

# the yankee radical

(617) 354-5078

February-March, 2010

## DSA Members Meetings

**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 17, 6:30 P.M.  
**WHERE:** 45 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge  
**TSTOP:** Harvard Square, Red Line

The February Boston Democratic Socialists of America members meeting takes place at the Democracy Center near Harvard Square. We'll discuss our ongoing work on housing foreclosure and healthcare issues, as well as several upcoming events. We will also be electing a new BDSA Executive Board to guide us through 2010.

There are nine elected Board slots, including Chair, Treasurer, and Yankee Radical editor. Any member can run—no experience necessary! We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month. If you're mildly curious as to just what being a Board member entails, or think you might be interested in running, call 617-354-5078.

We will end with an informal discussion on the causes and political consequences of the Scott Brown election, led by MA SEIU Political Director **Harris Gruman**, NARAL Pro-Choice MA Director and former Young Democratic Socialists leader **Andrea Miller**, and Cambridge Peace Commission Director and 2008 Progressives for Obama activist **Brian Corr**.

**WHEN:** Sunday, March 14,  
**WHERE:** [REDACTED]  
**TIME:** 2 P.M. Meeting; 4 P.M. Pot Luck Food & Drink  
**DIRECTIONS:** [REDACTED]

Our March members meeting will be at the home of DSA National Political Committee member David Duhalde. At this point the agenda is not altogether set, but we'll likely be discussing our participation in various labor, healthcare, and housing coalitions, an upcoming Washington anti-war march, possible endorsements in certain State House "special elections" and whatever else DSAers want to talk about.

Then long-time member **Monte Pearson** will give a presentation based on his book, *The Perils of Empire*, which compares the military adventures of ancient Rome with those of the United States from WWI to the present, with past and future consequences for democracy. It promises to be an educational and lively discussion, especially for those of you who like to argue and toss around historical analogies. Then we eat. Join us!

## DSA Forum: What to Do About Housing Foreclosures?

**WHEN:** Wednesday, March 3,  
7:00 P.M.  
**WHERE:** 33 Harrison Ave., Boston

President Obama has recently proposed modest tax increases on the bailed out big banks to help fund small business loans from community banks. This is a welcome, if belated, development. Although as cynics might point out, Obama has appointed his top economic advisors and policy makers almost exclusively from the pro-corporate, neo-liberal, Robert Rubin wing of Clinton Democrats who, along with their Republican colleagues, helped bring on our current economic mess in the first

place when they fought successfully back in the 1990s to deregulate Wall Street. This contributed to a sub-prime mortgage bubble fueled by predatory loans whose unraveling continues to destroy the savings and even neighborhoods of many Americans today, especially in cities among people of color. Our speakers will examine the causes of this crisis and what we can do to resolve it—from community mobilization to legislative action at the State House.

Former Green Party gubernatorial candidate **Grace Ross** is active with the Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending (MAAPL), a coalition of

60 housing, social service and community groups, including DSA; they are supporting State House legislation to help home owners and tenants stay in their homes and stabilize communities.

First term **Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz** (D-Boston) is a co-sponsor of one of the MAAPL bills, SB1609, which would protect tenants from eviction in foreclosed properties. **Melonie Griffiths** is Tenant and Economy Organizer for City Life-Vida Urbana, the Jamaica Plain based social justice organization. For directions to 33 Harrison 5<sup>th</sup> floor, visit [www.encuentro5.org](http://www.encuentro5.org)

## SHORT TAKES

**Haitian Relief**

Space precludes an intended diatribe here against the plunder of Haiti over two centuries by the United States and France and its euphemistic description in the mainstream media, except to pass along a suggestion from National DSA's website ([www.dsausa](http://www.dsausa)) about three donation-worthy groups that "have long estab-

lished programs in Haiti and are independent of the forces that contributed to its poverty and oppression": Doctors Without Borders, the Quixote Center, and the Boston-based Partners In Health ([www.pih.org](http://www.pih.org)).

**Jobs with Justice Dinner**

On Thursday, March 25 Jobs with Justice will honor new MA Secretary of Labor Joanne Goldstein. 6 P.M. Reception; 7 P.M. Dinner & Program. Suffolk Downs, 111 Waldemar Ave., E. Boston. (617-524-8778, [www.massjwj.net](http://www.massjwj.net))

—MP

## We're Not Too Big To Fail!

And, since we're also not a Wall Street investment bank or giant insurance company, we can't really apply for a Washington bailout either. So to keep Boston Democratic Socialists of America going for another year we rely on the generosity of members and friends in responding to our annual fundraising letter, this time sent out in early December by David Knuttunen (if you didn't receive it we probably don't have your address, which can be corrected by informing [webmaster@dsaboston.org](mailto:webmaster@dsaboston.org)).

The economic crisis has made the work Boston DSA was already doing in health care reform and labor solidarity more relevant than ever, and in the past year a group of (mostly) younger activists have joined up. Just in the past two months we've:

- brought some DSAers to a vigil (in the cold!) held by City Life for a family in Dedham facing home

eviction by Deutsche Bank;

- joined solidarity boycott demonstrations for fired Hyatt Hotel housekeepers who had been forced to train their sub-contracted "temporary" replacements at half the original wage;
- lobbied with the MA Alliance Against Predatory Lending for anti-foreclosure bills at the State House;
- picketed with the immigrant laundry workers of UFCW 1445 in their strike against Angelica Textile Services in Somerville;
- been one of the co-sponsoring groups for Noam Chomsky's fundraising talk against the Honduran military coup.

The actions above were communicated through Boston DSA's email list—to get on you have to apply through the "Calendar" section of the BDSA website, [www.dsaboston.org](http://www.dsaboston.org).

