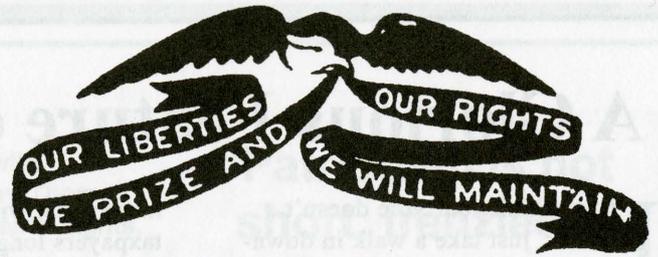


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



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September 2004

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Annual Reading List

The *Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*, Mike Rose

What your cab driver knows that you don't. A must for Labor Day week-end.

Random Family,

Adrian Nicole LeBlanc

LeBlanc took 12 years to live with a family in the Bronx and write a book about its struggles with poverty. No happy ending, no 'closure' – just a genuine encounter with real people in their full humanity.

Jung: A Biography, Deirdre Bair

Following biographies of Beckett and Nin, Bair tackles the genius of Jung in all of his shadowy dimensions. Bair's lively prose even makes Switzerland sound interesting. "They tried to tell us we're too Jung" – Paul Ingram.

Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability,

Paul Longmore

Why do many people with disabilities vehemently oppose assisted suicide? One of America's finest historians explores this and other policy issues from the perspective of the disability rights movement.

No Debate: How the Republican and Democratic Parties Secretly Control the Presidential Debates, George Farah

Remember when the League of Women Voters sponsored the



presidential debates? Since 1988 they've been run by the Commission on Presidential Debates, whose main goal is to preserve the two-party system. Learn how the commission arbitrarily decides which candidates will participate, and how the candidates themselves control who questions them.

America (The Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction, Jon Stewart and the staff of "The Daily Show"

Stewart provides a public service unmatched on television: he teaches people how to watch the news. The initial press run for what is touted as

an 'elaborately graphic' book has tripled due to eager bookseller demand. Funnier than Howard Zinn and almost as educational.

The Loyalty Oath Issue in Iowa, 1951, Arnold Rogow, American Political Science Review

An astonishing essay by a Stanford professor depicting the Iowa Senate's rejection of a loyalty oath, one that was far less stringent than those approved in almost half the states during the Red Scare.

Truth and Beauty, Ann Patchett

Sex, drugs, friendship, love, despair, art, betrayal, and redemption. Just another day in Iowa City.

Splendid Deception, Hugh Gallagher

Gallagher was a scholar and activist who crafted legislative precursors to the Americans with Disabilities Act back in the sixties. He died this summer, 20 years after writing a clear-eyed biography of FDR that will change the way you look at Roosevelt, the social attitudes of the time that compelled him to live a secret life, and the role of the press in colluding with him.

*Prairie Dog's Reading List,
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A Glorious Feature of American Democracy

If you think your vote doesn't matter, just take a walk in downtown Iowa City and go into the new public library. It is easy to get discouraged with politics, especially in time of war, but this new library is evidence in bricks and mortar that citizen initiative matters in American politics. It is also evidence of the importance of direct voting on matters of public importance.

One of the glorious features of America's democracy, often overlooked by people on the left, is the great variety of opportunities we have to participate directly in public life. I once read that there are 500,000 elected officials in America, an implausible figure, but however many there are, we have many opportunities to shape political life through voting for our representatives. Another admirable feature of American democracy is the opportunity to vote directly on issues of public concern rather than merely depending on our elected officials to do it for us.

Running through American democracy is a strong strain of mistrust of elected officials, expressing itself in state constitutional provisions for direct referenda, recall, and term limits. Iowa is rather grudging in its mistrust of its own citizens compared to our western states, whose ultra-democratic constitutions provided a model for European leftists in the late nineteenth century. The citizens of California have just used their admirable recall procedure to get rid of one of the worst governors in recent memory. We will have to wait several years to get any relief from the relentless, demoralizing budget cuts and corporate give-aways of the Vilsack administration.

We do have local referenda on bond issues, since Iowans' historic trust of elected officials has not extended to allowing local elected officials to decide when to borrow

money that will be repaid by the taxpayers long after the elected officials are out of office. To have a bond issue, though, for something like a new public library, the local elected officials have to ask for it. The permanent conservative majority on the Iowa City City Council opposed a bond issue for a new library throughout the 1990s. They regarded spending money on a free library as a waste of money compared to their own two priorities: (1) adding fifteen new members to the police department and (2) instituting a system of tax give-aways to wealthy corporations and investors under the guise of "economic development." Both of their priorities were expensive, so the library, parks and recreation, the fire department, etc. were starved of staff, and the city attempted push through a highly regressive local option sales tax to fund "economic development" and aggressive policing along with all the other services Iowa City voters expect.

