

the yankee radical

Institute for
Democratic
Socialism

(617) 354-5078

January 2001

Holiday Party!

Saturday, January 20

8:00 PM

20 Marshall St.,
Brookline

T: Green Line,
Kent St. stop

Directions: (617) 354-5078



All right, it may be a bit late for a "Holiday" party, but not for Boston DSA's annual Victor Berger bash, this year hosted by Rich and Ellen Rosen. Berger, the first socialist elected to Congress (from Milwaukee) in 1910, was later illegally expelled by his colleagues for opposing World War I. And although Comrade Berger's Socialist Party electoral machine, which eventually succeeded in regaining his

Congressional seat, was largely based upon the Brewery Workers Union, DSA's party features a wide variety of beverages along with good food and political gossip.

This year's get-together will also celebrate Frank Smizik's victorious campaign for Brookline State Representative and welcome DSA National Director Horace Small's move to the Boston area.

DSA E Board vote, election debate

Rich Marlen, AFL-CIO

Judy Atkins, UE

Harris Gruman, Boston DSA

Rose Gonzalez, Green Party

Thursday, January 25

6:30: *Members meeting and
E Board election*

7:30: *Forum*

Workmen's Circle

1762 Beacon St., Brookline

On Thursday, January 25, a forum on the lessons to be drawn from the recent elections will follow an important Boston DSA members meeting.

The 6:30 PM members meeting will elect a new Executive Board to run the Local, and discuss proposals for Boston and national DSA projects. All members are eligible to vote and run for seats on the Exec Board. If you'd like more information before deciding if this is for you, leave an inquiry at (617) 354-5078.

Our 7:30 PM forum assesses the future direction of progressive politics after Election 2000. To the extent that DSA has been involved in past elections, on either the national or local level, we have generally supported specific Democratic Party candidates (Bernie Sanders being an obvi-

ous exception). But the Nader campaign divided DSA along with others on the left, and since the Greens now have ballot status in several states including Massachusetts, and don't seem to be going away anytime soon, this may be a good time to review some basic political questions.

Is Gore's defeat by Bush bad news, as the AFL-CIO, NAACP, and various pro-choice and environmental groups seem to feel? Or is it really no big deal, as the Naderites contend? Is the Green Party an ingenious device to get progressives working to elect Republicans? Or is it a grassroots alternative to the corrupt, corporate-controlled Republicrats, and a building block for a new progressive majority? Is it possible to work together on some key issues, while "agreeing to disagree" on others?

Addressing these issues and others will be Rich Marlen, Legislative Director of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Harris Gruman, Chair of Boston DSA; Rose Gonzalez, State Coordinator of the Green Party; and Judy Atkins, President of United Electrical Workers, District 2. (The UE was the only national union to endorse Nader.) Please join us.

Talk on Global Sweatshops



Bob Ross

Director, International Studies
Program, Clark University

Tuesday, February 13

6:30-9:00 PM

Cambridge Library, 45 Pearl St.

T: Red Line to Central Sq.

The monthly series of DSA co-sponsored talks on the global economy at the Cambridge Public Library shows no signs of winding down. In December Tim Costello, Director of the Campaign on Contingent Work, sketched in some practical alternatives to corporate globalization as outlined in his new book, *Globalization from Below*.

On January 16, Arthur MacEwan spoke on Neoliberalism as a global ideology, who it works for and who it doesn't. And on February 13, DSAer Bob Ross will analyze the rise and fall and rise again of sweatshops, from the turn of the last century to China, Central America and the U.S. today.

Questions or ideas for future talks should go to Paul Shannon of AFSC at (617) 497-5273.

2 Short Takes

Give D.C. the Vote

According to Boston DSA's Bette Denich, Mike Harrington recruited her friend and future roommate Eleanor Holmes to the Young Socialist League during one of his speaking tours at Antioch College in the late 1950's.

Eleanor Holmes (Norton) went on to be a longtime activist in the civil rights movement before becoming the District of Columbia's elected Congressional delegate. The problem is, she can't vote, since the new Republican majority took that right away from her in 1995. Of course the lack of democratic rights is something she shares with all residents of the District as part of the Federal government's longtime colonial rule, an arrangement denounced in a DSA resolution passed at last year's convention.

