the yankee radical

Institute for Democratic Socialism

(617) 354-5078 October 2001

Work, Welfare, and Poverty: The Impact of Welfare Reform

William Julius Wilson, Harvard University
Robert Haynes, AFL-CIO
Heather Higginbottom, Office of Sen. John Kerry
Dottie Stevens, Survival News

Tuesday, October 30, 7:30 pm
Northeastern University, Curry Student Center
Sponsor: Democratic Socialists of America
Co-Sponsors: Center for Urban and Regional Policy; Boston Workplace Development Coalition
T: Green Line, Northeastern stop; Orange Line, Ruggles stop.

It's clear by now that the most dire predictions of many progressives about the disastrous consequences of the 1996 welfare reform law have not come true. Statistics show that at least a little of the U.S. economic boom finally began to reach the urban poor during Clinton's second term, aided by almost full employment, various community "self-help" initiatives, and progressive legislation like increases in the earned income tax credit and minimum wage. This has correlated with falling rates of crime, child poverty, unmarried teen birthrates and, according to the liberal Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, single-parent families. But other studies show that while welfare rolls have been cut in half, many former recipients, especially women with children, are locked into low-paying jobs which entail the loss of some previous benefits, like health care. In short, welfare as we knew it has been cut far more than poverty.

And with the almost unanimously predicted coming recession, accelerated by September 11, we may be about to discover how much of the negative aspects of welfare reform were obscured by the last decade's economic growth. The day before terrorists struck America, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a piece entitled, "Hard Times Hit Ordinary Joes—Now Unemployment is Rising for Blue Collar Workers; No Job, No Safety Net?" The article noted that the unusual (disturbing?) recent phenomena of layoffs and economic hardships striking "dot.coms, skilled technical workers and college graduates, not sales clerks or orderlies" seems to be coming to an end. Harvard economist Lawrence Katz states that "Things are looking more like the recession of the early 1990s. The group that usually gets clobbered is starting to get clobbered again."

The 1996 welfare law needs to be re-authorized, or modified, by next year, and few are as qualified as William Julius Wilson to analyze its first five years or suggest future legislative changes. Professor Wilson has written extensively on urban poverty, and is currently conducting a study of low-income neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago and San Antonio on the impact of welfare reform. A panel of respondents will reply to Wilson's national policy ideas and speak to state issues concerning welfare and working families. They include Bob Haynes, President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, along with Heather Higginbottom, legislative assistant to Senator John Kerry, and Dottie Stevens from *Survival News.*

Endorsements

The Boston chapter of Democratic Socialists of America supports the following candidates and referendums this November:

For Boston City Council

At Large, Felix Arroyo: (617) 250-0088; *www.felixarroyo.net*

For Somerville Board of Aldermen

At Large, Denise Provost, (617) 628-1130; *www.provost-citywide.org*
Ward 2, Kevin Tarpley (617) 625-6089

BALLOT QUESTIONS

Community Preservation Act (Boston): (617) 822-9100 *www.BostonCPA.org*
Community Preservation Act (Cambridge): (617) 864-1110; *www.voteyeson1.com*

DSA Members Meeting

Thursday, October 23
6:30 DSA Board Meeting
7:30 DSA Members Meeting
Workmen's Circle
1762 Beacon St., Brookline
T: Green Line, C Train, Washington St. stop

Following the monthly meeting of the DSA Exec Board, our 7:30 PM members meeting will review the November 8-11 DSA national convention in Philadelphia, including confirmation of delegates and convention resolutions. We will also continue the discussion begun at our August 18 members meeting about possible future projects, such as

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November Elections

On August 18 Boston DSA's Summer conference voted to endorse Denise Provost and Kevin Tarpley for re-election to Somerville's Board of Aldermen, Felix Arroyo for an At-Large seat on the Boston City Council, and local referendum campaigns for the Community Preservation Act in Boston and Cambridge.

In her first term as one of Somerville's four At-Large Aldermen, Denise Provost has stood fast against "Big Box" developers, demanding neighborhood consultation. An urban environmentalist, she has pushed for neighborhood community gardens and has been a strong advocate for expanded public transportation, calling for a T stop at Assembly Square, a Union Square stop on the commuter rail line, and a Green Line extension. Her supporters include Boston NOW, the MA Women's Political Caucus, and Ironworkers Local 7.

Kevin Tarpley, the first African-American elected in Somerville, sponsored and helped push through a "living wage" ordinance in his first term. Kevin has shown solidarity with many trade union struggles, both on the picket line and in City Hall, and has organized Ward 2 residents and local businesses to negotiate for mixed-use development and affordable housing. He is backed by SEIU 285, Ironworkers Local 7, Carpenters Local 218, Firemen and Oilers Local 3, and the Allied Painters Council.

Long-time progressive activist Felix Arroyo was raised in Puerto Rican public housing; his father was a police detective, his garment seamstress mother an ILGWU member. Past President of the Boston School Committee and current critic of the MCAS test, Felix was a policy advisor to both Mayor Ray Flynn and Senator John Kerry, and an active opponent of U.S. Central American policy in the 1980s. He is endorsed by the SEIU State Council, Boston NOW, CPPAX, Mel King, Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner and State Rep. Shirley Owens-Hicks.

The most important elections to be decided this November may be several local referenda on the Community Preservation Act (CPA), as Hillary Pizer explains elsewhere on this page. CPA is backed by numerous affordable housing, environmental and community groups, from the Chinese Progressive Association and GBIO to City Life and the Conservation Law Foundation.

Vote YES on CPA

By Hillary Pizer

Housing organizations, environmental groups, neighborhood development organizations and historic preservationists have joined together with labor unions and senior citizens to put the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on Boston's ballot on November 6th. This broad and deep coalition has already gathered 43,000 signatures of registered voters in Boston to qualify for the ballot—and support is continuing to grow. It is the biggest grassroots effort Boston has seen in a long time. Cambridge, Newton, Waltham, Peabody, and many other cities will also be putting this question to the voters this November.

At stake in Boston are tens of millions of dollars for affordable housing, neighborhood green space, and preservation of historic buildings and local business districts. If passed, the CPA would generate an estimated $52 million for Boston in the first two years alone, to be replenished each year. The CPA would be in effect for at least the next five years. After that it would have to go through another referendum campaign.

CPA funds would come from a 2% surcharge on property taxes. Owners of commercial and industrial property would contribute 80% of the money; 20% would come from homeowners and landlords. There are two important exemptions that make this a great deal for Boston residents. The first is that all low and moderate income households would be exempt from the surcharge. The second is that all residential property owners would get an exemption for the first hundred thousand dollars of their property's value. The bottom line is that the average homeowner in Boston would pay less than $18 per year into the fund in exchange for a $22 million investment in the city. Homeowners in Boston's lower income neighborhoods would pay substantially less.

