

CARTON 6:39

STRONG IN THE STRUGGLE

COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE

1992-1994

2017/193

WHERE

WE

STAND

DECLARATION
OF PRINCIPLES

COMMITTEES OF
CORRESPONDENCE

Goals and Vision

We are motivated by the profound conviction that our country needs a humane alternative to the anti-human system of capitalism. For the majority of working people, and especially racially and nationally oppressed people, this system does not work. After the 1980s Decade of Greed, the top 1 percent of wealth-holders have more property than the bottom 90 percent. Capitalism is fundamentally anti-working-class and anti-union, exploitative, militarist, elitist, racist, sexist, homophobic and destructive of the environment on which all life depends.

The tragic consequences are human and individual. Ever more men, women and children are homeless. Millions are trapped in low-wage, dead-end jobs, and millions more are unemployed, two-thirds of whom never receive unemployment insurance. One in seven Americans is without health insurance.

Our country is a mosaic of diverse peoples and experiences whose generations of labor have built an economically and scientifically advanced country. They have also created a rich cultural and historical tradition. The existing social system blocks the utilization of these human and material resources to solve the problems we confront.

Instead of promoting community, capitalism pits people against each other, to the detriment of us all. It fosters criminal abuse of women and children in the name of "family values." Our national resources continue to be senselessly squandered on preparations for war.

This looting of society and nature casts a shadow of pessimism across the land, shattering parents' dreams of a better future for their

children.

There is a spiritual crisis, a profound alienation of people from institutions unresponsive to their needs.

This crisis can only be addressed by a program of radical democratization. It requires that workers should organize to gain influence over their wages, benefits and working conditions and gain democratic control over their workplaces. It includes the realization of full equality, the empowerment of people to control all aspects of decision-making affecting their daily lives. Democratization means making institutions, public and private, advance the people's well-being. Only a massive and organized popular movement can turn our country onto a saner path.

☆ We see the division of our people due to racism as the main obstacle to achieving our goals, and therefore the struggle against racism is central to all our work.

☆ We are for full employment; universal health care; decent and affordable housing for all; quality, multicultural public education and child care.

☆ We are for affirmative action and massive infusion of resources into cities and other areas as steps toward freedom of people from racial and national oppression. Without justice, there is no peace.

☆ We are for economic, political and social equality of women and for reproductive rights and freedom from sexual harassment, rape and domestic violence. We are for the inclusion of women in decision-making in all areas of political and economic life.

☆ We defend democratic principles embodied in the Bill of Rights, which are being dangerously eroded.

☆ We advocate disarmament, the universal abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, an end to the international arms trade and U.S. wars and intervention abroad and the immediate cessation of nuclear testing. We urge the conversion of our economy and our national life from military to

peacetime orientation.

☆ We will work with people around the world to preserve, protect and restore the environment.

☆ We believe that there must be a fundamental realignment of the political system, new electoral initiatives and the creation of new vehicles to attain political empowerment.

Our vision has an international dimension, seeking ties and cooperation with popular movements and working-class organizations in all countries.

We view socialism as the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion. This vision is not a utopia, but a practical response and solution to the contradictions of capitalist society. We will continue to participate in the ongoing public discussion of how to define socialism in light of contemporary realities. We will continue to assess the experience, including both achievements and failures, of the first sustained attempts to build socialist societies in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. We welcome all those who would like to participate with us in this exploration, while we struggle together to address the immediate problems of our people.

We suggest the following characteristics for U.S. socialism: A society where the promise of democracy is fulfilled by the practice of self-government. A society of social justice, which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights. A society which preserves and builds upon all previous economic and scientific achievements, and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands.

Theoretical Framework

The initiators of the Committees of Correspondence are predominantly people with a socialist vision and a Marxist view of history. Yet we are convinced that we can and must build an organization that is plural-

ist, embracing members who have theoretical frameworks other than Marxist. Recent history makes us believe that there must be tolerance, and even more, genuine mutual respect and equality among differing activist views.

We recognize and respect the right of members to think independently about all questions. This frees theory from being officialized, made into a dogma, which tends to lead to its degeneration. A science of society, like any science, requires freedom of thought and inquiry, the clash of opposing views. Its integrity is preserved by the standards of internal consistency, inclusiveness and testing through practice which govern all science.

Marxism arose, historically, from revolutionary movements for democracy. It is still evolving. Marxists continue to have much to learn from people who approach the problems of society from other theoretical frameworks. As Marx said, only change is permanent. The continuing distinct contributions of liberation theology, environmentalism, feminism, theories of non-violent resistance and multiculturalism, non-Marxist socialism and others cultivate the common ground for struggle. We impose no ideological litmus tests. People with diverse views are necessary and welcome in this organization on an equal basis.

Therefore, we are both Marxist and pluralist. We believe different strands of socialist and democratic thought can coexist and enrich each other within the context of a shared political program and practice.

Who We Are

This organization is open to all people on the basis of its program. Our concern is to advance the true interests of the nation and its people.

We are partisan to the working class of all races and nationalities, occupations and industries, who are the immense majority of the people. We believe that the development of

capitalism gives the working class and its organizations a unique role as an engine of progress. The organization of workers into effective democratic unions to bargain collectively is a bedrock of the capacity of the working class to defend its interests and those of all the people. We therefore support any and all efforts to dramatically increase the unionized sector of the working class.