Full democracy for D.C. citizens could come from either Statehood or annexation to Maryland. The latter has geography, history and logic on its side; the former has more support in the District. Neither has much chance in this Congress.

Call your Congressman to urge the House Rules Committee to at least restore Eleanor Holmes Norton's right to cast a vote (202-224-3121). Visit Give It Back on the web, www.giveitback.org.

Global Justice Conference

On February 2-3, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century is holding a conference on "Building Post-Seattle Alliances for Economic Justice" at 396 Harvard St., Cambridge. Speakers include Walden Bello, Charles Derber, Naomi Klein and Mike Prokosch. It begins at 5:30 PM Friday. Follow-up conferences this Spring will hear Juliet Schor, Riane Eisler and Amartya Sen. (617) 491-1090.

Boston Vote

Boston Vote is a coalition of community groups ranging from the NAACP and the Codman Square Health Center to the Girl Scout Council, working to expand voter partici-

pation in Boston, especially among youth. Currently they're working on a voting rights agenda with City Councilor Chuck Turner and others. Sounds like a good local insurance policy against future Florida-type shenanigans. For more information call Malia Lazu (617) 542-VOTE, or for you webheads, Bostonvote.org.

Northeast Action

This year's regional conference of Northeast Action on February 9-10 brings together hundreds of progressive leaders, activists and elected officials for two days of discussions and workshops on public education, universal health care, clean elections, criminal justice reform, etc. Speakers include Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-Illinois); Chellie Pingree, the Senate Majority Leader of Maine; and Bill McNary, President of USAction. The conference takes place at the Sheraton Hotel in Braintree, and registration deadline is January 26. (617) 541-0500.

Statehouse Money

The Massachusetts Money and Politics Project has published a report, "On the Eve of Reform," profiling all political donors giving \$100 or more to state legislative incumbents. They find that a small group of donors account for most campaign funds, especially lobbyists, PAC's, lawyers and government employees. They also report that of the 43 states that held partisan elections in 2000, Massachusetts had the lowest percentage of contested legislative general elections in the nation—except for Arkansas! For a copy of the report call (617) 422-0017.

Plan Colombia

The National Political Committee of Democratic Socialists of America has condemned the Clinton Administration's \$1.3 billion aid package ("Plan Colombia") to fight the drug war in that country as a dangerous escalation of a failed U.S. policy. The resolution takes no side in the current conflict, stating that the Colombian

people have been victimized by atrocities of both right and left-wing guerrilla forces who also profit from the drug trade "on the backs of peasant farmers." In place of current U.S. policy, DSA favors the proposals of alternative development put forth by the European Union and United Nations. (Full text in Fall 2000 *Democratic Left*.)

Hanging Chads . . .

Boston DSA is pleased that three respected local progressives have decided to join. Judy Meredith, the "People's Lobbyist," has long fought the good fight at the Statehouse. Chuck Turner, after years of effective organizing in Roxbury, is now making a big impact as a City Councilor. (Both Judy and Chuck are past recipients of our Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award.) And Andi Mullin is both Political Director of the Commonwealth Coalition and President of Boston NOW. Welcome aboard! . . . Elaine Bernard reports that Canada's New Democratic Party lost 8 parliamentary seats in their recent election (from 21 to 13 out of 301). Worse, the labor movement there—the Canadian Labor Congress—is said to be "reassessing" its relationship to the Party, which it has strongly backed until now. Some past NDP supporters may have defected to the victorious Liberal Party to help fend off a new U.S.-style right-wing party, the Canadian Alliance. Elaine used to be an NDP official before coming south to Harvard to direct their trade union program. . . Another Former Boston DSA Chair Makes Good: John McDonough, who now teaches health care policy at Brandeis, has written a book on his adventures in the legislature as a Boston State Rep, *Experiencing Politics: A Legislator's Stories of Government and Healthcare*. Turning out not so good is Linda Chavez, a luminary of the Young People's Socialist League of the 1960's long since turned anti-union right-wing pundit, just appointed by Bush to head, of course, the Department of Labor.

—M.P.



ELECTION WRAP-UP

Tax Loss

by Jim St. George

On November 7, Massachusetts voters approved a massive \$1.2 billion state income tax cut. While labor and progressive groups came together to argue that there were better ways of using this money than a tax cut aimed mostly at the wealthy, voters bought Governor Cellucci's claim that we could cut taxes and increase spending on education, health care, and other vital investments.

