After reading George Orwell on the Spanish Civil War, he later regretted his silence on the Stalinist role in the conflict.

STONE WAS AN EARLY SUPPORTER of American participation in the war against fascism. As such, he was mostly silent on the Japanese internment and during the early war years was not even a consistent defender of free speech. He was not opposed to curbing the fascist press in America and favored a ban of Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*. Unlike the liberals who began to see the left as a threat to American democracy, Stone fervently believed the threat came from the right. He thought Martin Dies, John Rankin, and J. Edgar Hoover were the clear and present danger that should be curbed. He maintained his sympathy for the American Communist Party and saw the Soviet Union as a necessary ally in the fight against Hitlerism. Even on the racial issue he sided with the party's opposition to civil rights protests as hurting the war effort. Guttenplan does not dismiss these inconsistencies and clearly understands the anti-fascist motives of Stone.

Stone was always anti-imperialist and seldom missed an opportunity to attack the British in India and in the Middle East. He was a supporter of a national one state solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and his writings concerning illegal passage of Jews to Jerusalem had a tremendous impact, which significantly raised the circulation of *PM*. The subsequent book, *Underground to Palestine,* was widely reviewed and well received. He became much closer to the early Jewish state than any other American journalist. However, he irritated many American Jews by his constant defense of Palestinians and his criticism of what he saw as Israeli racism. Martin Peretz, the owner of *The New Republic,* denounced him as an "apologist of the PLO."

By 1948 he was reluctantly in the Wallace camp although he often disagreed with Wallace's positions. He supported the Marshall Plan, which Wallace denounced. Stone had no respect for the Progressive Party as a docile tool of the Stalinist dictatorship, which he frequently denounced. By this time the Cold War liberals were increasingly powerful and Stone was becoming more and more a pariah, seen as soft on Communism and even subversive. His attack on the Smith Act as homegrown fascism and his defense of the Hollywood Ten, many of whom were Communists, only added to the growing charges against Stone. He insisted that despite the Communists' violations of civil liberties, their own civil liberties must be protected. He weighed in against Reuther and the labor movement's anti-Communist purges and attacked the Americans For Democratic action for their encouragement of the anti-red hysteria.

Stone had become totally estranged from his own country and while traveling in Paris he saw a terrible contrast. In his view the United States was rushing toward fascism. Adding to his growing isolation was his book on Korea, which was initially turned down by more than two dozen publishers.

For years the book has been ridiculed with the exception of some favorable comments by Murray Kempton and reviewers in the Trotskyist and Communist press. It was totally ignored by most major publications. Richard Rovere did a hatchet job at the request of James Wechsler, who had become in Stone's view an "obsessive anti-Communist." Actually the book was a straightforward history of the war, but it exposed the details that the government did not reveal to the public. For Stone, the war was conducted more for domestic reasons than as a response to any threat of worldwide Communism. The war was even appreciated for the way it helped to encourage a rapid shift to the right in American policy. The political advantages of waging the war to the Truman administration were clear. No longer could he be charged as soft on Communism. According to Guttenplan, it now appears that Stone may have underplayed the close relationship of the North Korean government and Stalin. Guttenplan feels that the "raw nerve" touched by Stone was his calm assumption that the Truman administration "was willing to allow an attack on South Korea to go ahead and then to deceive the American people about the real objectives of American government policy." After the Gulf of Tonkin and the Iran-Contra scandals, the skepticism of Stone is much better understood. Stone raised the question: Was the Korean War Stalin's blunder? Or MacArthur's plan? It seems pretty clear what Stone believed. In any event the book was highly praised by Bruce Cummings, the chief scholar of the war and of North and South Korea. He got to the heart of the matter when he described Stone's book as an inquiry into "empire and its method." Stephen Ambrose wrote that it "took guts to publish this book in the McCarthy era."

The writings that made I.F. Stone a veritable institution was his establishment in 1952 of the *I.F. Stone's Weekly* that was to run as a weekly and then as a bi-weekly for 19 years. From the start it fought against McCarthyism and for the protection of civil liberties:

Although a staunch defender of the Jewish homeland in Israel, he feared the developing Israeli militarism and chauvinism and what he repeatedly declared was Jewish racism.

> The question is whether the Communists are part of an international movement; of course they are. The question is not whether these organizations named by the Attorney General are "fronts"; let it be assumed that they are. The question is whether we are to abandon the standards and habits of a free society. The question is whether we are to relinquish the standards of Jefferson for those of Torquemada.

