



DSA's National Convention



**The New Capital
of Progressive
Politics?**

Twenty-First Century Socialism

DSA 2005 Convention: One More Step on the Road to Human Freedom

By Michael Hirsch

When Big Bill Haywood convened the first convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, the radical trade union movement that rocked the foundations of the Gilded Age, he called it the “Continental Congress of the Working Class.” He wanted his fledgling organization, as he told delegates in 1905, to be the vehicle for “the emancipation of the working class from the slave bondage of capitalism.” Some 200 worker “revolutionists” roared their approval, and spent the next 10 days trying to fashion an organization that would do just that.

Jump ahead 100 years, and nothing so romantic or heady was said or done at DSA’s 2005 Los Angeles convention over three days in November. But in the galling age of the lesser Bush, with its homicidal empire building, its far right politicians—backed by a Bizarro-world cabal of clerical fascists—commanding every level of government and confronting still shrunken and mostly defensive labor and popular movements DSA’s delegates accomplished a lot, too, in building an organization that can aid the fight for human freedom and justice.

Held just days after Californians hammered down four invidious ballot propositions heavily endorsed by the state’s movie-star governor, and hosted in the same city where a militant and politically savvy left coalition elected a progressive mayor last spring, the air was infectious with possibilities. Delegates, upbeat after recognizing that union movement beginning to fight back and that massive anti-war agitation that is lighting the fire under national Democratic politicians, tackled practical ways this democratic socialist organization could grow in numbers and influence.

This was surely no inward-looking gathering. Whether discussing political action, strike support, the campaign against Wal-Mart, or ways to bring socialist ideas back into mainstream politics, discussion of building the organization was always set in the larger context of the health and perspectives of the social movements and progressive electoral politics.

One member described it well. Writing immediately after the convention to his own local, Boston DSAer David Knuttenen told of “com[ing] away from this convention feeling like there is new movement and vitality in DSA, and [that] I needed to be part of it.” He characterized the organization’s

activists—slogging along in the hard years—as “a fire-hardened group: dedicated to rebuilding an effective democratic socialist organization in the U.S., open to honest appraisals of DSA’s strengths and weaknesses, and willing to make pragmatic decisions, and to work together to carry them out.”

He also praised delegates for having “passed a National Priorities Resolution that is feasible in scope, and well integrated, such that it is easy to see how work done around one priority could be organized to also serve other priorities.”

Those adopted priorities included reaffirming the goals of the low-wage justice campaign, and its focus on stopping Wal-Mart’s predatory employee and competitive practices; involvement in Bernie Sanders’ pivotal independent 2006 Senate campaign in Vermont; cooperation with insurgent Democrats in the fight against neo-liberalism; fine-tuning and extending DSA’s ambitious internal and external socialist education programs; building the organization through orienting greater attention toward YDS; building locals while also aiding in the development of special-interest networks and national taskforces; and enhancing fundraising efforts in order to meet these goals. Resolutions were also adopted supporting the anti-war movement’s call for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq while also offering solidarity to Iraqi trade unions and other secular forces under attack from elements of the armed resistance; for universal health care and a campaign to lift the stranglehold of the insurance industry over health care accessibility; and support for both wings of the recently fractured labor movement.

While the gathering was a working convention—one that differed from past meetings in that all convention business happened on the plenary floor for maximum delegate participation, two evening public sessions focused on the big picture, too. On Friday evening, a panel consisting of ACORN chief organizer Wade Rathke, Kent Wong of the UCLA Labor Center and Roxana Tynan of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy looked at the level of struggles nationwide. Saturday evening delegates recognized the contributions of DSA vice chair and *Washington Post* columnist Harold Meyerson, Occidental College sociologist and longtime DSAer Peter Dreier and insurgent California Congress member Hilda Solis (D) who in turn provided in-depth perspectives of the political scene. The convention concluded with a

showing of the hard-hitting *Wal-Mart: The High Price of Low Cost*, and a discussion with its producers on how activists could best use the film.

So while this convention—for the best of reasons—wouldn't pretend it could echo Bill Haywood's centenary remarks that "[t]he aims and objects of this organization should be to put the working class in possession of the economic power, the means of life, in control of the machinery of production and distribution, without regard to capitalist masters," Haywood's underlying theme of economic emancipation still resonated at the recent national conclave of America's largest socialist organization. While DSA must speak in a twenty-first century idiom of empowerment, coalition-building, social and economic justice, anti-globalization, pluralism, and an end to sexism and racism, the evidence coming out of Los Angeles shows its activists remain as committed to ending social and economic inequality as did those in the days when Eugene V. Debs and Mother Jones and Norman Thomas and

A.J. Muste and Michael Harrington and Rosa Parks walked history's stage.

Michael Hirsch, a member of DSA's National Political Committee, was a convention delegate from New York City.

Editorial Note

Material from DSA's Los Angeles convention makes up most of this issue, including the priorities resolution that was approved, the results of leadership elections and transcripts of some of the presentations. Unfortunately, we lack the space to include everything in this issue. All of the resolutions (one resolution referred favorably to the National Political Committee remains to be dealt with), the full text of David Knuttenen's report to Boston DSA, and a number of photos are posted on our web site. We expect to be able to post recordings of some of the sessions as well. Convention material can be found at: <http://www.dsausa.org/convention2005/report.html>.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Ron Baiman, Jeffrey Gold, Michael Hirsch, Frank Llewellyn, Bill Moseley, Simone Morgen, Jason Schulman, Joseph Schwartz, John Strauss (Chair)
 Founding Editor: Michael Harrington (1928-1989)

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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Convention Resolution: DSA Priorities

1. The Low-Wage Justice Project

Since 2001 the national organization has focused our political work on combating global capitalism's 'race-to-the-bottom' development strategy. This 'Walmart-ization' of the global economy has depressed the quality of life of the world's working people, including those residing in the United States. DSA has "added value" at the national and local levels through efforts to build the community component of a citizen-labor alliance to fight the low-wage economy, which also negates the conservative argument that organized labor's efforts are 'self-interested'.

DSA has engaged in public political education aimed at illustrating that 'Walmart-ization' is not caused by the actions of one particular rapacious corporation but by a systemic and irrational model of global capitalist development. As an alternative, DSA has highlighted local, national, and transnational efforts to construct an alternative model of fair trade, global labor and human rights, and equitable development strategies.

