

the yankee radical

(617) 354-5078

January, 2007

RECEPTION FOR YDS

WHEN: Thursday, Jan. 11, 6:30–8:00 PM
WHERE: 11 Ely Rd., Arlington, MA

Today when campus activism ranges from single-issue groups to the authoritarian left, there remain a large number of students who instinctively resist sweatshop-manufactured products and corporate globalism, but whose conceptual analysis of capitalism is only semi-formed. Young Democratic Socialists (the youth section of Democratic Socialists of America) plays an essential role in introducing such activists to a well-grounded alternative. YDS is the only campus-based organization whose members found their politics on a socialism that is historically aware, nuanced, and profoundly democratic, resulting in an analysis and a commitment to social change to which they can remain steadfast long after graduation.

YDS is growing, and has chapters and organizing committees from Maine to Las Vegas, including places like central Arkansas, where the presence of organized socialist youth may seem somewhat surprising. It also has a smart, engaged leadership, and a talented Youth

Organizer. Nothing is holding YDS back, except the limits of the organizing resources we can throw at it!

So join us on January 11 at a House Party for Young Democratic Socialists. Hear representatives of the youth section speak about the organization's promise and goals, and about their upcoming February 16-18 conference in NYC, "Justice Beyond Borders", which will feature Noam Chomsky and Barbara Ehrenreich. Bring your checkbook, and make a contribution to help this dynamic student organization grow

Directions: Take Park Ave. S from Mass. Ave., or N from Rte. 2. Turn W on Appleton St. Continue on Appleton through the 6-way intersection (Appleton is the 2nd R). Take your second R after the intersection onto Ely Rd. No. 11 is the 2nd house on the R Call 781-643-1489 if you get lost.

MBTA Buses: No. 77 or 79 Arlington Hts. to Mass Ave and Park (1/2 mi) or No. 78 Arlmont to Appleton and Ely. We can also give rides from the Mass. Ave. bus for those who need it.

—*Dave Duhalde and Dave Knuttunen*

DSA Members Meetings

WHEN: Wednesdays 7 pm,
January 10, February 14, March 14

WHERE: Harvest Food Co-op
(Community Room); 581 Mass. Ave.,
Central Sq., Cambridge

The Boston Democratic Socialists of America Executive Board now meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the location listed above. These meetings conduct our organizational business and are open to all members.

On January 10 we will have our annual election for Chair of the Local, Yankee Radical editor, and members of the Executive Board—if you'd like to participate in guiding DSA through 2007, here's your chance!!

DSA Members and Friends: This year for the first time we're combining our annual fundraising letter with the YR (pgs 3 and 4), as we can't afford to mail them separately. Please be as generous as you can.

Breakfast with Mass Alliance

WHEN: 9 AM, Wednesday, January 17
WHERE: 10 St. James Ave., Boston
11th Floor, Terrace Room

As noted elsewhere in this issue, progressives made key gains in the 2006 State House and Senate elections. One reason for this was the Mass Alliance, a coalition of unions, environmental, civil rights and community groups—including

Boston DSA—who mobilize in State legislative races.

To celebrate these victories and raise money for more, the Alliance is sponsoring this Progressive Legislative Breakfast. We'll swap stories about the past campaign and hear about progressive prospects in Governor Patrick's new legislature. Among the speakers will be winning Alliance-endorsed candidates

Willie Mae Allen, Cleon Turner, and Steve D'Amico.

Suggested donations: \$25, \$50, or \$100. To RSVP or for more information call 617-722-4320, email contact@massalliance.org. If you're a DSA member who plans attending, please also call 617-354-5078.

SHORT TAKES

By Mike Pattberg

In Case You Missed It...

On October 18, about 20 people attended a Springfield fundraiser for the Bernie Sanders U.S. Senate race organized by the Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO and DSA, which in this case means Dave Knuttunen and MA AFL-CIO Vice President Ed Collins. It raised almost \$10,800 including checks from the UFCW and IBEW. Dave reports that despite the low turnout the event was “well-received by participants. We had the opportunity to show DSA in action to a few local labor leaders, as well as raise some significant new money for the Sanders campaign”.