Of course, though BDSA has been

mostly engaged in actions around local issues, in the last year or two it's been hard not to notice how many of our conservative fellow citizens throughout the country seem obsessed by our middle name. In a recent poll, 63% of rank and file Republicans believe "Obama is a socialist". Today the term is thrown around even more loosely, embracing even more contradictory meanings, than during the Cold War. Meanwhile Michael Moore makes a movie about the contradictions of capitalism and calls for "democracy" as an alternative. We think what Moore calls democracy is pretty much what we (and the non-Communist left for close to a century) call "democratic socialism".

Thanks so much if you have already responded to this year's fundraising letter; if not, please be as generous as these hard times permit.

✂

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

\$1,000     \$500     \$250     \$100     \$50     \$25     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(h) \_\_\_\_\_

(w) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:**

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

**Please let me know how I can be more active in DSA!**

# DSAers Fight Foreclosures, Battle Banksters

By David Knuttunen

For a person of the Left, the governmental response to the economic crisis of 2008 seems both inadequate and misdirected. The main concern of our elected representatives has been to protect and bail out the commanding heights of the financial industry. This bailout of the wealthy has been remarkably successful, as the much-publicized repayments of TARP funds by banks that continue to benefit from virtually free money from the Federal Reserve have amply demonstrated. Meanwhile, on Main Street (as opposed to Wall Street), the helping hand has been largely noticeable by its absence. Far too little has been done to ease the pain of working people and their communities.

Yet it was in large part the greedy and unethical actions of finance capital that got us into this mess in the first place. A key contributor to the economic crash was the bursting of the sub-prime mortgage bubble. There is ample evidence that the big banks and other financial institutions intentionally oversold these risky mortgages while using unscrupulous and often fraudulent means to do so, and especially targeted African American and Latino communities. Lender incentive systems were structured so that an agent would make more money by steering even credit-worthy victims... er, "customers", into high-risk, high-rate loans, instead of selling them safer mortgages. Many, many cases have been documented in which lenders actually falsified documents, and used other illegal methods to trick people into high-risk loans.

The result? Big banks get bailed out but little is done to help working people with these bad loans, who are now losing their homes to foreclosure. And the assault doesn't stop there. While the big banks get saved, smaller, locally based banks, which often play a more positive role in sustaining the communities where they are sited, are being swallowed up

and, with the government's help, handed over to the very monster institutions that are to blame for the crisis.

So this January DSAers in Brookline, Newton and parts of Wellesley took action to help the victims fight back against the perpetrators. We made calls to two of our elected representatives: Congressman Barney Frank and State Senator Cynthia Creem, who chair committees that are of vital importance on these issues.

The Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending (MAAPL), a coalition that includes Boston DSA, has filed four bills in the State Legislature to help predatory lending victims in Massachusetts. All are currently in the Judiciary Committee, whose Senate chair is Cynthia Creem. Her DSA constituents called to ask her to have these bills reported favorably out of her committee.

One of the community banks affected by the financial crisis was the Park National Bank in Chicago, which was seized by the FDIC in 2009 and turned over to U.S. Bankcorp. The Park National Bank had a well-deserved reputation as one of the most community-minded banks in the country, and its seizure caused the people of Chicago's westside to rise up, forming the Coalition to Save Community Banking. (DSA's Chicago chapter is a member). They have been pressuring their own Congressman, Luis Gutierrez, to arrange a meeting with the FDIC and hearings in Congress—and they need our help!

Congressman Barney Frank is Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee. He could initiate a process that might lead to using the remaining TARP funds to save community banks, instead of just handing them over like tasty morsels to be devoured by the big banks that precipitated the crisis. This would be a much more community-friendly use of the funds than other ideas that have been floated—like using them

to create a capital gains tax holiday! Constituents called to ask him to schedule a committee hearing to discuss this proposal.

This DSA action was something of an experiment. In most communities where we have locals, Democratic Socialists of America is too small to be much of a force on our own. But we have members and friends scattered throughout the country. By strategically mobilizing ourselves in support of other locals, in support of coalition members, and applying pressure on key legislators where it counts, we can make a contribution to struggles like these well beyond our numerical size.

The good participation of DSAers in this action suggests that the experiment was a success.

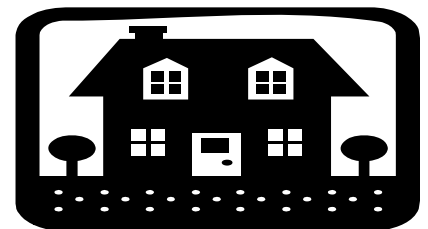
*It is not too late to take action on these issues. Call your own state legislators and ask them to support the MAAPL bills. Call your own Congressperson and ask that remaining TARP funds be used to help save community banks, and not to bail out big banks and other investors.*

For more information on the MAAPL legislation and the community banking crisis, check out the following web links:

Foreclosures (MAAPL website):  
<http://maapl.info>

Community Banks (Daily Kos article):  
<http://tinyurl.com/BDSA-banks>

—David Knuttunen is a former Chair and current member of the Boston DSA Executive Board.



# OH, MASSACHUSETTS!

by Tom Gallagher

(Originally published January 27 in Democracy.com)

There's sure been enough harsh talk around the healthcare bills coming out of the House and Senate—and I mean from people who support universal health insurance—forget the Tea Baggers and the Rush Limbaugh audience for the moment. On the one hand, you've got people calling for unseating Representative John Conyers because he voted for the final House bill—and he was the prime sponsor of the single payer bill! On the other, there's people dismissing any objections to the bills' shortcomings as the cavalier nitpickings of a privileged group that already has health insurance and doesn't really care much about anyone else who doesn't. But the hyperbole crown has got to go to the blogger who produced the headline "Raul Grijalva Flirting with History's Greatest Monster Status." And what crime did the Arizona Representative and Congressional Progressive Caucus Chair commit to join the ranks of Hitler, Stalin, and Attila? Why, he said that instead of passing the Senate bill as is, the House should send the Senate smaller individual bills that wouldn't include items such as a tax on pre-existing health insurance plans. Imagine that!

