



the yankee radical

Institute for
Democratic
Socialism

(617) 354-5078 <http://dsaboston.org/> March-April 2002

When Identity Politics Kills: Endgame in Balkan Wars

It's been a decade since the welcome end of the Cold War and most of the one party-stalinist-communist dictatorships. But the 1990s have seen a re-energized attack of global capital on labor and the environment, mediated through free trade treaties and international financial institutions. And these years have also witnessed a depressing upsurge of nationalist-ethnic-religious wars and ideologies in the former Yugoslavia and USSR, and parts of Africa and Asia. On the American left, old divisions based on the Cold War began to heal while new ones opened up over U.S. intervention in Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Few leftists are as qualified as Bogdan Denitch to analyze these developments. Now an Honorary Chair of

Wednesday, March 20, 6 pm

Speaker: Bogdan Denitch
Weiner Auditorium, Taubman Building,
Kennedy School
15 Eliot St. or 79 JFK St., Harvard Sq.,
Cambridge.
Sponsors: Boston DSA & Carr Center for
Human Rights Policy

Democratic Socialists of America, Denitch has been part of national DSA leadership since its founding, is the organization's representative to the Socialist International, and Chair (since 1981) of the Socialist Scholars Conference. He is also the American Left's foremost expert on the former Yugoslavia, the focus of tonight's talk, and has written several books and countless articles on this subject.

Thursday, March 21, 6-8 pm

Denitch Reception
41 Magnolia Ave., Cambridge
(off Line St. in back of Cambridge
City Hospital)

This DSA reception for Bogdan Denitch at the home of Board Member Allen Graubard may be of special interest to those concerned with DSA's approach to the "War (wars?) on Terrorism" and other international issues, as Bogdan has been a key participant in all DSA foreign policy discussions.

He also has some remarkable history of his own (to be found in his forthcoming autobiography). After volunteering for the British army (out of Cairo) at the end of WWII, Bogdan has spent the next half-century as a leading organizer of radical move-
(continued on page 4)

NAACP: The Early Years

Speaker: Mark Schneider
Tuesday, April 2, 7 pm
Cushing Hall (Northeastern U.),
102 The Fenway, Room 331
T: Green Line, E Train
(call 617-354-5078 for directions)

Mark Schneider will talk about his new book, *We Return Fighting: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age*. It chronicles the struggle for black rights in the 1920s, from the demobilization of 200,000 African American veterans returning from Europe at the end of WWI to the Depression. This was a period when white supremacist views, in varying degrees, were dominant in all classes of white society. Schneider argues that the civil rights movement in this era has been unjustly neglected by scholars and documentar-

ians, in contrast to the Harlem Renaissance or Marcus Garvey's black nationalist United Negro Improvement Association. To right this balance he has drawn extensively on NAACP journals and field reports throughout the U.S., where local chapters fought (and mostly lost) "a thousand battles" against racism, especially lynching.

The author notes that every aspect of the NAACP's political perspective was at some point contested, and various rivals who sought to destroy it failed. He concludes that "the NAACP endured because it had the right strategy to promote a revolutionary goal: full civil and political equality for African Americans," at least through the 1954 desegregation decision. Mark recounts the courageous campaigns waged "in the streets, courts, press, meeting halls,

state legislatures and Washington lobbies," in the face of "murder, rapes, gun battles, mobs and courtroom confrontations.

The author also assesses key NAACP leaders like James Weldon Johnson, W.E.B. DuBois and Walter White, the rise and fall of the Garvey movement, A. Philip Randolph, the Communist Party — and patrician racists like A. Lawrence Lowell, President of Harvard in the early 1920s who tried to keep black students out of Harvard dorms.

Schneider, a DSA member who works at AMTRAK in South Station, has received good reviews for his book, which can be purchased after his talk. The event is sponsored by DSA and the Law, Policy and Society Program at Northeastern.

2 Short Takes

In Case You Missed It...

