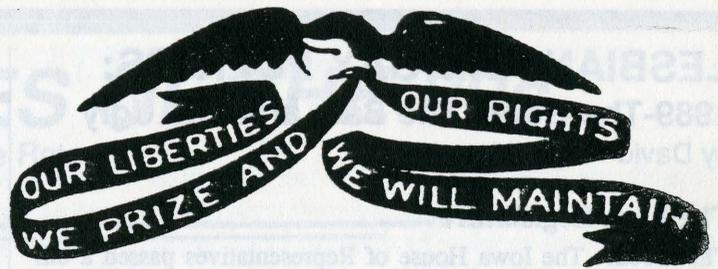


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT



December 1989

Prairie Dog's Honor Roll for 1989

The eighties actually ended during the first week of July, with the Supreme Court's decisions against reproductive freedom and for the right to burn a piece of cloth. The confusion of the decade was expressed by a new dilemma: when a flag is being sewn, at what point does it become viable?

The nineties showed promise, as millions demonstrated for democratic reform of repressive governments across the globe. As portrayed by American media, however, the demonstrations took on the aura of shopping sprees. It's a troubling image: East Germans breaking through the Berlin Wall to get to the malls on the other side. Democracy is being equated with consumerism; freedom means having a better selection of products to buy.

For Iowans, 1989 was the year when local governments began to question the migrant labor camps of Northup King and other multinational seed corn companies operating in the state. It was the year that Prairie Meadows, the rose of Des Moines' economic development, became a thorn for taxpayers. Polk County threw money at the doomed racetrack as if it were a Stealth bomber.

Iowans were told that what's good for Wal-Mart is good for the country. Fair-goers in Cedar Rapids lined up to watch non-union mules being paid below minimum wage to dive into uninspected tanks of water.

The lives of five ferrets who had gained notoriety as political prisoners in the Iowa City Animal Shelter were spared at the last minute. The Iowa City City Council, having accommodated the needs of developers throughout the year, did not want to appear unsympathetic to a species of polecat.

Despite a phony war on drugs, hypocritical restrictions on pornography, and the arrival of Christmas catalogs in August, moral courage continues to exist in Iowa. Some people still try to do the right thing, and several succeeded in 1989. Herewith, Prairie Dog's 3rd Annual Honor Roll. HAVE A NICE DECADE!

Darlene Hill

Chair of Iowa Democratic Party's Black Caucus. Organized the "Stand Up and Be Counted" parade to encourage minority participation in the political process and the 1990 census.

Iowa Citizen Action Network

The state's broadest coalition of unions, churches, and farm organizations. Incessantly badgers Branstad and the legislature to enact fairer tax laws, guaranteed health insurance, and responsible environmental alternatives. Maybe ICAN will find an alternative to polystyrene coffee cups at their next convention.

Roberta Till-Retz

Johnson County Democrat and labor activist. Her energy put the action back into the Affirmative Action Committee of the county party.

The Little Hawk

Iowa City's best newspaper, published by students at City High. In a look at alternative periodicals, its reviewer conquered his personal bias to praise the Prairie Progressive: "I did not enjoy this paper. Probably because I did not agree with a lot of what it had to say. But I do respect the people who put this paper out because they have some guts and are trying to get things done." The reviewer acknowledged that the PP is "into environmental causes like air and water pollution, which is cool."

Dave Nagle

Third District Congressman. Refused to let Monfort Trucking screw its Marshalltown workers and the taxpayers of Iowa. By forging rather than following public opinion, Nagle pushed Grassley and the Governor into a corner from which they couldn't escape. Perhaps he'll carry his courage a step further and start voting against aid to Nicaraguan contras and the Salvadoran police.

The Placement Committee of the University of Iowa's Law School

Withstood pressure to compromise its anti-discrimination policy. Because the military routinely discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation, the committee refused to allow Army and Marine recruiters to use law school facilities.

Johnie Hammond

Democratic Representative from Ames. A sensible lawmaker who has become an articulate advocate for accessible health care and rational AIDS-related legislation.

Glen Epstein

Iowa City artist. When his depiction of a naked man with an erection was deemed inappropriate (in other words, censored) for a local art show, Epstein proclaimed, "I did what I had to do."

Bob Notman-Cook

Driving force behind the Criminal Justice Ministries. Walked 215 miles to raise public awareness about the state's inhumane and inefficient treatment of prisoners. (Editor's note: Minnesota has a population 1 1/2 times larger than Iowa but imprisons 25% fewer people.)

CWA local 7181

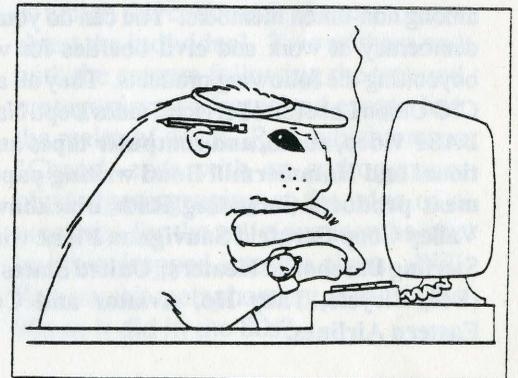
The Burlington union initiated and sustained the first nurses' strike in state history.