Massachusetts voters have lately become notorious for forcing a total tactical regrouping on the national health-care debate by electing a Republican to finish Ted Kennedy's Senate term. But on healthcare the politics of that New England state also hold some interest for the rest of us—the similarity between the ongoing quandary faced by advocates of expanded government services there and the dilemma that the current national health bills have posed for supporters of health insurance reform.

The "Massachusetts problem" stems from the fact that it is not only one of just seven states in the nation with a "flat" income tax, but also has a constitutional prohibition against establishing a graduated income tax—i.e., the kind we're all familiar with on the federal level, with rates that climb in higher income brackets. Numerous efforts to amend the state con-

stitution have failed. So the flat income tax, combined with the state's sales tax, has the effect of making the MA overall tax structure regressive, which seriously hinders any attempted redirection of resources within the state. You may be able to steer services and goods to the poor, but the money to do so will come from the middle rungs on the economic ladder and not the top. The Massachusetts dilemma, then, has generally boiled down to this: Do you ignore real needs or do you address them in a manner likely to eventually lead to a "middle class" taxpayer revolt such as the state's 1980 "Proposition 2 ½" property tax limitation, or California's more famous Proposition 13?

The national healthcare debate has faced no similar constitutional barriers, but the political barriers have proven every bit as formidable. The President and congressional leaders could have put forth a bill offering a more serious solution to the problem—whether single-payer, another type of universal nonprofit health insurance, a government-run healthcare system, or something else entirely—but they chose not to. The \$20 million in campaign contributions the healthcare industry gave Barack Obama (nearly three times the amount given John McCain) may not have in themselves *bought* a non-health insurance industry-threatening proposal, but it was probably at least a good predictor of the type of bill we would ultimately see.

So far as the debate *within* the left goes, both sides might do well to simply concede the other's central point: It is both true that the bills that came out of Congress *would* expand health insurance coverage significantly, although not universally, and that they *would not* fundamentally alter the expensive and wasteful private for-profit health insurance industry that lies at the root of the problem—except to further entrench it by mandating the purchase of its services.

If we're willing to grant the significance of both the bills' strengths *and* their

weaknesses, we might find ourselves then able to sympathize with the votes of both of the individuals who are arguably the most left-wing members of each congressional branch, even though they voted the opposite way: Senator Bernie Sanders was a "Yes" when one more "No" would have brought the Senate discussion to a halt, while Representative Dennis Kucinich voted "No" when there were a few House votes to spare and he could thereby highlight the vast gulf between the bill as it was and what it ought to be.

Just a couple of weeks ago, concern about the potential downside of passing the Senate or House bill as currently written might have been dismissed as academic, but it can't be now—or at least it shouldn't be. And for the fact that we now know that, we are indebted to MoveOn.org and Democracy for America for having the foresight and wherewithal to secure the services of the Research 2000 polling company to ask a few questions of the Massachusetts electorate. What they found was so at odds with the general "anti-big government" or "anti-insider" interpretations that dominate the mainstream media as to demand the closest attention.

The poll's target group was people who had voted for Barack Obama for President but did not vote for Martha Coakley, the Democrats' Senate nominee; and further divided into those who had actually voted for Scott Brown, the Republican winner, and those who stayed home. When asked if they favored or opposed "the healthcare reform proposal recently passed by the U.S. Senate," both groups opposed it—the Brown voters by a 48–32% margin and the non-voters by a 43–34%. And here's where things veered from the accepted norms of political discourse: When those opposed were asked if they thought the Senate bill "goes too far or doesn't go far enough," the 2008 Obama voters who'd taken a pass on the Massachusetts election said it didn't go far enough, by 53–8% margin. And so did

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# New MA Coalition Pushes Health Care for All

by Alexi Goranov

On January 25<sup>th</sup> activists from across the state met to establish a new coalition for passing health-care reform in Massachusetts. The meeting was called by Jobs with Justice and the Mass-Care coalition. Present were many union and community organizers, physicians, nurses, a handful State Representatives with about a dozen of their staffers.

In his introductory remarks, Ben Day of Mass-Care stated that in the recent U.S. Senate election, healthcare was the top issue for 56% of the voters. Since the chances of getting comprehensive national health-care reform is non-existent, he argued that the best way to proceed is to try to pass a reasonable healthcare reform here in Massachusetts. The goal would be to enact an improved Medicare-for-All (a.k.a. single-payer) State legislation in the next (2011) legislative cycle. Day argued that this is achievable, as there is significant support in the MA House and Senate, but

will require much community and workplace organizing to back it up. As Russ Davis of Jobs with Justice explained, we need a movement, not just a lobby effort. We should support workers fighting to preserve their health benefits, health care coverage for immigrants, and the struggles of communities let down by the current healthcare system.

The proposed campaign aimed at achieving all of the above is called the “Massachusetts Campaign for Health Care Justice”, and the opening mission statement sums it up nicely: “The MCHCJ will fight for universal, comprehensive, equitable access to health care for all residents because health care is a basic human right.”

The campaign has four goals, each of which will have a subcommittee:

1. Coordinate a strategic legislative campaign to enact Medicare-for-All legislation

2. Support worker’s access to affordable health care
3. Reduce health care disparities and support equitable access for immigrants
4. Protect and expand the health care safety net in MA

The campaign will be coordinated by a Steering Committee consisting of participating organizations. It will combine long-term goals, like enacting Medicare-for-All and immigrant inclusion, with short-term goals like supporting unions in their health care negotiations. This is an effort that can be won but will take hard work and engaging the public at large. Hopefully we can do our bit.

