



Grassroots Activism Revived

TANF Wars

Health Care on the Agenda

Childcare: An Unmet Need

plus

Perspectives on the Question of Palestine

An Interview with the NDP's Bill Blaikie

Book Review: The Future of Socialism • DSA Locals: Activism Across the Nation

DSA Statement on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

DSA reaffirms its long-standing support for the rights of self-determination of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, and the right of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to live in peace, each within their own state, with secure and recognized borders. Thus, DSA—without equivocation—condemns the suicide bombings and calls on the Palestinian Authority to do all within its power to stop them. DSA, with equal severity, condemns the Sharon government's invasion of the Palestinian Authority, an invasion which is destroying the viability of a civilian Palestinian Authority and thereby the possibility of a Palestinian state. Furthermore, DSA condemns the Bush Administration's granting of a blank check to the Sharon government to carry out this invasion and to prevent a UN investigation of the Israeli invasion of Jenin.

DSA calls upon the United States government to cease framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the terrorist suicide bombings solely in terms of the US's global "War on Terrorism." The causes of the conflict are specific to the region and not part of a "global terrorist conspiracy" against the "West."

DSA stands in solidarity with the peace forces in both the Israeli and Palestinian communities who call for the removal of Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We also support their consensus on the necessity of siting the capital of the Palestinian state in the Palestinian, eastern part of Jerusalem.


DSA also supports the Israeli and Palestinian peace forces who believe that, while the just and legal claims of Palestinian refugees must be addressed, it is unlikely that a final settlement acceptable to both sides will involve the full return of all Palestinian refugees to pre-1967 Israel. We also support large-scale economic compensation for the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their descendants who may not choose to or be able to reside within pre-1967 Israeli borders.

Finally, pro-peace forces in both Palestine and Israel cannot succeed without the aid of the international community. Therefore, DSA calls upon the United States immediately to abide by its stated policy of ending all military aid to Israel used directly for purposes of the occupation. Furthermore, the United States should cut off all military aid if Israel refuses to end all settlement activity and withdraw from the occupied territories as an integral part of the peace process. DSA also supports the UN, the European Union and the United States pressuring the Palestinian Authority to do all in its power to stop terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians.

Passed by the DSA National Political Committee, June 2, 2002.

COVER PHOTOS: (*Top*) Two scenes from the National TANF Day of Action on March 5 in Washington, DC. The day's activities included a press conference, a rally, a march to the Department of Health and Human Services and direct actions at the Democratic Leadership Council and the Heritage Foundation. PHOTOS FROM THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR JOBS AND INCOME SUPPORT.

(*Bottom*) Members of YDS (a participant in the coalition that called the April 20 demonstraton in Washington) join thousands of others at the Washington Monument in calling for a peaceful alternative to the war on terrorism; a halt to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the creation of a Palestinian state; and a more democratic world economy. PHOTO BY HEATHER MARIE



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Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity, and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements - of unionists, environmentalists, feminists, and people of color - which together can elevate global justice over brutalizing global competition.

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From the Editors

➤ It has taken a while but progressive activism and dissent, muted in the wake of September 11th, are beginning to make a strong comeback. Groups are mobilizing on issues from Fast Track to estate tax repeal to an international treaty on women's rights. 75,000 hit the streets of Washington, DC, to demand a US foreign policy based upon social and economic justice, not military and corporate oppression; an end to racial profiling and military recruitment targeting youth of color and working class youth; government funding for programs to benefit the economic victims of the 9-11 attacks and the recession; an end to the degrading and secret imprisonment of immigrants; increased funding for non-military-based financial aid for education; and full disclosure of military contracts with universities.

Meanwhile, public attention in general is returning to those bread and butter issues that are the main concerns of working families on a day-to-day level: food, housing, education, health care. And more and more, the answers that those "family values" Republicans endorse—marriage incentives and low-wage jobs—are found wanting. In this issue, among other items, we bring you several articles on matters of real concern to American families: welfare reauthorization, campaigns for universal health care, and concrete plans for a national child care system—all issues where grassroots mobilizations are building momentum.

➤ The issues surrounding the Israel/Palestine conflict stir up many emotions among leftists, as among the general public. No statement could sum up the points of view of DSAers on this subject. Eliot Ratzman's article on page 9 is one socialist perspective on the issues involved but, as he notes, there are many other points of view and we encourage others to consider responding. In fact, we encourage letters to the editor on all items published in DL so that we can better reflect the wide range of views among DSA members. Letters should be kept to 150 words.

➤ Finally, we'd like to let our readers know about one campaign that DSA has wholeheartedly endorsed and in which we encourage our members to get involved. That campaign is the nationwide push for the passage of House Resolution 99—the so-called **Health Care Access Resolution**. The resolution was put forward by the Congressional Universal Health Care Task Force, founded and led by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), and calls on Congress to introduce and pass universal health care legislation by 2004.

The Health Care Access Campaign, spearheaded by the Universal Health Care Access Network (UHCAN), is using this resolution to mobilize groups across the country to educate people about the need for universal health care and to press their Congresspeople to co-sponsor the resolution. The resolution has also spawned similar initiatives in several state legislatures. All this activity is helping to create a national dialogue about the possibilities for change.

As of June 13, 321 organizations—58 of them national—had endorsed UHCAN's campaign. The organizations represent an impressive range of interests from faith-based groups to unions to health care workers to social action groups. By the same date, the number of Congressional sponsors had grown to 79, with others being added every day under pressure from constituents. UHCAN itself has lobbied Congress through staff briefings (60 attended one in April) and national call-in days.

With support swelling, UHCAN has scheduled a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on June 25, featuring statements from national endorsing groups to highlight the breadth of the public support for radical change in the health care delivery system in this country. The conference will also take advantage of the publication in May of a report by the National Academies' Institute of Medicine which concluded that hundreds of thousands of Americans die prematurely for lack of insurance coverage.

More information about the campaign and how to get involved is available on the UHCAN website, www.uhcan.org, or by contacting UHCAN at 2800 Euclid Avenue, Suite 520, Cleveland, OH 44115-2418, 216-241-8422 or 800-634-4442.

The full text of the Health Care Access Resolution is reproduced on page 5.

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CORRECTION: In Bill Mosley's article on the DC Domestic Partnership Law on page 2 of the last issue, the first line of the third paragraph should have read: "The District, *unlike* even Puerto Rico and other territories, is subject to budgetary and legislative oversight by Congress...."

TANF Wars: The Grassroots Fight Back

By Deepak Bhargava

It's been a wild ride in the welfare wars of 2002. The 1996 welfare reform law which ended the 60-year entitlement to cash assistance to poor mothers with children expires this year and must be renewed by Congress.