As we said during the campaign, so long as the economy stays reasonably strong passage of Question 4 is not going to send the state into deep fiscal turmoil. It will, however, make it much harder to create or expand programs to help struggling families. One example: Project Bread, the state's leading anti-hunger organization, has unveiled a plan to guarantee free breakfasts to every needy child in the state. The plan would cost just \$4 million a year, but the Cellucci Administration has so far been unwilling to commit funds for the program. Imagine. We have the resources for a \$1.2 billion tax cut aimed at the wealthy, but not to ensure that hungry children get a nutritious breakfast.

Make no mistake; funding vital programs in Massachusetts will be challenging in the coming years. And the challenge will get worse next year if (as seems likely) the new Bush administration succeeds in eliminating the federal estate tax. Why will that hurt Massachusetts? Our estate tax is directly tied to the federal tax, meaning that when the federal estate tax is repealed, ours is gone too, along with the \$200 million a year it provides.

Where do we go from here? *the* The Tax Equity Alliance for Massachusetts (TEAM) is anticipating two lines of attack to generate the revenue needed to fund important programs. First, we must repeal that uncon-

scionable state loophole for investment income, the 1994 capital gains tax cut. Starting next year, income from long-term capital assets will be tax free in Massachusetts, costing the state some \$400 million a year. It's time that investors and executives paid at least as much as bank tellers and nurses.

Second, we're going to work hard to address the corporate subsidies flowing through the state tax codes. These subsidies should be held to the same tough standard as on-budget spending programs. We want to know what we're spending and what we're getting for them. And if businesses (like Raytheon) take a big tax cut but then do not provide the jobs they guarantee, we intend to take that tax cut back.

Jim St. George is Executive Director of the Tax Equity Alliance for Massachusetts, which led a DSA-supported coalition in opposition to ballot questions 4 and 6.

WFA Wins Worcester

By Harris Gruman

This November the Battle of Worcester was fought, and the Working Family Agenda won it decisively. Yet as we are but the playthings of history, it was rather overshadowed by the even more epic Battle of Florida. Before we could enjoy our hard-won victory, we were besieged with questions like, "What do you make of the recount?" and "Will you be going to Palm Beach now?" Unfortunately, Palm Beach is outside our jurisdiction. So let us now consider what happened two months ago in Central Massachusetts, how it happened, and what it means.

Three years of hard work for the Working Family Agenda coalition (which includes DSA) came to a head in this year's election. In February we found a progressive candidate, Jim Leary, to take on Bill McManus, the worst of Worcester's conservative State Reps. McManus, who had the

worst voting record of any Democrat in the State House, served in the leadership team of House Speaker Finneran, and was a supporter of Republican Governor Cellucci, knew we could beat him in a primary, so he switched from Democrat to Independent to garner the Republican and centrist votes of a presidential election while holding on to his Democratic hacks. Another conservative Democrat—a City Councillor of twenty years!—jumped into the primary against our candidate. Thus, we were faced with back to back races, both difficult because they were against long-time incumbents.

So Neighbor to Neighbor, the AFL-CIO, the Teachers Association, and the Commonwealth Coalition fielded an army. For the primary we had a voter universe of 6000 likely voters, who we contacted three times each (at their door, by phone, and by mail). Our July poll showed the opponent ahead of us by 14 points, mostly due to name recognition. On primary day, September 19th, we beat him 62 to 38%!

For the general election we had a voter universe of 16,000 presidential voters. Again we contacted them all three times before the election, and all our ID'd voters six times between Saturday and election day (over 150 people worked for Leary on election day). At 8:30 p.m., precinct captains began calling in results, and we won 71 to 29%—possibly the largest margin of victory against a leadership incumbent in the state's history!

This victory was in the Northeast district of Worcester, but the coalition-backed candidate in the Northwest district, a progressive housing activist named Bob Spellane, also won an open seat. Worcester, the second largest city in New England after Boston, has five Rep districts, and we now have allies in three. (This includes the only pre-existing Rep we were able to work with, Vincent

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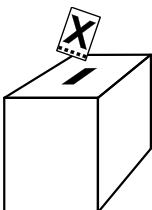
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Pedone.) The progressive resurgence in Worcester began with the victory of Congressman Jim McGovern in 1996, and seems to be building to a progressive bid for Mayor in 2001. Not a bad five-year plan!