—Alexi Goranov is a post-doctorate fellow in the MIT cancer research program and active with Boston DSA. For more information on MCHCJ contact Ben Day at 617-723-7001, or [Director@masscare.org](mailto:Director@masscare.org).

(continued from page 4)

those who voted for Obama in 2008 and Brown in 2010—by a 36–23% margin!

And just so there wouldn’t be any misunderstanding as to what going “far enough” might mean, the pollsters also posed the question “Would you favor or oppose the national government offering everyone the choice of a government administered health insurance plan—something like the Medicare coverage that people 65 and older get—that would compete with private health insurance plans?” Both groups said yes—the Obama voters who stayed at home by a 86–7% margin and those who came out and voted for Brown by 82–14%.

Probably we shouldn’t entirely blame the mainstream pundits for the difficulty of incorporating the results of this poll into the national analysis. The fact is that the poll’s results are counterintuitive—people just don’t expect voters who felt the Senate healthcare bill did not go far enough to vote for a Republican. Counterintuitive, but true. After all, there was no candidate on the final Massachusetts

ballot advocating going further than the Senate bill, now was there? It’s not just the voters who need to deal with the consequences of their actions—so do the members of Congress who gave us the bills at hand.

On January 1 of this year, a Rasmussen Reports poll found voters nationwide opposing the Congressional plans by a 58–39% margin. The poll also found a majority opposed to a single-payer healthcare system by a 52–34% margin. In other words, the spread against the Congressional plan—19 points—was greater than the 18 point spread against a single-payer plan, even though single-payer has never had the benefit of so much as a single Congressional hearing or vote! Although it was dismissed as a non-starter from the outset, at this juncture it’s hard to see how the White House and Congressional leadership would have done worse if they’d had the political will to stand up to the insurance industry with a plan of which the President once said, “The truth is that unless you have a what’s called a single-payer system in

which everybody is automatically covered, then you’re probably not going to reach every single individual.”

Opponents would have derided it as “big government,” to be sure, but it would have had the substantial asset of offering an actual solution to a major problem. Instead, the Democratic leadership chose to offer another type of “big government” solution, one that would involve ever more complex regulation of potential insurance company abuses, along with subsidies to allow lower income individuals to pay the bloated premiums those companies demand. And that’s big government that we can’t all believe in.

—Former Allston-Brighton State Rep, Boston DSA Chair, and aspiring Luger Tom Gallagher researches obscure ball-players from the last century for the Society of Baseball Historians in between monitoring UN elections.



# The Fight for Universal Health Care Isn't Over

The fight for universal, comprehensive national health care has been a central part of the American Left's political life for over a century. For the past twenty-five years, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has consistently advocated a single-payer or "Medicare for All" approach to universal health care that would eliminate the wasteful and inhumane private-insurance industry.

Congress is on the verge of passing legislation that would affirm the principle that the government has a responsibility to guarantee meaningful healthcare for its citizens. Some bill will likely pass into law by early February.

DSA believes that between now and then progressives should work to improve the bill. More importantly, the Left must recognize that the fight for universal and affordable health care is just beginning. We must continue to fight after February to expand national health-care coverage, to make it more affordable, and to rein in the power of the private insurance industry. Progressives may most productively focus their efforts on establishing single-payer universal health insurance systems at the state level.

DSA urges all its members and our progressive allies to lobby the White House and the Democratic House and Senate leadership to insure that the final bill:

- makes health insurance affordable for more presently uninsured individuals by better subsidizing it
- is financed fairly, through income taxes based on ability to pay and a high level of employer-contributed premiums rather than by taxes on the health-care benefits of unionized workers
- allows for state experimentation in providing health care for all, including state single-payer systems that could access Medicare and Medicaid funds to help finance single-payer, and
- requires health insurance plans to cover comprehensive reproductive services, including abortion.

## Talking Points on These Key Issues:

**Affordability.** The Senate bill fails to offer adequate subsidies that would enable moderate income individuals and families to afford health insurance, nor does it expand Medicaid eligibility to moderate-income families. The House version is better than the Senate bill, but the final bill should include even higher subsidy levels.

The combination of inadequate subsidies and penalties for not buying insurance will likely alienate moderate income workers and turn them against all reform.

**Equitable Financing.** DSA joins with the AFL-CIO in demanding that expanded health care be financed by progressive income taxes on wealthy individuals and by employers being required to pay their fair share for expanded coverage. In this regard, the House bill is superior to the Senate bill.

If health benefits are to be taxed the level should be raised to \$10,000 for individuals and \$27,000 for family plans, and this must be indexed to health-care cost inflation, not to the slower general cost-of-living index.

**State Experiments, Including State Single-Payer Systems.** Thanks to the efforts of our fellow democratic socialist, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), the Senate version allows for states to experiment with alternatives to the federal health-care system. State experimentation could lead to the establishment of state single-payer systems, particularly if the final bill grants an ERISA waiver to states so they can fold the Medicare and Medicaid funding for their residents into a comprehensive single-payer system.

**Insuring Reproductive Rights for All.** Both bills restrict the use of public funds for abortion. The Senate bill allows individuals who receive public health-care subsidies to use the private funds they contribute to buy insurance to cover reproductive health services, including abortions. The House's Stupak amendment would bar all women who receive public subsidies from purchasing a health insurance plan that includes abortion services. We demand abortion coverage.

