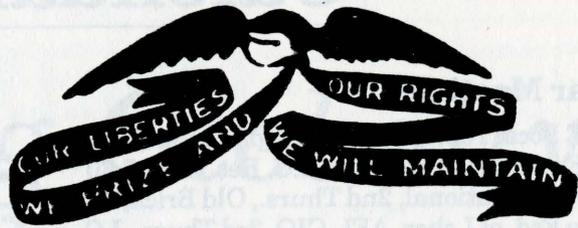


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Published by Iowa City Democratic Socialists of America, 728 1/2 Oakland Ave., Iowa City, IA, 52240. Labor Donated. Subscriptions \$5.

An Open Letter to The City Council

No one on the City Council is to blame for Federal policies which are now squeezing the blood out of city programs.

No one on the City Council is happy that basic human services are eroding. No one on the City Council wants to see this first-class, caring community become just another two-bit town.

The City Council is not responsible for this impending disaster, but it is guilty of one sin: failure to stand up and fight. Even those councillors once perceived as human service advocates now speak of "inevitable" cuts. On taxes, labor issues, and the library, Larry Baker has become part of the conservative majority, and George Strait and Kate Dickson are silent.

The new city manager, when asked to analyze the transit system, presented a 10-

Commentary by "Prairie Dog"

***Won't one city official
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page memo which could have been written by any accountant already on the city staff. He then concocted a city budget which, in effect, tells social service agencies to fend for themselves. The people of Iowa City expect more from their city manager, and they want more from their city council. They expect and want something called "leadership."

Does this council want to be known, ten years from now, as the council that laid down and played dead before

the steamroller of Reaganomics? Doesn't one councillor have the courage to say, "I will not sit silently as this jewel of a city decays into mediocrity." Doesn't one councillor have the guts to say, "I will do anything—even raise taxes—rather than allow our love for this city to turn into disgust and resentment."

We are about to pay the price for 6 years of supply-side economics, trickle-down theories, and an obscenely bloated Pentagon budget. As always, the poor will suffer most, but the quality of life for all will decline.

Won't one city official summon the leadership, the bravery, and the creativity needed to preserve services? Or will they all look back some day and regret that they surrendered with so little struggle? •

Calendar of Events

Regular Meetings

- AFSCME Local 183, 2nd Wed., Eagles Lodge, 7:30
 AFSCME Local 12, 1st Thurs., I.C. Rec. Ctr., 7:30
 Amnesty International, 2nd Thurs., Old Brick, 7:30
 Iowa City Fed. of Labor, AFL-CIO, 3rd Thurs., I.C. Rec. Ctr., 7:30
 Democratic Socialists of America. Next meeting: February 21. Call Gary Sanders, 337-7739.
 Iowa City Peace Vigil: Every Wednesday at noon, Clinton and Washington.

FEBRUARY — Black History Month

- February 13-20: AMES: Nuclear Madness Week, with a Nuclear Madness Night. Speakers, Films, Discussions. Call (515) 292-6644.
- February 15: CEDAR FALLS: Citizens for Peace Meeting, St. Timothy's United Methodist Church, 7 p.m. Call (319) 266-0464
- February 15-22: AMERIKA; A five-part mini-series about a Soviet take-over of the United States with the aid of United Nations Troops. To protest, write John B. Sias, President, ABC Network Division, 24 E. 51st Street, New York, NY 10022.
- February 18: IOWA CITY Foreign Relations Council, Noon, Jefferson Building. Speaker: Chief of Public Relations, **National Guard**, Washington, D.C.
- February 18-20: CORALVILLE: Working Women's School, U. of I. Labor Center, Ironmen Inn. Call (319) 335-4144.
- February 21: MECHANICSVILLE: Noon vigil and tree-planting at the GWEN tower site two miles east of Mechanicsville on Highway 30; followed by 1 PM program at Doc & Jo's Cafe. Call (319) 854-7026 or (319) 337-5187.
- February 22: IOWA CITY; LIVING THE DREAM: Cable Channel 20 (library channel) Community Commemorative for Martin Luther King with Andrew Young as the main speaker. Originally videotaped 1-31-86 by Dan Daly, 1 P.M.
- February 22: IOWA CITY, "Atomic Cafe," Bijou Theater, Iowa Mem. Union, 9 P.M.
- February 23: **Black History Month: ALL OF US COME ACROSS THE WATER.** Play adapted by Donita Devance and directed by Greg Pearson. 1 and 7 P.M. on Cable Channel 20.
- February 23: IOWA CITY, "Atomic Cafe," Bijou Theater, Iowa Mem. Union, 9 P.M.

