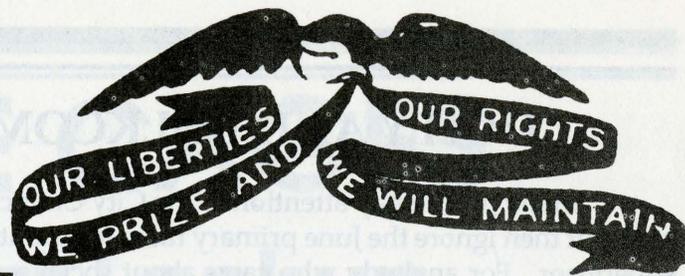


# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



22

Spring 1992

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

## Harkin Harvest Fails In Granite State

By David Leshtz

MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE—The 727 landed in a dense fog. One year ago today, the ground war had begun.

One year ago, perhaps, yellow ribbons festooned the trees and telephone poles. Now the streets were littered with leaflets from yesterday's ACT-UP rally ("Read my lipstick—no new taxes on the rich!"); photos of people dead or dying from AIDS hung from bare branches.

The ground war of the First Primary had begun. Troops from the seven major campaigns skirmished up and down Elm Street. Solitary dark horse candidates (more than fifty on the ballot) sought to establish beachheads. Platoons of journalists and camera crews patrolled the perimeter.

But Manchester was not only a battlefield. It was also a small town before a big football game. Store windows and apartment buildings sported Homecoming-style banners ("Sununu for President—no more wimps!"). Pick-up loads of beefy young Buchanan supporters careened through the business district, blasting their horns and chanting through bullhorns. Smug Kerrey volunteers planted themselves in front of the Merrimack Restaurant and cheered themselves hoarse. Kitty-corner to them was a well-coiffed Clinton crowd, waving signs and exchanging taunts with smaller knots of Cuomo and Harkin flag-bearers who darted in and out of traffic.

Occasionally a Nader mobile-home rolled through the streets, an enormous yellow write-in pencil mounted on its roof.

The crowds and the cacophony grew as Game Time neared. Warm weather on the day before the primary brought out

would be over for Tom Harkin.

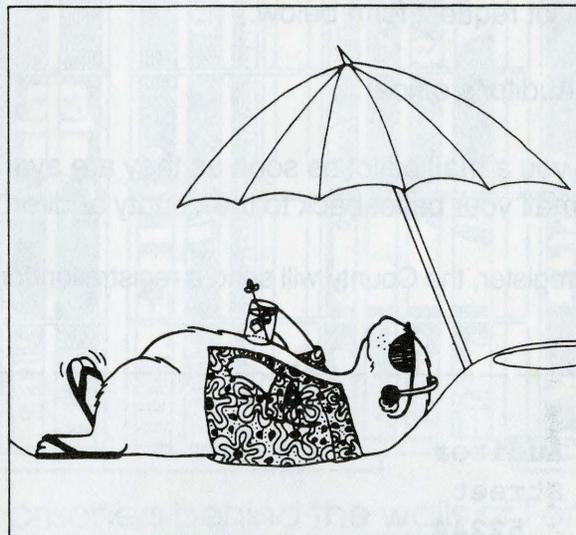
Was Harkin's problem "the message or the messenger"? That's how the major media posed the issue of Harkin's failure to ignite Democratic primary voters.

Nothing was wrong with Harkin's fundamental message. It was a simple amalgam of: 1) Jesse Jackson's message in '88; 2) some facts and theories lifted from Republican analyst Kevin Phillips's book, "The Politics of Rich and Poor"; and 3) Harkin's own instinctive populism.

The message, however, had two strikes against it. First, the primary schedule was less than ideal. New Hampshire, one of the most anti-government, anti-tax, anti-labor states in the nation (and the food's not very good, either), is a terrible place to begin the Democratic primaries. Even one little industrial state with a minority population could have injected some momentum into Harkin's campaign earlier in the process.

