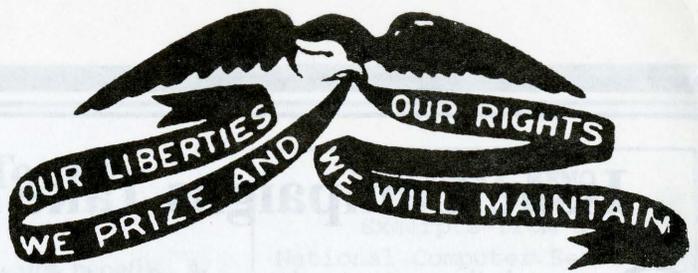


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



23

July 1992

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Summer Reading List for Cultural Elitists

Last summer, America endured months of confusion and denial following the Gulf War. This summer might be worse.

Dan Quayle promotes Traditional Family Values by attacking Murphy Brown, a woman who can't respond because she doesn't exist. The Republican base of fundamentalists and anti-abortion fanatics returns with blissful smiles to the GOP.

Bill Clinton tries to one-up Quayle by attacking Sister Souljah, a woman who can defend herself quite well. White pundits are surprised that a young African-American rapper is intelligent, articulate, and willing to do battle ("souljah," you understand, means "soldier"). For those who still don't get it, listen to her song, "The Hate that Hate Produced."

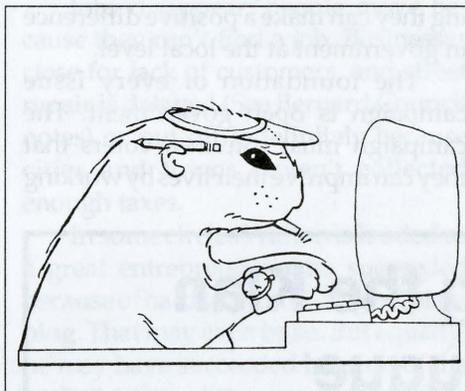
Clinton's advisers are pleased that they've stolen the headlines for a few days. The vestigial left wing of the Democratic Party bemoans the cynical victim-blaming by "the presumptive nominee." Is it any wonder that millions of fed-up voters flock like lemmings to Ross Perot?

May this year's list help us understand America's fear and anger in the post-Verdict summer of '92.

Race: How Blacks & Whites Think & Feel About the American Obsession by Studs Terkel. The master oral historian reveals real people in all their contradictions. Published just before

the Rodney King verdict, Terkel's interviews prefigure the LA rebellion with painful accuracy.

The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children & Yours by Marian Wright Edelman. The Traditional Family Values crowd could learn a lesson from the founder of the Children's Defense Fund. It's a measure of our failure that bookstores shelve this under Black Studies, not Education.



Playing in the Dark: Whiteness & the Literary Imagination by Toni Morrison. America's greatest living novelist analyzes how Melville, Poe, & Hemingway used African-Americans in their fiction, and how they influenced the way generations of writers and readers have thought about race.

Haves Without Have-Nots: Essays for the 21st Century on Democracy &

Socialism by Mortimer Adler. The chief editor of the Encyclopaedia Britannica tackles Bork, world government, the Constitution, and nature-vs.-nurture. Bonus: the Iowa City Public Library's copy includes a right-wing reader's ravings scrawled on the last page.

Deborah, Golda, & Me by Letty Pogrebin. How to be a politically correct Jewish American feminist in the 90s.

Native American Testimony by Peter Nabokov. Indigenous peoples speak for themselves about 500 years of extreme unpleasantness.

A Prairie Populist: Memoirs of Luna Kellie by the University of Iowa Press. Raise less corn & more hell, was the motto of the Farmers' Alliance in the late 1800s. A hundred years later, Kellie—who fought the railroad monopolies, organized Nebraska farmers to form cooperatives, and raised 11 children—is a model of commitment to political change.

Which Side are You On? by Thomas Geoghegan. How a Harvard lawyer fell in love with the class struggle. You might not want your anti-labor friends to read this book (subtitled *Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back*), but don't miss the chapter on the classification of unions by how often they use the word "fuck."

Continued on Page 6

Issue Campaigns Take Root in Johnson County

Once again the most outspoken and most explicitly progressive candidate has won more votes than anyone else in a Johnson County election. You might think the only "surprise" of this election is why Joe Bolkcom's victory is considered a surprise. But despite Johnson County's progressive reputation, our local government is dominated by conservatives.