On December 9, a Boston DSA member’s meeting heard Paul Garver lead a discussion on “Coca-Cola, Columbia and the Unions”. Paul was a DSA NPC member in the 1980s who has recently “semi-retired” back to the Boston area after 16 years in Switzerland where he was coordinator of the Department of Transnational Corporations for the International Union of Food Workers (IUF). He relayed some of his experiences trying to aid union organizing in Columbia, beset by death squads, guerillas, and an unsympathetic state.

Young Democratic Socialists

As noted on page one, Young Democratic Socialists are having their Winter conference February 16-18 in NYC, “Justice Beyond Borders:

Democracy and Socialism in the 21st Century”. Speakers include Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, former Boston DSA Chair Joe Schwartz and possibly Jerry Hudson of SEIU 1199, among others.

YDS is also participating in a study-away program in NYC in the Spring and Fall called “Union Semester”. According to the YDS website, “You get 16 undergraduate credits in labor studies classes, intern at a union, and work with members of YDS”. For more information about the YDS conference or Union Semester email yds@dsausa.org.

Toxic Environment

Tolman-Kaufman Bill: Clean Water Action and other environmental groups are urging support for State legislation to get potentially harmful chemicals out of our food, water and air. Sponsored by Senator Steve Tolman and Representative Jay Kaufman, the Safer Alternatives Bill would “create a pragmatic and flexible program to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives”. For more information on the bill visit www.healthytomorrow.org/currentleg.html or call 617-338-8131

Dancing with Lesbians: If you’re a lesbian, or friend of lesbians, or just like to dance with lesbians, the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition is sponsoring a fundraiser on Saturday, January 27, 8:30 pm—12:30 am, at the Brookline Holiday Inn. Billed as “the

first great party of 2007”, the 9th Annual Lesbians and Friends Dance features a cash bar and a silent auction; tickets \$30-\$35. MBCC emphasizes environmental links to breast cancer and primary prevention, not just funding elusive cures. More information: www.mbcc.org. 617-376-6222.

DSA Sweeps Seekonk!

Although largely unnoticed by the corporate media, on closer inspection the 2006 election campaign may have been a referendum on ...DSA! At least according to Steve Howitt, Republican candidate in the fourth Bristol District (Norton, Rehoboth, Seekonk, Swansea). Howitt sent out mailings accusing his Democratic opponent, former Mass Fair Share organizer Steve D’Amico, of “accepting thousands from unions, lobbyists and special interests including Democratic Socialists of America”. Addressing D’Amico personally, Howitt wrote: “It’s YOU who belongs to special interests. Mass Alliance has already taken credit for your primary victory. They represent Democratic Socialists of America, Boston Carmen’s Union Local 589, Boston Teachers Union...and more!”

These mailings, and similar comments on the Howie Carr radio show, allowed D’Amico to ride a massive pro-DSA backlash to a stunning upset victory. Thanks, Steve!

Restore Romneys’ Cuts!

After Governor Mitt Romney decided to slash \$425 million from the state budget using his “9C” authority, hundreds of community and social service groups rallied at the State House to demand restoration of the money. Romney’s cuts include \$1.5 million for Community Health Centers, \$1.2 million in elder home care services, and \$26 million in early education funds affecting thousands of children and families.

In response, community and advocacy groups got together to form the Campaign for Public Responsibility (CPR), a growing coalition of groups and individuals affected by these cutbacks. On December 6 CPR organized a rally attended by 2000 human services consumers, providers and advocates who spoke about how the budget reductions were affecting the state’s most vulnerable residents, and a

20 foot inflatable rat named “Willard” meant to portray Romney. CPR plans to continue its advocacy until the cuts are restored.

To learn more about the Campaign for Public Responsibility, call Carl Nilsson at Neighbor to Neighbor at 617-723-6866 or email carl@n2nma.org

—Rachel Berry



Sunday, December 03, 2006

Dear Friend:

When I attended the last biennial convention of Democratic Socialists of America, just over one year ago, I was inspired by what I saw as a new wave of promise in our organization. The delegates seemed more serious, focused and committed than I have seen at national DSA conventions in the last 10 years. It felt like we were all searching honestly for answers to the questions of how to build an effective socialist organization in the US, and how our tiny group could help to build a broader Left. And the answers we came up with were good ones. The priorities resolution we produced, unlike some of the laundry lists of the past, felt coherent and achievable. I was impressed by how the parts fit together: one could do socialist education on the low wage economy while hosting a house party to raise money for Bernie Sanders – thus addressing three of the national priorities (socialist education, opposing the low wage economy, and Sanders support) with one event!

