

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Vol. 4, #2 February 1989

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

**Pro-Enrichment
Tax Issue
See Page 2**

Harkins Begins 1990 Campaign in Iowa City.

Citizens for Harkin opened their first campaign office for the 1990 reelection effort on January 2 in Iowa City. Key staffers familiar to many Iowa Citizens include Phil Roeder, who oversees the day to day management of the campaign, and Joe Hansen, who will concentrate on building a state-wide grassroots campaign organization.

They need your help. Tom Harkin will be a major target of the Republican right because of his success in demonstrating that progressive politics means electoral success. Send a check now to 328 S. Clinton, Suite 4, or call 337-8900 and volunteer.

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.

The Changing of the Guard: Commentary by Prairie Dog

Harold Donnelly was one of the last of a classic breed: the party politician who never forgot his neighborhood roots. Even after years of serving all of Johnson County, Donnelly continued to work his precinct for the Democrats.

But he knew in later years that the guard was changing. In 1984, Donnelly arrived early at his neighborhood's presidential caucus to set up a table for John Glenn supporters. When only four people joined him, Donnelly looked around with a bemused smile, folded up his table, and said as he walked out, "the neighborhood's not the same anymore."

"I lose voters every time I read the obituaries," he once said. It was sad to finally see an obituary with the name of Harold Donnelly.

Appointing his successor were the county auditor, recorder, & treasurer. They managed to keep the process open and fairly public. In other times & other towns, the choice would have been made in a back room of the funeral home before the organist played "When Irish Eyes are Smiling..." and Harold would have approved.

Council watchers in Iowa City are watching card-carrying pot maker Karen Kubby closely. Supporters are grumbling privately that Kubby, in her first meeting, voted with the rest of the council on every vote, including the controversial motion to go into executive session. So much for her campaign promise of greater accessibility—how soon they forget!

Those awaiting fireworks may be as disappointed as the Johnson County voters who mistakenly expected Bob Burns to bring back his combative style of the 70s to the Board of Supervisors.

The real question is how the rest of the council will react to Kubby's presence. Although some observers detected a "There's a girl in the locker-room" atmosphere for a few minutes during the first meeting, council members have gone out of their way to be friendly and helpful, and Darrel Courtney delivered some gracious welcoming remarks at the first formal meeting.

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do well to reappraise
the political landscape
of Iowa City."*

Insiders predict that Randy Larson and Susan Horowitz may feel more comfortable in giving rein to their liberal impulses. Indeed, considering Kubby's triumph and the surprisingly small margin of John Balmer's victory, all of the council would do well to reappraise the political landscape of Iowa City. Prairie progressives, having flexed their collective muscles, will be keeping an eye on incumbents John McDonald, Darrel Courtney, and John Balmer—all up for reelection in less than a year.

*"Prairie Dog" is not the editor of the
Prairie Progressive*

A Prairie Progressive Editorial: Vote YES! on Valentine's Day

by Jeff Cox

Iowa City progressive voters should march to the polls again next Tuesday, and make sure that the School Enrichment Tax passes.

There are at least three good reasons to support this tax. The first is that the school board really does need the money. Under the Reagan administration, public resources have been shifted away from government programs which enrich and improve the individual, especially education, and used for military spending, foreign aid, intelligence operations, and debt service. Under the Branstad administration, economic development programs which subsidize wealthy investors have taken priority over education and public welfare. Iowa City in particular suffers from a state school aid formula which rewards districts with declining enrollments and penalizes those with growing enrollments. As a result, Iowa City ranks 17th in a list of the twenty largest school districts in per capita spending per pupil. There is little prospect of changing this situation at the state or federal level soon, but because of the democratic nature of our system of government we can and should do something about it locally.

The second reason to support the enrichment tax is that it is relatively fair. The enrichment tax is three-quarters income tax surcharge, and one-quarter property tax surcharge. Of the three major sources of government revenue in Iowa, the income tax, sales tax, and property tax, only the income tax is related to ability to pay. If you have no income, you pay no income tax.

In Iowa, the Democratic legislative leaders have cooperated with Branstad to push through a sweeping regressive overhaul of our tax code, with cuts in the top rate of income tax, increases in the sales tax, and a variety of obnoxious regressive fees such as the park user fee and a "birth tax" on every baby born in Iowa. The top level of federal income tax has fallen from 70 to 33% during the last decade. Although the property tax can be very unfair to particular taxpayers, it is a better tax than the sales tax which falls almost entirely upon wage earners and poor people even when groceries are exempt. This small enrichment tax surcharge will help restore some fairness to our tax system.

