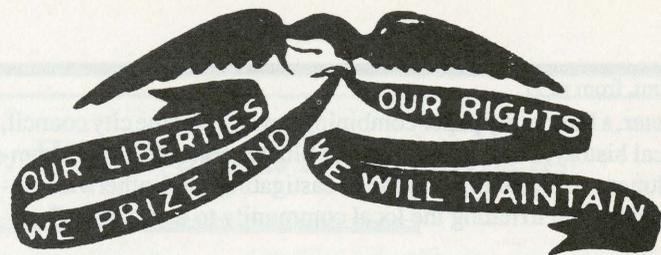


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



December 1990

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Honor Roll For 1990

1990 was a year of strange sights on the prairie. Spike Lee defended himself in front of a crowd of Iowa City students who accused him of sexism in his films. Communist Party leader Gus Hall passed through town, more exuberant than ever. John Chrystal wore a "Tax the Rich" button.

1990 was also the year of the crisis. The Savings & Loan bailout. Operation Desert Shield. Medical waste incineration. Four more years of Terry Branstad. The tragic slaughter of thousands of prairie dogs in Colorado.

Although the nineties don't look too promising at this point, courage and conviction are as abundant as the fall harvest. For those who don't believe it, here is Prairie Dog's 4th annual Honor Roll. This year's crop includes many everyday people who do not think of themselves as heroes. Maybe the poet Yevtushenko will be proven right:

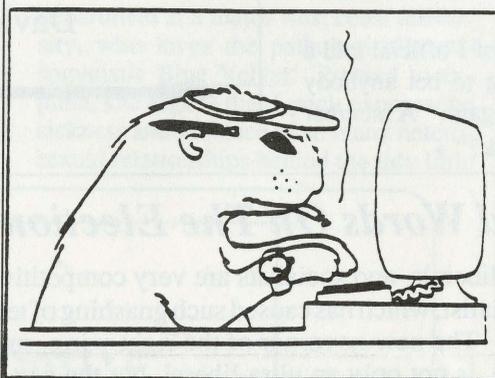
One day posterity will remember
This strange era, these strange times
When ordinary common honesty
Was called courage.

Officers and Activists of Local P3

They held their union together and continued to provide services to members long after Farmstead closed its doors in Cedar Rapids.

Paul Zimmer

The director of the University of Iowa Press turned down a \$12,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts because he believed the grant's restric-



tions amounted to government intrusion on his publishing activities. Zimmer said the restrictions violated the First Amendment, and that his refusal of the grant affirmed "the right of publishers to make independent, creative decisions in accord with the custom and law of our free country."

A Taste Of Thailand

The downtown Des Moines restaurant hosted The Nation editor Victor Navasky to celebrate the weekly's 125th anniversary. Owner Prasong Nurack provides an amiable ambience for spicy food and hot topics.

Father Norm White

Resigned from the Private Industry Council to protest the awarding of federal job training funds to Iowa Beef Processors at its Waterloo plant. White said that he was following the "teachings of the Catholic

Church that say an employee, for a full day's work, is entitled to a living wage. \$5 an hour is not a living wage."

Oswald Diaz-Duque

Resigned from the University of Iowa's Human Rights Committee to protest its insensitivity to gay concerns and the U of I's lack of commitment to its own human rights policy.

Darla Garber

Jury forewoman in the Woodbury County trial which acquitted the operators of an adult bookstore of breaking the state's new obscenity law. Garber said that if the prosecution "couldn't define community standards, and we couldn't define it, then what is it? It doesn't exist."

The Honorable Rosemary Sackett

Iowa Court of Appeals judge who cast the lone vote against removing a child from its home due to the parents' failure to keep the house clean. Sackett suggested that providing housekeeping services would be a cheaper and wiser alternative for the state than putting the child in foster care.

State Representatives Linda Beatty, Joel Brown, Jack Hatch, David Hibbard, and Jane Teaford

The only five members of the Iowa House to have 100% favorable voting records for both the Iowa Civil Liberties Union and the Iowa Citizen Action Network.