In fact, I was so impressed with the spirit of the convention, that I felt I had to be a part of this as much as I could manage, so I stood for, and won, a seat on the National Political Committee of DSA.

I have not been disappointed. In this critical election year DSA's focus was on electoral politics. **Our main national campaign was raising money to support Bernie Sanders' election to the U.S. Senate from Vermont.** DSA (through our PAC) raised over \$50,000 for Bernie's campaign – an amount equivalent to about 20% of DSA's national budget!—in a series of house parties that, like the words of Joe Hill, ranged from “San Diego on up to Maine.” **Two of the house parties (raising over \$16,000) were organized by DSA volunteers here in Massachusetts.**

And Bernie won – becoming the first ever avowed socialist Senator in the history of the United States.

Of course, your Boston DSA local didn't stop with our work on the national campaign! We actively supported local Massachusetts progressive candidates through our participation in the Massachusetts Alliance, a coalition whose purpose is to get progressives elected to the state legislature. **We publicized Mass Alliance-endorsed candidates in the Yankee Radical, provided volunteer time, and raised over \$2200 at our Debs-Thomas-Bernstein reception to support Alliance campaigns. Plus we have maintained our active participation in other progressive coalitions such as Jobs with Justice, the Working Family Agenda, and the Massachusetts Campaign for Single Payer Health Care,** as well as providing stimulating discussion (and socializing) at member meetings, our “After Capitalism” book group, and our monthly Exec. Board meetings (members invited!)

Boston DSA has made a good start on carrying out DSA's national priorities, and I believe we can do even better, next year. But we're going to need your help to do it. **While making these important contributions to fundraising for progressive politicians, we have sadly neglected our own.** The state of our exchequer, right now, is truly dismal!

This will be an important year for DSA. Nationally, the Democrats are firmly in control of the House, and more tentatively of the Senate. Key members of the Progressive Caucus, including several from Massachusetts, will hold important Committee Chairs. Here in Massachusetts, we have a Democratic Governor again, at last. Opportunities abound. But we need an active voice for progressive politics – for democratic socialist politics – to help control the inevitable tendency of the Democratic Party to drift to the center. And the Presidency remains, for at least the next two years, in the hands of the ruthless, Imperial, war-mongering, civil liberties-trouncing, Republican Right.

Yes, the next year, and the one following, will be promising – but challenging ones – for DSA. With your help, we will meet the challenges, and fulfill the promise.

In the next year, you can expect Boston DSA to engage in:

- **activism resisting the assault on living standards, both locally and globally;**
- **labor support, and opposition to Wal-Mart and other low-wage employers;**
- **agitation for truly universal, single payer health care; and**
- **education on the global aspects of our issues, including a planned event on the mass-based socialist upsurge —or “pink tide” – taking place in Latin America.**

Expect, as well, an increased frequency of member meetings, giving members and supporters like you an opportunity to get together, discuss issues, socialize with other socialists, and participate in the democratic life of DSA.

But we are not Rumpelstiltskins; we cannot spin gold thread from a pile of straw. Boston DSA runs a very lean-and-mean operation. We do not have paid staff or an office. Instead, we have a small group of hard working, and committed volunteers, and we meet mostly in donated space. **To do our work—to stay in touch with our members and publicize our issues to the rest of the world—we do have some minimum needs: a post office box, a telephone line, web space, printing and postage. Printing and mailing the Yankee Radical alone costs us over \$4000 per year.** DSA locals do not receive funding from the national organization, and Boston DSA has no “angels” with deep pockets to keep us afloat.

We send out a fundraising letter like this only once a year – to you, our friends, members, and supporters—and we need you to give as generously as you can, so we can keep holding the Democrats’ feet to the fire, keep educating the general public about the deeper issues behind neoliberalism, globalization and the low wage economy – and keep the ideas of Democratic Socialism alive in Massachusetts politics!