Finally, the enrichment tax will help get rid of school textbook and participation fees. One of the great strengths of

our public school system is that it has not been needs tested. Our two most successful public welfare programs are the public schools and social security, where benefits go to everyone regardless of income level.

They not only reach everyone, they reach them without stripping them of their citizenship rights by classifying recipients as "needy". One of the most harmful of liberal fantasies is the notion that social problems can be solved by isolating a target population of needy people and helping them with special programs designed for the poor. Not a single one of our major social programs that are needs tested, such as food stamps, medicaid, ADC, WIC, or Pell Grants, reaches even one half the target population. They are not

only inefficient, they humiliate and isolate poor people by forcing them to identify themselves as needing special help. In the minds of most people, those who receive help from "poverty programs" are not citizens in the full sense. A poor student in our public schools, on the other hand, is a citizen just like her classmates, not a poor person receiving a special subsidy from the government.

Unfortunately, needs testing has been creeping into our public school system, largely because liberals have abandoned the commitment to universal entitlements which characterized the New Deal, and substituted a commitment to

special help for the poor. In 1981 the liberal Iowa City school board instituted a series of textbook and participation fees which amounted to a small tuition charge, declaring that they would take care of any problems by exempting "the poor". In practice this has meant a great deal of embarrassment for poor children and parents who have to apply for the exemption. Fees have generated considerable resentment, and the school board, to its credit, has agreed to end them if the enrichment tax passes. By voting for the tax, we can contribute to a restoration of free public education in Iowa City.

Please don't forget to vote. You may not vote at your usual polling place since several precincts are consolidated for school elections. If you don't know where to vote in a school election, call the auditor's office at 356-6004. Polls close at 8 on Valentine's Day.

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Calendar of Events

FEB. 12.

(and succeeding Sundays), a Women's Resource & Action Center, 1 P M. Organizational meetings for Take Back the Night March.

FEB. 12.

IMU Main lounge, 3 pm—Auction of local art work for the benefit of the Domestic Violence Intervention Program

FEB. 12.

Pizza Hut, Downtown, 1:00 PM. Alliance for Middle East Peace. Open to All: Palestinians, Israelis, Iowans. All Ages and Backgrounds. Will meet Sundays, call 338-0602. for future meeting place/time.

FEB. 15.

WRAC, 12:10 PM. Brown Bag Lunch: "The Image of Black Women in Fiction"

FEB. 16.

IMU Triangle Ballroom, 12:00 - 1:00 PM. New York Street Theater Caravan will present a free performance. This Obie-award winning group poses questions through music, humor, and dance, on the international status of women.

FEB. 16.

IMU, Triangle Ballroom.. "Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity in Iowa. What State Government Should do". Discussion featuring Don Avenson, JoAnne Zimmerman. Open to all. Sponsored by Johnson County Democrats and University Democrats.

FEB. 18.

Mechanicsville, IA, Noon vigil at the GWEN Tower (Post-nuclear war communications network). Followed by 1:30 program at Doc&Jo's Cafe: Brian Terrell talks about his deportation from Honduras for protesting U.S. Intervention.

FEB. 20. Shambaugh Auditorium; 4:00 PM. Charlotte Bunch, internationally known activist, will speak on

"Global Feminism and Development Issues". Reception will follow.

Brown bag lunch with Bunch at WRAC, noon, 21st.

FEB. 25.

State Rainbow Coalition Convention, North High School, Des Moines

FEB. 26.

Peoples Unitarian Church in Cedar Rapids, 5:00 PM. Monthly meeting / potluck of C.R. Middle East Friendship Group. Speaker: Des Moines Register editor Carol Rose, presentation on her recent trip to the Middle East.

MARCH 2.

First Christian Church, 217 Iowa Ave., 7:00 PM. Environmental Advocates. Earth Day Planning. Call 337-9109 or 354-4013 for future place/time.

MARCH 7.

Hillel House, 122 E. Market, 8 PM. Israeli writer David Grossman discusses Yellow Wind, his eye-opening book on the situation in the West Bank.

MARCH 8.

International Women's Day.

MARCH 10.

WRAC, 11:45 AM, Brown Bag Lunch with Dr. Jeanne Stellman, Women's Occupation Health Resource Center, N.Y.

