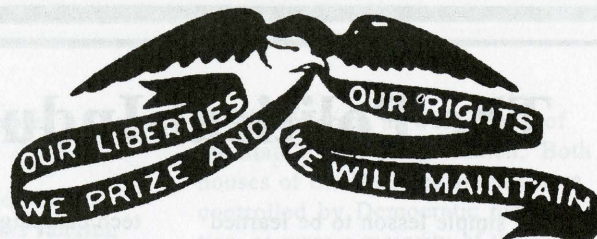


# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



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Spring 2005

*A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT*

## Prairie Dog on Meth

**M**ethamphetamine is a Bad Drug. It can destroy lives, families, young and old, much like alcohol. But even a Very Bad Drug doesn't justify hypocritical and ineffective responses to its dangers.

Remember what a Bad Drug crack was? The thousands of 'crack babies' we were told to expect never materialized. How about Ecstasy? The rush to criminalize a promising anti-depressant resulted primarily in shutting down kids' dance clubs; it's been all but forgotten by Iowans who have found a new drug du jour. Stirring up hysteria and solemnly clucking tongues are not effective responses to public health problems.

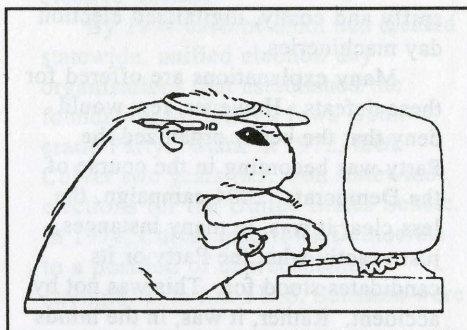
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Enhancing penalties for meth or other Bad Drugs has never decreased usage and never will. Making it harder for law-abiding citizens to buy 'meth ingredients' won't help, either, any more than banning the sale of rolling papers or other 'paraphernalia' prevents people from smoking pot.

Such laws may even increase crime. Shortly after the Iowa Senate

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Iowa legislators and county officials, in their fever to near-criminalize pseudoephedrine, are in essence confessing that the harsh



criminal penalties they enacted for meth have failed. When will they acknowledge that treatment and public education are the only sensible weapons against Bad Drugs, as has been proven beyond a doubt with nicotine and to some extent with alcohol?

The latest over-reaction is a bill proposed by Representative Mary Mascher that expands the definition of 'possession' of drugs to include 'proximity to the object or substance' and 'access to the area where it is found.' Proximity and access are traditionally considered to be 'constructive' possession, requiring additional evidence in court. The proposed legislation would make

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In other words, if your teen-age son or daughter is in a car full of friends, and a police officer finds a joint in the glovebox, every kid in the car can conceivably be convicted of 'constructive possession.' If four college students share an apartment, and drugs are found in a common area like the kitchen, all four can be convicted of 'constructive possession.'

A man is arrested for 'actual possession' of drugs. His wife does not possess any drugs but might be aware of them in the house, might be afraid to do anything about it, might fear domestic violence is she does. This bill makes it easier to arrest and convict her for 'constructive possession.'

Ironically, Democrats trying to prove their 'moral values' with draconian 'war on drugs' bills have allowed Republican Chris Rants to sound rational for the first time in his career. Rants has sanely called for restraint in the rush to criminalize cold meds and allergy pills in the name of fighting meth.

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*Prairie Dog,  
Continued on Page 6*



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# The Political-Industrial Complex - Part I

The simple lesson to be learned from the November 2004 election is this: progressive and liberal Iowa Democrats must push the Iowa Democratic Party and elected Democratic office holders to provide a new emphasis upon core values, as opposed to focusing on the next wave of purported reforms of campaign machineries.

In that election, Iowa Democrats suffered their first loss of the Presidential race in years, a disappointment suffered in the national spotlight created by our swing state status. The humiliation did not end there.

In that same campaign, the Iowa Democratic Party failed to offer an effective challenge to U.S. Senator Charles Grassley, a one-time fiscally-conservative Republican who has now morphed, without any political repercussions, into a legislative architect of the largest deficits and most wasteful Federal spending in American history. Of the millions of dollars floating around the Hawkeye State in the 2004 campaign cycle, barely a penny could be found by Iowa Democratic Party leaders to support Grassley's hapless, if undaunted, challenger, Art Small, a longtime progressive political officeholder.