So please, celebrate, with me, this year of challenge and promise, and give as much as you can to support the work of Boston Democratic Socialists of America.

In solidarity,



David O. Knuttunen

Yes, I want to help Boston DSA fight for democratic socialist values. Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$500 \$100 \$25 \$250 \$50 \$1000

Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____

Email: _____



return to:

Democratic Socialists of America
P.O. Box 51356
Boston, Massachusetts 02205

<http://dsaboston.org>

Left Gains in State Races

By Georgia Hollister Isman

On January 3rd the new Massachusetts Legislature will take the oath of office. Like the freshmen in the US Congress, this year's class includes fewer Republicans. It also has fewer opponents of civil rights and economic justice. Unlike the U.S. Congress, the story of 2006 here is not the victory of the center or the take over of moderates. In Massachusetts, the new representatives are more pro-choice, more likely to support marriage equality, and more committed to economic justice than the legislators they are replacing.

Just as important is the election of a few progressive champions—representatives we will be able to count on to move economic justice measures forward in the legislature. Willie Mae Allen, for example, won the sixth Suffolk district to become the first 100% progressive legislator to hold that Mattapan seat. And Steve D'Amico, a former Mass Fair Share organizer, won the fourth Bristol district in this season's biggest gain. He will replace Rep. Phil Travis, one of the most conservative Democrats in the House.

Substantial gains like this are often elusive in gubernatorial election years when the attention of voters and activists is divided. They were made possible this time by three factors—a climate for accountability, intensive organizing, and a united and engaged left.

Following so many scandals at the federal level and building on Deval Patrick's theme of changing the culture of Beacon Hill, legislative candidates who campaigned on accountability and a new direction for Massachusetts did well. Not just in the sense of open and responsive government, but accountability to the real needs of struggling families. Candidates who showed voters their commitment to making state government responsive to the rising cost of healthcare, the deterioration of public schools, and stagnating wages did particularly well. This theme had the most effect in districts far from Boston,

which feel neglected and underserved. These more suburban and rural districts accounted for most of this year's key victories.

The D'Amico and Allen examples as well as our success in defending progressive incumbents in this cycle would not have been possible without on-the-ground organizing, both through the Mass Alliance itself and its member groups. Neighbor to Neighbor in the Allen race and the Coalition for Social Justice with D'Amico provided start-to-finish field support and mobilized volunteers to contact voters..

Finally, we continue to see gains because we are doing a better job of achieving a unified front. The organized left, in the form of Mass Alliance, has strengthened its position as an electoral force. Over the past year, the Alliance has expanded and consolidated its coalition of progressive and labor organizations. Throughout a tough primary season we were always able to work together—the various factions of the left were never opposing each other in these key races. Together we brought huge resources to bear—fundraising, field, independent mailings, advice, and volunteers.

But in the long run, successfully playing defense may be just as important. In every single open seat, pro-economic justice retiring legislators were replaced by freshmen with a similar agenda. Every single progressive incumbent who was challenged in the Primary or the General was reelected—that's everyone who voted to close corporate tax loop holes, or to make irresponsible employers pay for healthcare, or allow undocumented immigrants to attend state colleges like their peers. These defenses don't change the balance of power, but they may well change the political calculus about controversial votes.

One example bears special mention: Representative Cleon Turner. Rep Turner was first elected in 2004 and has

been a consistent supporter of economic justice. He faced a strong challenge this year in his Republican-leaning district. Many people wrote him off as a lost cause and a cautionary tale of what happens when representatives from conservative districts take progressive positions. Mass Alliance and its member organizations never gave up on this seat. We worked hard for Cleon throughout the campaign and mounted an aggressive get-out-the-vote campaign for him on Election Day. He won by 800 votes!

This has not been a watershed year for the State legislature as it was for the U.S. Congress. But it was another step in the march toward a progressive majority on Beacon Hill. We consolidated our gains, defended our incumbents, and gained new champions and votes on every issue the left cares about.

Georgia Hollister Isman is Political Director of the Massachusetts Alliance



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DREADFUL CONVERSIONS: The Making of a Catholic Socialist

By John Cort,
Fordham University Press, 327 pgs.

