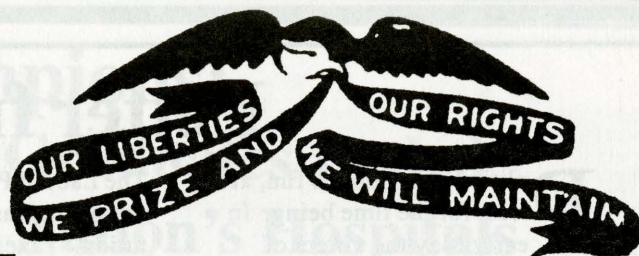


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



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Spring 2000

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Both Sides Now? Students Say No

The "Fair" Labor Association was formed in the wake of the Kathie Lee Gifford scandal and was originally backed by labor, interfaith, and human rights groups.

However, virtually all these groups left the FLA as they realized it could not be effective in monitoring sweatshops. UNITE, a garment workers' union, released a statement after its withdrawal which states that "such codes [as the one drafted by the FLA]... are a step backward when they undercut the demands and actions of the anti-sweatshop movement and allow corporations to carry on business as usual."

Three years after its formation, the FLA has yet to prove them wrong. They have yet to monitor a single factory. In spite of this, the University of Iowa remains a member.

Why are all these groups against the FLA?

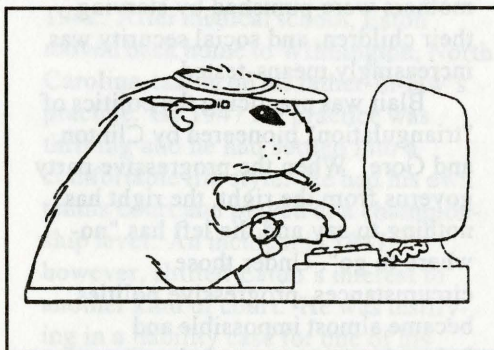
- The FLA has a weak code. It does not guarantee the right of workers to organize or the right to a living wage, and it has weak provisions for women's rights.

- The FLA does not mandate independent monitoring. It allows each company to choose and pay its own inspectors, which ensures a biased report. Also, each factory to be inspected is warned ahead of time, allowing it time to hide abuses.

- The FLA does not have full public disclosure of locations or

conditions, making it impossible to mobilize public pressure to stop sweatshop abuses.

- The FLA can't be reformed by universities. On a board of thirteen, only one person is a university representative. Also, of the four non-profits on the board, three are partially funded



by sweatshop-using companies, leading to an even more biased panel.

Why can't the FLA work with the Worker Rights Consortium to benefit everyone?

- Founding FLA member Nike has said it won't work with the WRC because they "don't agree with [the WRC's] founding principles."

- If two conflicting reports on the same factory are done, the University can, and probably will, defer to the "nicer" and less critical FLA report to avoid bad PR. Additionally, because of the university's financial contracts with Nike and Reebok, who are on the FLA,

it makes them biased toward supporting the FLA's findings as opposed to those of the WRC.

- Being in the FLA lends legitimacy to an organization that won't work, which undercuts the work that could be done by the WRC.

- The University can't be on both sides of the issue, supporting companies who profit from sweatshop labor (FLA) and garment workers who want to end it (WRC).

Can the FLA work if it has more time? (Short Answer: NO)

- The FLA has been around three years and has yet to do any monitoring.

- Privatized monitoring has had an 8-year test in the US and all the

evidence shows that this approach does not work. It has "failed to significantly clean up the industry," according to a recent Working USA article. "Finding violations means added expenses in back wages owed and lost time if the work is removed from a violating shop." This leads them to either monitor factories ineffectively or to lie about found labor violations. ❧

—Kristen Gast and
Doug Anderson

Students Against Sweatshops,
www.uiowa.edu/~uisas/index.htm

Letter from London

Politics in London is fun, at least for the time being. In early May the voters of London will elect their first-ever directly elected mayor.