Therefore, this convention endorses a continuation and deepening of the organizational focus and coordinated activism that the "Low Wage Justice" campaign (initiated at the 2001 DSA convention) has brought to the organization. In particular, the focus on Wal-Mart, as an exemplar of the corporate "race-to-the-bottom" economic strategy, will continue.

Thus, this convention commits itself to:

a. The DSA NPC and national office continuing to provide resources and information to aid locals in living wage campaigns, immigrant justice activism, and labor support work.

b. The NPC and national staff monitoring closely the nascent national labor and community-based campaigns(s) fighting Wal-Mart. The NPC and staff will assist locals, YDS chapters, and members who wish to plug into relevant local and national campaigns. .

c. The NPC and national office aiding DSA and YDS groups that wish to conduct (well-publicized) public educational events that highlight the inegalitarian and unjust consequences of corporate globalization.

d. DSA paying particular attention to working with communities of color and feminist groups in fighting this economy, as the disproportionate burden of the low-wage economy falls on women and people of color.

2. The Sanders for Senate effort

From now through November 2006, the Sanders for Senate campaign in Vermont will focus national media attention on the most serious socialist electoral effort in the United States since the Debsian period. Bernie Sanders has been an articulate voice for democratic socialist politics among the 435 members of the House of Representatives and has spoken at DSA events on many occasions. Sanders would become a much more visible national spokesperson for socialist politics if and when he serves as one of 100 members of the more powerful United States Senate.

His election is by no means assured and he will need the financial and organizational help of the broad democratic left around the country. In addition, Sanders support work provides a natural vehicle in any locality for DSA to reach out to—and potentially recruit—unaffiliated socialists and independent radicals.

Thus, this convention commits itself to:

a. The national staff and NPC developing feasible, legal, ways that DSA locals, networks, individuals, and campus groups can aid the Sanders for Senate campaign.

b. The national leadership providing guidance as to how local groups engaged in aiding the Sanders campaign can utilize such efforts to recruit for and build DSA.

3. Public Socialist Education

A staple of viable DSA locals and campus chapters has been visible, well-publicized socialist education. Socialists understand that ideological struggle is political work, and that socialist agitation and education must focus on the health and perspectives of movements opposing corporate domination as well as "imagining" socialism and sketching what a better world would look like.

Over the past few years, however, particularly on campus and areas where DSA has numerous members but weak (or no-longer existing) locals, the organization has engaged in little public educational work. This work remains imperative as, given the weakness of liberalism, the critique of individualist marketplace ideology and the defense of social solidarity and public provision is only coherently done by socialists. There remains a popular audience open to a critique of the stifling center-right consensus that dominates American politics. Such work provides a viable way for even small

DSA groups to reach out to others who share our politics and those open to a radical analysis.

Thus, this convention commits itself to:

a. Increasing the amount of internal and public education done at all levels of the organization in regard to the relevance of democratic socialist vision, analysis, and program to contemporary politics and to popular democratic resistance movements at home and abroad.

b. The NPC and staff working to develop a speakers' bureau of DSA members who can speak at locals and YDS-sponsored public meetings, thus providing a socialist perspective on key issues of the day.

c. The NPC and national staff continuing efforts to improve *Democratic Left*, the website, e-mail announcements, and other forms of public communication.

d. The NPC and staff organizing a working retreat of key DSA and YDS activists to address revitalizing a socialist political and intellectual center in the United States

e. The NPC and staff using the organization's international ties and other contacts to facilitate a dialogue between progressive elected officials in the United States and in other countries that would focus on policy alternatives to the "Washington consensus."

f. The NPC and staff opposing neoliberalism and other forms of pro-corporate ideology and dominance within the Democratic Party and elsewhere.

4. Building Organizational Infrastructure and Capacity

The challenge over the next two years is to increase the amount of organized public activity in the organization's name (whether it be by locals, commissions, campus chapters, or 'networks') To do this the national organization at all levels will try to increase its financial, staff, and activist capacity. The following steps can realistically be taken to strengthen YDS and our campus presence; improve national finances and grow our small staff; and to help build (and revive) locals, commissions, and networks of DSA members.

Thus, this convention commits itself to:

a. Support for YDS

The national staff, NPC and DSA activists will work to increase their support for YDS. The organization will work to expand its list of faculty and campus contacts who can identify and support potential campus activists. National DSA and locals will work to support nascent and existing YDS chapters by building stronger relationships with our campus groups and providing relevant off-campus political connections (while also respecting the need for younger socialists to create their own relatively autonomous culture and activity).

b. Local Development

The national staff, NPC, and Local Development Com-

mittee will work to encourage the organization of new locals and revival of dormant ones. The LDC should try to maintain a list of local contacts in areas where there is no local or OC. Such local contacts should be notified of persons in their areas, especially including direct-mail recruits, who express interest in local activity. They should also be notified in advance of direct-mail solicitations so that they may prepare to contact interested persons;

c. Supporting the Development of Networks and Re-development of Commissions

The NPC, working with and responding to relevant DSA members across the country, shall establish coordinating bodies composed of members already involved or interested in being involved as individuals in specific types of movement work, and who wish to function with a degree of national cohesion via DSA. Such networks can include electoral activity, such as work with the Progressive Democrats of America, the Sanders campaign, the Working Families Party, and similar organizations and efforts. Efforts will also be made by the NPC to establish anti-war and labor networks, as well as other interest areas in which a need is demonstrated. To the degree these networks take off, they should be institutionalized as commissions.. The general purposes of networks and commissions are as follows:

i. Bringing DSA's political analysis to network participants and commission members and other persons working in the relevant movements;

ii. Keeping network participants and commission members and others informed of significant developments in other movements;

iii. Encouraging movements to pursue their goals in ways that support the work of other movements and challenge corporate domination of the economy, society, and politics.

d. Enhancing Fundraising Efforts

i. the national staff, NPC and local DSA leadership will work together to increase significantly the number of monthly "sustainer" donors.

ii. in part, the goal of such fundraising should be to increase the size of our national staff so we can better accomplish the political and organizational goals outlined above.

e. Increased Communication

The National Office will communicate monthly with the activists and the locals via the internet and dsamember. The reports shall include:

i. What DSA national is doing,

ii. What campaigns we are engaged in,

iii. A sampling of local reports.