What does this victory demonstrate objectively? The power of uniting three crucial constituencies of a possible left majority in the Commonwealth. First, the most obvious: low income people (mostly Latinos, Blacks, senior citizens, immigrants, and single white mothers). Second, and also fairly obvious: the unionized working class. Third, and often overlooked, the progressive urban middle class, mostly in public administration and service and teaching, but also small business people and others who remain committed to urban life and the all for one/one for all attitudes it implies if it's to succeed. The latter are what Michael Harrington called the "conscience constituency" in 1964, and they are, as he noted then, *not* the ideological and rhetorical radicals (whose right wing is inhabited by us DSAers), but progressives of a more organic, less demonstrative nature.

These three forces were present in almost equal measure in Northeast Worcester: Great Brook Valley and Lincoln Village housing projects (2500 voters), the unions (2500 members), and the progressive middle-class Irish-American community (that produced candidates like Jim McGovern and Jim Leary). Together a coalition like this is unstoppable, and it shows that the Working Family Agenda strategy can become the majoritarian movement we need to win progressive power.

Harris Gruman is Chair of Boston DSA and Campaigns Director for Neighbor to Neighbor.

**Nice Try**

by *Judy Deutsch*

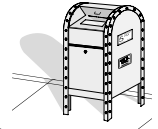
Did you ever have an urge to run for the state legislature, instead of just complaining about it? I did. The bottom line is that my successful opponent (Susan Pope, the two-term Republican incumbent) received 12,759 votes (62%), and I received 7,150 (35%) as the Democratic challenger. A Libertarian candidate received 3%.

Many of my supporters have told me how glad they are that I ran—that I introduced and discussed important issues that needed to be introduced and discussed. One said that I was successful in moving my opponent “from the extreme right to the far right,” and all of them said that I ran a really good campaign.

Those who voted for me were the ones who have long felt unrepresented on income taxes, welfare and health care, and more recently on the death penalty, gun control, campaign finance reform and a living wage. These issues were not of paramount importance to most of the voters. What seemed to matter most was that our District (Maynard and affluent Sudbury and Wayland) be able to get what it could from the State. At least one of the towns voted overwhelmingly for the reduction in the State income tax and against the health care question.

The District, as configured now, has voted for a Republican State Representative for more than 34 years. The Republican leadership in Sudbury seems to believe that the new people are less conservative. My door-to-door experience leads me to believe that may be true but that it will probably be some time before a Democrat will win the seat, especially because so many of the “liberals” are eager to see two parties represented in the State Legislature.

Judy Deutsch is a Board member of DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission.

Letters

Dear Friends:

I joined the YPSL when I was 15 and I am now 71. That means that for quite a few Presidential elections now I get to read letters in the style of those in your September issue: a vote for McReynolds is a vote for Bush, a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush, a vote for Wallace is a vote for Dewey, and the like.

What is the matter with you? Why have a party at all? Also, excuse me, what a bunch of bull. May I suggest you change your name to *The Yankee Milquetoast*? Yours,

Karl V. Teeter

Editor:

I am doing some research on the history of the Socialist Party of Massachusetts, and ask your help.

- Where can I read over past editions of the *Yankee Radical*, 1962-present?
- Where are the archived files, if any, of the SP of Mass.—from 1950s-1960s, and prior to these decades (1900-1960)?

Papers of such SP members as Julius Bernstein, Joseph B. Greenfield, Frank Manning, Mary Donovan, and Alfred Baker Lewis, and others, would be welcome as well.

Many thanks.

Bill Shakalis

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Cutting out the Middleman: Local Co-op Aids 3rd-World Farmers

By Rodney North

In light of the recent election we should be glad there is more than one way to cast a vote for the kind of world we'd like to live in. For example, the organization I work with, Equal Exchange, a worker-owned co-op based in Canton, MA, is making it possible for hundreds of thousands of North Americans to "vote" for a more democratic and just economy with every cup of tea or coffee. Before describing how, let me sketch in some background information.