Despite the self-congratulation of Washington elites and some of the mainstream press, the record since 1996 gives nothing to cheer about. The new welfare program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), did put an end to a program that everyone—including welfare parents—knew would never bring about an end to poverty. But the authors of welfare reform, including Democratic President Bill Clinton, managed to make welfare much worse.

TANF requires most parents to go to work regardless of their family circumstances and imposes a lifetime limit on benefits of 60 months (many states have adopted shorter limits). The “work-first” model of the new welfare system typically denies access to education and training that might allow low-income parents to get living-wage jobs. And the biggest cuts in the 1996 law came at the expense of the most vulnerable people: most recent legal immigrants are now not eligible for cash welfare, food stamps, health coverage, or SSI.

What's the result? Since 1996, welfare caseloads nationwide have decreased by over 50%. Welfare parents who left welfare for jobs typically earn \$7 per hour, have no health insurance, sick leave or parental leave and few opportunities for education or training. As many as one-third of those who left did not leave for work at all, and many report increased hardship after exiting the rolls, including high rates of hunger and homelessness.

Volumes of research on the effects of welfare reform 1996-style have demonstrated that, while it has been successful in shrinking caseloads, poverty remains high—and has actually increased among single working mothers, the population most affected by changes in



There is a silver lining in the cloud of welfare reform

welfare policy. One in four poor children in America lives in an immigrant-headed household and, in large part because of their lack of access to the safety net, immigrant families are faring particularly badly across a range of indicators.

Welfare reform has unleashed a wave of “lawlessness” at welfare offices. It is difficult or impossible for poor families to get even short-term emergency help when they experience a crisis like domestic violence or the loss of a job. In one notorious case, the State of Oregon told applicants to go “dumpster diving.” And, as has been the case throughout American history, “states rights” has resulted in discrimination against people of color in access to services and benefits.

Still, there is a silver lining in the cloud of welfare reform. Thanks in large part to the heroic efforts of grassroots groups of low-

income families and their allies, some states did adopt progressive policies, including increased access to education and training, higher benefit levels, expanded childcare, transportation and health care, and humane immigrant and time limit policies.

One would think that this record would result in efforts to build on the model approaches that now exist and to outlaw the worst practices. But, earlier this spring, in a remarkable (and somewhat successful) effort to change the subject, President Bush proposed a welfare reform plan that does just the opposite. His plan massively increases work requirements (to the extent that even the nation's Governors are howling in protest), and fails to provide a dime for childcare or other work supports. The Bush plan also manages to reduce the meager education and training opportunities now available to poor parents and creates a massive new “super-waiver” program that would allow states to waive nearly any provision of federal law governing low-income programs.

Yet, the worst thing about the Administration's plan is what it does not do: there is nothing in the plan to reduce poverty; nothing to help millions of struggling low-wage workers; nothing to ensure fair play for immigrants; and nothing to address welfare time limits that are expiring in many states this year. The Republican House of Representatives has rubber-stamped the President's proposal on a party-line vote, sending it to the Senate where the real debate has begun.

Unfortunately, a cadre of “moderate Democrats” affiliated with the Democratic Leadership Council, including Senators Hillary

Clinton and Joe Lieberman, has joined the President. They have embraced the higher work requirements and seem unwilling to seriously address the problem of poverty. Some of these Democrats have gone so far right on welfare that a number of Republican Senators, including Olympia Snowe and Orrin Hatch, have actually found themselves significantly to the left of the DLC Democrats.

Still, all the news is not bad. Senators Kennedy, Wellstone, Corzine and 19 others have laid out a progressive vision for welfare reform that would increase access to education and training, stop the time limits for low-wage workers, ensure fair treatment for immigrants, and invest in supports such as child care. And many of their ideas may well prevail.

The great irony of the 1996 welfare law is that, because it was such a total victory for conservatives, progressives now have all the ideas and the energy to fight back. Grassroots groups led by low-income people are actually winning a whole series of battles around the country—on living wages, health care, education and training, and more. These provide a solid foundation for reconstructing humane national anti-poverty policies. Some of these ideas—such as paid leave for low-income working mothers, public job creation, expanded education and training opportunities, and fair treatment for immigrants—are very likely to be incorporated into the final welfare bill this year.

We won't achieve a new paradigm on poverty in 2002—largely because Washington policy elites are stuck in the tired welfare-bashing debates of the 1990s; but these incremental gains will provide a platform of ideas, a constituency, and a set of messages for the long-term fight for economic justice.

Deepak Bhargava is the Director of the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support.

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HEALTH CARE ACCESS RESOLUTION

House Concurrent Resolution 99 (H. Con Res. 99)

Directing Congress to enact legislation by October 2004 that provides access to comprehensive health care for all Americans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 4, 2001



Rep. Conyers

Mr. CONYERS (for himself, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. TIERNEY, Ms. LEE, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. BONIOR, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. HILLIARD, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. NADLER, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. FRANK, Mr. WAXMAN, Ms. MCKINNEY, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Mr. OLVER, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. STARK, Ms. CARSON of Indiana, and Mr. CAPUANO) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

Whereas the United States has the most expensive health care system in the world in terms of absolute costs, per capita costs, and percentage of gross domestic product (GDP);

Whereas despite being first in spending, the World Health Organization has ranked the United States 37th among all nations in terms of meeting the needs of its people;

Whereas 43 million Americans, including 10 million children, are uninsured;

Whereas tens of millions more Americans are inadequately insured, including medicare beneficiaries who lack access to prescription drug coverage and long term care coverage;

Whereas racial, income, and ethnic disparities in access to care threaten communities across the country, particularly communities of color;

Whereas health care costs continue to increase, jeopardizing the health security of working families and small businesses;

Whereas dollars that could be spent on health care are being used for administrative costs instead of patient needs;

Whereas the current health care system too often puts the bottom line ahead of patient care and threatens safety net providers who treat the uninsured and poorly insured; and

Whereas any health care reform must ensure that health care providers and practitioners are able to provide patients with the quality care they need: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), that the Congress shall enact legislation by October 2004 to guarantee that every person in the United States, regardless of income, age, or employment or health status, has access to health care that—

1. is affordable to individuals and families, businesses and taxpayers and that removes financial barriers to needed care;
2. is as cost efficient as possible, spending the maximum amount of dollars on direct patient care;
3. provides comprehensive benefits, including benefits for mental health and long term care services;
4. promotes prevention and early intervention;
5. includes parity for mental health and other services;
6. eliminates disparities in access to quality health care;
7. addresses the needs of people with special health care needs and underserved populations in rural and urban areas;
8. promotes quality and better health outcomes;
9. addresses the need to have adequate numbers of qualified health care caregivers, practitioners, and providers to guarantee timely access to quality care;
10. provides adequate and timely payments in order to guarantee access to providers;
11. fosters a strong network of health care facilities, including safety net providers;
12. ensures continuity of coverage and continuity of care;
13. maximizes consumer choice of health care providers and practitioners;
14. and is easy for patients, providers and practitioners to use and reduces paperwork.