Reviewed by Father Ed Boyle, S.J.

This autobiography is a delightful as well as informative read. The personality that emerges from these pages is often frisky and self-deprecating. Reflecting his years as a journalist, the prose is fast-paced and lucid, and the variety of Cort's experiences keeps the reader engaged.

A quick sketch of Cort's life reveals a fascinating mosaic: a two-year stint with the Catholic Worker in New York City after graduating from Harvard in 1935; several years in varied positions with the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (he was a co-founder), intertwined with numerous stays in T.B. hospitals, and a brief stint as an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union; twelve years as a business agent with the Newspaper Guild, initially in New York and then in Boston; two years as a senior Peace Corps administrator in the Philippines; several years laboring on urban poverty, first as the head of the Commonwealth Service Corps, then with the Model Cities Program in Lynn, MA; finally at the age of 60, entering upon a career of serious scholarship, which included authoring a 400-page work on Christian socialism and now a 300-page volume on justice and the right to a job. In 1946, amidst all this, he won the hand of a bright social worker and together they raised ten children! Yes, John Cort has had a busy life!

The enigmatic title of this book is derived from two conversions that framed the life of the author. The first was to Catholicism as a senior at Harvard, which is described almost blandly in this work. Yet, this religious decision clearly went very deep, as Cort has been a daily communicant ever since. John Cort's formal affiliation with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) in 1975 marks his first public identification with

democratic socialism. Once again, the description of this major change is free of drama, with only minor acknowledgment to the influence of Michael Harrington.

Perhaps the lack of drama in this case is explained by this revealing passage on that DSOC decision: "I began to think that perhaps I had been a socialist all along, ever since I joined the C W in 1936, or better since I got involved with the ACTU and realized that government also has responsibility for the works of mercy and justice. I simultaneously began to realize that my socialism was related directly to and fed by my Catholicism and the teachings of the Church." In Chapter 18 Cort lays out the theoretical groundings of his own politics including the Socialist International's Frankfurt Declaration of 1951. The marriage between his religious faith and his social outlook is clearly evident in the passage by a police official from Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* that adorns the frontispiece and subsequently the book's title.

"We are not particularly afraid of all these socialists, anarchists, infidels and revolutionaries. We keep watch on them . . . but there are a few peculiar ones among them who believe in God and are Christians, but at the same time, are socialists. These are the people we are most afraid of. They are dreadful people. The socialist who is a Christian is more to be dreaded, than the socialist who is an atheist."

This reviewer was somewhat disappointed in the relatively scant coverage of the author's involvement with the Archdiocesan Labor Guild. He was a key activist for several decades, a past president, and editor of its monthly newsletter. But I was pleased with the details of his Roman experiences as a Labor Guild representative at international Church meetings on social action, including his first-hand impressions of Pope John XXIII, and the politics of the Curia. Hopefully, *Yankee Radical* readers will be

similarly surprised and stimulated by the varied meanderings over nine decades of this socialist comrade.

Father Ed Boyle is Executive Secretary of The Labor Guild, Archdiocese of Boston, and has been active with Jobs with Justice. This review was written before John Cort's recent death.

Last Thoughts on John Cort By Mike Pattberg

I first met John Cort in the 1976 Fred Harris Presidential campaign, soon after he had joined the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. He was a tall, erect, white haired man with a quizzical smile, baritone voice, and—sorry, no other word will do—courtly manner. The "Prairie Populist" never quite recovered from his 5th place finish (out of 9) in the MA Democratic primary that year which, as I vaguely recall, we tried to spin into almost a victory ("It's down to the Final Five!. We beat Sargent Shriver!") But DSOC (later DSA) had acquired one of our most loyal members.

In the next 30 years John's active participation in Boston DSA afforded us ample opportunity to back up our claim to being a democratic and pluralist organization. He had his views, and liked expressing them. Unlike some in the Boston local, he had little use for the writings of Karl Marx, and not just the 20th century dictatorships that arose in his name. But his major objection to DSA was our pro-choice stance on abortion. On this question and others, he took the official position of the Catholic Church.