Coffee production is the backbone of many national economies, especially in Latin America and parts of Africa. Often it is a country's largest export and source of foreign exchange. Coffee is also the life blood of thousands of rural communities around the world, and the livelihood for millions of small-scale farmers who supply most of the world's production. Therefore the coffee trade determines, in part, people's opportunities, their standard of living, and the nature of their societies.

Unfortunately, for the vast majority reliant on coffee, the system of bringing coffee to lucrative markets in the North is stacked against them. Most farmers live in isolated communities where it's a "buyers market." A middleman with cash, a vehicle, and information on the constantly fluctuating coffee market is the only buyer for the farmers' harvest, and he sets the terms. Farmers have little choice but to accept. Consequently, the small farmers get the equivalent of sweatshop wages for their year's crop. These middlemen may also be the only source for loans at critical times. This means borrowing at usurious rates against future harvests, and often falling into an inescapable cycle of debt. (Unfortunately, most farmers around the world, including North America, are in similar situations.)

So, this—or the plantation system, which can be even worse—is how most coffee is brought out of the

countryside. The middlemen sells the coffee to local processors (who are often local plantations), who sell to a handful of powerful exporters. The exporters sell to importers and/or to the large US coffee companies. It is a rigid social pyramid with no interest in aiding the small farmers at its base.

However, some of these poor farmers—knowing their land to be ill-suited for other crops, and not wishing to take their chances in the overcrowded cities—make the best of it by forming or joining cooperatives. Together many poor farmers can do what they couldn't do alone, such as buy a truck or build a warehouse or processing shed. But forming co-ops is no easy feat, and many rural leaders have been killed for challenging the status quo with this kind of organizing. Hence, the greater need for close ties and international solidarity. And even in times of peace large, well established co-ops still face two major problems: the usually low world market price for coffee, and a lack of funds to buy coffee from the co-op members at harvest time.

This is where Equal Exchange (and a handful of other small fair trade organizations) come in. Since 1991, recognizing how the coffee industry was impoverishing small farmers, we chose to embrace the international standards of fair trade. This means we buy our coffee from democratically organized co-ops of small farmers; pay a guaranteed minimum of \$1.26 per pound (more than twice the current world price); offer affordable pre-harvest financing; and support sustainable agriculture (for example, 70% of our coffee is certified organic).

Equal Exchange has followed these principles not out of charity but rather to create an alternative for farmers' based on human needs and mutual solidarity. This year we will purchase approximately 1,500,000 pounds of coffee from 17 cooperatives in 10 different countries, all of it



fairly traded.

Another recent development has been the creation of a domestic version of Equal Exchange called Red Tomato. In only 3 years this non-profit has begun "recreating local food systems," which means they are helping to re-connect local markets with family farms. The goal is to build up consumer demand for local, ecologically grown fruits and vegetables, provide a reliable supply of high quality produce to meet that demand; and thereby raise and stabilize incomes to local farms.

But possibly our greatest accomplishment has been demonstrating the feasibility of fair trade to our larger competitors. This past year some conventional corporations, such as Starbucks, Green Mountain, and Peet's have bowed to popular pressure and have begun, albeit in only a small way, to follow fair trade standards for some of their imports. This has already led to a doubling of the amount of fair trade coffee being sold in the US. We are hoping this is just the beginning of reform for the 3 billion dollar specialty coffee industry.

Rodney North (781-830-0303 ext. 233, info@equalexchange.com) is the Answer Man at Equal Exchange.

Professor charged with assault

Ned Price, a DSA member and a math professor at Framingham State College, has been charged with assault and battery to racially intimidate after a verbal altercation with a student. In interviews with the local press, Price's colleagues have questioned the accuser's credibility. Price is known as a supporter of the civil rights movement who was active in the movement against the Vietnam war. He is president of his chapter of the faculty union. Further inquiries: mprice@frc.mass.edu.

—David Keil

The Limits to Land Use Planning

By Monte Pearson

The Land that Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century, by William A. Shutkin. MIT Press, 244 pp. 2000.

This is a brilliant, but puzzling, new book about urban environmentalism. The initial argument is original and critical of the capitalist growth process; however, the political punch line calls for incremental reforms with grassroots involvement in planning thrown in for flavor.