The new Boston DSA Exec Board elected at our January members meeting looks much like the old one, the exceptions being the departure of DSA Chair Jack Clark (see below) and the addition of longtime DSAer (and Mass. Teachers lobbyist) Julie Johnson. To fill Jack's shoes the members elected as co-chairs DSA's first all-berg slate, Vic Bloomberg and Mike Pattberg. Other returning E Board members include Joe Morgan as Treasurer, Dave Keil and Mike Pattberg as YR editors, David Knuttunen, Jack Bray, Adele Greenberg, Martha Older, Barry Hart, Allen Graubard, and Jeff Knudsen as databaser at large.

The group then discussed our coalition work on the state budget and prospects for a student chapter at Boston University, ending with a discussion on Afghanistan that reflected some of the divergent viewpoints expressed at DSA's November Convention.

DSA State Policy Lunches

DSA's monthly series of "brown bag" public policy lunches geared to State issues is continuing. The idea is to bring together progressives who work

in the public sector with others who push for policy changes for some informal brainstorming. Those who wish to attend future lunches (in the Government Center area) should call Julie Johnson (617-738-9838) and leave their email address and phone number.

Socialist Scholars Conference

This year's Socialist Scholars Conference takes place April 12-14 at the Cooper Union, 51 Astor Place, New York City. Debates on just wars, the limits of street protest for the anti-globalization movement, Enron finance & pension funds, clash of fundamentalisms, reparations, strengths and weaknesses of the peace movement, and endless other panels, arguments, parties, etc. (212-817-7868) www.socialistscholar.org

Fair Taxes

United for a Fair Economy has developed a 45-minute workshop on fair taxes they'll be glad to bring to your community, congregation, union or school. It's designed to help build the campaign to "stop the State budget cuts and raise additional revenue for people's needs." Call Chuck Collins or Karen Kraut 617-423-2148, x11 or x18.

Superbowl Socialists?

The last time the YR took note of Rush Limbaugh he was raving on about the sinister power and influence of ... DSA! It turned out that his staffer had stumbled onto Web site connections between DSA and the Congressional Progressive Caucus, sending Rush off the deep end.

And now, according to an email from Paul Corrigan, Limbaugh has been calling the Superbowl Champion New England Patriots "socialists" on his syndicated radio show (he doesn't mean it as a compliment). He came to that conclusion by this bit of Limbaugh logic: because prior to the start of the game the Patriots chose not to be introduced individually over the loudspeaker, as is customary, but instead ran out together as a team. According to Corrigan, Limbaugh told his fans that Stars should not de-emphasize themselves with false humility. "There is no such thing as equality," ranted Rush, confusing teamwork and cooperation with 'mediocrity' and 'misery.' Rush could be the only person on the planet who believes the New England Patriots locker room is a repository for mediocrity and misery."

Just don't tell this guy about the DSOX.

— M.P.

Goodbye Jack

Sunday, April 7, 4-6 pm
Doyles Cafe, 3484 Washington St., Jamaica Plain

T: Green St. stop on Orange Line

Former Boston DSA Chair and National DSA Director Jack Clark is leaving us for a new job with the transport workers union in Washington, DC. But before he goes Boston DSA is giving him a proper send-off at the legendary Doyles Cafe, hangout for up-and-coming politicians of all ideological stripes (even ours). Ask for Middle Room when you get there. Let's party!



Upstart DSOX Astound Ski Bums!

By Glenn Kulbako

The DSOX, Boston DSA's co-ed softball team (first named for the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee in 1984) — the winningest team in the Cambridge Independent League from 1990-2000 — turned a few heads in 2001 when it joined the Boston Ski and Sports Club (BSSC) softball league, looking for new worlds to conquer.

Competing for the first time in the BSSC West League C Division, the 2001 DSOX were an impressive 11-5 overall, finishing the regular season third out of a pack of 20 teams. Battling against (youthful!) corporate teams, the DSOX drove unbeaten through the playoffs with hard hitting from co-manager Eran Caspi (.773 average) and rookie Barry Kruse (1.750 slugging percentage), along with out-

standing fielding by newcomers Artemis Panagopoulos and Carol Quink. The team lost 7-4 to the Jumbos in a tightly fought championship game, leaving two runners on base in the last inning when the Jumbo center fielder made an unlikely shoestring catch to end the game.