Equally problematic was the media's aversion to openly class-based politics. "Class-resentment anger," the Des Moines Register labelled Harkin's rhetoric. The Wall Street Journal dismissed his attacks on Reaganomics as "class warfare." They just don't get it. Class remains America's dirty little secret, one which well-fed columnists from the finest schools are ill-equipped to explore.

Harkin's strengths as a messenger were outweighed by two flaws. The decision to go negative in New



**Prairie Dog is on vacation and will return next issue.**

hundreds more, as adrenaline-and-caffeine-crazed staffers croaked "Visibility!" to their workers, who surged out of their headquarters, jockeying for position on the best turf. At one point a beat-up van screeched to the curb and disgorged a dozen pumped-up twentysomethings brandishing Laughlin signs. They claimed the corner.

By nightfall of Primary Eve, Manchester had become a surreal blend of street theater, Mardi Gras, and Prom Night. Twenty-four hours later, the party

Continued on Page 6

# DUFFY AND BOLKCOM FOR COUNTY SUPERVISOR

Many people pay attention to the City Council race, but then ignore the June primary races for county supervisor. For anybody who cares about social services, especially for children, or the Iowa City Public Library, that is a mistake. The Board of Supervisors has far more responsibility for social services than the City Council, and the 10% of the library budget supplied by the county is essential to its operation.

Joe Bolkcom would bring a breath of fresh air to the Board of Supervisors. He is dedicated to open, accessible government, and to making the Board as well-known as the City Council by televising its pro-

ceedings. He is committed to maintaining the quality of life in Johnson County, to our public library, to a clean environment, and to a decent standard of living for everyone, including persons with low incomes and disabilities, and all children.

Charlie Duffy has been a reliable supporter of environmentally safe conservation practices and weed control, of social services, and of the library.

If you think you might forget to vote in the JUNE 2 PRIMARY fill out an absentee ballot request and send it in now. It's easy.

## Voting by Mail is as Easy as A, B, C

- A)** Complete the mail ballot request form below.
- B)** Mail it to the County Auditor's office.
- C)** The county will send you a mail ballot as soon as they are available (about a month before the election). Mark and mail your ballot back to the county auditor.\*

\* If you need to register, the County will send a registration form with your ballot.



Johnson County Auditor  
913 S. Dubuque Street  
Iowa City, IA 52244

To Whom It May Concern:

I request a mail (absentee) ballot for the June 2, 1992,  
Democratic Primary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Special Address for Ballot?

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

LABOR NOTES:

# CIVIL LIBERTIES AT WORK AND OTHER POLITICAL ISSUES

By Todd Anderson

This past month the District 1 COPE (Committee on Political Education) meeting was held at the Coralville AFSCME office. The meeting was well attended by approximately 25 labor representatives from the new district. Senator Richard Varn and Representatives Mary Neuhauser and Bob Dvorsky were in attendance and provided a wonderful exchange of information.

One item of discussion was posturing by officers of the Principal Financial Group, who claim that Iowa's regulation of drug testing by employers is too stringent and is scaring away busi-

ness from locating in the state. What a bunch of bunk! A recent study shows that only 41 of more than 50,000 deaths and injuries at work in the United States between 1972 and 1990 were caused by drug or alcohol abuse. Workers were 160 times more likely to be victims of chemical emissions than to be killed or injured in accidents involving alcohol. Obviously Principal would serve its concerns better by lobbying to enforce and increase OSHA regulations.

Democratic Party platform planks were discussed, and since that time I've come up with a new plank: WHEREAS with hindsight the victor of the Iowa Presidential Caucuses historically appears to be the wisest decision for the party; THEREFORE let the party nomination process begin and end in Iowa. Did anyone happen to hear the National Public Radio report on Pat Buchanan in which they detailed the plan Pat devised for his boss Slick Dick

in 1971? The plan was the blueprint for the Republicans to influence the Democratic nomination process so that the candidate they knew they could beat got the Democratic nod, i.e. McGovern over Muskie. Quote: "If Bill Clinton becomes the Democratic nominee, the Republicans will break him open in the fall like a soft peanut."—Senator Bob Kerrey.