Shutkin's initial analysis of environmental issues and American democracy is rooted in two divergent streams of political thought. One is the Jeffersonian notion that a healthy connection to the earth (exemplified by farming in Jefferson's day) is a necessary component of a healthy social and political life. Later, Walt Whitman and Lewis Mumford bemoaned the destruction of natural areas through unplanned growth and connected that destruction to a loss of community and civic participation in the country's growing urban areas.

Following these thinkers, Shutkin links the decline of social capital in the United States (see Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*) and the decline of political participation with the assault of industrial capitalism on our environment. Shutkin points out that American political ideas about individualism and the sanctity of private property have facilitated land use policies that favor corporate profits and result in the destruction of environmental resources. He believes that since WWII suburban sprawl, toxic pollution, and the automobile culture have created a physical landscape that impedes the development and nurturing of community. Thus, our environmental problems are reinforcing the decline in community spirit that results from the intrusion of the market into social relationships.

Due to these trends, suburban and small city America now face the same civic decline and environmental degradation once associated with

urban, minority neighborhoods. Here Shutkin picks up a second stream of political thought, the critique of social norms and environmental politics known as the environmental justice movement.

Environmental justice advocates like Mark Dowie assert that the mainstream environmental movement is dominated by white, upper-class men more interested in preserving recreational wilderness areas than in protecting the vast majority of Americans who live in steadily more polluted urban and suburban areas (see his *Losing Ground*). Mainstream environmentalists are especially neglectful of urban, minority groups who live in polluted cities surrounded by brownfield sites. In addition to economic and political discrimination, these groups are subjected to multiple health and social ills created by the environment around them.

The above critiques, while well presented, are primarily repeats of other people's ideas. Here Shutkin makes a brilliant linkage of the two lines of political thinking through the concept of "civic environmentalism." On one level, it encompasses a description and critique of the situation facing urban minorities and suburban residents. "Civic environmentalism" posits an ideal society, where people live in self-governing communities, using social capital built up through personal interactions to work together for a better future.

In contrast to this ideal, American capitalism brings an environmentally destructive and undemocratic kind of economic growth, which generates inequality, destruction of community, and declining political participation.

On another level, civic environmentalism points the way toward a subjective process by which people from all communities might work together to reclaim their environment and society. People, Shutkin claims, have a need for a feeling of place. This concept of "place" encompasses both a love of nature and also a need for civic interaction. To restore and

defend places that are important to them, people from urban and suburban communities can develop a civic environmentalism that may enable them to work together to challenge the capitalist development process.

To flesh out his idea, Shutkin describes four community development processes that he believes contain the seeds of future changes. Here his traditional political notions about incremental change betray the more radical implications of his earlier argument. Shutkin believes that democratic land-use planning, planning which considers the viewpoint of many stakeholders, is the key vehicle for building civic environmentalism.

However, the rural and suburban examples he cites are attempts by citizen groups to channel growth in semi-rural areas through a variety of clever planning techniques. None confront the logic of capitalist development that he has so persuasively indicted for creating our economic and environmental problems. His urban examples are projects attempting, with community input, to revitalize low-income, minority neighborhoods. Each attempts to channel growth into neglected urban areas.

All of his examples involve people getting together in heroic attempts at reform, and all of them are deserving of our good wishes. But none of them confront the corporate values or wealthy developers who operate at the core of our development process.

Shutkin's land-use planning system is a weak line of defense when confronting the capitalist development bulldozer. In our political system people have the freedom to protest, but unless they move on to grasp political power, the bulldozer will eventually have its way. I hope that Shutkin's next book presents concrete ideas for how citizens' groups, inspired by civic environmentalism, can turn the bulldozer off.

Former DSA Board Member Monte Pearson has worked for the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Third parties and the Left: Two views

Thanks, Ralph Nader and David McReynolds

Nader: No

By David Keil

If the Ralph Nader campaign spelled the difference between victory and defeat for Al Gore, it was because hundreds of thousands of voters made a new sort of judgment call. This was the calculation that the difference between Gore and Bush was not large enough to trump the year-2000 opportunity to vote, for a change, for hopes rather than against fears. This may spell the beginning of the end for lesser-evilism in this country.

When one evil paves the way for the other, which is lesser? Johnson paved the way for Nixon, Carter for Reagan. We need not liken the Republican Party to the Nazi Party (to the contrary!) to point out that a vote for “lesser evil” Hindenburg vs. Hitler was a vote for Hitler, because, among other acts, Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor shortly afterward. In the case of the Democrats and Republicans, policies are so similar that the parties switch places in power periodically without the slightest change in the political or social atmosphere of the country.