- February 24: IOWA CITY Public Hearing, FY 88 Budget for City of Iowa City, Civic Center, 7:30
- February 27: IOWA CITY: Groundwater Quality Forum, U. I. Law School Auditorium, 3-7 P.M.
- February 28: IOWA CITY: Legislative Forum, League of Women Voters, 9:30-11:30 AM, Commerce Center (Washington at Gilbert).
- February 28: DAVENPORT: Quad Cities Conference on Peace and Security, featuring Jean Lloyd-Jones, Dr. V. Bruce Rigdon, and "Alice in Blunderland," St. Paul Lutheran Church. Call (319) 326-9450.

MARCH

- March 5: IOWA CITY: Klezmerim (Jewish Street Jazz), Hancher Auditorium.
- March 8: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
- March 8-12: IOWA tour of Linda Coffin of Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns and Kim Hill Smith of Iowa Peace Network. Contact (515) 274-4851.
- March 20-28: NATIONAL CENTRAL AMERICA WEEK.
- March 21: MECHANICSVILLE: Noon vigil at GWEN site; followed by 1 PM program at Doc & Jo's Cafe.
- March 30-April 3: CORALVILLE: 35th Annual Labor Short Course, U. of I. Labor Ctr., Rodeway Inn, (319) 335-4144.

APRIL

- April 4: CEDAR RAPIDS: Annual Assembly of the United Nation Association, Iowa Division. Contact: Dorothy Paul, (319) 337-7290.
- April 15: NATIONAL WARTAX PROTEST DAY. In Iowa contact Iowa Peace Network, (515) 274-4851.
- April 22: Iowa City: Earth Day. To help plan the event call Gloria Williams, 354-3854.
- April 25-27: WASHINGTON, D.C.: Mobilization for Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa. Contact SANE (202) 546-7100.

MAY

- May 1: INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY
- May 2: IOWA CITY: Johnson County Democrats Annual "Casino Night", Izaak Walton League, 5 P.M.
- May 17: ROCK ISLAND: Die-in at Rock Island Arsenal
- May 23-25: CHICAGO: Socialist Party national convention •

Why Thinking Globally Is Not Enough

By Dennis Harbaugh

In Iowa, thinking globally — or even acting nationally or statewide — is not enough.

The Iowa Democratic Party (IDP) spends roughly \$400,000 a year on organizational purposes. Tens of thousands of Democrats work within the county-level Democratic structure. And over 80,000 activists participate in what is surely the fulfillment of an organizer's list-building dream — the presidential caucuses.

Why then, is the percentage of Democratic turnout decreasing in Iowa's largest cities? And why was the attendance at the 1984 Democratic caucuses less than the turnout in 1980?

You may be wondering: Why should progressive Democrats care? Because, generally, the most disappointing Democratic turnouts in recent years have been in Iowa's urban areas — *where the opportunities for progressive base-building are greatest.*

The bottom line of the trend described above is that there is a large number of potentially progressive Democrats not being reached by the Democratic Party. If our goal as progressives within the Democratic Party is to expand the influence of a progressive philosophy, it is our responsibility to examine why large numbers of potentially progressive Democrats continue to go unorganized.

Many factors may contribute to the growing cynicism among disenfranchised Democratic

constituencies, including the agendas of statewide candidates, the financial barriers to Democratic Party membership, and the non-partisan nature of most local elections in the state. But there is a weakness in the structure of local Democratic organizations in Iowa that helps contribute to low Democratic turnouts in metropolitan areas.

That weakness — which is ultimately correctable, as we shall see — is the failure of county Democratic organizations in urban areas to organize around pressing local issues. This problem is especially noticeable in Des Moines and Iowa City, where — ironically — both the city and county governments are controlled by Democrats.

Let's look at Polk County first. Four of Des Moines' six city council members are Democrats, as are four of Polk County's five supervisors. Numerous local issues have surfaced during the past year: the search for shelters for the homeless, the contamination of Des Moines' water supply, and the continuing deterioration of Des Moines' local neighborhoods, to name a few. Each of these problems directly affects peoples' lives, and in each case average Iowans are anxiously waiting for solutions.

Other than a belated meeting to consider the problems of homelessness, there has been no leadership nor development of a Democratic strategy to address any of these problems. While it's disappointing enough to see lack of

leadership on these issues from Democratic city council members, it is equally surprising that the Polk County Democratic Party has no structure — and no plan — to deal with local issues. Meanwhile, organizing opportunities which would benefit both the Iowa Democratic Party and the progressives within it, are lost.

Likewise, Democrats on the Iowa City Council outnumber Republicans 6-1. This bustling campus town also has numerous problems which plague potential Democratic voters, including the need to maintain a good transit system and a strong commitment to social services.