The plot thickens. The Arkansas Development Authority has numerous bonds underwritten by BCCI (internal banking and terrorism scandal) associate Jackson Stephens who is represented by the Rose Law Firm headed by none other than Hillary Clinton. Stephens has raised more than \$100,000 for the Clinton campaign and his bank has made a \$2 million dollar loan to the campaign. You can't help but notice the smell and steam rising from this pile, folks. I vest my last hopes in the 30% delegate control by superdelegates at the National Convention. For the first time, I see the rationale of this check.

*Todd Anderson is President of the Iowa City Federation of Labor.*

*DSA Honorary Chair*

# Barbara Ehrenreich

will read from her works on the

Evening of May 7th

# Shambaugh Auditorium

Sponsored by

the Emma Goldman Clinic

and Prairie Lights Bookstore

## Don't Miss It!

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

Yes, I want to subscribe:

Prairie Progressive for 1992 (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_

Iowa City DSA mailing list 1992 (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Iowa City DSA local dues 1992 (\$10) \_\_\_\_\_

(Both PP and other mailings)

1992 sustaining fund contribution (Thanks!) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Return to 112 S. Dodge, Iowa City, IA 52240

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# BEAUTIES & BEASTS, CARTOONS & CANNIBALS, HISTORY & HERSTORY: TOUGH PIX FOR OSCAR

By Jae Retz

It's Oscar time again--time to assess what the current crop of nominations tells us about the state of the union in this election year.

For starters, this is the first time in Oscar history that an animated film (time for a reality check, America?) has been nominated for best picture. While the nomination of "Beauty and the Beast" may be setting a terrifying precedent, its theme--of woman taming the beast in man--is pretty much at the heart of four of the five films nominated for best picture.

Maybe this country won't be able to face reality until it's done with the 60's, until the last person dies who still remembers where she or he was on November 22, 1963. With the thoroughly riveting "JFK," Oliver Stone has dressed himself in a permanent cross hair shirt. Conspiracy or no, the film is a depressing reminder of how the assassinations of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy left this country a stunned prey for the feasting frenzies of the insatiabes.

In "Silence of the Lambs," which is not, despite its title, a critique of the American media during the Gulf War, the beauty and beast theme is most obvious. As an FBI agent pitted against Hannibal the Cannibal, Jodie Foster doesn't really tame the beast, but does use him to capture another. Barbara Bush reportedly walked out of this movie. Would she have walked out of the war had it been a movie instead of the real thing? The Academy is probably not ready to hand an Oscar to a cannibal, no matter how great his performance. And it is great. The first look at Anthony Hopkins standing in his cell is more powerful than two hours of Nick Nolte on his emotional roller coaster.

In a "Prince of Tides" voice-over, Nolte tells us of losing touch with his inner potential: "I needed ... a rec-

onciliation with that unborn man ... to coax him gently toward his maturity." Sounds like Robert Bly is lurking between those lines. In this tale of the ever-demented South, Barbra Streisand shrinks away the demons in Nolte's past and transforms him into a normal man ready to embrace normality. So Nolte leaves the Jewish analyst and the excitement of Manhattan and returns to his family in South Carolina, where his life will no doubt be as humdrum and predictable as the tides.

*"The theme of violence in our society is well represented, with murder playing a key role in 14 of the 22 (nominees)."*

In "Bugsy" the beauty v. beast theme takes a more domestic form. Annette Bening corrals Bugsy's libido and milks \$2 million from his building fund while he pursues his obsession of putting up a resort in the Nevada desert. The movie itself is constructed like Bugsy's dream hotel--a glossy facade covering an empty shell. And Bugsy is portrayed less as a crook than as a man who really has the vision thing. One reviewer reveals just how far form has overtaken content in Hollywood when he praises Beatty for having "a killer's sense of style."

Today's Black filmmakers often end their movies with an on-screen quote or message driving home the point of their films. "Bugsy" uses this device, and exposes the moral of the story, by letting roll across the screen the heartening news that Bugsy's original \$6 million investment has reaped to date over \$900 million in profits. That's the bottom line. Don't count the bodies, count the dollars.