So much for the subsequent institutionalization and endurance of I. F. Stone.

Similar to his friend Noam Chomsky, not to mention Randolph Bourne, Stone consistently railed at the appalling weakness of the liberals to defend the rights of American citizens. He echoed Carey McWilliams, the editor of the *Nation*, in describing Arthur Schlesinger Jr. as a "McCarthyite with a Harvard Accent." The liberals' tendency to "genuflect before the heresy hunters" was nauseating. The liberal support of the Communist Control Act of 1954 supported by none less than Hubert Humphrey, Paul Douglas, and J.F. Kennedy, was simply "a noose for the labor movement." It marked the "complete moral collapse of the Democratic Party." Soon a headline appeared in the *Weekly*: "Why I Cast My Vote for Ike." He charged that the Democratic leaders had become so obsessed to clear themselves of any suspicion of Communism that they and "the labor union leaders supporting them are so ready to relapse into an arms race. . . . that they have become the war party. " Again, so much for the institutionalization and endurance of I. F. Stone and his *Weekly!*

For Stone, American politics had become pathological, as illustrated by the degradation of the Oppenheimer affair. The complete record of the Cold War liberals was one of hypocrisy and cowardice. Richard Pells observed in his study of *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* that the reason there were so many victims of McCarthyism was because they had so few defenders. In the long run it would certainly appear that the fear of the left, as epitomized by Arthur Schlesinger and other supporters of Cold War politics, was certainly misplaced and that I. F. Stone's fear of the rise of the right was far more on the mark.

ALTHOUGH A STAUNCH DEFENDER of the Jewish homeland in Israel, he feared the developing Israeli militarism and chauvinism and what he repeatedly declared was Jewish racism. These views, as well as his candor on the vicious totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, cost him much support. Four hundred subscribers cancelled subscriptions after an attack on the Soviet Union police state. At the same time he refused to see the evils of Stalinism as a way of denouncing the Communist left at home. When Paul Robeson was attacked not only by the state, which took away his passport, but also by many liberals, Stone immediately came to his defense as "a great artist and a deeply sympathetic human being." There was no justification in denying his right to travel regardless of his pro-Soviet sympathies. He denounced the committee of lesser men baiting the singer. He never equated Soviet crimes with those of the

Nazis. But he was certainly no fellow traveler and he continued to attack the Stalinist state.

One of his major targets was Sidney Hook, the New York University philosophy professor and public intellectual, for his support of denying jobs to alleged Communists in the schools and the universities. Stone got very little credit during these years for his staunch defense of civil liberties. In addition to all of these sins, he was a vigorous supporter of the Castro Revolution in Cuba and argued that it was United States policies that forced Castro to become dependent on the Soviet Union for economic survival. However, he did speak out against Castro's imprisonment of dissenters. But Stone always suspected that the United States was at the root of the problems in Cuba.

Stone was opposed to the Vietnam War from the very beginning and he participated in the early marches and teach-ins against American intervention. It was, to him, a graphic example of unbridled imperialism. Stone seldom misses the obvious quotation, such as Johnson's declaration that "Diem was the Churchill of Asia." In issue after issue of the *Weekly,* he exposed the lies and duplicity of the government, the State Department, and the Pentagon, as well as the Atomic Energy Commission. By the mid-sixties he had become close to the international peace movement and a friend of Bertrand Russell. At home the leaders of SDS and others of the New Left regularly read the *Weekly*. He became friendly with many and often spoke at their meetings.

For countless others, not simply his comrades, the *Weekly* became required reading. Even Walter Lippmann, whom he had pegged as a "stuffed shirt" insider was a reader and respected Stone. Isaiah Berlin, far more conservative, became a friend and supporter as well. He particularly admired Stone's quick mind and vast reading. To leftist students who scorned "middle class liberals" and called for a working class third party, he pointed out that the bitterest resistance to the black revolution would come from the white working class. He had always felt that "no white man from the President on down, can really understand the Negroes' feelings" in America. The murder of Medgar Evers was simply a part of a system of humiliation and violence that still existed in the country. He longed for somebody who might make a speech on the race issue in America without all the platitudes about the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Once again it is clear why I. F. Stone became an institution and continues to endure. Stone had a heart attack in 1967 and after 19 years finally gave up on the *Weekly* in December of 1971. He published a collection of his columns in his 7th book, *In Times of Torment.* Henry Steele Commager saw Stone as a modern Tom Paine who celebrated "common sense and the rights of man" and hammered away at "injustice, exploitation, deception, and chicanery." Ronald Steele, Lippmann's biographer, saw Stone as endowed with an "eternal hostility to bunk." The last years of his life were primarily devoted to Greek scholarship and led to his successful publication of *The Trial of Socrates* in 1988. He died on June 18, 1989.