Boston needs the CPA for many reasons. We have low and moderate income workers who are struggling to pay Boston's average rent of $1600 per month. We have working families who can't find a home to call their own in the neighborhoods where they were born and raised. We have children who need nearby parks and playgrounds. And we have beautiful churches and other historic buildings that are literally crumbling and in need of repair. The CPA is also an opportunity for Boston to qualify for state matching funds that will boost the city's economy. Of the estimated $52 million CPA would raise in Boston in the next two years, $24 million would come from state matching dollars. To wait is to lose those funds that will go to other communities instead.

The time is now to vote YES on CPA. For more information, call the campaign at 617-822-9100 or visit our website at *www.bostoncpa.org*.

Hillary Pizer is Associate Director, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance (MAHA).

Labor Drive for Wages, Parental Leave

The Campaign for Working Families, backed by the state AFL-CIO, has launched a signature drive to place two initiatives on next year's November ballot. One would raise, then index, the state minimum wage to the inflation rate, thus ensuring cost of living raises to the working poor. The other would establish a "New Families Trust Fund" to partially compensate working parents who choose to take time off to care for newborn children; targeted tax credits would help mollify small business.

As required by state election law, the Campaign needs signatures now in order to qualify for the 2002 ballot. DSAers who want to help should call Faye Ruth Fisher at the Mass. AFL-CIO, 617-227-8260, ext 11.

Meatpackers March

By Marcy Goldstein-Gelb

On September 20, in a powerful show of support for the workers at Kayem Foods Incorporated, more than 150 members of community, religious and labor organizations marched from Chelsea City Hall to the Kayem plant holding signs aloft and chanting, "¡Si, se puede!" (Yes, you can!)"

Brought together by the MA Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH), community groups, the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1445 and Kayem employees, the marchers sent a clear message to management of the Chelsea meatpacking plant: we will not tolerate Kayem's deplorable work conditions and the company's ongoing battle to block workers' right to organize.

Demonstrators cheered as speakers voiced support for the workers. A MassCOSH report released at the rally documented unsafe conditions for Kayem employees, including lost fingers in meat-slicers and chemical burns.

At the close of the rally a delegation of Kayem workers and their supporters attempted to deliver a letter to Company president Ray Monkiewicz, urging him to address unsafe conditions and allow workers to elect a health and safety committee to oversee improvements. At first refused entry, the delegation was finally met by plant team leader Wilfredo Alas, who blamed the injuries and illnesses on the workers themselves. "This sort of response discourages workers from speaking up and demonstrates the company's unwillingness to address the serious and well-documented problems at the plant," said MassCOSH Executive Director Marcy Goldstein-Gelb.

The coalition that came together on September 20 has vowed to continue the fight to protect the rights of the workers as they speak up for safe working conditions. We ask you to send letters supporting the right to organize and safe work conditions to: Ray Monkiewicz, President, Kayem Foods Incorporated, 75 Arlington Street, Chelsea, MA 02150.

Jim Drake, Organizer

by Lew Finfer

Jim Drake, a co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union, a renowned community organizer with the Industrial Areas Foundation, and founding organizer of Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, died last month of cancer at age 63.

Jim grew up in Oklahoma. In l962, as a young clergyman, he joined Migrant Ministries to work with low-paid migrant workers in California. He met Cesar Chavez and, under his direction, worked for 17 years to organize those migrant workers into the United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO. This involved very hard work to negotiate the first extensive contracts to gain union benefits and work place rights for tens of thousands of workers. It involved tumultuous conflicts with powerful growers supported by then Governor and later President Ronald Reagan.

Jim Drake coordinated the famous UFW boycotts of grapes and lettuce in the l970's that millions of American participated in. This led to union recognition of the migrant workers and pioneered the large scale use of this tactic in subsequent struggles.

Beginning in the late l970s, Jim began other community organizing work that took him across the country. He founded the United Woodcutters Association and the Southern Woodcutters Assistance Project in Mississippi to help these low income workers deal with the large paper companies. It was a unique bi-racial organization in a state that hadn't seen that before.

In l983, he became an organizer for the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), an international federation of broad based community organizations, and worked on its national staff until his death. This carried him to work for Valley Interfaith in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, where he helped organize campaigns that led to the appropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars to bring basic water and sewage to residents of third world style colonias, along with political empowerment of Mexican-Americans in the region.

Jim also organized the South Bronx Churches in New York City to help revive an area that U.S. Presidents hadn't been able to help. That group built over 800 units of affordable housing and opened a model public high school called Bronx Leadership Academy. In l995 he came to Massachusetts and organized Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, which is credited with increasing appropriations for affordable housing by hundreds of millions of dollars, improving schools, and organizing immigrants for their rights.

His greatest accomplishment and legacy is the many hundreds of community and labor organizers and leaders whom he trained and mentored, and who continue to work for social and economic justice across the U.S.

A memorial service was held on September 30 in Roxbury. Donations in his memory can be sent to GBIO, 307 Bowdoin Street, Boston, MA 02122.

Lew Finfer is Director of the Organizing and Leadership Training Center.

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working with AFL-CIO to index the minimum wage, continuation of the DSA-Neighbor to Neighbor lobbying network, various study groups, more involvement in the anti-sweatshop movement, responses to September 11, etc. Finally, we'll be mobilizing for the November election on behalf of our endorsed candidates abnd referenda.

Stan Weir (1921-2001): trade unionist, democrat, socialist.

SEPTEMBER 11

As we go to press October 8, the air war over Afghanistan has just begun and little information about results of that action has come in. The items below were written in the wake of the atrocities of September 11.

National DSA Statement

Nothing can justify the terrorist attacks that came from the skies on September 11th. Democratic Socialists of America condemns these brutal crimes. The victims of this tragedy require effective justice not politically motivated hyperbole. Few have been spared the agony of some personal connection to the pain and anguish caused to those who have lost family or friends. Our hearts are with all who have lost loved ones and colleagues. All of the perpetrators of these criminal acts must be brought before the bar of justice. In the days and weeks ahead we will begin to learn the identities of those who perished, compounding the shock of the terrible images that we all saw time, and time again, on our television screens.

Our television screens have also been filled with the pundits of the right pushing their agenda of increased military spending and diminished civil liberties. Progressives and progressive elected officials must demand that all proposals be based on proven need rather than emotional excess. Sadly such excess has already resulted in attacks against Americans of the Islamic and Sikh faiths. There can be no doubt that more effective anti-terrorist measures including more effective intelligence gathering, better security measures and policing of the skies are necessary. But we cannot allow these needs to be used as fig leaves for wasteful and ineffective increases in military spending.

Nor should our response be unilateral. The community of nations has condemned this heinous act. We should act with them to extradite these criminals and seek justice through trial and punishment rather than the kind of ineffective bombing and missile campaigns that our government has initiated in the past.