Our partisanship requires relentless struggle for the equality of all racially and nationally oppressed peoples – African Americans, Mexican American/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Caribbeans and other Central and South Americans, Asian and Pacific Island peoples, Native American Indians, people of Middle Eastern origin. We recognize the enormous contribution of the African American freedom struggle as inseparable from and essential to all struggles for democracy and social progress.

We are uncompromising partisans of the complete equality of women in society and at home. Women, through their numbers, organization and participation in every type of progressive movement, have become a critical force for change in society, in our organizations and in personal relations.

We believe that progressive social change requires struggle. We are an organization of grassroots activism, committed to electoral and non-electoral forms of activity.

We are internationalist, and organize solidarity with peoples everywhere struggling for their genuine independence and rights as nations.

We are committed to the struggle against all forms of human oppression – racism and anti-Semitism, sexism, discrimination against the elderly and homophobia. We are for gay and lesbian rights and the rights of the disabled.

We seek the full participation of young people and are energized by the militancy and justifiable rage of a generation who are being robbed of their future.

We are committed to an organization which is from its inception multiracial and multinational, and recognize that this requires ongoing attention and effort.

We practice the democracy we preach. Our leadership is elected by and accountable to the membership. We arrive at major decisions through free discussion at all levels. Our practice is open, tolerant and mutually supportive. We strive for consensus whenever possible.

We seek an atmosphere which fosters the study and development of theory and the acquisition of organizing skills.

Relations With Others

Socialists can only proceed towards their goals, both short and long term, together with others. We do not seek for ourselves any special or privileged status. We do not believe that any one group has a monopoly on wisdom. Diversity is a source of strength and insight.

In our relations with others, we are governed by the principles of mutual respect and honest dialogue. We are willing to explore differences openly and to engage in critical and self-critical exchanges.

We look forward to cooperating with all democratic and progressive groups.

We always seek the broadest unity to achieve immediate goals. Counterposing socialism to reform can only damage efforts at reform and doom socialism to marginalization. We do not seek to compete with, control or supplant the many movements for reform.

We especially seek out dialogue, discussion and cooperation with other left and socialist organizations, and with socialist-minded people who are not affiliated. Together we can make socialism a significant factor in the political life of our country.



An Invitation ...

This statement of principles was adopted on July 19, 1992, by a Committees of Correspondence national conference on Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s.

We hope that it will stimulate fruitful thought, dialog and action. We welcome your ideas and proposals.

We invite you to join us in exploring the path ahead and in struggling for a democratic and socialist society.

- Yes, I'd like to be a member of the Committees of Correspondence. Enclosed is \$25 (\$10 unemployed, senior, youth or other low income), which will entitle me to membership, including a subscription to the monthly newsletter.
- Enclosed is \$4 for the Proceedings of the Conference on Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the 90s.
- I'd like to subscribe to the newsletter only. Enclosed is a \$10 subscription fee.
- I'd like to subscribe to the discussion bulletin, Dialogue and Initiative. Enclosed is \$10.
- I know good causes need money. Here is my contribution of \$_____ to help in your work.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Return this coupon to:

Committees of Correspondence
11 John St., Rm. 506
New York, NY 10038
(212) 233-7151, fax (212) 233-7063

COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE
11 JOHN ST. ROOM 506
NEW YORK, NY 10038

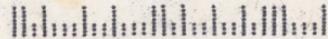
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- Tina Shannon
Lee Brown Avenue
P.O. Box 42-1031
San Francisco, CA 94142

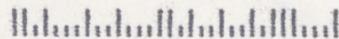
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COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE
11 JOHN ST. ROOM 506
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Lee Brown

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94142

COPY

April 19, 1994

Dear Senior CoCer,

By now we have talked to all of you by phone, If not, please call us immediately at 415/383-2593. The big tribute is planned for Sunday, June 26th, at 2 pm at the Scottish Rite Center on Lakeshore in Oakland. We are delighted that you are all participating and getting your photos and life stories ready. Following are dates and deadlines you need to know.

1. The **bio or anecdote about your life** that you are writing for the program book will need to be typeset, laid out and printed so we need plenty of time to prepare this. Therefore, the **deadline is Mon, May 9th**. You may mail them to me at 28 Morning Sun, Mill Valley CA 94941 or to whom you have been talking to or to Huli at 522 Valencia St, San Francisco CA 94110. In some cases we will pick them up when we visit for photos if the visits are before the deadline. (Note: That's less than three weeks away.)

Also pick a photo of yourself and include with your piece of writing. These bios/anecdotes must be no longer than one standard page of typed copy (8 1/2 x 11 ins).

2. We are visiting some of you who have photos and other memorabilia for the exhibit. Someone will be calling you soon to set up times for the visits.

3. There will be a **chorus rehearsal and videotaping session** during the lunch and extending into some of the afternoon workshop time at the **May 21st** general membership meeting. Watch your No CA CoC newsletter for the location of this meeting and look for us there for the rehearsal room. We will have one other rehearsal and taping session after that on the other side of the Bay, but we want to get as much accomplished at the first rehearsal as possible. Andrea Turner will be the conducting the chorus so it should be fun. Any suggestions for songs can be called to me at 415/383-2593. Also good singing is not a prerequisite. We will sound good no matter what and it is a way for everyone to have a voice so don't worry about your voice quality (or lack thereof).

4. Photos and memorabilia that you are lending for the exhibit but do not want to mail may be brought to the May 21st session. We will be carefully recording what belongs to whom.

5. In the not too distant future, we will have invitations to mail. You can either take a bunch to send to your friends and contacts (including a personal note would be great) or you can give us a mailing list to add to the main mailing. Please be gathering your list for that time.