It is I. F. Stone as radical voice of dissent that is the real subject of this fine biography. Sometimes as a social history Stone becomes lost in the details of events that only peripherally related to his own life. But for the most part he emerges as a man for all seasons. Guttenplan refers to Stone's "transit from pariah to a national institution" and frequently sees him as an outsider, but when he traces Stone's life and lists his vast array of important friends and supporters in high places, he appears not as a marginal figure but at the very center of this nation's 20th century history.

Beats, Rhymes, and Power

ALEXANDER BILLET

Somebody Scream! Rap Music's Rise to Prominence in the Aftershock of Black Power
MARCUS REEVES
N.Y.: Faber and Faber, 2008, 320 pp. $25

WITH A YEAR OF THE OBAMA presidency under our belts, now seems an opportune moment to pick up Somebody Scream! Nobody who paid attention to music could ignore the way in which hip-hop culture and rap music in particular rallied around Obama's campaign for the White House. The sense of enthusiasm among artists for electing the young senator could be felt quite apparently in songs like NaS' "Black President," or Young Jeezy's "My President is Black."

Now, like so many inspired by Obama the candidate's message of "change" who are coming up against the realities and limitations of Obama the president, rap is asking itself that tried-and-true, history-making question: "what next?"

As the old chestnut tells us, you can't know where you're going without knowing where you've been, and *Somebody Scream!* does the latter surprisingly well. *Scream* is yet another addition to the recent crop of books that reflect a growing thirst for knowledge of hip-hop's social and political roots (Jeff Chang's *Can't Stop Won't Stop,* Michael Eric Dyson's *Know What I Mean*? and so on).

Weaving together the evolution of rap and the history of "post-black power America" isn't a new concept. As author Marcus Reeves points out, "[p]eople have been making the link between the two for years." No writer has utilized Reeves' own strategy, however: examining the careers of some of rap's biggest icons.

The value of this is more than meets the eye. As a music journalist, I've encountered countless young activists over the years who, when describing their musical tastes, feel the need to qualify their interest in rap — "as long as it's 'conscious'" — a distinction they don't make with other genres like rock, punk or electronica. *Somebody Scream!* cuts against this unintended elitism, forcing those who believe that music has a role to play in social movements to think twice before being so dismissive toward rap's most marketable elements — and instead view them in a context.

Reeves' format might cause the reader to expect a series of short hagiographies, but that thankfully isn't the case. A former deputy music editor for *The Source* magazine, the author is skilled at applying a critical eye to each performer — from Run-D.M.C. to Tupac Shakur to Eminem. In doing so he reveals that rap's connections to black power, far from being faded with time or relegated to the fringe, run deep within even the most mainstream of artists.

The first two chapters of *Scream!* make this case right off the bat in an undeniable way. Black power was part of rap's very DNA. Architects of the music like DJ Kool Herc would incorporate James Brown's "Say It Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud" into their sets. Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation took much of its own

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ideology from the Black Panthers, and viewed itself as a "revolutionary youth culture." If the movement itself was destroyed and in decline by the late '70s, then rap's young upstarts sought to appropriate its legacy for themselves — sonically.

The chronological examination of rap's key figures provides a surprisingly good schematic for how this dormant spirit manifested itself as the 1970s gave way to the Reagan 1980s. The militant Afrocentrism of Public Enemy played as a soundtrack for the anti-Apartheid movement gripping US campuses. Los Angeles' urban blight and the racist drug war provided fodder for N.W.A's *Straight Outta Compton*, which more or less laid the basis for the ghetto-gangsta-as-folk-hero aesthetic.

Black power was part of rap's very DNA.

But *Scream* doesn't dodge any of the hard challenges that face rap's rise. His chapter on Salt-N-Pepa sees Reeves employing a deft even-handedness on the issues of sexism and censorship. Tackling the 1990 federal obscenity ruling against 2 Live Crew's *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*, the author calls it for what it is while not apologizing for the album's misogyny:

> Yes, many blacks (women and men) agreed that 2 Live's album was vulgar, sexually derogatory toward women, and not the best (or even the most authentic) that rap had to offer. But the persecution and banning of their music (black music), and deeming its purchase a criminal act, reeked of the racist sentiment that had been rising since the the early 1980s.

