



Democratic Socialists of America IOWA NEWSLETTER

JOIN US!

FEBRUARY 1986 LABOR DONATED BY
IOWA CITY DSA LOCAL, KIM JONES, CHAIR

Iowa City DSA's goal is to move politics in Johnson County to the left without moving away entirely from practical, everyday politics. In 1985 we practiced "the left of the possible" with these projects:

1. We sponsored, with the Iowa City Federation of Labor, our annual Labor History Workshop, which always succeeds in attracting some rank & file union members. This year's featured speaker was David Moberg, labor writer for In These Times.

2. We began to introduce some ideas into the proceedings of the Johnson County Democratic Central Committee, the largest and most effective permanent political organization in Johnson County. In September the committee endorsed a DSA inspired resolution in support of making Iowa City a nuclear weapons free zone, the first issues resolution ever passed by the central committee. In November DSA & the University Democrats cooperated to introduce a resolution calling for a tuition freeze at our state universities, and directing the county Democratic chair to convene a meeting between Johnson County's Democratic legislators and the University Democrats in order to discuss the proposal. Future resolutions will all require some specific action by the committee or its officers.

3. In September we sponsored a public forum on "Economic Development in Iowa City: Alternatives to the Chamber of Commerce," featuring DSA member Pete Fisher, chair of the UI's Department of Urban & Regional Planning, and others. DSA is the only political organization in town which has publicly promoted any ideas about economic development to counteract the Reaganite trickle down views of the city sponsored First Capitol Development Corp.

4. DSA members played key roles in Socialist Party member Karen Kubby's campaign for the city council. This campaign demonstrated that socialists can practice serious, appealing electoral politics. Almost all of the diverse elements of Iowa City's left joined in a campaign which set the stage for a successful campaign by Karen in 1987.

5. DSA organized a successful letter to the editor and editorial writing campaign in support of the bus drivers and riders who were fighting right wing proposals by the city staff to make deep and harmful cuts in our bus system. As socialists we believe that access to transportation should be a right guaranteed to all citizens.

In 1986 we will be doing caucus and convention work, candidate recruitment for electoral politics, & public education about civil liberties for working people and economic development. Won't you join us? Or make a contribution to our work? If you would like to be on our mailing list for 1986 please return the enclosed card and envelope.

IOWA DSA NEWSLETTER
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CAUCUS UPDATE Democratic Socialists of America

DSA and the Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL CIO, are co-sponsoring a pre-caucus meeting on Tuesday, February 4th, 7:30, Iowa City Public Library, Room A. Other groups have been invited to help discuss ways to make the left presence most effective at the neighborhood Democratic caucuses, which will be held on Monday night, February 10. Some proposed resolutions may be found on the following pages, but they are presented partly for purposes of discussion and do not cover all issues. It is important for party platforms to be short and practical as well as socialist--no easy task.

If you can't attend the pre-caucus meeting, be sure and: 1) attend your local caucus; 2) tear off the attached platform proposals and have your caucus endorse them and send them on to the county platform committee; 3) put yourself up for election to the county central committee and as a delegate to the county convention. Try to elect people to the platform committee who are sympathetic to these resolutions.

DSA Local Non-Intervention Work

Compiled by Claire Reinelt, Staff Associate

Central American organizing work has taken several forms within DSA. Following are several accounts about what different locals have been doing. In Los Angeles, DSA members played a key role in having Los Angeles declared a sanctuary city. Prior to DSA's involvement, a sanctuary resolution had been drafted for consideration by the City Council. A coalition of groups who work on Central America, including the religious community, the left, the anti-intervention and solidarity movements, began meeting to discuss a strategy for passing the resolution. DSA members had the broadest political experience on the committee. They also had good contacts with City Council members. They played an active role in lobbying City Council members and organizing others to contact their Council people. DSA got the L.A. County Federation of Labor to pass a resolution supporting the sanctuary resolution. The resolution did pass making L.A. a sanctuary city. (If you are interested in initiating this kind of campaign in your area, the DSA office in Berkeley has the L.A. resolution and other background material. San Francisco DSA has been active organizing affinity groups for the Emergency Response Network. Out of a non-violence training for members and supporters of the S.F. DSA Anti-Militarism Committee, a DSA affinity group was formed. The experience of being an affinity group -- meeting together and sharing both politics and personal lives -- was such a positive experience that DSA members constituted an affinity group organizing committee. They called people who had signed the Pledge of Resistance to see if they were interested in being part of an affinity group. The key to a successful affinity group is first finding one person that is willing to play a leadership role. Those groups that have participated together in a non-violent direct action and have shared the intensity of that experience are more likely to stay together. Affinity group organizing is easier when there is an imminent need for action. Lexington DSA has been active in organizing the progressive religious community around Central America. The Lexington Task Force on Latin America has existed since 1981. The Task Force predates the DSOC-NAM merger. The Task Force finds speakers with some authority to speak first on liberation theology and sanctuary to Adult Sunday School classes. By "nosing around" the Task Force finds progressive church activists who are willing to bring together church members to listen to these speakers. Through this process the Task Force has put together a list of over 600 people who are interested in Latin America. The Task Force itself holds monthly meetings at which they get 35-60 people.