British voters are used to having decisions made for them by a remote elite, subject only to a parliamentary election every five years or so. The novelty of direct, candidate-centered electioneering, which now generates only cynicism in America, looks colorful in London. Everyone is predicting a very large turnout.

Of course electoral politics is no fun unless candidates do a good job at running campaigns, and Londoners are being treated to a campaign by a true electoral showman, Ken Livingstone. One of Livingstone's attractions is the hatred he stirs up among the leaders of his own political party, the Labour Party. Led by the Nixon-like Prime Minister Tony Blair, Labour has become thoroughly unpopular. By voting for Livingstone for mayor, voters have a chance to give the government a bloody nose.

Blair's unpopularity with the public is very recent. In 1997 Labour was elected to general rejoicing, defeating a Conservative Party that had led the nation for eighteen years. The public was thoroughly sick of hearing that markets would solve all problems, that the disasters of capitalism were their own fault, and that public employees were responsible for all the nation's ills.

Not being readers of the *Prairie Progressive*, the people of Britain did not realize that the Labour Party (like the Democratic Party) had been taken over by political leaders who accepted the logic of global capitalism, regarded labor unions as backward-looking special interest groups, and treated popular public services (like public schools and the National Health Service) as drains on the productive sectors of the economy.

Like Clinton, Blair duly began to govern like the conservative he was.

The Labour Party's commitment to socialism was stripped from its constitution. Taxes were kept down on the wealthy. The quality of public schools, the health service, and the universities declined in relationship to the private sector. Labour Party political leaders lectured public employees for their failings, and harassed them with efficiency experts.

With nowhere to go, labor union leaders were placated with "access" to a government that promoted entrepreneurship, tolerated large-scale layoffs in manufacturing, lowered taxes on corporations, preached the virtues of globalization, and denounced the Seattle protesters as dangerous anarchists. Prisons and the military grew, while civil liberties were assaulted by the government. Welfare mothers were punished by starving their children, and social security was increasingly means-tested.

Blair was practicing the politics of "triangulation" pioneered by Clinton and Gore. When the progressive party governs from the right, the right has nothing to say and the left has "nowhere to go". Under those circumstances, progressive politics became almost impossible and Labour's core supporters became demoralized. Having abandoned Labour principles in order to gain popularity, the Labour government became increasingly unpopular for having abandoned its principles. With no serious political party to the left of Labour, however, there was no way to oppose Labour's right wing policies. Progressives could only resort to symbolism.

When Labour's Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott showed up at Britain's annual music awards dinner, one of the members the anarchist rock band Chumbawumba jumped up on his table, poured a pitcher of water on his head, and told him: "That's what you get for being a scab!"

Then along came Ken Livingstone, an unrepentant left-wing socialist who

represents everything about the Labour Party that Blair hates. Livingstone first sought the Labour Party nomination for mayor, promising to support the party nominee. Prime Minister Blair rigged the selection process in order to nominate a party hack. Livingstone then broke his promise, and launched a campaign for mayor as an independent. His popularity soared.

He promised to withdraw all city contracts from any homophobic contractor, and praised the demonstrators in Seattle. His popularity soared again.

He endorsed the Irish Republican Army, and denounced fox-hunting. His poll ratings shot up. Breaking all the rules that got Labour elected nationally, he appears to voters as a breath of fresh air in a country that is being governed by control freaks who have abandoned their party's traditional values.

Perhaps Livingstone will go too far. He recently claimed that the policies of the International Monetary Fund had killed more people than Hitler. At the heart of Livingstone's appeal, however, is his defense of institutions that serve public rather than private interests.

Voters of all parties find it refreshing to hear a prospective government official say that public transportation, public education, and public health are good things for everyone. His promise of a campaign to save London's subway from privatization by the Labour government has struck a chord with every kind of voter. In a country where both major parties serve the interests of private investors first, large portions of the electorate are hungry for a politician who believes that government can serve the people, and make life better for the average citizen. If only there were a Ken Livingstone anywhere in the Democratic Party. ✂

— Jeff Cox

The Champions:

How Three Michigan Graduates Ended Segregated Care in the Nation's Hospitals

Among many remarkable medical achievements in the last fifty years is the quiet, largely unheralded struggle that ended racial segregation of patients and physicians in our nation's hospitals. A half-dozen black physicians overturned a powerful legacy to change the way medicine is practiced and hospital care is organized.