5. Finally, this seems like a lot to do. But we don't want to overburden anyone with tasks. This is a big party for all of you and meant to be a tribute that is also fun. So , if all you can do is come, that's okay too.

Thanks for your time and years of work. We'll be talking soon.

Mary Idosidis
for the Tribute Committee

California Committee of Correspondence
Income and Expenses
3/ 1/92 Through 4/22/92

Category Description	1992
INCOME	
Contributions Received:	
July Conf.	1,660.00
Contributions Received - Other	3,919.00

Total Contributions Received	5,579.00
Day's Pay	3,662.38
Dues	1,169.75
Initiations	4.00
Misc. Income	3.00
Sustainer	2,287.95

TOTAL INCOME	12,706.08
EXPENSES	
Auto Expenses	505.84
Contributions Made	90.00
Convention Exp	908.88
Employee Benefits	291.66
July Conference:	
Phone	278.52

Total July Conference	278.52
Misc. Expense	44.00
Contrib. to Nat'l C. of C.	1,000.00
Office Expenses:	
Maintenance	122.36
Misc.	58.04
Supplies	475.69
Transport	298.90
Volunteers	909.33

Total Office Expenses	1,864.32
Payroll Taxes	182.98
Postage	755.97
Rent - Office	300.00
Retiree Exp.	486.10
Taxes	27.52
Telephone	720.51
Travel to Nat'l meets	116.00
Wages	2,400.00

TOTAL EXPENSES	9,972.30

INCOME MINUS EXPENSES	2,733.78
	=====

California Committee of Correspondence
Account Balances
As of 4/23/92

Acct	3/ 1/92 Balance	4/23/92 Balance
ASSETS		
Cash and Bank Accounts		
Bank Account-WF	22.72	2,648.10
	-----	-----
Total Cash and Bank Accounts	22.72	2,648.10
Other Assets		
Book Ctr Rcvble-owed by bookstore	3,000.00	3,000.00
MSS Rcvble-owed by Marx. Study	2,389.90	2,389.90
	-----	-----
Total Other Assets	5,389.90	5,389.90
	-----	-----
TOTAL ASSETS	5,412.62	8,038.00
LIABILITIES		
Credit Cards		
Cr Card Payable	0.00	0.00
	-----	-----
Total Credit Cards	0.00	0.00
Other Liabilities		
Fed P-R Tax Pay-Federal payroll taxes	452.79	295.60
Rent Payable	7,200.00	7,200.00
St P-R Tax Pay-State payroll taxes	32.94	81.73
	-----	-----
Total Other Liabilities	7,685.73	7,577.33
	-----	-----
TOTAL LIABILITIES	7,685.73	7,577.33
	-----	-----
OVERALL TOTAL	-2,273.11	460.67
	=====	=====

California Committee of Correspondence
Report of Income from Clubs during March and April 1992

	Sustainer	Day's Pay	# DP	Dues	#Dues	J/F/M
Marin (J. Reed)	\$ 52.00	\$ 0.00	0	\$ 20.00	4	3/0/0
C. Costa	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
S. Clara (Lab/Comm)	265.07	563.38	6	154.85	25	12/12/15
Humboldt (KEL)	45.30	101.00	3	13.00	9	7/0/9
Sacramento	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
Sonoma	188.50	120.00	2	223.00	58	7/3/3
Holiday	55.50	70.00	2	57.60	30	3/9/1
PV Mercado	82.00	0.00	0	86.00	30	8/8/7
Patterson	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
Eastern	222.50	700.00	9	171.90	47	11/11/10
SF Day	33.00	0.00	0	12.00	12	4/4/4
Western	78.00	664.00	5	49.00	13	4/5/5
Yoneda	219.00	127.00	2	68.00	28	9/11/8
EB Day	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
EB Mercado	124.00	142.00	2	25.00	5	4/2/2
EB PubWrk	249.30	250.00	3	0.00	0	0/0/0
EG Flynn	0.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
Robeson	99.00	0.00	0	120.60	47	12/10/8
EBTU	380.50	850.00	7	103.50	25	6/8/6
Wheeler	100.00	0.00	0	0.00	0	0/0/0
	=====	=====	=====	=====	=====	
	\$ 2193.67	\$ 3587.38	41	\$ 1104.45	333	

* total dues

98/91/88

* includes at-large members

Income Report Form

California Committee of Correspondence

CLUB _____

DATE _____

I. Dues Income

A. dues units by month

YEAR	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec

B. total dues units and amount

_____ @ \$1.00 = \$ _____

_____ @ \$5.00 = _____

TOTAL DUES (I) _____ **units** \$ _____

II. Sustainer payments

A. Number of members paying by month

YEAR	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec

B. Sustainer Collected \$ _____

 retained by club _____

Net Sustainer to CCC (II) \$ _____

III. Total Income

Dues (from I) \$ _____

Net Sustainer (from II) _____

Day's Pay (# members _____) _____

Contributions _____

Other _____ _____

TOTAL SUBMITTED \$ _____

Mail completed report to: Steve Willett, 6422 Irwin Ct., Oakland, CA 94609
 Checks preferably made payable to "California Committee of Correspondence", otherwise to Steve Willett

Committees of Correspondence

11 John Street, Room 506, New York, New York 10038, (212) 233-7151, fax (212) 233-7063

Important! Please read and return!