The apprehension of proven suspects in this crime against humanity should be carried out through the international system of justice and international criminal procedures. We must remember that the terrorists hope to provoke inappropriate military responses. If force must be used, a multinational police action is the most appropriate means. Indiscriminate aerial attacks or prolonged military campaigns on foreign soil will breed more terrorists and further endanger the security of the United States as well as the rest of the world.

We cannot pretend that the answer to terrorism is simply a matter of military or law enforcement measures. We live in a world organized so that the greatest benefits go to a small fraction of the world's population while the vast majority experiences injustice, poverty and often, hopelessness. Only by eliminating the political, social and economic conditions that lead people to these small extremist groups can we be truly secure.

Approved September 16, 2001 by the DSA National Political Committee

September 15: Mourn and Organize

by Eric Bove

The events of September 11 have made us all feel a combination of sadness, anger, and fear. We sit by the television and listen to the radio and feel numb and helpless. We would like to do something, but we don't want to join in the general jingoism (and in certain quarters open prejudice) that seems to be becoming the dominant discourse. Some may react to this general mood by engaging in "Chickens have come home to roost" rhetoric. I have already heard some express the view that what happened was a semi-justified consequence of U.S. Middle East policy or general arrogance or some such thing. Others will no doubt take refuge in conspiracy theories. Such rhetoric will only discredit the left and rightfully so. We are heading into a bad time, much like the period of the Iran hostage crisis, and stupid rhetoric is the last thing we need. This does not mean, however, that we should abandon our principles because our real principles have not been proven wrong by events.

First, we should remember that extreme fundamentalism is and has always been the enemy of true progressives. (At this writing the guilt of the bin Laden group has not yet been established, but it does seem likely that some group advocating Islamic fundamentalism was at least partially responsible for last Tuesday's events.) Bin Laden, the Taliban, the government of the Sudan, the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria may oppose

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U.S. imperialism and aspects of capitalism, but not because of a genuine dislike of social injustice. Like the Nazis and the Japanese imperialists of World War Two, they don't oppose oppression per se, they just wish to be oppressors themselves. Just look at Afghanistan where the Taliban treat women as sub-human and attempt to isolate their Hindu and Christian minorities, or at the Sudan where black Christian and animist southerners are enslaved and murdered by Arab Northerners with the support of the fundamentalist government.

We need to oppose fundamentalism, but that does not mean we need to become cheerleaders for George Bush or allow him to use this crisis to get his agenda passed without opposition; nor should we get swept up in the general prejudice against Muslims, Arabs, and other Middle Eastern people that seems to be emerging in our barrooms and talk radio stations. A Star Wars missile defense system would not have stopped the events of September 11. It was a bad idea September 10 and it is still a bad idea today. The argument that the CIA needs to be able to recruit evildoers in order to protect us from evil is contradicted by history. It should not be forgotten that many of the so-called "Arab Afghans" who are the core of bin Laden's group were recruited and trained by the CIA during the 80s for the Afghan war. Most Arabs and Muslims deplore what happened last Tuesday and if there is one lesson we should have learned from recent events, it is the wrongness of collective punishment. And our own fundamentalists are acting like a U.S. mini-version of the Taliban, blaming feminists and homosexuals for America's "weakness."

They should not be setting the agenda, we should be. We should be the first people asking George Bush why he is protecting his oil company friends with investments in the slave trading Sudan from the sanctions currently before congress. While we are at it, we should start questioning the U.S. role in propping up the medieval monarchy that rules Saudi Arabia. There are alternatives between bin Laden's Jihad and Bush's McWorld; if we don't offer them, who will?

Afghani Women's Movement Statement (excerpts)

On September 11, 2001 the world was stunned with the horrific terrorist attacks on the United States. RAWA stands with the rest of the world in expressing our sorrow and condemnation for this barbaric act of violence and terror. RAWA had already warned that the United States should not support the most treacherous, most criminal, most anti-democracy and anti-women Islamic fundamentalist parties because after both the Jehadi and the Taliban have committed every possible type of heinous crimes against our people, they would feel no shame in committing such crimes against the American people whom they consider "infidel" Š

But unfortunately we must say that it was the government of the United States who supported Pakistani dictator Gen. Zia-ul Haq in creating thousands of religious schools from which the germs of Taliban emerged. In the similar way, as is clear to all, Osama BinLaden has been the blue-eyed boy of CIA. In our opinion any kind of support to the fundamentalist Taliban and Jehadies is actually trampling on democratic, women's rights and human rights values.

If it is established that the suspects of the terrorist attacks are outside the US, our constant claim that fundamentalist terrorists would devour their creators is proved once moreŠ

Now that the Taliban and Osama are the prime suspects by the US officials after the criminal attacks, will the US kill thousands of innocent Afghans for the crimes committed by the Taliban and Osama?

From our point of view vast and indiscriminate military attacks on a country that has been facing permanent disasters for more than two decades will not be a matter of pride. We don't think such an attack would be the expression of the will of the American people Š While we once again announce our solidarity and deep sorrow with the people of the US, we also believe that attacking Afghanistan and killing its most ruined and destitute people will not in any way decrease the grief of the American people. We sincerely hope that the great American people could *differentiate* between the people of Afghanistan and a handful of fundamentalist terrorists. Our hearts go out to the people of the U.S.

Down with terrorism!

— Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), *http://www.rawa.org*

RAWA was founded in 1977 as an independent organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and social justice. Their pro-democracy politics and opposition to both the Soviet occupation and its U.S.-Pakistani-backed fundamentalist opponents has brought them much repression, including murder of key activists, along with a human rights prize from Amnesty International.

Labor's Response

By Eric Lee

I've never forgotten the comment made by a friend of mine during a passionate debate on some political topic many years ago. He said that we on the democratic left agreed on 98% of everything, and spent all our time arguing about the 2% that divided us.

I thought about that comment when looking at some of the many reports we've run in *LabourStart* about trade union reactions to the terrorist outrage in the US on September 11th, and the prospects for a "war on terrorism."

While there are different reactions from different unions in different countries, with some stressing one aspect and others another, it remains clear that the labour movement worldwide is united on several very important points:

1. The condemnation of the terrorist attack remains universal and unqualified. We have yet to see a single union come out with a statement showing even the slightest sympathy

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2. Unions everywhere are showing strong support for measures to increase real security. This is particularly true of unions in the aviation industry, which are backing some very radical proposals to increase security for air travellers and crews.

3. Unions are in the forefront of the struggle to ensure that the war against terrorism does not spill over into racist Muslim-bashing. The war against terrorism should unite, not divide, the peoples of the world. (We ran a particularly strong, and timely, statement from the New York-based Jewish Labor Committee on this subject on our site.)

Of course there are divisions among unions—as there are among the general population—regarding how to proceed.