In all, 22 movies were named in the

various categories. The theme of violence in our society was well represented, with murder playing a key role in 14 of the 22. But aside from "Boyz N the Hood" (up for best director) and "Grand Canyon" (best original screenplay), the films pretty much ignore the crucial issues of the day. "Boyz," which I think is a better film than all but the totally depraved "Silence," is more firmly grounded in reality than any of this year's nominees. Life is a daily survival test in the Hood, without the fanciful life choices offered up in the well-meaning "Grand Canyon." Individual reaction to social problems is the answer in this new-age drama, a trickle down sort of approach: if the middle-class whites get their act together, some of the people standing in the wings might also get to step on stage. Helicopters, forever linked in the American consciousness to Vietnam, constantly hover over the LA landscape of these two urban films, serving as symbolic recognition that our real war was here all the time.

This Oscar season may go down in history as the Year of the Beast. What a contrast in character between the male and female roles in the best acting categories. Jodie Foster's FBI agent and Thelma and Louise are three powerful women leading the best actress nominees. On the male side, we find a sadistic cannibal ("Silence of the Lambs"), a sadistic psychopath ("Cape Fear"), and a sadistic criminal ("Bugsy"). (The contrast is nearly as remarkable in the supporting categories.) In the women's movies--"Thelma and Louise" and "Fried Green Tomatoes" (with Jessica Tandy up for supporting actress)--there is ultimately no attempt to confront the beast; flight is the only alternative. But what good is achieved when the fairy tale Beast is tamed? He turns into a white male. And we're right back where we started.