Paving the Way to Single-Payer, Universal Health Care

By Janet S. Houghton

There is little doubt that major health care reform will not be accomplished in this country any time soon, particularly under the current administration. Most likely, it will happen state by state, or region by region, and it will happen because the citizens of these areas demand it. This will be a direct result of the many grassroots movements that have grown up throughout the United States. Here in Maine, real progress has been made towards universal health care largely through the efforts of several grassroots organizations, including the Maine People's Alliance.

The Maine People's Alliance is an organization of some 16,000 members statewide, who are committed to social, economic, and environmental justice for all Maine citizens. It develops leadership by helping citizens to educate and organize themselves around important issues. Our field organizers go door to door around the state, distributing information and learning about people's concerns. In this way, we build strong grassroots support and also identify community leaders. We maintain close contact with our legislators. (This is one advantage of being a small state—it's not too hard to contact a legislator personally.) We help reform current, and create new, legislation to improve the lives of Maine citizens. Some of our accomplishments are toxic waste reduction in the workplace and the environment; campaign finance reform; and—our current major undertaking—health care reform. Maine People's Alliance has been a leader in the battle for universal health care. In order to demonstrate how our successes have come about, I need to give a little history.

The background

Several years ago, there was a plan in our state to create a new for-profit health insurer called Maine Partners. This would involve the merger of three

of our state's largest hospitals with Maine Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Maine People's Alliance was against this merger for several reasons:

- The merger would most likely eliminate non-profit health insurers in the state;
- The merger would create a conflict of interest between a non-profit hospital and a for-profit insurer;
- The new insurance plan would prevent patients from going to the three Catholic community hospitals in the three towns where the merging hospitals were located;

• The newly formed insurer would probably be bought by a larger, out-of-state company—which did happen—resulting in our health care dollars leaving the state;

• There would be a large increase in health care premiums—which also happened—that Mainers could ill afford;

• The new company would eventually go public—which it did.

There was a public hearing in Portland before the Bureau of Insurance for people to voice their concerns about this issue. MPA and other organizations succeeded in getting over 500 people to attend this hearing, many of whom testified. A meeting that was expected to last a few hours lasted for two full days. Though



Janet "Jay" Houghton of the Maine People's Alliance speaking in Philadelphia at a public forum on "The Current State of Health Care."

we did not prevent the merger (legally there was no way we could), we achieved some positive political objectives. For one thing, the Bureau determined that patients could not be prevented from going to the Catholic community hospitals. More important, the public's attention was definitely starting to focus on health care reform.

Since the hearing, Maine People's Alliance has stepped up its activity. Door-to-door canvassing is continuing in earnest to gather more support and inform citizens about single-payer universal health care (SPUHC). Our members were urged to keep informed about health care issues and respond to articles in the news media to keep the issue in the public eye. One of our

major projects was the creation of a Speakers Bureau. The members of this group travel around the state educating the public about SPUHC and also making sure people know how deeply flawed and unjust our present system is. To gain support for health care reform, the public must be informed well enough to demand it. Our members are continuing to go to Augusta and contact legislators—both incumbents and those running for office—to determine how they stand on SPUHC. We strongly support those who favor universal health care. MPA also succeeded in working with coalition partners to expand health care to more adults and children through the existing Medicaid system.

We listened to citizens as they voiced their concerns regarding the rise in health care costs, the decline in the quality of health care, their inability to access health care, and their perception that the only beneficiaries of our current system were the insurance companies.

Last year, a bill for SPUHC (LD 1277) was passed by our House of Representatives and we garnered 18 votes in our state Senate. Though the bill was not enacted, a plan was signed by the Governor to create a commission called the Health Security Board. The purpose of this Board is to develop a plan for the implementation and funding of a state-wide single-payer system. The Board is made up of a cross section of community members from around the state—hospital administrators, physicians, businesspeople, insurers, nurses, a member from MPA, and ordinary citizens.

The Portland referendum

In November of 2001, the Southern Maine Labor Party drafted and got on the Portland ballot a referendum question that basically voiced support for the advisory board set up by the legislature. Passage of this referendum was vitally important to our cause. Though it was non-binding, its

passing would mean that the people of Portland (Maine's largest city), would support health care reform. MPA and other grassroots organizations clearly had their work cut out for them and they rose to the challenge.

Door-to-door visits were made to

Major health care reform will not be accomplished in this country anytime soon. Most likely happen state by state or region by region, and it will happen because the citizens of these areas will demand it.

all Portland residents in key districts, educating the residents about the referendum and single-payer. Phone banks were set up and dozens of volunteers worked day and night calling people to continue the education process and to urge them to vote. Several local offices donated their office space and phone lines to the volunteers

Media coverage was sought and, as a result, two MPA members were interviewed on Maine public television and several radio interviews were done. Press conferences were arranged, one in front of City Hall and one in front of the Maine Medical Center—both good spots for public exposure. A professional expert in “selling” referendums came from out of state to volunteer his time in planning this strategy. Finally, an MPA member recorded a radio message urging people to vote “yes” on the referendum.

Members worked hard to make personal contacts to get endorsements for single payer. The Speakers Bureau expanded to form the Health Care Co-ordinating Committee. Membership was enlarged and training sessions were held to expand the numbers who could give presentations.

Working with the Southern Maine Labor Party, the MPA produced a four-page flyer informing people about the advisory board and the referendum

and distributed it to residents and businesses in the Portland area. Political signs urging people to vote “yes” were also put up around the city.

But the grassroots groups faced strong opposition. Maine's largest health insurer, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, obviously took this non-binding referendum very seriously. It spent around \$400,000 on some impressive TV ads opposing the work of the advisory board. The ads were shown many times on prime-time programs. MPA's budget was \$10,000. Nevertheless, the referendum passed, though by a slim margin. This is a prime example of what grassroots work can accomplish. I think these results also demonstrated something else. The people of Maine are ready for the reformation of health care. They also don't like their health care dollars being spent on fighting referendums!