Similarly, the Iowa Democratic Party offered Iowa voters no effective alternative to any incumbent GOP congressman when it denied each challenger access to effective political or monetary support. In every case, Iowa's losing Democratic challengers were progressive and articulate, yet each of their respective voices were silenced, not so much by the opposition, but by the abject failure of the Iowa Democratic Party to meaningfully support their candidates.

Embarrassingly, the Iowa Democratic Party gained only a few seats in Iowa's General Assembly, after spending millions of dollars on high-

tech campaign programs that promised to deliver much, much more. The amounts spent per legislative seat gained were remindful of the smelly sums paid in recent years by Republican defense departments to coddled contractors for toilet seats.

When the dust settled after Election Day 2004, it was clear that the Iowa Democratic Party made no appreciable advances at any level of elective office, even in a campaign year characterized by unprecedented expenditures of funds, the ubiquitous presence of paid campaign staffers, and the voluntary efforts of thousands of persons who, in acts of political faith, had silenced themselves from any hint of substantive debate while following commands regurgitated by spiffy and costly, digitalized election day machineries.

Many explanations are offered for these defeats. However, few would deny that the better organized the Party was becoming in the course of the Democrats' 2004 campaign, the less clear it was, in many instances, just exactly what the Party or its candidates stood for. This was not by accident. Rather, it was, in the minds of some, a form of political "intelligent design." It is a design whose very architectural foundation must now be challenged.

The adverse results bitterly surprised many Iowa Democrats. Arguably, the outcome was more disappointing than for any general election since before the rebirth of Iowa's modern Democratic Party, starting in the mid-1950s, when the Polk County Democratic Party faithful, inspired by the no-holds-barred hammer-and-tongs stem-winding rhetoric of people like lawyer Lex Hawkins, grabbed 3 x 5 index cards from their shoebox filing places and went off to find and bring

to the polls persons who had been identified as likely Democratic Party voters—and won.

A commitment to issues, not to fancy, expensive Election Day gadgets, spelled the difference between victory and defeat in that earlier era. Iowa's first generation of progressive, liberal political leaders — Neal Smith, Harold Hughes, Dick Clark and John Culver — never dreamed of ways to spend the sums of money that, in the 2004 election cycle, routinely flushed through the system like Drains through a sluggish sewer pipe.

What that early generation did have, however — and they had it in spades — was something that too few in Democratic Party leadership positions demonstrated in the course of the most recent campaign: an unflinching and unapologetic commitment to progressive, liberal causes.

This correct order of priorities—commitments to core values before the creation of political machineries—was first demonstrated by the 1962 election of Harold E. Hughes to Iowa's governorship. Although uniquely charismatic, the lasting impact of Hughes's rise to power resulted from his unflinching religiously-based commitments to a liberal agenda: attacking concentrations of political and economic power; protecting citizens from predatory economic interests and from those shills who, for a price, are always willing to do their dirty work; easing the plight of the poor and disenfranchised; and opening new opportunities to Iowa's middle class families.

Armed with these basic convictions, Governor Hughes earned Iowans' trust, even amongst those who disagreed with his positions on particular issues. This trust allowed him to usher in the most wide-ranging era of reform that Iowa had seen since

*Political-Industrial Complex,  
Continued on Page 5*



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# A Model for Justice

**R**estorative Justice (RJ) is the name commonly given to a worldwide criminal justice reform movement that is also alive and well in Johnson County. Often contrasted with the largely retributive justice now practiced, RJ is based on tribal practices of native peoples in North America and New Zealand, peacemaking efforts of religious groups like the Quakers and Mennonites, and the vision of ordinary political progressives.

This model of justice seeks to address criminal offenses in terms of actual harm done to victims and their families, along with their needs for healing and restitution, rather than primarily as a legal violation against the state. It also seeks to help offenders take real responsibility for their actions, to make meaningful reparation and to build pro-social lives, rather than just paying a fine or doing time. RJ recognizes that offenders' families are often secondary victims of crime with real concerns to address and contributions to make. The safety needs of the wider community and its obligation to support all of its citizens are also considered essential. Where the real needs of these three groups – victims, offenders and communities – overlap is where justice is likely to be most restorative.

