

THE GREAT MEDICARE ROBBERY

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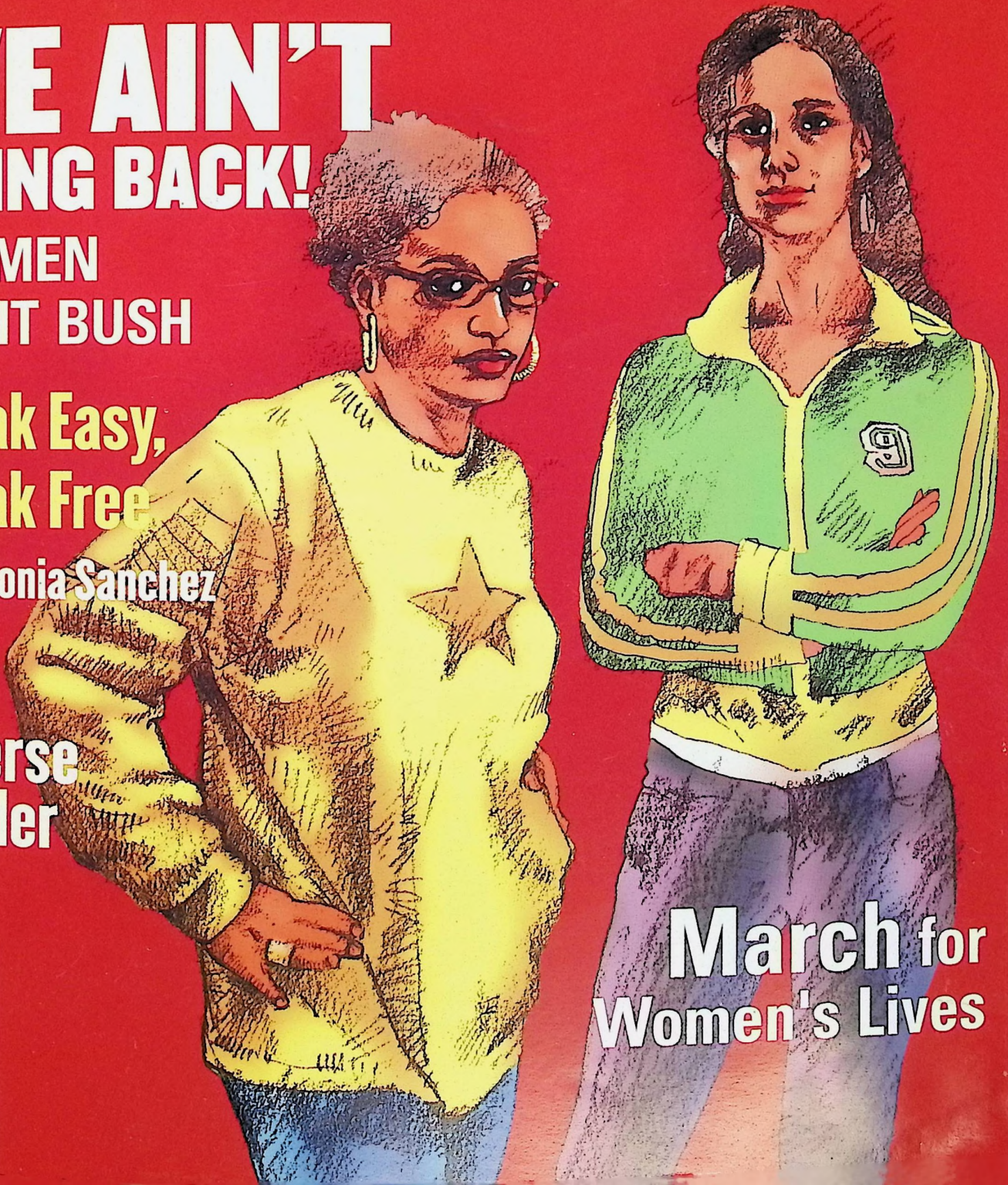
WE AIN'T GOING BACK!

WOMEN FIGHT BUSH

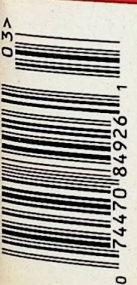
Speak Easy, Speak Free

with Sonia Sanchez

Reverse Gender Gap



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Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Book Reviews Need More Info Lynd, Minnesota

A suggestion for your book reviews: include price and number of pages. In the review of *The Iron Triangle*, the reviewer says the book is "too brief," so I looked up to see how many pages: no information. And the review made me want to read the book, so I looked up to see its cost: no indication. Thanks for considering this subscriber's suggestion.

Phil Dacey

Theory Update Needed Stubenville, Ohio

Please try to have more articles updating Marxism-Leninism to the specific problems of the 21st century. At Weirton Steel, in Weirton, West Virginia we have great backwardness in the working class. Our West Virginia/Ohio area is very conservative and religious. I personally am considered a troublemaker because of my political and social views. The working class in the steel industry is being exploited shamelessly. Our executives got \$4 million in retention bonuses.

Jeff Lahach

Troubled About China East Plains, Missouri

I got your quiz questions all right, so now I'll write something to you. I read the article about building socialism with Chinese characteristics and apparently am not clever enough to understand it. However, the things that China is doing with their cheap production and cheap commodities are causing a lot of pain in this and other countries. Even the Mexican workers in the runaway factories are losing their jobs to China. They have even gone to the extent of copying traditional American quilt patterns and the quilts are passed off in tourist centers as local handicrafts. I understand that their healthcare was free, but now they have to pay for it. They are allowing foreigners to come to their country and adopt their children. I don't think a socialist country should

be doing these things. Then I read the editor's note where market socialism was put in quotation marks. Apparently *PA* doesn't completely agree with this stuff either.

Pamela Wright

Author Identification is Fuzzy Tucson, Arizona

The most useless feature of the magazine is found in the footnotes about writers of articles. They never say anything about the writers of the articles other than "so and so is a contributor to *PA*." It is clear they are contributors, since their writings appear above the footnotes. What readers want to know about the writers is something of their qualifications to tell us anything. If such information cannot be given, the footnotes might as well be omitted.

Jack Blawis

Social Unionism will Defeat Bush New Haven, Connecticut

David Trujillo's article, "Labor Reaches Out" (December 2003) is a boost to labor organizing and outreach to allies. While as the author notes, this trend runs through the history of the labor movement, it is not static and must be broadened and built further. For example, there was a qualitative leap in AFL-CIO outreach with the election of the new Sweeney leadership team in 1995, an outcome of expanded rank-and-file activity. Also, the alliance between the top AFL-CIO and additional AFL-CIO unions and immigrant communities is new. That is why it is important to consider and build a broad organizing vision of unions as well as a social justice role. They go hand in hand.

In this connection, one of the historical examples given by the author is the leadership by William Z. Foster of the packinghouse and Great Steel Strikes of 1919. Trujillo characterizes Foster as "the great IWW and Communist leader." The characterization is correct regarding Foster as a Communist leader, although not until five years after the 1919 strikes. It is incorrect and misleading regarding Foster as an IWW leader.

While Foster was an organizer for the Industrial



PA, January 2004



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PA, December 2003

Workers of the World (IWW) for two years during its heyday, he was not a leader of it. In fact he dropped out in 1912 because of basic disagreements with its dual union sectarianism and its non-political stance. As Foster said in his book *American Trade Unionism*: "In order to appreciate the disastrous effects of dual unionism, it is necessary to understand the importance to labor of the militant elements that have been practically cancelled by the dual union policy."

The movement that Foster headed for organizing all unorganized basic industrial workers laid the basis for the CIO starting in 1935. The united front and independent political action by the CIO ushered in the New Deal and important labor and community gains. These are being upheld by AFL-CIO unions and allies today against the union-busting, war-hawk attacks by Bush.

Trujillo's contribution helps us see that the labor social justice role combined with mass labor and community organizing (being followed by the AFL-CIO), mass political action by labor and allies and all-important unity of the working class with the racially oppressed and women and immigrant workers is a formula for bringing about the daunting but doable defeat of Bush and the far-right's control of Congress.

George Fishman

Among our contributors...

Jen Barnett is the circulation manager at the *People's Weekly World*.

Edward A. McKinney is a retired trade unionist and seniors advocate in Cleveland, Ohio.

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Gerald Meyer is the author of *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician, 1902-1954* and *The Lost World of Italian American Radicalism*.

EDITOR'S NOTE

With this March issue, *PA* has a new look. What do you think? Like it? Dislike it? Tell us why. The magazine redesign is part of our ongoing effort to change *PA* and make it a fresher, more interesting and thought-provoking publication. In 2004 we are taking this campaign to a new stage. In fact we are relaunching *PA*! Along with the new clothes for the print edition, there's a new website at www.politicalaffairs.net. We are also planning new content: look out for upcoming special editions on gay rights, sports, culture, and race and nationality. Why the redesign? The answer's easy: We are trying to reach out to a new audience and improve circulation. To achieve this we need a new image and better and more lively content. Who said Marxism-Leninism has to be boring?

What do you think? Send us your comments at pa-letters@politicalaffairs.net.

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The Great Medicare Robbery

By Edward A. McKinney

Everyone should have the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health" and "the right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment.

— Franklin Delano Roosevelt,
Annual Message to Congress on
January 11, 1944

Priate insurance and pharmaceutical companies 1, seniors 0. Yes, the medical/health monopolistic private sector has prevailed once again. The major focus of the Medicare prescription drug bill has been on the prescription drugs-for-seniors component. An evaluation of this legislation triumphantly signed by Bush last December, shows that its major beneficiaries will be the medical/health monopolies. It does little or nothing for seniors.

In the next two to three years we will witness an astronomical rise in the cost of prescription drugs. Nothing in this legislation prevents it. As new drugs enter the market and with increases in the volume of sales of these drugs, the rise in drug costs will be dramatic. Wall Street is already predicting that higher costs could amount to a windfall of approximately \$13 billion annually.

Lobbyists for the medical/health monopolies assured this condition of price gouging by pushing for a provision in the law that prevents the federal government from bargaining for lower cost prescription drugs. The law also limits the re-importing of cheaper drugs from Canada. Approval for drug re-importation from Canada or other countries will require the signature of the secretary of Health and Human Services. The secretary will determine if the

drug in question is safe and costs less. The current secretary has expressed in various ways that we shouldn't expect such certification. This will be a serious blow to seniors who have come to rely on cheaper drugs from Canada.

This legislation is also designed to force seniors into privately managed health care plans. At the same time, the law provides the private insurance industry with incentives to go "cherry picking," that is only enrolling the youngest and healthiest sen-



△ The Bush administration's Medicare law will make prescription drugs less affordable and access to health care less certain.

White House photo

iors. There are no mechanisms in this legislation to prevent this.

Another major flaw in the legislation is commonly referred to as the "doughnut hole." It works like this: estimate the premium that a senior pays currently at \$35 a month. (By time the drug benefit begins in 2006 it will probably be higher.) But, let's say it is \$35 a month or \$420 annually. In addition, the senior will pay an annual deductible of \$250 ($\$420 + \$250 = \670). Now, the drug plan will pay 75 percent of the drug costs, leaving the senior 25 percent until the total drug costs for the senior reach \$2,250. After the senior reaches the \$2,250 in drug expenses in a given year the coverage stops. The senior now pays the next \$2,850 in all drug expenses ($\$5,100 - \$2,250 = \$2,850$). This amount can have a very negative impact on a senior on a fixed low income. \$5,100 is the amount the senior has to reach before the coverage starts again. This gap in coverage is the "doughnut hole." In the course of a year a senior could pay as much as $\$250 + \$420 + \$2,850 = \$3,520$ until coverage kicks in again. Once it reaches \$5,100 the senior qualifies for catastrophic insurance. For the rest of the year the senior pays a \$2 co-payment for every generic drug or \$5 for every brand-name drug (estimated by some to be as high as

This legislation is as "fixed" as the Florida elections.

will have the private insurance plans and the traditional Medicare plans operating side by side to determine which plan is most effective and efficient in providing drug coverage. The demonstration projects are a process for "fixing" the outcome and have been designed to ensure that the Medicare program ends up in the greedy hands of the private insurance companies. During the demonstration projects the traditional fee-for-

service component will compete with the private insurance plans. Traditional Medicare has and will continue to serve the most vulnerable and expensive population of recipients, those with more severe health problems. It is obvious that the cost will be higher among this population. Bush's bill calls for the extra costs to be passed on to this very vulnerable population of enrollees. This extra cost is expected to force seniors to opt for the private plans in their efforts to survive financially. In the end what will the demonstration projects tell us? They will say that it is time to privatize Medicare because privatization is more economical and efficient. This legislation is as "fixed" as the Florida elections.

The main result of the Medicare prescription drug bill is that the private insurance and drug companies have gained a significant foothold in this cost efficient government program. The goal of the Bush administration and the medical/health monopolies is the privatization of Medicare. Privatization, they claim, is necessary to save on administrative costs of the program. What they don't say is that the administrative costs of Medicare are far lower than the private insurance carriers. In fact, the General Accounting Office (GAO) a few years back projected that the difference between the high administrative cost of the private insurance sector in the US and the relatively lower administrative costs of the Canadian Health System could be used to cover the 40 million uninsured people in the US.

So, with billions of dollars at stake, the medical/health monopolies have little or no interest in the right of seniors to prescription drugs and good quality of life. With this political momentum under the direction and leadership of the White House the question is what's next for health care legislation? One can only wonder or imagine what the future holds for Social Security, national health insurance, and other health and welfare policies. ■



With Bush's new Medicare law millions of seniors will find doctor's care and prescription drugs far more expensive.

five percent of costs above \$5,100). It is obvious that the deductible and even the premiums may grow each year depending on the anticipated increases in drug expenses. Economists have shown that drug prices increase significantly faster than inflation. Also, one can anticipate that the amount a senior will pay will grow faster than his/her income.

The major threat to Medicare will come from the so-called demonstration projects. Demonstration projects are being designed for six areas of the country (not yet selected) beginning in 2010. They

March for Women's Lives

By Jennifer Barnett

I think I was about 17 when I found out that my mom had had an abortion. She had just recovered from tuberculosis and was still taking massive doses of antibiotics to fight off the chronic bronchitis that had sprung up in its wake. She had been seriously dating somebody for the first time since her divorce. Despite protection, she got pregnant.

