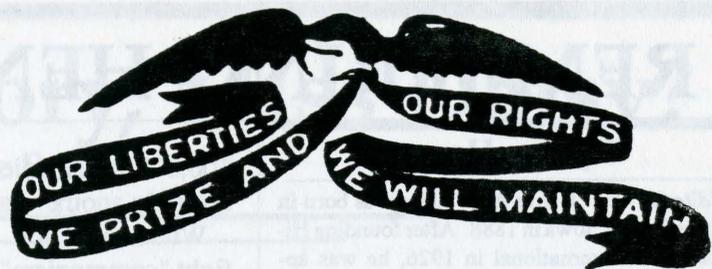


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



March 1990

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Drug War Diary

1968: Media accounts predict that thousands of deformed children will be born to chromosome damaged LSD users.

1969: President Nixon declares the need for a "new urgency and concerted national policy" to fight drugs.

1970: The currency surplus in Florida banks is calculated by the Federal Reserve Bank at \$576 million.

Early 1970s: U.S. government sprays Mexican marijuana fields with deadly herbicide paraquat.

1976: The currency surplus in Florida banks reaches \$1.5 billion.

1982: George Bush is assigned by President Reagan to lead the fight against drugs.

1988: The currency surplus in Southern California banks is calculated at \$3 billion.

A survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse shows that 12% of those who regularly use illegal drugs are black.

A Gannett News Service analysis of FBI crime reports shows that 38% of all drug arrests are of blacks.

Spring 1989: The combined currency surplus of banks in Miami and Los Angeles is calculated at \$8 billion.

Drug czar William Bennett: "The drug crisis is a crisis of authority."

First paragraph of a fundraising letter from Sen. Tom Harkin: "There's a killer in Iowa. It's coming to your town. You better be ready for it."

Outgoing Surgeon General C. Everett Koop claims in congressional testimony that cigarettes killed 390,000 Americans last year, cocaine 2,000.



Summer 1989: Bennett: "A massive wave of arrests is a top priority for the war on drugs."

The Iowa Supreme Court, citing a nationwide drug crisis, upholds the arrest and conviction of a 16-year-old Panora boy for skateboarding in the Hy-Vee parking lot at 10:15 P.M., in violation of a local curfew.

Kurt Schmoke, mayor of Baltimore: "Our current drug laws not only are not helping us to win the war on drugs, they're helping us lose the war on drugs...we are wasting billions of dollars on law enforcement that could be more effectively used for education, treatment and prevention."

A Des Moines Register article warns parents that a teenager left at home alone over the weekend might become a crack addict.

Bonnie Campbell's campaign brochure describes her "vision:" "The Attorney-General should have no higher priority than the fight against drugs." The word "tough" appears five times in the brochure.

Fall 1989: Former Lt.-Gov. of Missouri Harriet Woods, campaigning for JoAnn Zimmerman for Governor: "It doesn't help to merely throw everyone in jail. We must come to grips with the fact that a 'have-not' generation has been created."

The U.S. prison population passes one million. Only South Africa has a higher per capita rate of imprisonment.

Rep. Tom Tauke recommends offering "bounties" for information leading to drug arrests.

1990: Ira Glasser, Executive Director of the ACLU: "It's time to cool out the hysteria and talk rationally about controlling the use of drugs through practical policies that become us, rather than disgrace us, as a nation."

Campbell says that even police officers know that law enforcement is not the answer to the drug problem.

A survey by the Drug Policy Foundation finds that 68% of Americans favor treatment for drug users and 21% favor punishment.

Harkin abandons the slogan "Drug-free by '93."

Rep. Dave Nagle mails a constituents' newsletter full of substantive discussion of important issues, with no mention of the war on drugs.

--by *Prairie Dog*, with help from the *Nation*, *In These Times*, and *Business Week*.

REMEMBERING HENRY A. WALLACE

By Jay Howe

(Editor's Note: Henry A. Wallace was born in Adair County Iowa in 1888. After founding Hi-Bred Corn International in 1926, he was appointed U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1940 he was elected Vice-President of the U.S.. After being forced off the Democratic ticket in 1944 for his left wing views, he later served as Secretary of Commerce. In 1948 he was the presidential candidate of the Progressive Party. Following is an assessment of Wallace from a pamphlet published by the Adair County Historical Society and Tourism Council.)



Americans need to recognize and appreciate Henry Wallace's prophetic, yet tragic, role during America's emergence from World War II as the preeminent military and economic power.