The DSOX may have limited space for this year's roster, but there will be tryouts the first two Sundays of April, weather permitting. If you're interested in joining this team steeped in DSA history, firebrand activists, authors and talented (fun-loving) athletes, please contact Glenn Kulbako at GKulbako@worldnet.att.net.

When not playing Left Field for the DSOX, Glenn Kulbako is active with the Jobs with Justice Workers' Rights Board.

ACTION ALERT — Stop the Budget Cuts! Close the Capital Gains Tax Loophole!

The Governor is cutting programs and jobs for struggling working families:

- **HOUSING:** Eliminated the Housing Trust Fund to create more affordable housing
- **SCHOOLS:** Eliminated \$5 million for all-day kindergarten
- **HEALTH CARE:** Eliminated dental care benefits for 500,000 people
- **JOB:** Mass layoffs of human service workers

These cuts reverse the hard-won victories we fought for!

Fair taxes are on the table at the State House. The biggest revenue sources are closing the capital gains tax loophole and freezing the income tax rollback. Only capital gains raises money for the long term as well. And it's just plain fair to tax cap gains the same as wages! If we tax capital gains at the same rate as wages and salaries — we can raise between \$300 and \$600 million in new state revenue every year!

Boston DSA has joined the Stop the Cuts Campaign, led by TEAM, United for a Fair Economy, the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, SEIU, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Mass Senior Action. The goal is to stop deep budget cuts to human services, education, child care, housing, and so on, by raising revenue progressively. Please act on the alert below and call now in support of the bill sponsored by Rep. Jim Marzilli to raise the capital gains tax.

**Call your State Representative NOW!
617-722-2000 or 1-800-291-9969**

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

“Hi, my name is _____. I live[or work] at _____.
I am very concerned about recent cuts in the state budget.
Please support Closing the Capital Gains Tax Loophole.
Taxing capital gains at the same rate as wages and salaries is the simplest, fairest, and best way to raise revenue to fund the programs working families need.
Thank you for your efforts to limit budget cuts. My phone number is _____.”

AFTER YOU MAKE YOUR CALLS, PLEASE CALL DSA @ 617-354-5078. We need to know how many calls each Representative got in order to plan our follow up!

For more info on closing the capital gains loophole, call Harris at 617-723-6866.

FTAA Tour Hits Town

By Catherine Benedict

On March 23 Boston will host a national tour with leaders of social movements from Chile, Mexico, Brazil, and the United States, speaking out against the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas). They will be joined by several local speakers who will give testimony about the way the FTAA would affect us here in Massachusetts. The event will take place from 4:00 to 6:00 at a location TBA. The FTAA, the latest in a series of corporate-sponsored “free trade” initiatives, is an attempt to extend NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere by 2005. It would harm

workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, the environment, public services, and democratic sovereignty while shifting more power into corporate hands. The March 23 event will be a chance to learn about the effects the FTAA would have both locally and internationally, to find out about opposition to it, and to join in local resistance efforts. For further updates on the tour, please visit the Boston Global Action Network website at www.bostonglobalaction.net or email catherinebenedict@earthlink.net. And if you haven't had a chance to see it, try to catch Bill Moyers' outstanding program “Trading Democracy,” which explores Chapter 11 of NAFTA, the

provision which allows corporations to sue governments for “anticipated lost profits.” You can order the video for \$29.95 plus shipping by calling 800-336-1917.

*Catherine Benedict is a member of the
BGAN FTAA Task Force*

Yankee Radical

P.O.B. 51356, Boston, MA 02205

Phone: 617-354-5078

yankeeradical@dsaboston.org

<http://dsaboston.org>

Editors: D. Keil, M. Pattberg

Bogdan Denitch — 1953

The following is excerpted from Tim Wohlforth's 1994 political memoir, The Prophet's Children — Travels on the American Left (Humanities Press). In recent years Wohlforth has joined (Bay Area) DSA.