**After Passage: The Struggle Continues.** DSA recognizes that the inadequate health-care reform that may pass Congress in a few weeks will fail to rein in the power of the health insurance industry. But it will expand health-care coverage to over 30 million Americans, create health "exchanges" through which those who lack secure workplace coverage can gain group-insurance discount plans, and will reduce insurers' ability to discriminate against the sick and those with pre-existing conditions. In the final weeks, DSA urges its locals and members to join the phone-ins, e-mail campaigns, lobby days, and demonstrations that feminist organizations, labor unions, MoveOn, PDA, Health Care for America Now (HCAN), and others are organizing to improve the final bill.

But DSA also understands that millions of Americans (including millions of undocumented immigrants who provide important labor that benefits all of us) will still not have health insurance coverage and that millions more will be paying too much for inadequate coverage regardless of the bill that may pass. Thus, the fight for a universal system that provides affordable, high-quality, health-care coverage for all residents of the United States will continue. To win this fight we must build a stronger political coalition capable of eliminating the corporate health-care industry's inordinate political influence.

—January 12, 2010

## Yankee Radical

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# WE WANT JOBS!

By Gregory N. Heires

*Public Employee Press*, District Council 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO, January 2010

**Forward by Marguerite Rosenthal**, Member of the Executive Committee, of the National Jobs for All Coalition and DSA.

*Our country has had a chronic jobs shortage for years, but as any reader of the Yankee Radical surely knows, we're in a crisis now, with un- and under-employment at all-time highs since the Great Depression. Counting "hidden unemployment," a measure that includes involuntary part-time workers and those who've given up looking for work, there are now 30.8 million people unemployed, nearly 20% of the workforce. The official unemployment rate for African Americans is over 16% and for African American youth nearly 50%. And, in this economic environment, the employed are experiencing cut-backs in wages and benefits. Sadly, though some politicians are again beginning to talk about the need for job creation, attention to this problem has been startling in its absence. The Obama stimulus was too little, and without a real push, the President is unlikely to propose a really vigorous jobs creation program. Labor, too, has tended to focus more on saving the jobs of its union members—a worthy goal, of course—rather than proactively pushing for many new ones that will ultimately mean more union members.*

*The National Jobs for All Coalition, formed in the mid-1990s, is likely the only significant national organization aside from the unions that has consistently called for a full employment policy—including public job creation where and when appropriate, like now. In mid-November, we held a national conference in New York City, unfortunately on the same weekend as DSA's National Convention. As the January 2010 Public Employee Press article by Gregory N. Heires, reprinted below in an edited version demonstrates, activists from a range of interests and perspectives joined together to discuss the current jobs crisis and to mobilize for a national push for full employment at decent wages for all who want to work. Heires, writing to his union members, includes information that is particularly relevant to them and is, perhaps, more optimistic about the Administration's current commitment to this issue than I am.*

*We are serious about continuing the work we began in November. Committees are being formed to work on Program Development, Fundraising, Outreach, Legislation, Education and Media. Anyone locally wishing to know more is encouraged to contact NJFAC at [www.njfac.org](http://www.njfac.org), or me at [margueriteorsenthal@gmail.com](mailto:margueriteorsenthal@gmail.com), 617-524-2127.*



With the unemployment rate at 10 percent, workers are growing increasingly anxious over the disappearance of secure jobs with decent wages and benefits.

“Good jobs are the central economic issue of our times,” said DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts. “The high rate of unemployment is a wake-up call about the need to make the economy work better for ordinary people, not just the bankers and Wall Street elite.”

With a rebound of stock prices and modest economic growth, many mainstream economists are saying the Great Recession may be ending. But no recession is over until working people who want a job are back at work.

The jobs crisis facing our country is undeniable:

- one in five Americans is unemployed or underemployed, or has given up hope and stopped looking for work;
- only one job is available for every

six Americans seeking work

- unemployment now lasts for an average of six months, the longest since the 1930s, and
- when workers find a new job, it usually pays less than their old one.

Trade unionists, academics, and religious and community activists gathered in NYC Nov. 13 and 14 for a national conference on jobs. The National Jobs for All Coalition, a full-employment advocacy group, organized the conference with the support of DC 37 and other unions and organizations.

Moved by the urgency of the jobs crisis, participants pledged to organize a nationwide movement to fight for decent jobs with an eye toward a march on Washington in 2010. “Change will not come about without a mass movement,” said Coalition Chair Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg.

**Reserve army.** Robert Pollin, a Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts, underscored the importance of steady work for individuals and

the country, noting that people derive their sense of self-worth from their jobs, and government relies on their taxes to fund services. High unemployment, he said, can devastate individuals and families and pit worker against worker in the competition for jobs among the “reserve army of the unemployed.”

Pollin said the current jobs crisis is rooted in the abandonment of the national commitment to full employment that Franklin D. Roosevelt and Democratic presidents promoted during the New Deal and through the 1960s. In the 1970s, neoliberal policymakers abandoned the goal of full employment to focus on controlling inflation to protect wealthy investors, while conservatives pushed to cut taxes, reduce government services, and deregulate the labor and financial markets. These policies have caused greater economic inequality and undermined union power. Wages caused greater economic inequality and undermined union power. Wages used to

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# Chile and Coakley

by David Duhalde

In a recent election, the centrist candidate lost to a charming conservative. A right-winger had not won this elected post in decades. Many traditionally center-left voters stayed home or voted for the conservative to send a message to the political elites. Although many progressives feared this misguided way to convey anger, they were sympathetic to disgruntled working-class voters who felt neglected by those in power.