Wallace wanted our nation to cultivate an atmosphere of goodwill and peace-expectancy through institutions of cooperation like the United Nations.

He understood the great contest raging in the world, the contest between freedom and tyranny, between progress and reaction, between general welfare and special privilege, a contest between impulse for liberation on the part of millions of oppressed people of the world and the capacity for imperialism on the part of a privileged few. He saw it clearly as a choice between peace and war. When he made his "Century of the Common Man" speech in 1942 before the Free World Association, he was recognized as the first public figure who had placed World War II in its proper place in history.

Unfortunately, the vision that dominated post-war American policy - as espoused by publisher Henry Luce in his call for the "American Century" - was one that had had many anti-democratic, imperialistic characteristics. This impulse, lasting almost 50 years, has been a violent and humanly expensive proposition. In Vietnam alone, 57,000 Americans and over

100,000 Asians died in what was essentially another gasp of colonialism.

When America was rearming to fight "communism" in every region of the world, Wallace insisted the Cold War would be costly, dangerous and avoidable. This stance cost him his cabinet position in the administration of President Harry S. Truman. But Wallace fought on.

Being forced out of Truman's Democratic administration in 1946 was far from fatal to Wallace's determination. Wallace's principles and commitment to the people's welfare transcended partisan politics. His earlier conversion to the Democratic party over Depression-era Republican farm and trade policies demonstrated this. Thus in 1948 he left the Democrats to join the Progressive Party to run for President. He set out then to challenge what he saw as the reactionary policies offered by both the Republicans and Truman Democrats. He told Americans that post-World War II actions of Truman and his bipartisan alliance, if left unchecked, would lead to a divided Europe, a costly and permanent U.S. arms industry (later referred to by Eisenhower as the military-industrial complex), colonial wars (Vietnam), covert actions (Latin America), and anti-communist hysteria at home (McCarthyism).

Wallace saw the hope and optimism which should have arisen out of the ashes of World War II being forfeited by a big business-military cartel seeking to rule both political parties and extend corporate influence to the markets of the world. Wallace unalterably opposed economic exploitation and class rule, either at home or abroad, which is upheld and strengthened by military power, hysterical anti-communism, and sham national patriotism.

With these thoughts in mind and

while forthrightly articulating his beliefs in the 1948 campaign, Henry Wallace was met by angry mobs of bigots, and even pelted with rotten eggs and tomatoes. His supporters were harassed by the FBI, and he was frequently denied permission to speak in public places and forums. Nevertheless, he never stopped or turned on his political allies in spite of a red-baiting climate of fear and intimidation.

Wallace was no communist, though many on the political left may have supported his campaign. He was the very opposite of a communist, more so than the majority of his detractors. He was a genuine democrat - with a small d - who didn't see why someone with unpopular beliefs should be denied the right to speak or participate in public life. He carried on relentlessly.

In the end, Wallace's loyalty to the Bill of Rights, the centerpiece of the U.S. Constitution, brought about his annihilation as a public figure. It was reminiscent of when he took a head-on, uncompromising position on civil rights at the 1944 Democratic Convention, where he was taken off the Democratic ticket because of his insistence on full democracy for all people, including African-Americans.

Had Henry Wallace granted himself the luxury of a few months of silence, he would have been President, instead of Truman, a year later on the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

We can only ask ourselves what the world would have been like under "President" Henry A. Wallace.

We can also ask: What is the significance of this one individual in the march of time and history?

Is not now the season for us to give Henry A. Wallace his rightful place?

Where's The Glory, Miss Daisy?

by Jae Retz

Here's a question: Would the Black 54th regiment portrayed in Glory have fought in the Civil War if they had seen Driving Miss Daisy first?

Two major hurdles stand in the way of the proper enjoyment of these two films, hurdles having to do with slavery, soldiery, and dignity. In Driving Miss Daisy the viewer has to try to get past the point of wanting Morgan Freeman to say: "You just bend over now, Miss Daisy, and I'll drive this Hudson where the sun don't never shine."; and in Glory we're asked to accept the premise that there's honor and glory for the Black man in getting his ass blown off in a white man's war.

Freeman's decision to play this role in Driving Miss Daisy illustrates the classic dilemma for the Black actor faced with precious few and almost always stereotyped parts. And I can see how it would be excruciating if not impossible for a Black person to watch this movie. Even though Freeman's role is called "chauffeur", economically and socially he is Miss Daisy's slave. His function, though, is conveyed in the title (and movingly underscored in the film's final image) -- the African American as the nameless force, vital to the very survival of Southern gentility.