Reeves never waivers in his defense of rap. He rightfully recognizes the music's potential — its rebellious spirit, its connection to the experience of the oppressed and downtrodden, its penchant for speaking truth to power. But rather than fall into the clap-trap of hero worship that all too many music journalists fall prey to (especially ones of his profile), he places each influential artist and movement in the context of the social, political, and economic forces that affected them.

Doing so certainly forces Reeves to face some unflattering truths — it also allows him to argue for its progressive potential. Perhaps the best example of this often tricky navigation is his analysis of "bling-bling." Instead of renouncing the aesthetic — cars, mansions, money — and insisting that rap had "lost its way," Reeves objectively sees it as more complex, an expression of the deep-seated desire to get out of the ghetto influenced by rap's attainment of music industry powerhouse status.

"The subtext of this new, garish materialism was celebration," says Reeves in his chapter on Jay-Z, "paying homage to hip-hop as a generation's golden ticket to social, cultural, and economic legitimacy (even if only as an emblem for those who couldn't benefit)." In the context of the late '90s economic boom, as "the first black president" Bill Clinton parroted the line of "there is no alternative" even while slashing welfare and upping the prison population tenfold. The desire to escape could only come out in such a way.

This same chapter, however, displays one of the book's key weaknesses: Reeves' reticence in pinning down an exact definition of "black power." Throughout the book, he speaks of the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, and mainstream black Democrats in equally favorable ways — even as he is forced to admit that elected African Americans have done little to improve the overall lot of working-class blacks. This catch-all treatment of a term that has taken on myriad interpretations leaves the reader wondering how Reeves himself envisions black liberation coming about. Is it merely through liberal reforms? Militant separatism? Cultural nationalism and "knowing your people's history?" A healthy black capitalism? Revolution? Or perhaps all of the above?

Questions like these aren't just for the academic. Reeves' vagueness is almost certainly a choice, and as a result *Somebody Scream!* can appeal to hip-hop fans of almost any left-of-center political background. Still, his own hesitancy means that the author himself falls victim to the same contradictions as his subjects.

The weakness is especially shown in his chapter on Tupac Shakur, who simultaneously embodied hip-hop's hope and pain the way few have before or since. As Reeves explains, Shakur's mother Afeni was herself a former member of the Panthers. This would have considerable influence on Tupac's work. His mantra of "Thuglife" (which stood for "the hate you give little infants fucks everybody") was equal parts gangsta lifestyle and an urgent plea for fundamental change — a stance Reeves dubs "gangsta-revolutionary," and can be seen in such radical acts as Dead Prez and Immortal Technique. In his short yet prolific career, Shakur would release amazing protests against poverty, injustice, and inequality ("Brenda's Got a Baby," "Changes"), but would also be pulled by hip-hop's ascendancy in the music biz.

Reeves notes the shift in Shakur's persona with his 1996 album *All Eyez On Me*: "Gone were the messages of resistance and painful urban blues, replaced by a postprison hedonism, materialism (thanks to the bundle of money provided by his label), and an egotistical drive to commercially crush his rap competition."

Yet even as we understand Shakur's contradictions in a social context — and do not ultimately see them as taking away from his importance as an artist in any way — Reeves' own refusal to square these contradictions with the political content of his own mother's past leaves the reader thinking that it couldn't be any other way.

As a result, Reeves' application of the critical eye to rap can sometimes morph into a kind of pessimism — a belief that the failures of the 1960s has left young African Americans with little choice other than playing within the system, however unsavory that might be.

That being said, the chapter on Shakur is one of the most engaging in *Somebody Scream!* Whatever ideas author or reader may hold on how black power is best achieved, Reeves writes in such a way that the ideology's rebellious push toward justice can't be denied. Seeing how Shakur — who had perhaps the most organic connection to the apex of black power in the 1960s — made it relevant for the hip-hop generation teases forth an idea of the music and culture's inherent instinct for something better.