The future

We have a lot to do to assure that Maine gets universal health care. The public must continue to be educated about the major problems in our present system—huge administrative costs and executive salaries; decline in the quality of care in our hospitals; unaffordable health insurance; denial of care by insurance companies; denial of insurance to those with pre-existing conditions, etc. We also need to reach out and educate the “non-believers”—physicians, business owners, people who still think the United States has the best health care system in the world—about SPUHC.

I am confident that sometime soon everyone in our state will have health insurance, and hopefully we will be able to say “As Maine goes, so goes the nation!”

Janet S. “Jay” Houghton is a registered nurse and a worker and spokesperson for the Maine People's Alliance on single-payer universal health care.

Affordable Quality Child Care: An Unmet Need

By Barbara R. Bergmann

Right now in America, a couple with two pre-school children and an income of \$30,000 must reduce their standard of living almost to the poverty-line if they want to put their children into licensed day care. The American child care system, in which parents, largely unassisted, must navigate a woefully inadequate marketplace to buy the child care they need, is not working well. The market provides much child care that is of unacceptable quality, and the services that it does provide are unaffordable to many parents.

Free public schools were established in the nineteenth century when it was recognized that the unfettered marketplace worked poorly in supplying the country's needs for primary and secondary education. Rich people could buy what they needed, but the rest were not well served. For much the same reasons, leaving things entirely to the marketplace works poorly in the care and education of children under six. It is in the children's interest and the public's interest that the services be of decent quality. But millions of parents are unable to pay what standard-quality services currently cost, much less what they would cost if the wages of those workers who care for and teach these young children were increased to decent levels.

The political system has recognized that American parents need help with child care, but what has been done so far scratches the surface. Some government help comes as a tax credit, but it provides minimal help, and doesn't give any help to lower-income families who don't owe income taxes. Then there's Head Start, which is aimed exclusively at the very poorest. It is way underfunded, and traditionally has been a half-day, school-year program that doesn't fit working parents' needs. The Child Care and Development Fund was set up to pay for a share of the child care expenses of low-income working parents, primarily those coming off welfare or in dan-

ger of going on welfare. Unfortunately, the funds that Congress has provided cover only 13 percent of eligible children. Some states run pre-kindergarten programs. But only one state—Georgia—is providing pre-K for a substantial number of its children. This array of programs leaves many children locked out of quality care.

What would a better child-care set-up look like? Families with incomes at or below the poverty line need to be subsidized completely out of public funds. All of their income must be devoted to food, clothing and shelter. As for families with incomes above the poverty line, a plan that Suzanne Helburn and I have proposed in our book *America's Child Care Problem: The Way Out*, would require families to pay no more for child care than 20 percent of their income above the poverty line. The rest of the expenses would be paid by the federal government. A program like that would require about \$30 billion a year in new funds.

A different plan has been proposed by the Committee for Economic Development, which gets its financial support from Exxon, the Ford Motor Company, Merck, J.P. Morgan, Prudential Insurance, and a long list of other big corporations. The CED proposes that government provide all American children with access to free pre-Kindergarten classes starting at age three. The federal and state governments would share the cost. It suggests that the pre-K sessions take place in settings that would also offer the after-hours and summer care needed by the children of working parents. This would end the misery-making shuffling of children from one care giver to another that many parents and chil-



dren currently endure. The CED plan would cost about as much as the Bergmann-Helburn plan, but would give a free ride to higher-income parents. Our plan would help parents with fees for children under three, whom the CED plan would not cover.

The CED plan appears to be modeled on the free nursery school program that is part of the French public school system, the *écoles maternelles*, in which children may be enrolled as soon as they are toilet-trained. France provides enough places to accommodate all children presented for enrollment. The all-day schedule of the French program, its multi-year character, and the coordinated arrangements for before- and after-school care that accompany it mean that it can also serve a custodial function. In France, each nursery school class is supervised by a professional teacher, who is required to have the same qualifications as an elementary school teacher—the equivalent of a masters degree. The schools are housed in well-designed, bright buildings that are a feature of every residential neighborhood. They present a dramatic contrast to the facilities in church basements, with their ill-

continued on page 11

How Are We Asking the Question of Palestine? One Socialist-Zionist answers

By Eliot Ratzman

When it comes to debating the Arab-Israeli conflict, the real is mostly irrational, and the rational can be unreal.

Responsible democratic socialists must reconsider how the pro-Palestinian left and we are arguing about Israel. Different ways of framing the situation result in radically disparate assessments of the important issues at hand. This determines the sort of activism we do, from our lofty positions papers to the campaigns we choose to run to the content of the signs we hold.

The left has been rightly critical of Israel for its treatment of the occupied Palestinian population and non-Jewish minorities within Israel. Such criticisms should not abate. To say, as I think we must, that Israel is a state *with problems* is to place it in the context of other states that act in their perceived national and ethnic-majority interests. Israel is indeed a state with problems, a state like any other in many respects, but also a state thinking of itself as beholden to an extraordinary history and facing extraordinary enemies. As Israel has claimed for itself special status as a refuge from anti-Semitism, so too have critics of Israel claimed that it has a special status as a state particularly worthy of censure, sanction, and hatred. Israel's very right to exist as a non-Arab state in the Middle East is continually being called into question, a position expressed by a growing number of young activists. Israel's relationship with the United States has been used to justify obsessing over a range of lesser evils that would have gone unnoticed if perpetuated by any other state. Thus, instead of seeing Israel as a state with problems, Israel is being treated as a *problem state*.

Elements of the left have rushed to frame the conflict as one with a clear

villain and a clear victim. Israelis are the French or white South Africans, Palestinians are Algerians or black South Africans. This framework has led to a valorization of the political



Peace demonstration in Tel Aviv

goals of the Palestinians, an uncritical attitude towards the political goals of the PLO, and a willingness to excuse murderous ethnic hatred with the canard that suicide bombings of civilians are understandable reactions to profound suffering. Pausing our moral reasoning, many of us on the left have grown soft on murder, ethnic nationalism, and religious fanaticism when it comes from Muslim Palestinians rather than from Jewish Israelis.

The intense pain of history and memory blinds the victimized just as self-interest numbs the victimizer. We are suspicious, and rightly so, when Israeli leaders justify their actions with narrow ethnic-national reasons or play the Holocaust card. However, many on the left have, ironically, accepted the Palestinian national narrative without critical comment. Palestinian activists claim a certain exceptionalism of suffering as well: that they are the world's largest refugee population, that the Israeli occupation is comparable to Nazi Germany, that the struggle against Israel must preoccupy the international community at the expense of other issues, etc. We should be wary of trading in one ethnic-national story for another.