I must have been about five at the time. I have vague memories of accompanying her to the Ob/Gyn, not knowing what that was but being amazed at how many pregnant women there were in the waiting room.

It never occurred to me that if the same situation had arisen about 10 years earlier, my mom would have been facing a much more terrifying prospect. Being born after 1973's *Roe v. Wade* decision, I've always had a certain set of reproductive rights. I've always had to take a side in the debate in which you're either "pro-choice" or "pro-life," but I always got to be on the winning side, fighting for the status quo. Growing up, it never occurred to me that if it were the other way around, if as pro-choice I was fighting against the status quo, my mom might very well have died when I was five. She would have been left with the choices of an illegal abortion or a pregnancy that she wouldn't have been healthy enough to survive.

My mom was nothing special in what she went through. There are thousands upon thousands of women who have been in similar situations. Some went through it before *Roe*, others after; some made it out alive, others didn't.

Last November, the same year *Roe v. Wade* turned 30, Congress and George W. Bush made the first legal ban against an abortion procedure. The blow against reproductive rights, called the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban," makes it illegal for doctors to perform, and therefore for women to undergo, a medical procedure, whether in the best interest of the woman's health or not. For me, this is the first time in my life I'm coming face to face with the fear of generations before me.

For some who will be in



△ Men and women marching to protect reproductive rights.

The largest pro-choice march in history will happen in Washington, DC on Sunday April 25, 2004 to show that an overwhelming majority supports a woman's right to choose safe, legal abortion and birth control.

The Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Organization for Women and Planned Parenthood Federation of America are the principal organizers of the March for Women's Lives.

The march will begin at noon at the Lincoln Memorial, although assembling will begin at 10 a.m. After marching, a rally will be held from 1-4 p.m. on the National Mall. Special seating will be available for people with disabilities. The rally program will be signed for the hearing impaired. The route is wheelchair accessible and transportation will be provided for those who cannot negotiate the route.

For more information contact the coalition at:
March for Women's Lives

Mailing Address: 1725 Eye Street,
NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006

Call: 202-349-3838

Fax: 202-349-3839

Website: www.marchforwomen.org

Washington, DC April 25 at the March for Women's Lives, it will be out of fear that this bill is just the first erosion of reproductive rights as a whole. For some it will be a fear that it signals the impending return of the bad old days. For everyone there, though, it will be a stand against such erosion of rights. Coming a few months before the November elections, the march will also serve as a reminder of exactly whose side George W. Bush is on.

The four groups calling the march – the Feminist Majority, the National Organization for Women (NOW), NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood Federation of America – and the many others that have signed on as co-sponsors are organizing a demonstration that will draw people from all walks of life and more than just one gender. The pro-

1. Which prominent radical feminist was a member of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) led by Karl Marx?

- a. Susan B. Anthony
- b. Victoria Woodhull
- c. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- d. Lucy Stone

2. International Women's Day was first established by the Socialist International (Second International) in solidarity with an early 20th century strike of women workers in

- a. London
- b. Berlin
- c. New York
- d. Paris

3. Contrary to conventional wisdom, women were among the most militant labor organizers. Which one of the following women was not a major working-class leader?

- a. Mother Jones
- b. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
- c. Mother Bloor
- d. Elizabeth Fox Genovese

4. The Communist movement, in its development of a theoretical position on the "woman question," called upon class-conscious male workers to

- a. accept separate spheres for women and men.
- b. fight consciously against male chauvinism in all working-class organizations and areas of life.
- c. form separate unions for women workers.
- d. fight to put women in upper management positions in the capitalist class.

5. Which of the following has not been a major women's rights issue in recent decades?

- a. abortion and general reproductive rights.
- b. the passage of an Equal Rights Constitutional Amendment (ERA) to make gender equality a part of the Constitution.
- c. the protection and expansion of affirmative action for women and minorities.
- d. making, as President George W. Bush suggested, poor women more physically attractive so that they could marry affluent men.

Answers: 1] b 2] c 3] d 4] b 5] d

How to Score Yourself:

0-1 correct: You have been misled by the capitalist media! Keep reading PA.

2-3 correct: Like most of us, you are at an early stage in your socialist development.

4 correct: You are a leader of the people! Start a PA discussion group.

5 correct: You are at an advanced stage of development. So when was the last time you wrote for PA?

ple at the march will be there to support reproductive rights, but they will also be there to support other rights.

In asking around about whether people will be at the march or not, it seemed that for everyone I talked to it was about far more than one issue. Stripping away a woman's right to choose is one of many heinous actions of an unrestrained Bush administration. Destroying the environment, giving tax cuts to the rich, embarking on an unjust war – these are all issues of the same ilk.

Not all of those I spoke to easily identify themselves as "pro-choice." For some, religion or other factors make them staunchly anti-abortion. But they support the right to choose. Though it might not be a choice they would make, they under-

People will be at the march to support more than one issue.

stand that if this right gets taken away, they will be quick to go after another one.

When I was out holiday shopping, I was taking a bus up Madison Avenue in New York City. A delivery-type truck pulled up next to the bus. On the sides of the truck were graphic photos of aborted fetuses, with dimes next to them to show scale. It was the second time I had seen this truck while riding the bus. Like it did the first time, the images turned my stomach. I've never had an abortion, nor have I been faced with the decision, and I honestly don't know how easily I'd be able to make it if I were. I'm not "anti-life," even though I oppose what the "pro-life" drivers of that truck were trying to achieve.

In some ways, though, I'll be in DC April 25 for the drivers of that truck, for their sisters and mothers and daughters. I'll be there for the right of the debate to continue, for the disagreement to continue. I'll be there to stand up for more than just reproductive rights, because there are more rights than that on the line. ■

Beyond French Feminisms: Debates on Women, Politics, and Culture in France,

Roger Celestine et al, eds. 1981-2001

New York, Palgrave Press MacMillan 2003

Reviewed by Norman Markowitz



Feminism as a concept developed in France at the end of the 19th century and came to be associated with a wide variety of political tendencies. Feminists of the left developed alliances, with Marxists from the period of the Second International, some later challenging what they saw as male dominated "phallogentric" labor movements and parties. Some Marxists contended that feminism generally was "bourgeois," replacing class

struggle with gender struggle, which replaced mode of production as the material basis for exploitation and oppression.

After a great revival of feminist ideologies and organizations in the 1960s issues of women's rights and varieties of feminist ideology have either revived or developed in response to the new global realities, in which social movements of the oppressed including national minorities, women, and gays, have become a significant force on the world scene. In 1968, France became the center in Europe for a student-based "New Left," of anarchists and other cultural radicals, who unlike their American counterparts, engendered a political crisis and mass strikes that many saw as a potential revolutionary situation.

Although French politics, along with the politics of the rest of the NATO countries, have moved sharply to the right in recent years and the French Republic today is firmly in the hands of the right wing, France remains a center of political and intellectual ferment, a place where political intellectuals are taken seriously.

Beyond French Feminisms, a collection of short often obtuse essays highlights both developments in French politics on questions of women's and gay rights and at the same time displays the "academicizing" of feminist ideology, which has also happened in the United States where politically neutral concepts have become separated from and often indifferent to the struggles of oppressed masses.

The short essays raise but rarely answer interesting questions, such as the universalism of French republicanism, the tradition of the great revolution, which are used both to defend equal rights and affirmative policies for women by many and rejected in the name of some form of particularism, a women's or "ethnic" identity, by others.

Beyond French Feminisms displays the academicizing of feminist ideology.

In the final sections, some writers, in a fairly unprincipled way, pick up on conservative American women writers' caricatures of American feminists to characterize as Joan W. Scott notes, American feminists as subverters of heterosexuality and the rights of everyone. Indeed, the last essays are filled with polemics about and against American feminism.

In any case, the movement for women's rights/women's liberation continues and has made significant advances in France and in other countries, in spite of the self-serving and self-aggrandizing analysis of many of the writers, who, as one Marxist critic noted about such theorizing long ago, build abstraction upon abstraction, in the apparent belief that the higher the abstraction, the more divorced it is from real events and life, the greater its value.

Although they would probably consider themselves "beyond Marxism," most of the writers could really profit from a little Marxism 101, some understanding of the relationship of consciousness (conceptions of self, society) to being (material social relations).

This might help them realize that the history of modern France, the role of the Communist and Socialist parties, of the broad left generally, created a political climate and institutions in which civil unions, the parity law, extensive affirmative action policies, all of which many find problematical,

became possible (along with such longtime policies as paid maternity leaves, family allowances, and other social benefits the authors don't even bother to mention).

Along with Joan Scott's fine short essay, the work ends with an interesting comparative article, "Made in America: 'French Feminism' in Academia," by Claire Goldberg Moses, which deals intelligently with the differences and similarities between the political cultures of France and the United States and the differences and similarities between feminists.

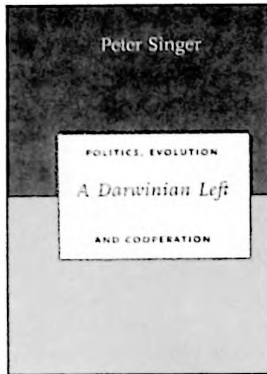
However, this book reminds me most of Karl Marx's critique of the journals of the Young or Left Hegelians, who became so enamored over the debates concerning the dialectic that they considered the debates more important than the events of real life – that is, the real struggle was being fought out in the pages of the journals, not in the factories, on the farms, and in the villages and cities. This book, in effect, falls backward from French or any other feminism, as an ideology shaping the struggle for women's rights/women's liberation. ■

BOOK REVIEWS

A Darwinian Left: Politics, Evolution and Cooperation

Peter Singer, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000

Reviewed by Thomas Riggins



In this work Peter Singer, DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton, argues that the left needs a new paradigm based on Darwin not Marx. He maintains that the collapse of Communism and the abandonment of socialist goals by social democracy shows that the traditional Marxist view of the malleability of "human nature" is wrong. This on the view of the sixth of the *Theses Feuerbach* that so called "human nature" is really "the ensemble of social relations." Not so

says Singer. "It is time for the left to take seriously the fact that we are evolved animals, and that we bear the evidence of our inheritance, not only in our anatomy and our DNA, but in our behavior too. In other words it is time to develop a Darwinian left."

In Singer's left, workers and class struggle are hardly mentioned. He calls himself a utilitarian and sees the function of the left as "reducing suffering." His goal is to "swap Marx for Darwin." We know that "social Darwinism" was used in the past to support right-wing and reactionary causes. Singer notes, however, that Darwin can be used by the left just as well as the right. "Darwin himself rejected the idea that any ethical implications could be drawn from his work."

Singer's program is to take all the beliefs associated with the left and check them against Darwinian evolutionary theory. All left ideas must be conformed to Darwinism or rejected. Practically he comes to conclusions such as "we cannot use the fact that there is a disproportionately large number of men in high status positions in business or politics as a reason for concluding that there has been discrimination against women ... biological differences between men and women may be a factor." This is one of the oldest and most discredited arguments used by traditional "social Darwinists" (as well as by Talibanists and other Islamic fundamentalists). It is disappointing to find it in a book touted by Yale as "groundbreaking."

Singer, the author of *Animal Liberation*, wants to narrow the perceived gap between humans and other animals. We should "base policies on, the similarities we identify between humans and nonhuman animals." With this in mind he takes on Engels (*The Dialectics of Nature*) for having held it to be "impossible"

to make "any immediate transference of the laws of life in animal societies to human ones." Engels thought this because animals "collect" but humans prepare "the means of life." Singer thinks this dubious because "fungus growing ants" prepare and grow "specialized fungus." This is a particularly lame counterexample for no one would hold fungus growing ants are engaged in mycological speculations and consciously experimenting with the development of improved varieties of fungi.

Singer's real aim is to completely invalidate a main thesis of Marxism. He wants to get rid of the notion that "social evolution" is driven by "social and economic causes." This leads to the delusion that humans can be improved by social and economic means. What the left must accept is that there is a basic human nature that cannot be altered by social engineering. He puts forth the idea of "universal elements" of human nature which the left must recognize as the basis of workable reform policies. Sex roles, male dominance, ethnic identification, xenophobia and racism are some suggested "universal elements." Singer congratulates himself for having lived in "a multicultural society with a relatively low level of racism." He means Australia where aboriginal people were hunted down like animals and their children forcibly taken away to be raised by whites. Singer should go see

the recent movie *Rabbit Proof Fence* about child removal by the government of "relatively low level" racism.

Once we understand our evolved inner selves we won't put forward utopian plans of reform. He gives a possible example when he suggests we might abandon plans to have public ownership of industry and have the left favor privatizing in the name of efficiency. It seems there must be some sort of entrepreneurial gene at work here. This is just a possible example of what he has in mind for "tailoring our institutions to human nature."

Singer hopes we can use Darwinism to evolve policies leading "towards a more cooperative society." But this society will have to be based on our evolved sense of self-interest.

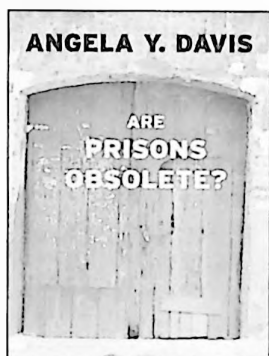
Marx had great respect for Darwin the scientist, and despite Singer's efforts to banish Marx from social theory, I don't think his views on biological evolution can be substituted for the type of social understanding of the problems of class struggle found in *Capital* or the *Manifesto*. Let us hope that social Darwinism remains extinct. ■

In Singer's left, class struggle is barely mentioned.

Are Prisons Obsolete?

Angela Y. Davis, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2003

Reviewed by Ellen Bunt



While the US prison population has surpassed 2 million people, this figure is more than 20 percent of the entire global imprisoned population combined. Angela Y. Davis shows, in her most recent book, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, that this alarming situation isn't as old as one might think. Just a little over 30 years ago the entire prison population stood at 200,000 in the US;

that is a tenfold jump in just one generation. In California alone, 3 prisons were built between 1852 and 1952; from 1984 to the present, over 80 facilities were constructed that now house almost 160,000 people. While being jailed or imprisoned has become "an ordinary dimension of community life," according to Davis, for men in working-class Black, Latino, Native American and some Asian American communities, it is also increasingly an issue women of these communities have come to face.