The Case for Socialism in the Twenty-First Century

by Jason Schulman

We live in an insane world. Today we see, more than ever, incalculable wealth standing opposed to unspeakable misery. Millions die of curable or preventable diseases while the United States government wastes hundreds of billions of dollars on arms production. Half the world's working population makes \$2 a day or less. In the U.S. there has been a 20 percent fall in living standards for 80 percent of the population since 1973, with one-third of the work force stuck in temp and part-time jobs as the eight-hour work day is becoming a thing of the past. This country has a predominantly Black and Latino prison population which may hit 5 million by the year 2010. The gap between what *could* be accomplished with the talents of the world's population and what *is* accomplished is wider than ever.

Our world is one where people exist for the sake of the economy and not, as it should be, the other way around. This insane world is, above all, a *capitalist* world.

Capitalism doesn't simply mean the private ownership of corporate property—"the means of production," as socialists often say. Capitalism is an economic system based on dominance of production-for-profit. In such a system the individual, privately owned enterprise represents nothing other than a *particular interest*. It acts as if it were the center of the universe. It lays hold of as much means of production and raw materials as it can and employs as many workers as its resources and its sales prospects enable it to, without asking itself if these resources and this labor power might not be more useful in another field of activity. It produces as many of its particular commodity as it can dispose of on the market without asking itself if other goods might not be more useful for society. And it is even prepared to attempt to wage a "psychological war" against the whole population, through advertising, in order to convince people that they have a *need* for a particular commodity. The logic of capitalism is to turn everything into a commodity, into something that exists only to make a profit.

The capitalist class, which consists of the primary owners, executives and financiers of capitalist firms, appropriates the surplus of the value created by those who have to sell their labor power in order to survive—that is, the majority of the population, which is what socialists are talking about when we use the term "working class." (If you have to work for a boss, and you lack managerial authority, then you're in the working class.) This asymmetry of power means that while

capitalists might pay workers a "living wage," the value of this wage is always less than the value of the commodities produced by the workers' labor, since if capital can't make a profit it won't employ workers. Under capitalism, the only "needs" recognized as legitimate are those that appear through a market exchange and the ability to pay ("effective demand," as economists revealingly call it). This is so even if food is exported from famine-stricken areas or houses stand empty because they can't be sold while thousands of people are homeless. By contrast, a *rational need* from a socialist standpoint is one related to guaranteeing provision of food, shelter, clothing, and access to recreation and education for all.

The capitalist class is the *ruling class*, the class with the greatest amount of power, because it's the class that controls employment and monopolizes economic decision-making. Even when politicians that represent capital aren't directly controlling the government, all state officials under capitalism are always constrained by the need for business confidence and private investment. Hence, reforming capitalism is difficult and it often can't be done at all without mass political mobilization and social unrest. This structural inequality erodes the promise of political democracy, perhaps nowhere more obviously so than in the United States. Voting under capitalism doesn't include the right to decide on what corporations should do, whom they employ or who gets the profits.

The inherent irrationality of capitalism, of the dictatorship of market forces, is that the object of economic growth is economic growth itself, not the satisfaction of human needs. Capitalism treats human life itself as a "production cost." Work, the activity through which humanity appropriates its environment, is a compulsion, opposed to relaxation, to leisure, to "real" life. Production is ruler of the world; when one produces, one sacrifices one's time during work in order to enjoy life *afterwards*, in a way usually disconnected from the nature of the work, which is just a means of survival. And even when the whip of the capitalist market is somewhat softened by state regulation, the system remains ruled by impersonal laws that inevitably impose themselves on the wills of every individual.

The Socialist Ideal and the Capitalist World

The values of socialism are the exact opposite of those of capitalism: the principle of cooperation replaces that of acquisitive competition. The socialist vision is of a world without social classes, in which all people's material needs are met and everyone is able to fully develop his or her creative potential. In such a world, the dichotomy between "work"

and “leisure” is overcome. People are no longer forced to do the same thing their entire lives. Production is no longer the ruler of society but instead is subservient to society; when all economic and political institutions are democratically controlled, the economy is no longer a separate and privileged field upon which everything else depends. This doesn’t mean that with socialism work would become perpetually enjoyable, or that human beings would become angels, but humanity would finally be able to consciously control its destiny and the arbitrary use of power would no longer be possible.

Democratic socialism is therefore the heir of the best aspects of classical liberalism. There is nothing wrong with the freedoms that classical liberalism holds dear: the freedoms of association, speech, press, assembly, and so on. The problem is that under capitalism these freedoms are greatly restricted and hollowed out. Liberal freedoms can only be fully secured in a socialist society, where property rights no longer take precedence over political, civil, and social rights.

Socialism is, therefore, not about authoritarian central planning or mere state ownership as existed in Russia, Eastern Europe, or China. It is not about replacing the rule of capitalists with the rule of state bureaucrats. But it does involve replacing the dictatorship of market forces with deliberate, democratic economic coordination. Defenders of capitalism—above all, professional economists—claim that this is technically infeasible, and many people accept their arguments. But there are real precursors and aspects of socialism that exist today, under capitalism.

- In Argentina, workers from Buenos Aires have formed worker-managed co-operatives by taking over factories abandoned by their former owners. Their success proves that workers don’t need bosses—arbitrary, authoritarian work relations are not necessary.

- There are also international “direct trading” networks which develop fair trade links between European consumers and cooperatives of small scale growers of coffee and cocoa in Africa and Latin America. In such a “socialized market” prices are determined by social objectives instead of commercial ones and non-economic values are prioritized.

- Much of the internet now runs on open-source software, written not for profit but for the pure satisfaction of creating a useful product. This anticipates a future in which productive social labor becomes an end in itself. It shows that private corporate property has become a constraint on the development of technology.

- A current capitalist goal is an automated shop floor, with functions such as purchasing, stock, and sales in the retail outlets linked electronically to the factory floor. The real problem is its complexity, which is a result of rivalry in profit

making and the business secrecy that this requires. If sales could be predicted and planned in advance, then this would be workable—but it requires the end of the business cycle of “booms” and “busts,” which is impossible under capitalism. Despite the fact that companies spend millions in marketing efforts to discover consumer wants and to improve the usability of their products, the real problem is not what consumers want, but what they can afford to buy, and it is this element that is the most unpredictable of all and lies behind the operation of the business cycle. Fixing this problem requires the overcoming of the contradiction between private consumption and collective production.