I became a socialist in 1953, right at the height of McCarthyism and at the lowest ebb that the American socialist movement had ever experienced. I was a sophomore at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. I was won to socialism by the Shachtmanites, a group that made up in intellectual vitality for what they clearly lacked in members. The Shachtmanites were the dissidents of the dissidents, the uncompromising defenders of democracy in a world dominated by totalitarianism and during a period when the Left itself was by no means untouched by totalitarian thought and practice.

The socialists came to Oberlin that fall. Their arrival was quite an event, not totally unlike the landing of a flying saucer, and many turned out to hear them out of curiosity alone. We were graced with two socialists — Scott Arden and Bogdan Denitch — from the newly formed Young Socialist League. Neither I nor anyone else at Oberlin College had ever heard of the group. The group's membership was over one hundred, which in the dark days of McCarthyism made it the largest socialist youth organization in the United States. In fact I believe it was the only socialist youth organization outside of the Communist Party's Labor Youth League (LYL), which was down to two campus branches and was almost defunct. The organization was, as I would later learn, vaguely in the Trotskyist tradition, heavily influenced by veteran Trotskyist leader Max Shachtman. This gave Denitch and Arden a rather attractive political coloration: very militant and critical of American society and foreign policy yet committed to democracy and just as critical of the Soviet Union as they were of the United States. These socialists, for all their small numbers and sectarian background, made a very big splash. Some two hundred students turned out to hear them at the First Congregation-

al Church. I can still remember the main outlines of their speeches. They said that the world was divided into two imperialist camps, one headed by Russia and the other by the United States. They opposed the two camps with the creation of a "third camp" made up of the colonial countries and the workers of all countries. America's foreign policy, they maintained, was antidemocratic, propped up dictatorships around the world, and opposed social progress everywhere. It therefore offered no real alternative to Soviet imperialism. The American economy had pulled out of the depression only through rearmament and World War II. It avoided a threatened postwar slump through rearmament during the cold war. We now lived under a permanent war economy. If we wished peace and disarmament, it would have to be on the basis of a socialist society. Denitch and Arden were socialists but they were not Communists. Socialism in their view was the logical extension, the full development of democracy. The speakers were challenged from the floor by two professors from the college who had worked for the government under the Truman administration. They defended the basic outlines of American foreign policy as necessary to combat the dangers of communism while challenging the thesis that the American economy was dependent on war industries for its prosperity. Denitch and Arden immediately challenged the two professors to a debate. The two professors could hardly refuse in front of an audience of two hundred students, and the debate was set for the same place the following evening. The debate the next evening went over the same basic points. The professors were in trouble from the beginning as having been advisers to the previous government; they were forced to defend almost all actions of that government in the mounting cold war. At the same time they were liberals, not cynical politicians, and they continuously tripped over their liberal convictions as they followed a line of realpolitik. Arden and Denitch were skilled debaters with years of experience in the socialist movement. They knew abso-

lutely nothing about economics, and their theory of the permanent war economy was, I would learn many years later, a one-sided explanation of the postwar boom. Yet these limitations did not hamper them and — at least as I remember the event — they creamed the professors. Nothing pleases a student more than to see his professors have their heads handed to them; the audience was with the socialists.

Bogdan Denitch painted a colorful and somewhat exaggerated picture of the YSL. He gave a most astounding interview to the college newspaper. He stated that the YSL's membership was "under 30,000" and went into great detail about a "training school" the YSL ran to turn out machinists to invade industry and form socialist cells to challenge the conservative union bureaucracy. The newspaper painted the organization as if it were a big Red plot. I found out the truth a couple of years later when I turned up in New York City and needed a job. Two older comrades, Herman Benson and Julius Jacobson, had a small machine shop. If you pleaded with them enough they would give you a fifteen-minute lesson in running an automatic screw machine. Their instruction was rather inadequate; luckily I never had to work in industry.