Some unions have openly called for "vengeance, not justice," giving a virtual blank check to the Bush administration to use whatever force is deemed necessary. Other unions, at the other extreme, are opposed to any form of military response, looking instead to get rid of terrorism by getting rid of the conditions that breed it.

I think the vast majority of unions, like the vast majority of working people, are somewhere in the middle—fearful of what may happen next, angry at the terrorist outrage, anxious and aware that there are no simple answers, military or otherwise.

In the days and weeks to come, it is essential that while we engage in frank and open discussion about these developments that we remember that we still agree on the important things, the 98% that really matters.

An article I wrote in the days immediately following the terrorist attack on New York and Washington has been published in the Scottish Socialist Voice and is available here on the web:

http://www.labourstart.org/ssv04.shtml

This week's Labour website of the Week goes to China Labor Watch. This is a website created by a network of workers in China who are seeking to defend workers' rights and lay the basis for genuine independent trade unionism. The site is reviewed briefly on the front page of LabourStart and its address is:

http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/

Six more unions have added the Labour NewsWire to their websites in the last week including the United Trades and Labor Council of South Australia, the 140,000-member Australian Services Union, and the 100,000-member OPSEU, the second largest union in Ontario, Canada. The total is now 269, which though impressive is still only a fraction of the trade union websites in the world. Remember, it's ridiculously easy to add the Labour NewsWire to your page-instructions can be found here:

http://www.labourstart.org/lnw.shtml

Former DSA (DSOC) staffer Eric Lee is founder of the London-based, union-funded website "LabourStart."

War, Peace and Confusion

By Mike Pattberg October 3

A Sept. 25 public meeting sponsored by the Boston Global Action Network in response to the mass murder of Sept. 11 brought forth many shared feelings and general reactions — the bombings were indefensible, so is Arab-bashing, the U.S. should change its foreign policy, etc. But on the question of what the government's response should be, the group seemed to divide into those who oppose many instances of U.S. military intervention, and those who oppose all. Radicals in the latter camp have the virtue of political clarity; those of us who like to pick and choose our U.S. wars tend toward confusion and ambivalence, possibly because Bush, as of this writing, hasn't actually done anything yet.

If anything, the somewhat berserk rhetoric coming out of Washington early on ("Ending states," declaring world war on anonymous foes) has been replaced by cautious coalition building, UN authorization votes, and other sensible steps like pooling data from police and intelligence agencies and freezing bank assets. The imperious unilateralism of Bush's foreign policy has been momentarily reversed, apparently a victory for Colin Powell. Even those who oppose any U.S. action should support the broadest possible coalition as a means of restraining the Bushites from any tendency to run amok. And since the kind of genocidal lunacy seen on Sept. 11, apparently unconnected to any (or almost any?) state, is not in the interest of the world's rulers, it's at least possible that the coming U.S. military action might do less harm than good.

If so it wouldn't be the first time. Were the Union forces in our Civil War, whose victory transformed America into a new capitalist power, worthy of socialist support? Karl Marx thought so. A case can also be made for WW II, where world fascism was defeated only by a military coalition of three imperialist powers — the U.S., Russia, and Great Britain (the largest at the time). Or Clinton-era interventions in Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo, which freed subject populations from rightwing death squads and ethnic cleansing. Radical critics of these U.S. wars and interventions aren't altogether wrong in their analysis, just their conclusions.

As today's unrivaled global superpower the U.S. symbolizes, at bottom, two things. One is (leftist cynics aside and all imperfections granted) democracy, self-government, freedom and human rights. The other is a kind of world headquarters for Global Capital, Inc. The real-life synthesis — "bourgeois democracy," or democratic inequality — is, socialists believe, a contradiction to be resolved through political struggle. In the meantime even the most "just" U.S. wars have reactionary aspects.

Which doesn't say anything about our attitude toward this one. And there's no question Bush could revert to form. (Many of his advisors organized, worked with or at least supported the rightwing forces who devastated Central America in the 1980s.) If he does go off on a binge of semi-indiscriminate bombing and war, as opposed to a multilateral police action or commando raids, it will be a good day for "unity on the left," but a terrible one for the long-suffering people of Afghanistan.

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After October 7: Caution!

By David Keil October 8

U.S.-British air strikes over Afghanistan have just begun. There are reports of the deaths of demonstrators in Pakistan and the occupied Palestinian territories protesting this action.

It is clear that the international criminal organization responsible for September 11 must be broken up and its leaders apprehended and tried. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan has publicly accepted responsibility for harboring the Al-Qaeda network, which openly applauded the September 11 attacks and undoubtedly was involved in them. The world has rightly condemned this murder of thousands of civilians.

But the coalition to root out Al-Qaeda and the Taliban must be led by regional forces that have the confidence of populations in the region. An outside coalition of the U.S., other NATO powers, Canada, and Australia cannot do this job, and may even increase popular support for Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, raising the danger of civil war there.

Those in the region who oppose this war will point out accurately that the U.S. targeted and killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians (1945) and Vietnamese (1965-1972), and that with its direct support the Shah of Iran murdered tens of thousands of Iranians (1953-1979). They will point out that the U.S. and its allies are not disinterested parties in the affairs of countries of the oil-rich Middle East, that U.S.-supported sanctions are believed responsible for the deaths of Iraqi children, that the U.S. maintains unwanted bases in Saudi Arabia and favors Israel over the Palestinians. They will attribute political objectives that go far beyond the elimination of terrorist bases. We must look at these objectives ourselves.

We must also demand that Congress assume its constitutional role in the declaration of war. In the emotion after September 11, the President went to Congress and obtained a blank check to wage war against terrorism anywhere. It is obvious, however, that war is waged against states, and declared by naming such states. The White House has just announced that it will not necessarily limit its air war to Afghanistan. Will Congress step in to choose where and against which states this war is waged, or is the Constitution to be ignored?

The air war that the West took to Afghanistan October 7 is a giant risk. If it callously harms civilians, this war may be a disaster for the whole region and notably for the countries that wage it.

David Keil and Mike Pattberg are co-editors of the Yankee Radical.

Congratulations to Ed Clark, Dessima Williams, and John Maher on being honored for your work on global and local democracy.

And thanks to Boston DSA for reminding us of the importance of this work.

Julie Johnson and Rep. Frank I. Smizik

(This ad was accidentally left out of the DSA Awards section of our last issue.)

Letters

To the Editors:

On page 7 of the August YR, you make the erroneous comment "(sorry about the chandelier)" in reference to the house of Debs-Thomas-Bernstein awards hosts Marcia Peters & David Karaus. For your information, it was a bulb covering, not a chandelier; I should know, I broke the thing. It was a Victorian bulb cover of spun glass (or some kind of molded glass) and apparently so unique as to be irreplaceable. A tragedy, to be sure, but not so bad as an entire chandelier being broken.

In the future, try to be more careful in your reporting.