Davis points to the increased involvement of corporations in prison construction, security, health care delivery, food programs and commodity production using prison labor as the main source of the growth of the prison-industrial complex. As prisons became a new source of profits, it became clear to prison corporations that more facilities and prisoners were needed to increase income. It is evident that increased crime is not the cause of the prison boom. Davis writes "that many corporations with global markets now rely on prisons as an important source of profits helps us to understand the rapidity with which prisons began to proliferate precisely at a time when official studies indicated that the crime rate was falling."

Corporations such as Westinghouse, Minnesota Mining and Manufacture, General Dynamics and Alliant Techsystems push their "crime fighting" equipment for consumption by state and local governments. Board members at Hospital Corporation of America helped to found Correctional Corporation of America (CCA), now the largest private prison corporation in the country. By 2000 there were 26 for-profit prison corporations that

operated 150 prisons across the country. Additionally, billions in profits come from using prisons as exclusive markets for selling such products as Dial soap, AT&T calling cards and many other items. Some corporations have come to rely on contracted prison labor, a modern version of slave labor.

Institutionalized racism and racial scapegoating for economic decline since the 1970s have fueled much of the justification for the prison boom. Davis points out that "criminals and evildoers" (using language made vogue by Bush) "are fantasized as people of color," and their subsequent incarceration seems natural. Incarceration is used to steal civil rights (such as voting rights) and to ensure continued social marginalization for millions of people of color.

Davis also focuses on what she describes as how "gender structures the prison system." This is not simply a way of discussing women in the system or to add women to the conversation. It is a way, in Davis' view, to show how the ruling class uses ideas about what men and women are supposed to be like and what they are supposed to do to perpetuate current incarceration practices. Additionally, "women remain today the fastest-growing sector of the US prison population." Davis directly links this development to the rise of the prison industrial complex in the last two decades and the rapidly changing

economic context that saw the end of good jobs, dismantling of the welfare safety net and globalization. Women who have been labeled criminals face difficulties that make their incarceration experience different from men. They are

more likely to be placed in mental institutions, receive psychiatric drugs and experience sexual assault. Indeed, views of gender suggest that criminalized men still operate within the confines of "normal" male behavior, while "the fallen woman" is beyond moral recuperation and can be treated accordingly.

Davis' central point is worth studying and bringing to the foreground in the prison reform movement. She argues that prisons do not solve crime. Within the last two decades the prison boom simply has intensified the criminalization of certain types of behavior, rather than having brought official crime rates down. So prison reformers have to think about whether or not prisons are obsolete. Davis believes they are. This book is well worth reading for understanding this radically important new perspective. ■

The prison boom has intensified criminalizing certain behaviors.

Anger and Loathing at the Movies - Oscars 2004

By Michael Shepler

Resentment, anger and loss are emotions that fuel performances in many of the Oscar-nominated films of 2003.

From *Mystic River* (parent attempts to revenge murdered child) to *21 Grams* (parent attempts to revenge murdered family) to *House of Sand and Fog* (woman seeks to regain house at all costs) these films, dramatic and powerful, stir emotions that have no form of release. Lacking the stature of tragedy, they also sidestep social issues. *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, director), for instance, is a story driven by the specter and consequences of child molestation, yet the people involved are blue collar men and women who have been forced into leading marginal lives in a country gutted by corporate greed. The prison sub-culture, which has become America's largest growth industry, has also served to blight the lives of many of the film's characters. However these issues were addressed only obliquely. (Note: Be on the lookout for Eli Wallach in a 5 minute bit as a garrulous owner of a liquor store in *Mystic River*. He's the one bright note in the film.)

The shadow of the penitentiary also hangs over *21 Grams* (A.G. Inarritu, director). The hit-and-run driver played by Benecio del Toro is also an ex-convict. *House of Sand and Fog* (Vadim Perelman, director) pits Americans against an Iranian. Ben Kingsley plays a refugee and former military man under the Shah. He buys a house at auction, seeing it as his chance to begin the difficult climb out of the pit of low-paying jobs life in America has brought him. His antagonist played by Jennifer Connolly, is a careless, former coke addict who could have prevented tragedy by reading her mail (a clerical error begins the nightmare). Aided by a smitten cop and fuelled by the escalating violence, which seems to have become America's simplest solution to any problem, no one wins and none are spared.



△ Jude Law, Nicole Kidman and Renee Zellweger in *Cold Mountain*.

Beyond these films, we have the "shock and awe" special effects of *Return of the King* (Peter Jackson, director), the concluding film in the Tolkien trilogy. This is the sort of pre-sold film critics call "magical" and "fun for the whole family." Noisy, violent and bombastic, presenting a simplistic battle between good and evil, this should be a big Oscar winner in a year when Hollywood, in line with advice from the Bush administration "watches what it says."

Peter Weir's seasick-making *Master and Commander* continues an odd trend back toward "pirate pictures" (a return to the 1950s when Tony Curtis and Jeff Chandler swashed buckles). This one has Russell Crowe battling Napoleon and this reviewer recommends Dramamine.

Cold Mountain (Anthony Minghella, director) chooses to fight the Civil War in Romania (where the extras come cheaper) and ignores the causes of the war. Once again, as in the other films, we are asked to look at the story as an unconnected "tragedy" or "triumph" in which confused individuals struggle alone. A de-glamorized Renee Zellweger could win best-supporting actress for her role as the farm hand who saves Nicole Kidman's bacon. The efforts of Kidman and Zellweger do represent a positive collective response to the social breakdown which surrounds them and the scenes with the "Home Guard" provide chilling parallels with the sinister motives of today's "Homeland Security."

Something's Gotta Give (Nancy Meyers, writer/director) is funny and entertaining. It breaks



with a Hollywood taboo, dealing with love between a mature couple. Jack Nicholson does his "Jack" shtick, allowing us a few glimmers of his old powers, while Diane Keaton is radiant in her best role in years. One beef against the film: like too many films (comedies in particular) the protagonists are almost invariably wealthy, usually with more than one residence, and able to self-prescribe recuperative trips to the Caribbean or to Paris when life doesn't go their way. The film is

also marred by blatant advertising for Mac PCs.

Although the switch in emphasis in *Seabiscuit* (Gary Ross, director) from *Seabiscuit* to the people surrounding him hurt the story, this was still a relief from the general hopelessness. *Seabiscuit*, the dark horse, was an inspiration to the people of Depression America. The great success of Laura Hillenbrand's book was, I believe, fuelled by our wish for a similar inspiration in the very different depression of today. Chris Cooper is outstanding as *Seabiscuit's* trainer.

Hopefully some of the smaller films won't be overlooked:

Dirty Pretty Things is a thriller by Stephen Frears starring Audrey Tatou and Chiwetel Ejiofor as a pair of illegal immigrants working in a seamy London hotel. The story revolves around their discovery of criminal activity going on in the hotel. Their wish to set things right is weighed against the threat of deportation and death. Both actors are brilliant as is Frears' depiction of the underside of London. This is the best kind of filmmaking, with story and "message" serving one another, drawing the viewer into the immigrants' world.

Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* depicts Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson as two strangers in Japan who are able to connect with one another without the films taking the usually inevitable romantic plunge. A slight story and a very gentle comedy.

Gregor Jordan's *Buffalo Soldiers* is a film shot in Germany prior to 9/11 which nearly failed to find release. The film isn't great, but one can see why there was pressure to suppress it as it portrays life in the military in less than idealistic colors. Joaquin Phoenix is good as the enlisted man/black-marketeer but beyond the introductory half hour the film can't go the distance.

In the way of documentaries recommended are: *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*: Irish documentarians Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Brian capture the struggle of President Chávez and his reformist government to survive a US-backed coup. It was filmed inside the presidential palace, as the events unfolded.

An Injury to One: Travis Wilkerson's film that documents the battle between miners and the Anaconda Mining Company in Butte, Montana during the early years of the 20th century.

Needless to say, theatrical showings of the two documentaries are not easy to find. ■

Oscar Bets (Not necessarily choices)

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Best Picture: | <i>The Return of the King</i> |
| Best Director: | Peter Jackson (<i>The Return of the King</i>) |
| Best Actor: | Sean Penn (<i>Mystic River</i>) |
| Best Actress: | Diane Keaton (<i>Something's Gotta Give</i>) |
| Best Supporting Actor: | Tim Robbins (<i>Mystic River</i>) |
| Best Supporting Actress: | Marcia Gay Harden (<i>Mystic River</i>) |

Oscar Choices

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Best Picture: | <i>Dirty Pretty Things</i> |
| Best Director: | Stephen Frears (<i>Dirty Pretty Things</i>) |
| Best Actor: | Chiwetel Ejiofor (<i>Dirty Pretty Things</i>) |
| Best Actress: | Audrey Tatou (<i>Dirty Pretty Things</i>) |
| Best Supporting Actor: | Chris Cooper (<i>Seabiscuit</i>) |
| Best Supporting Actress: | Marcia Gay Harden (<i>Mystic River</i>) |



Telling It from the Mountain Top

The Life of Louise T. Patterson



▲ Louise Thompson Patterson.

If she had been a partisan of capitalism, Louise Thompson Patterson would have been a Horatio Alger heroine, lionized today as a pioneering woman of the Harlem Renaissance and a role model for both African Americans and women. Instead she chose to put the skills and education that she fought for and won in a racist society to work for the liberation of her oppressed people, the US working class, and the exploited and oppressed peoples of the world.

Born in Chicago in 1901, as Louise Toles, Louise Patterson moved West with her mother at the age of five after her parents had separated. She grew up in Western towns where she was

often the only Black child in the community, fighting back against racist taunts and ostracism by excelling in school. After her mother settled in Berkeley and married a handyman, whose name she took, Louise became the first African American woman to attend the University of California at Berkeley, where she received a degree with honors in economics in 1923.

It was here that she heard W.E.B. Du Bois speak and as she was to remember, "for the first time in my life I was proud to be Black."

In spite of her achievements, professional jobs were not plentiful for Black people (as they had not been for Du Bois a generation earlier, even with his Harvard PhD). After a humiliating stint in a secretarial job Louise returned with her mother to Chicago, to pursue graduate work at the University of Chicago. Although her situation improved markedly, she abandoned this career to become, with the encouragement of Du Bois, a teacher in Black colleges. Forced to resign from Hampton Institute because of her support of striking students, she came to New York to study at the New York School for Social Work on an Urban League Fellowship in 1927.

Soon she began to involve herself in both community activism and the cultural life of the Harlem Renaissance. Doing editorial work for Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, briefly marrying novelist Wallace Thurman, she turned her large Harlem apartment into a meeting place for African American writers, poets and fine artists.

As the Depression devastated Harlem, Thompson joined with the African American sculptor, Augusta Savage, to form the Vanguard, a radical artists group in opposition to those within the Harlem Renaissance who continued to seek the traditional path of finding wealthy patrons and gaining entry into establishment institutions.

Attracted also to both the committed anti-racism and socialism of the Soviet revolution, she organized the Harlem branch of the American Friends of the Soviet Union and began to study Marxism at the CPUSA's Workers' School. In 1932, she organized and led a group of Black artists, including Langston Hughes and her former husband, Wallace Thurman, to the Soviet Union to produce a film about African American life and struggles for liber-

ation. Although the film was not made, the excursion was viewed positively by Thompson and most of the other artists. "For all of us who experienced discrimination based on color in our own land," Louise was to remember, "it was strange to find our color a badge of honor."

Thompson returned to New York with stronger commitments to mass struggle and socialism as indispensable for Black liberation. Now called "Madame Moscow" by many of her more establishment-oriented Harlem friends, she joined the CPUSA in 1933 and became an organizer for the International Workers' Order (IWO) composed of many nationality groups.

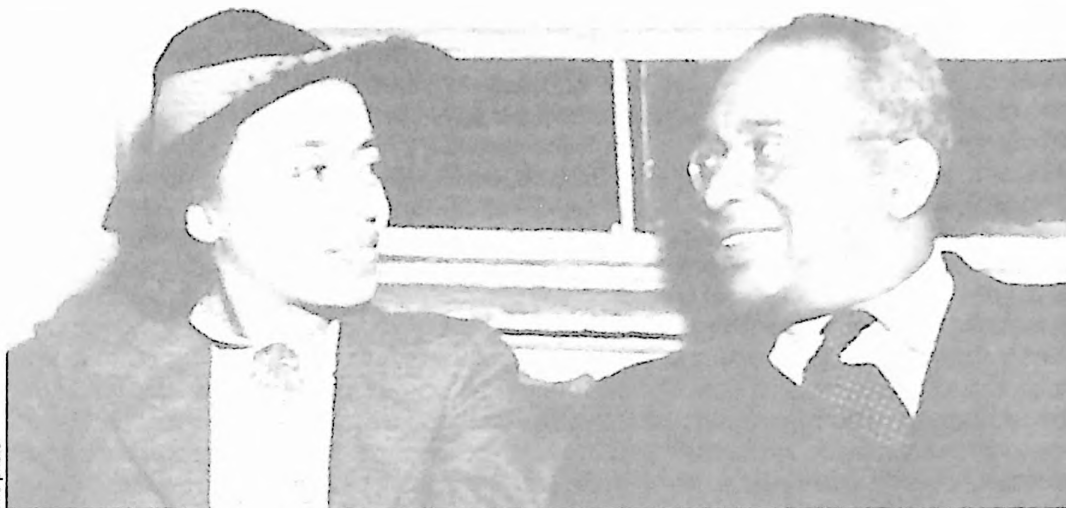
Her talents as an organizer were seen as she led a march in Washington for the Scottsboro prisoners in 1933.

With the rise of the federal arts projects of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935 and the creation of the National Negro Congress, (1936) she worked tirelessly in a politicized Harlem in campaigns against all forms of racism, for advancing and radicalizing New Deal social programs, and for building a united front against fascist aggression in Africa and Europe. Two years later, she joined her friend Langston Hughes in Spain in solidarity with the anti-fascist fighters of the Spanish Republic.