I write not of Massachusetts, but of Chile. The 2010 Chilean presidential election was similar in many respects to the Martha Coakley-Scott Brown U. S. Senate race. In each election, the center-left candidate ran terrible, complacent campaigns and lost, but in neither country did conservative electoral victory translate into a clear right-wing popular mandate. And perhaps most importantly, both elections clearly demonstrated the dangers of failing to effectively mobilize a party's electoral base.

Since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990 until the recent election, the Concertación, a coalition of the Christian Democrats and three social democratic parties, held the Chilean presidency and majorities in the National Congress. Current president Michele Bachelet, a doctor, divorcee, and former political refugee whose father was killed by Pinochet's regime, had a rollercoaster tenure but will leave office with public approval ratings of over 70%. This is due in no small part to

the fact that Bachelet and the Concertación reduced poverty rates from 40% to nearly 13%, even though the overall thrust of their economic policy was fairly neoliberal in orientation.

Eduardo Frei, a former president who ran again at the top of the Concertación list, failed to recapture the presidency and lost to conservative billionaire Sebastián Piñera by 4% in the final round of the election. The divisions within the left in the first round illustrate how Piñera was able to score an upset win. In December, two candidates ran against Frei and Piñera: Jorge Arrate, a former socialist representing the Communist Party-led coalition, and Marco Enriquez-Ominami, a young former Socialist representative and filmmaker running as an independent. Each candidate sought to push the Concertación toward the left and to shake itself out of the complacency engendered by almost two decades of uninterrupted rule.

The Concertación's first problem was scrapping a pre-election primary so that it could anoint Frei the nominee. This angered many in the coalition's base, who did not respond favorably to the prospect of a second unremarkable Frei presidency. Even so, the centrist and leftist candidates collected nearly 55% of the first round's votes, but Frei's disappointing 30% result was incapable of overcoming Piñera's momentum. By the end, much like trying to connect Scott Brown to George Bush, the campaign unsuccessfully tried to frame

a Piñera victory as a defeat for democracy that would undo all of the progress that had been made since Pinochet's ouster in 1990.

The Frei and Coakley campaigns clearly demonstrate the foolishness of believing in a supposedly automatic electoral victory, not responding to offers for help from powerful institutions such as unions until too late, and spurning the concerns and frustrations of the party's base. But neither loss should be viewed a popular mandate for the right. Each candidate lost by a margin of less than 6%, showing that a strong get-out-the-vote effort coupled with a platform that addresses the concerns of swing voters worried by economic downturns could have produced different results. The silver lining: here in Massachusetts, Coakley's loss has given a much needed wake up call to Democratic politicians, and in my campaign work in Somerville I saw numerous volunteers trained by the Obama campaign doing great work on the ground. Defeating well-funded conservatives will always be difficult, but progressives don't need to shoot themselves in the foot by running poor campaigns.

—David Duhalde grew up in NYC in a Chilean family forced to flee their homeland after a U.S.-supported military coup overthrew the elected government of Salvador Allende. He is a member of the Boston DSA Executive Board.



Part of DSA contingent at February 2 rally for fired Hyatt workers pausing for a photo op: (L-R) David Duhalde, Maryam Shansab, and David Knuttunen.

## IN MEMORIUM

**Howard Zinn, People's Historian, 1922-2010**

**Tim Costello, Labor Internationalist, 1945-2010**

Boston DSA joins with the many who are saddened by their passing. Although over the years we had more contact with Tim, who last spoke for us after Obama's election, they both left enduring legacies in the struggle for a better world. Rest In Peace.

# Greek PM on Global Warming, Socialism and Democracy



The January 4 Democracy Now program ([www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)) featured an Amy Goodman interview with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, whose Socialist Party came to power after trouncing the center-right government in last October's election. Papandreou is also the president of the Socialist International, a loose grouping of 170 labor, social democratic and democratic socialist parties and organizations around the world, including DSA ([www.socialistinternational.org](http://www.socialistinternational.org)). The text below has been edited for length. It began with a discussion of the recent Copenhagen climate crisis conference.

**AMY GOODMAN:** Prime Minister Papandreou, welcome to *Democracy Now!*

**PRIME MINISTER GEORGE PAPANDREOU:** It's nice to be on your program, and I follow it quite often through the internet. And congratulations on what you're doing.

**AG:** Thank you. The state of the climate negotiations, what is your take on them?

**GP:** It's a very difficult negotiation. And I think that one of the things we have to take away from Copenhagen, is that, more and more, our planet will be needing cooperation at the highest level, and this is going to be a question of governance, ...of how the UN can be more effective and democratic ...and, of course, how we make sure that all parts of the world are well represented in the way we make our decisions. And I think this is just a—it is a major development as far as institutions are concerned and for humanity.

But it just shows that what we have is very difficult. There are different interests...

**AG:** There is clearly a simmering anger of the developing world, particularly of the South, over the major greenhouse gas emitters, the donors. When I asked Vandana Shiva, the Indian environmentalist and scientist, what she thought of the US questioning climate debt, climate reparations, she said, "Don't call the donors 'donors.' Call them 'polluters.'" What do you make of that?

**GP:** Well, I would agree in many ways that the world that has developed

already has a huge responsibility for where we are right now. At the same time, I will say that we have to get beyond this, the blame game, and take up our responsibilities. And certainly those that are polluting more have a much higher responsibility, and historically so, but also in what they're doing today. But that doesn't mean that—and so, that's one part of the story—we have to help the countries that are poor to be able to move forward.

What we have to be able to say is that countries like India have the right to grow as other countries have, to develop, but that in the end, our path, the path of the developed world—maybe now including Greece—is unsustainable. It's unsustainable for us. It's unsustainable for the rest of the world. So, we can talk about the past, and we can talk about the burden we have, but we also have to talk about where we go from now on.