March 1993

Dear CoC member,

The January meeting of the National Coordinating Committee decided to directly consult the members of the Committees about three questions: when to hold our founding convention, where to hold our founding convention, and the adoption of emergency statements by the National Executive Committee. **This referendum is part of the exercise of membership democracy in the CoC; please take the time to register your opinion on these questions.**

Date of founding convention. The Berkeley Conference of the CoC voted to hold a founding convention in approximately 18 months, that is, in January 1994. It was felt by all at the NCC meeting that the convention should be in either Chicago or New York. However, an investigation of the logistics suggested that the late spring or early summer would be a better time. This would avoid bad winter weather, make it possible to consider use of dormitories on a campus for housing, and make it possible for more people to coordinate their vacation with the convention. The National Coordinating Committee voted (23 in favor, none opposed, 2 abstaining) to hold the convention in late spring or early summer of 1994, subject to membership referendum. If a majority agree with the recommendation of the NCC, the convention will be held in late spring or early summer of 1994. If a majority disagree, the convention will be held in December of 1993 or January of 1994, as originally proposed by the Berkeley conference.

Place of founding convention. As indicated above, Chicago and New York were the sites discussed. In favor of Chicago, it would be within driving distance of a large circle of the Midwest, from Pittsburgh to Minneapolis, and even parts of the South, making it possible to build in an industrial area where we need to greatly increase our presence. Chicago felt that it is capable of hosting a convention, with substantial support from the national office. New York is at the center of the Eastern population corridor, and would allow us to consolidate and base ourselves on one of the two existing main membership bases of the Committees. New York would also offer special opportunities for media coverage and guest participation from other organizations. Chicago and New York are gathering information about convention facilities and costs. The matter is to be decided at the next NCC meeting in June (by the NEC, if it is necessary to decide earlier). The NCC agreed to hold an advisory referendum of the membership on location.

Adopting statements. The January NCC meeting adopted statements condemning the illegal blockade of Haiti by the Bush administration (with the support of president-elect Clinton) and on the Middle East. A motion was then made, in view of the infrequency of NCC meetings and the possible need to respond quickly to future developments, to authorize the National Executive Committee to issue statements on behalf of the NCC when extraordinary circumstances warrant, provided that such statements are adopted unanimously. The NCC action was based on the Section 4, Accountable and Representative National Leadership, of the How We Are Organized document adopted in Berkeley. The motion was adopted with no votes in opposition, one abstention. It was then voted to submit the action to a referendum of the membership.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Kendra Alexander Co-chair • Carl Bloice Co-chair • Leslie Cagan • Peter Camejo • Barry Cohen Associate National Coordinator • Carl Davidson • Manning Marable Co-chair • Charlene Mitchell Co-chair, National Coordinator • Rafael Pizarro Co-chair • Raahi Reddy • Sharon Stewart • Steve Willett Treasurer

cut here

When shall we hold our founding convention?

The National Coordinating Committee recommends the holding of the founding convention in late spring or early summer of 1994. Please check a box to indicate your agreement or disagreement.

agree

disagree

Where shall we hold our founding convention?

The NCC agreed to hold an advisory vote to help decide whether the founding convention should be held in Chicago or New York. Please check a box to indicate your preference.

Chicago

New York

Emergency statements by the National Executive Committee.

The NCC voted to authorize the National Executive Committee to issue statements, by unanimous vote, on its behalf in extraordinary situations. Please indicate your approval or disapproval.

approve

disapprove

Please return this ballot to CoC, 11 John St., Rm. 506, NY, NY 10038.

Goals & Principles Discussion

A Memo to Members

TO: CoC members
FROM: Goals & Principles Task Force
DATE: March 1993
RE: Discussion on Our Identity

We are engaged in the challenging task of creating a new organization on the left in the United States. We do so at a moment which not only affords the possibility, but demands of us that we reexamine, openly and in a friendly and critical spirit, such important questions as strategies for fundamental social change; theories of society and history; how we define our goals, popularize them, and achieve them. In short, questions of the specific political identity of the CoC.

An important first step was the adoption of Where We Stand at the Berkeley conference on Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the 90s last July. To carry that discussion forward, the January 1993 National Coordinating Committee meeting agreed to launch a wide-ranging discussion throughout our organization and beyond. The objective is to prepare a new document for adoption at a founding convention in 1994.

The questions below were adopted for the purpose of guiding and focussing the discussion. Of course, anyone may wish to respond to only one or some aspects of the questions raised, or to discuss matters relating to the CoC identity not posed in these questions, or to contribute other questions.

We recognize that some of these questions cannot be answered in the short term and will be on our agenda for years to come. Some things will undoubtedly look different from the vantage point of several years from now. Other questions will require some level of unity and the expression of definite positions at our founding convention as a basis upon which to move forward. One task of the CoC membership discussion is to determine which ones call for immediate resolution and which ones will be a matter of debate for some time to come.

A Goals & Principles Task Force was established and given the responsibility to coordinate collective discussion and debate among the Committees of Correspondence membership. (If you have questions or ideas concerning the conduct of the discussion, please feel free to contact the members of the Task Force or the CoC offices.)

We encourage all members to participate in these discussions to the fullest extent possible.

Below are the proposed goals and timetable for each phase of this project.

Phase I. Identify various views that exist on the questions posed. March 15 - July 15, 1993.

Circulate questions to CoC members, chapters, and regions, asking them to have collective discussion.

Ask each area to name a person to be responsible to report back to the Task Force on positions taken in their discussion and to send any position papers to the Task Force (via CoC national office, 11 John St., Rm 506, NY, NY 10038).