Through the IWO she organized with Langston Hughes in 1938, the "Harlem Suitcase Theater," which provided a venue for young Black playwrights. Robert Earl Jones, father of the distinguished African American actor, James Earl Jones, began his career in the Harlem Suitcase theater in Langston Hughes' *Don't You Want to Be Free?*

In 1940, Thompson married her longtime friend and fellow CPUSA activist, William Patterson. With Patterson she returned to Chicago and became active in the Civil Rights Congress and the IWO and played a leading role in the establishment of an African American Cultural Center on the South Side of Chicago. Along with her husband, she helped found the Abraham Lincoln Workers' School in Chicago, using her prestige in cultural circles to recruit Lena Horne to sing at a fund-raiser for the school at the Chicago Opera House.

In the Cold War era, she and her husband stayed left. In 1949, she was a major organizer of Paul Robeson's Peekskill concerts and later helped to organize Robeson's tour of African American



File photo
 Δ On wedding day with William L. Patterson

communities against the savage campaign of the FBI to deny him access to concert halls and theaters.

Louise also worked through the 1950s with other prominent African American women, Shirley Graham Du Bois and Charlotta Bass, among others, in resistance to McCarthyism, racism and colonialism. With her husband, she sought to provide support and guidance to a new generation of African American activists whom the FBI and all of the institutions of political repression in operation sought to isolate from the "old left."

In the 1960s, as some of the more brutal manifestations of McCarthyism began to recede, Louise joined with Marxist historian and CPUSA leader Herbert Aptheker to establish the American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS). Contrary to the new establishment view that the "old left" disappeared after 1956, William and Louise Patterson continued to play an important role for a new generation of New York political and cultural activists, who flocked to their Harlem apartment in the 1960s just as Harlem Renaissance figures had in the 1920s.

In the early 1970s, she led the New York Committee to Free Angela Davis. After her husband's death in 1980, she established the William L. Patterson Foundation to continue her and her husband's work. Louise Patterson Thompson died in 1999 at the age of 98. For nearly 80 years she was an organizer in the finest sense. Marx and Lenin would have been proud to have known her, as were her legions of friends and comrades. ■



File photo
 Δ Louise Thompson Patterson in the 1970s.



Fare to War

anthrax, sounds like the innards of beetles

the clever thin shell of a roach
our nails gripping triggers

it used to be rocks, then shaved sculptures
called knives, which our women thought
were only good for cutting carrots

when, in some undisputed time
future, distant or nearby, the free space
surrounding our daily movements

fills with invisible particles that will move
silently within, like missiles, and our lungs
explode, and all the while we will say

this suffocation inevitable... it started
when we had too many toys
and our leftovers could have fed the world

but our constitution decrees our superiority,
right? And we are used to winning.
What are we without the upper hand?

– Judith Pordon

Portrait with Money

At the end of the day, my father is tired.
He sighs over his newspaper and pushes
the cold dinner around on his plate.

Because he works late, he eats alone.

Even my mother will not sit with him.
She is tired, too, from her day at the office
and is folding clothes or making lunches
for tomorrow or is already asleep
in front of the chuckling television set.

As young as I am, I know about money:
How there is never enough, how it causes
crying and fights. On payday, I know
happiness again – a new pair
of saddle shoes, a movie after school,
the red plaid skirt on the beautiful girl
in the Sears catalogue, page three-sixty-two.

When my father goes to bed at night
he leaves his wallet on the hall table.

Most often, there is nothing in it
but a couple of ones or fives.

In the plastic window for photographs
there is a picture of him and me when I was one.

We look so happy together. I hold him
so tightly on the arm and neck
there's no space between us,

but he hasn't started to mind. Somehow,
small and fair and held so close, I can see
how I could look like a growth on him, something
permanent and needy, something he didn't ask for
but is learning to live with.

– Kate Daniels

– from *The White Wave* ©1983. All Rights Reserved.



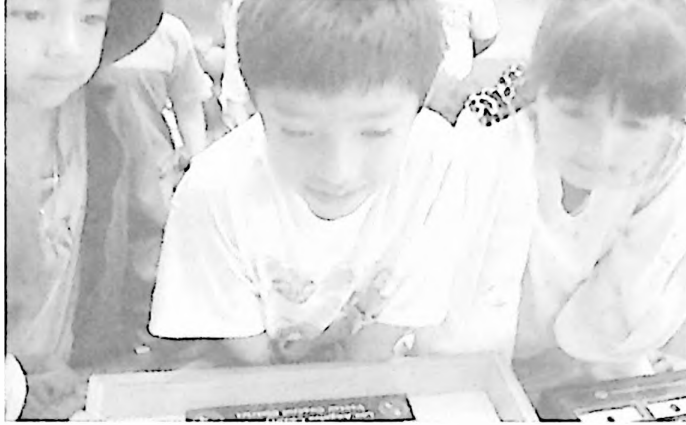
The Education Scam

By Rosita H. Johnson



△ The No Child Left Behind Act proposes to close down facilities such as these if children don't score well on standardized tests.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is the Bush administration's education reform plan. The NCLB mandates that school districts eliminate the gaps in education between poor students and wealthy students, Black and white students, special education students and regular students, and students with limited English and those fluent in English. The stated goal is to provide for those students who historically were denied an opportunity to a quality education. To close the gap it requires that all students make adequate yearly progress and be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014. Congress passed this law with the support of the majority of both parties. With such lofty expectations and goals, why is NCLB being criticized and labeled a set-up for vouchers and privatization?



△ Crowded classrooms and underpaid teachers and staff are ignored by the Bush administration's education policies.

The NCLB does not provide funding to build new schools or classrooms.

There are several reasons: NCLB raises standards without supplying the states with adequate resources to meet the needs of their students. Even the funds originally promised for NCLB face cuts due to the wars on terrorism and Iraq. All 50 states now face a cumulative deficit of \$68 billion. The NCLB requires each state to submit a plan with yearly goals showing how all of its students will

become 100 percent proficient in reading and math by 2014. Yearly standardized testing is the means of assessment. Student attendance and the rate of high school graduation are also part of the

assessment. By 2005 there must be a qualified, certified teacher in every classroom. Each year there are escalating sanctions for all schools and districts that do not meet their state goals for making "Adequate Yearly Progress," (AYP). Schools that don't make it are listed in several failing categories. Schools that have reported violent incidents are labeled "dangerous schools." Parents of children in these failing and/or dangerous schools must be notified and offered a transfer for their child to a "successful school." In many districts there are few or perhaps no successful schools with spaces for those asking for transfers. The Department of Education says that lack of space or overcrowding is not a valid excuse for denying transfers to these students. Does this make sense? The NCLB does not provide funding to build new schools and classrooms. Students in failing schools must also be offered tutoring paid by the state.

Our suspicion should have been aroused when proven methods of raising student achievement such as small class size, early childhood education and improved teacher training etc. were not mandated by or mentioned in NCLB. We should have been suspicious when Bush appointed Rod Paige,

an African American educator from Texas, to be secretary of the Department of Education and Eugene Hickok from Pennsylvania to be undersecretary. When Bush was governor of Texas, he opposed lowering class size and students' test scores improved because teachers taught the test. Recently Texas has been criticized for falsifying dropout rates to avoid federal sanctions and reduc-

ing the number of questions that students have to answer to pass the tests. Hickok headed the Pennsylvania Department of Education under former Governor Tom Ridge, who tried unsuccessfully to pass a voucher bill in the legislature. But Ridge was successful in the illegal state takeover of Philadelphia's schools and partially successful in his scheme to privatize them under the management of Edison Schools Inc.

The school district of Philadelphia became an experiment for the NCLB when it was subject to state take-over at the end of 2001. The reason for the take-over was a \$250,000 deficit. The reason for the deficit was that Pennsylvania would not provide adequate equitable funding for its schools. African American students in Philadelphia never received a quality education. In 1970 the Commonwealth Court ordered that racial segregation be eliminated by 1975. Magnet schools and a voluntary desegregation plan were instituted. Some Black students were bussed to white schools. But schools in Black neighborhoods were allowed to deteriorate just like the communities they served. In 1994 Commonwealth Court Judge Doris Smith ordered the state to correct the problems her education team found and to immediately upgrade schools in racially isolated neighborhoods. Ridge and the state legislature refused to obey the order. Ridge had other plans for Philadelphia, namely - privatization. Education in Philadelphia is now a cottage industry: charter schools, for-profit privatized schools, non-profit privatized schools and reconstituted schools. At the top is CEO, Paul Vallas.

Many students can't keep up and must stay after school for mandatory tutoring. Philadelphia has 40 percent of the state's impoverished families. Black unemployment in the city is twice the national rate. But the Department of Education does not want excuses for failing the tests. Meanwhile the Republican-dominated legislature is six months late passing a budget. Schools had to borrow money from banks to keep their doors



△ Crowded classrooms and underpaid teachers and staff are ignored by the Bush administration's education policy.

open. Governor Rendell, a Democrat, asked for \$650 million in additional funds to improve the schools. The legislature came up with only \$258 million of new money after months of debate and a promise of more funds next year. The Republican-led legislature is not nor was it ever committed to quality education for all its students. Wealthy school districts can afford good schools by

funding them through property taxes. Urban and rural districts cannot. As we observe the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, a quality public education is still not attainable for all students in the United States.

The National Conference of State Legislators estimates that 70 percent of the nation's schools will be subjected to sanctions before the end of the decade. Florida reported that 87 percent of its schools and all of its districts failed to meet adequate yearly progress in the 2002-03 school year.

In Pennsylvania half of the schools failed to make adequate yearly progress. Said Jack Jennings from the Center on Education Policy in Washington, DC, "There is no set of national standards. You can have schools of the same quality in two different states ranked far differently". Some suburban schools where test scores were in the top portion of the state were shocked to find that their schools did not make adequate yearly progress goals because special education students did not make the required goals. School staffs, students and parents in schools where great effort and cooperation has taken place over the past two years to improve the quality of education are demoralized when their schools are labeled as failing.

Quietly, dissatisfied parents, especially African American parents, are being told that what they need is "choice." If their child's school is failing, the state should give them a voucher so they can send their child to a private or parochial

school. Organizations such as the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO) are organizing Black parents around the concept of choice. Right-wing foundations such as the Bradley Foundation, which also funded David Horowitz's ad campaign against reparations, support BAEO.

The philosophy of the NCLB is anchored to the market-place concept where competition is supposed to force bad schools to shape up or go out of business and where good schools thrive. Parents are viewed as consumers and the commodity they are shopping for is a quality education for their children. A few years ago parents were told that charter schools were the answer to their children's needs, but charter schools have not raised student achievement any more than public schools. Privatized schools have not worked any better than the struggling public schools. Private schools do the choosing not parents and students. So "choice" is just a distracting myth. It distracts parents, educators, students and the entire community from organizing for real education reform – adequate equitable funding, small class size, smaller well equipped schools, qualified certified teachers and administrators, comprehensive early childhood education and parent involvement.

Meanwhile, labor and civil rights organizations remain committed to defending public education. The NAACP remains committed to quality public education and opposes vouchers and privatization. Reg Weaver, President of the National Education Association, calls NCLB the "granddaddy of all under-funded federal mandates." Sandra Feldman, President of the American Federation of Teachers, believes that people in high places hostile to public education and supporters of vouchers see NCLB as an opportunity. Teachers are under pressure to move students at a rapid pace through a basic skills reading and math curriculum, and students are pressured to pass reading and math tests.

The NCLB will not close the educational gap between the haves and the have-nots. It will destroy the concept of public education as an entitlement and the basis for political democracy. The fight for public education must be part of the 2004 election campaign. The NCLB must be repealed or changed. ■

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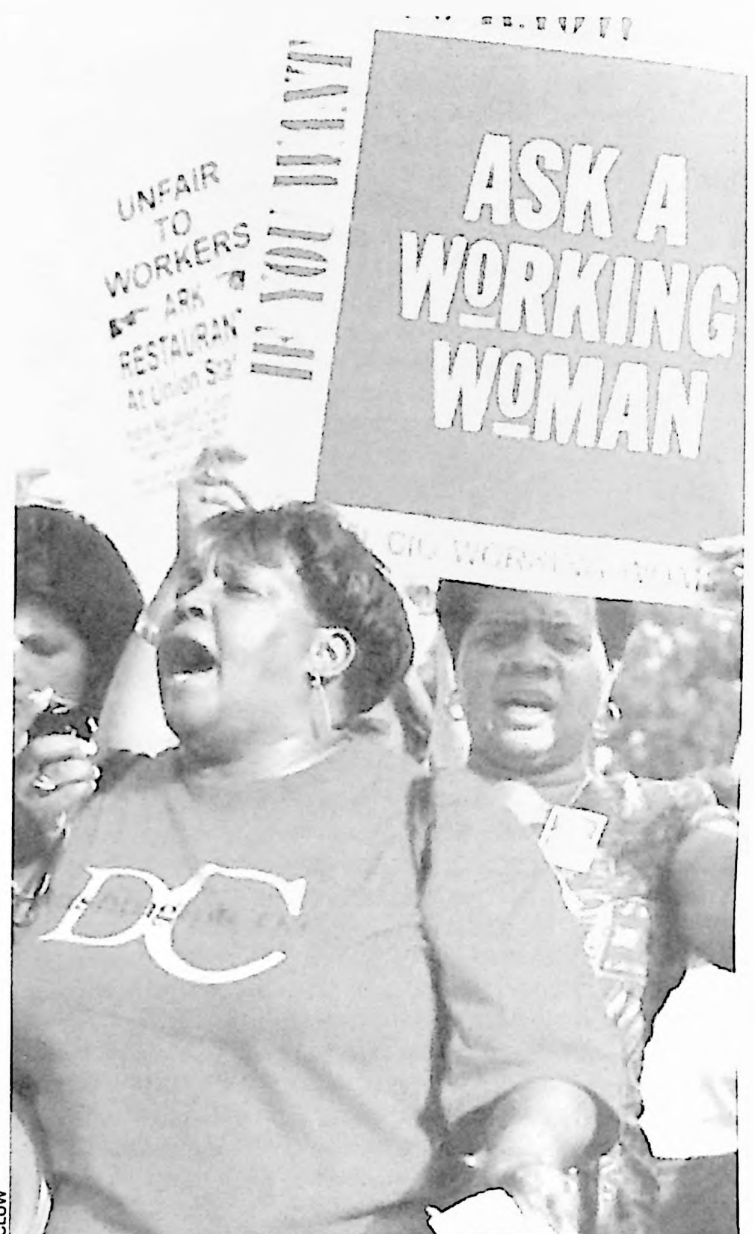
"GENDER GAP"

By Joel Wendland

"Boys are becoming the second sex" proclaimed *Business Week* last May in a cover story titled "The New Gender Gap." *Business Week's* article appeared as part of a spate of articles and television news segments on the subject of increased educational opportunities for women. The basics of the story are that in the education system, teachers have become so conscious of catering to the needs of girls and young women that boys are being left behind. Boys, they say, are being punished for "boyish" behavior. They are being put more often into special education programs or disciplinary classes, and the outcome is that boys have a negative educational experience. This trend translates into poorer high school performances and perhaps college as well.