I got to know John better in the 1980s, when we were part of the Boston DSA contingent for the Pledge of Resistance, one of the more effective expressions of popular opposition to U.S. policy in Central America. The Pledge favored long meetings which often attracted many participants, and their preferred method of decision making was "consensus". This did not go down well

(continued on page 7)

Iran Resolution

At our November meeting Boston DSA voted to sign on to the petition below, organized by Just Foreign Policy (www.justforeignpolicy.org) and Peace Action (www.peace-action.org), opposing any future U.S. military attack on Iran. While democratic socialists and human rights groups have many

concerns with the Iranian government, host of the recent Holocaust deniers conference, U.S. aggression can only make things immeasurably worse.

Although the meeting voted unanimously to endorse the resolution, the discussion expressed some reservations about the text, also a wish

it had explicitly opposed both Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons and U.S.—British enhancement of their stockpiles.

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy (www.cpdweb.org) also has a petition on this issue, "Neither U.S. Aggression or Theocratic Repression".

**To: Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice**

**cc: Chairs of the Senate Foreign
Relations Committee and
House Committee on Inter
national Relations**

We, the undersigned, vehemently oppose any U.S. military action against Iran. Such military action would inevitably kill large numbers of innocent people, foster even more hatred and international condemnation of the United States, and dramatically

increase the instability of the region. Our own intelligence agencies have concluded the Iraq war has worsened the terrorist threat, and a war against Iran would add immeasurably more fuel to the fire.

Even if Iran decided to build a nuclear weapon, the CIA estimates it would take 5 to 10 years. There is no crisis, and our government should not create one with inflammatory rhetoric or military threats. The United States has both the time and obligation to work with the

international community to fashion a diplomatic resolution to the situation, and the current refusal of U.S. officials to talk directly with Iranian officials cannot possibly help.

Therefore, we urge you to take all steps necessary to reach a peaceful resolution to the current situation, including direct negotiations without pre-conditions. This is the only way to prevent yet another war, one that would be a calamity of truly global proportions."

(continued from page 6)

with John, who would often sit impatiently beside me, quietly muttering.

Partly he thought debating and voting was a more democratic and certainly less time consuming alternative, but also, as I came to realize, he just liked to argue.

Reading *Dreadful Conversions* so soon after John's death, it's easy to hear his "voice", as the lit critics say—informal, direct, serious in purpose, not without wit. He chronicles a life of political action, from mobilizing his fellow Catholic Workers in support of the NYC Seamen's strike of 1936-37, to confronting a racist cop in Roxbury, to twice running for state rep in Allston-Brighton—only to have the election stolen from him by future State Treasurer Bob Crane! The book also recounts his interactions with everyone from then-Congressman John F. Kennedy and Dorothy Day to the Boston Black Panther Party and waterfront gangster Johnny "Cockeye" Dunn.

But the parts of this book that will probably stimulate the most controversy on the left have to do with the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU), which John helped lead, and their fight against Communist Party influence in the unions of the 1940s. The chapter "ACTU and the

Stalinists" describes how CP-controlled unions subordinated not just foreign policy resolutions but strike activity and general militancy to the ruler "of one of the most reactionary, dictatorial, homicidal governments in the history of the world". During the Hitler-Stalin Pact (1939-41) CP unions urged strikes, like at North American Aviation in 1941, to deny arms shipments to Hitler's only opponent—Great Britain. That is until Hitler tore up the alliance pact and invaded Russia, whereupon CP unions became the most ardent advocates of assembly line speed up, piecework and no-strike pledges. After WW2 they remained uncritical apologists for Stalin in the emerging cold war. John makes a persuasive but by now hardly original case that this was not a good thing for the American labor movement, and points out that ACTU was aligned with socialists in some of these anti-Stalinist struggles. He states, "So it was left against right, yes, and the real left won and the real right lost". But this sweeping conclusion overlooks a lot of well-documented history.