The Johnson County Restorative Justice Task Force, about five years old now, meets in January, May and September. In the interim, work groups focus on the needs of victims, offenders, the wider community, and on restorative justice education. The Task Force includes representatives from government agencies, NGOs, churches and neighborhood associations, as well as interested citizens. Local RJ projects include everything from compiling a directory of resources for crime victims to establishing Circles of Accountability

and Support for offenders “on paper” who need more help than the Dept. of Correctional Services can provide. Family Team Meetings are held for youthful offenders and community safety projects are on-going with several neighborhood centers. A Victims Rights Week is held each spring. All of these projects can use more volunteers, who can work with victims or offenders directly or on behind-the-scenes efforts. Valerie

**“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.”**  
—Fyodor Dostoevsky

Kemp at Correctional Services is the contact (625-2650 or [valerie.kemp@doc.state.ia.us](mailto:valerie.kemp@doc.state.ia.us)).

A recent development on the local RJ scene is the Coalition for Faith and Justice, a network of churches who are working inside area prisons and with offenders in the community. They provide both faith-based ministries and things like the Stories from Dad Project at Oakdale, where inmates read books to their kids on tape and send them home, all free of charge. Churches are also a great resource for one-to-one mentors and Circle members for offenders, as well as for job contacts and transitional housing. The Faith and Justice Coalition will co-sponsor a conference called “Each One Reach One” with the Dept. of Correctional Services on April 6<sup>th</sup> in hopes of getting more churches

involved. The contact is Bruce Kittle at 319-398-3907 or [bruce.kittle@doc.state.ia.us](mailto:bruce.kittle@doc.state.ia.us).

The Alternatives to Violence Project offers workshops to inmates (co-led by them) on conflict resolution, community building, and non-violence. In other areas of the world AVP also works in schools and the community, which we hope will happen here in time. People interested in AVP can contact me at 319-321-7920 or [dwhiston@mchsi.com](mailto:dwhiston@mchsi.com).

Another group that works at least tangentially on RJ practices is the Johnson County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC), an off-shoot of the Jail Task Force of a few years back. The CJCC is working with several agencies to set up programs to serve mentally ill and/or substance abusing offenders that will include crisis intervention and intensive case management, hopefully providing a realistic alternative to jail in some cases. Sheriff Lonny Pulkrabek is committed to making greater use of programs like GSI monitoring and work release, all of which tend to help offenders stay connected to the community. The CJCC continues to monitor jail facility needs and develop plans for the future based as much a commitment to restorative programming as to the number of inmates. While the CJCC is appointed by the Board of Supervisors, its meetings are open to the public and community members regularly serve on sub-committees. Supervisor Pat Harney is the chair and can be reached at 356-6000 or [pharney@co.johnson.ia.us](mailto:pharney@co.johnson.ia.us).

Restorative Justice work is a great way to renew one's hope for a more just society. ✕

—Dorothy Whiston is a member of  
Soul Friends Ecumenical Ministry  
in Iowa City



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# Musings of the Holy Land

**A**t-Tuwani is a 1000 year old Palestinian village in the hills south of Hebron. It is a microcosm of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis. The Israeli settlement of Havot Ma'on sits above the village on the hilltop, in violation of international law. On the next hilltop is a settlement outpost where settlers have brought mobile homes in violation of even Israeli law. Children from a neighboring village must pass between the settlement and the outpost to attend school in At-Tuwani. For years, the children had been verbally and physically harassed till only five children remained walking to school each day. These children would not give up. At last, in October of 2004, villagers beseeched Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and Italian peace group Operation Dove (OD) to intervene. And they began to escort the children to school. Weeks after the accompaniment project began, the peacemakers were attacked by settlers and hospitalized. Because now internationals were being attacked and injured, the Israeli government finally took action. Their solution was to declare the route a closed military zone and allowed only an army military escort to follow the children. The settlers continue to attack internationals who watch the procession from the hilltops, but now when the settlers appear, the soldiers put the children in their jeeps and drive them to safety. There are currently fifteen children walking to school in At-Tuwani.

The closest medical clinic to this tiny village is in a neighboring village called Yatta. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has closed the Palestinian road to Yatta by using debris as a roadblock. Even though a beautifully paved road passes close to Tuwani,

villagers are not allowed to use the Israeli road. Technically, they are not even supposed to cross the road. So, the villagers decided to build their own medical clinic. But, they are not allowed to build on their own land without permits. Palestinians are

**“The art of politics is to create forces to be able do in the future what we cannot do now. Those who want to be radical should work to build the social and political forces that will allow them to be.”**

**—Marta Harnecker,  
Chilean political  
scientist**

never given building permits. Therefore, work on the clinic is often stopped and the clinic is often threatened with demolition. Despite all

these obstacles, villagers recently hung doors and placed windows in the almost finished clinic.

