

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Summer 1988

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

OUT OF ORDER: FIVE SCENES FROM A STATE CONVENTION

Commentary by Prairie Dog

THE NIGHT BEFORE: Banker/farmer/gubernatorial candidate John Chrystal hosts a hospitality room for Democratic delegates. A guest asks Chrystal, who has never run for public office, if he is comfortable in the role.

"It's getting better," the candidate answers, "but a lot of people aren't taking me seriously. They ask me why I'm running. Frankly, I find that a little insulting."

The former Paul Simon supporter nods with a flicker of recognition when another guest suggests that Jesse Jackson must have felt the same way.

Iowa pundits may soon be asking, "What does Chrystal want?"

WITH THE JACKSON DELEGATION: State Senator Tom Mann is elected to chair the group. Mann had given a stirring speech at Jackson's announcement rally in Greenfield last October, but amidst this diverse coalition he reverts to a stiffer demeanor, as if presiding over his colleagues in the legislature. Mann's first task is to relay to the group a deal offered by the Dukakis forces: as a show of party unity, let's all say we're Dukakis delegates.

The offer baffles most of the dele-

gates. Unlike most deals, the group would gain nothing — no national delegates, no alternates — in exchange for switching allegiance. First-time delegates and Jackson loyalists are offended by the prospect of a deal of any kind.

Mann seems surprised by the overwhelming rejection of the Dukakis offer. He is clearly unaccustomed to this kind of crowd, but he manages to maintain a semblance of order. At one point Mann grips the podium and hollers, "Keep it down! This isn't a cattle barn!"

Mann, a former chair of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, has been a progressive state senator. He has had to move step by painful step toward his legislative goals. The only black lawmaker in Iowa, Mann knows how to compromise. He has frequently walked point in some lonely territory.

Mann once received a letter congratulating him for his single-handed effort to protect high school students from arbitrary locker searches. Mann wrote back, "It's good to know somebody out there cares."

On a hot Saturday in June, Tom Mann has come face-to-face with the people he had always hoped were out there, and he doesn't know quite what to do. Here is someone — an attorney and a legislator — who be-

lieves in discipline, negotiation, and order. For the first time, he is confronted by the raw, uncompromising power of the Jackson constituency — a constituency that is also his own.

Half of Tom Mann seems to be thinking about business as usual: we've got to work the system for the best we can get, compromise where we must, go along to get along. A realization appears to be slowly dawning in the other half of Tom Mann: this group does not want to play by the old rules.

He finally calls for a vote on the deal. Standing in favor are less than twenty of the 300 packed into the auditorium. A roar of exultation erupts as Mann concedes, "The delegation has expressed its preference loudly and clearly." There would be no deal. "Keep your sense of humor, Tom!" shouts a Cedar County delegate.

Continued on page 3

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE is edited by members of the Iowa City Local of The Democratic Socialists of America, 112 S. Dodge, 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.

Labor donated.

WELCOME TO THE NEW FAMILY

by Dennis Harbaugh

A God-fearing friend and father of two told me last week that the next time he heard a politician talk about the nuclear family he was going to be sick. While not encouraging a physical reaction, it's time for those us on the Left to take a hard look at some of the "pro family" proposals being pushed by so-called "progressive" individuals and organizations. If we're not careful as we craft social solutions to family problems, we'll end up discriminating against large segments of our population, and in the process take a step backward in our struggle for equity for all workers.

Circumstances have combined to make the '80s the decade of the New Family. The delayed fertility of baby boomers, the fear of AIDS, and increased concern and attention on drug abuse have resulted in widespread public concern about children and the future of families. Half of Iowa mothers of children under 6 work outside the home, and 66 percent of those with children 6-17 years old also work. Working mothers continue to be the fastest growing group in the labor force, and by 1996 it is estimated that two-thirds of preschool-age children will have mothers who work.

Always following closely behind demographic trends and public opinion is Democratic legislation, and, right on time, the New Family has given birth to numerous Democratic proposals. Most solutions put forth to restore the nuclear family focus on increased child care and full parental—as opposed to limited maternal—leaves for the workplace. Although often mentioned in the same breath and proposed as one policy, these two family issues are very different—even contradictory—and should be treated as such.