But here, too, Democratic initiatives which focus on local issues are rare. It was AFSCME that held a hearing on public service cutbacks, and it was DSA that invited the Iowa City City Manager to explain and justify next year's proposed budget.

While these forums are fine for discussion and publicity, they do **not** expand the **Democratic Party** base, and therefore are not genuine 'Party-building.'

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Positive examples of Democrats organizing around local issues are hard to find in Iowa, even where partisan local elections are the rule. The emphasis by the IDP on voter registration and identification, get-out-the-vote efforts, and on

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legislative campaigns has resulted in many electoral victories, but it has also squeezed local issue lifeblood out of county Democratic structures.

Recently, the IDP responded to calls for more issue-orientation and got its feet wet by forming task forces on **statewide issues** which affect potential Democratic constituencies. The IDP Rural Development Team Report and the task force on health care currently being organized are steps in the correct direction. However, it should also be understood that statewide task forces are not adequate substitutes for grassroots organizing efforts around unique local issues. Perhaps the IDP should consider ways it might

encourage county organizations to think locally, and in that way rediscover what it feels like to work with enthusiastic volunteers whose motivations are close to home.

There are plenty of reasons which might explain why our urban organizations have such trouble focusing on local issues. Many of us in Des Moines no doubt find it easier — and more exciting — to spend our time on national campaigns or legislative issues rather than on local concerns. Maybe the 'enlightened' Democrats in Iowa City have become complacent with their sizable voter registration advantage, or maybe they simply have trouble seeing social service needs because their sight is blocked by the "Nuclear Free" Iowa City signs posted at every entrance into town.

But figuring out who is to blame

for this situation is less important than choosing a future path, and we must never forget that in the wake of past oversights are great opportunities.

The need has been demonstrated, and scattered dissatisfaction with the status quo exists inside **and** outside of the IDP structure. Openness to change follows periods of dissatisfaction, so let us be ready to offer solid, progressive, structural alternatives during this period of IDP restructuring. And let the core of that alternative structure be a commitment by county Democratic organizations to spend more resources toward organizing around local issues. •

Dennis Harbaugh is a Polk County Democratic activist and DSA member.

**“Call it what you may,
call it democracy, or call
it democratic socialism,
but there must be a
better distribution of
wealth within this
country for all of God's
children.”**

*—Martin Luther King in 1965 speech to
Negro American Labor Council*

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE is edited by members of the Iowa City Local of the Democratic Socialists of America, 728 1/2 Oakland, Iowa City, IA 52240. Editor for this issue: Jeff Cox.

Each article represents the views of the author, and not those of the editors or DSA. We welcome articles and responses to articles written from any point of view whatsoever. Subscription per calendar year: \$5. Contributions of money are always welcome.

Congratulations to the recently elected officers of the Iowa City Federation of Labor:

President: Tom Jacobs

Vice-President: Rick Taylor

Secretary: Jean Martin

Treasurer: Dow Voss

Trustees: Kim Jones, Sharry Lenhart, John Young

Congratulations also to Don Schuettpelez, recently re-elected president of the Hawkeye Labor Council (Cedar Rapids).

The University Progressive Network, a recently formed association of faculty, staff, and students, will hold its second meeting on Sunday, March 1st, 3:30 p.m., 304 EPB.

Groups are being formed to work on a variety of issues ranging from educational opportunity to Star Wars and contra aid.

New members are welcome at the meeting. •

Progressive Politics in WATERLOO

By Tim Yeager

Waterloo, Iowa is a blue-collar town that has been hit hard by Reaganomics. Like Youngstown, Pittsburgh and the south side of Chicago, its urban landscape is pockmarked with the cavernous ruins of once-bustling industries. The unemployment offices are often crowded, and empty, curtainless houses may be seen in most neighborhoods. In its commercial centers and at community gatherings, few people in their 20s and early 30s are in evidence. And a shopping mall which sprang up ambitiously in the 1970s is now ringed by cracked pavement and weeds.

But Waterloo is also a town with a strong labor union history. It boasts two of the few unionized hotels in the state. Blue U.A.W. windbreakers mix with green Pioneer jackets on the sidewalks. The Machinists, Teamsters, Communication Workers, and skilled trades are here. The United Food & Commercial Workers have two offices. Even some of the lawyers are U.A.W. And the yellow pages contain ads indicating that certain barber shops and stores are **union** shops.

There is a long history of progressive political activity in the Waterloo area, even though the region is generally characterized as conservative. Paul Robeson sang here in the 1950s, even as the "Christian Anti-Communist Crusade" was being organized at a local radio station by Dr. Fred Schwarz.