Three of these physicians were graduates of the University of Michigan Medical School. One was an academic physician with a keen understanding of Beltway politics. The second was a physician and community leader in a rigidly segregated southern community. The third was an activist who organized northern liberal support for the cause.

Paul Cornely graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1931, a time when internships were not open to blacks at the University of Michigan Hospital. To continue his training, he chose Lincoln Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, from the small group of black hospitals that offered internships. Later, frustrated again in finding a surgical residency that would accept a black physician, Cornely instead returned to the University of Michigan to earn a doctorate in public health. With his doctorate, he took a faculty position at Howard University and began a career documenting and trying to eliminate racial disparities in health. He teamed up with Howard colleague and anatomy professor W. Montague Cobb in a protracted legal and political campaign against hospital segregation.

The 1946 Hill-Burton legislation allowed federal funds be used to build hospitals on a "separate but equal" basis, but the 1954 Brown decision appeared to overturn it. Cornely

worked with Cobb to put on a series of national conferences to publicize segregated conditions and advocate for ending them. Fearing backlash, neither Howard University nor the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare would provide space for the conferences. They were held instead at a local church. The conferences led to court challenges and eventually to federal legislation, Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prohibiting the use of federal funds to any program or organization that discriminated on the basis of race.

A critical part of this legal struggle involved Hubert Eaton, who graduated from the U of M Medical School in June 1942. After medical school, Eaton moved back home to Wilmington, North Carolina, taking on his father-in-law's practice. By 1947 the practice was thriving and he had settled into a comfortable life style. He had his own tennis court and played at a championship level. An incident in 1947, however, shifted Eaton's interest to another kind of court. He was testifying in a liability case for one of his patients who had been injured in an accident. As he was about to put his hand on the court Bible to be sworn in, the clerk quickly switched the Bible to a beat-up one marked "Colored" in dirty adhesive tape. It was Eaton's wake up call.

Wilmington had two hospitals. One was a small substandard facility for blacks. The other, James Walker Memorial, maintained about 25 beds for black patients in a ward that had two toilets and was completely separate from the main whites-only hospital building. To reach the delivery room, operating room, or diagnostic facilities, the black patient had to be wheeled or walked thirty yards in the open.

Walker Memorial didn't just deny black physician applications for privileges. It actually had bylaws that restricted staff privileges to white physicians. Yet Walker Memorial paid no taxes and had public dollars for support. In 1954 Eaton, along with several other black physicians, applied for privileges. As expected they were denied. In March 1956 Eaton filed a suit in U.S. Federal District Court, the first of its kind in the nation. Eaton became a test case for the hospital desegregation efforts supported by Cornely and his Howard colleagues. It would take Eaton until April 1964, more than eight years, to win a victory in the Federal Appeals Court. The case brought attention to the use of public funds in hospitals that discriminated and helped assure the passage of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

John Holloman, Jr, brought in the final fruits of the struggle begun by Cornely and Eaton. Holloman graduated from Michigan the year after Eaton. He practiced in New York, eventually becoming an active member of the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR). In 1963 the group shocked the medical establishment by picketing American Medical Association meetings for failing to bar medical societies that refused to accept black physicians as members.

In 1965 Holloman assumed the Presidency of MCHR. In the summer of 1965, in a hastily organized effort, the organization sent volunteer civil rights inspectors into southern hospitals. The group was outraged by federal inaction in the face of the clear violations they found in their inspections. In December of 1965 a protest demon-

*The Champions,
Continued on Page 6*

Oscar Doesn't Live Here Anymore

And furthermore, Oscar could use a good dose of campaign finance reform.

