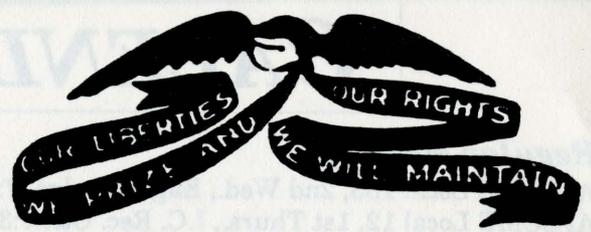


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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COMMENTARY BY PRAIRIE DOG:

Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?

Admit it! There's a certain glamor attached to guys in \$500 suits who swoop into town with sophisticated entourages, trails of reporters and cameramen, and free hors d'oeuvres. Even the most cynical Iowans like to see them come to us. For a brief while we no longer live in fly-over country. To hell with bicoastal arrogance: Iowa is hot, and it will stay hot for another eight months (no matter how cold the weather gets by February 8).

Remember the title of a popular Italian movie a few years back: *Seduced and Abandoned*. Surely we are seduced by the national spotlight, by the personal attention of people whom most Americans see only on TV, by the near-groveling of senators and governors who pay tribute to our heartland values and our midwestern common sense. Once the seduction is complete, after we have jilted city and county and state concerns for a taste of the federal fast lane, we are abandoned for the following three years. Then we return reluctantly to the old, familiar, mundane local issues: trying to keep the city library open every day, recruiting progressive candidates to run for county offices, lobbying state legislators for equitable tax laws.

The caucus process brings money, publicity, and a degree of clout to our state, but not without exacting a cost. Local issues, no matter how important to our daily lives, wither in the heat and glitter of presidential politics. The caucus, originally meant to be a tool for community activism and grass-roots organizing, now diverts us from those aims.

It's true that citizen participation is still the key, and yes, the candidates still troop into living rooms, high schools, and feed lots. But the process has gradually been subverted into a high-dollar, high-tech spectacle. TV commercials for Babbitt began to appear a full ten months before the caucus. Lt. Governor Zimmerman and unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate Junkins are supporting Biden, although they insist that Biden's substantial contributions to their campaigns have nothing to do with their endorsements. The state Democratic central committee spends most of its time and its \$540,000 budget on caucus-related work.

The ultimate subversion of the caucus process is the increasingly popular "pick a winner" mentality. This mind-set is most common among those whose main concern is to be seen as savvy pols who know which way the wind is blowing, and for those who think that being "on board" early in the process will afford them easy access should their candidate actually hit paydirt. This approach to the caucus is fun for gamblers and would-be traders, and it allows them to avoid dwelling on messy things like issues and positions.

But what about electability? Don't we have to decide, as early as possible, who has the best chance to capture the White House? That was the line of the Mondale campaign in 1984; yes, we like McGovern's and Cranston's stands, but they can't win. An electable candidate losing forty-nine states is tragicomedy of the highest order, but the lesson seems lost.

This year the dispensers of conven-

tional wisdom say that supporting Jesse Jackson is "unrealistic." Is it unrealistic to bring thousands of people into the Democratic fold? Unrealistic to articulate genuinely Democratic ideals? Unrealistic to challenge the rest of the business-as-usual candidates with a progressive agenda? Unrealistic to bring together urban and rural, black and white, farmers and workers, into a potentially dynamic coalition?

Perhaps Jackson is not electable or even "nominatable." "If only he were white," some Democrats privately confide. Iowa activists who claim to care about social progress are relinquishing their position of influence when they dismiss Jackson's candidacy. They feed into the racism that fuels this country, and they perpetuate the status quo by settling for a less progressive but more "realistic" choice. Worst of all, they reveal their distrust of a process in which they gladly participate.

The purpose of the caucus process is to provide a stage for candidates to develop and present their ideas, and for us to "put them through their paces," as Cuomo said in Grinnell. This is not the time to guess the winner. It is the time to shape the debate and narrow the field. Right now, focusing on electability helps neither Iowa, nor the Democratic party, nor the eventual nominee.

Even as we succumb to the allure of presidential politics, we can still insist that our suitors be accountable to us on the issues we care about. If we are less easily seduced, we may also be less brutally abandoned in the years to come.

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. Call Gary Sanders, 337-7739

June

June 9 Jackson Exploratory Committee Meeting, 7:30, Iowa City Rec. Ctr., Room A
 June 13 Last broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion."
 June 14 Cedar Falls. Citizens for Peace, St. Timothy's United Methodist Church, 7 pm.
 June 15 Anniversary commemoration of Soweto Massacre.
 June 17 Women's Resource and Action Center Brown Bag Luncheon, "Building Alliances: Crossing the Class and Racial Barriers," 12:10 pm, WRAC, Iowa City.
 June 19-20 **Great Plains Democratic Alternatives Conference, University of Missouri, Kansas City. "Because One Republican Party is Enough." Call 816-561-5726.**
 June 24 "Aids: A Community Responsibility," WRAC Brown Bag Lunch/Discussion, 12:10 pm, Iowa City.

June 26 Jesse Jackson at Iowa Democratic Party New Frontier Club Reception, Des Moines, Hotel Savery, 8:00 p.m. For info call 515-244-7292.
 June 27 Gay Pride Day Marches in Des Moines and Iowa City.
 June 27 Iowa Socialist Party State Committee Meeting, Des Moines.
 June 28 Johnson County Democrats Precinct 18 Party, 4:00-Sundown. Potluck at 6:00. corner of Oakland and Center, Iowa City.
July
 July 7 Johnson County Aids Coalition, 5:30, Mercy Hospital, Iowa City (1st Tuesday of Every Month).
August
 August 1 Third District Democratic Workshop, Iowa City. "National Health and the Democratic Agenda." Caucus to Convention planning. Iowa City Rec. Center. For more information call Jeff Cox, 319-338-4551.
 August 9-14 Summer School for Union Women, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Call Gene Daniels, 612-624-7046.
 August 9-15 "Anytown, USA" camp, Scattergood School, West Branch. Contact American Friends Service Committee, 515-274-4851.