Ralph Nader’s service in 2000 was to point out that the candidates of the parties that monopolize our elections are indistinguishable *for practical purposes* (voting), as journalists have pointed out that they are hard to tell apart for journalistic purposes.

Politics is less about winning office than winning on issues. Another contributor to our political education in 2000 was David McReynolds, the Socialist Party candidate, who wrote, “Politics is about who lives and who dies, not simply about who will live better and who won’t.... If I take politics seriously it is because it shapes our lives, and is only a game for the ruling class.” The media ignored McReynolds, but millions saw his name in November on the photos of the Florida “Butterfly” ballot. Election laws kept his name off the ballot in states like Massachusetts, as Nader was excluded from the debates by similar bipartisan unfairness. But truth shines through.

Do supporters of parties that silenced and excluded Nader, McReynolds, and everyone like them, have any right to complain to us, now that their man has lost?

For Nader to have gained an opportunity to raise some issues that badly needed to be raised is more than worth the cost of letting a bipartisan Democrat-led administration lose to a bipartisan Republican-led one.

A *Salon* article by Todd Gitlin touted the left “pragmatism” of supporting Gore and called the third-party strategy “a doomed enterprise” because “the Constitution is decisively tilted against it.” The Nader voters are right to object to this logic. What is doomed is any strategy based

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By Mike Pattberg

Left debates on this Presidential election mostly reframe longstanding arguments about the Democratic Party. Ever since the New Deal, socialists opposed to supporting liberal Democrats have never tired of pointing out that the DP was not a socialist, or social democratic, or even class-based party—and often not even “progressive,” whatever that loaded term happened to mean at any given time. Many urged instead a labor party based on the unions. A few socialists denounced even this proposal as insufficiently radical, since it was based (hypothetically) on union leadership and not the rank and file. Many instructive debates were held in small socialist organizations as to which kind of non-existent labor party was preferable. Needless to say, all had principles and positions far in advance of the Democrats.

In fairness, before the current method of selecting candidates through party primaries became dominant about 30 years ago the labor party perspective had some logic to it, hopeless as it might look in retrospect. There was no easy way for progressives to challenge Democratic Party policies or candidates except in November. So in 1948 both Norman Thomas and Henry Wallace felt compelled to run their very different kinds of left protest campaigns against Truman and the Democrats. On the other hand, the Communist Party experienced the height of its numbers, power and influence when it abandoned its previous ultra-left course to become the Stalinist wing of the New Deal in the mid-1930s.

In any case, by the early 1960s some within the Socialist Party (including future DSA leaders), adopting a variant of the CP’s strategy 25 years earlier, had broken with prevailing labor party orthodoxy. (Or the belief that the SP should continue to run its own candidates without support from labor or anyone else, another version of the same idea.) They instead advanced the concept of “Realignment” in the Democratic Party; forging a coalition of labor, blacks and middle-class liberals and radicals to take over the Party by purging (democratically, of course) Southern racists, big-city bosses and other retrograde elements.

Reality is often a step or two ahead of even the best theoreticians. Today the Dixiecrats and urban political machines are largely gone, thanks to the civil rights movement and the institution of primaries to choose Democratic Party nominees after the debacle of 1968, the last boss-ridden Presidential Convention. But instead of opening up the DP to “the people,” as liberals had hoped, replacing conventions with primaries has replaced the

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on the permanence of any political straitjacket. If it becomes evident to everyone that the Electoral College has created a mess for 2001-2004, then it will be replaced. If the two-party straitjacket ceases to work, it will fall too.

Gitlin is mistaken to think that he can claim anyone's vote for one component of this monopoly by arguing that the monopoly is eternal. This is 2000 Todd; the Stalinist monolith has fallen, Suharto is gone, Pinochet is on trial, Internet stocks are king one year and tank the next. Nothing lasts forever; nothing.

Having been held to a dead tie despite Gore's loss of votes to Nader, the Republicans were ferocious in hijacking the post-election process. It is reminiscent of the ferocity of the Clinton impeachment period. In each case, the stakes were not issues but offices. The lesson of Clinton's experience was that when one coopts half the platform of the Republicans one gains nothing but an angry swarm of Republican office-holders at one's back. Gore learned nothing of that. (Bush learned something.)