To stimulate local discussions, Dialogue & Initiative will publish some individual views on these questions. This will begin in the Spring 1993 issue and continue in each succeeding issue. Local Committees are also encouraged to invite left groups and individuals not in the CoC to participate in these discussions, and to write up their views for circulation in D&I.

Phase II. Get input from entire organization and prepare an initial draft on Goals & Principles. July 15 - October 15, 1993.

Task Force reviews all materials submitted and synthesizes the collective discussions.

Task Force prepares initial draft reflecting that synthesis and distributes it to all members of CoC.

Phase III. Task Force prepares final draft on Goals & Principles based on organization-wide discussions. Oct 15, 1993 - April 1, 1994

Entire membership discusses draft document and sends its written comments, alternative proposals, etc. to Task Force. (By Feb. 1, 1994)

Based on feedback, Task Force prepares new draft for founding convention to consider. (By April 1, 1994)

The above timetable is based on the assumption that the founding convention will be in June or July of 1994. If the referendum of the membership determines that the convention be held at the beginning of 1994, the schedule will be shortened proportionately.

CoC Goals and Principles

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. What working hypothesis should be adopted as a strategy for radical social change at this stage in U.S. history? What constitutes a progressive agenda in this era? How can such an agenda be advanced given the balance of forces and the state of the left? In the short term? In the long term?
- B. Given that strategy, what should be the specific role of the Committees of Correspondence? Within the mass movement? Within the left? What should be our stance internationally? How do we view our role in the electoral arena? In the trade union movement? Democratic struggles? What constituency do we seek to serve and attract?
- C. Given the CoC's specific role, what organizational form would best serve our political objectives and facilitate reaching our constituency? (By "form" we mean organization? coalition? network? party?)
1. How should the CoC function internally? What should be the relationship between our leadership and our members at the base?
 2. What level of political unity is necessary to establish the collective functioning of the CoC?
- D. Should the Committees of Correspondence be:
1. Explicitly socialist? If yes, a) What do we mean by socialist? b) Why socialist?
 2. Explicitly Marxist? If yes, a) What do we mean by Marxist? b) Why Marxist?
 3. Explicitly anti-capitalist?
 4. Explicitly pluralist? If yes, a) What do we mean by pluralist? b) Why pluralist?
 5. Explicitly something else?

TO REPEAT: An important part of discussing these questions will be deciding which questions need to be resolved at the founding convention and which ones call for ongoing discussion in the future organization.

The following people are members of the Task Force at this time; others may be added to ensure geographic and political breadth:

Kendra Alexander (N. Cal), Frances M. Beal (N. Cal), Leslie Cagan (NY), Barry Cohen (NY), Arthur Kinoy (NJ), April Knutsen (MN), Manning Marable (CO), Betita Martinez (N. Cal), Tristan Masat (OR), Charlene Mitchell (NY – ex officio), Mark Solomon (MA), Sharon Stewart (S. Cal), Willie Williamson (IL).

Communications to the Task Force and written contributions to the discussion should be sent via the CoC national office: 11 John St, Rm 506, NY, NY 10038, (212) 233-7151. Also, Northern California office: 522 Valencia St, San Francisco, CA 94110, (415) 863-6637; NY CoC office: 27 W 20th St, Suite 1006, NY, NY 10011, (212) 229-2388.

Committees of Correspondence

11 John Street, Room 506, New York, New York 10038, (212) 233-7151, fax (212) 233-7063

March 1993

Dear CoC member,

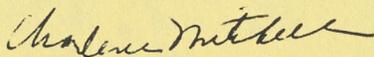
Our National Coordinating Committee held its second meeting in January. The connecting thread of the items taken up was consolidating the Committees of Correspondence, in membership, activities and program, and moving toward a founding convention. This requires, of course, the thinking and involvement of the entire membership. (An extensive report on the NCC meeting is contained in the latest Corresponder, which has already been sent to you by third-class mail.) I hope that you will give your attention to the following matters that are raised in this mailing.

Membership. We set ourselves the goal of reaching 2,500 members by the end of 1993, up from 1,750 at the end of 1992. This could be achieved by renewing 80 per cent of the 1992 memberships, and recruiting an additional 1,300. Of that goal of 1,300, more than 350 have already been achieved. **It is time for you to renew your membership.** Please take a moment to fill out and return the form below. We hope that you will also use the enclosed Where We Stand brochure to introduce a friend to the CoC.

Goals and Principles discussion. An important part of the process leading up to our founding convention will be the Goals and Principles discussion. This should involve all our members and friends and other progressive people in probing the significance of the changes which have occurred in our country and the world, how to achieve radical changes in our society. The objective is to adopt an expanded statement of principles. A set of questions to assist in guiding and focussing this discussion has been prepared by a special task force, and is enclosed.

Referendum. Three questions, including the time and place of our founding convention, were referred by the NCC meeting to a membership referendum. An explanation of the questions is included on the ballot. Please take the time to make your voice heard.

Yours in struggle,



Charlene Mitchell

- Yes, I want to renew my CoC membership for 1993. Enclosed find \$25 (\$10 unemployed, senior, youth or other low income).
- Yes, I want to renew my subscription to Dialog & Initiative for 1993 at the special members' rate of \$5.
- Enclosed find my contribution of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Kendra Alexander Co-chair • Carl Bloice Co-chair • Leslie Cagan • Peter Camejo • Barry Cohen Associate National Coordinator • Carl Davidson • Manning Marable Co-chair • Charlene Mitchell Co-chair, National Coordinator • Rafael Pizarro Co-chair • Raahi Reddy • Sharon Stewart • Steve Willett Treasurer

Committees of Correspondence

11 John Street, Room 506, New York City, New York 10038, (212) 233-7151, fax (212) 233-7063

June 26, 1992

Dear CoC Affiliate,

We are looking forward to a productive conference in Berkeley, July 17-19. Some 250 people have already pre-registered. If you intend to be present, we urge you to register now, using the coupon on the enclosed brochure. All pre-registrants will be sent additional information about location, transportation and other logistics.