Evolution and Revolution

A hundred years ago, when socialist parties were becoming enormous and socialism really did seem to be on the historical agenda, there were famous debates about whether it could be accomplished peacefully through the election of socialists to office or if the working class would have to forcibly overthrow the existing capitalist state. The main question was whether or not the capitalist class would respect its own legal order if the socialist movement became popular enough to actually try to legislate capitalism out of existence. Given capitalist support for Hitler in Germany in the 1930s and Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s, we can be certain of the answer to this question: if capitalists feel sufficiently threatened by the socialist movement, they will even support fascists, and accept limits on their own civil and political rights, if that’s what it takes to save their system.

At the same time there is no getting around the fact that the majority of workers in the advanced capitalist countries have simply not been interested in revolutionary socialist politics. Part of this is due to authoritarian Communists calling their states “socialist.” Part of it is due to the predominance of market values in popular culture, especially in the U.S. Part of it is that what socialists call “the working class” is in fact very heterogeneous, not just in sex, race, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, etc., but in skill and income level (blue collar, white collar, etc.). But it’s also true that in liberal-democratic countries workers have been able to meet at least *some* of their needs via the welfare state, thereby creating a situation in which they no longer have, to quote Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, “nothing to lose but their chains.”

The truth is there is no certain road from existing society to the classless society. But in the past, both moderate socialists (known as Social Democrats) and revolutionary socialists (who usually called themselves Leninists and Communists, inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 led by V.I.

Lenin's Bolshevik Party) were both very optimistic. Social democrats believed in the electoral road to socialism, and most of them came to believe that a reformed, regulated capitalism was the only "socialism" that was both necessary and possible. The economic achievements of social democracy are undeniable. Germany and the Scandinavian nations, in particular, are probably the most democratic, humane countries in the world, without any real poverty to speak of, with strict health and safety regulation, progressive taxation, and guaranteed health care, child care and housing—all things for which Americans are still fighting. At the same time, social democracy both equated electoral victory with radical change and fell into a pragmatism that was overwhelmed by the economic power of capital, particularly its mobility. Social democratic parties have usually been technocratic and purely electoral in their approach to politics, and have had little need for, or interest in (if not active fear of), the development of a militantly class-conscious activist movement. In an age of global capitalist domination, social democracy has been able, at best, to polish the sharpest edges of corporate power.

Leninists argued that there was no road to socialism except through the insurrectionary overthrow of the capitalist state. Lenin shared this conviction with socialists who were consistently both democratic and revolutionary, such as the German socialist leader Rosa Luxemburg. But Lenin took 20th century socialism into an authoritarian direction. Although he vaguely described the replacement of the capitalist state with self-governing workers' councils in his pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, in practice, Lenin's Bolshevik Party rapidly supplanted the councils as the main governing institution in the Soviet Union. Despite his claim to Marxist orthodoxy, Lenin's belief in the privilege of the "vanguard party"—which can do whatever it wants once it takes power because it represents the "true" interests of the working class—contradicts Marx's belief in the self-emancipation of the working class. Leninism has generally been very unpopular in democratic capitalist societies, perhaps because self-described Leninist parties are usually thoroughly authoritarian.

Socialist Politics Here and Now

The struggle for the free, classless society is going to take much longer than we would like and that there's no guarantee that we'll be fully successful in reaching it. Fundamentally changing human consciousness and building alternative institutions takes a great deal of time. The fight against capitalism—and the fight to limit the likelihood of violence in defense of capitalism—will have to take place both inside and outside existing states. The effectiveness of elected socialist politicians ultimately depends on the strength and size

of the socialist movement outside the halls of government. Our job right now is work to for reforms of every kind—social, economic, and political—that will exist within capitalism but will work against capitalism and for the majority of people. We can't expect the tiny U.S. socialist movement to jump from minority to majority status any time soon, and we have to work with people more politically moderate than ourselves to achieve even partial goals. But as radicals we embrace not only electoral politics but also industrial struggles, strikes, civil disobedience, and direct action.

Given that many workers, particularly in the U.S., don't even think of themselves as "working class," socialists insist on the ideal of class unity in order to distinguish the common interests of people who are otherwise divided into separate interest groups. Sexism, for example, affects women of all classes, but what they can do about it is very much class-related. Similarly, all of humanity currently stands on the verge of ecological disaster, but for the workers of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the increasing destruction of the environment and biosphere and the day-to-day struggle to survive are aspects of the same immediate experience. Environmentalists who embrace primitivist or anti-developmental perspectives fail to see that workers in the "Global South" are very much in need of an "eco-socialist" approach to economic and social development.

Some say that socialists should hold on to our ideal and our approach to politics but drop the word "socialism" because of its association with unaccountable state bureaucrats. But the truth is that if you believe in consistent democracy and recognize that wealth is a social creation and therefore should be controlled by the whole of society, you can use other labels, but you are going to get called a socialist anyway. And in the U.S. those who defend capitalism invariably demonize proposals for such reforms as a national health care system or public investment in childcare as "socialist." Since we are stuck with the S word, we ought to wear it proudly.

The days in which socialism seemed inevitable are long since gone, and socialism's appeal has been tarnished by the authoritarian regimes that falsely ruled in its name. For the foreseeable future, socialism may be only an ideal, as we can't promise that the emancipated society will ever arrive. But the socialist ideal informs our day-to-day politics, our opposition to class domination and the dictatorship of market forces. As the socialist writer Leo Panitch puts it, "as long as we can muster the strategic creativity and imagination to develop alternative political institutions that will in fact be developmental, we are contributing to making socialism possible."

Jason Schulman is on the editorial board of the socialist journal New Politics, active in NYC DSA, and an editor of DL.

Progressive Coalition Building in Los Angeles

by Roxana Tynan

The L.A. Alliance for a New Economy, founded in 1993 by the hotel workers union, initially was viewed as a way to build community support for the hotel workers' struggle. Since then we've been really able to branch out beyond that to a broader mission of building labor-community alliances. We work with a number of different unions. Many of them are Change to Win unions, including SEIU, UNITE and the Food and Commercial Workers Union. And we work on a number of different policies, community organizing campaigns, worker support campaigns, all designed to look for that nexus where we can build coalitions that maximize the community organization power and the power of progressive labor unions in Los Angeles.