It all began last year. As much as I love Shakespeare and hate war, I was not happy to see *Shakespeare in Love* beat out *Saving Private Ryan* for Best Picture. Not because of the quality of the movies, but because of the massive shameless ambushing of DreamWorks' *Private Ryan* by Miramax's \$15 million-plus ad campaign for Shakespeare. In a contest between schlock and dollars as Oscar's guiding principle, I would choose schlock every time.

The good thing about this year's Oscars is that even before the nominations were announced we got to see all the nominees for Best Picture right here in Iowa City. That we didn't get to see several nominees in other categories reveals serious shortcomings of both Hollywood and Iowa City.

Iowa City likes to call itself the "Athens of the Midwest," but as a town that infinitely prefers wrestling to movies, it is closer to Sparta than Athens. Its last standing downtown movie house is in danger of becoming another bar, which our downtown needs like L.A. needs another bad cop. Other small cities have different priorities. In Helena, Montana, the old city jail was converted into an alternative movie theater, as was a former funeral home in Eugene, Oregon. These were life-affirming transformations. Iowa City has gone off in the other direction, turning movie theaters into first a Burger King, then a bank, and now possibly a bar.

Any nominated movies that make it here are pretty mainstream (read profitable). Central States, the monopoly distributor in our area, keeps its eye on the golden bottom line, never on the silver screen. It didn't even see fit to bring Woody Allen's latest movie to this university town. And not even Iowa's fabled provincial chauvinism could induce Central States to bring

David Lynch's *The Straight Story*, a movie about an IOWAN and filmed in IOWA, to Iowa City.

The movies that did not play here attest to the on-going plight of women actors in Hollywood. Of the ten male nominees for leading and supporting actor, only two didn't make it to a local screen. But we got cheated out of seeing no less than half of the women's performances. Yes, the best roles in the mainstream money makers still overwhelmingly carry a For Men Only label. Is it only coincidence that the last two Best Actress winners, Hilary Swank (totally) and Gwyneth Paltrow (partially), played as males?

African-Americans are faring even worse than women. This is the second time the good old white boys of the Academy have stiffed Denzel Washington for Best Actor. A late campaign to discredit *Hurricane* for playing loose with the facts hurt the early front runner Washington. Since when is Hollywood a stickler for keeping it real? There can be no greater stretch than the Queen of Cute, \$20 mill-per-pic Julia Roberts playing Erin Brockovich, a mother of three on the edge of poverty, whose first two husbands left her. Somehow in America, events just seem to conspire against African-Americans who rise to the top in their field. Let's call it by its real name: institutional racism.

Is it an omen that the first Oscar ceremony of the new millennium would turn out to be a celebration of dysfunctionality? The big story this time was the utter mediocrity of the Best Picture field (only *American Beauty* and *The Insider* deserved nomination). So the one against-the-stream entry, DreamWorks' *American Beauty*, ran away with the most statuettes. DreamWorks would not be outspent a second time in the pre-Oscar publicity campaign: in a groundbreaking venture, DreamWorks

even linked up with Amazon.com to promote *American Beauty* on the Internet.

Hate it or love it, *American Beauty* is a stinging slap in the face of all the family value zealots trying to take over the country. While watching it I couldn't help thinking of Kubrick kissing the hem of the censor's garment just to get *Lolita* on the screen. It is impossible to imagine James Mason's Humbert Humbert in the Academy insider role Kevin Spacey played on Oscar night. There he was, the pot-smoking, monkey-spanking, cheerleader-chasing Lester Burnham all over the Shrine Auditorium: in the audience, in Billy Crystal's opening video, back stage, center stage presenting an Oscar, then finally receiving one himself. While Denzel Washington was confined to his seat the whole evening.

No knock on Spacey, who is arguably America's finest, non-ethnic male actor. But the Academy has a history of rewarding those who are overdue, as it did the first time it passed over Washington for Al Pacino in the insipid *Scent of a Woman*. Washington is long overdue. His two scenes at the visitor's window in the prison--those alone should have won it for him. What more does the Academy want from him?