About a dozen of us met with Arden and Denitch and decided to organize our own socialist club on campus, which we called the Eugene V. Debs Club, naming it after the famous early leader of American socialism...

(Bogdan Denitch – Cont'd from page 1)

ments on two continents; organizing farmworkers in Florida, working on the docks in Manhattan, getting arrested countless times, participating as a socialist in the UAW, Steelworkers and Machinists unions, leading a major sit-down strike at American Safety Razor (UE) — all this before 1955! He also recruited Mike Harrington into the Socialist Party in 1952, and out of it shortly afterwards over Korean War policy. At Berkeley in the 1960s Denitch organized Freedom Rides into the South, and later anti-Vietnam War pro-

Health Care Crisis is Labor's Opportunity

By Rand Wilson

As the protagonist in the hit movie, *John Q*, Denzel Washington personifies the health care crisis for working Americans. Without adequate insurance for a life-saving surgical procedure for his son, he takes radical action and becomes a new working class hero. It's a good metaphor for what the entire labor movement needs to do to demonstrate the power of solidarity.

The biggest issue facing most workers is the expected double-digit increases in health insurance premiums. It means growing numbers of workers are being asked (or forced) by employers to shoulder the burden of the spiraling costs of their health care. For union members, bargaining is likely to become even more fractious than it was during the late 1980s and early 1990s when premiums rose by similar amounts.

The struggle over "who pays" provides an ideal opportunity for union leaders to connect the labor movement to the rest of the working class. To do so, unions must resist employer demands for cost shifting "John Q" style – escalating the crisis. At the same time, labor needs to be a major force fighting for broad social reforms that will benefit everyone, or risk being seen as part of the problem.

Waging an effective campaign against health care concessions requires broad-based membership involvement. Unions that don't begin extensive membership preparation before any cost

(Bogdan Denitch – Cont'd from page 4)

tests. The U.S. government refused, for political reasons, to grant his request for citizenship until it lost an ACLU court suit in 1965. And along the way he has worked with, or against, or at least gotten to know, quite a diverse group of political figures; from Dwight MacDonal in his anarchist phase in the late 1940s to Dorothy Day and A.J. Muste in the third camp peace movement of the early '50s, numerous labor and civil rights activists, Yugoslavian dissidents and leading figures in today's European Socialist and Communist parties.

shifting demands are on the table will fail. Just as importantly, negotiating committees also need to reach out for broad community and labor support. Fortunately, the health care issue is a powerful coalition builder.

Most unions that took on the cost shifting fight in the late '80s found that community-labor coalitions were the key to avoid being painted by employers as "just another selfish union" unwilling to "share the pain." Back in 1989, sixty thousand striking telephone workers overcame that notion with the slogan, "Health Care For All, Not Health Cuts at NYNEX."

Even under the best of circumstances, not every health care negotiation will end successfully. If the outcome of bargaining does result in some cost shifting, locals should have an array of concrete options that at a minimum also enlist support from employers to work for social reforms that remove health care as a contentious contract issue.

Ironically, while workers are paying more for health care, draconian cuts in services mean that they will get less. That contradiction ought to stir up plenty of anger about the failure of managed care and discredit any future "free market" approaches to reform.

Tragically, the labor movement is missing a broad consensus around a simple reform plan (like single payer) that provides a framework for members to relate their particular employer-based struggle to larger social goals.

Among the obstacles to reaching that consensus is the large number of labor-management sponsored health and welfare funds. No one to my knowledge has come up with a transition plan that would convince building trades unions to give up the perks of running a small insurance agency in favor of a single-payer system.

Links to caregivers

The cost-shifting phenomenon also provides an opportunity to turn union members' dissatisfaction with ever more costly employer-based insurance to broader labor support for caregivers and others whose working conditions in the health care industry are deterio-

rating.

As the number of uninsured and under-insured grows, the financial crisis in health care will get much worse. Health care managers will be forced to downsize and consolidate services while increasing health care workers' "productivity" with more short staffing and mandatory overtime.