We are fortunate that we had the opportunity to vote on the sales tax, which to the amazement of local community leaders failed twice. The voters actually saw through the overconfident city manager and the overconfident city council majority as they attempted to raise far more money than was needed to build a new library, despite the library board's willingness to run interference for the city in both sales tax votes. After failing twice to shift the tax burden from property-owners to wage earners through a sales tax increase, and refusing once to put a library bond issue on the ballot, the council finally relented on a bond issue vote, certain that it would fail. City Manager Steve Atkins was predicting it would fall short of its needed majority right up to election day, when it received a nearly two-thirds majority vote. Everyone he talked to thought it

was a bad idea, and the city council thought it was a bad idea. How could it pass?

Without the direct election of 2000, we would not have a new library. Direct elections are a corrective to group-think among elected officials, who tend to talk to each other, their staff, economic development officials, and law enforcement personnel and confuse their views with those of the public. At the same time that two-thirds of Iowa City voters were approving a new library, 70% of Iowa City voters were rejecting a bond issue for a massive expansion of jail capacity. The same pattern of out-of-touch elected officials met the same kind of correction from the public. The Sheriff appointed a citizens' committee which unanimously endorsed a new jail. The Mayor of Tiffin predicted that it would get an 85% yes vote. Supporters of the jail were so confident of their case that they hardly campaigned. Every single member of the County Board of Supervisors, and every single candidate for County Board of Supervisors, supported the new jail. How could it get only 30% in Iowa City, and only 35% county-wide?

A great deal of the credit for this outcome, which can be summed up as "education yes, incarceration no," belongs to Carol Deprosse and Caroline Dieterle, the founders and main organizers of Citizens for Alternatives to a New Jail. (Full disclosure: I was treasurer of that organization, but did little of the work).

Progressives are often distrustful of direct elections because they believe that the electorate is conservative; we have bought the propaganda of our opponents. It is of course true that the voters in some circumstances will vote down gay marriage and vote in flag

*American Democracy,
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Iowa City Elementary Students Challenge Abusive Child Labor

Child labor is the global exploitation of children for economic benefits. Most of the world's 246 million child laborers do not go to school, girls representing the majority of these marginalized children. Child Labor touches our lives in Iowa City every day, even if we are not aware of it. Take a look at the label on the shirt you are wearing right now. Where was it made? If it was manufactured in Asia, Africa, South or Central America, or even certain parts of Eastern Europe, it may bear the fingerprints of child laborers. As you can see, child labor is all around us—even in Iowa City—in the clothes we wear, in the houses we live in, even in the food we eat. If it is imported, the stuff we buy might be made by child labor.

After hearing a Labor Day presentation by Chivy Sok, a Khmer Rouge survivor who worked as a child laborer in Cambodia, a small group of Lucas Elementary 6th graders decided to organize a club. It wasn't long before our club ballooned to 25 6th grade members. We met weekly after-school (and continue to meet in the summer) to create political, education and outreach strategies to end child labor. We named our group C.H.I.L.D. (Children Helping Innocent Laborers Democratically), and we completely dedicate ourselves to stopping child labor. C.H.I.L.D. has received donations from several local entrepreneurs and businesses including but not limited to Thai Flavors and Staples. In our meetings, we devise strategies to raise awareness among politicians, business owners, other students and citizen consumers in Iowa City about child labor. Organized into four committees, C.H.I.L.D. addresses a variety of strategies to try to end child labor

This committee raises awareness for the average consumer about the issue of child labor. You may find book marks at local book stores made by this committee. These educational bookmarks hope to raise awareness about child labor, and provide strategies for citizens to combat this affliction. Staples donated the cardstock paper for 4,000 bookmarks! The education committee recruits students and family members to child labor documentaries in local theaters and at home parties. Members of the education committee have delivered presentations to community groups in Iowa City to raise awareness about the atrocities of child labor. They have also participated on Public Access Television panels to discuss child labor. On July 26-27, several C.H.I.L.D. members delivered presentations at a Child Labor conference for educators.

The political committee communicates with elected officials to raise awareness about child labor and enroll them to champion this important issue. Last month Mayor Lehman proclaimed June the Month of C.H.I.L.D., and allowed CHILD students to outfit city vehicles with purple ribbons, (the C.H.I.L.D. symbol for solidarity with child laborers around the world.) Members of the C.H.I.L.D. political committee attend legislative forums in Johnson County, and ask state elected officials about measures the state can take to curb child labor. We are recommending procurement policies that give preference to products made in the USA which almost guarantees a big market for child labor-free merchandise. Think about it...[the state spends a LOT of money!