Despite the Bush-Cheney-Powell-Ashcroft win, the 2000 election has had positive features. The gang now in power has a dark cloud over its head. A movement for voting rights has been mobilized in Florida; it was reflected even in Congress January 6 by Black members' protests against the Gore-led crowning of Bush.

The country is on notice that Democratic candidates will ignore anti-corporate forces only at their own risk. The scandalous bipartisan foreign policy—Iraq, Cuba, Kosovo, Star Wars, Colombia, Afghanistan, Sudan—is laid bare more than ever.

The veneration of Supreme-Court impartiality is mostly gone now; it is known not to be impartial even between the country's twin dominant parties.

Having had to silence himself on abortion all fall, Bush cannot pretend he has even half a mandate to attack women's rights. Lacking any illusions that Ashcroft and Co. will defend abortion rights, the undefeated pro-choice forces can be expected to mobilize more than before to defend reproductive rights. While it may be a bad four years for Supreme-Court nominees, the Court is likely to be somewhat stymied from now on as an anti-women, anti-minority institution.

Robert Borosage wrote aptly in the *Nation* (11/29/00), "progressives should be emboldened not discouraged." Harold Meyerson is utterly mistaken to claim that Nader's candidacy "will cripple" the left.

While there are interesting contributions to be made on both sides of the third-party debate, to suggest that Nader is guilty of "bad faith" (Gitlin), to say "Shame on you" to swing-state Nader voters (Meyerson) will not advance the discussion. The decision by Democratic Socialists of America to refrain from endorsing any candidate for President in the 2000 election was a prudent one. The Cambridge DSA-sponsored forum early last fall, where we aired the views of varied forces inside and outside DSA, was an example for future election-oriented activities.

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Party structure itself; there is not much left to "take over," or realign with. In its place are freelance, entrepreneurial candidates who owe nothing to the "party bosses," now almost as non-existent as the labor party, but to whichever right or leftwing interest group can finance their television campaign ads.

Which brings us to last November.

It's not hard to understand why some progressives were tempted to vote Green—and even easier after listening to some Gore statements, like his solemn pledge to throw even more money at the Pentagon than Bush (a vain hope). Much of Ralph Nader's case against Gore-Clinton (NAFTA, WTO, Telecommunications Act, subsidized arms sales, etc.) was compelling, well argued, sometimes inspiring. At least as seen on late night CSPAN, his speeches showed what a more user-friendly U.S. radicalism might look like. Civil society and democratic institutions were portrayed not as hoaxes or frauds to be deconstructed, but as a worthy inheritance to be protected against corporate interests. Even if he seemed uneasy with some issues, he covered more ground than Gore, and his focus on local business, small farmers and "the commercialization of childhood" were hopeful attempts to move the left beyond the cultural ghettos of Cambridge, Berkeley and Manhattan.

Still, some of his rhetoric was the kind of glib half-truths you expect from a campaigning politician, such as his easy dismissal of the consequences of a Bush victory. A few of his statements were just bizarre, like his claim that the Clinton-Gore civil rights record was worse than Ronald Reagan's "except for housing discrimination," something he knows because he says two conveniently anonymous friends in the Justice Department told him so.

Finally though, the AFL-CIO, NAACP, NOW, NARAL, ACORN, the Sierra Club, etc., weren't wrong to support Gore. They responded to actual, not imaginary choices, and real candidate differences, most of which didn't make it into the campaign but all of which affect their constituents.

But not necessarily Nader voters, all 2.7% of them. As Eric Alterman noted in the *Nation*, the Nader movement had little support among blacks, Latinos and unions, or organized feminist, gay rights and environmental groups. What it seems to be is the self-expression of the ideological left, standing alone. The kind of people who read . . . well, the *Nation*. Middle-class activists less compelled into politics by their life conditions than by general ideas of social reform.

The Nader campaign shows what happens when this grouping goes off on its own. Denials to the contrary, it's clear from looking at Florida and New Hampshire that Nader indeed cost Gore the election. A little of what we're in for is already apparent: a Christian Coalition Attorney General, a proponent of the anti-union Paycheck Protection Act as Secretary of Labor, a James Watt pro-

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