According to statistics offered by *Business Week*, 57 percent of all new bachelor's degrees and 58 percent of master's degrees are awarded to women. This "education grab," according to the article, was the source of the "new gender gap." Though, the article did hint that even with the new trend in the numbers, women still had some ways to go in order to catch up after 350 years of being almost entirely excluded from the university.

Most observers of this situation will find such an article perplexing. Certainly most women will likely be skeptical of its major argument. That this "reverse gender



CLUW

▲ Though women union members earn more than their unorganized counterparts, they still experience enormous financial losses when compared with men.

gap" argument exists, however, is not surprising. Like its cousins in other areas of social life (reverse discrimination or reverse class warfare), it is being generated primarily by the ultra-right. The purpose is to stifle the struggle for equality by implying (or stating directly) that the gains made by women through struggle over the last 40 years have gone too far and have detrimentally affected society.

Some in this camp go so far as to suggest that women who demand equality are out to hurt men. At worst, it demonstrates that the right wants to twist the outcome of social progress to divide us. They say that a struggle between men and women for social goods is the fundamental source of social conflict and that women are winning – a situation that, for some, means reversed gender inequality and for others goes against natural laws of male supremacy invoked by God.

Any way you look at it, however, this picture is a distortion of reality. So what does the real gender gap look like?

Barbara Gault, director of research at the Institute for Women's Policy Research, recently told *Women'sWallStreet.com* that there are several explanations for and holes in the current data on the educational experiences of men and women. First, high-paying occupations that do not require college degrees, such as skilled

Americans, where the difference between women and men earning college degrees is the widest among all racial or ethnic groups, it is clear that institutional racism directed at African American men plays a large role in keeping them out of college. Fourth, in the crucial field of information technology, women continue to earn only about one-third of the degrees awarded and get only about one-third of the jobs available. Finally, men continue to outpace women in completing doctoral and professional degrees (81 women for every 100 men), resulting in continued male dominance in corporate board rooms, the seats of political power, the highest positions in universities, etc.

The successes of the women's equality movement, progressive changes in attitudes about roles women can have and the implementation of affirmative action policies (which benefited women as a whole most) have had a tremendous positive impact on the access women have had in education. Just 30 years ago, women earned advanced or professional degrees at a rate of only 23 women per 100 men. In other arenas, such as the workforce or the political field, the gender gap, in sheer numbers, has largely narrowed. But the numbers still don't paint the whole picture.

While higher education is a major factor in gaining financial security, it is something that is only available to about one-fifth of the adult population.

So for the vast majority of women, this supposed "new gender gap" means absolutely nothing. Other data on the condition of women's economic security paint another picture altogether. About eight of ten retired women are not



▲ Subsidies for child care and caregiving are needed to ensure economic parity between men and women.

eligible for pension benefits. When retired women do get a pension, it is typically far less than retired men get. Fifty percent of women who receive pension benefits get only about 60 cents for every dollar of male pensioners. On the average, retired women depend on Social Security for 71 percent of their income, and about 25 percent of retired women rely solely on Social Security for their income.

In the work force, women's pay averages only 76 percent of men's pay (at a cost of about \$200 billion for working families annually). A report produced by the General Accounting Office last October shows that since 1983, the wage differential has actually increased. 60 percent of all women earn less than \$25,000 annually. Women are one-third more likely to live below the poverty level. Black women and Latinas are between two and three times more likely to live below the poverty line than men are. For women of color, facing the double oppression of racism and sexism, pay losses are even greater: 64 cents of the dollar at a loss of about \$210 a week. The average woman, according to the AFL-CIO, will lose \$523,000 in her lifetime due to unequal pay.

Even more costly to women, is the "price of motherhood," as journalist Ann Crittenden argues in her recent book of that title. In almost every case, women lose income, jobs, job experience and retirement income (while work hours increase) when they decide to have chil-

Continued on page 43

The average woman, according to the AFL-CIO, will lose \$523,000 in her lifetime due to unequal pay.

drades, are still male dominated. Second, women need a college degree in order to earn roughly what men do with only high school diplomas, giving them stronger motives to make a special effort to obtain financial security. Third, among African

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SONIA SANCHEZ TALKS ABOUT LANGUAGE

Editor's Note: The following article is excerpted from a conversation with editor Joe Sims.

We writers have a passionate love affair with words – words that quite often don't just get on the page but [actually] jump out at you. Many of us learn to take these words and examine them. We toss them up and throw them out at the populace with what I call great humility. The more education and political information we've acquired causes people sometimes to tend to be arrogant with their words and with the language, assuming sometimes that "the people" will not understand, when the reason "the people" have survived is because they indeed do understand language. They understand both the language given them and the language they've survived with and by.

Once I heard a person speak who said, "bring it down to the people." I disagree with that. We need to go back and remember how we spoke growing up – how our parents spoke, how preachers spoke, how people spoke period. We need to remember that the language we communicated with each other with was rich and fascinatingly rough but at the same time had so much meaning. One must have an appreciation of what language says and does. Sometimes we have to rearrange it to make it much more interesting and if we have a passion for it, we'll make people have a passion for it also.

When I first started to write poetry, I was also learning how to read it aloud in order to get an audience. Initially some of us would use curse words to get people to listen. After they started listening we never used another curse. One of the things I have understood is that people are not hypocritical about language. When you come to them with language that is rough, they retain a memory of it. Once, when reading a poem to homeless women about a mother who takes her child into a crack house, one of the sisters said, "Hey Maria, that's just like Jean, ain't it?"

I wanted to break down and cry. But writing makes me strong: it keeps me grounded and rooted. The thing about reading to people is that we meet in an arena that says, "Yes, people have conspired to make us less than human, but let us continue to be human."

When you identify inhumanity and the causes that lie between the spaces – I don't have to spell it out – but if you look between the spaces and the silences, you will understand the reasons why that woman did that. I said to them, "Let us lean back reflect, and say, This is something I cannot do to my children. Let us learn from this kind of inhumanity how the world is made inhumane and how to always stay on that road toward humanity, to always walk upright."

In a way, you touch people and heal them with your words: these words we use do heal. I get letters from people who say, "I am alive today because I found your book at a time when I needed to." Then you look up and realize why you are doing this.

In the 1970s, the *New York Times* asked James Baldwin if there was any such thing as a Black language. Baldwin replied, "Of course there is." He said, "Now that we have to speak it, you are angry and want to denigrate it." He continued, "But you taught it to us incorrectly, and we had to survive. We did the best we could by taking this language and twisting and turning and pulling it and coming out with a language all our own. Your language

would be dead, if it were not for this Black English."

It's always amazing to me that to this day people don't really believe we have the ability to even write, to even deal with language properly. I remember I had written something once and in the course of the question and answer period someone said, "Did you know...?" I said, "Yeah, but I wrote it in this fashion because that's the language of the person who was speaking." She said, "Oh, oh."

It's always, "Let me correct your language." I said to her, "We don't need correction. We need you to listen and understand the beauty of this language."

Sometimes I see writers speaking down to people. They think because people are working class, because people are from the streets that they need to keep using only their language. I think that the true writer – the true political writer – understands that you might need to do some of that, but you also at some point need to take people to another place. It is incumbent on us to say, "I acknowledge that, but I also acknowledge other words."

I'm speaking about this in terms of my own experience. I did a book called *A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women*. It's a long semi-autobiographical poem. It was a lyrical poem. Before reading it I prepared the audience. I began to talk. I said, "I'm going to need 20 minutes. I'm going to ask for your undivided attention. I'm going to come with language, and I chose some words that you might not know. Let me translate the words for you." I continued, "I am going to tell you that this section is about the following. And I want you just to listen to the language. And if need be, if a word hits you that's beautiful, write it down."

I was teaching from a platform, teaching people how to listen to this thing called poetry. But this poem, this book, took me to another place, but it also took my audience with me. [I said to them], "let's listen to the story because we might have a similar story." It was about this person who had



△ Sonia Sanchez.

We writers have a
passionate love affair
with words

moved from the South, and the movement into high schools and universities and politics. As I was doing this, I was tuning their ears.

I might be somewhere doing a reading, and see people just change. Quite often it's understood it is theater. You comprehend how much Bertolt Brecht really understood about the theater. How, when artists are up at the podium, an audience can be made to understand the possibilities about themselves.

If you have a vision about work or about the world, it is incumbent upon you as a writer to say, "[We've done this for awhile]. Now we must turn a corner and go some place else."

Someone said to me in an interview, "You don't write the way you used to." I said, "You're right. I shouldn't write the way I used to. If I did, then I would show no growth." I said, "We have great people like the W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois who showed us that as you get more information, you change and evolve."

This country would have you believe that if you change there's something wrong. I say, you change you stay alive; you evolve you stay alive. You're saying to the world, "I have more information now." It's not that I'm dissatisfied or that I refute what I did before, because I think that what you do is part of who you are as you advance, and people need to see that. You started there and now you here. You don't have to apologize for who you are – your history and herstory.

I remember the first time I talked about going to Cuba there was a tension in the audience. [In this situation] what I try to do is a poem where you just leave it in: it's natural. They might ask in the question and answer session about it. But the point is to use language in such a way that you are bring people into your arena. You also bring the humanity of people into the arena who have been presented as not being human: people like Fidel or Lumumba.

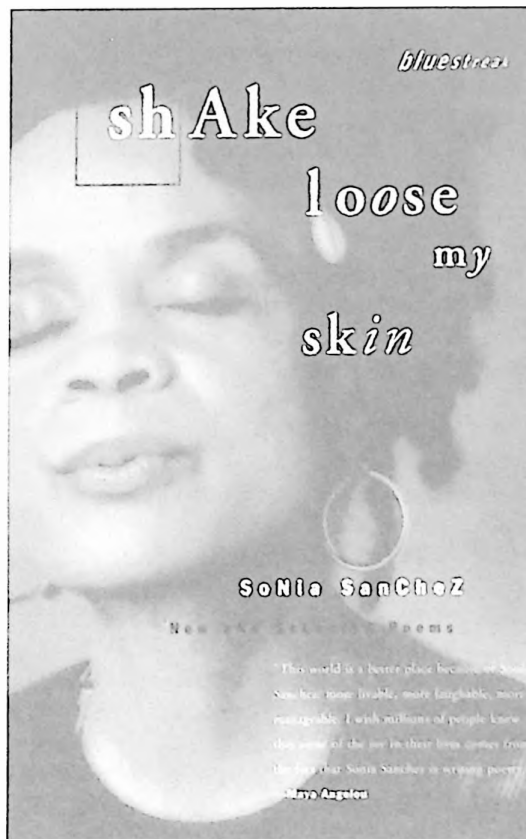
When you see the movie *Lumumba* now, you reflect on how back then we said the CIA had killed Lumumba. But when you said this before people just stared at you. However, once you put it out

there, people remember. I have had people say to me, "I've seen the movie *Lumumba* and I remember what you and others were saying 30 years ago." When this happens you don't say, "I told you so." Rather you reply, "Yeah, isn't that something," and allow them to bask in their discovery.

Writers and activists must understand that you have to wait for people sometimes. One has to have an enormous patience because the people are so bombarded and what you are saying is always limited. You don't get the press you should with the consequence that it takes people time to catch up. It's the same with language.

I remember [an occasion] when some people wanted to organize an event and put out a leaflet full of the language of revolution. I told them, "Don't do that. No one will want to come." I said, "You have to use a different language" They said, "No, no, no." And no one came because people preserve themselves. However if you have something very human on stage, people will come.

I tell political people and myself that we must use human language. We also must be human. Once I did a reading in Philadelphia and people came from the community who had never before





▲ Progress in access to universities for Black women was not an easy victory to claim.

been at that site. One of the things I like to do when I finish reading is to join hands. Well, the people who had invited me were too "hip," too "political." One white man present literally dropped his hands and the people from the community saw that. I wanted to say, "You're so dumb. You don't understand. You don't get it, because the people do see."

What I'm trying to say to an audience in my work is we become human by understanding that if someone comes to us in a wrong fashion, we've got to be able to say, "Excuse me. What did I do to harm you? Help me with this." At one time a young brother told me, "You can do that because you're older." I said, "Yes, but people my age talk about people – it's not an age thing." He replied, "What if they think I'm a punk?" I said, "My brother if someone thinks you're a punk, they'll think you're a punk anyway. Do not talk against each other. Do not gossip against each other. Do not take your tongue and curl it against anybody." He then said, "That's too hard to do." I answered, "The easiest thing to do is to destroy someone. If you have a

toxic tongue, then you have toxins in your body. It means that if you destroy with your tongue, you can kill somebody." I told him, "We already have toxins coming out of the White House and the Middle East with people saying, 'I'm correct or my God is correct.'" A judge in Alabama insists, "I've got a right to bring religion into this courtroom."

You have to ask why are we not really discussing this? You go into a Black church and someone is talking against gays and we sit there and not say a word. I can't do that. I've been not invited to some churches, because I will say, "I thought this was a holy place." You have to keep people correct: ministers, pastors, teachers of children.

Coming full circle about language, what I've learned is that there's no easy language. There's no easy way to look at language because language is very complex and seductive. It will seduce you if you're always writing in the same fashion. People will seduce you too and make you repeat yourself and repeat yourself. I always tell young people they have to be willing to break with applause and not allow it to tell you what you should or should not write.