The Old Hotel in Greenfield

Southwest Iowa's progressive choice for prairie fundraisers.

Rossie's Café

The Mel's Diner of Iowa City. Rednecks and radicals are equally at home in this pocket of urban ambiance nestled in a college town.



LESBIAN AND GAY POLITICS: 1989-The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

by David Tingwald

The Iowa Legislature

The Good: The Iowa House of Representatives passed a bill providing for civil rights protection for lesbian and gay people.

The Bad: The Senate buried the bill.

The Ugly: It was the Senate democratic leadership that buried it.

The Good: The Iowa Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus, a new state-wide organization, was formed to work for civil rights. Send lots of money to: P.O. Box V, Des Moines, Iowa 50311.

Lesbian/Gay Civil Rights and the Johnson County Democrats

The Good: The Johnson County Democrats' leadership put their bodies where their party platform has been for a long time and supported gay and lesbian civil rights by marching in the Iowa Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade held in Iowa City in June.

The Bad: There wasn't anything bad about it.

The Ugly: Someone mailed an anonymous poison-pen letter to Johnson County Democrats' contributors implying criticism of the Central Committee for endorsing the event.

The Good: It backfired. The Democrats made money on it.

Pornography, Art-Funding, and Jesse Helms

The Good: Jesse Helms's diddling with NEA funding of a Mapplethorpe exhibit attracted considerably more attention to Mapplethorpe's work than it would have otherwise received.

The Bad: The definition of obscenity in the Iowa Code was expanded. It is as yet unknown to what degree this will chill sexual expression, but when the legislature starts tinkering with what we

are allowed to see, can further repression be far behind?

Barney Frank and the "Influential Homosexual Lobby"

The Good: Barney Frank is still in Congress.

The Bad: Steve Gobie is going to make money from having sold Barney Frank's Career

The Ugly: The whole episode has given conservatives cause to say that there is a "homosexual lobby", wielding undue influence in Congress, which has prevented Frank's fall. The patent preposterousness of this notion (this unduly-influenced Congress has not passed a gay rights bill) has not diminished its popularity.

The Uglier: Remember that Hitler sold the idea of the "undue influence" of Jews on Germany's economy as a justification for their initial oppression. The Myth of the Powerful Jew (here, the Powerful Homosexual) will be a powerful factor if the far right makes another play for power in the United States.

Graf for Council

The Good: An openly gay man and activist ran for Iowa City City Council, got 42% of the vote running for the first time against a well-financed incumbent, and nobody batted an eye about him being gay.

The Best: The Press Citizen's dry notation: "Family: Donald Engstrom, partner of 18 years."

20th Anniversary of Stonewall

The Good: The 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the trigger of the modern lesbian and gay civil rights movement, came and went in June, and the movement is still here. To quote a chant: "Fags and Dykes are doing well, the whole right wing can go to hell!"

David Tingwald is Chair of Gay and
Lesbian Democrats of Johnson County

Support the Labor Movement: The Ethical Consumer's Non-Buying Guide

DSA has launched the 'American Solidarity Movement' to help rebuild community support for labor unions, especially among non-union members. You can do your part to strengthen democracy at work and civil liberties for working people by boycotting the following products. They all appear on the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Dept. National Boycott list: **BASF video, audio, and computer tapes and discs; International and Hammermill Bond writing paper; John Morrell meat products (including Rath Blackhawk brand); Napa Valley Coop Bergfeld Sauvignon Blanc wine; Shell Oil Co.; Sterling Baseboard Heaters; United States Playing Card Co. (Bee, Bicycle, Tally Ho, Aviator and Congress Brands); Eastern Airlines.**

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE is edited by members of the Iowa City Local of The Democratic Socialists of America. Editor for this issue: Jeff Cox.

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1990 sustaining fund contribution (Thanks!) _____

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TOP 10 MOVIES OF THE 80s

by Jae Retz

The first two films are on my all-time best list; thereafter the movies are listed alphabetically. If your favorite movie of the 80s isn't here, it's only because I didn't get a chance to see it.

Ran

No experimenting or special effects necessary for the grand master. Kurosawa simply blends the conventional elements -- a good story (Shakespeare's tale of King Lear), visual splendor, and a strong moral perspective -- into a work that seems to transcend the medium itself.

Berlin Alexanderplatz

Are there any superlatives left? There have to be for this fifteen-and-a-half hour Fassbinder masterpiece, originally produced for television. *Prairie Dog* once channel-flipped into the middle of an episode, and, without knowing the story or bothering to read the subtitles, was instantly mesmerized. Enough said? This is filmmaking at its magical best.