Anti-Communism in the post-WW2 CIO was a product of both a democratic impulse from below and a top-down strategy from business and government,

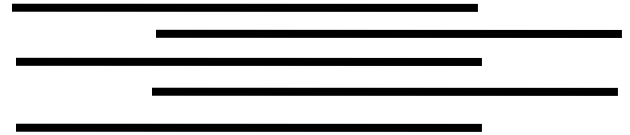
which makes categorical judgments problematic. The new leadership of some unions switched from parroting Moscow's line to parroting Washington's; instead of hailing Soviet subjugation of Eastern Europe, they supported CIA coups in Central America. Others, like the UAW under Walter Reuther, adopted a more independent foreign policy.

But even with CP support for anti-labor measures in WW2 and opposition to A. Philip Randolph's 1941 March on Washington Movement, it's hard to argue that most of the anti-Communist labor leaders who replaced them were better on wages, contracts, or organizing—and on fighting racism within the unions, impossible. More troubling is John's apparent support for at least some of the undemocratic administrative measures used to purge Communists from union office, although in fairness he also recounts ACTU opposition to others.

Well, enough. Wherever John is, by now he's probably initiating one of those "Round Table Discussions" he picked up from his days at the Catholic Worker. It's Boston DSA's loss that we can no longer take part.

Whose Boston ?

By Shirley Kressel



On Saturday, December 9, a couple of dozen people from neighborhoods and organizations across Boston got together to tackle a question growing in the minds of many residents and taxpayers: Whose Boston is it? That's the name of the sponsoring coalition, whose mission is to recover the community's voice and resources to prevent Boston from becoming a city for the very rich and the very poor—for transients (students, conventioners, shoppers, tourists, and real estate speculators) rather than for ordinary residents, families with a stake in stable, thriving neighborhoods.

This transformation started with urban renewal in the 1950's. Passed as a program to provide safe, decent housing for all, the Housing Act of 1949 funded the devastation of low-income, African-American and immigrant neighborhoods across America. Few of the displaced were ever re-housed in the high-rent residential towers that replaced their neighborhoods, and the program's "public purpose" of "eliminating blight and slums" quickly morphed into "economic development"—i.e., corporate welfare for big developers of office towers, stadiums, enclosed shopping malls, government buildings, and a massive highway/garage network. If the white middle class wouldn't live in the city, they would at least drive in to work, buy, and enjoy the culture missing from their safe, sterile suburbs.

Now that aging baby boomers want in again and the yuppies of the new economy need housing, the city is booming, and those who survived the bulldozers are now being driven out by gentrification—"urban

renewal without tears," as one new condo owner called it. Certainly no tears for him—but what about all the long-time city dwellers who hung in there, and are now watching it all appreciate beyond their means? Whose Boston will it become?

The structure established in 1957 for taking Boston from one set of people and handing it to another was—and still is—the Boston Redevelopment Authority. But in the intervening years, the BRA has taken over most other development-related City functions, including planning, zoning, and project review and regulation, and has neutered the power of the City Council under which it was to carry out narrowly defined projects. So: same mission—population transposition, redirection of land and wealth—but vastly greater powers, a license to print its own money through nefarious land deals, and virtually no oversight or accountability. An agency built to jump-start the economy of depressed post-war Boston with 40-year plans has made itself a permanent parasite on the body politic.

The group talked about the growing emergencies in housing affordability and property taxes, and the BRA's total disregard for community-based planning and lawful zoning. In discussing allies, the issue was raised of sensitizing construction unions, who now indiscriminately support all development proposals, to the impact of development on communities.

The group considered various strategies for organizing the community to the best effect, such as eliminating the BRA or taking the City Planning function out of it and back into the City, getting

BRA money into the City budget, limiting private-use eminent domain, changing the zoning structure, expanding the basis for standing in zoning lawsuits beyond abutters, and requiring various Master Plan community impact studies and developer criteria. As with any movement, evolution versus revolution was discussed and debated: should we go for the roots—more effective but maybe more difficult, or chop away at branches—less effective but maybe more achievable. The group sought action targets that would add up to an overall victory. State and local strategies are being planned.

The group also faced another decision: should we reform the structures of government, or try for better elected officials? Of course, accountable and transparent structures are essential to serve the public interest and ensure that all voices are heard; but good people have to be put into office to pass good laws and enforce them. So if *Whose Boston?* wants the answer to be "OURS!", we'll need to replace many city and state incumbents who have turned a deaf ear to our pleas with people who share our economic and social values. City Council elections are coming up this year. State legislators run again in two years. The Mayoral election is in three years. The time to start thinking about this is now.