MARCH 10.

IMU Illinois Room, 4:30 PM, lecture by Dr. Jeanne Stellman, "Where Did All the Soldiers Go?", focus on Vietnam veterans' exposure to herbicides.

MARCH 15.

IMU Ballroom, 7:00 PM. UI Credit Union Annual Meeting. Let's force a vote on the Credit Union's proposed gobbling of Iowa Avenue homes.

TELEVISION:

8 PM Monday nights:

PBS "War and Peace in the Nuclear Age".

9 PM Tuesday nights:

KTS, Channel 27, "Eyes on the Prize". Great documentary series on the Civil Rights Movement, 1956-60

7 PM Wednesday nights:

CPC, channel 26, "Eyes on Justice".

Democratic Socialists of America

YES, I want to subscribe to *Prairie Progressive* for 1989 (\$5). _____

YES, I want to be on Iowa City DSA's mailing list in 1989 (\$5). _____

Iowa City DSA local dues 1989 (both *PP* and other mailings) (\$10) _____

1989 sustaining fund contribution (thanks!) _____

Name, address, and phone: _____

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"The Battle That We Did Not Choose, But Which We Must Fight"

by Jae Retz

I pretty much believe that men should have no say on the issue of abortion. So I'll begin by saying that, as a male whose wife has had one, I believe abortion is a matter solely between a woman and her doctor. And her conscience, or whatever you want to call it. At least her wondering. How can you stop the wondering? At the time of my wife's abortion, I'm sure I felt as strongly as she that the pregnancy was an impossibility for us. Still, it's a moment in my life that I can't bear to think about, and can only guess at how much harder she must work to keep it out of her thoughts.

So I hate abortion, and the lonely burden it forces on women. The battle over unwanted pregnancies should begin at the sperm sac. A gender-just society would not assume the female reproductive organs as the primary ground for birth control research.

I'd feel better about the so called "pro-life" people if there were more evidence that their concern for human life extended beyond the fetus stage. Even more than abortion, I hate what the hard core anti-abortion people stand for. Or more precisely, what they don't stand for.

The *Des Moines Register* issue covering the Operation Rescue arrests contained three other stories of note:

1 - A former imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan is in a primary runoff for election to the Louisiana legislature.

2 - The number of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States reached a five-year high in 1988.

3 - A recess Rambo struck again, this time at a DC school, wounding four.

Why aren't these issues sending "pro-lifers" into the streets?

Hideous ironies have kept this country marching in place for some time now. It all began when we dumped LBJ because of Vietnam and got Nixon and Kissinger, and continues with a former head of the CIA calling for a kinder, gentler nation. And now feminists are being painted as collaborators in murder, while the Right (can there be a one word oxymoron?) wraps itself in the diaper and comes off as the great protector of human life.

Abortion foes have usurped the ideal slogan. "Pro-choice" is an inspired counter-effort, but pales next to "pro-life". What a choice: to be, or not to be. Holding high the banner of life, pro-lifers have forced pro-choicers into the trenches, from whence the latter are hurling desperation grenades, such as: "Abortion saves lives." "Abortion improves the health of women." It is no longer enough simply to advocate the right to safe, affordable abortion. As attests the sign at a recent pro-choice rally, the very act of abortion has been pressed into the service of the good fight: "Abortion Is The First Step On The Road To True Liberation." This is a long way from Simone de Beauvoir's

: "As long as the family and the myth of the family...have not been destroyed, women will still be oppressed."

In the electoral arena, this issue, which some say is dividing our society more than any other since slavery, blurs party loyalties. Many Catholic Democrats, historically major forces for social progress, defect to anti-abortion candidates. On many issues in presidential races, telling the Democrat from the Republican can get difficult, but the proof of the pudding comes in the appointments to the Supreme Court. That is where backward or forward steps are decided, and we're about to see one of the former.

Operation Rescue officials claim that more people have been arrested the last few months protesting abortion than were arrested during ten years of the Civil Rights Movement protesting racism. While racism, hate, and violence are on the upturn in this country, the abortion issue has us quibbling insanely over the point at which life begins. This is in a nation that spends billions on the weaponry to wipe out life on this planet hundreds of times over.

The point is to make life liveable, not designate when it starts. It should be obvious by now that eons of male leadership has us going in circles. What a pity that the best hope for a new consciousness is being forced into a struggle with its own conscience.

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