Keyron McDermott

Owner and editor of the Cascade Inter-
(cont. on p. 2)

(cont. from p. 1)

preter, a bimonthly paper combining coverage of the city council, local history, blunt interviews and blunter editorials, and a commitment to "goading, cajoling, castigating, and otherwise upbraiding and irritating the local community to democracy."

Attorney-General Tom Miller

Classiest loser of the year. Miller never spoke a harsh word about his defeat in the Democratic gubernatorial primary, and has now accepted the will of the people that he should make a lot of money with a private law firm.

Jean Jew

Classiest winner of the year. When her sexual harassment case against the U of I was finally settled, Jew voiced concern for the victims of harassment who have neither the money nor the tenure to risk lengthy court battles. She also expressed hope that all of the involved parties would resist complacency in the future.

A Voice In The Crowd

After Jew warned against complacency, a U of I official told a campus gathering that he "would be willing to bet anybody anything that this sort of thing won't happen again." A member of the audience cried out, "Do you have a buck?" ♦

"The tradition of democratic socialism tells us that the accident of birth must never condemn a human being to poverty, sickness, or lack of hope. At a time when inequities are on the rise in this, the richest nation on earth, we remain committed to social and economic justice."

David Dinkins, Mayor of New York

Some Final Words On The Election by Jeff Cox

The Good News. Ultra-liberals, old liberals, and socialists are very competitive in electoral politics. Bernie Sanders' election to Congress as an independent socialist, which has caused such gnashing of teeth in the Daily Iowan editorial columns, was not a narrow victory, but a landslide. The new governor of the right-wing, sunbelt state of Texas is a liberal woman. Minnesota's new senator, Paul Wellstone, is not only an ultra-liberal, but the sort of person that George Wallace used to describe as a pointy-headed intellectual who rides a bicycle to work. On the left-wing fringe of the Senate, Wellstone will join Tom Harkin, who won decisively, and Paul Simon, who won by a landslide.

It is worth dwelling on these victories because the press continues to behave as if the electorate is in some fundamental sense conservative. The electorate is in fact ambivalent, undecided, and uncertain on a large range of issues. When conservatives do a better job at electoral politics than liberals, conservatives win. When socialists do a better job than either liberals or conservatives, socialists win.

The Bad News. Things are now much worse than most people realize in the Iowa legislature. The six Democratic losses represent gains, not just for Republicans, but for new-style Republicans of either the suburban developer or fundamentalist Christian variety. It is hard to know which is worse, but both are definitely worse than the old style rural Republican obstructionist. The days when we could have serious legislative initiatives on minimum wage, extended health care, and a tuition freeze appear to be gone for the time being. Instead we will be debating abortion, the death penalty, and tax breaks for developers. Soon we will all miss Don Avenson much more than we do now.

The pendulum has swung in Iowa politics, and when Democrats lose elections, progressives go down to defeat. With a Democratic trend in legislative elections, we would have seen in Des Moines progressives such as John Norris, Jesse Jackson's Iowa campaign manager, and Mark Henderson, the environmental activist and DSA member. The moral: for the time being, keep sending your money to the Iowa Democratic party.

The Future. When an independent-minded progressive such as Bernie Sanders gets elected, we can expect a powerful backlash among the rich, the powerful, and the influential. We should all pay attention to the fate of Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower, one of the most progressive elected officials in the nation, and easily the funniest. The Texas Farm Bureau, right-wing Democrats, and manufacturers of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and growth hormones ganged up on him, and narrowly defeated him with a media campaign accusing him of flag-burning. Watch for the same kind of campaign, in a toned-down, low-key Iowa form, when Karen Kubby runs for re-election to the Iowa City city council in 1991. If we are waiting for them, they might not get away with it. ♦

Wild At Heart And Weird On Top: Who Warped David Lynch?

by Jae Retz

Wild at Heart, a carnival ride through a chamber of horrors and tunnel of love all at the same time, is typical Lynch. This "piece of garbage," as a friend called it, also makes this year's other Hollywood efforts look like tired retreads. The title itself, on a deeper level, could apply to all the other works that have sprung from the mind of David Lynch: Eraserhead, Blue Velvet, and Twin Peaks.