I think there is—as when you talk about the anger, there is a culmination of issues here, and it's not just climate. It's poverty. It's inequality. It's a sense of marginalization of wide parts of the population around the world, a sense of impotency because we see the great capabilities that humanity does have, the huge wealth which we do have. If you just saw the financial crisis last year, the money that existed to bail out the banks, and you compare that with the fact that we are not dealing with important issues like poverty, inequality, migration issues and so on, conflict...therefore this climate issue, I think, has brought in and culminated some of this anger. And it's justified.

**AG:** It's not only money used to bail

out the banks, but also for war...

**GP:** Absolutely.

**AG:** —the US waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Your response to your counterpart, President Obama, in the United States?

**GP:** Well, I think we have to see that, obviously, the Iraq war has—the money that has been spent, and still is being spent, could have been spent in a very different way and, first of all, dealt with some of the big problems that the planet has, I think also creating a very different positive will towards the United States and in being a leader in the world, a leader in democracy, rather than losing out so much in the Bush years.

I had said something which some people were a bit unhappy with, but I said, as being a Socialist and a Democrat, that the word "socialism" lost out because of the Soviet Union, but under the Bush administration the word "democracy" had also been undermined by the way it was used as a double standard. So I think that from a moral point of view, from a political point of view, and from a security point of view, the US—we all have to gain by putting our money elsewhere.

**AG:** You are not only the prime minister of Greece, you are the head of the Socialist International. What does "socialism" mean to you?

**GP:** Well, I know it's a taboo word in the United States.

**AG:** And you were educated in the United States. You were born here.

**GP:** Yes. I was born in St. Paul,

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*(Greek PM continued from page 9)*

Minnesota, grew up in California, and I studied on the East Coast in Massachusetts, Amherst College. I also lived in Canada for some years and parts of—many parts of the world, as we were exiled during the [US-supported] dictatorship in Greece.

So, for me, I think there are three things today. And let's not take labels, let's just see what is. First of all, it's freedom. Freedom and democracy are basic, very basic. And we see that being undermined by, I would say, the capture of our institutions by special interests around the world, and a very, very high concentration of power—money and media and so on—in the hands of a few. That is one big question. So democracy is number one.

Second, social justice, a sense of justice and equality around the world. We've seen inequality grow, even though we as human beings and societies have greater capacity, in fact, to produce.

And the third is ecology, a new deal with our environment, a new deal with nature. And I think these are the three main things that today our movement represents.

**AG:** The activists here hold up signs that say “System change, not climate change.” I just interviewed President Morales of Bolivia, and he said you can't deal with global warming, you can't bring an end to global warming, unless you bring an end to capitalism. Do you share that view?

**GP:** I would say, yes, system change and not just climate change. And I

would say, well, we need to use the market. Let me put it the other way around. I am not dogmatic in favor of the state, and I am not dogmatic in favor of the market. I think when we have dogmas, they have hidden special interests, and they have hidden, very often, very, very strong interests, whether it be the state in the Soviet Union or Wall Street in the United States.

What we need is for the market and the state to democratically work for us, put them to work for people... In dealing with climate change, we need to bring in governments and market forces, but in an organized way, in a regulated way... So that means, in many ways, a system change: a much more transparent system, much more equitable system and a much more planned system.

*(JOBS continued from page 8)*

rise in tandem with workers' productivity, but that hasn't been true for the last three decades.

During the expansion of the 1960s, the median income of middle-income families rose 33 percent, adjusted for inflation. But in the “boom” of the early 2000s, their income rose only 1.6 percent. If the minimum wage had kept up with productivity over the past 30 years, it would be \$19 an hour rather than \$7.25.

President Reagan smashed the air traffic controllers' strike in 1981 and intensified the assault on unions, whose membership since then has dropped from 22 percent of the labor force to less than 12 percent.

Speakers and participants at the conference had several suggestions for addressing the jobs crisis:

- shifting resources from the military sector of the economy toward clean energy, education and health care, which produce more jobs;
- supporting the Employee Free Choice Act to increase unionization;
- fighting for living wage laws to improve opportunities for less-educated workers;

- raising the federal minimum wage;
- extending unemployment benefits, and
- increasing aid to state and local governments to preserve jobs and services threatened by the loss of tax revenues.

Speaker Glen Ford, Executive Editor of the online Black Agenda Report, said it makes little sense to talk about creating jobs without first addressing employment discrimination and the high incarceration rate of Black men.

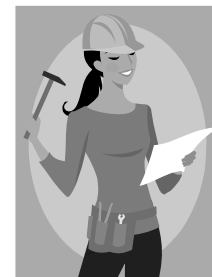
**Government action.** The conference also called for a jobs program modeled after the New Deal and urged the Obama administration to carry out a second stimulus package. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus plan protected or created up to 1.6 million jobs. Many of those jobs are in the public sector, where tax revenue has fallen because of the weak economy.

On Dec. 3, the Obama administration held a jobs summit at the White House; coinciding with it, the labor movement issued its own plan. The AFL-CIO called for extending assistance to unemployed workers; rebuilding public schools, energy systems and roads; increasing aid to

cities and states to maintain jobs and services; supporting community-based job initiatives, and directing unused funds from the bank bailout to help small- and medium-sized business get credit.

In a talk at the Brookings Institution on Dec. 8, Obama outlined a series of proposals to help small businesses and promote jobs. These included tapping the unused \$200 billion in the bank bailout for jobs creation, rebates to homeowners who make energy-saving weatherization improvements, business tax incentives, and increasing stimulus plan spending on public infrastructure.

“The president really does understand the urgency of job creation,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka after the White House summit. “He said it n numerous times: jobs, jobs, jobs.”