The same thing is true regarding life: be willing to come with explanations people don't want to hear in the same way you come with language they really don't want to hear. What you've got to do is say, "I'm coming up with something new, I'm playing with this now. I'm not quite sure where I'm going with it, but I've been thinking about this. Let us speak about this together." In this way people are brought into a conversation.

I'm presently writing an essay on memory. I've noticed some of us African Americans are so at peace with the memory of slavery, being disenfranchised and all the pain this country has caused us. It's familiar, so in a sense, it's comforting.

What I'm trying to say in this essay is how do

I finally say good bye to that memory? How do I stop and say, "OK, that really did happen. How can I get to this 21st century and just acknowledge it without going back and wallowing in it and staying there?" This [problem of staying in the past] means in a sense we are not dealing with what is going on in the continent of Africa; or New York City and the difficulty for some people to even find a place to live. We're not dealing with what's going on in the churches; we're not dealing with our children. While we are dealing with advancing our careers, we're not dealing with the fact that an entire generation might be lost. We cannot afford to lose an entire generation: Black, white, Asian, Brown, whatever.

You can't deal with that if you have people constantly in the past because there's a present and a future. What we need right now are people who use language that talks about the future with a vision. Someone said to me, "You're being so optimistic." It has nothing to do with optimism. It has to do with being able to see a way. It's a long laborious path but I can see people finally with a way – with a way!

We have some of the most advanced people who can see things. I'm not talking about intellectuals only seeing the truth. I'm talking about people who have

experienced things in this country. Younger people are putting it together and looking at what is going on. That's finally what I'm talking about. And to make use of words to do all that is a joy. I couldn't figure out how to do it any other way. We all need words, but I'm saying you should be able to pull up language sometimes that will say it in the way that other people see exactly how to get to it, or how to see a way, or how to see the beauty in themselves.

I think it is important for a lot of political people to understand – I said this once at a poetry reading and people looked at me – if you only deal with ideology you will die. If you only deal with ideology your organization will die. If you only deal with ideology then at some point you will not understand things and begin to fight and destroy yourselves. Grenada was a fine example of taking hard lines on ideology and not understanding that if you don't have the art that comes along with, if you don't have the cultural things, you will kill each other. And lo and behold it happened.

[Regarding culture] the left and even a lot of Black groups will say, "Let's have a culture night." And that would be it and most of the people who were political wouldn't even come. They left it to the people to go and be happy at culture night.

They didn't even understand what was going on there. They didn't know how to weave it in and make people understand that this culture is the thing that keeps us human as we do this work. We'd sit there for so long and when you got up to read the political people would walk out. I'd say, "Where are you going? Don't you understand how closely we are connected at this point? Your speech and this poem are connected." People would turn around and say, "What is she talking about?"

Imagine all the songs we sing that inspire people to continue, but we push it to the side. It's as if it's thought, "We'll entertain the people and then give them the real thing."

[On the other hand,] this country has learned how to strip culture, take it and use it. It doesn't stay in power by being dumb. We can call Bush dumb, but he's not running the bloody thing at all. I used to say, "Culture is the consciousness of the people." They have taken over our culture and made the people unconscious.

Look at what they used culture for the Iraq war; look at the artists who sang those supposedly patriotic songs. Look at how they tried to use poets too. But they couldn't use the political ones wise enough to say no to an easy patriotism. We know that patriotism is finer and has a deeper resonance than that. ■

If you only deal with ideology you will die. If you only deal with ideology your organization will die.

Marx, Markets and Meatgrinders

A CONVERSATION WITH BERTELL OLLMAN



Illustration by John Kim

Editor's Note: Bertell Ollman is a professor of political science at New York University. He worked in the middle 1960s as an adviser to the Michael Manly government in Jamaica. He invented the board game *Class Struggle*. He is the author of numerous books on Marxism, most recently, *How to Take and Exam...and Remake the World*, *Ballbuster: True Confessions of a Marxist Businessman*, and *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marxist Methods*.

PA: What was your motivation for writing the book *How to Take an Exam...and Remake the World*?

BO: I am very much the teacher, which means that I'm always looking for new ways to present my ideas in a clear and convincing manner. Also, along with other radicals,

I've long been bothered by the fact that too few people come looking for radical teachers or ideas. We need to do more to attract them. In this book, I give students a lot of tips that will help them on exams – hoping in this way to satisfy a strongly felt need

– but I exact something in turn. That something is that they also listen to my simple explanation of what capitalism is, how it works, for whom it works better, for whom worse, how it originated and where it seems to be heading. The humor is there to make the whole thing more fun, and therefore, more attractive than such accounts usually are.

PA: How do you compare teachers and students on the left today to those of the past?

BO: I've lived through many different periods. My first political experiences were in the mid-fifties at the University of Wisconsin. There was little interest in socialist ideas at the time. That changed, and very quickly, in the 1960s. During most of the 1960s, however, I was out of the country - in England, Jamaica and France. When I came back in 1967, much to my delight, I found many thousands of radicals, of all sorts, throughout the academy. This bullish situation peaked by the early 1970s. Since then we have been through several dips and rises, as a result of developments in the world beyond the university. Since the late 1990s, there has been a very sharp rise, so that today we find almost as much interest in radical ideas of one sort or another (though not - maybe I should say "not yet" – of our sort) as there was in the 1960s. I'm speaking of students here, and not of faculty, who remain on the whole a pretty moderate if not conservative lot. Oddly enough, I've been in a position to track some of these changes through a course called "Socialist Theory" that I have been giving at NYU for the last 35 years. It's an elective, so students take the course because they want to learn more about socialism. The number who sign up for it has varied a lot but always in strict alignment with what is happening elsewhere, at other universities, in the country and in the world. Readers of this journal will be interested to learn, then, that in the last few years the enrollment in this course has been higher, far higher, than it was even in the late 1960s.

PA: In the late 1970s there was a controversy between you and the University of Maryland. The question of academic freedom came up in this battle, which you describe in your recently republished autobiography, *Ballbuster?* What was the reason for the fight, and how did it get resolved?

BO: Ballbuster? is mainly about what happened when this Marxist professor became a businessman to market his board game, Class Struggle, but, as you note, the book also deals with my own class struggle with the University of Maryland. The two events are intertwined in the book because they were intertwined in my life – both began in the Spring of 1978. None of the faculty in the Department of Government at Maryland at that time were Marxists, though a few of them were on the left. These radicals knew of my work, and they convinced a majority of their colleagues to offer me the job as chairman of the department. Surprisingly, particularly to me, the top administrators of the College Park campus of the university went along. There had never been a Marxist chairman of a major political science department in the country, so their offer was very tempting.

But as soon as I accepted, the roof fell in. When the word got out that a Marxist was going to become chair of a political science department in the Washington, DC area, the press - with a few honorable exceptions - put all their worse prejudices on display. Ten nationally syndicated columnists wrote columns violently attacking me and the university for this unprecedented assault on American values. The governor of Maryland, at three different press conferences, denounced the university for giving me the job as did the university's own Board of Regents, led by Samuel Hoover, J. Edgar's younger brother. Several state legislators even threatened the university with budget cuts if something was not done immediately to bring this madness to a halt.

Maryland, like most universities at that time, had a few Marxist professors. So it wasn't just a matter of my being added to the teaching staff. What really bothered my opponents was that I would have a little bit of power over jobs and the kind of courses that were taught. Some of them, of course, went further. As one corporation president put it in a letter to the university president, "We can't let a Marxist get a hold of a department of government so close to the White House." I guess he had an image of me putting cannon on the roof of the political science building and aiming them down Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, a mere twenty miles away. The pressure wasn't all one way – the students, most of the faculty, a few of the lower administrators, and even some of the press, including the New York Times in an editorial, were on my side. After a few months of noisy pushing and shoving, the president reversed the decision, but refused to tell anyone why he had done so. I sued, but "justice" being what it is in our courts, I lost.

PA: Related to this is the trend initiated by right-wing think tanks like Lynne Cheney's *American Council of Trustees and Alumni* of attacking college professors and pressuring administrators who don't support their views on the war or on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. What is your comment on this new trend?

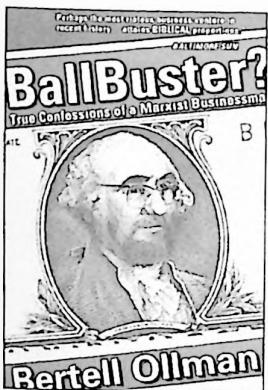
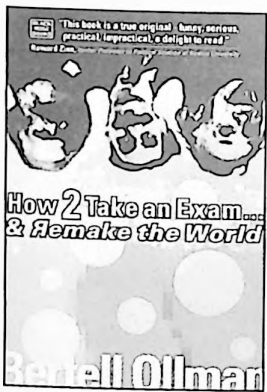
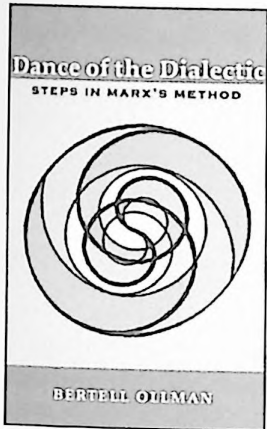
BO: It isn't new; it's been going on over 100 years. It's the current form of an old trend. McCarthyism also wasn't new. That was also part of this trend, which – in the universities – goes back to the early years of the 20th century. Scott Nearing is probably the first American radical who lost his job because of his political views. That occurred in 1915 when he taught economics at the University of Pennsylvania and wrote an article criticizing the use of child labor in the mines. One of the coal barons was on the board of trustees of his university, and Nearing was forced out.

He got another job at the University of Toledo but lost that in 1917 for opposing America's entry into World War I. So this has been going on for a long time.

What was new in the 1960s and 1970s is that a lot more radicals came into teaching positions. This created a special problem for those who ran the universities. They had good reasons, good "class" reasons, for not wanting radical ideas to gain a wider hearing. At the same time, they had to be concerned with the image of the university as a place where real learning goes on, and this means, among other things, where different explanations and visions – including Marxism – can contest over which is better. If people, and particularly students don't think of the university in this way, that is once a college is viewed as a bible college, all its efforts to pass the ruling ideology off as "truth" will meet with widespread skepticism. I think it is chiefly this contradiction that gives radical professors like me the little space we have in which to move and do our work.

PA: How do you compare the policies and goals of the Bush administration to past presidencies?

BO: It's the most conservative and indeed reactionary administration we've had, maybe ever. If this crowd were in power during the Cold War, we might have easily slipped over into a hot war with the Soviet Union. Why it's so reactionary is difficult to say. There are factions of the Republican Party that



have never been as dominant – even under Reagan – as now. This includes the Christian majority, the neo-cons and also the right-wing Zionists. The latter cannot be left out, especially for all issues relating to the Middle East. They play a crucial role – how crucial is something we still don't know – in making this administration the unmitigated disaster that it is.

PA: In, *Market Socialism*, your critique centers around the ideology that rises from market relations. You argue that this ideology is totally at odds with socialist values and ways of thinking regardless of who controls the market mechanism, the tool or whatever we call it.

BO: It's important to see that I arrive at this conclusion by laying out what goes on in market exchanges of all sorts. Given how often those exchanges occur and how early they begin, I try to show that what we actually experience here leads to certain ideas about oneself, money, products, social relations, and the nature of the society. These ideas, which have to do with individualism, freedom to choose, the power of money, greed, competition, and mutual indifference form the core of bourgeois ideology. On the whole, radicals have given too much attention to what Marcuse called the "consciousness industry" – schools, media, church, etc. – where we passively imbibe these ideas, and too little to those activities, like buying and selling, where we can be said to live them and where these ideas get confirmed on a daily basis. These ideas as well as, their accompanying emotions are the exact opposite of those - like cooperation, solidarity, and mutual concern - that are required by life in socialism, that is, if such a society is to work.

There are some things, in other words, that mix and can be mixed easily. Salt and pepper are two; there is no problem mixing salt and pepper. But there are other things that don't mix - for example, fire and water. If you try to mix them, either the fire is going to cause the water to become steam or the water is going to put out the fire. I believe mixing the market, any kind of market, with socialist institutions is a mixture more like fire and water than it is like salt and pepper. They are simply not going to be able to maintain the durable equilibrium that market socialists want and believe possible.

You referred to it as a "tool or whatever we call it." It's terribly important what you call it, just because most people do think of the market as a

tool. Tools generally function as they do because of who is holding them and how he or she chooses to use them. Basing themselves on this metaphor, many on the left think of the market as a kind of can opener. It's in our hands and we can use it to open cans if we want. However, if we change the metaphor from can opener to meat grinder and instead of seeing ourselves holding it we view ourselves as being inside it, all of a sudden the market appears to be doing something quite different. Rather than moving in ways we direct, it is us that gets moved about according to its rhythm, and it will eventually turn us into ground meat. This is a really the best metaphor with which to think of the market. The market is not an instrument in our hands like a can opener. It's more like a meat grinder and we're inside it.

It doesn't follow that we should try to abolish the market over night. I think we should make serious inroads on the market as soon as we have the chance to do so, expanding public ownership and creating a democratic central plan for producing and distributing our most important goods. That wouldn't include everything. It is terribly important, however, that we keep clearly in mind the ultimate goal of doing away with private ownership and market exchanges completely, that public education for it – particularly as the crucial step in overcoming alienation – never falters, and that the pace toward attaining this goal remains steady.

PA: What are the most pressing questions in Marxist theory?

BO: There are many, but here's my short list, and therefore, too questions that I have tried and am still trying to address. First, state theory. Marx wanted to do a systematic study of the state, particularly of the capitalist state, but, as with so much else, didn't get around to it. There's a lot in his writings that gives us an idea of what he thought, but the systematic theory of the state - something comparable to what he gave us on value - is still to be done. My own work in this area has been mainly on the role of dialectics in constructing the changing boundaries of the state and the part played by alienation and ideology in state functioning. My main writings on these topics appear in *Dialectical Investigations* and, my most recent book, *Dance of the Dialectic*.

