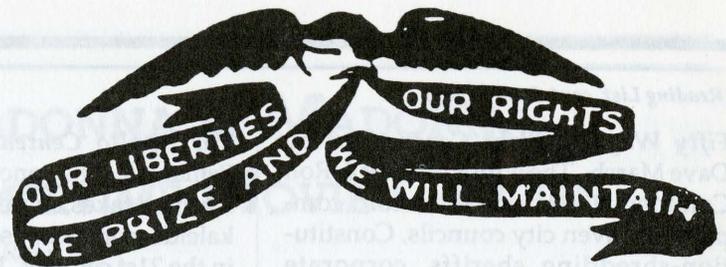


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Summer 1991

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

PRAIRIE DOG'S SUMMER READING LIST 1991

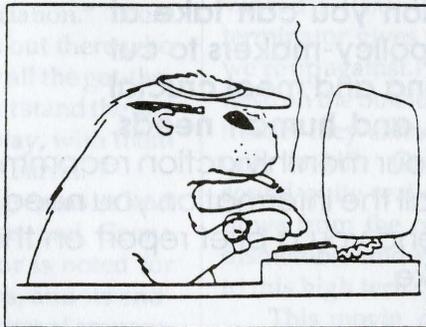
Floods. Searing heat. Across-the-board budget cuts and lay-offs. The lingering euphoria of Desert Storm. Those fabulous Gates boys, Daryl and Robert. There's never been a better summer to gather an armful of books and beat a fighting retreat to the porch, the basement, the park, or – in Prairie Dog's case – an air-conditioned burrow with friends standing guard outside.

To help prairie progressives keep their perspective, this year's list emphasizes the big picture and the long view – from 1492 to 2100, give or take a few years. And who knows? Perhaps by summer's end we'll emerge to find Clarence Thomas's Supreme Court nomination in flames, Harkin leading Bush in the polls, and a recycling program finally instituted by the Iowa City City Council.

The Crown of Columbus by Louise Erdrich & Michael Dorris. A native American version of one man's generosity to the Western Hemisphere, giving added weight to Joseph Conrad's view that "the discovery of America was the occasion of the greatest outburst of cruelty and reckless greed known in history." A welcome palliative for the onrushing hysteria of the 500th anniversary of Cristobal's arrival.

What's that Pig Outdoors? by Henry Kisor. Is it true that people with impaired hearing make good lifeguards? Why do they get discounts on drivers' insurance? A Chicago journalist's memoir makes deafness seem a lot more interesting than being able to hear.

On Strike at Hormel: The Struggle for a Democratic Labor Movement by Hardy Green. After reading the details of the strike that started in Austin, Minnesota, and eventually affected the entire meatpacking industry, you'll be convinced that only a decentralized, communitarian union can attract un-



organized workers in the 90s. Iowans playing roles in the struggle included Dixon Terry and former Ottumwa

mayor Jerry Parker.

Death Song by Thomas McGrath. Walt Whitman lives! Political poetry that is neither arrogant nor somber. Black-listed from teaching during the McCarthy years, McGrath is by turns angry, funny, tender, and rude, but always exuberant in his celebration of America's diversity and the land itself.

You Just Don't Understand by Deborah Tannen. Effective reminders that language shapes thought, that problems with relationships are often problems

Renewal Time

If you have enjoyed reading the Prairie Progressive every three months for the last five years, please help us keep publishing by renewing your subscription for 1991.

Mail subscribers will find a renewal card and envelope inside; new subscribers should clip out the renewal form inside, or just send us a check.

We're planning a special Fifth Anniversary issue in September. If you would like to take out an ad for your union or organization (\$50 half-page; \$25 quarter-page; \$10 smaller box) please send a check with your text to 112 S. Dodge, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

The Prairie Progressive is supported entirely by subscribers, and by unions and other progressive organizations that advertise their support. Thanks!

of linguistics, and that conversations between women and men are always cross-cultural. Learn the politically correct way to miscommunicate with your loved ones.

The First Amendment Book by Robert Wagman. A handy user's guide, just in time for the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights. Keep one at home, at work, and in your car.

Cures by Martin Duberman. Despite a preponderance of excessively handsome boyfriends, one of America's finest historians paints a landmark portrait of growing up gay before it was okay.

(cont. on page 2)

(Reading List, cont. from page 1)

Fifty Ways to Fight Censorship by Dave Marsh. The editor of Rock & Roll Confidential takes on the record companies, craven city councils, Constitution-shredding sheriffs, corporate fiends like Coors and 7-Up, and the dread Tipper Gore – and shows how you can do it, too.

Divorcing the Dictator: America's Bungled Affair with Noriega by Frederick Kempe. A case study of how the willingness to abandon democratic principles in favor of short-term foreign-policy goals makes America its own worst enemy. Noriega is depicted as a combination of Richard III, the Wizard of Oz, and Frankenstein – a monster the US helped to build. God bless the nuncio!