The current absence of affordable child care discriminates against two-earner families, and a national child care policy would abolish this barrier in the workplace. Governmental guarantees of affordable, quality child care for all workers who desire it should be embraced during the 1988 election cycle, as suggested in the Iowa Democratic Party Platform. And financial support for those workers too poor to afford the child care facility of their choice is consistent with the Democratic Left goal of improving the working and economic conditions of all workers and voters.

On the other hand, expanding the length of and providing pay for expanded maternity or paternity leaves amounts to little more than a dirty diaper. In most cases, maternity leaves are treated as a medical disability, and mothers are usually required to utilize sick, comp, or vacation time during the 6-8 weeks that they are not in the workplace. Most parental leave proposals would remove

births from the medical arena, and would instead provide paid, "social" leaves for both working parents for periods ranging up to four months.

As an expectant father and state employee, I confess that a four-month PAID leave after the birth would be nice. But it wouldn't be fair. It wouldn't be fair for my colleague who has to take an UNPAID leave of absence to take care of his acutely ill grandmother. It wouldn't be fair for my friend who has to take an UNPAID leave to care for a friend dying of AIDS. It wouldn't be fair to workers who have to take an UNPAID leave when they toil to elect responsible public officials rather than add to the world population. And it wouldn't be fair to workers who are forced to go without pay when they return to school to improve their earning power and career options.

The cornerstone of any family policy must be to assure the equality of opportunity and benefits for ALL WORKERS. No individual—gay or straight, single or married, with or without children—should be discouraged from working or discriminated against in the workplace.

In this context the contradiction between support of child care and support of paternity or expanded maternity leaves is clear:

- A national child care policy would eliminate barriers that currently discriminate, and would empower working couples;
- Parental or expanded maternity leaves would result in direct discrimination against certain groups of workers—who by fate or by choice—are childless.

Child care would unite workers; parental leaves would divide workers.

If the Democratic Left in this country is ready to make the social judgement that workers should be rewarded and given extra benefits for having children, then so be it. Until then, all "pro family" proposals should be held to the time-tested standards of equity and non-discrimination.

Dennis Harbaugh is a Democratic Party Activist in Des Moines

Zephyr

COPIES

Locally owned and operated
for 7 years, providing:

*High-Speed Duplicating
Soft Binding
Passport Photos
Seven Self-Service Machines
Laser Typesetting
Graphic Design
Database Management*

124 E. Washington • Iowa City, Iowa
319/351-3500



"Styrofoam Mess Courtesy of M^cDonald's"

If you would like to tell McDonald's how you feel about their use of styrofoam write:

**Joan Kroc, Principal Shareholder
M^cDonald's
8939 Villa LaJolla Drive
San Diego, California 92037**

Commentary by Prairie Dog (con't.)

ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR: The national party platform has already been constructed, but Iowa delegates continue to fashion their own. The complicated election process for electing Democratic National Committee persons drags on.

At 10 PM a woman asks to be recognized for a point of information. "Every member of the Adair County delegation," she informs the crowd, "is still here!" Moments later, another delegate grabs a microphone and proclaims, "The entire Fayette County delegation is still here, and we came from further away!"

WITH THE JACKSON DELEGATION: Nineteen candidates for national delegate are giving their speeches. As each approaches the time limit, Mann gives them a discreet pat on the back. When he is slow to remind a speaker, the crowd helps out, yelling "Time! Time's up!"

A different reaction occurs when Steve Heaberline asks the delegation for its support. Heaberline had accompanied Jackson to the Middle East and remained there after Jackson left for Chicago following the death of Mayor Washington. Heaberline describes his trip, and then begins to tell about the time Jackson visited his farm.

"I drove him around in my pick-up to show him my land. After awhile, Jesse asked if he could drive the pick-up. Then . . ." Suddenly Heaberline feels Mann's touch on his shoulder. He acknowledges that his time is up and leaves the podium, but the image of Jackson at the wheel of the Marion County farmer's truck is too compelling to be cut off. "Let him finish! Finish the

story!" cries the crowd.