Progressives of all stripes also need to refrain from equating the decisions of the international community with justice. UN resolutions are not decided in a tribunal of pure reason, but are in most cases the results of power plays, regional alliances, and national interests. For example, how many UN resolutions, committees, speeches or otherwise have been dedicated to the Tibetan people's cause? The international community's obsessions with Israel must be seen as political decisions, not simply expressions of the just will of the nations.

In recent months, I have worked with a group of Israeli soldiers from combat units who've pledged not to serve in the Occupied Territories. These soldiers, dubbed the "Refuseniks," have endured very public condemnation by the Israeli right and, surprisingly, by elements of the Israeli left. At our public appearances, the reception by Arab and Arab-American audiences has been mostly positive. Alongside of our condemnation of the Occupation and Israel's myopic and heavy-handed strategies, we condemn the immoral and counterproductive suicide bombings and the tacit support by many Palestinians. As well, while not all of us identify ourselves as Zionists, we are categorically opposed to the anti-Zionist rhetoric being deployed by the far left and by most of the Islamic world. Some have disagreed intensely with our airing criticisms of Palestinian political culture. Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza contains its own long list of indignities and injustices, absurdities and outrages—it need not be insultingly equated with Apartheid or Nazi Germany. It is possible to organize

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Interview: The Canadian NDP's Bill Blaikie

Bill Blaikie is the House Leader of the Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP) and his party's trade expert. Blaikie, who represents Winnipeg-Transcona, and Chicago's Raul Ross Bineva, a member of the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), recently accepted an invitation by Twin Cities DSA to explore collaboration between the three "Socialist International" member organizations in the upper Midwest. Blaikie agreed to share his views on terrorism, globalization, and the future of the NDP with Stephan Peter of Twin Cities DSA.

SP: *Some US media have described Canada as the terrorists' aircraft carrier from which to launch strikes on US territory. Are Canada's immigration and civil rights laws an invitation to terrorist abuse?*

BB: Unfortunately, this is a perception by some in the United States. I think we need to begin by noticing that all the people that carried out the terrorist attacks of September 11 were people who were residents in the United States.... Having said that, I think Canada has an obligation to do what it can not to be a safe haven for people who are planning terrorist activities in the United States or anywhere else, and a number of measures have been taken by the government to try to achieve that goal. But I think there's a lot of misinformation about Canada. Without being overly facetious about it, there was a recent episode of West Wing in which an advisor to the President suspected that terrorists had crossed over into the United States at the border between Ontario and Vermont. As it turns out, there is no border between Ontario and Vermont....

SP: *The NDP has stated publicly that it "oppose(s) offensive military intervention by Canadian forces or others where such action is not sanctioned by the United Nations...and call(s) for an immediate end to the US-led military action in Afghanistan, and to end Canadian participation in this action." What foreign policy does the NDP believe is best suited to fight terrorism?*

BB: Our position, post September 11, is that, if the United States had evidence that Al Qaeda was responsible for September 11, that evidence should have not been brought before NATO behind closed doors but brought before the United Nations; that an international *ad hoc* tribunal could have been struck to consider the evidence and, had the evidence been convincing, then the United Nations could have proceeded to request of the Taliban that Mr. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda be turned over to the United Nations. If that didn't happen, then that would have been the opportunity for UN

police or military action against Afghanistan. And that, it seems to us, would have been more in accord with international law and more in accord with Canada's own traditions with respect to how these things should be dealt with....

SP: *Bill, you have argued that globalization under current rules restricts governments in promoting democracy and acting in the public interest. How has Canada been negatively affected?*



Bill Blaikie (left) with Stephan Peter

BB: We certainly feel that there has been an overall loss of well-paid manufacturing jobs in Canada since the inception of, first of all, the Canada/United States Free Trade Agreement in 1988, and then the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993. It's not just a question of job loss, because certainly other jobs have been created, although they're not always as well-

paid jobs as some of the jobs that are lost. It's also a question of what the role of government has become in a free trade regulated society or a free trade regulated economy.... Many policy choices that were available to Parliament or Canadian governments in the past are no longer available because they're proscribed, prohibited or illegal as a result of the free trade agreement. And we are, of course, very concerned about the investor state dispute settlement mechanism which you will find in Chapter 11 of the NAFTA which enables corporations for the first time to sue governments directly for loss of profits or potential profits. This is a real concern and has a real chilling effect on governments when they consider environmental regulations and other policy decisions that would have the effect of limiting the profit-making ability of foreign corporations which is, basically, to say American corporations.

DL: *At the last DSA convention there was renewed interest in proportional representation. What version of proportional representation do you have and what has been the NDP's experience with it?*

BB: We don't have proportional representation. The NDP advocates proportional representation but we don't have it. We have the same voting system as in the US except that

third parties are able to win seats.... Parties which may not even register on the scale in some parts of Canada are the dominant party in other regions. Proportional representation is fairer in any event in our judgment but we are also advocating it as a way to deregionalize our politics in our parliament because it would mean that national caucuses in the parliament would have representation from all regions in all likelihood. The temptation to play regional politics would be reduced.

SP: *The NDP recently completed a comprehensive review of all aspects of the social democratic movement in Canada in the 20th century. The final report, issued by the party's Steering Committee, bemoans a loss of optimism embodied by the NDP. And it urges rallying behind key values and goals such as sustainability, a new version of globalization, and devolution and decentralization. Not even a name change for the party is excluded as a possibility. How do you interpret the report's findings?*

BB: Well, we just had our national convention in Winnipeg in November and there was quite a debate there.... The final report was adopted and it called for reaffirmation of the goals of the policy orientation of sustainability and equity and democracy and this was accepted by the convention. There was a move at the convention to adopt what was called the new politics initiative.... [T]he debate was really about whether the party was already left-wing enough, whether it needed to be moved further to the left and, certainly, the majority view was the party was already quite left-wing enough. We're way to the left of all our competitors in Canada, and certainly way to the left of the Democratic Party in the United States. We're way to the left of all the Social Democratic parties in Europe....

SP: *Brother Blaikie, thank you for this conversation.*

Stephan Peter is a member of the executive committee of Twin Cities DSA and of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Affordable, Quality Child Care

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paid, ill-trained teachers, that are common in American child care.

Both the Bergmann-Helburn plan and the CED plan take into account the existence in the United States of a private child care industry, which would fight to the death a shift of their clients to public facilities. Both plans suggest public payments through vouchers to licensed private caregivers meeting quality standards.