Why did Bolkcom, and Karen Kubby before him, succeed where others did not? For some, the answer is that they had the backing of the "Kubby Machine." They fear local politics has been taken over by a soulless band of technocrats who manipulate and overwhelm the defenseless electorate through the use of amoral tactics and computer printouts. Local politics has become infected by the cynical tactics and techniques which have disgusted the voters and strangled meaningful national debate.

These concerns are misguided. I believe that once these people take a closer look, they instead will become excited about the future of local politics and local government in Johnson County.

I managed both the Bolkcom and Kubby campaigns and I know first-

hand that both campaigns were driven by the candidates' deep commitment to issues, issues all progressives believe in. Both Joe and Karen are articulate advocates for human services, for the environment, and for opening up government. Regardless of what people say about issues not winning elections, the issue campaigns turned out more supporters than anyone else on Election Day.

What is an issue campaign? A campaign which takes local government seriously. Issue campaigns work hard both to educate voters and to listen to voters. Issue campaigns define what the election is about.

Issue campaigns generate strong support from people who care about issues, people in addition to the candidate's immediate circle of friends and family. Issues attract constituents willing to give time and money to make their community a better place to live. A growing number of Johnson County residents are finding they can make a positive difference in government at the local level.

The foundation of every issue campaign is open government. The campaign must convince voters that they can improve their lives by working

together with neighbors; i.e., by becoming involved in local government. The first step is to vote.

While there is no "Kubby Machine," you could say Karen Kubby's years of hard work are beginning to turn Iowa City into a fertile "community garden" for progressive candidates. She has cultivated higher expectations about what local government should do and about what voters should expect (demand) from local candidates. These raised expectations are in turn reflected in voters' choices.

Just as not every plant will grow in Iowa's climate, so not every candidate will thrive in this community garden. However, issue-oriented, hard working, grassroots campaigners will flourish and their successes will nourish the next generation. The more this garden is worked and enriched by progressive campaigns, electoral and otherwise, the more abundant harvest we will all enjoy.

Regardless of what metaphor you choose, the Bolkcom and Kubby campaigns signal a revitalization of true participatory democracy in Johnson County. We all benefit as a result. ●

—By Rusty Martin

Confronting the Klan in Dubuque



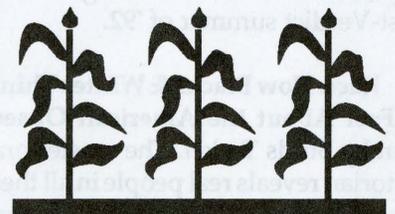
Eyewitness Views:

10:00 PM

July 7, 14, 21, 28

Iowa City Channel 26 (25)

Moderator: G. Sanders



From Martin Luther King to Rodney King—From Selma to Dubuque Civil Rights Marches Backwards

As America prepares to celebrate its day of independence, is there anything left to say about that southern California city where the ideal of freedom was buried in a frenzy of inhumanity and violent disregard for life that seems to have killed all hope of racial harmony? Yes, I'm talking about The City of Devils—Simi Valley, California, site of the Rodney King verdict, favored residence of L.A. police officers, home of both the Ronald Reagan presidential library and twelve blind rats.

You can take the blindfold off of our symbol of justice—she obviously doesn't need one. And give her the face of the juror who said Rodney King was "directing the action." To hear this woman on "Nightline" fumbling her way through an explanation of how she reached her verdict was quite a lesson in the American judicial system. She was in effect instructed to suspend her faculty of reason and sense of morality while letting herself be guided by the precepts "beyond a reasonable doubt" and "with moral certitude"—and may the best lawyer win.

The ideal juror in the American system would be blind, deaf and dumb, in the sense of stupid. With the aid of the Zapruder film, this jury could have been persuaded that John Kennedy committed suicide that day in Dallas. The Simi Valley 12 sent a clear message across the land: white cops can now beat up Blacks on camera as well as off. Law professor Norman Amaker put it another way: "Our lives aren't worth shit." The rebellion in L.A. was predictable, only the magnitude was shocking.

"A riot is the language of the unheard," said Martin Luther King, Jr. You can say what you want about the L.A. uprising, but you can't say it didn't work. In fact, it's obviously the only thing that does work. America only

wakes up to its oldest, saddest crisis when a match is lit under its white ass. The media came running. In our world, if something is not on television it's not happening. Publications as diverse as Sports Illustrated and BusinessWeek set aside space for the inner-city. And, yes, even our What, me care? president showed up in South-Central Los Angeles for photos and platitudes next to the rubble.