Brazil

More impressive than likable, this movie has earned a spot in the history of cinema for its sheer technical brilliance alone. It is a gripping commentary on the limitations of fantasy as the sole weapon against the unrelenting oppression of a bureaucratic society.

Do The Right Thing

Spike Lee does what Woody Allen has not yet managed to do: simultaneously wear the masks of tragedy and comedy, to make people laugh while showing them that human existence is nothing to laugh about.

Full Metal Jacket

Imagine the impact of this movie if the more popular and conventional Pla-

toon hadn't hit the screens first. Wielding irony as his most powerful weapon, Stanley Kubrick forgoes Oliver Stone's good soldier-bad soldier formula and shows that war itself is the ultimate evil.

Hope and Glory

This delightful movie represents director John Boorman's deliverance from the violent male world of his previous films. In his memoir of the London Blitz it is the humanizing values of women that offer hope in a war-ravaged world without glory.

Kiss of the Spider Woman

This film is equal in every way to the uncompromising power of its social and sexual politics. With so much of the story taking place in the confines of a prison cell, it demands extraordinary performances from William Hurt and Raul Julia. Hurt's storytelling flights into the realm of fantasy make the movie a metaphor for cinema itself and its power to break the shackles of everyday life.

My Beautiful Laundrette

With his strong sense of irony and a flair for filmmaking that drives him to the edge of absurdity while making things unsettlingly real, Stephen Frears is definitely a director for our times. In his first feature film international cultures clash, homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality, and the only character with a discernible moral framework spends most of his life in bed in a drunken stupor.

My Life As A Dog

This wonderful movie about a boy and his dying mother, and the caring Swedish village that makes him its own, is also a tribute to the values of a truly kinder, gentler nation. Twelve-year-

old Anton Glanzelius gives one of those miraculous performances where every moment works to perfection.

Room With A View

More profound than meets the eye, this movie is about opening oneself up to life. To live or not to live as an autonomous being is the dilemma of the young female protagonist. The acting -- which the British do best -- gets more impressive with each viewing and is done with a grace and style that seems to say: "Yes, we're only acting, but isn't it marvelous?"

Reasoning that it wouldn't be very progressive to bow to the tyranny of the number "10", I must also mention Woody Allen's *Radio Days*, which strongly suggests that directing may be his greatest gift of all, and Martin Scorsese's *Life Lessons (New York Stories)*, in which he leaves the mean streets to transform raging bull into a modern artist and offer up a feast for the eyes, ears, brain, and funny bone. In the process he answers a variation on the feminist question, "What happened to Rembrandt's sister?" -- she's stretching canvasses for an inferior artist.

Do these films illuminate the decade? Only four out of ten have "happy" endings, and only four present a world in which the community seems to care about the individual. Two of them end with the camera following the tortured protagonist on a fantasized escape into the realm of death. *Ran*, which means "Chaos", ends with an androgynous, blind figure groping at the edge of a precipice for the religious icon he/she has just dropped into the abyss. Will Kurosawa's metaphor ring as true in the 90s as it did in the 80s?

One other thing -- I liked *Ishtar*.

TESTOSTERONE UPDATE: FRY WINS GOLDEN TESTY

by Sundy Smith

The Prairie Progressive reported last year on the efforts of WAFT, Women Against Freefloating Testosterone, to increase awareness of the dangerous environmental transmission of the male hormone. Testosterone, chemically $C_{19}H_{28}O_2$, has been linked to effects ranging from heavy beard growth to world wars.

While the push for the right to testosterone-free air in the workplace was the primary focus for WAFT's efforts in 1989, this year the group will be broadening its public awareness campaign. "We want the nineties to be known as the Testosterone-Free Decade", says a WAFT spokesperson.

To start the campaign, WAFT initiated an annual award for the person most publicly demonstrating the aggression-inducing effects of testosterone. The first Golden Testy award goes to University of Iowa football coach Hayden Fry. While the UI football program long has been rumored to be the secret testosterone toxic waste dump for Iowa, the WAFT judging committee chose the coach's nationally televised tantrum during the Iowa-Ohio State game as the winning performance. Fry angrily grabbed quarterback Matt Rodgers's face mask, later explaining he felt the player could handle such treatment because his father was also a coach. One judge gave Fry extra points for later throwing his headset to ground.

With announcement of the award, WAFT is calling for periodic, unannounced testosterone testing for all UI football coaches. Those testing at toxic levels would be offered job security on the condition they enter a treatment program. WAFT is also asking for a boycott of UI football games in the fall of 1990. "This won't be easy for season ticket holders. The testosterone-laden environment can be addictive," admits one WAFT member. "My husband and I are finally up to the forty-five yard line with our priority seating, and since they've tightened up on drinking in the stands it's almost pleasant. I only got barfed on once last season."

WAFT is asking members and other interested persons to pass on, via the Prairie Progressive, suggestions for next year's award as candidates emerge.

Sundy Smith covers the hormone beat for the Prairie Progressive.

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