Below are some recent key votes by new third district congressperson Dave Nagle:

How's He Doing?

May 20: Defense authorization bill which includes *stringent arms control amendments* opposed by Reagan Administration. Passed 239-177. Nagle: *Yes*.

May 12: Rowland Amendment to *increase SDI funding* from \$3.12 billion to \$3.55 billion. Defeated 207-213. A "yes" vote is a vote to increase SDI funding. Nagle: *No*.

May 12: Dellums Amendment to defense authorization bill to *discontinue research and development on SDI*. Defeated 105-307. A "yes" vote is a vote to *dismantle SDI*. Nagle: *No*.

May 6: Hunter Amendment to defense authorization bill which would *delete*

provisions requiring American adherence to 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Soviet Union. Defeated 156-262. A no vote is in favor of maintaining adherence to ABM treaty. Nagle: *No*.

May 6: Dicks Amendment requiring *U.S. Adherence to SALT II Treaty*. Passed 245-181. Nagle: *Yes*.

April 29: Gephardt Trade Bill calling for *retaliation against nations which maintain large trade surpluses* with U.S. Passed 218-214. Nagle: *Yes*.

April 23: Barton Amendment to *facilitate mandatory drug testing* of federal employees defeated 145-242. A "yes" vote is in favor of federal funding

of mandatory drug testing. Nagle: *No*.
March 11: Six month freeze on *Contra Aid*. Passed 230-196. Nagle: *Yes*.
March 5: Dannemeyer Amendment requiring *compulsory AIDS testing for the homeless* receiving medical care under HR 558. Defeated 101-292. Nagle: *No*.

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. •

The Central America-South Africa Mobilization: More Than Echoes of the Sixties

By Stephen Vlastos

As one of several hundred Iowans who made the trek to Washington D.C. April 25-27, I found reason to take heart. The Central America-South Africa mobilization showed the expanding social base of progressive politics. It may be too early to talk about a new "New Left", but the march on Washington signified more than the resuscitation of "sixties style" movement politics.

To the media, the Central America-South Africa mobilization was little more than the past revisited: The same people who marched on Washington two decades ago to protest the Vietnam war were at it again, albeit older, and less strident. Why they might be marching again was not worthy of serious discussion. Readers were encouraged to believe that, like crew cuts and Bermuda shorts, anti-war marches might just be coming back in style. And, though 100,000 people marched, the media almost ignored the event. (The *N.Y. Times* carried a picture and story on page 14.)

To those of us who last marched on Washington to protest the Vietnam War, the Central America-South Africa mobilization was an historically significant event because of the strong representation of organized labor. To be sure, students, intellectuals, old leftists, young peace activists, punkers, religious folks—people who fit the media stereotype of anti-war activists—turned out en masse. However, so did union people: young, middle-aged, elderly; black, white, Latino; male and female; industrial and service workers. That these folks came to Washington in such numbers despite vicious red-baiting by the likes of Albert Shanker and Lane Kirkland illustrates the growing cracks in the unholy alliance between the AFL-CIO and the Cold War lobby. For the first time since the late 1940s, major unions are breaking ranks with the ruling class

and joining with the Left in actively opposing an imperialist foreign policy.

There is a common misconception that during the Vietnam war the college-educated middle class opposed the war while working class people supported it. In fact, public opinion data show the reverse: the higher the income and education level—the two are closely linked—the greater support for the Vietnam war. Nor should this come as a surprise. Low income groups, particularly minorities, were made to shoulder the greatest bur-

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den of the war. After all, it was their sons who were drafted and their social program cut back. Despite well publicized images of hard hats attacking anti-war marches, low income people were less supportive of the war than the middle class and rich. They may not have liked the protesters much, but they liked the war even less.

The post-World War Two Cold War consensus and bi-partisan foreign policy of military intervention against social revolution lasted as long as it did because of broad institutional support: universities, churches, unions, and the media. This is changing. In growing numbers, teachers and students, religious communities, and even segments of the media

are rejecting Reagan's war policies in Central America and collaboration with apartheid. Now some international unions and many locals are breaking ranks.

We need to be realistic, of course. The AFL-CIO hierarchy still believes that their interests are best served by Cold War politics. Anti-communism, racism, and fears of social revolution in the Third World still influences the politics of much of the white working class, no less than the politics of the white middle class.

However, the impressive turnout of union people augers well for a new progressive political agenda that equally addresses the abuses of capitalism at home and imperialism abroad. The deindustrialization of the economy, elimination of social services, and transfer of resources to the rich orchestrated by the Reagan Administration has significantly reduced the material stake of the white working class and middle classes in U.S. imperialism.

The hard hats who attacked anti-war marchers during the Vietnam war were drawing paychecks that enabled them to own homes in the suburbs, drive new cars, and even send their sons and daughters to college. After six years of give-backs, take-backs, and plant closings, it is increasingly clear that imperialism abroad does not mean more jobs and higher pay at home.

For the moment, at least, the excessive zeal with which the Reagan administration has pursued its agenda of corporate greed and imperial violence has created the opening for a fundamental realignment of Left political forces. Whether such a realignment will take place within or outside of the Democratic Party remains to be seen. •

Stephen Vlastos teaches history at The University of Iowa.