We're working also to try and reframe the discussion in terms of why you need government—why you need a *progressive* government. So we look for opportunities where we can use the power that the labor movement has been able to

build here in Los Angeles to expand the role of government in a progressive direction. We helped put together the coalition that passed the Living Wage and since then we've continued to look for ways to use this leverage, this government power, to build a progressive economy here.

In terms of Wal-Mart, we'd been organizing together with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union around this issue when it became clear that Wal-Mart had set its sights on an incredibly juicy development site in Inglewood, 60 acres and perfect for them. And because Inglewood is a working-class town—mostly a black and brown town—Wal-Mart assumed that they were going to be welcomed with open arms. This is in the context of Wal-Mart's plans to build forty supercenters in southern California. They now talk about 25 supercenters instead of 40, and we think that number is going to continue to go down, because they've run into opposition in every location that they have chosen in the last few years.

Initially Wal-Mart made an effort to simply get their plans approved through the City Council. But when it became clear to them that they did not have support there, and that the Council was going to look for any means possible to deny them a permit to build, they decided to go around the Council directly to the voters by putting a measure on the ballot that would allow them to build whatever they chose—essentially a blank check: We're not going to take any input from you on how we build or what we build or how big it is or how many cars come through, and once we've built it, it's going to take a two-thirds vote of the population to make any changes to our project.

They acted with enormous arrogance, supremely confident that they were going to win. Frankly, we were supremely confident that they were going to win, too. We had done polling, and Wal-Mart is very popular in a lot of places, because it's cheaper, with 20% lower prices than a lot of other stores. We looked at all the issues that we thought might resonate with folks. We were doing a lot of community organizing. We were listening to what people were talking about, and the issue that began to emerge was this basic, fundamental notion of a community's right to control its development. I think that's on a much larger scale what ACORN is going to deal with in trying to take back community control of the rebuilding in New Orleans. And that fundamental right really resonated with people. As the campaign developed, voters in Inglewood be-

Convention Elects DSA Leadership

Each convention elects a leadership to serve for the next two years. The following members were elected by the convention:

National Political Committee*

Theresa Alt, Virginia Franco, David Green, Michael Hirsch, David Knuttunen, Simone Morgen, Michele Rossi, Joseph Schwartz, Timothy Sears, Herbert Shore, John Strauss, Corey Walker

**There are four vacancies on the NPC. All must be filled by women, and two of the four vacancies must be filled by people of color. Members who are interested in filling a vacancy should contact the National Director.*

Honorary Chairs:

Bogdan Denitch, Barbara Ehrenreich, Dolores Huerta, Eliseo Medina, Eugene (Gus) Newport, Frances Fox Piven, Gloria Steinem, Cornel West

Vice Chairs:

Edward Clark, Dorothy Healey, Jose LaLuz, Hilda Mason, Steve Max, Harold Meyerson, Maxine Phillips, Christine Riddiough, Rosemary Ruether, Motl Zelmanowicz

gan to see this attempt by Wal-Mart to bulldoze over, bulldoze into their neighborhood as fundamentally a question of respect—Wal-Mart did not respect their community enough to go through the folks they'd elected, to hold hearings, to get input on how to build or what to build. They lacked enough respect for Inglewood to go through the regular process.

And as they deluged folks with about a quarter million dollars of direct mail and untold millions of dollars in advertising that just happened to focus during those months on what a great place Wal-Mart was to work, randomly, people began to say to us, as we were doing our door-to-door organizing, "How stupid do they think we are? We may like their low prices, but none of us are under any illusion that it's a good place to work. We're getting three pieces of mail a day from these people, and every time I turn on the TV there's another Wal-Mart ad with a shiny, happy person saying how great it is to work here. This is obviously not true—and why don't they want to just go through our process? Why don't they want to hold public hearings? Why don't they want to hear what we have to say?" And these were *not* folks who were convinced that because Wal-Mart doesn't pay a living wage, because it discriminates, it shouldn't be allowed to build. These were people who, when we did our initial polling, were saying, "Yeah, Wal-Mart, sure; we could use a Wal-Mart"—who weren't coming from an already critical perspective.

Frankly, Wal-Mart did our organizing for us. They organized people into our arms, because their disrespect was so blatant. Our original polling had us losing by 20 points; we wound up winning by 20 points, 60 to 40.

We worked with a coalition of folks. ACORN was very involved in our fight. Many of the churches were involved. We had a lot of support from the Nation of Islam, who actually helped us organize. We got a lot of press coverage. And we were able to beat them back.

Wal-Mart has, however, bought the land and is waiting, hiding in the tall weeds, to see if we stop paying attention, and then they'll move in. So we're going to continue to organize and be active in Inglewood. We've been able to use that victory as we talk to folks throughout L.A. County who are looking to fight Wal-Mart, and I think it's really that victory of a little city standing up to the biggest corporation in the world that has been inspiring to other folks in the county who want to keep Wal-Mart out and who want to be able to talk about what the Walmartization of the economy means for us.

One of the strategies that we have used to deal with development and developers relies on this basic notion of self-determination—people's ability to determine what happens in their own neighborhood—because we believe it enhances our ability to build these labor-community alliances that are

going to maximize our political power and our ability to really make systemic change. We have been using this tool we call the Community Benefits Agreement. When major developments are proposed, we do community organizing. That means building coalitions of unions and strong community organizations to intervene with the developer. It also means demanding a set of community benefits that include living wages, union shop, local hiring, affordable housing, park space, and other issues that the neighborhood raises as specific community needs. So far we have been able to successfully negotiate six or seven such agreements. The first one was around the Staples Arena; we were part of a coalition led by SAJE. Union jobs, \$1 million for parks, affordable housing, living wages, and local hiring were all agreed to, and we have been implementing that agreement very effectively. We have helped to set a marker.

It's an example of where we've come to in Los Angeles that our mayor, our exciting, recently-elected progressive mayor, is championing the idea of community benefit—and that now when developers come to City Hall, they try and use that language of community benefits, because they realize that we've managed to shift the frame. No longer should we be grateful to Wal-Mart or to other developers for providing our communities with poverty-level jobs and very little else. We have built enough political power in Los Angeles so that these developments have to serve the communities in which they exist, and not the other way around.