As you know from materials previously sent, it is being proposed that the conference:

- issue a draft left agenda for wider discussion
- project a founding convention for the second half of 1993
- adopt a short declaration of principles
- establish an interim organization and structure for the period until the founding convention

Three widely representative committees have been working to lay the basis for action at the conference on the above points. Drafts of the Declaration of Principles and the Proposed Interim Structure have already been circulated.

Even if you will be unable to attend, your thinking on all these matters is solicited for inclusion in the work of the conference.

In particular, your input is needed concerning potential officers and members of a national body or bodies. The Committee on Interim Structure proposes that a National Coordinating Committee and an Executive Committee resident in and near New York be established. (Subsequent discussion shows that there are some differences with the term and/or concept of an Executive Committee.)

The Interim Structure Document proposes that members of the CoC in each area (there are about 30) elect one person to the NCC following the conference. (Therefore, all members, and not just those attending the conference, would be eligible to participate.) Other members of the Coordinating Committee would be elected at-large by the conference, and the body would be empowered to add a certain number of members to reflect growth and to improve class, racial, gender and other representation.

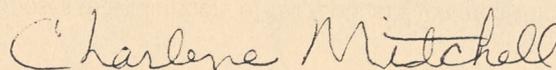
The Committee on Interim Structure also proposes that national co-chairs be elected at the conference, who will be part of the National Coordinating Committee, but elected separately. Initially, three co-chairs were proposed, but subsequent discussion has indicated the desirability of increasing that number.

Of course, the conference may modify these projections or make different decisions. We believe that, whatever the conference eventually decides, it is essential that there be the necessary preliminary thinking to permit the conference participants to act as they feel best. In this case, that means having available a large and diverse group of nominees who have agreed that they would, if elected, serve. We would like to have a sufficiently large number so that the conference will be able to elect bodies which are geographically, politically and racially representative.

Any affiliate of the CoC is entitled to make nominations. Please include information about the experience, activity, gender, racial/national background or other pertinent information of the person being nominated. In many cases nominees will be unknown to many conference participants and they will need to rely on this description to make serious, well-informed decisions and to implement affirmative action. We also need a way of contacting each nominee to assure that they are willing to serve. Please enclose your name and a way of contacting you as well.

The role of the Implementation Committee will be to gather nominations and descriptions, determine the willingness to serve and present the names to the conference. We propose to have the names of all nominees available at the opening of the conference.

Yours for a successful conference,



Charlene Mitchell,
for the Implementation Committee

my name _____ city/state/zip _____
address _____ phone _____

I propose the following person for
 National Coordinating Committee
and/or Executive Committee

name _____
address _____
city/state/zip _____
phone _____
description _____

(Use separate sheet for additional information)

I propose the following person for National Co-Chair

name _____
address _____
city/state/zip _____
phone _____
description _____

(Use separate sheet for additional information)

I propose the following person for
 National Coordinating Committee
and/or Executive Committee

name _____
address _____
city/state/zip _____
phone _____
description _____

(Use separate sheet for additional information)

I propose the following person for National Co-Chair

name _____
address _____
city/state/zip _____
phone _____
description _____

(Use separate sheet for additional information)

Fighting For Our Kids and Defeating 174



by the Northern California Committees of Correspondence
522 Valencia St., San Francisco CA 94110 415-863-6637 (fax) 415 863-5543

There's a virus spreading over our land, infecting entire communities. We call this social disease hopelessness. It is symptomatic of a society that has abandoned its collective commitment to the common good. While this affliction has been recognized for decades, it grew to epidemic proportions in the 1980s. Now, in 1993, we face a massive outbreak of hopelessness in the form of Proposition 174, an attempt to destroy one of our most important civic institutions: public education. The measure would provide vouchers to be used, with almost no restrictions, in any educational institution, including religious and independent schools. As progressive community activists, we are particularly alarmed by this proposition because it:

- *fosters the notion that competition will make for better public institutions where some people will win and others lose;

- *feeds on growing racism, immigrant bashing and elitism;

- *will break down the separation of church and state in publicly funded institutions;

- *challenges the idea of public education as a key to empowering communities and creating a more democratic society;

- *crushes the hopes of millions of working people who view public education as a vehicle for gaining a better life.

Like Proposition 13, the battle over Proposition 174 will reverberate throughout the nation, challenging some of the best features of our society and seriously undermining our collective future.

What's in Prop 174?

Before responding to this initiative and discussing strategies to defeat it, let's look at a few of the most alarming specifics. The initiative would:

- ***Allow private voucher schools to discriminate** based on religion, sex, IQ, test scores, income, or physical limitations. Voucher schools could expel anyone they wanted with no due process.

- ***Cut neighborhood schools by at least 10%** simply to subsidize children who are currently in private schools. For a school district like Oakland, this would mean a loss of approximately \$23 million.

- ***Take away funding for two students every time one transfers to a private voucher school**, resulting in a shift of at least \$2.6 billion away from our already underfunded public schools into private schools.