Should the burden of paying for child care be passed to the taxpayers? Shouldn't the nation's employers be called on to solve our problems in the field of child care and early education, by providing on-premises centers, as some already do? No—depending on employers would be a big mistake. If it were made mandatory for employers to provide and pay for centers for their employees' children, hiring discrimination against parents, and even potential parents would become rampant. If it were left for employers to do it voluntarily, as is the case with employer provision of health insurance, large parts of the population would be left without coverage.

Only increased government appropriations will solve the problem of affordability. Additional steps would be needed to make headway on the quality problem. Centers have to compete with providers of family child care—people who take children into their homes—who have considerably lower costs. So centers economize by paying low wages to their employees. Those wages don't allow them to attract and retain a work force that is professionally trained to help children develop and learn. That's one reason the quality offered by many American centers is mediocre or worse. Relatives and family child care providers also lack such training. A large government program should contain provisions that mandate standards of training, and prescribe other aspects of quality for providers receiving public funds. And those funds should be sufficient

to finance appropriate salaries for trained people working in the field.

What chance does a \$30-billion dollar-a-year child care program have in the present environment? The fact that an organization supported by big business has made such a proposal is rather startling. Could big business be saying that the era of big government is not over after all? The truth is that there are plenty of highly placed executives in the biggest American corporations who understand that the economic condition of the country and the long-run prosperity and stability of their business will be strengthened if the trouble spots in our society can be cured. They know it will be to their companies' ultimate advantage if many more children enter first grade ready to learn; and they know that today's workers perform better and are more reliable if they have access to good and reliable care for their children. The CED is the voice of this group.

There are other potential supporters. Public school administrators, teachers and their unions should be advocating full-day kindergartens and preschools, and school-based before- and after-school care. Unions contain a large pool of parents of young children, and they see child care workers as potential members. Child care centers themselves, particularly those owned by for-profit corporations, should be lobbying for appropriations to provide revenues, just as defense contractors do. And just as defense contractors do, they should be asking for funds to provide high-quality merchandise, not stripped-down models.

The country has major unmet needs that can only be addressed by government, and along with universally available health care, the care and education of young children is one of the important ones. Meeting those needs is not an impossible dream.

Barbara R. Bergmann is Professor Emerita of Economics at American University. In addition to her work on child care, she is the author of 'Is Social Security Broke? A Cartoon Guide to the Issues.'

The Question of Palestine

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against Israel without the cant of anti-Zionism.

The question must be asked: why do we on the left uncritically welcome Palestinian national goals as our goals? It is not clear, for example, why justice demands that Jerusalem be the capital of a future Palestinian state if Arab residents of Jerusalem have equal rights and equal access to resources as Israeli citizens or as future citizens of Palestine residing in Jerusalem. We should not shy away from criticizing Palestinian political culture when it clearly deserves demystification. Between an authoritarian PLO, which has never given up its selfish program of armed struggle, and the religious fanaticism of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian social democratic option is going against the grain. Blindly supporting the cultural and ideological agenda of any ethnic-national movement is a recipe for disaster.

As well, we must question Israel's dramatic and deeply discriminatory laws that mostly limit land ownership to Jewish agencies, truncate non-Jewish population growth, and inflict other indignities great and small that contribute to making the Jewish State the state of the Jews and not of its citizens. The Jewish left has been soft on Israel's blatantly discriminatory laws. Some Jewish progressives have also sidestepped any discussion about the Palestinian refugee problem. This resistance to dealing with the 1948 Palestinian catastrophe has its roots in the nostalgia for the socialist Israelis of the Labor Party. Remember it was Labor governments who were in large part responsible for the ethnic cleansing of certain large areas of Israel in the War of Independence. The Labor Party has never adequately reconciled its Askenazi chauvinism, its distasteful anti-clericalism, and its decades-long support of ethnic nationalist laws and practices from the Right of Return to

the discrimination against Arab Israelis. Socialist credentials should never distract us from seeing the truth of the situation.

What are we to do as American democratic socialists? First we must be committed to political and economic

Elements of the left have rushed to frame the conflict as one with a clear villain and a clear victim.

justice for Palestine. Our job is in part to highlight the economic dimensions of the conflict, to smoke out religiously motivated claims posing as "security" or as "self-determination," to agitate for radical democratic civil societies in Israel and Palestine. What is clear is that Oslo was, in large part, a peace between elites. Israelis and Palestinians, even during Oslo, did not cultivate the ties on the level of civil society requisite for a truer peace. For future activism, we might consider loosening ties to the Labor Party of Peres and Barak in favor of important, if small, efforts by Gush Shalom, Bat Shalom, the Committee Against Home Demolitions, and Rabbis for Human Rights. When activists put themselves in between bulldozers, tanks, and the homes of Palestinians, the concrete injustices of the Occupation are revealed to a broader public. As well, the American Jewish community—and many Israelis—need to face the details of the occupation, the harrowing texture of Palestinian life under the shadow of Israeli policies. Though ideology pervades even the presentation of facts, there is nothing like experiencing the abject injustice of home demolitions or the fanatical Hebron settlers to sharpen the debate in very real and very human terms.

As democratic socialists, we must seek to support the efforts in Israel and Palestine that most reflect our values and vision. It should be clear that we must take a militant stand against the injustices

perpetuated by the State of Israel. We on the left agree on a large number of things: the settlements needs to be dismantled, the occupation of Palestinian lands must end, the refugee problem addressed, the issue of resources and land resolved fairly. But, we should also be honest about what is profoundly wrong with the political practices of the so-called representatives of the Palestinian people and the Arab countries that lead the rhetorical charge against the occupation. Victim status does not confer higher wisdom. Support for the rights of the oppressed should not mean we refrain from criticism and complaint.

Finally, the democratic left needs to be anti-anti-Zionist. Zionism must be recognized as a mixed bag ideology with a variegated history. Indeed, just as some of us identify as socialists despite "actually existing socialist states," so also do some of us identify ourselves with Zionism despite Ariel Sharon. The prevailing anti-Zionist rhetoric betrays a thorough disregard for the national aspirations and the self-determination of the Jewish people. Such pernicious rhetoric should not be mistaken as adequate political argument.

Thinking and acting about Israel and Palestine must be a slalom run around ideological false friends, conflicting loyalties and questionable historical claims. Though our positions may be complicated, our actions should be clear and coherent. It is here where we must stand with the problematic pro-Palestinian left with the intent to improve the quality of the debates, the strategies of the campaigns, and the content of our protest signs.

My response, that of someone who is Jewish, has lived in Israel, and who identifies himself as a Zionist, should be answered with a contrary perspective. I hope *Democratic Left* will solicit such a response so that a proper dialogue between all of us of good will can commence.