Shirley Kressel is President of the Alliance of Boston Neighborhoods. For more information on Whose Boston?, contact Lydia Lowe of the Chinese Progressive Association at lydialowe@verizon.net

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

Democratic Socialists of America carries on the struggles and traditions of American democratic socialism, led this past century by Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas and Michael Harrington. While working for freedom, justice and democracy everywhere, DSA seeks to build movements to challenge the power of large corporations. The Boston local holds educational forums and study groups, supports progressive political candidates at election time, and participates in labor, civil rights and community struggles. Join us!

Enclosed are membership dues (\$50 sustainer, \$35 introductory, \$15 limited income).

My address has changed

Please send me more information about DSA.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Union/School _____ E-mail _____

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

DSA Honors Harris Gruman

Last September 24 Boston DSA presented our annual Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award to our longtime comrade, Director of Massachusetts Neighbor to Neighbor Harris Gruman. The award was named after Gene Debs, Norman Thomas and Julius Bernstein, democratic socialist leaders of the last century.

Hosted by former N2N Director John Maher and Co-Chaired by Senator Pat Jehlen and MA AFL-CIO Vice President Ed Collins, the event was also a fundraiser for both Boston DSA and

the Mass Alliance. Some Alliance-endorsed candidates were among the attendees, including Denise Provost, Jarrett Barrios, Willie Mae Allen, Claire Naughton and Will Brownsberger.

Political Director Georgia Hollister Isman explained how the Mass Alliance helps elect progressives to the MA legislature, and introduced some of the candidates. Pat Jehlen and John Mayer noted how Harris combines the skills and abilities of an ace precinct captain and shrewd political strategist with a vast knowledge of the more obscure

events of socialist history in Sweden, Austria, Italy, which undoubtedly comes in handy on the campaign trail.

Thanks to our hosts, John Mayer and Ellen Sarkisian; our perennial MC, Julie Johnson of the Mass Teachers Association and DSA who kept things running smoothly; primary organizers Susan Davidoff and Mike Pattberg, and all those who contributed to making this event a success



John Mayer (R) presenting award to Harris Gruman (photos: MP)

2006 Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award

September 24, 2006

Honoring Harris Gruman

Benefactors:

Patricia Armstrong, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66
Abby Rockefeller & Lee Halprin

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Maxine Phillips
Rep. Denise Provost
Phil Saines
Richard Sterne
Stan Sultan



Harris and Senator Jehlen (R) attempting to levitate John Maher



American Federation of Teachers
Massachusetts
AFL-CIO

Thomas J. Gosnell,
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Treasurer



**Claire Naughton, Alliance Political Director
Georgia Hollister Isman, and State Representative
Willie Mae Allen**

Dissent

SALUTES

HARRIS GRUMAN
&
MASS ALLIANCE

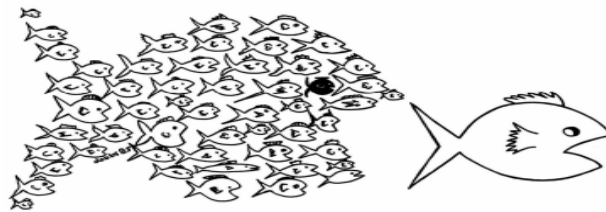
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NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

MASSACHUSETTS

Congratulations Harris
 on receiving the Boston Democratic
 Socialists of America's
 Debs-Thomas-Bernstein Award.

We love you, Comrade!
 ~ Your Neighbor to Neighbor Family



ORGANIZE

<i>YDS Party</i>	p. 1
<i>Mass Alliance Breakfast</i>	p. 1
<i>DSA Members Meeting</i>	p. 1
<i>Short Takes</i>	p. 2
<i>Restore Romney's Cuts</i>	p. 2
<i>Boston DSA Fund Appeal</i>	p. 3
<i>Left Gains in MA Races</i>	p. 5
<i>More on John Cori</i>	p. 6
<i>Iran</i>	p. 7
<i>Whose Boston?</i>	p. 8
<i>DSA Honors Harris Grumman</i>	p. 9

INSIDE

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