Thank you for your consideration,

Barry Hart

Apologies to Barry Hart, whose points are well taken. — MP

Nurses Revolt

by Sandy Eaton

A local pastor recently asked me why there hasn't been a more noticeable outburst against the growing injustice in our health care system. I drew her attention to Brockton, where 465 nurses struck for 103 days for safe staffing language in their contract. I pointed to civil disobedience by seniors in Amherst after being abandoned by Kaiser-Permanente, and to the 48% of Massachusetts voters who opted for fundamental reform last November despite $5 million in attack ads against Question 5. Rebellion is erupting against market morality in health care. Nurses are in the midst of this uprising. Having been privatized, deregulated, downsized and reengineered, they're in no mood to put up with the current industrial model of health care endangering their patients and themselves, and increasingly realize that fundamental change is the answer. While an estimated 500,000 nurses in this country are not practicing right now, others still in nursing have adopted a militant stance, organizing themselves to face this challenge to the very existence of nursing as a caring profession.

The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) typifies this evolution. Founded 98 years ago as a professional association affiliated with the American Nurses Association (ANA), it began organizing registered nurses and other health care professionals for collective bargaining in the mid-60s. MNA rewrote its bylaws in the mid-80s to insulate its labor program from possible management influence, creating a separate policy-making board, the Cabinet for Labor Relations. This Labor Cabinet provided the impetus for MNA's joining MASS-CARE at its inception in 1995, as well as for the founding of MNA's Statewide Campaign for Safe Care and its legislative agenda. MNA's commitment to last year's campaign for Question 5 was underwritten by the budgets of these two structures.

Spring 1997 saw the beginnings of a labor coalition within ANA. States with extensive labor programs banded together for greater leverage within ANA and to stave off raids from competing unions. Two years later, proposals for the creation of a national nurses' union, the United American Nurses (UAN), were brought before ANA's House of Delegates. The MNA, joined by delegates from Maine, argued fruitlessly for amendments that would guarantee an independent funding stream and decision-making power to create a real union. Rumors that a Dixiecrat bloc of delegations had threatened disaffiliation from ANA if a strong union were created rang true. A bittersweet moment came with the passage, after many years of effort, of MNA's motion to support single-payer universal health care.

The rest is history, as they say. In March 2000, some in MNA proposed bylaw amendments to disaffiliate from ANA, something the California Nurses Association (CNA) did five years earlier. Fearing management's political and ideological domination, a movement advocating a strong, independent, well-funded MNA grew, mostly within MNA's eighty-five local units, but also among the more progressive members beyond those units. MNA's Worcester County organization, invigorated by new leadership drawn from the St. Vincent nurses who had recently defeated Tenet Corporation, officially joined the call for independence. By September a solid majority of MNA's Board of Directors publicly supported disaffiliation. ANA, for its part, funded a monster telemarketing and direct-mail campaign. At the Boston convention on November 9th, the disaffiliation motion won but by less than the two-thirds required to amend bylaws. This resulted in an incredibly unstable situation in which the bulk of MNA membership and leadership wanted absolutely nothing to do with ANA, but were locked in.

This contradiction was resolved by the revolution that broke out at the December Board meeting when the Pro-MNA Board majority voted to retain disaffiliation from ANA as the overarching goal in the coming period. The pro-ANA executive director was replaced by the director of MNA's labor program. As the Board continued to pass motion after motion spelling out the steps to secure independence, the five pro-ANA members verbally resigned and left the building. When the meeting was called back to order by the one remaining officer, the vacancies were filled in accordance with the bylaws. The mantle of leadership thus descended on the rank-and-file nurses, the ones providing hands-on care.

The largest assembly of nurses in the history of Massachusetts took place in historic Mechanics Hall in Worcester on March 24th. Nearly 2400 nurses converged by bus and car. Once the assembly was seated, business moved swiftly, there being only one question to be answered. The final tally was 1925 to 413, or 82% in favor of the break with ANA. Months of intense internal organizing overcame the campaign of ANA and its supporters which labeled independence activists as rogues, renegades and "the enemy within."

As the corporatization of health care rolls on, patterns of response diverge: adaptation or resistance, individual career advancement or collective action, retreat before the inevitable or vigorous pursuit of a progressive agenda. Within the ANA federation, matters came to a head first in California in 1992, with working nurses gaining the dominant position by the spring of 1993. CNA supported the ill-fated single-payer ballot question of 1994, seceded from ANA, became a founding affiliate of the Labor Party, pushed through the nation's first needle-stick legislation, won passage of whistle-blower protection for health-care workers and, despite opposition from ANA and the industry, mobilized thousands of nurses and patients repeatedly to descend upon Sacramento to achieve enactment of the country's first state-mandated nurse-to-patient staffing ratio bill.

The day after the vote in Worcester, the leadership of CNA, MNA and the

Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP) met to deepen their mutual commitment to building a national movement of nurses to take on and defeat corporate health care. On April 28th, the Maine State Nurses Association (MSNA) left ANA, and on May 23rd, leaders of MNA, CNA, PASNAP, MSNA and the United Health Care Workers of Greater St. Louis gathered in Baltimore to further steps toward a new national nurses organization and adopted the following principles:

• Establishing a progressive national voice of nurses.

• Protecting, preserving and promoting RN practice, such as requiring safe staffing and opposition to de-skilling and intrusion on RN scope of practice.

• Autonomy and independence of the individual member organizations.

• Support for universal health care, with establishment of a single-payer style national healthcare program.

• Unionization of any RNs throughout the U.S. who desire representation.

• Solidarity with international nurses organizations that share similar goals and values.

Strong ties exist among US nurses, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and the Australian Nursing Federation. As we fight here for health care to become a basic right, nurses are in the forefront of popular resistance to the Americanization of health care in Canada, Australia and around the world. The global race to the bottom is particularly evident in efforts to underfund and privatize public health services, deskill, speed up and overwork nurses and others in health care, and open the door to for-profit consultants, managed care plans and hospital chains.

The day after the Baltimore meeting in May, the AFL-CIO Executive Council voted to offer a national charter to ANA's UAN, which was accepted in late June. So questions arise. Will an independent organization representing currently only 60,000 working nurses out of 2.2 million be effective? Clarity of vision, as embodied in the six principles listed above, and focused action to set new precedents for the industry point toward a new level of hope for nurses.

Perhaps CNA's most remarkable and far-reaching achievement so far, for example, is passage of safe staffing legislation mandating minimum nurse-patient ratios. Health care employers have demonstrated time and again their unwillingness to staff appropriately, so the state must step in to set the standard. MNA has introduced legislation, H1186, which calls for state-mandated safe staffing here. The recent strike in Brockton took place because the CEO of Brockton Hospital was unwilling to commit, in writing, to making his "best effort" to staff adequately so that mandatory overtime would be unnecessary. His stance is the best evidence that safe staffing, not overtime, must be mandatory. Nurses are mad as hell and aren't going to take it any more!