Another important set of questions relate to the communist future. Again, Marx didn't give us a detailed picture of what socialism and communism would be like, but there's not work of any size that doesn't offer some information on this subject. In

my book, *Social and Sexual Revolution*, I try to bring most of Marx's comments on socialism and communism together to get an idea how full and detailed his views in this area were. I am currently working on a book on communism, the main aim of which is to lay out the elements of the dialectical method that Marx used to study the socialist and communist future inside the capitalist present. In spelling all this out, I not only want to show what Marx did and how he did it, but to help us to do it – and to do it more often and more effectively – with the capitalism of our day.

Understandably perhaps, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many on the left – including a lot of people who had always been critical of the USSR – have been struck with a kind of shyness when it comes to discussing to the kind of society that we want. Yet, criticisms of capitalism, no matter how apt, have never been enough. If people are to get involved in the terribly difficult work of overturning capitalism, they need to know, at least in a general way, what will replace it. And this is probably more true now than ever, when Margaret Thatcher's infamous mantra – “There is no alternative” – bombards us from all sides. And the chief place to look

least right on target in focusing on what we can build using what we've got here, in capitalism, rather than trying to draw on less than relevant experiences elsewhere.

Still another pressing question in Marxist theory has to do with class interests and their role in the development of class consciousness and in the kind of political activities people engage in. Again, despite its importance, this is a subject about which Marx said very little. People's motivation is obviously very complex, but, for the big questions and over the long and even the middle term, the pressures coming from our class interests determine what most of us want and do – for the price of ignoring them is a much lowered quality of life that can even threaten our survival both as individuals and as a class. It is not surprising, therefore, that in all class societies, the ruling economic class does its best to construct relations in every sphere of life that serves its class interests, whatever that happens to be. Better than anything else, this explains the past (at least in broad outline), our present (again, in broad outline – even taking account of all the differences between capitalist countries), and our likely future.



Media services

△ Is the market a mechanism we can use, or will it continue to abuse us until it is abolished?

for the evidence and signs of this alternative society is in the unrealized potential (what Marx referred to as the “germs”) of our own capitalist society, and not – as so many communists did earlier – in the model of socialism born in altogether different conditions on the other end of the planet. The whole debate on market socialism, whatever position one takes on it – and you've heard mine, is at

As regards the future, the question is often asked – would workers make the kind of changes in a socialist society that we Marxists expect them to? My answer is that the workers would act no differently than have earlier ruling classes, which is to say that they would do whatever is necessary to serve their class interests. And I think, in this period, their main interest as a class would be to do away with

Continued on page 43

FAY AND HERBERT APTHEKER: a life

By Gerald Meyer

Apthekeer always accompanied scholarly work with political activism. Indeed, the one enriched and motivated the other. The Communist Party simultaneously offered Apthekeer the promotion of his scholarship and the opportunity to engage meaningfully in the anti-racist struggle. In 1939, Louis E. Burnham, a major leader of the Southern Negro Youth Congress (and later a founder of the Harlem-based weekly, *Freedom*), asked Herbert to accompany him on a journey to the South to assist the efforts of the Food, Tobacco, and Agricultural Workers' Union (CIO) to organize a multi-racial union in the heart of Ku Klux Klan territory. (It was on these interracial picket lines, where so many workers were beaten and even killed, that the song "We Shall Overcome" was first sung.) Traveling with Burnham through the South meant that Herbert lived in the African American community. Out of this and so many similar experiences, Herbert reported that "I developed a deep comfort being around Black people, so that it became second nature to me." Fay and Herbert also became lifelong friends with Louis and his wife Dorothy. Herbert dedicated his *Afro-American History: The Modern Era* "to the Memory of Louis E. Burnham," who died while still a young man.

Apthekeer also worked with the Abolish Peonage Committee, which was affiliated with the International Labor Defense. This group sought to free African Americans held in debt peonage in the Deep South. Herbert repeatedly traveled to the South on this dangerous assignment. He later stated that after making contact with the victims of this system, they would travel southward not northward, because the authorities who might pursue them would assume that the runaway debt peon would flee directly northward.

Apthekeer embraced the Communist Party's position that, in the United States, racism was the greatest obstacle to the unity of the working class, the key prerequisite to any movement capable of



challenging the capitalist system – a perspective that place the struggle against racism at the very center of its political agenda. He also closely adhered to the Party's insistence that its members behave in ways that were in concert with this belief. The Apthekeers' closest friends were African Americans. John Hope Franklin recalled that he was "honored that my friendship with Fay and Herbert Apthekeer spans more than a half century. I shall

affectionately remember Fay and Herbert, not only for their commitment and dedication but also for their warm and unselfish humanity, their marvelous wit, and sense of humor." When Herbert was still a young man, Du Bois told him: "Herbert, any time you have a problem, don't hesitate, just ask me." Not surprisingly, Fay and Herbert lived in a predominantly African American community, Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York.

Fay was an organizer for the Party in Kings County and later the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. She was very active in the Stockholm Peace Pledge campaign, in defense of the Rosenbergs, and in the peace movement. Herbert admired his wife's political activism. One wintry Saturday morning, he admonished the members of the college teachers' club of the Communist Party, that while they were sitting around a living room talking and drinking coffee, Fay and the members of her community club in Crown Heights were standing in front of a local supermarket selling copies of the *Daily World* and party literature that they displayed on a folding table.

Aptheker's political activities and scholarly work were curtailed in December, 1941 when he enlisted in the United States Army. By September 1942, Aptheker was again living in the Deep South, this time as an officer in the United States Army, at Camp Livingston, in Alexandria, Louisiana, where he spent a year training the soldiers of a segregated, all-black artillery battalion. Aptheker delighted in marching his Black troops through the thoroughly segregated town singing "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on." Herbert experienced combat as an artillery officer in Europe and rose to the rank of major. His military service was something of which he was tremendously proud. When he was being introduced to speak, he would at times whisper to the master of ceremonies "Don't forget to mention that I was a major in the United States Army." In no small part, this feeling arose from his satisfaction that a once sickly, scholarly Jewish boy from a privileged background was promoted on the battlefield as part of the Allied forces occupying the unconditionally defeated Third Reich of the Master Race.

Herbert returned from the war to be confronted

Aptheker saw racism as the greatest obstacle to the unity.

with the realization that, as an avowed member of the Communist Party, he would never be able to obtain an academic appointment in the United States. He then set about to make a life as an intellectual-activist openly affiliated with the Communist Party.

Herbert served for 30 years on the one-hundred-member National Committee of the Communist Party. However, he never held a higher position in the Party. He explained: "I wasn't an organizational person. I was just an intellectual. My job was writing and lecturing and talking. I never was an organiza-

tional officer of the Party." However, in many different capacities, Herbert performed enormously important work for the Party.

Herbert functioned as the expert witness on behalf of the Party in a number of important cases, including the Smith Act trials of the top twelve Party leaders in New York City from 1948 to 1949 (at which Judge Manuel Medina repeatedly ruled him out of order), the Smith Act trial of Steve Nelson from 1951 to 1952, and later before the hearings of



△ Herbert Aptheker, Communist Party candidate for U.S. Senate from NY is interviewed by reporters from two Syracuse University newspapers, the Black Voice and the Daily Orange

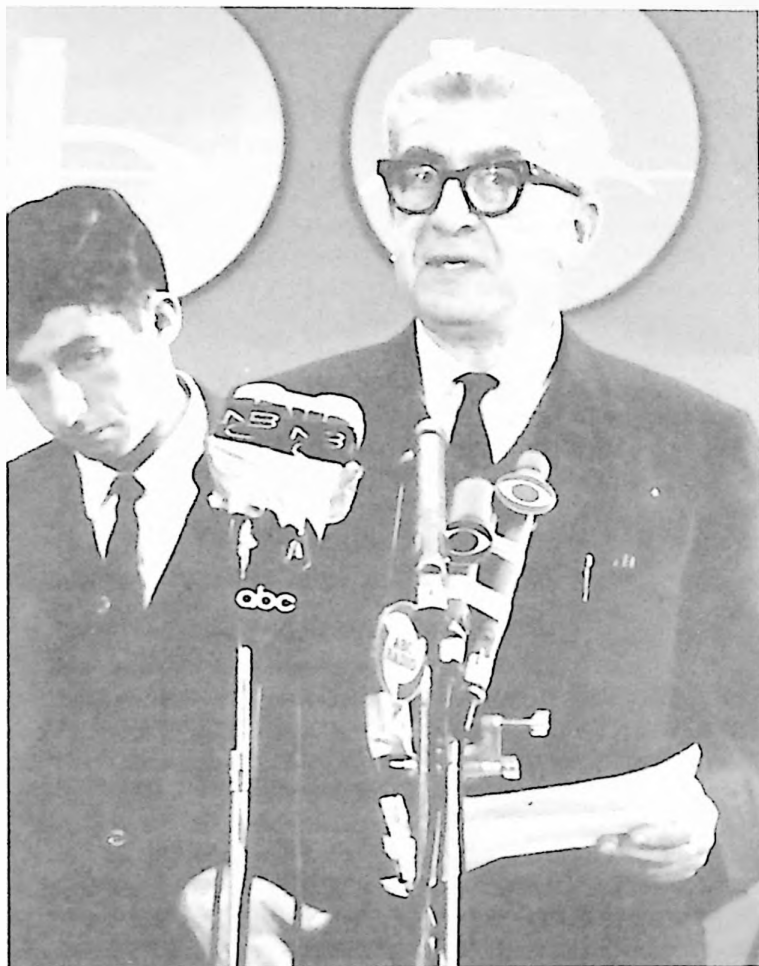
the Subversive Activities Control Board, which ultimately ruled that the Communist Party had to register with the Attorney General of the United States as a subversive organization and to submit to a long series of restrictions and penalties. Herbert also wrote the most trenchant and far-sighted critiques of the McCarran Act and the other legal assaults on the Communist Party. The most comprehensive of these was *Dare We Be Free?: The Meaning of the Attempt to Outlaw the Communist Party*, which sold 70,000 copies. As the McCarthy Era began to wane, Aptheker became a national spokesperson for the Party. Starting in 1965, he embarked on a series of nationwide speaking tours at more than a score of American colleges. When college administrators and others attempted to prevent these events from happening, his appearances often developed into impromptu free-speech campaigns.

Herbert served, from 1948 to 1952, as an associate editor of *Masses & Mainstream*, a cultural journal closely associated with the Party. When cul-

tural authority V. J. Jerome was imprisoned in 1952 for a conviction based on the Smith Act, Aptheker assumed the editorship of *Political Affairs*, a position he held until 1963. This period coincided with a tumultuous factional fight within the Party. Under his stewardship, *Political Affairs* presented the positions of the various contenders. Within the ranks of the Party, however, Aptheker allied himself with William Z. Foster, the Party's General Secretary, who insisted that the Party not change its overall outlook or organizational structure. In these internal fights, Aptheker stood together with the major African American leaders – such as Benjamin Davis, Jr., James Jackson, William Patterson, and Henry Winston – in upholding the Party's traditional stance.

In 1964, shortly after stepping down as the editor of *Political Affairs*, Aptheker founded the American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS). The headquarters of this unique institution, located in midtown Manhattan, housed a library stocked from the personal collections of a number of Communist leaders including Foster and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. Each month AIMS published the AIMS Newsletter, a six- to eight-page annotated bibliography of recent Marxist-oriented publications. It also published over 100 occasional papers on subjects ranging from Marxist literary criticism to aspects of left history in the United States. Aptheker was justifiably proud of the AIMS Occasional Paper Series because it provided a unique service, that is, it published worthy manuscripts too short to be published as books and too long to be published as articles. (He enjoyed noting that *The Communist Manifesto*, because its length fell into this category, would never have been able to find a publisher in contemporary society.) AIMS also sponsored public conferences, including ones on "The Old Left and the New Left," and "Vito Marcantonio: The People's Politician."

Aptheker made a major contribution to the anti-Vietnam War movement when in December 1966, in defiance of the United States government, together with Tom Hayden and Staughton Lynn, he arrived in Hanoi for a three-week stay as an act of solidarity with the Vietnamese people. This dramatic action helped energize the still nascent anti-war movement by applying a human face to "the enemy" and by contra-



△ On their return from visiting the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Thomas Hayden (left) Herbert Aptheker (right) January 1966.



△ Students demonstrate for Herbert Aptheker at Yale Univ., April 1976 for Dr. Aptheker's right to teach a seminar on WEB Dubois. Apthker was on the faculty at the time.

dicting much the media's widespread jingoistic reportage.

In 1966 Herbert ran for Congress, from the 16th Congressional District, in Crown Heights Brooklyn, against Edna Kelly, an organizational Democrat. Running on the Peace and Freedom ticket, he received a modest several thousand votes. Herbert later ran for the United States Senate from New York on the Communist Party ticket in 1976.

Neither Herbert nor Fay was ever indicted under the Smith Act or other laws concocted to ensnare Party members. Nonetheless, they were subjected to an endless barrage of government-inspired provocation and opposition. In 1952, Herbert was hauled before McCarthy's committee. Herbert was denied a passport, and his case, *Aptheker v. Rusk* (Dean Rusk, Secretary of State), which dragged on for years, ultimately resulted in a major civil liberties victory. In June 1964, the Supreme Court held unconstitutional the provision of the McCarran Act that barred all Communists from traveling abroad.

Herbert was a major target of COINTELPRO, an FBI program of surveillance and provocation intended to derail the re-emerging progressive movement. Branding Aptheker in his FBI file as "One of the most dangerous Communists in the United States at the present time," the FBI organized a remarkably comprehensive campaign to undercut Aptheker's influence and effectiveness. The FBI tactics included: encouraging the owners and managers of public halls to refuse to rent their spaces to meetings where he would speak; planting negative articles in newspapers in localities where he was scheduled to speak; and by having distributed

a pamphlet wherever he spoke, that it had commissioned and had published anonymously, which attempted to discredit Herbert's scholarly work.

The greatest loss to Herbert, and by extension to Fay, caused by the United States government's political persecution was his inability to obtain an academic position, which denied him his due as a scholar and condemned the Aptheker family to near penury.