Vigorous resistance by the entire labor movement to any more service cuts or hospital or clinic closures will help to win allegiance from current members and excite non-union health care workers to organize. Similar to the fight against cost shifting, union struggles to maintain quality services need broad community support and coordination with reform organizations.

Broader context

A major national political victory on health care is a long-term goal. In the near term, significant reforms are more likely to be achieved at the state level. With sufficient commitment and support, a union-backed campaign could make universal health care the defining issue in state electoral politics. Connecting the struggles against cost shifting and service cuts to the overall fight for universal health care will energize the movement, complement organizing, and sharpen labor's political edge.

But what's lacking is a unifying context for health care related struggles. Without coordinated on-the-job actions that continue to involve union members who have been part of past campaigns against cost shifting or cut backs, the labor movement (and reform efforts in general) keep losing their momentum.

Such a campaign would not only galvanize large portions of the existing membership, it will also help attract workers to the union movement and build broader community support for labor in general. However, we won't grow or succeed unless labor unions adopt a clear message that the health care crisis can't be solved if we continue to rely on an employer-based, private insurance system.

Union organizer Rand Wilson has worked for the Teamsters and SEIU, and is a long-time health care reform activist.

Report on New Progressive Network

By Jason Pramas,
Campaign on Contingent Work

A couple of months after September 11th shattered politics-as-usual for the American left, a number of local Boston activists in the labor-welfare coalition Working Massachusetts, in Jobs with Justice, and in my group, the Campaign on Contingent Work (CCW), thought that the economic downturn accelerated by the terrorist attacks was actually creating an excellent climate for progressives to take the political high ground in Massachusetts.

While there was certainly patriotic fervor aplenty, there was also growing grassroots anger at policies which led to a situation in the Commonwealth that looked very much like the results of “structural adjustment” imposed on Third World countries: lower taxes on corporations and the rich, leading to a budget collapse in state government in the wake of a worldwide economic contraction, leading to big cuts in the public sector, leading to impoverishment and immiseration for growing numbers of Massachusetts working families.

So in November of last fall, two ideas — Jobs with Justice’s plan to hold a Faneuil Hall speakout similar to the epic DSA-led “Hearing on Economic Insecurity” in 1996, and a CCW/Working Massachusetts plan to hold a conference to help further unify the work of area progressives (and not-coincidentally relaunch Working Massachusetts in time to fight the reauthorization of the 1996 “welfare reform” laws)—converged into a coalition to put on both events with only two months lead time.

On February 2nd, despite overlapping with the Democratic Party caucuses, we attracted 350 people to a “Speakout for Justice and Fairness in the Economy” at Faneuil Hall — timed to coincide with both the World Economic Forum in NYC and the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Like the 1996 speakout, we featured 4 panels of speakers from the front lines of the Massachusetts economic crisis representing every major job market, interspersed with expert testimony from organizers and academics. Nurses

from Waltham-Deaconess Hospital jostled elbows with fisherman’s wives from Gloucester, immigrant factory workers from Fall River, and graduate students from Amherst. All told tales of financial hardship, but some spoke of recent victories won by organizing collectively.

The major difference between our event and the 1996 event (which many of us had also worked on) was that the worker panels testified to the local Jobs with Justice Workers Rights Board consisting of eminent personages like Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner and Boston College Professor Juliet Schor — rather than testifying to a panel of Congresspeople. A few politicians showed up, most notably Congressman Delahunt, State Treasurer Shannon O’Brien and State Senator Warren Tolman, but the overall focus of the day was that the area progressive movement should express public shock and outrage at the local state of economic affairs in the light of the mass media. And propose that a freshly-emboldened popular movement could change the current political equation in favor of working people.

The other difference between this year’s speakout and the 1996 event was that the local progressive movement is much broader and better networked than it was then, so we were able to expand on the speakout by inviting area progressive activists from every sector of the movement to our “Forging a New

Social Contract” conference the following weekend. The goal of the conference was to bring various groups and unions together to discuss what we all were up to, and more importantly, to emerge with a loose network that would help us keep in better touch with each other.