American Beauty won five Oscars. Close behind was *The Matrix* with four, all in the technical categories. The trend in Hollywood to shift the flow of dollars from actors to special effects, animation and publicity is now officially an avalanche. How long before we won't care if Oscar nominees come to Iowa City or not? ❧

—Jae Retz



CALENDAR

Supervisors: Tom Carsner, Carol Thompson, and Kathy Fitzmaurice

July 1, 1970

New York legalizes abortion

July 17, 1955

Disneyland opens in Anaheim, CA

July 26, 1990

Americans with Disabilities Act signed

July 28, 1965

LBJ announces doubling of the draft and number of US troops in Vietnam

August 2, 1990

Iraq invades Kuwait

August 14, 1935

Social Security Act signed

August 25, 1925

A. Philip Randolph organizes Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

August 28, 1955

Emmett Till lynched in Mississippi

May 1

May Day Celebration at noon in the Pedestrian Mall, downtown Iowa City, sponsored by AFT Local 716

May 4, 1970

National Guardsmen kill four Kent State students at anti-war protest

May 9, 1960

FDA approves birth control pill

May 13

Iowa Civil Liberties Annual Dinner, 7:00 PM, Iowa Memorial Union, Iowa City. More info: 515-243-3988

May 14, 1970

Police kill two students at Jackson State

June 6

Primary Election. Prairie Progressive Endorsements for Johnson County Board of

Thank You!

... to our loyal Prairie Progressive readers for contributing \$849.00, 5000 yen, and 70 rupees since December of 1999.

"Look around, before we leave, at the young people who are with us..."

When you look in their eyes, you can almost see, if you look close enough, see yourself...And that reflection really is you. It's what we looked like and who we were 20 years ago, or 30 years ago, or 40 years ago. We got here because someone looked in our eyes.

"We didn't understand why they were looking at us so closely like that. We didn't understand why tears were welling up in their eyes as they looked at us, but they were looking at us and seeing themselves. And we must challenge ourselves to do that now with young people, because once you do that you can never look away again. Never look away."

—Kweisi Mfume,
February 2000

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The Champions,
Continued from Page 3

stration led by Holloman was held in the office of John Gardner, Secretary of the Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. The pressure worked. The Title VI certification effort for Medicare, scheduled to go into effect in July of 1966, became deadly serious, not another paper compliance charade. Holloman served as a consultant to the Office of Equal Health Opportunity to assure that hospitals receiving Medicare funds did not have segregated accommodations and did not discriminate against black physicians.

Self-interest has an amazing way of changing attitudes. In this case, the self-interest came in the form of Medicare funding for hospitals. The transformation was remarkable. Almost 1,000 hospitals quietly and uneventfully ended segregated accommodations and discriminatory

medical privileges. It was almost as if, as one black physician observed, "it had always been this way."

But it had certainly not always been that way. The struggles of three University of Michigan Medical School alumni, working as a team, lead to a remarkable victory in the ongoing battle to achieve racial equity in healthcare. They had each earned the title of Champion. ✕

—David Barton Smith is a professor in the Healthcare Management Program at Temple University, and the author of **Health Care Divided: Race and Healing a Nation**, University of Michigan Press 1999. This article is adapted from an article scheduled for publication in the journal *Medicine at Michigan*.

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

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**When an elephant
stands still, it is more
bothersome for the
person underfoot than
for the rider on the top.**
—Indian Proverb

As we go to press, the Iowa Legislature had yet to complete its business, including several major budget bills. The inept Republican 'leadership' wasted countless hours trying to nullify the Governor's Executive Order #7, force women to wait an extra 24 hours before having an abortion, hang the 10 Commandments in the Senate chambers, and make drug paraphernalia such as pop cans illegal.

Fortunately, some Iowa governmental bodies functioned more rationally. The Prairie Progressive salutes the Davenport City Council and the Decorah School Board for recently adding sexual orientation to their civil rights ordinances. ✕