Out of great adversity come great leaders. Most impressive so far is Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who represents the South-Central area. She called Bush's address to the nation on the L.A. crisis "his second Gulf War speech," proving that she has no illusions about official white attitudes and what her people are up against. Among white leaders, Sen. Bill Bradley is sounding the most aware and committed to change: "Just as slavery was our original sin, race remains our unresolved dilemma."

Here in Iowa City spontaneous pro-

first speech, because the Klan was riding the white L.A. backlash into Dubuque, to Iowa, the very heart of America and its center of down-to-earth decency—the present governor to the contrary notwithstanding.

In her rousing pre-rally speech, Wright reminded us of our purpose: "If we can't stop them from legally gathering, we sure can make it hard as hell for them to be heard."

Scene of the rally was the gazebo in downtown Washington Square, where the police had erected a barrier about 30 yards away and positioned themselves between the Klan and the protesters. Standing at the barricade next to Iowa City's chief justice warrior Clara Oleson made me wish I had brought a tape recorder instead of a camera. To cool down, she went across the street and joined two elderly local residents on a bench. When they told her they were against both sides, she told them that it was because of them that we had to come to Dubuque. Clara

Justice

"That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise:
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes."

Langston Hughes

tests led to the creation of a group called Anti-Racist Mobilization. A.R.M.'s elected chair is Lynette Wright, by whom nature did the right thing, creating a powerful blend of the two key senses of justice and sanity-saving humor. She would soon have to make her

also let them know in her inimitable way that they were perfect symbols of what's wrong with America: "Old white men sitting on their asses."

The police unwittingly provided another such symbol: the thin blue line "that separates good people from the worst instincts of our society" (Bush)

was standing with its back to the Klan. The department had bought the propaganda of "the kinder, gentler Klan" (Wright). The Grand Wizard now calls himself "national director" and—no doubt tired of hearing "Get a life, cone head!"—wears a business suit (we're drowning in symbols). The local police chief helped spread the fear of violence from "outside groups" and even went so far as to utter the blood-curdling words "street gangs."

Fear of violence led the great majority of anti-Klan Dubuquers to choose as their form of protest a celebration of diversity in Eagle Point Park at the edge of town. No human being should have to hear what the Klan has to say, but those people at Eagle Point should at least have heard the screams of outrage that greeted the unfurling of the huge WHITE PRIDE WORLD WIDE banner. A slaughter of infants could scarcely have produced a greater hue and cry. What the Klan had to say was essentially official Republican policy on race unfiltered through the usual code words like heritage, affirmative action, and family values.

There were no confrontations at the rally, so the media had to make do with a couple of post-rally scuffles to feed its insatiable appetite for violence. This, not the 3,000 people attending the diversity celebration, made the headlines. The front page of the Cedar Rapids Gazette looked like a promo piece for the Klan, with the headline "Violence after rally: 2 Klan supporters beaten by opponents" and a photo of an elderly robed man looking like your average Iowa grandpa at a lodge meeting. It could have shown what all of us there saw—Klan members and supporters giving the Hitler salute. Iowa's media seem to have forgotten the Klan's favorite way of dealing with their enemies, but surely they remember how the Nazis did it.

The right and duty to revolt contained in the Declaration of Independence apparently no longer applies to

American citizens. LIFE magazine's front page headline portrays Blacks and Latinos as foreign invaders: "A Vision of Terror: Scenes from the Siege of L.A." As long as white America keeps calling Black revolt "riots," African-Americans will keep celebrating Juneteenth, marking the abolition of slavery, as their day of Independence. Will Washington respond to this latest wake up call, or will Democrats and Republicans just use it as an excuse to out-law-and-order each other? Will America's people of no color ever take pride and

joy in being part of the most richly diverse nation in the world?

Meanwhile, three men who brutally beat a white truck driver have been apprehended. They are Black, and they were not wearing uniforms or wielding police issue clubs, and they will go to trial and they will be found guilty. Because, you see, their act was caught on video tape . . . ●

—By Jae Retz

The State is Broke!

(so are we)

The sales tax just increased by 25% but the price of The Prairie Progressive hasn't changed in 5 years. If you haven't subscribed in 1992, please send a contribution to keep us from selling out to a Major Corporate Sponsor.

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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Sam Walton's Legacy to Small Towns

Sam Walton, owner of the Wal-Mart Stores, died this week leaving a legacy of billions of dollars to his children, who ranked behind him as the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th richest men in America. The other half of the Walton legacy is less glamorous: bankrupt main street businesses and small town merchants unable to compete with his "power buying" scheme.