So on February 9th, we attracted 120 people from around the state to Harvard University’s Sever Hall. By the end of the day, we had achieved our goal of expanding the coalition that planned the conference into a network of about 60 local activist groups and unions that would meet regularly to discuss all the campaigns going on in Massachusetts, and strategize ways to expand our collective reach and popular muscle.

That’s about all there is to it. We deliberately avoided trying to write any grand manifestos or attempts to form any new overarching organization because we don’t think that our still-fragmented movement is ready for that yet. But we do think that we can grow together over time by communicating better with each other. So, if you’d like to get involved in this new unnamed Massachusetts progressive activist network, email Matt Borus at Working Massachusetts, mborus@aol.com, or myself, jpramas@igc.org, and we’ll sign you up to our already nearly 100-person “Social Contract” listserv, so you can get meeting notices and participate in our strategic discussions.



DSA — Join Us!

- Enclosed are membership dues (\$50 sustainer, \$35 regular, \$15 limited income).
- Enclosed is a contribution of _____ (make check payable to DSA, especially you non-members who get the YR for free).
- I am renewing.
- My address has changed.
- Please send me more information about DSA.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Union/School _____ Email _____

Boston DSA • P.O. Box 51356 • Boston, MA 02205

Health Coalition Fights State Policies

By Elizabeth Saunders

Today our children are unnecessarily exposed to toxic chemicals as they do all the normal things children do — eat, breathe, play, go to school — often from things that the average parent would never suspect was dangerous. Rates of childhood diseases with links to toxics such as Asthma, Behavioral and Learning Disabilities, and Childhood Cancer are higher now than they've ever been before, and they're on the rise. Although there are many inter-related factors causing this increase in childhood disease, among them are current policies that allow widespread harm to our health.

In response, Clean Water Action has helped to initiate the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT), a public health coalition of scientists, health care workers, teachers, parents, religious and

environmental groups and others seeking preventative action on toxic hazards.

Short-term, AHT is focusing on the Campaign to Protect Child Health. We are developing a list of "First Steps" that the Governor can take to protect child health in Massachusetts, and will ask each candidate running for that office in 2002 to pledge to implement them if elected. The finalized platform will be released in April, but will include common-sense steps for healthy homes, schools, neighborhoods, food, etc.

Longer-term, AHT's goal is to correct fundamental flaws in all government policies that allow harm to our health and environment. We plan to prevent harm before the damage is done,

with programs that are proactive, protective, and precautionary.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Sign up to join the AHT TODAY! Then you can receive action alerts and updates on local events. Changing the way that our state government deals with toxic threats to human health is a huge task; the corporate interests benefiting from the loopholes in our current system will be powerful opponents. We will ultimately be able to succeed in "changing the rules of the game" if we stand TOGETHER and call on our officials to better protect our health and that of our children.

Elizabeth Saunders is on the staff of Clean Water Action.

To join: Email info@healthytomorrow.org with the following information: name, mailing address, phone number and email address, call 617-338-8131, or check out the AHT Web site, www.healthytomorrow.org.

Urban Ring: A Bait & Switch Scam?

By Fred Moore and Mike Pattberg

A metropolitan "urban ring" rapid transit line was first conceived during the anti-highway revolt of the 1970s. It was seen as a progressive alternative to the endless, city-destroying highway building then in vogue. It meant rail transit directly connecting Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville, Everett and Chelsea, without first having to change in downtown Boston.

Launched with such great visions, hope, and hype, the Urban Ring circumferential corridor line has since degenerated into a conglomeration of bus lines intermittently using special use roadways that double as truck haul roads, in the classic local transit planning game of bait and switch.

And now the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization's public review draft of the regional Transportation Plan 2000-2005 has omitted the full build, rail version of the Ring from its "Recommended List of Projects." As the Conservation Law Foundation has pointed out, the original rail version of the Urban Ring would decrease car trav-

el, improve air quality, improve transit access to the designated "growth areas" of Boston and surrounding towns, improve service to low and moderate-income neighborhoods, promote brown fields redevelopment, and ease congestion on existing MBTA transit lines by reducing the need for unnecessary trip segments and transfers — among other things! But this is not what state and federal transportation planners have in mind.