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# NO MORE CAGES

## Rally Against Lockup

Saturday, May 2, 1:00pm

Fort Madison

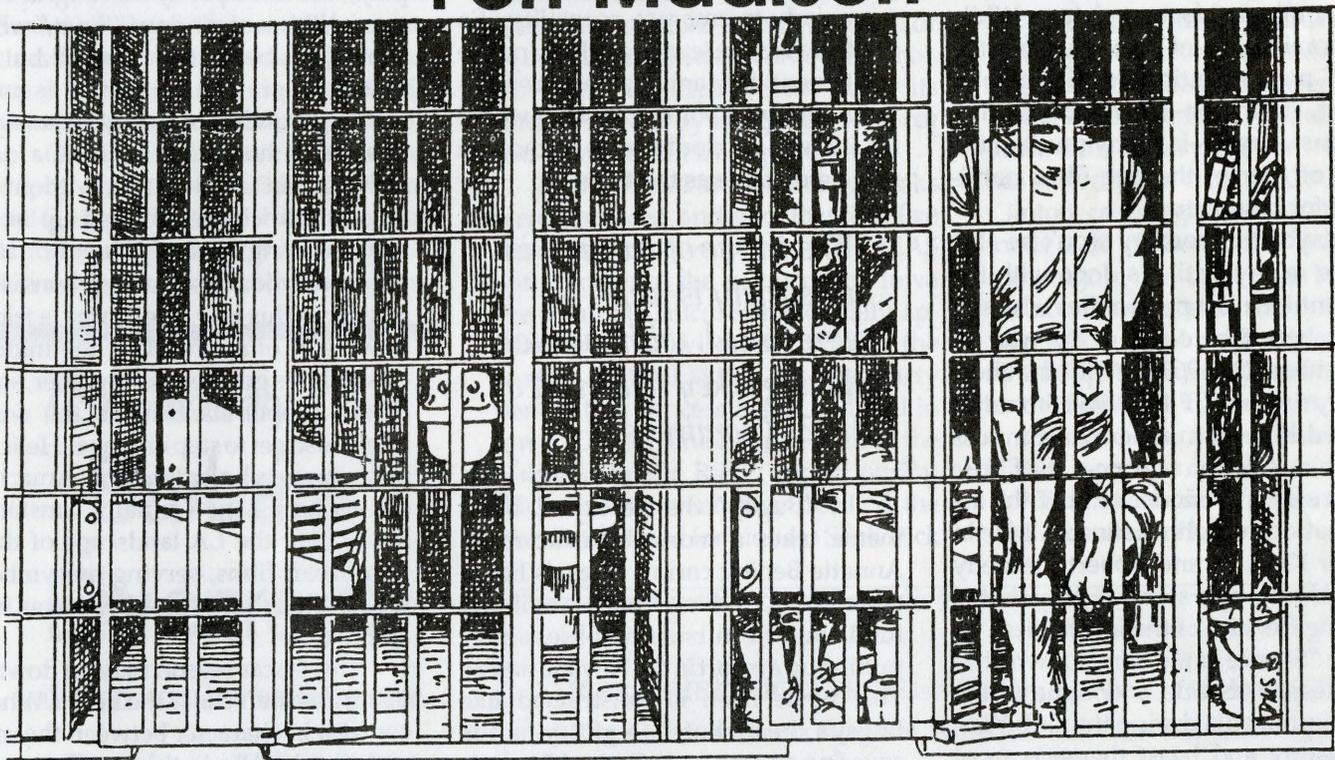


Illustration by Dominique Strandquist

Over forty percent of the prisoners behind the walls at Fort Madison are confined to their cells for twenty-three hours a day, 163 out of 168 hours a week. Many of them are in lockup for extended periods of time, some for years and even decades.

Nationwide rallies against control unit prisons will take place May 2 at Marion, Illinois and elsewhere. The Marion federal prison has been condemned by Amnesty International for psychological torture, yet its control unit serves as a model for state prisons to increase their lockup.

For more information or transportation call Criminal Justice Ministries at 515-284-5047.

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**HARKIN HARVEST, continued from page 1**

Hampshire was a crucial mistake. His Iowa victory did give Harkin a bump going into New Hampshire, with tracking polls showing him slowly but steadily inching ahead of Kerrey toward 15%.

Had Harkin been content to make a few "comparisons" of his record with Kerrey's, his upward trend probably would have continued. Instead, Harkin took shots at all of his competitors, thereby defusing the attack on Kerrey while increasing his own junkyard-dog image. What worked against Tom Tauke backfired against a larger field.

Harkin's staff apparently realized that something had gone askew, because they hastily resurrected a softer ad featuring Harkin's hearing-impaired brother. The kind-and-gentle persona came too late for a knock-out of Kerrey, which was crucial to the long-range goal of a Harkin-vs.-Clinton showdown. Harkin's hopes, and the struggle to define the Democratic Party in 1992, were finished.

The messenger may have made another serious mistake by abandoning his stance as an outsider. Harkin's claim of being "the only real Democrat in the race" was accurate in many respects, but it didn't play well in an anti-establishment atmosphere. And Harkin's style, epitomized by his beautifully-orchestrated announcement event on a farm in Winterset, began to reek of the Beltway. Neither Harkin nor Kerrey, flying first-class with bloated entourages, could adjust quickly enough to the twists and turns of a national campaign. Yet, with little money and less than ten staffers, Jerry Brown (a quintessential insider) is still in the race.

*"Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it."*

—Shakespeare

Withdrawing from campaigns brings out the best in presidential hopefuls. Kerrey was far more lively and appealing during his exit remarks than he ever had been as a candidate. A trace of self-deprecating humor somehow found its way into Harkin's withdrawal speech. The account of his campaign, Harkin joshed, should be called "Memoirs of an Invisible Man." Both he and the crowd were startled by his halting attempt to poke fun at himself, but the joke was okay for a first try. A little more of that could go a long way in '96

*David Leshtz is an Iowa City Democrat who campaigned for Harkin in New Hampshire. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of the Prairie Progressive editorial board.*

## **THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE**

112 S. DODGE

IOWA CITY, IA 52240

"The astounding reality of the moment is that the President of the United States, on every substantive issue, holds a minority viewpoint. The majority of people do not agree with him. The reason he is President is that we don't have an opposition party."

Bernie Sanders, testifying  
September 13 before the  
National Organization for  
Women's Commission for  
Responsive Democracy.