The ICARE Cookbook. Find out what your friends are having for dinner, and contribute to HIV-related services in southeast Iowa, by buying this colorful collection of diverse recipes and health tips. Editor's note: Available for \$10 at Prairie Lights & New Pioneer Co-op.

Fighting for Air: In the Trenches with Television News by Liz Trotta. Hard-bitten, hawkish autobiography of the first woman to cover a war for television. Trotta's clashes with mindless, bloodletting network executives are nearly as harrowing as her description of landing under fire in Vietnam.

American Nervousness by Tom Lutz. A University of Iowa professor tells you everything you wanted to know about the year 1903.

The Soccer War by Ryszard Kapuscinski. The Indiana Jones of journalists describes more than thirty coups d'état which he personally witnessed. Never has a reporter put himself at such risk to bring to the world the truth from places seeking to conceal it.

Through a Window by Jane Goodall. Three decades of ogling those zany chimps reveals a sobering picture of manic-depressive cannibal elves. Scariest book of the year.

The Apollo Centennial by Gregorio Brillantes. The concept of cultural differences takes on new meaning in this kaleidoscopic story set in the Phillipines in the 21st century. Not for monolithic thinkers.

Short Stories by Alice Munro. No one hangs out the dirty laundry of rural

Ontario with such joy and gusto.

The Motel of the Mysteries by David Macaulay. A look at North America from the perspective of a 22nd-century archeologist. Ponders the meaning of golden arches, plants that would not die, and other strange artifacts from the age of consumption. ♣

Resolution Passed by the Adair County, Iowa Democratic Party at its Off-Year Caucus 1991

A constitutional amendment should be proposed to the people of Iowa, which would guarantee proportional representation for all viable political groups (parties) in our lawmaking institutions, e.g., any groups gathering a sizeable percentage (such as 5%) of the total votes cast for all legislative candidates would be guaranteed at least as many legislators in the body as are needed to reflect its share of all votes cast. (This system would increase democratic participation, increase voter turnout, and make it more difficult for powerful interests to control politicians.)

Every month we'll find you the best 20-minute action you can take at home to urge policy-makers to cut military spending and meet crucial environmental and human needs.

We'll send you our monthly action recommendation on a postcard with all the information you need. And every six months we'll send you a brief report on the results of the actions you take.

20/20 Vision: The way to stay active on the issues you care about most. It works. We change policy-makers' minds. And it's simple. No meetings, no mountains of mail. We even promise we won't call you during supper.

20 minutes a month/20 dollars a year. Join thousands of people who are making our democracy work to change our nation's priorities. We'll turn the time you're willing to spend into time well spent.

Contact Mark Smith, Third District Chair, 205 N. Westminister, Iowa City, Iowa 52245, (319) 337-8379

THELMA & LOUISE, MADONNA & MADONNA, T-800 & T-1000: SUMMERTIME MOVIE COUPLES

by Jae Retz

"Women lag in power" is the earth-shattering conclusion of a recent United Nations study. But at least the foe has finally been defined – the so-called "white male". (Let's give him a touch of class and call him the "non-union white male".) And maybe there is some hope at local theaters this summer, where we can see "two women finding their power," as Geena Davis describes *Thelma and Louise*, and Madonna flashing hers (power) in *Truth or Dare*.

To argue whether *Thelma and Louise* is a feminist movie or a betrayal of feminism is a bit like discussing the composition of the snow during an avalanche. This is a case where the effect is greater than the cause; the movie has struck a powerful chord in women, and a raw nerve in lots of men. One man calls it a "recruiting film for the National Rifle Association." There are an awful lot of men out there who don't seem bothered by all the get-the-women movies, but can't stand the fact that turnabout is gun play, with them at the wrong end of the barrel.

The movie is not as great as its lead actors, Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis. Its male director is noted for stylish male action films, and its ending would qualify as an act of empowerment only as a take-this-life-and-shove-it sort of gesture. But what it does offer is satisfaction with a vengeance.

The avalanche image applies to analyzing Madonna as well – just get out of the way and enjoy her power. No man may be an island, but Madonna seems to triumph as one. In the final stage number of *Truth or Dare* she sings a lusty ode to relationships while kicking her fellow singers and dancers into a pit.

The respect Madonna denies her fellow performers she lavishes on her audience through her workhorse ethic. She is a real perfectionist. And real

funny. Not to forget raunchy. If Jesse Helms were to see this documentary he would be as convinced that the social order is out of control as some are convinced it is firmly locked under his white thumb.

Thelma and Louise may have lost their round, but maybe they have swung open the box office doors a little bit for other women's films. Madonna may not have helped open the women's history archive here at the U. of I. by purchasing Louise Noun's Frida Kahlo, and Sean Penn may still be the love of her life, but she stands as proof that a woman can control her own destiny in a man's world.