Setting the stage: the background to Prop 174

In the last thirty years, public education has been the target of critiques by groups ranging from big-business think tanks to teachers' organizations. The pressing and legitimate concerns of parents, students and other community activists are often directed at the day-to-day functioning of schools, or, more specifically, their ineffectiveness in dealing with violence, drug addiction, counseling and health care. Other criticisms relate to the broader educational system: the lack of high expectations for all students, insufficient preparation for the work world, limited accountability of school personnel, the increase of standardized testing, the deterioration of services and physical plants. In addition, the progressive community continues to address the use of racist, sexist and Eurocentric course materials, tracking students by ability, the lack of community involvement in decision making and decreased and unequal funding for public education. All of these problems combined make the public schools especially vulnerable to an attack by the religious right and conservative business community.

So, is there any thing that's right about today's public schools? While there are countless suburban communities and upper middle-income neighborhoods which are satisfied with their schools, what about the schools serving the majority of working class communities, especially where large percentages of people of color are concentrated?

On a day to day level, many of the latter schools do outstanding jobs, building on multicultural and real-world

oriented course materials and lessons. In addition, as Berkeley School Board member Pedro Noguera pointed out in his recent study of a West Oakland middle school, public schools increasingly serve as sanctuaries from many of the individual and collective problems of our communities: unemployment, homelessness, and deterioration of social services. What is interesting is that, despite growing criticism and a mistrust of public schools in general, a majority of working class families -- of all racial and ethnic backgrounds -- maintain faith in their local schools.

What does public education mean to us?

Why is there still this gut-level commitment to one's own local school? Is this just a matter of convenience? We don't think so. Going back to the Massachusetts Bay colony, communities have made a commitment to provide education and to pay for it. While the growth of most early towns was unplanned, the Northwest Ordinance of 1789 mandated and provided land for public schools. Public education is **the** public space for our society: it is where children learn about themselves in relation to others. It is where they learn about equality and diversity, not only in the abstract but as they test it out in life. While we might wish and fight for free national health care or a federal jobs program, **we have come to expect a free public education as a birthright for all in this society**, largely as a result of struggles by working class organizations, women, the disabled and, especially, by people of color, extending back to the battles led by African-Americans during Reconstruction.

These struggles for access have gone hand-in-hand with issues over equalizing public school funding. In states like Texas, community activists have challenged inequalities in school funding which is based primarily on property taxes. Here in California, as a result of the 1974 Serrano-Priest case, we have succeeded in guaranteeing that 95% of our school districts are within a \$300-per-student-allocation of each other. However, our recessionary economy has led to an ironic result: education funding has been **leveled down** so that California is in the bottom third of the States in money spent on school children and is 46th in average class size.

Herein lies the background to Prop 174. It is precisely the current crisis in the public school system and the hope of many that these public institutions can answer the general societal crises which have prompted the corporate and religious right to seize this moment to launch an all-out-attack on public, secular education in California. Pat Robertson's Christian Crusade is mobilizing thousands of volunteers and raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to help pass the Voucher initiative. They stand to make tremendous nationwide gains with a victory in California.

The real agenda: promoting the politics of hopelessness

The major thrust of the campaign for Prop 174 is an ideological assault on our long-held assumption that, as a society, we are required to provide certain basic services to our entire population. The campaign feeds upon racism and the growing anti-immigrant sentiment, adding fuel to the dangerous argument that poor people and immigrants -- not a sick economy -- are straining our educational system.

The right wing employs the language of free-market competition which has at its root the frightening proposition that some schools should, in fact, be superior to others. Comparing schools and supermarkets, conservative economist Milton Friedman suggests that the voucher plan "would do exactly the same good that competition does in every other area. What is it that keeps a supermarket trying to serve its customers?" he asks. "Why is it that we have had an enormous improvement in the quality of supermarkets in the past 20 or 30 years but we have had a deterioration in the quality of schools? What produces an improvement is competition among different people for the custom of the citizen. The effect of the voucher plan would be to improve the public schools ... because [they] would lose their customers." (*SF Chronicle*, 3/30/79).

Backers of the initiative appeal to the concept of individual choice when the only real choice is that made by school administrators, not by the parents or students. They appeal to the fear that -- if public schools are sinking -- why should only some people be able to opt out? They appeal to the notion that -- when schools are underfunded and communities feel powerless to organize a fight -- it's time to abandon ship. They promote the politics of hopelessness.



Who loses?

If the voucher initiative wins, there will be big losers, among them:

- *the immigrant community which can lose the legal protection of bilingual and English as a Second Language programs.

- *the working poor who -- unable to pay the skyrocketing tuition costs created by the greater demand for private education -- will send their children to local public schools which have been robbed in order to support children in private voucher schools. (Currently, 76 percent of non-religious schools in California charge above the voucher amount.)

- *a major part of the public sector workforce -- some 300,000 teachers and 200,000 support staff -- who will face massive layoffs over the space of several years.

- *those children who -- just weeks before the beginning of school -- discover that they were not chosen by the voucher school.

- *all of us who are fighting to instill in our children, friends, neighbors and co-workers an awareness of the power of collective action, mass struggle and a commitment to equality and to one's community.

Strategies for defeating Prop 174

Between now and November, defeating Prop 174 must be a priority for the entire progressive community. We need to work with and expand existing community/trade union coalitions which have organized to defeat the measure. We need to walk and talk, sharing -- as we go -- our special understanding of this initiative in the context of what public education means to us as a nation.