Sandy Eaton, a staff nurse at Quincy Medical Center, is a member of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Nurses Association, as well as the Labor Party and the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism.

STOP Female Excision!

By Susan McLucas

In recent years the media have carried occasional reports about the efforts of various indigenous groups and NGO's to end the cultural practice of female genital cutting, or excision, prevalent in certain parts of the third world, especially Africa. Since 1997 I've been involved in two such campaigns in the West African nation of Mali.

I began volunteering at the Centre Djoliba, an NGO of maybe 15 people that has been fighting female genital mutilation for 30 years. There I produced a poster, which UNICEF adopted and has been distributing throughout Mali.

I have also helped pull together a committee of local people interested in using music in the struggle, one of whom had a little NGO, Sahel Initiative Third Millennium. We put out a tape of 12 songs about women's rights, 8 of which dealt with excision; the other 4 are for respect, fair pay, access to work, freedom from violence, etc. Of those, most were in Bambara but we also had one song each in Sarakole, Senoufo, Pulaar and Dogon. Using a loan from my dad, and funding from the Canadian Center for International Studies and Cooperation, we produced a CD along with 8 music videos, plus contracts with 12 radio stations to play the songs 4 times a day for 6 months. The videos are still in progress and should be coming out soon. Some of the best known Malian musicians sang for us, and the album has made quite a splash. I have met people in Bamako who knew the words to the songs on the basis of having heard them on the radio.

During this last trip I started up the Pledge Against Excision, a signed promise never to excise a daughter and to speak out against this "tradition." We got 30 local groups to work on the project. Some people really liked getting signatures and having all the conversations that are required to get them. We made up a one-page handout explaining the reasons we were against FGM. Our signature gatherers would give them out while they lasted and then use them as an outline to talk from when there were no more to give out. We were working with some financial constraints, since I was just using my own money, which was fast running out.

We also found we were coming across excisers, many of whom signed as well. The first one that we met with agreed to stop excising and also invited us to speak to a group she promised to convene, including half a dozen women she had trained to be excisers. As promised, she provided us with an audience of about 30 women. Two of

continued on page 5

the people in the group we had trained to lead sessions led the meeting, showing slides of complications of excision, and leading a discussion about the problems with FGC. When it was done, almost all the women signed the Pledge, and we talked with those who were trained to excise about other ways they could make a living. We promised to try to help them find some money to borrow to start out on a new profession, though we were not able to find such a source. (All the groups in Bamako who have tried this approach have given up on it.)

Being an outsider is a strange combination of liability and asset. My colleagues would often say that I should keep a low profile, because they didn't want people to think that the impetus to stop excision was coming from the outside, and I did avoid ever going on TV or being very public in my opposition. But there is also a certain amount of respect that Malians have for outsiders, and I found that, for some reason, people were quite receptive to my leadership. It's kind of confusing.

The movement in Mali these days is gaining momentum. The President was recently convinced, for the first time, that excision is a real problem. The same slides that we showed to our exciser and her people were shown to the President and a few ministers that he invited; he got very upset and said that something had to be done. He then invited the same presentation to be made to the National Assembly, where some legislators thought they should legislate right away; the majority opinion seemed to be that it was best to wait a year or two, while more education could happen.

The Demographic and Health Survey will come out soon with recent figures to show how much progress is being made in the struggle. Estimates vary, in the absence of hard data. Some people talk as if there has been quite a bit of progress. It's hard to know how much might be people saying what they think you want to hear. One study said that 60% of the people believe it is a bad practice but, strangely, only about 20% say they are ready to stop it. This is one time when respect for elders is a disadvantage. So many young parents don't want to do it but are forced to, or feel they can't go against the wishes of their elders. Sometimes the elders simply take the girl and have her excised when the parents are away. But at least these days people can speak about the subject without shocking people.

I hope to be able to go back to Mali and continue work on the Pledge Against Excision, or at least to find some funding to send over there for the other people involved in it. This would mean continuing to gather signatures, hold educational meetings and then present the signatures to the press and the authorities. Or I might like to go to another country, maybe Ethiopia, and make another record against FGM. I understand there is a lot of infibulation there. This is the worst kind of mutilation, where they sew up the wound and create a very small vaginal opening. If I can find a way of going back, I would like to keep up the work that I have started in Africa.

It is a very interesting way to see another part of the world, even if it is around 100 degrees for months on end.

I am distributing the CD, STOP Excision, for a contribution of $10-$20, your choice. Any profits will be used in the struggle. For the moment, I'm selling them out of my house in Somerville, which is the U.S. branch office of my partner group in Mali, Sahel Initiative. Other groups in the movement could sell them to help raise money. Let's talk.

DSA member Susan McLucas can be reached at SusanMcL@aol.com, 617-776-6524.

Defense Budget Blues

By Charles Knight

During the first six years of the Clinton presidency a consensus developed in Washington that the post-Cold War defense budget would level off at about $285 billion (all budget numbers in this article are in FY2002 dollars). This was the end point of the orderly downsizing initiated by Cheney and Powell in the first Bush Administration.

Then in 1998 two things changed: Clinton was impeached and the "readiness crisis" campaign Senator McCain fabricated over a number of years was enthusiastically joined by the Service Chiefs. In the dark days of impeachment the Joint Chiefs extracted a promise from Clinton to end further planned budget reductions and instead increase national defense authority 5.4% the following year to $317 billion from its post-Cold War low point of $300 billion in FY1998. For comparison the Reagan high point was $464 billion in 1985.

For the remaining three fiscal years of the Clinton administration defense budgets stayed very close to the conservative agenda. By FY2002 (the budget Clinton passed onto Bush) the defense budget authority had risen by almost 15% from 1998 with more than 5% of that increase handed-off as a sort of present to Bush in Clinton's lame duck FY2002 budget. No wonder Rumsfeld and Bush could afford the political luxury of saying they would defer significant defense budget increases until FY2003 — that budget takes effect next year and is crafted by the various agencies in the fall and winter 2001/2002.

The upcoming FY2003 budget (the first real Bush Administration budget) was supposed to be informed by a new national security strategy and the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld came into office trumpeting his plans for strong civilian management of military affairs and his intention to have a new post-Cold War national strategy drive Pentagon planning and budget. In the first months he put on ice the year-old Quadrennial Defense Review process centered in the Joint staff and in its place organized some dozen or more new strategy and planning task forces dominated by civilians and handpicked retired military officers. Rumsfeld kept his options open and policy control cen-

tered in his civilian staff.