Then along comes Arnold and puts everything back into perspective. *Terminator 2* is the tale of two terminators, the good T-800 model and the evil advanced T-1000. (The notion of a good terminator gives you an idea of what we're up against.) Both are white males, flesh on the outside, impervious on the inside, they cannot cry, and they live only to kill. On the surface it may sound quite realistic, but a direct line flows from the old "Tom and Jerry" dismember-and-reconstitute cartoons to this high tech dreck.

This movie, called by its director "the first action movie advocating

world peace," is on the same level of cynicism and hypocrisy of Arnold's quotaphobic friend George Bush selecting the avuncular Clarence Thomas as his civil rights terminator. In one scene two small boys with very realistic guns are shown struggling with each other, while the young hero asks T-800 if there is any hope for human beings. "It's in your nature to kill yourselves," the terminator answers. Read his lips – this is not just a terminator speaking this line, it is Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose cinematic body count is surpassed only by the major wars of human history. Be ready for the movie's last line: "If a terminator can learn the value of human life, maybe we can too." Turning Arnold Schwarzenegger into a symbol of peace and humanity is like holding up Charles Manson as the model head of a family.

I loathe everything about the man playing this "kinder, gentler terminator" (his words), from his politics to his grotesque physique, and maybe most of all his you're-dead-and-I'm-not-one liners. He plans to run for senator from California in '92. He loves violence and has an Austrian accent. Let's ask that question again: Is there any hope? Nope. ☹

WEDNESDAY NIGHT, 8:30 P.M.

THE SANDERS GROUP

lively, unrehearsed discussion of today's issues
with Maura Whalen, *Daily Iowan*
Marlene Perrin, *Press-Citizen*
Jeff Cox, *Prairie Progressive* and
Gary Sanders, Moderator

Local Access Cable Channel 26/25
(with no apologies to the McLaughlin Group)

WAGNER'S SPIRIT: SUPPORT H.R.5., S.55

by Todd Anderson

The Wagner Act of 1935 is the nation's principle private sector labor-management relations law. Imagine, if you will, the late Senator Wagner visiting this side of the grave. He would find the interpretation of his paramount legislation so perverted to make it unrecognizable. Supporters of the Wagner Act effectively argued in 1934-35 that if our nation were to remain free and democratic, democracy must be extended to employees. Despotism would result if economic power remained in the hands of a few corporations.

The state of labor-management relations during the 1930s is best reconstructed from the testimony before the LaFollette Committee on Civil Liberties. Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin reported to Congress that industrial espionage was universal in American industry. The committee revealed repeated instances of employers laying in huge supplies of sickening gas and shotguns to be used against their workforce in the event of a strike. In 1937 it was discovered that Republic Steel bought 10 times more gas guns

and 26 times as many shells as the Chicago Police Department. Most interesting and I believe relevant today were reports of the "Mohawk Valley Formula", a step by step plan for employers intent on breaking a strike. Circulated by the National Association of Manufacturers, this plan called for hiring vigilantes, using professional strike-breakers to cross picket lines, and always calling union leaders "agitators."

Robert Wagner began championing the welfare of American workers when he, as a New York Senate Majority Leader, joined with the young Al Smith, Majority Leader of the New York Assembly, in investigating the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911. The bodies of 146 women workers were recovered from the sweatshop, of which the doors were locked. One must realize the thousands of lives saved when 54 of their 60 bills regulating factory conditions became law as a result of their investigation of this irresponsible incident. Some twenty years later Wagner, in response to the climate of labor-management relations, would once again arise to the call protecting

America and her workers with the Wagner Act.

The Wagner Act or National Labor Relations Act was passed to protect U.S. workers' right to "engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection". To insure this right, the law went on to clarify that to interfere with employees' exercise of these rights is unlawful. The National Labor Relations Board, since the laws initiation, has held that it is an unlawful labor practice when employers threaten employees with the loss of their jobs. Finally a balance was reached in labor-management relations.

The "Mohawk Valley II" was created by the Supreme Court in *NLRB v. Mackay Radio and Telegraph* in 1938. The court said that it was lawful for employers to permanently replace employees participating in an economic strike. Yet, it was still an unlawful unfair labor practice to fire or threaten to fire employees involved in the same strike. This decision virtually went unnoticed until President Ronald Regan dusted it off and "permanently replaced" thousands of U.S. workers practicing their civil liberties in the PATCO strike. Since PATCO, employers have learned that they can simply enter into bad faith negotiations, demand outrageous concessions, and drive employees out in an economic strike. Once out on strike, the employees are "permanently replaced".

The Workplace Fairness Bill (H.R.5/S.55) seeks to amend this blatant skirting around the intent and spirit of the Wagner Act. It's time to close the loophole, ask your Senator and Representative to support the Workplace Fairness Bill, and demand that balance be returned to labor-management relations. ☛

Todd Anderson is Business Agent, S.E.I.U. #728, and President, Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO.

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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