They bring in speakers from out of town, usually cosponsoring the event with another group in order to share the expense. The Task Force fundraises by selling buttons, t-shirts, collecting newspapers and aluminum cans, making impassioned pleas at the event and collecting pledges and membership dues. Lexington has recently organized the Watermelon affinity group -- mostly DSA members. They are developing a project to stop the Kentucky National Guard from going to Honduras for training. They're considering both guerilla theatre and direct action. In Chicago, DSA members raised \$3500 for Nicaraguan medical aid. They received a packet of materials from CISPES on how to do door-to-door canvassing. They then met with Chicago CISPES, the Chicago Committee in Support of Nicaragua and others and formed a Chicago Coalition for Medical Aid to Nicaragua. They received endorsements from City Council members and seven organizations. DSA members then sent out a mailing and did phone-banking to their own members and others generating over 50 people who were willing to canvas. Canvassers used a humanitarian rap asking for money for victims of the war. They didn't say which side they were on. Money was funneled through Church World Services. Leaflets and talk were more left after the person had given the money. A pro-Sandinista line was used only if the person was obviously supportive. East Bay DSA members have made significant contributions to several coalitions that organized major marches on anti-intervention and peace issues. The key to coalition work is defining a role that suits the time, energy and resources that members have available. In the recent April 20th Actions, East Bay DSA wanted to play a role, but members' time to volunteer and attend meetings was limited; so, they raised \$800 to hire a part-time staff person (a DSA member) for the coalition. They held a fund-raising party and did a mailing to their members soliciting contributions. (Oftentimes, peripheral members will contribute to a well-defined project.) A staff person created visibility, contacts and a sense that DSA could be counted on to deliver what was needed and asked for. It is important to do well what is asked for even if it is limited, than to take on too much and not come through. In coalition work, it is also important not to have a hidden agenda or turf to protect. Coalitions on Central America and peace issues have been most successful when they have included labor and church activists in addition to the solidarity groups.

IOWA EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY ACT

1. Real increases in funding for teachers' salaries and higher education.
2. The state will provide matching grants for school districts to provide free day care for pre-schoolers.
3. No fees shall be allowed for any purpose in public schools between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm
4. An immediate tuition freeze at Regents' institutions and community colleges
5. The above shall be paid for by:
 - a. all lottery proceeds to education
 - b. complete elimination on personal returns of Federal Tax Deductibility from the Federal Income Tax
 - c. eliminate corporate federal tax deductibility
 - d. repeal entirely the accelerated cost recovery system (a Reagan inspired loophole for multinational companies that has produced no tangible economic growth)
 - e. limit homestead and agricultural property tax exemptions to owner occupiers, with the incorporation of a "circuit breaker" concept into Iowa's property tax system to make property taxes related to income and therefore provide relief for laid off workers and family farmers suffering economic hardship while making local property taxes more acceptable

AN AMERICAN BILL OF RIGHTS FOR WORKING PEOPLE

1. National plant closing legislation which will guarantee all workers the right to 90 days advance notice of layoffs and plant closings involving more than 50 workers, and the right to bargain with employers over alternatives to layoffs.
2. The right to government funded retraining and relocation assistance, in addition to unemployment insurance, in the event of layoffs and plant closings.
3. The extension of comparable worth standards to all public sector employers and to large private sector corporate employers.
4. A new National Labor Relations Act which will enforce severe & swift penalties on employers who refuse to bargain with their employees or who victimize employees in union organizing drives.
5. A new national Occupational Safety and Health Act which will include the right of workers to shutdown a hazardous plant until inspection and correction.
6. Passage of the Dellums National Health Service Act, which will provide universal, free, locally controlled medical care to all Americans, financed by a progressive payroll tax.

OVER

AN IOWA BILL OF RIGHTS FOR WORKING PEOPLE

1. Full civil liberties for Iowa public sector employees, including the right to bargain with their employers about wages, hours, & working conditions (open scope of bargaining).
2. Unemployment compensation for at least 75% of Iowans unemployed and looking for work (it now goes to less than 30%). In order to move toward that goal the one week waiting period should be eliminated, a sliding scale of penalties for employee "misconduct" instituted, and compensation should be provided for a minimum of 39 weeks.
3. Prevailing wage provisions in all state contracts, in order to prevent tax money from being used to drive down wages.
4. Allow Iowa employees to seek civil damages from employers for "unjust dismissal".

DEMOCRACY IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

We call for an immediate end to the practice of providing automatic representation for elected officials at Democratic Party Conventions, especially the national convention

GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS

We call on Senator Tom Harkin to become a co-sponsor of the Kerry Amendment to the Civil Rights Act, which would prohibit "discrimination on the basis of affectional or sexual orientation"