Elliot Ratzman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. He can be reached at eratzman@princeton.edu.

DSA Locals Report

NORTHEAST

Boston DSA is focusing on its state's budget crisis, joining with others to fight cuts in human services by raising the capital gains tax. Its upcoming annual awards reception will honor State Representatives Patricia Jehlen and Anne Paulsen, Co-Chairs of the Progressive Caucus. In March, about 100 people at Harvard's Kennedy School heard DSA Honorary Chair Bogdan Denitch assess past wars, US policy and prospects for democracy in the former Yugoslavia. (Submitted by Harris Grumman)

DC/MD/NOVA DSA's principal activity has been working with the Stand Up for Democracy in DC Coalition, a multiracial, grassroots coalition leading the movement to win full democratic rights for the District of Columbia. The local has helped the coalition in organizing press conferences, rallies, lobbying and neighborhood outreach. (Submitted by Bill Mosley)

In January, **Greater Philadelphia DSA** held one of its Free Speech Cafes about privatization of public schools and Philadelphia's struggle over a state take-over and school "reform" in the city. Another cafe titled "The Logic of Cancer Cell: Wal-Mart's Model of Growth" is planned for the end of June and local actions connected with Wal-Mart are also planned. Co-Chair John Hogan also testified on behalf of the local at City Council hearings on a proposed wage tax reform. (Submitted by John Hogan)

MIDWEST

Over 400 people attended **Chicago DSA's** recent 44th annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington Dinner, this year honoring SEIU Local 1 President Tom Balanoff and labor attorney Barbara Hillman; its featured speaker was Professor of International Law and public radio commentator Douglass Cassel. Considerable resources went to sending people to the A20 demonstration in Washington, DC, including a vanload of YDSers, most from the University of Chicago chapter. (Submitted by Marc Silberman)

Columbus DSA is helping to establish a Jobs with Justice chapter, which has been very helpful in access to a rather conservative labor establishment. The closer ties with labor may help its ongoing crusade for a Columbus living wage. DSAs have rallied for locked-out AK steel workers in Mansfield,



(Top) Presenter Carl Shier and honoree Hillman. (Bottom) AFSCME VP Roberta Lynch presents award to SEIU's Balanoff.

Ohio, and are supporting the local faith-based community organization (B.R.E.A.D.) in working for low-priced housing and access to health care. (Submitted by Simone Morgen)

After a successful October roundtable on "Women and Prisons" as part of Prison Awareness Month, the **Madison Area DSA** threw its energies into organizing a study group on state taxation and economic justice to prepare for a panel we are sponsoring at Radfest 2002.

Twin Cities DSA has met with Bill Blaikie, House Leader of the Canadian New Democratic Party in the Ottawa parliament, and Raul Ross Bineva from the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution. All have begun collaboration in this region. The Social Democratic Action caucus of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor party, founded by DSA, is organizing around various issues and will work to reelect Paul Wellstone for a third term to the Senate. (Submitted by Dan Frankot)

WEST

Dave Anderson spoke for **Colorado DSA** at May Day rally on the downtown mall in front of the county courthouse. (Submitted by Dave Anderson)

Oregon DSA has been sponsoring a video series with discussions over the past several months; videos dealing with globalization and the antiglobalization movement have been particularly popular. (Submitted by Duane Poncy)

This summer **Phoenix/Tempe DSA** will hold a socialist theory discussion group headed by Justin Wilford. The local is also working with the UFW on the Pictsweet campaign. (Submitted by Fabricio Rodriguez)

Members of **Sacramento Valley DSA** joined 3,000 others in the March for Justice to celebrate the Cesar Chavez holiday. We co-hosted Fr. Ray Bourgeois, who spoke on the School of the Americas ("School of the Assassins"). Local leader Duane Campbell spoke to a group of Mexican workers seeking to build a union at D-Q University. The local is distributing the national anti-war paper *War Times* and focusing on a living wage campaign. (Submitted by Duane Campbell)

The reborn **San Fernando Valley DSA**, once again singing "The Internationale" off-key at Van Nuys International House of Pancakes, is supporting California campaign finance reform and lobbying for union, welfare and homeless issues and legislation. (Submitted by Leo Whitaker)



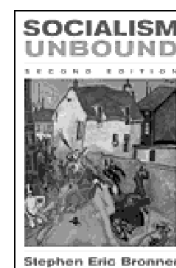
Sacramento DSA members block entrance to Taco Bell as part of March for Justice to celebrate Cesar Chavez Day, March 30, 2002.

Reports edited by Jason Schulman.

Socialism, Past and Future

By Jason Schulman

Stephen Eric Bronner. *Socialism Unbound*. Second Edition. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000, 232 pp.



The first edition of Stephen Eric Bronner's *Socialism Unbound* appeared right before the fall of the Soviet Union. It defended the central role played by class conflict in contemporary politics, minus the traditional Marxist faith that the working class would inevitably overthrow capitalism. The new edition reaffirms this perspective in the light of ten years of "third way" social democracy and the dominance of post-modern and "rational choice" forms of inquiry in the academy. Taking solace from the emergence of the anti-globalization movement, Bronner attempts not so much to envision a post-capitalist society as to provide a "class ideal" to regulate struggles for reform in the present, and to insist upon the idea of leftist politics in "what has often enough been called an anti-political age." On most counts, he succeeds—and in the process provides a comprehensive history of the socialist movement.

Perhaps surprisingly for one who declares Marxism to be "dead as a political worldview" because "its teleological guarantees of the unfolding of history have lost their material foundations," Bronner eloquently defends the democratic credentials of Marx and Engels. Bronner stresses Marx's and Engels' political activities, particularly in the First International, while disproving anarchist accusations of "Marxist authoritarianism" and noting that Marx, unlike Karl Kautsky or Lenin, "never identified any particular political organization with the ultimate interests of the working class." Marx's analysis of both the alienated nature of labor under capitalism and the trend towards concentration of capital remain highly relevant, according to Bronner.

Bronner's take on Karl Kautsky and Second International "orthodox" Marxism is genuinely fascinating. Bronner acknowledges that Kautsky was an economic determinist. But ironically, "with its claims regarding the 'inevitable' revolution, orthodox Marxism actually spurred political activity by intensifying the desire of workers to bring socialism into existence more quickly." The heyday of the Second International (the late 19th to early 20th centuries) was the only time in which theory and practice, reform and revolution, political democracy and socialist transformation were all connected in a mass movement. Kautsky, says Bronner, never deserved the scorn that the communist movement heaped upon him. He was never pro-imperialist, and unlike most of his rivals he grasped that "a social democratic party without a sense of socialism would soon degenerate

into just another party and that the communist attempt to construct socialism without republican commitments would result only in an authoritarian perversion of the idea."