One of *Scream*'s virtues is that it makes clear the many ways that this instinct manifests itself, be it through the muscular menace of Yonkers rapper DMX, or even the uber-controversy of Eminem. Once again, Reeves refuses to apologize for the artist's contradictions (violence, sexism, homophobia) while recognizing the rapper's significance. Eminem's massive success in the late 1990s and early 2000s brought rap's new status into relief. That a white man could become a respected icon in a typically black art-form — indeed, most people who bought rap albums were white by the dawn of the 21st century — revealed the influence that the music had attained within all races.

EXAMINING EMINEM'S OWN POOR, trailer-park upbringing and hard-won climb to the top, Reeves nails down what lay beneath this shift: class. "Instead of being among the legions of middle-class suburban white kids fascinated with looking at black urban angst through a hip-hop lens, Eminem was a product of America's other invisible nation, the white underclass, unable to shake the contradictions of race and class (America screws white folks, too) and coming of age in close proximity to black folks."

And so, despite provoking unprecedented outrage among many sectors for his well-publicized homophobic and misogynist lyrics, Eminem was nonetheless driven to release songs like "Mosh," an unapologetic call for unity against George W. Bush in the run-up to the 2004 elections.

Reeves' chapter on Eminem scratches beneath the surface of rap's present position. Given its release in early 2008, mere months before the Obama phenomenon began to gain real steam, the book might be construed as lacking. While the flowering of outspokenness from within hip-hop's ranks that the 2008 elections provoked is, of course, nowhere to be seen, *Scream!* is essential in showing how this outpouring wasn't an isolated incident.

Somebody Scream! is not intended to be a totality of rap's character. The author glosses over artists like Lauryn Hill, Outkast, and A Tribe Called Quest: artists who may not have been the heavy-hitters in defining hip-hop's evolving zeitgeist, but were nonetheless influential — and were arguably more conscious in maintaining the music's link to black power.

Still, Reeves' examination of the icons breaks down a false divide between the "empty-headed mainstream" and the "progressive underground" so often constructed in conversations on rap. Even in its darkest, most over-marketed moments, rap has always spoken in some way to the condition of the downtrodden and forgotten. No matter how much crap of the ages is heaped upon the music, these roots can't be totally erased. With hip-hop culture more influential than ever before among young folks of all colors, that's reason to be hopeful.

Tom Kaczynski

KENT WORCESTER

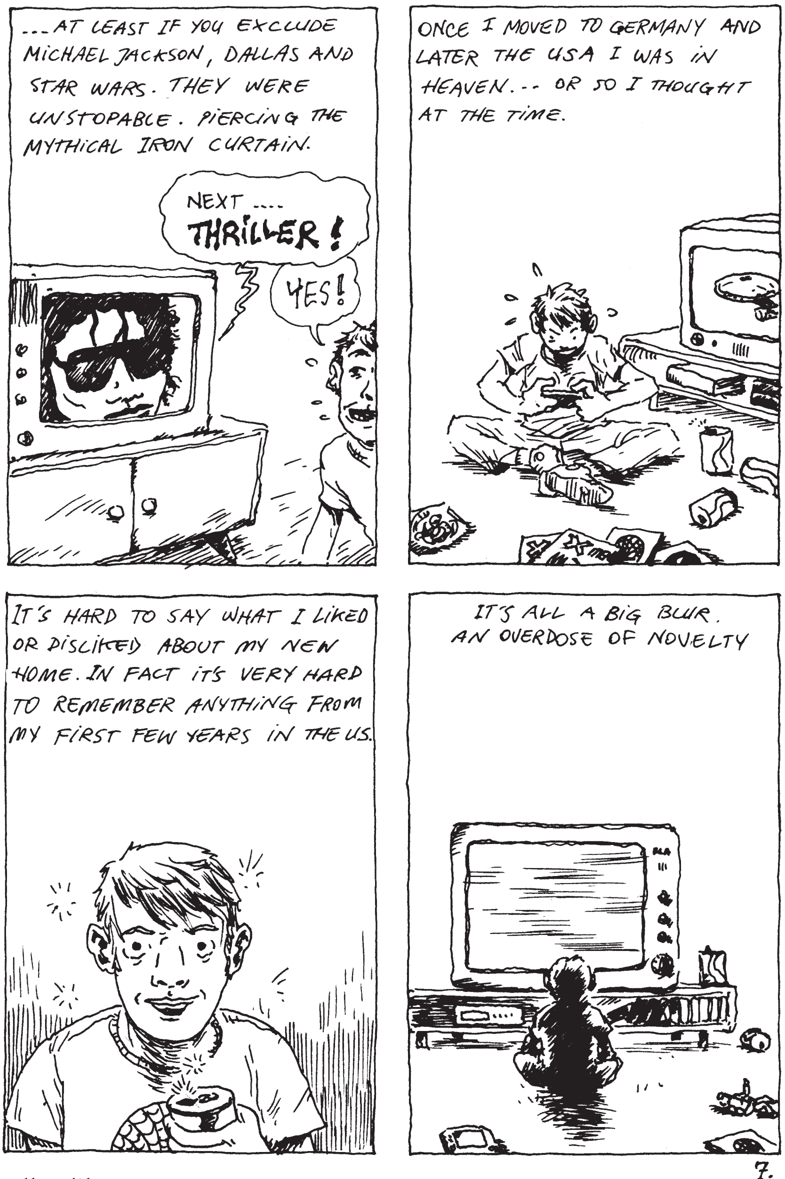
TOM KACZYNSKI was born in Gdansk, on the Baltic coast of Poland, in the early 1970s. His father worked as an engineer, while his mother was a computer programmer. He moved with his family to West Germany in 1986, shortly after the repression of the Solidarnosc movement. Less than two years later, they were living in the United States. Now based in Minneapolis, he crafts observant, often haunting mini-comics and graphic stories that grapple in different ways with both the official Communism he knew as a child and what he deems "the oversaturated wasteland of today." His work is unusual in that it not only invokes political themes, but starts from the premise that the present won't last and that we should try and figure out what we want from the future.