Much of the strength that we've been able to build has been based on the growth of the progressive labor movement here in Los Angeles. And in a way I think that coming out of a very right-wing anti-union town created a context historically where key base-building community organizations like ACORN, key progressive unions, and other organizations in Los Angeles were really forced to work together because we had no other choice. That experience has forged long-term relationships that have helped us grow and expand the idea of what these labor-community alliances can actually win. And I would say that in a funny way the federal abandonment of our cities has provided us some useful organizing opportunities—so much so that now the right wing has really started to notice that progressives have taken root and are building steadily and slowly these relationships in a lot of major cities throughout the country, and that they begin to present a really credible threat to their dominance in this country.

Roxana Tynan, lead organizer for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, addressed the Convention as part of a panel discussion. This article is an edited version of her remarks.

Los Angeles and the Progressive Tradition

by Peter Dreier

Los Angeles today is very similar to what New York was a hundred years ago—a city of enormous wealth and great disparities between rich and poor. New York was a city where new industries were booming, but there were sweatshops, slums, and public health crises. Out of that cauldron of social problems came the progressive movement. It started in New York among immigrants, who began organizing labor unions, middle class reformers who started settlement houses, and writers like Jacob Riis, who exposed conditions in the slums and factories to public scrutiny. Politicians like Al Smith, Robert Wagner and Meyer London were elected to local and national public offices, and they were the voices of the immigrant workers, the sponsors of legislation for affordable housing and tenement house and workplace reform. There were clergy involved in supporting that movement. There were people in the upper class, mostly women, who started the first generation of philanthropies that helped the working class movement, the union movement, the housing reform movement, the public health movement. After the Triangle Fire, there was a huge spate of legislation to improve working conditions in factories.

L.A. is comparable to that today. It's an immigrant city which has enormous wealth and yet more poverty than any other city. It has an incredible set of grassroots organizations. It's got rich people who are progressive, organized through groups like the Liberty Hill Foundation. It has journalists like Harold Meyerson and others who are exposing social problems and shaping the public debate. It has clergy who participate in social justice activities. It has an enormous amount of interracial cooperation between African-American, Latino, white and Asian activists.

The progressive movement in New York laid the intellectual and political foundations for the New Deal twenty years later. The people that spearheaded the movements in New York, like Frances Perkins and Robert Wagner, later became the people who were organizing to get the minimum wage, to get Social Security, to pass the Wagner Act. The progressive movement in L.A. today may be laying the intellectual and political foundation for the next New Deal—so that my students and young people in the DSA Youth Section will inherit a movement that will not only change Los Angeles but eventually change the country.

One example here in California was the overwhelming vote in November rejecting Arnold Schwarzenegger and his corporate rightwing agenda. Mike Harrington said that what DSA should be is the left wing of the possible, which sometimes means taking risks and going beyond conventional wisdom. Two years ago the California Nurses Association took a risk and began to challenge an extremely popular governor on his health care, fiscal and tax agenda, on his rapid move to the right after his first year in office. I'm pleased to say that one of my good friends is here tonight, David Johnson, the organizing director of CNA. Now it's conventional wisdom that Arnold was vulnerable, but then only a handful of people who could see that—CNA was in the forefront.

As a college professor I know that there's an enormous myth about young people, that they're apathetic, that they're indifferent. Across this country tens of thousands of college students and young people who are not in college are, just a little bit below the surface, idealistic. Their cynicism is only that deep. If they're given an opportunity and an outlet for their idealism, they take advantage of it. For example, there's an enormous anti-sweatshop movement in this country: two hundred colleges have anti-sweatshop codes of conduct. I think progressives, whether they are professors or union leaders, must mentor and recruit the next generation of activists.

Sometimes I worry that the left in academia, the kind of postmodern, postcolonial, armchair lefties who teach in a lot of our colleges, actually have a negative impact on a lot of students, because they tell them how awful things are, how capitalism is terrible, and then they give them absolutely no idea about what to do about it other than to go to the library and read more theory. One of the things I and other faculty do is try to get our students involved in what might be considered reformist activities—reforms that lead to progressive change—what Andre Gorz called “non-reformist” reforms and I call “stepping stone reforms.”

The organizing happening here in L.A. and around the whole country, can have a ripple effect. That's what DSA has helped to do: remind people that you don't have to be a radical just on-line or in the classroom, that you can be a radical in the streets and the union halls and the churches and the synagogues by engaging in real reform. This is much more complicated than theorizing about what a perfect society would be like. DSA has played that role, linking the near and the far, theory and practice, reformism and radicalism.

When Mike Harrington was dying of cancer, he came to Boston to give a speech at an anti-poverty organization. I asked then Mayor Ray Flynn [whom I worked for at the time and had previously introduced to Mike] if he wanted to go to hear Mike speak because he probably wouldn't be alive for very much longer, and if he wanted to get together with him afterwards. Ray said, "I got a better idea. Let's proclaim Michael Harrington Day, and give him a key to the city." How many big city mayors will make a day for a leading socialist? Ray did that because he was so taken with Mike. In fact, lots of times when Flynn would ask me about different issues he would say, "What would your friend Mike do about this?"

Mike would have been impressed by the new mayor of our 21st century city of Los Angeles, Antonio Villaraigosa. He was a union organizer. He was the head of the ACLU. He came out the barrio and grew up very poor. His father was an alcoholic, beat his mother—he overcame incredible obstacles. He dropped out of high school, and went back and then graduated from UCLA. He worked his way up through the labor movement and then was elected to the state legislature, becoming Speaker of the Assembly. When he was term-limited out of the legislature he ran for the LA City Council and was elected. When he ran for Mayor the first time in 2001 he lost, but he ran again and won in 2005. Now we have a progressive mayor, thanks in large part to this impressive network of grassroots organizations, labor unions and community and environmental organizations. Many of them have lifted up some of their leaders into positions of electoral power. It's a network of activists that work closely with elected officials, like Congresswoman Hilda Solis, and it's just remarkable what L.A. has become.

I have an idea for a new TV show. It's about the mayor of a big city who gets elected president of the United States in about twenty years. It's about the internal workings of the White House under this progressive president, who had been Mayor and Assembly Speaker, and who eventually gets national health insurance passed, and raises the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. He's able to cut the military budget in half, put that money into public education, child care, and a program of stronger environmental regulations and green industry. He pushes through a bill, making gay marriage legal in all fifty states. I haven't written a word of this yet, but I think it will be a hit. And I think I know what to call it: *Left Wing*.