The first blow to the Rumsfeld plan happened when the commander of the Pacific fleet apparently delivered a not so subtle threat of service revolt if Rumsfeld sought to implement his strategy panel's proposal to downgrade the primacy of large deck carriers in the Navy. Then hardly a week passed when Sen Jeffords bolted from the Republican Party, precipitating the Democratic takeover of the Senate. The timing could not have been worse for the White House, which had promised a major statement of the new strategy from the President. The nation did not get the new strategy then, nor has it since.

It is now clear that the second QDR, like the first, will not be strategy driven. Once again the point of departure will be notions of politically acceptable budgets and personnel end strengths. The services are also back in the driver's seat.

The QDR will have only a very few strategic changes worth mentioning. First there is the extraordinary emphasis on rapid development of national missile defense and the abandonment of nearly all arms control regimes. Secondly, there is the loosening of the dogma that the U.S. must be prepared to fight two major wars simultaneously in different parts of the world. Rumsfeld seems to have negotiated service acceptance of a one war "plus" concept, but this may not be much better defined or much less ambitious than the previous one. On September 5th Rumsfeld said, "The new construct would prepare forces to defend the U.S., deter in four critical regions, prevail in two overlapping conflicts, while leaving the president the option to commit forces in either of those two conflicts to impose our will on the adversary - including regime change and occupation." To grasp how much military capability play there is in this "construct," it is worth remembering that the "two" old wars were modeled on Desert Storm, which did not include the demanding task of regime change and occupation. The services will be able to advocate any military requirement they desire within the enormous room of this formulation for negotiating end strength and budgets. An astonishing example of this is reported to have happened in August when a force structure panel advocated a navy with 35 carriers (up from the current 12) based on interpretation of ambiguous language in Rumsfeld's "Terms of Reference and Guidance."

It has become clear by now that the Service Chiefs have largely won: no large end strength reductions and no raids for now on service budget priorities in favor of missile defense. Of course, that agreement assumes that Congress will approve large budget increases.

Until September 11th it looked like the money might not be there for large budget increases. I was busy preparing a presentation that would enumerate reasonable ways to save $50-75 billion from the budget. I looked forward to my advocacy being backed by the strong logic of the disappearing budget surplus. Now I believe there will be little to stop the Administration from getting whatever it wants for "defense" next year. We might see a defense budget of $375 billion or more, not including the direct expenses of the wars we are about to join (the number of which are unclear at this writing.) With war supplementals added in the budget might rival Korean War levels of $500 billion.

It is important to note that George Bush has now fully joined the ranks of wartime Keynesians. He has a majority coalition with Democrats to spend the country out of the recession it is now entering. In the short term the left in this country cannot hope to advance a better option. We must instead focus on deepening our analysis and story of this time in history so that when our country tires of vengeful war and its repercussions we have done the groundwork to lead the country in a different direction. Part of that story should be that 90+% of military investments have nothing to do with countering terrorism or with defending our homeland and that if we desire not to be a target of terrorist hate in the future we need to change our country's stance in the world.

Furthermore, I think this is a good time for the left to reexamine a piece of its dogma: that it is the economic interests of defense contractors that keep defense budgets high. The economic self-interest of contractors is an important fact of the political economy, but the central impetus for high military budgets comes from the utility of military power to US elites in their efforts to enhance their position of dominance across the globe. We are seeing that power in action now. Nevertheless, I believe that the majority of Americans do not share that interest in dominance with conservative elites. We must learn to provide a viable security option for this majority of Americans.

Charles Knight is the Co-Director of the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA) in Cambridge, MA. (http://www.comw.org/pda/).

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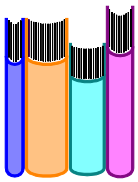
The Elusive Majority



William Julius Wilson, The Bridge Over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics, *University of California Press, 1999, 128 pp.*

Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers, America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters, *Basic Books, 2000, 179pp*

Theda Skocpol, The Missing Middle: Working Families and the Future of American Social Policy, *W.W. Norton, 2000 171 pp.*

Reviewed by Jack Clark

Near the end of *The Missing Middle,* Theda Skocpol recounts a conversation she had in 1994 in Maine with the mother of Jeffrey, her son's friend from a summer day camp. Annemarie, a single mother and former welfare recipient, worked as a health aide in a nearby nursing home. Although her husband had deserted her, her mother-in-law provided essential support and child care as Annemarie worked long shifts. Annemarie mentioned a recent emergency that required an ambulance trip for Jeffrey to the hospital. Annemarie's job did not include health coverage, and she was still trying to pay the bills from that emergency room visit. " Maybe something will soon happen in Washington to help out with the health care," Skocpol suggested, explaining a little about Clinton's then pending health care plan. "Annemarie listened politely and responded in a kindly tone, yet unmistakably looked at me as if I had just arrived from the moon. 'Nothing they do there' — meaning Washington D.C. — 'ever makes any difference for people like me,' she replied, putting a firm end to that phase of our conversation."

The incident sums up the dilemma of progressive politics which all three of these books address from different angles. Annemarie stands for a progressive Everywoman. A low-wage worker in the growing service industry, a full-time worker who lacks health insurance, a mother, Annemarie stands to benefit from the policies we propose. Her vote and her enthusiasm for a left agenda are essential if we are to have any chance of transforming American politics in the direction of greater equality. Yet far from enthusiasm, Annemarie expresses cynicism and disillusionment with the very idea of politics.

For Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers, Annemarie belongs to the forgotten majority of America's white working class. With relentless arithmetic, Teixeira and Rogers demonstrate that there is no winning coalition on either side of American politics without a substantial share votes from white workers. The current working class looks different from the subjects of Diego Rivera murals. There are more women, fewer people working in steel and other traditional goods-producing industries, more working in a wide variety of services, and more white collars than blue. Computers are more common than hammers as workaday tools. Most members of this working class don't belong to unions, and the non-union white working class is the focus of this book.

All of this has not lead to a new classless society, though. Teixeira and Rogers look at the distribution of income over the last quarter century and note that inequality has grown. The dividing line defining the new inequality is higher education. Only 25% of white American adults have a four-year college degree. For the 75% of white workers without bachelors' degrees, the years since 1973 have seen a steady erosion of living standards.

America's Forgotten Majority argues forcefully that the real swing voters in American politics are people like Annemarie. In the campaigns of the last decade, high-priced campaign consultants have pursued a different demographic for the swing vote. Elections, according to these political professionals and their media allies, are won or lost in affluent suburbs among the soccer moms and the high-tech wired workers. Their experiences may mirror the world of an increasingly affluent political class that divides its time between policy making and hobnobbing with funders, but there simply aren't enough of these upscale voters to determine election outcomes. The relentless pursuit of these upscale voters tends to define a politics of shrinking electorates. Campaigns that really don't have anything to say about people like her reinforce Annemarie's cynicism about politics.