Lynch has said that the most important things about him are that he is a native of Missoula, Montana and an Eagle Scout. Both are key to the dualities of his work: who doesn't know what horrors have lain hidden beneath many a medal-covered chest? But even more vital to Lynch's view of the world may be his Montana

past, where he was immersed in both the beauty of nature and the nature of nature.

At the end of Blue Velvet, the robin – symbol of love and hope – appears on the window sill as a sign of return to normal after the nightmare of events. But it does not sing because it has a live, flailing insect in its beak.

Lynch's extreme dualities make for an ambivalent audience. The seductive power of his craft is exemplified for me by a close friend, head of a women's studies department at a major west coast university, who loves the pathologically misogynistic Blue Velvet. Pressed to explain, she argues that Lynch exposes the sickness and violence of so many heterosexual relationships behind the tidy little

white picket fences. (The lower depths villain at one point says to the upper crust hero: "You're like me.") She's right. Who but Lynch would underscore this mingling of the two worlds by placing the naked, battered, and traumatized Dorothy (Isabella Rossellini) in the girlfriend's middle-class living room?

As one who both reveres and fears David Lynch, I find him both brilliant and sordid, thrilling and disgusting, ultimately an enemy of both womankind and kind men. The famous line from Blue Velvet – "Are you a detective or a pervert?" – captures the essence of David Lynch the filmmaker. In his attempts to investigate and record the mysteries of life Lynch's camera takes us to the most nether regions of the human heart and mind. In Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) he has created one of the most terrifying models of male brutality in film history. For Frank: In the beginning was the F-Word, and the F-Word was Violence. Procreative instinct has never worn such a sinister face.

Which brings us to: Who killed Laura Palmer? The answer should have come as no surprise to anyone who has witnessed Eraserhead kill his mutant child. Naturally it would be the father: creator and destroyer in one, both giver and taker of life. At the heart of Lynch's view of human nature the extremes of good and evil, innocence and depravity reside in the same breast.

Lynch is obsessed with the wild beast within the human soul. The roaring of an animal dominates the soundtrack while Leland kills Laura's look-alike cousin, the exact sound defining the image of Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan) succumbing to Dorothy's masochistic plea.

Many would prefer David Lynch without the violence. But maybe it is not possible to make a movie about America without violence, which is after all as American as Agent Cooper's cherry pie. Television codes have tamed Lynch's depiction of his wild beasts, allowing the other side of nature greater play. Is it too damning to suggest that one of America's leading creative lights is ultimately more palatable on television? ♦

ALTERNATIVE
SECURITY

LIVING WITHOUT
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edited by
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WAFT Golden Testes Award Postponed

by Sundry Smith

Women Against Freefloating Testosterone (WAFT) have postponed awarding their Golden Testes award for 1990. The annual award is given to the man best exhibiting evidence of higher than normal testosterone levels, which recent research (NYT, July 17) has found to include such things as free expression of anger, domination of social situations, and attempts to control others. Awards will be made after the results of two pivotal testosterone show-downs: the Rose Bowl (January 1) and President Bush's withdrawal ultimatum to Saddam Hussein (January 15). A special awards task force will be sent to both locations to observe.

Last year's winner, Hayden Fry, always a local favorite, looked like a shoo-in again this year, despite some questions about exactly why he shaved his moustache at the start of the season. Some observers thought it was because it was starting to thin out and look wimpy; others believed that the rush of hormones as he geared up to redeem

himself this season made it hard to contain the growth to the neat, slightly sinister look he once sported.

However, George Bush, a dark horse in the contest as he fished amiably through the early days of the Gulf crisis, has recently become a serious contender for the award. A new bulldoggishness has emerged over the past few weeks, which some say is

being expressed only now that he can't be outdone by Maggie Thatcher. Having this bulldog Bush direct the patient diplomacy of economic sanctions against Iraq is like having Fry coach a team of quilters.

Whatever the results of the two contests in January, WAFT officials say it looks like a good season for the hawks. ♦

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

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