Peter Dreier is the E.P. Clapp Distinguished Professor of Politics and Director of the Urban and Environmental Policy Program, Occidental College. He is co-author of The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City. Peter was recognized at the Convention Dinner. This article is taken from his remarks.

Their Vision is Collapsing: How's Ours?

by Harold Meyerson

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Republicans have been a little uncertain what their unifying theme is. They had anticommunism, which unified all wings of American conservatism for many years. They lost that in 1991. And one of the few things they all seem to be able to agree upon is opposition to higher taxes. So this is a notable election, because Jerry Kilgore, the Republican gubernatorial candidate running in Virginia, campaigned on that and lost, as did Doug Forrester, campaigning for governor of New Jersey; voters in Colorado in the special election repealed much of the tax limitation law there because it was impeding the state's abilities to keep the schools open and the roads paved. Finally, here, what was originally the central measure in Arnold Schwarzenegger's package—Proposition 76, which would have limited spending on schools and given the governor unilateral power to cut the budget—lost by 24.5%, and it lost almost every county in the state. Dare we suggest that the real needs of the American people and the ideology of the Republican Party not only are out of synch, but that the American people are beginning to realize this at long last?

The Republicans, reacting to the political disaster of Katrina, said, "We will comfort the drenched poor and afflict the dry." This has not flown all that well. And a group whose very life was uncertain—the heartbeat line was flat lining in the hospital for four and a half years—Republican moderates suddenly begin to get a little bouncing on that line. A previously supine, inert, moribund tendency has suddenly awakened. This was first apparent a couple of weeks ago when they went to the White House to say that they had to oppose it when the vote came up to repeal the President's suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act in the Gulf Coast. George Miller, a liberal Democrat, had found a little known provision that said if the President suspends a law, a member of Congress could force a vote to overturn that suspension. That vote was to have taken place this week. It did not take place because Re-

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publican moderates from the Northeast and Midwest did not want it to take place; they were going to vote against the President. The President dropped it. That encourages me.

Next, Democratic Senate leader Harry Reid invoked previously hitherto unused Rule 21 to force discussion which led to the current broader acknowledgement of the scandal of the Republicans cooking the intelligence before we went into the war on Iraq. After four years it appears that there are some Democratic members of Congress who have finally learned how to play the game.

It's the Republicans, not the Democrats, who no longer have unity on Capitol Hill. I don't know which is more astonishing: that theirs is broken or that the Democrats' has reoccurred. This has not been the pattern for some time. The President lashing out evoked fond memories of Richard Nixon in conflating the attacks on him with the attacks on our troops. What Nixon said he was going to do was to rally the silent majority. At best Bush can rally the silent minority. The majority is gone. The independents and moderates have already turned against this war. And I do not think that this is a line of attack that is going to work.

But then most of their lines of attack this year have not worked, as the gap again between their ideology and the reality of American life has come crashing down upon them. Imagine for a minute that the Social Security privatization debate was still going on—while Delphi is throwing its workers' pensions out, while GM is talking about cutting back benefits, while *Time Magazine* has a cover on the crisis of retirement, while *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* has the same. Do they trot out the privatization of Social Security when jobs are being created in great numbers, when there is a feeling of prosperity in the land, when private sector employers are actually offering defined-benefit pensions and generous 401(k)s? No, they wait until everything in the private sector is falling down, and then say, "Let's get rid of Social Security." Is there something wrong with this strategy? It's the worst form of second-term disease, which is you listen only to your in-groups, which is what they did on Terri Schiavo.

Now, we all know the Democratic Party and its ability to transcend the Republican crisis with its own hesitations, flummoxing and genuine screwing up, but it is nonetheless a moment of Democratic opportunity. We should credit them, before we get to the topic of "why don't they say what they're for?" Let's just step back and give them credit for at least learning how to say "no." And let's remember the first three years of this miserable presidency when all kinds of Democrats who should have known better voted for idiotic tax cuts, voted for the war, and many of them who did so didn't come from swing states, didn't come from purple states. Some came

from safe districts. Some of them came from blue states. One of them is named Dianne Feinstein. But in the last few months, they have finally, at least in a unified way, learned to say "no," and this is a good thing.

So what is it to which they and we should be saying "yes?" We should confess that this state spawned the tax revolt 27 years ago with Proposition 13. So, to those here from elsewhere in the country: Sorry. But I begin to see across the country in certain campaigns some Democrats who are beginning to say: We do target the raising of taxes or spending on some programs that everybody is for. Tim Kaine's gubernatorial campaign in Virginia is pushing the same program that Rob Reiner, formerly of *All in the Family*, is promoting a ballot measure, which is universal preschool for four-year-olds. Reiner's funding this with a tax on the rich.

If you look for any Democrats over the past half-decade who have actually challenged the current workings of American capitalism, you're not going to find them on Capitol Hill. But you are going to find them in Elliott Spitzer, who has actually stepped into the breach created by Republican control of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and done the work of that commission while Attorney General of New York. Or California Treasurer Phil Angelides, who has been a major force on the state pension boards, calling for socially responsible investment of public pension funding and blowing the whistle on some dubious corporate practices. Angelides, unlike Schwarzenegger, pushes tax hikes.

If you don't raise taxes, we continue the Schwarzenegger policy, which is cutting admissions to the University of California, to state universities and community colleges, because this rich state can't afford to have our kids go to college.

There is some real movement, even in the center of the Democratic Party. There's a new book by Gene Sperling, one of the key Clinton economic advisors. Sperling, like people now at the Democratic Leadership Council and the PPI, their think tank, are saying we really need more progressive taxation. There's so much wealth that is not being expended in public investment. So at least the center is coming around to that, and some, though not enough, are even beginning to question the unending benefits of free trade. But then there are some more serious issues on which the Democrats are mute, and on which we're largely mute, too.

For the last 20 years the European economy—which is still much more social-democratic than ours, and social democrats have real power—has not done a great job of creating new jobs, but they have maintained better-paying jobs than have we. In America we get rid of regulations and we create a lot of crummy jobs at the bottom—but we do create jobs. But

read the business page one day a month, every month—the day that the unemployment statistics and job creation statistics come out—over the last year. It makes for really interesting, confusing and bizarre reading, because unemployment is falling. Yet we are not really creating any significant number of new jobs. People are giving up and leaving the labor force. We're not even creating enough crappy jobs any more. We're in the first recovery of the post-New Deal, post-World War II era in which profits are soaring, gross domestic product is doing quite nicely, and the annual median income is dropping. And it makes perfect sense. There are no unions to speak of any more in the private sector. Who can negotiate for higher wages anyway—with the 7.9 percent level of union density—who has the power to make that stick? In 1980 there were over 400,000 people employed making steel in the U. S. Right now there are 120,000. They make the same amount of steel. This would be great if the other 280,000 workers went off and got really nice jobs; instead they are among the people who are falling through the cracks, explaining why unemployment is dropping but no jobs are being created.