The salient political event of 1986 was the election of Democrat Dave Nagle to the U.S. House of Representatives. An alliance of labor union members, the Black community, and farmers rose up

and tipped the balance of the election against the Republican Party for the first time in more than 50 years in the Third Congressional District. Though shunning the "liberal" label, Nagle came out strongly against aid to the contras, and for a nuclear test ban. An independent committee was organized on the East Side of Waterloo to mobilize working-class voters and to push Nagle on the issue of jobs. As a result, a leaflet was produced by the Nagle campaign which called for transferring funds from the military to create jobs for Waterloo's unemployed, rehabilitating housing and roads, with affirmative action guarantees in hiring. Several thousand of these were distributed door-to-door on the East Side, and on the back were listed the polling places. Voting turnout was much higher than predicted by the media, and a clear anti-Reagan message was sent to Washington.

Black Hawk County still elects its Board of Supervisors at large, even though many counties have gone over to district-based constituencies. Many of the progressive forces that came together to support the Nagle candidacy have continued to meet for the purpose of changing this. The at-large system has disenfranchised the working-class neighborhoods of Waterloo, particularly the Black community which is concentrated on the East Side. Also generally unrepresented on the County Board are nearby Cedar Falls and the rural areas. The dominant force in county politics has been the more affluent West Side, which has a high voter turnout. Individuals from many community organizations have formed an ad hoc committee for democratizing the elections. A

federal lawsuit is being planned to compel districting, similar to the recent successful suit brought in Springfield, Illinois. The effort is expected to be announced in the community within the next few weeks.

Citizens for Community Improvement has organized a committee to consider the municipalization of Iowa Public Service's utilities services in the city of Waterloo. The IPS franchise comes up for review in two years. Neighboring Cedar Falls, with its municipal power company, charges utility rates which are 40% lower than IPS. There appears to be considerable support for changing to public ownership, which backers see not only providing lower rates, but also providing revenue which will remain in the community for economic development.

The Black Hawk County chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. sent a representative to the march recently held to protest racist attacks in Forsyth County, Georgia. Ray Dahl, a teacher at Waterloo's East High School, later spoke at the University of Northern Iowa about the march.

Martin Luther King's birthday was marked by a number of observances, including a march and rally at the City Recreation Center, attended by more than one hundred people. There were art displays at the Center, and ecumenical church services in several places. Many people in the downtown march carried signs calling for jobs, and for "Farms, Not Arms."

Official Black Hawk County Job Service statistics show a decline in the work force of nearly 20,000 people since 1980.

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PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

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So when the U.A.W.'s contract with Deere & Company came up for negotiation, there were strong pressures on the union to agree to concessions. The parking areas around the company's facilities were crowded with green and yellow inventory. Thousands had already been laid off. But the union refused to buckle.

The union employed the tactic of a selective strike at some of the company's shops. Deere responded by locking out the entire bargaining unit, in what was to become the longest work stoppage in the company's history. Workers approved a new contract on Sunday, February 1, which provided for improved pension benefits and job security for 90 percent of the workforce during the life of the contract. Although there was no general wage increase, other than

cost-of-living adjustments, the workers were successful in preventing a wage cut. In addition to the local economic significance of the settlement, several legal reforms were spawned by U.A.W. action. A federal court ordered that striking or locked-out workers may not be denied food stamps. Further review of this case is pending, but if upheld the ruling will deny employers the threat of hunger as a weapon to break collective bargaining efforts. Also, the denial of unemployment benefits to locked-out workers has stimulated interest in reforming Iowa's unemployment statute. (Several other states already allow locked-out workers benefits).

Recent events in Waterloo indicate that there is emerging a new and potentially very powerful alliance of labor, the Black community, and farmers which has already demonstrated its strength by the historic election of an anti-

Reagan Democrat to Congress. Farmers attended rallies in support of striking Deere workers, bringing their own tractors. Signs in the Martin Luther King commemoration called for justice for farmers and jobs for workers. Elsewhere in Iowa, union members have shown support in helping farmers to resist auctions and repossessions.

By working together to oppose Reaganite candidates and policies, this alliance has already tipped the scales in Washington and Des Moines against the nuclear arms buildup, and for jobs, equality, and agricultural reform. The strengthening and development of this alliance is the key to further social and economic progress for the working men and women in Iowa. •

Tim Yeager is a Legal Services Attorney in Waterloo and Chairperson of the Iowa-Nebraska District Communist Party U.S.A.

G. Sanders
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DSA/PROGRESSIVE COALITION MEETING:

February 21, 10:30 AM
Iowa City Library

"Is the Iowa City Budget Process
Over Before the Public Hearing?"
Special Guest: Councilman Larry
Baker (The Progressive Hoax? Or
the Progressive Hoax....)