Driving Miss Daisy will probably walk off with the major Oscars. It is flawlessly put together; Freeman, Jessica Tandy and even Dan Akroyd are excellent, and (of utmost importance to the Academy's sentimental social conscience) it offers a hopeful message in a time of much publicized tension between Blacks and Jews.

There is a good deal of humanity in this basically inhuman relationship and how Freeman plays the role triumphs over what he plays.

Freeman also gives an impressive performance in Glory, but this movie belongs to Denzel Washington. I dare say the screen hasn't seen such a magnetic presence since the young Brando. By contrast, Matthew Broderick as Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the leader of the Black 54th, is woefully out of place. (I was reminded of the years when Julius Irving and Larry Bird were the dominant forces and chief spokespersons in the NBA. That juxtaposition did more to crumble the myth of white superiority than 100 Emancipation Proclamations.) In general, the movie loses its power when Blacks are off screen.

When the white Col. Shaw "requests the honor" of leading his black troops in the suicidal assault on the impregnable Fort Wagner, the parallel to Viet Nam is overwhelming.

Can't you just hear The Man saying: "You troops lead the charge today and we'll let you fight our future wars for us and someday even give you our inner cities." Nearly a century and a half after Black men won their Civil War rights, nearly one in four young Black men is in jail or prison or on probation or parole, and men in dirt-poor Bangladesh have a better chance of living past 40 than men in Harlem.

With Spike Lee leading the charge, the long overdue Black revolution in this country has begun in the movie houses. Lee has said Blacks are "starving" to see movies by and about them. These performances by Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington should whet the appetites of white audiences as well. To borrow and vary a line from the Rev. Franklin about his daughter Aretha: "These guys are stone actors." They fill the screen like few actors can. And in their eyes lie whole new worlds crying to be brought to the screen.

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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(both PP and other mailings) (\$10)

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An Open Letter to Johnson County Democrats by Jim Walters

[editor's note: The following letter was sent to 58 members of Attorney General candidate Bonnie Campbell's Johnson Co. steering Committee, including the editor of the Prairie Progressive. It is reprinted slightly edited with permission of the author, a Johnson county farmer and political activist.]

"Lately, the language of government, always revealing, grows more and more fierce and commanding (due to so many lost wars? so much money wasted?), and military metaphors abound as czars lead all-out wars on drugs. Yet, at the risk of causing both offense and embarrassment among even the not-so-faithful, I feel obliged to say that I do not accept the authority of any state – much less one founded as was ours upon the free fulfillment of each citizen – to forbid me, or anyone, the use of drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, sex with a consenting partner or, if one is a woman, the right to an abortion. I take these rights to be absolute and should the few persist in their efforts to dominate the private lives of the many, I recommend force as a means of changing their minds."

Gore Vidal – The Nation August 7/14, 89.

Dear Johnson County Democrat:

I am writing to you because today I received a campaign appeal from Bonnie Campbell which listed you as a member of her county steering committee. I am offended by the tone of her campaign and I am concerned about her commitment to civil liberties.

The "war on drugs" is a fraud at many levels – even school children recognize the bogus nature of a drug war which does not target alcohol or tobacco and the elimination of the bonanza of tax dollars state and federal governments receive from this consumption.

At another level the drug war provides a cover for much repression and political surveillance in minority communities. And there was never a problem when the heroin dollars flowed out of the ghetto through the mafia and into the white banks; but when yuppie dollars flow out through Jamaican hands to Colombia then we've got a problem.

Ira Glasser, Executive Director of the ACLU, in that organization's most recent newsletter, points out that almost all the problems resulting from drug use are enhanced by prohibition, including "the spread of AIDS, high homicide rates, property crimes, the proliferation of criminal cartels, corruption of public officials, paralysis of our criminal justice system, and the steady erosion of our civil liberties."

It does not take much intelligence to realize that our modern day drug warriors would welcome a replay of the 20s and 30s. More police, more judges, more prisons, they cry. I fear that once a narco-establishment loses interest in drugs they will turn their attention to politics and there is some evidence this is already happening.

But the biggest fraud of the drug war is the way it diverts our attention from our real problems--education, the environment, and the economy. What I want are Democratic candidates who are committed to civil liberties and freedom – like the freedom of Jefferson, Jackson and, as outlined above, the freedom of Gore Vi.lal. Who will stand up for these things if we don't?

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

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"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