Because the super-wealthy are highly admired in the American constellation of values, and monopolies despised more in theory than in actual practice (government legislation or lawsuits), Walton was a hero to a lot of people.

Furthermore, the Dallas'n'Danielle Steele life is glamorized by TV and in movies without ever considering the environmental, social or moral implications of it. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that when 4 or 5 people amass billions, a lot of others go without.

The irony of Sam's life is that people in small towns endorsed his "success" which was much written about in business magazines, and small town people supported his stores to the max. They believed it was good to have lots of cheap goods they could drive to in half an hour and buy. People believe this in spite of the fact that their landfill fees have doubled, and so has the cost of garbage collection.

Amazingly, people all over the Midwest admired Sam and trooped to his stores while they lamented the loss of jobs, places to shop, taxes to fix their streets, sewers and water systems and so much else—unable or unwilling to see the correlations between the two.

The American people made Sam Walton what he was, and they have made their own communities what they are—bankrupt, having to share police (See Farley Council notes: Farley and Epworth are discussing sharing one full-time policeman), and hiring two part-time ones so they won't have to

pay vacation and health benefits. A couple of full-time jobs with benefits have just disappeared from the community!



Jobs disappear; people move because they can't find a job. Businesses close for lack of customers, and street repair is delayed (See Bernard Council notes) or put off indefinitely because cities and towns haven't collected enough taxes.

In some circles Walton is lauded as a great entrepreneur who succeeded because of hard work and diligent planning. That may even be so. But equally, he may have succeeded because of the pathetic, thoughtless personal self-interest of people of small town America.

Sam Walton—may he rest in a place he richly deserves.●

—By Keyron McDermott

Reprinted from The Cascade Interpreter
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Contact:

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Bottom of Old Water Tower Hill
Cascade, IA 52033

REAL-LIFE MEMO

Excerpts from a
National Computer Services
Memo to Employees

Date: March 3, 1992

To: Reading Scorers

From: NCS Reading
Coordinator

- A number of people have been showing up later than 8 AM and demonstrating an interest in leaving earlier than 4:30 PM. It has been pointed out that traffic in the morning is bad and traffic in the afternoon is bad. Bad traffic. Since this problem is not likely to abate without some sort of plan, a plan: leave the house earlier in order to arrive on time.

- Quiet, sporadic conversation is interesting. Sharing one's life story or having a dialogue regarding the soul is ultimately annoying unless it is late at night or early in the morning.

- Personal time off requested is to be for those times when people have legitimate needs. From this point on, any requests for personal time off that are not clearly legitimate will probably require some discussion.

- Illness is understandable and calling in sick is strongly advised in those situations. Calling in sick because you don't feel like being here is not understandable and not really in keeping with the spirit of what I like to call work.

Reading List, continued from page 1

Dishing It Out: Waitresses & Their Unions in the 20th Century by Sue Cobble. If you've ever waited on tables or tended bar, you'll be amazed to learn that waitresses once had a powerful union.

Fire on the Prairie by Gary Rivlin. A Chicago journalist recaptures the roots, rivals, and rise of Harold Washington, against the backdrop of a city that was, in Lenny Bruce's words, so corrupt it's thrilling. Rivlin is no fan of Jesse Jackson, but some of the book's most electrifying scenes depict the Saturday morning standing-room-only speeches delivered by the Reverend at the old synagogue that served as headquarters for Operation Push.

Racism & Justice: The Case for Affirmative Action by Gertrude Ezorsky. Read this and you'll never lose another argument on "quotas."

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE
112 S. DODGE
IOWA CITY, IA 52240



Try these when you need a break from race and class:

Letters to Sartre by Simone de Beauvoir. "The everyday dust of life" is imbued with intensity in this recently discovered chronicle of love and lust between the world champions of existentialism.

Motoring with Mohammed by Eric Hansen. Manic journey across the landscape of Yemen, which might as well be Mars, through the eyes of a wide-eyed but perceptive American rich kid.

City of Boys by Beth Nugent. More postmodernism, this time from a lesbian perspective, by the best short story writer out of Iowa City since Flannery O'Connor.

Pomona Queen by Ken Nunn. Burned-out vacuum-cleaner salesman visits a biker wake for his brother—and is not permitted to leave. Brings *Easy*

Rider up to date.

Rads: A True Story of the End of the Sixties by Tom Bates. If you can remember the 60s, you didn't really live them.●

Research Assistant:
Paul "Prairie Mouse" Ingram.