Shepherds are also not allowed to graze their goats and sheep on their own pasture land. Settlers have claimed they need to keep natives away from the settlements for their safety. Yet, it is the settlers who have attacked shepherds and their flocks, killed sheep and goats, poisoned Palestinian wells, and kept them off their own lands. Recently, CPT and OD members have begun to accompany shepherds as well.

Farmers in At-Tuwani have suffered the uprooting of hundreds of ancient olive trees that were their livelihood. Once again, the settlers and the IDF say it is in the interest of settler security.

These people want only to be left alone and allowed to live on land that their ancestors have farmed for a thousand years. Tell your legislators that the United States can not go on giving billions of dollars to the Israeli government without conditions. The oppression of the Palestinian people and the occupation of the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza must cease immediately. Let us not waste this very opportune moment in history to do our part to free a noble and ancient people in the name of peace. ✨

*—Pat Minor-Nidey of West Branch  
was in Palestine in December*





March 24, 1980

Archbishop Romero assassinated by right-wing gunmen in El Salvador

April 27-30

White Privilege Conference Central College, Pella. www.whiteprivilegeconference.com

April 28, 1965

US Marines invade Dominican Republic

April 30

Iowa Civil Liberties Union Annual Dinner, Iowa Memorial Union, Iowa City. 515/243-3988

May 1, 1960

USSR shoots down U2 spy plane

Political-Industrial Complex Continued from Page 2

the date of the State's mid- 19th Century founding—reforms ranging from an end to capital punishment to the creation of a new statewide system of high-quality community colleges whose affordable tuition served as a model for the nation.

Similarly, inspired by the earlier successes of organizational political activists in Polk County, but no less committed to a substantive liberal agenda than Hughes himself, people like John Culver and his administrative assistant Dick Clark implemented, starting in 1964 in northeastern Iowa's Second Congressional District, the same kind of "identify Democrats and bring them to the polls" strategies that had proven so successful, but this time used to win a series of Federal elective offices.

By 1974 each of them had created statewide, unified election day organizations that established the foundation for today's Iowa Democratic Party. Clark in 1972, then Culver two years later, won statewide elections for the United States Senate. In 1974, Culver lead Iowa Democrats to a position of unprecedented strength: both Iowa U.S. Senators were

now Democrats, as were 5 of 6 of the State's U.S. Congressmen. Both houses of the Iowa legislature were controlled by Democratic majorities, as were a majority of the courthouses in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

One of those new Congressmen, arising out of traditionally Republican territory in central Iowa, was an unabashed liberal named Tom Harkin. No slouch when it comes to organizational politics, Harkin's high-profile allegiance to the Iowa Democratic Party's liberal and progressive traditions, first as a Congressman, thereafter as a U.S. Senator, best explains why he has also been the most successful elective Democrat in the State's history. ✂ (to be continued)

—Jim Larew is the author of A Party Reborn: The Democratic Party of Iowa, 1950-1974

Jeff Cox's column will return in the next issue

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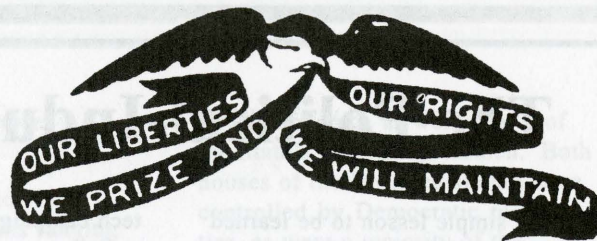
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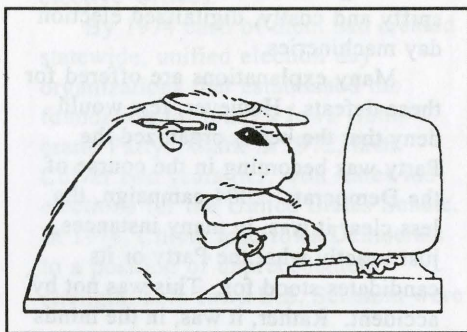
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