Teixeira and Rogers examine implications of appealing — or failing to appeal — to forgotten majority voters for Republicans and the Reform Party as well as for Democrats. No group, they argue, can build a majority without these white working class voters. The Democrats' failure among forgotten majority voters is the book's central theme. From the successful Democratic Presidential elections of 1960 and 1964 to the Clinton elections of 1992 and 1996, white working class support of Democrats dropped 13%. The defection went beyond the Presidential level and cost Democrats their long-time Congressional dominance in 1994. To appeal once again to the forgotten majority, argue Teixeira and Rogers, Democrats need to break from the fiscal conservatism that characterized the Clinton Presidency and the 2000 campaign. Gore's infamous lock box not only failed to put the Social Security surplus beyond the Republicans' grasp, it crippled the Democrats' ability to propose the bold programs needed to mobilize forgotten majority voters.

Programmatically, most of what *The Forgotten Majority* proposes fits in the scheme of the work Boston DSA does through the Working Family Agenda and other coalition efforts. Hard working people deserve the right to health care; we need to expand quality child care at affordable prices for working families; education for our children and training to improve our own skills need to be central to the new economy.

On one point Teixeira and Rogers move into very controversial territory. Affirmative action, they argue, must be based on class not race. Such a policy

shift, they argue, would unite rather than divide low-income whites and the African-American and Latino poor. Beyond the specifics of affirmative action, The Forgotten Maj*ority* stumbles when examining the politics of race. Seeking to explain the white working class move away from Democratic voting, Teixeira and Rogers dismiss racism as a causal factor. They rightly note that polling demonstrates clearly that outright prejudice has declined. When examining polling data that shows growing support for statements that blacks don't try hard enough and ask for too many government favors, Teixeira and Rogers argue that the questions really reflect a certain liberal view of government and don't address race per se.

Of course, the role of government has been the decisive question in elections over the last twenty years. Teixeira and Rogers build the case systematically that a winning strategy for the left involves a more expansive view of government policies to help working people. The perception that activist government benefits the undeserving "them" (black welfare recipients, for example) rather than the deserving "us," is the problem.

William Julius Wilson takes on exactly that problem in his The Br*idge Over the Racial Divide.* Acknowledging that racial resentments have shaped politics in the last thirty years, Wilson proposes to solve the stalemate of progressive politics through a politics of coalition that unites low-income whites with disadvantaged people of color. Using much of the same data on family income marshaled by Teixeira and Rogers, Wilson sees a growing commonality of interest between the black and Latino poor and working class whites. Wilson takes care to define racism, noting that racism can be biological or cultural, individual or institutional. An encouraging decline has occurred in both individual prejudice and in racism based on theories of biological inferiority. Cultural and institutional racism remain significant, and as noted above, cultural racism rooted in beliefs that blacks are lazy and responsible for the decline of urban areas shapes too much of our politics. Wilson groups these biases into a category he calls racial ideology.

Perceived as a scholar who put a higher priority on class than race, Wilson might be presumed to be sympathetic to the Teixeira and Rogers' call for class-based, rather than race-based affirmative action. In a chapter entitled "Affirmative Opportunity," Wilson demolishes the notion that class-based affirmative action can move us toward greater racial harmony. At all income levels, blacks and Latinos perform worse on standard tests like the SAT's (and MCAS, residents of this state might note). Specific race-based remedies face both popular resistance and increasing legal challenge, Wilson acknowledges. Yet, he cites admissions policies at University of Michigan Law School and at the University of California at Irvine which use broader criteria than standardized tests. A young person who has overcome major barriers in life, yet has a lower SAT score than a privileged suburban youth may have a better chance at admission at these institutions. This doesn't mean lowering standards, Wilson insists. It just means using broader and more flexible criteria. In both the cases he cites, the flexible criteria result in ethnically diverse student bodies without numerical guidelines or quotas. Similarly, Wilson argues that numerical goals or racial preferences for civil services jobs, for example, create unmanageable resentments among whites, but that programs like job training, which helps the disadvantaged gain access to such jobs, can win broad public support. Reshaping affirmative action policies to emphasize expanded opportunity can offer real benefits to historically excluded groups while lessening the conflict with the white majority. But without some attention to the specific barriers of race, the broad progressive coalition cannot hold the loyalty of African Americans, according to Wilson.

Wilson, Teixeira and Rogers all published their books during the long 1990s economic boom, and all of them present the improving economy as a major basis for hope that a new progressive majority coalition can be assembled. For Teixeira and Rogers, better times open the white working class majority to a more expansive view of the possibilities of government. For Wilson, better times weaken the pull of racial ideology.

Theda Skocpol also published toward the end of the long 90s boom, but she builds a case less dependent on economic cycles. Skocpol takes a long view in examining the successful formula for American social policy. Tying together programs as disparate as public education, the foundation of a federal Children's Bureau, civil war pensions, Social Security and the GI Bill, Skocpol identifies several common elements that made programs successful. Programs that have a broad reach and benefit many people make for more sustainable policy than programs with narrowly targeted benefits. Skocpol enlarges on this familiar point. She points out that dynamic partnerships between government officials who advocate for programs and independent civic organizations create the political climate for policy initiatives. The American Legion helped draft and popularize the notion of a GI Bill; Jane Addams and the settlement house movement lobbied for the mothers' benefits Congress voted in the early part of the 20th century. Benefits seen as a reward for service fit the American sense of government's role much better than individual entitlement programs. Skocpol applies her formula to current problems including health care, Social Security and lack of adequate time for families. One of the strengths of Skocpol's argument is her insistence that we need to rise above technical policy details and build a moral case for policies that support working families.

All these books were written prior to the 2000 election fiasco. None address the specific dilemmas we all face after September 11, 2001. Yet all three speak to our immediate politics. Skocpol notes that America won't change just because people write books. That's true, but we can still learn a lot from these authors. Applying their wisdom well can help us build the broad, multi-racial majority we need to transform America and the world.

Jack Clark is Chair of Boston DSA.

Boston Democratic Socialists of America
Events Calendar

Date	Event
Tuesday, Oct 23	Boston DSA Pre-Convention Member Meeting Discussions preparatory to the DSA National Convention (to be held in Philadelphia Nov 9-11). Also November elections, future of Boston DSA. 6:30 pm – Exec Board meeting 7:30-9:00 pm – Members meeting Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon Street, Brookline
Tuesday, Oct 30	Forum on Welfare, Children and Families: The Impact of Welfare Reform with William Julius Wilson Cosponsors: Democratic Socialists of America, Center for Urban and Regional Policy (Northeastern U.) and Boston Workforce Development Coalition 7:30 pm, Northeastern University Student Center
Tuesday, Nov 6	Vote early and often. (See pgs. 1 & 2).
Tuesday, Nov 13	Boston Global Action Network Lecture Series Elaine Bernard, Director of Harvard Trade Union Program 6:30-8:30 pm, Cambridge Public Library 45 Pearl Street (Central Square), Cambridge

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