The legacy of Eduard Bernstein, however, is one that Bronner sees as problematic. While Bernstein himself "was no party hack" and "was genuinely preoccupied with the oppression of working people," his "evolutionary socialist"

philosophy proved to be even more exclusively focused on economic issues than Kautsky's orthodox Marxism. Despite the obvious economic accomplishments of revisionist social democracy in Western

Stephen Eric Bronner is to be commended for explicating what socialism has been and what it must become.

Europe, it had nothing to offer to those engaged in anti-imperialist struggles in the former colonies. This movement, based on the philosophy of "the goal is nothing, the movement is everything," has degenerated to the point where it is now reversing its own reforms. For if the logic of Bernsteinian social democracy has been "the achievement of incremental reforms through calculable compromises with the party as broker," then, in an age of global capitalist domination, the role of reformist social democracy will be, at best, to polish the sharpest edges of corporate power.

Lenin, too, receives fairly harsh treatment by Bronner, even as he draws a sharp distinction between Lenin and his Stalinist successors. Bronner recognizes the "legitimate reasons for the appeal of Leninism among the most wretched of the earth"—the colonized—and despite its empirical errors, Bronner acknowledges the explanatory power of Lenin's theory of imperialism. Unlike Stalin, Lenin truly wished "to link the bourgeois struggle against imperialism with the proletarian struggle against capitalism." But Lenin's notion of the vanguard party as the embodiment of "true" working class consciousness was in its very essence substitutionist, Bronner contends, as Lenin did not see any need to institutionally check the arbitrary use of state power by the party in power. And despite the radical democratic veneer of *The State and Revolution*, never once in that pamphlet does Lenin outline an actual political conflict that might arise inside the workers' councils, or how the councils are to relate to the party.

The "underground tradition" of Rosa Luxemburg, claims Bronner, is the stream of socialist thought and activity most significant for contemporary radicals. Her theories of nationalism and imperialism, despite their flaws, take issue with "the still popular attempts to identify the left with

national or ethnic aspirations.” By stressing working-class self-empowerment over the temporary needs of any party, she became a heretic in both the social democratic and communist movements. The strategy she put forth in *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions*, writes Bronner, “took the democratic impulse within orthodox Marxism to its most radical conclusion” and “confronted [the] artificial distinction between the economic struggle of the trade unions and the political struggle of the party.” Luxemburg actively opposed the conservative pragmatism that engulfed social democracy, and, though she supported the Bolshevik revolution, she was prescient in her critique of the Bolsheviks’ suppression of political pluralism and democratic rights. Despite what he considers her romanticism, Bronner insists on maintaining Luxemburg’s critical spirit today.

The final chapter of *Socialism Unbound* is the most heavily revised. In it, Bronner attempts to outline a viable socialist politics in a world where both evolutionary and revolutionary hopes have been dashed and the old “proletarian public sphere” has been squashed by the culture of the market. If socialism, or even the “final crisis” of capitalism, is not in any sense inevitable or even likely, we are required to recover the ethical spirit of socialism as a protest against oppression, and put forth a “class ideal” which can overcome the fragmentation of progressive movements. Bronner should be applauded for stressing that sexism, racism, and homophobia are *working class issues*; he does not counterpose class politics and “identity” politics in his search for a leftist universalism. In the absence of an active revolutionary agent in the traditional sense, socialism must be redefined, as Bronner has said elsewhere, “as a practice intent upon mitigating the whip of the market *through* the state and abolishing the exercise of arbitrary power *by* the state.” In opposition to neoliberalism, socialists should engage in a politics of radical reform from below, even if there is no guarantee that our efforts will ultimately lead to a post-capitalist world.

Bronner is correct that if we lack the sense that history is on our side, socialism—as opposed to “non-ideological” reformism—becomes a matter of ethical commitment. But some aspects of Bronner’s “radical realist” approach I quibble with. Even if we cannot promise the emancipated society, we do need at least a realistic outline of what it might be like, if only as a means of motivation; we should still *demand* a society beyond capitalism even if we cannot guarantee its arrival. Further, in stressing the limits of central planning and the need for market mechanisms to meet consumer needs, Bronner fails to consider that various socialist economists have outlined the possibility of *decentralized* planning (admittedly often combined with forms of market exchange). We should hardly sneer at “mere representative democracy” after a century of fascism and Stalinism, but Bronner does not discuss the possibility of a gradual transition to a more decentralized, more “stateless” order *in a post-capitalist economy*, as he fears that considering socialism as “the absolute other” can only lead to marginalization.

Finally, Bronner implies that ecological destruction can be halted and reversed within capitalism provided there is sufficient action by states and international organizations against the market. But there may well be significant limits to how far “sensible environmental policy” can go absent the victory of a movement to fully socialize nature and production.

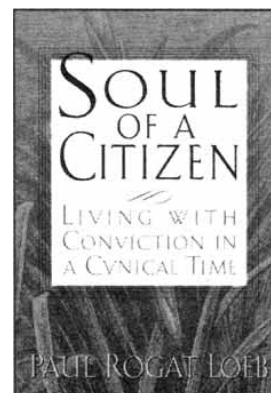
Quibbles aside, Stephen Eric Bronner is to be commended for explicating what socialism has been and what it must become. The new global anti-capitalist movement will hopefully live up to his class ideal and ethic of democratic accountability, and become popular enough to begin the process of putting our upside-down world right-side up.

Jason Schulman serves on the DSA National Political Committee. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

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“Confronting the Low-Wage Economy”

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Forty years after DSA’s Founding Chair Michael Harrington authored *The Other America*, poverty is more deeply embedded in American society than ever before. The unequal distribution of money and power grows every year. Political elites have turned from providing inadequate income supports to punitive workfare measures aimed at reducing welfare case loads while maintaining an adequate supply of workers for the low wage jobs that are such a crucial part of the new economy. This new economy affects everyone but has been especially devastating to women, children, people of color and recent immigrants.

This conference will kick off **DSA’s Low Wage Justice Project**, which is designed to bring the human consequences of the low wage economy to the attention of the American people. The project will support activist campaigns around issues such as living and minimum wage campaigns; attempts to organize low-wage workers; struggles for day care, health care and affordable housing; and campaigns to reverse the direction of welfare reform (TANF). The conference is co-sponsored by the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support. Other organizations are also welcome to co-sponsor.

This event will be the first of several meetings organized around the country to support activism on these themes.

For more information or to co-sponsor the conference:
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