C.H.I.L.D. met with Ed Fallon, a state representative who is considering a run for governor. We asked Representative Fallon to sponsor legislation

calling for child labor free buying power policy in the state legislature... and he agreed!! Our next step is to prepare a position paper for him. The political committee also sent child labor surveys to U.S. presidential candidates.

Our Outreach Committee reaches out to spread C.H.I.L.D.'s message wide and far. We are disseminating the child labor bookmarks to bookstores, libraries and schools in the community. They attach purple ribbons to the bookmark, which will be tied to car antennas to spread the C.H.I.L.D. message. C.H.I.L.D. outreach members are also preparing a kit for other schools to emulate the efforts they are making at Lucas. This box will include educational materials (books, publications, web sites, lesson plans, videos, bookmarks, etc.) as well as their meeting minutes and agendas, and other critical organizational resources.

The fundraising committee tries to raise money too help pay for the expenses of our group. They raise money through bake-sales, and Thai Flavors Community Night fundraisers. Several individuals have donated money too.

What can you do about child labor in Iowa City? C.H.I.L.D. students have prepared a guidance sheet for Iowa Citizens to take action. Contact: spencer_lundquist@yahoo.com or send a SASE to Luan Heywood 1207 Tyler Ct. Iowa City, IA 52240 if you would like a copy. ✨

—Luan Heywood, Becca Fulton, and Mrs. Meggitt, their 6th grade teacher.

Labor Day Greetings

Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

**The Iowa City Federation of Labor
participates in community service, labor
history commemoration, labor movement
advocacy, and political action.**

**“An Injury to One
is an Injury to All.”**

**American Federation of Teachers
Local 716, AFL-CIO**

A Union for Community Activists



Aug. 18, 1959

"What'd I Say (Part 1)" by Ray Charles reached #6 on the pop singles chart

Sept. 10-11

Iowa Environmental Council Conference, Hotel Fort Des Moines, Des Moines

Sept. 11

National Security & the New Arms Race, 9:00-4:30, Botanical Center, Des Moines

Sept. 18

Immigrant Rights Network State Meeting, 9:30-4:30, 601 Grand, Des Moines

Sept. 27, 1954

US Senate Committee finally called for censure of Joe McCarthy

Oct. 9

Johnson Co. Dems Fall BBQ, 4-H Fairgrounds, Iowa City

Oct. 15

What's the Matter with Kansas? Reading by Thomas Frank, 6:00 PM, Prairie Lights, Iowa City

Oct. 22

Last day to register to vote

Oct. 23

Annual NAACP Banquet, Marriott Hotel, Des Moines

Oct. 29-30

Iowa Latino Conference, State Historical Building, Des Moines

Nov. 2

Last day to vote

Nov. 15

Iowa's Mosaic/Diversity Conference, 8:30-4:30, Scheman Center, Ames

"Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

— *Adlai Stevenson*

"Conceit, arrogance, and egotism are the essentials of patriotism."

— *Emma Goldman,*
1917

"My version of patriotism is simple: When the powerful no longer act responsibly, then it is our responsibility to take the power away from them."

— *Barbara Ehrenreich,*
2004

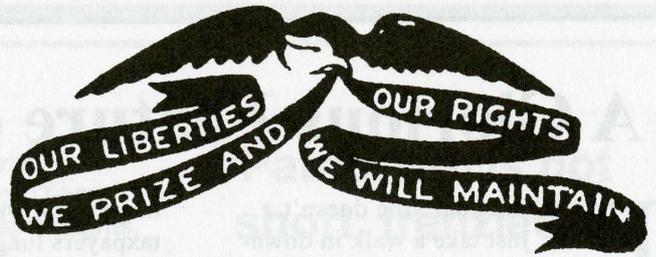
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- \$ _____ 2004 sustaining fund gift
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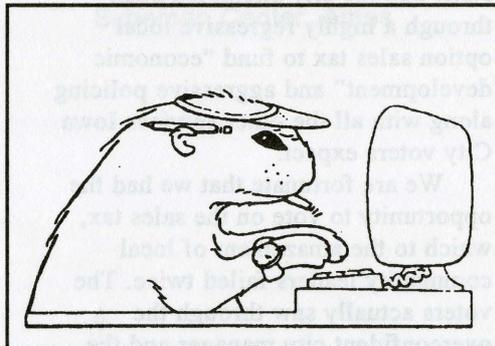
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