The Federal Transit Administration seeks to promote busway construction as a substitute for the more popular light rail, and to lower the capital costs; the idea seems to be to siphon off transit funds for road building. Phase two of the Ring scheme is to build some disconnected roadways in current rail rights of way and call the whole thing "bus rapid transit" (BRT) Given that this has to be done on the cheap, where there is no railway real estate to confiscate, we will have "bus rapid transit in mixed traffic." The mixed traffic portions are mostly street traffic bottlenecks in the corridor, and constructing bypass roads there would drive up costs to an unac-

ceptable level. So what we have here is a "virtual" corridor that plays fast and loose with the term "bus rapid transit," the most flagrant abuse of terminology since the German Democratic Republic.

Touted as the rapid transit of the future, this throwback to the past is much like the earlier incarnation of BRT a generation ago. Expressways were going to make traffic jams a thing of the past! The express bus on the limited access highways would be transit; and rapid, supposedly making suburban commuter rail obsolete! The battlefield of Massachusetts politics has littered the landscape with public works that have failed to perform up to expectations and had to be re-done at great taxpayer expense. Unfortunately, the ambitious timetable to upgrade the Ring to the full rapid rail phase will probably slip and fade. What gets built in phase two will likely be around for twenty years or longer; can such a temporary Ring be cost effective if it needs to be torn out and re-done several years later? The "T" has an abysmal track

(continued on page 8)

**(Scam –
Cont'd from page 7)**

record with temporary anything; like the “temporary” suspension of electric tram service on Green line A and E branches. The ultimate double whammy is that if the BRT does not generate enough ridership, the highway lobby will be saying “we told you so, transit does not work” and the busways

will be converted to general use roadways. If ridership gets too heavy, the service quality will degenerate. And if a major capital project does not soon follow to build rapid rail as should have been done in the first place, it will fail to shape the land use patterns that work with a high volume transit operation. Whereas mass transit needs to expand its destination envelope, building the same facility over and over again will

take capital funds away from places that could benefit by substituting a railway line for more road widening. Although this is being sold as the transit substitute, skeptics see a scaled down version of the Inner Belt.

Fred Moore is President of the Association for Public Transportation (617-482-0282, www.car-free.com). The Conservation Law Foundation has also done much work on this issue (617-350-0990).

Boston DSA Events Calendar

Date	Event
Wednesday, Mar 20	Denitch talk at Kennedy School, 6 pm (see pg. 1).
Thursday, Mar 21	Denitch reception, 41 Magnolia Ave., Cambridge, 6-8 pm (see pg. 1).
Tuesday, April 2	Mark Schneider talk on NAACP, 102 The Fenway, Room 331, Boston, 7 pm.
Sunday, April 7	Jack Clark farewell party (Doyles Café), 3484 Washington St., J.P., 4-6 pm.
April 12-14	Socialist Scholars Conference, NYC (212-817-7868).
March, April	BGAN Forums, Cambridge Library; call 617-354-5078.



the yankee radical

Institute for Democratic Socialism
P.O. Box 51356
Boston, MA 02205

**Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Boston, Mass.
Permit #59341**

INSIDE

<i>Denitch Talk & Reception</i>	<i>page 1</i>
<i>NAACP Talk</i>	<i>page 1</i>
<i>Jack Clark Party</i>	<i>page 2</i>
<i>Short Takes</i>	<i>page 2</i>
<i>DSOX Astound</i>	<i>page 2</i>
<i>Action Alert</i>	<i>page 3</i>
<i>FTAA Tour</i>	<i>page 3</i>
<i>Bogdan back then</i>	<i>page 4</i>
<i>Health Care & Labor</i>	<i>page 5</i>
<i>New Progressive Network</i>	<i>page 6</i>
<i>Public Health Coalition</i>	<i>page 7</i>
<i>Urban Ring Scam</i>	<i>page 7</i>