So let me make three points.

Point 1: I don't think we're going to get out of this fix without massive public sector investment. There are some folks in D.C. who have conceptualized something they call the Apollo Project, which is about using large tax credits and some spending to create a vast number of jobs in retrofitting America, in building new infrastructure that is more green than our current infrastructure. I think at the point at which the Congress is Democratic and the White House is Democratic—and I think there's a decent chance of that by 2008—this is something we need to think about, something we need to push, because I don't think the jobs are coming back.

Point 2: The fundamental shift in capitalism in this country over the last 30 years is to a shareholder-dominated capitalism, which puts every other aspect of the economy and every other player in the economy at risk. There's a very important new book out by Barry Lynn, a fellow at the New American Foundation, called *End of the Line*. It's a serious book looking at globalization as it really is. He writes that over the last 25-30 years the role of the CEO in the corporation has changed from being the corporation's man in the boardroom to the shareholder's man in the company. If you're the shareholders' man in the company, if you're answering only to some investment funds based in New York, it really doesn't matter nor is it your role to defend the workers in that company. It is okay to cut; it is okay to outsource; it is okay to shuck your pensions to the federal government, because you are only concerned about shareholder value.

Now, you can begin to come up with some modest re-

forms about how to change that. But they fall short of the full package, because it is a daunting challenge to change capitalism. One of the reasons this is difficult not merely conceptually but politically is that the Democratic Party has become dependent upon many of the Wall Street folks who benefit from this system. When the Goldwater right arose in the 1960s their animus was chiefly directed at Rockefeller Republicans who accepted the premises of the New Deal and were willing to entertain an economy that had unions and social benefits. They moved those folks out of the Republican Party. And they have names like Robert Rubin and Robert Altman, and they are very comfortable with the state of American capitalism as it exists right now. Just as the Goldwater right went after those Republicans who were comfortable with the existing New Deal Democratic order, it is the role of the democratic Left today to go after those Democrats who are comfortable and part and parcel of the current financial order.

Point 3: We need to level the global economy up. When I fly from DC to LA I often fly into the Long Beach airport, because it's right near my mom's house. To do this you fly JetBlue. A couple of months ago a JetBlue plane landed at LAX here, and the landing gear wasn't down right, and there was a moment of reasonable suspense. Jet Blue gets the long-term maintenance on its airplanes done in Canada and El Salvador. This is an airline, mind you, that only flies within the continental United States. But the wage differential between getting the work done in Atlanta, let's say, or Baltimore or here in Long Beach, which is a hub, as opposed to El Salvador is such that they get it done in El Salvador, where the level of regulation of the Federal Aviation Administration is a little less than it is in Long Beach and Baltimore and Atlanta.

So I took a non-Jet Blue flight a couple of months ago to Chicago. There are a lot of formal, odd international labor groupings that nobody quite understands, including the member unions, and there was one of them meeting in Chicago. Within this meeting there was a subgroup of unions involved in what is called property services. These are janitorial unions; these are security guard unions. In the United States we're talking about the SEIU. What was interesting was that what they were doing, largely with SEIU funding, was meeting to form an almost-*proto-quasi-global* union. Why? Because all of the American companies whose names we know that provided security guard services, and some of them provided janitorial services, have quietly in the last five years been bought by a handful of global conglomerates, chiefly based in Britain, Denmark and Sweden. Executives in Stockholm, in Copenhagen and London, run Pinkerton and Burns and Wackenhut. They also own the companies that employ security guards throughout Europe, and in South Africa, and in

Hong Kong, and in Singapore and in Bombay. And lo and behold, what do you have but workers who are not relocatable—you cannot outsource the job of a janitor; you cannot outsource the job of a security guard—employed by the same companies. It doesn't typify the global economy, but it is a point of entry.

If you're looking at the Change to Win coalition, the new labor federation, it is an odd collection of unions. You have unions at the right end of American labor with the Carpenters and the Teamsters, unions on the left end with SEIU and UNITE-HERE. What they have in common is that they represent work that by and large cannot be outsourced. They are transportation workers. They are nurses, communication workers, and janitors. The people who are putting this together are looking at major campaigns in these sectors. So we're looking at non-outsourcable work; we're looking at the rise of global corporations in which pressure can be brought on the employer by workers in different parts of the world trying to coordinate their efforts, trying to help each other's

organizing, and strike and even political efforts. Those are changes that I find exciting. They may be embryonic, but then we are responding to the changes in a world economy which is somewhat bewildering, but which does offer opportunities as well as a good deal of dread.

I was struck by the fact that this meeting in Chicago happened a mere 157 years after a German guy with a beard and a British guy who was much more dapper than the German guy with the beard wrote that workers of the world might just consider uniting. You know, 1998 was the 150th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*. I had not read it since college. I went back and read it, and I was stunned. Obviously, the inherent revolutionary role of the proletariat that Marx predicted was something that the proletariat itself never quite warmed to, or even understood. But his description of the economy was mind-boggling. He started talking about doctors and lawyers working for wages. He started talking about nations on the penalty of extinction being forced to adopt the current capitalist mode of production. And I said, oh my God,

he's not writing about 1848; he's writing about, in that case, 1998. He's writing about 2005.

Michael Harrington managed to work Marx into lots of talks, so I'm going to take my stab at it, too. What Marx did is he looked at an acorn and described an oak, before anyone had ever seen an oak. We live in the age of the oak. The acorn has grown up. And our task as socialists, as well as our task as progressives, is not only to immerse ourselves in struggles but also to understand this world and to understand what folks have to do so they can live decent, fulfilling lives. It's not true, as Marx and Engels wrote, that the people we personify and the people we support have nothing to lose but their chains. But in the era of globalization, now more than ever, they and we surely have a world to win.

Harold Meyerson, a Vice Chair of DSA, was recognized at the Convention Dinner. This article is an edited version of his remarks.

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