Growing up under Communist rule, Kaczynski idolized American culture. As he writes in *Trans Siberia*, a self-published mini comic that came out in 2007, "All I wanted were products that to my mind were vaguely American. U.S.A. and Reagan were where my allegiance lay. I hated all the lame Eastern European cartoons and movies. I deliberately got C's in Russian in school." As he got older, his relationship to his Communist past and what he calls "infinite growth capitalism" became more complicated. *Trans Siberia*, along with its companion comics *Trans Alaska* and *Trans Atlantis,* depicts its author as a bewildered exile from a vanished and imperfect past, struggling to make sense of the world around him. "Where is

KENT WORCESTER *is the co-editor (with Jeet Heer) of* A Comic Studies Reader *(2009).*

knowledge and wisdom in the age of information overload?" he asks. "This incessant stream of information, good and bad, it does something to you, a deadening, a mental coma," he complains. Kaczynski's anxiety-ridden pen-and-ink stand-in effectively spends all three comics searching for that "kernel of temporal resistance" that lies beyond the horizon of the familiar.

The stories reprinted in *Cartoon Dialectics*, Vol. 1 (2007) are similarly concerned with the gap between hype and reality that characterizes the American way of life. They specifically address such topics as junk food, mind control, cats, and the supposed death of print. His hero Ransom Strange, whose exploits open the volume, uses clove cigarettes, obsolete technology, and "immaterialist psychonautics" to give a "dialectical emetic" to a Cthulhu-like corporate monster. "This is 2012," declaims this brave humanist from the future. "There's much to be done. The future won't create itself." As with his mini-comics, these cleanly organized pages use comic book devices and tropes to advance critical theory-style ambitions. This unexpected juxtaposition between the Kaczynski's playful visuals and his fierce intellectual preoccupations is part of what makes his work so appealing.



In political terms, Tom Kacynski is hard to pin down. In a 2008 interview with his editor, Gary Groth, Kaczynski said that

> what I'm looking for is alternatives to the debates about Utopias that we have. We should maybe pause and look at classic Utopias to counteract these capitalist luxury consumer fantasies that proliferate everywhere. To a certain extent I'm bothered that most of my critiques are so negative. I want to be able to put forth a positive Utopia. Something that inspires one to move forward.

After suggesting that markets "in general have worked for centuries and do certain things very, very well," he insisted that "markets are taking over way too much of our lives…I'm definitely not pro-Republican or pro-Democrat. I find both parties to be kind of reprehensible. The debate in this country is very skewed by these two parties that basically co-opt the entire debate into red or blue. It's easier to imagine the end of the world rather than a small change in the political system."

Tom Kaczynski's graphic stories have appeared in *The Drama*, *Punk Planet*, and *Backwards City Review*. For the past few years he

has been a regular contributor to *MOME*, a quarterly anthology of graphic storytelling published by Fantagraphics. He blogs at transatlantic.net, and his mini-comics are available from www.uncivilizedbooks.com.

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