Mann waves Heaberline back to the mike. "I told Jesse, we'll vote for you, but so many of the other farmers won't. That's what everyone was saying — we will vote for him, but they won't.

"Jesse told me to tell those people, 'we is they. If we vote for him, there is no they.'" Heaberline beams as the delegates cheer.

2 AM ON THE CONVENTION FLOOR: A delegate sits on the stairs, conferring with a friend. Another delegate, running down the aisle, trips and falls into a microphone stand, which crashes into the back and head of the delegate on the stairs. The running man is very apologetic. The seated delegate rubs her head and says, "Don't worry, I won't sue you." An elderly delegate two rows back shakes her finger and says, "You shouldn't be sitting there! You're out of the order!"

Democratic Socialists of America

YES, I want to subscribe to *Prairie Progressive* for 1988 (\$5). _____

YES, I want to be on Iowa City DSA's mailing list in 1988 (\$5). _____

Iowa City DSA local dues 1988 (both *PP* and other mailings) (\$10) _____

1988 sustaining fund contribution (thanks!) _____

Name, address, and phone: _____

Return to 112 S. Dodge, Iowa City, IA 52240

labor donated

AFGHANISTAN & LUCASLAND

Summertime Killing Fields in Your Neighborhood Theater

by Jae Retz

Rambo III is new myth with adult violence; *Willow*, the new George Lucas film, is old legend with violence "tempered" for a young audience. Where the two intersect is at the body count. One estimate for *Rambo* hit 123 deaths in 109 minutes, over one per minute. My body count for *Willow* found 76 over 126 minutes, more than one death every two minutes. Surprised?

There are other important similarities between these unlikely candidates for a double bill. *Rambo's* friend, the colonel, is captured trying to destroy the Evil Empire in Afghanistan, while in *Willow* a baby is kidnapped while prophets say she will destroy a mythic evil empire in Lucasland. Dialogue is secondary to action in both. One critic bets *Rambo* speaks fewer than 200 words the whole movie. (That's less than two words per death.) The true star of *Willow*, the infant, speaks even less than *Rambo*, nary a word. Otherwise she is far more expressive than he—her facial muscles spasm in uncanny accordance with surrounding stimuli, while *Rambo* greets everything around him with the same sleepy-eyed snarl. Both movies climax in grand battle scenes, and the credits of each list far more people performing stunts than acting. Oh yes: good triumphs over evil in both films. If you're worried about violence, each of these films is for adults; if you care about character development, plot or general significance, they're both for children.

Willow aims at the very young, with a massive merchandising campaign involving over 30 companies producing goods ranging from underwear to computer games. George Lucas's filmmaking assault on the young is shamelessly profitological.

We adults find it easy to laugh at *Rambo's* representation of the exacerbated testosterone levels of the 80s. His movies sometimes seem like promotional films for Reagan volunteerism, and this latest effort could just as well be called *Afghanistan Jones*.

But when children's movies start looking like *Rambostiltskin* the laughing should stop. Lucas has admitted that the violence in *Willow* is "pretty intense" for viewers below the age of six. His 7-year-old daughter was frightened, but director Ron Howard's 3-year-old daughter loved it. The insidious combination of ingratiating cuteness and incredible savagery is what makes *Willow* so pernicious. Lucas lures the young into his magical little world, treats them to mythical battles between pure good and pure evil, and refuses to see or care that his formula teaches violence as a cure for evil in a moral universe with no shades of gray.

A historian once shared his key to grasping the spirit of an era: look for the areas of agreement between antithetical viewpoints. If we use these two films — on the surface so unlike — as a key to our times, we must conclude that we live in an era of nearly total immunity to violence. *Rambo* and his fellow celluloid Barbarians for the American Way are helping create a nation of eager young warriors. But with movies like *Willow* being fed them at an early age, by the time they are teenagers not even *Rambo* will be able to satisfy their appetite for violence

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

112 S. Dodge

Iowa City, IA 52240

BULK RATE US POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NO. 006 IOWA CITY, IA
--