Herbert Aptheker has been generally considered to be a disciplined Communist who did not criticize the Party's leadership. In part, this may have been a product of his military background. He always referred to the Party as "the outfit" in casual conversation. However, in part due to the influence of Fay and Bettina, Herbert gradually, but steadily, became more liberal. Among other issues, he increasingly questioned the Party's official neglect of the women's movement and the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. Underlying these specific concerns was the gnawing realization that the absence of democratic procedures within the Party thwarted the will of the membership. This, in turn, had the effect of demoralizing the membership and isolating the Party from its natural allies. All of these doubts and criticisms came to a head at the Communist Party's Twenty-fifth National Convention, held in Cleveland during December, 1991. At the convention, Aptheker had difficulty gaining the floor to speak, and was in ways small and large treated disrespectfully. Rejecting what he saw as the Communist Party's lack of internal democracy and failure to acknowledge past errors, in 1992, along with nine hundred other former members, Aptheker helped launch the "Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism." At its founding convention he stated that "Only a democratic practice can eventuate into a democratic society, [which is a goal that requires that] our behavior coincide with the quality of life we collectively seek to create."

On September 26, 2002, Herbert received an apology, signed by Communist Party Vice Chair Jarvis Tyner and other major leaders of the Party, for the treatment he had been subjected to during the Party split. In part, the letter stated: "It is our honest and public position that everything you questioned was not wrong and everything we did was not right. Basically your Party needs you. We need your thinking and experience in the battle of ideas. Whatever contribution you can make at this stage of your life to the development of our many younger comrades will be greatly appreciated. We

need you to help us deepen our grasp of Party and United States history." Although Herbert expressed interest and support for the more open and self-critical culture of the Party, he did not rejoin, but remained a member of the Committees of Correspondence.

The reconciliation desired by Tyner did not take place until after Fay and Herbert's death, when on October 16, 2003, at a memorial attended by hundreds in Saint Peter's Church, in Manhattan, Jarvis Tyner and Charlene Mitchell, the National co-Chair of the Committees of Correspondence, joined a long list of speakers and the New York City Labor Chorus to honor Fay and Herbert Apthekers' lives. Among the many tributes that were sent in remembrance of the Apthekers was that of Jean Damu, who said "The last Underground Railroad conductor has died ... Herbert is in that very small pantheon of white men who like John Brown, José Martí, and Joe Slovo devoted their lives to making common cause with Africans, Africans in the Diaspora, and Africans in America in their fight for liberation and against racism and imperialism." Mumia Abu-Jamal added, "Herbert Aptheker's work did not record the minutia of the princes or the privileged; rather, he looked to those consigned to the lowest levels of American society, Black captives, and marveled at the deeply hidden evidence of their resistance to a terrorist system of white supremacy, and told the stories of their never ending fight for freedom."

The Apthekers moved to San Jose, California in the summer of 1977. Both parents wanted to live near Bettina. At that time, Bettina was teaching at San Jose State University. She had earlier played a major role in the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley. Fay had survived cancer and specifically wanted to help her only daughter with her two children – Joshua Kurzweil, now 36 years old, and father of his first child, Luca, born July 6, 2003, in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia; and Jenny Kurzweil, now 28, mother of Jacob, born January 5, 2003, a great-grandson whom Herbert actually held a week before his own death. In 1980, Bettina was appointed Professor of Women's Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz and is now the chair of that Department. Bettina, whose areas of study are women's history,

women's cultures, and feminist pedagogy, has combined political activism with scholarship.

When Fay and Herbert moved to San Jose, Herbert opened up the West Coast office of the American Institute for Marxist Studies, and for a time continued to publish its newsletter. He also arranged for symposia in Berkeley and Santa Cruz, and was a frequent speaker at Stanford, San Jose State, San Jose City College, and at Black churches in the area. For ten years he taught a course on racism and the law at University of California Berkeley's Boalt Hall Law School and later for Hastings Law School in San Francisco. During this period, he continued to write and publish, including his book on the history of anti-racism. He became increasingly unable to travel, so most of his engagements were in the San Francisco Bay area. Fay continued her political activism, especially as a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Until the last four or five years of her life, when she was no longer well enough to do so, Fay usually traveled with Herbert. Throughout their sojourn in Southern California, Fay and Herbert enjoyed an active social life, which included providing hospitality for many students and scholars.

The Apthekers lived their lives well. They coped with extremely difficult situations in dignified, creative ways. They managed to handle with grace the repression of the McCarthy Era, and still worse for them, the near dissolution of the Communist Party. They turned adversity to advantage. Herbert's inability to work in a college allowed him to concentrate single-mindedly on his research and writing. Barred from teaching in a college, Herbert taught in the Jefferson School for Social Science and its successor, the

Fay and Herbert Aptheker turned adversity into advantage.

New York Center for Marxist Studies. Fortunately, Herbert and Fay were young enough when McCarthyism took hold to live long enough to see its demise, so that later in life Herbert did teach in college. In 1969 student demands for a course on Black history led to an invitation to teach at Bryn Mawr College where he taught until 1973. In 1973, Aptheker joined the Social Science faculty at Hostos Community College (CUNY), where he taught until 1976.

Fay's death on June 15, 1999 devastated Herbert. He explained that she was not just important to him emotionally and physically, and for his



△ April 1976 Dr. Aptheker addresses a rally at Yale University.

work, she was also his personal link to the working class and its egalitarian values. Whenever he had been curt to a bus driver, or had not left a sufficiently generous tip for a waiter, that evening Fay would confront him with his behavior. She was sensitive to these slights because of her own poor working class background. Similarly, whenever he was impatient with people who did not quickly enough grasp a point, she would remind him later: "You have a Ph.D., and they don't." Fay's inability to graduate from college endowed her with empathy for the underdog that did not always come naturally to her husband. Herbert said that these admonishments "would help me," because they had irrevocably cast their lot with working-class people.

Fay and Herbert Aptheker conducted their lives in consonance with their conviction that knowledge and human progress emanate from combining theory and practice. They personified the very best that the Communist movement has produced – fearless, humble, effective fighters for the exploited and oppressed. Herbert Aptheker represents the absolute ideal of socialist humankind – a scholar-activist, a worker-intellectual – something made possible for him and the movement through the devotion of Fay, who put aside some of her aspirations to support the work of the man she loved, moreover for a man who was able to contribute monumentally to the cause to which she had dedicated her own life. It behooves all those committed to the hazardous path of struggling for a more just world to heed and honor their lives. ■

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KAREN TALBOT,

in Memoriam, 1934-2003

Known internationally as a fighter for peace and justice, Karen Talbot, a member of the editorial board of this magazine, passed away after a difficult battle with cancer on October 12, 2003. She was 69.

Talbot began her work as a political activist in the Labor Youth League, precursor of the Young Communist League, in Detroit in the mid-1950s. Her peers in that organization considered her a leader. Friend and compatriot, Mark Solomon, also of those early Detroit days, called her "a major player in the LYL." With the threat of nuclear war looming, Karen led the local peace delegation to the office of then freshman member of congress John Dingell to discuss issues of nuclear war and peace.

In the depth of the McCarthy years and the Cold War, Karen led and became deeply committed to the movement against nuclear armaments and for world peace. Though she found herself constantly under surveillance by Hoover's FBI, her fighting spirit was never dampened. She participated in numerous cultural activities, including forming a singing group in Detroit's left community.

In 1973, she traveled with other peace activists to the World Peace Assembly held that year in Moscow. By 1975, her talents and leadership marked her for service on the secretariat of the World Peace Council (WPC), the world's largest peace organization. She served in the leadership of that organization into the 1980s and remained affiliated with the WPC until her death, working closely with branches of the US Peace Council. Solomon recalled that her work for the WPC was a "remarkable experience because it exposed her to various movements, leaders and national conditions" that formed the basis of all of her work. Her close friend Romesh Chandra, long-time World Peace Council director, says, "she was also a key organizer of several major WPC-led conferences and other events in different continents."

Chandra praised Talbot's activities on many issues. In the 1980s, Karen became deeply interested in the conflict in Afghanistan. Readers will recall that the left-wing government there, with the support of the Soviet Union, struggled against the

fundamentalist forces that eventually coalesced as the Taliban by the early 1990s with the support of the CIA and the Reagan administration. It was Karen's work, the peace movement, that brought much of this history and the realities of this conflict to light in the United States.

In the 1990s, Karen founded the International Center for Peace and Justice, an organization that remains affiliated with the World Peace Council. Through this organization, she continued to research and write about the imperialist roots of the major global conflicts. She wrote extensively on Yugoslavia, North Korea, Afghanistan, and up to the time of her death, she shattered the lies and exposed the real causes behind Bush's war on Iraq. In these years she also worked closely with such organizations as the San Francisco-area Gray Panthers and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Many of her articles appeared in the *People's Weekly World*; she joined the editorial board of *Political Affairs* in January of 2003. Upon her death, the World Peace Council secretariat released the following statement:

Dear comrades:

We were shocked at the death of Karen Talbot, an outstanding fighter for peace and justice in this world. She dedicated her entire life to the just causes of peoples in all continents. She participated in numerous congresses and conventions for peace and led together with other comrades for a long time the World Peace Council. Her life and example will guide future generations, and her modesty and strong will to fight against imperialism will stay alive for all of us. We express our deepest condolences to her family and the peace movement of the USA.

— The WPC Secretariat

We at *Political Affairs* echo these sentiments and urge our readers to continue the battle for peace and remember that we stand on the shoulders of giants. ■

Reverse Gender Gap

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dren. With some slight improvements, women remain the primary caregiver in nearly every family. For many mothers, single or married, the economic inequalities described above are exacerbated. For married women, dependence on men is heightened and the threat of economic hardship enforces interpersonal inequality and conflict. Divorced mothers and their children have among the highest rates of poverty of any demographic.

Crittenden argues that unless other sources of financial support for motherhood are made available institutionalized inequality will persist. She suggests retirement benefits for mothers, public funding for day care and health care for children and their caregivers, salaries for primary caregivers, expanded public education for pre-school children, equalized social security for spouses, increased financial contributions from husbands and fathers, increased educational and support resources for parents and equalization of living standards for divorced parents.

As for the fallacy of female supremacy, the gains made by women through struggle and implementation of policies such as affirmative action point to the necessity of broader systematic change. But if female supremacy is a fallacy, does this mean that men go unhurt by gender inequalities? No. Men and boys are hurt when their families suffer because pay inequity causes their mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunts to lose income, get fired, face hiring discrimination, are refused pensions, don't have equal Social Security benefits, lose out on promotions or have limited access to higher education. Additionally, if the average woman loses \$523,000 in income in her life, does this mean that the average man is enriched by \$523,000 in his lifetime? If pay inequity costs women \$200 billion yearly, does this mean that men are enriched by \$200 billion? The answer is no. These billions are savings in labor costs to employers. Employers enjoy the profits of male supremacy and gendered divisions among working people. So it makes sense that the right tries to portray the profits of progressive social change toward women as bad. It cuts into their bottom line. ■

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Bertell Ollman

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the conditions that underlay their common exploitation as workers. Besides taking over the means of production, this could only be done by developing democracy to the point where no group – even among the workers – would be in a position to establish a new form of exploitation. This move toward a thoroughgoing democracy would coincide with a rapidly growing equality, in large part because equality is necessary for democracy to work. Taken together – perfecting democracy and expanding equality because this is in the interest of the entire working class – is the best answer to the criticism we often hear that a socialist society will only replace one form of exploitation with another.

Today, unfortunately, many otherwise committed Marxists do not give class interests the attention that it deserves. Partly, this is a result of accepting a overly narrow definition of "workers" that places most of the people who work for a living under other labels (rather than seeing that most Blacks, women, Moslems, gays, etc. are still – and also – workers); and partly it is a result of the real but explainable difficulties most workers in the advanced capitalist countries have had in becoming class conscious. Thus, for example, while some of the most creative work by Marxists in recent years has been in the area of ecology, most of these scholars seriously underplay the role of class interests, both in studying who suffers most from the destruction of the environment and in developing an effective political strategy to stop it. This neglect usually follows from prioritizing human interests over class interests. Clearly, capitalists and other non-workers are human beings and have the same human interests that workers do. But it is not human interests that are decisive in determining how most people act economically and politically, at least as regards to the most pressing questions in their lives. And in any clash between human interests and class interests, it is almost always class interests that win out. Just examine how the great majority of capitalists act whenever their class interests are at stake, no matter the cost to their human interests. And I think this is the case with workers as well, even though the gap between class and human interests is not as great here. But if this is so, then Marxists must put class interests back into the center of their analysis, and not just for the problems of the ecology.

Finally – and this is only on my short list – there is dialectics. The political disorientations of the last two decades have driven a small but growing number of Marxist scholars to reexamine dialectics not just as a worldview but as a method of research. In the mid-1980s, I co-edited a three volume work on *Marxist Scholarship on American Campuses*, in which Marxist scholars in twenty three different disciplines reported on the Marxist tradition in their areas. While much of this work was extremely impressive, the understanding of dialectics in the American academy was shown to be limited. But it is only with dialectics that one can achieve an adequate grasp of the complex interactions in society, as they have evolved, are even evolving and are likely to evolve in the future. Therefore, only dialectics can consistently avoid the one-sided and static caricatures of reality that constitute such a large part of bourgeois ideology. I would go so far as to say that most of the shortcomings found in Marxist analysis today - a few of which I've noted above - can be traced to the neglect or misuse of dialectics. In short, a lot rides on getting dialectics right, but we must also be able to explain this difficult subject in ways that most people can understand, something that may be even harder to do than getting it right. Most of my theoretical writings, including *Alienation*, *Dialectical Investigations*, and – most recently – *Dance Of The Dialectic: Steps In Marx's Method* have been shaped by these dual aims. ■

**AT THE TOP OF
THE FOOD CHAIN
BUT THE BOTTOM
OF THE LINE**

I am an American,
I rush to be before the bullet,
as I push air out of my way,
I snap commands, advice
without request, involuntarily,
I wait only briefly for anything,
I comb my hair without looking,
as fast as possible, then
can't understand why my
strands are haphazard.
I brush past, my goal in sight,
but you, who are you?

I am an avorter,
My eyes have never touched
anyone. I will rush to my grave
and even in the tomb
will be pissed, for everything
I didn't get to finish.
I am an American. I pledge allegiance
to the clock, to productivity, to the bottom line.

Judith Pardon