# DSA Statement on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Winning Peace with Justice in the Middle East



Peace in the Middle East and justice for both the Palestinian and Israeli people can only be achieved through mutual recognition by each side of the right of each people to viable and secure states of their own, in which the rights of minorities are also guaranteed. Thus, the rejectionist politics of both the Netanyahu administration and of Hamas are a barrier to peace. United States foreign policy should be mobilized in favor of peace forces in both camps and, in particular, against rejectionist Israeli government policies, which historically were and remain buttressed by unconditional U.S. economic and military aid.

Democratic Socialists of America deplores the continuing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip, its multi-party refusal to uproot settlements in the West Bank that block a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and its wall that brings neither long-term security to Israelis nor solidarity with its neighbors.

Further, DSA believes that the recent Israeli bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza did not advance the peace process. In seven years of intermittent rocket launchings from Gaza, 22 Israelis have been killed and scores wounded. But these numbers, as horrid as they are, pale in comparison to the loss of civilian life among the Gazan population and the squalid conditions in which they must live within borders policed by Israel. There was a ceasefire in 2008, however, and if indirect negotiations with Hamas had not been abandoned by Israel, it is quite likely the cease-fire would have been maintained without the Israeli military escalation. By killing hundreds of Palestinian civilians, wounding thousands more, leaving upwards of 50,000 homeless and turning whole

sections of Gaza City into what even Israeli observers call “an earthquake zone,” Israel’s three-week military operation was an excessive and inhumane response to Hamas’s deplorable rocket launchings into Israeli population centers. It was also a failure in that it did little to enhance the long-term security of the Israeli people.

As even former Israeli conservative Prime Minister Ehud Olmert now admits, Israel can neither gain physical security nor perpetuate its status as a majority Jewish state unless it ends its unjust occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The international community must, of course, consistently condemn unjust attacks on civilians by both sides. Democratic Socialists of America urges the U.S. government and the international community to insure that the temporary cease-fire in Gaza leads to a sustained diplomatic effort to negotiate a just, two-state solution to the conflict between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The Israeli state has a right to defend its people, but after more than 60 years of self-defense and 40 years of an unjust occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it should be self-evident that peace and security for Israel cannot be achieved by injustice towards another people. The common Israeli/U.S. effort to isolate, both diplomatically and economically, the Hamas regime in Gaza only served to increase Gazan support for Hamas. There can be no military solution, imposed by either side, to what is a political problem. The withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Forces from the West Bank and the creation of an economically viable and politically independent Palestinian state would provide the Palestinian people a reason to push aside rejectionist

forces within their community.

DSA also recognizes that leaving it at telling combatants to lay down their arms and embrace a two-state solution is like asking the sea to part itself. With hostilities enduring since before the time of Israel’s founding and with its holding and colonizing East Jerusalem and the occupied territories for longer than the 30 years war lasted, a political solution is both necessary and elusive.

In many ways, the worst elements of both Israeli and Palestinian society are now the political leaderships of their respective nations. On the Israeli side, opportunism mixes with chauvinism as Netanyahu’s Likud-coalition government panders to the settler vote. Yet without removing the settlements—by either repatriating the settlers root and branch, buying out their holdings or acceding them as citizens with equal rights in a Palestinian state—there won’t be peace. Even a Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza, with Israel still in control of the settlements, the water and the most arable land won’t be viable. Neither will a Hamas-led state whose main goal is reversing the Nakba.

On the Palestinian side, there won’t be peace until there’s a broad pro-peace front that can compete with the Islamists—and they can only do that if they have partners among the Israelis and the U.S. citizenry, not followers cheering on an impossible military solution or endorsing an illusory “single-state” solution.

What it will take is diplomacy by outside forces to give political weight to those factions genuinely desiring peace and willing to compromise. It means freezing out the millenarians on either side—even as we know that both Likud and Hamas must be brought to the peace

*(continued on page 12)*

(*Mideast Conflict continued from page 11*)  
table, at least in the first instance- while allowing moderate elements on both sides of the Green line to be able not only to negotiate a peace with authority but to keep one by ruling stable states.

In the short-run, a viable cease-fire in Gaza must involve international supervision of the crossing points between Egypt and Gaza and between Israel and Gaza. The basic needs of the people of Gaza cannot be met absent normal commerce between Gaza and Egypt, Israel and the West Bank. Re-opening the border crossings would also eliminate the Hamas rationale for abandoning the previously successful cease-fire. An internationally guaranteed cease-fire must also preclude the covert importation of arms into Gaza.

As the preponderant military force in the region, Israel can best reinitiate the peace process. Israel could help restore

its tarnished international image by taking up the Arab League's 2002 initiative as a starting point for comprehensive peace negotiations. In 2002, the Arab League abandoned its long-standing denial of the right of the state of Israel to exist and offered to recognize the state of Israel in return for the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with its capital in East Jerusalem.

DSA recognizes that its primary political responsibility is to change a U.S. foreign policy that continues to give a blank check to Israeli government policy by prolonging its policy of massive unconditional military aid to Israel. The Bush administration's unyielding support for Israeli intransigence harmed the people of Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel itself. Thus, DSA will work, along with other pro-peace forces in the American Jewish, Arab, and broader progressive

community to pressure the Obama administration to adopt a balanced Middle-East approach. We support the Obama administration's call for an end to expansion of settlements, and we urge pressure on Israel to freeze any settlement activity as a prelude to abandoning them in an effort to bring peace. Such a policy should use carrots and sticks to encourage both sides in the conflict to make the hard choices and compromises that must be the foundation of an enduring peace. As activists in the Israeli peace movement have said for generations, the United States cannot contribute to the security of all the peoples of the Middle East if it continues to embrace Israeli governments that block the peace process.

—June 17, 2009

*the yankee radical*

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