Beyond November, we must begin to seriously address educational reform in the context of a progressive analysis of the current crisis and specific proposals for what is to be done. During the last several decades we have failed to establish the common ground necessary to build a progressive agenda for education; as a result, we have left a vacuum which the Christian right and conservative business community is attempting to fill.

We invite you to join us in:

- expanding the debate about public schools to include why education is at the core of maintaining and broadening an egalitarian view of our society

- exposing the anti-working class, racist and anti-immigrant nature of this constitutional amendment

- stressing the need for increased and equalized funding of public schools and a challenge to California's regressive tax system

- focusing attention on business' attempt to tighten its grip on public education, exposing all of their "so-called "educational reforms," including Whittle Communications' attempt to sell news-and-advertising packages to public schools

- joining us in building a group of educational activists

to assess current educational reforms and to create a progressive/left agenda for education, focusing on -- but not limited to -- issues such as increasing and equalizing funding; creating multicultural and anti-sexist curricula; involving parents, students and the community in decision making; and, meeting the language needs of California's growing immigrant population.

About the Committees of Correspondence

We are motivated by the profound conviction that our country needs a humane alternative to the anti-human system of capitalism. We are for a society of social justice, which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights. A society which preserves and builds upon all previous economic and scientific achievements, and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands. We are both Marxist and pluralist. We believe different strands of socialist and democratic thought can coexist and enrich each other within the context of a shared political program and practice. Our organization is open to all people on the basis of its program.

We invite you to join us in struggling to build a new organization of the left dedicated to democracy and socialism.

For more information, fill out this form and mail it to:

**Northern California Committees of Correspondence
522 Valencia St., San Francisco CA 94110**

.....

I would like more information about the Committees of Correspondence.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE CONFERENCE

Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s

PLENARY SPEAKERS

Charlene Mitchell •
Jose La Luz • Man-
ning Marable • Eliza-
beth Martinez • Mark
Solomon • Carl
Bloice • Leslie Cagan
• Ying Lee Kelly •
Herbert Aptheker

INTERNATIONAL

Ngo Thanh Nhan,
VIETNAM • Judy Re-
bick, **CANADA** •
Sigfrido Reyes, **EL**
SALVADOR • Andrea
Lederer, **GERMANY** •
Hlatshwayo Madoda,
SOUTH AFRICA

DOCUMENTS

WHERE WE STAND:
A Declaration of
Principles of the
Committees of
Correspondence
•
How We Are
Organized

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Breaking New Ground in Berkeley

They arrived from Jersey City, Baltimore, West Palm Beach, Jackson, Houston, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Honolulu, Anchorage, Madison, Ann Arbor, Louisville, Albany and, of course, places like New York, D.C., Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles – 35 states in all. Their simply having arrived, responding to the conference call, was dramatic and undeniable testimony to the most important thing: the continuing vitality of the left in the country's political life.

Unquestionably, recent developments in Eastern Europe and the shifting political currents throughout the world have had a major impact on progressives, prompting some disorientation, a lot of rethinking and no small amount of personal disquiet. Still, the notion that the idea of socialism is dead or that the left is now hopelessly battered and shattered was always more a fond wish of reaction than a accurate reading of reality. The idea should have been put to rest by the cautious but optimistic mood of the 1,300-plus conference delegates who, with their feet on the ground, ended up setting out on a course that, if successful, will bring about a significant realignment of the U.S. left.

"As we approach the 21st century, working-class, democratic, left and socialist activists stand at a crossroads," read the call to the Conference on Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism. "No clearly marked trail lies before us. We must be willing to blaze new paths to guarantee a better and more just social system."

The conference call, initiated by then less-than-six-months-old Committees of Correspondence, had, by the time the gathering opened July 17, garnered support from a wide range of more than 500 activists from workplaces, labor unions, community organizations, social and political movements and schools and colleges. Some were public officials. A large number of the participants were men and women involved in the trade union

movement. A third came from African-American, Latino, Native American, Asian and Middle Eastern communities. Some were "exes" from existing left-wing political parties and groups. Many were independents. What they had in common was a desire to come together and find a new basis for productive exchanges and unified activities, hopefully jettisoning most of the dogmatism and sectarianism that has plagued the U.S. left in the past and kept it divided into contending camps.

The conference thus became a forum for people from various left and progressive trends, movements and organizations to discuss in an unrestricted environment various views on the past and perspectives for the futures.

A particularly valuable aspect of the conference were the exchanges which took place in 45 workshops which took up topics ranging from the new world order to the gay and lesbian movement to organizing the unorganized to senior power to national health care.

Many of those attending the conference were there to discuss broad left unity, debate issues and network with others rather than to take part in any new formation. But hundreds who remained for the Sunday session joined the Committees of Correspondence and took part in launching a year-and-a-half-long action, discussion and organizing effort. This is seen as lead to the founding at the end of 1993 of a new activist organization oriented toward democratic socialism.

On the following pages you will find facts and figures about the conference, be introduced to the Committees of Correspondence and the men and women who will serve as its transitional leadership and read the major part of the proceedings of its plenary sessions.

If you desire further information, please contact the CoC (11 John St., Rm 506, NY, NY 10038, (212) 233-7151). And, of course, you are invited to join and take part in this historic project.

COMMITTEES OF
CORRESPONDENCE
**NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
JULY 17-19, 1992

Where We Stand

Goals and Vision. We are motivated by the profound conviction that our country needs a humane alternative to the anti-human system of capitalism. For the majority of working people, and especially racially and nationally oppressed people, this system does not work. After the 1980s Decade of Greed, the top 1 percent of wealth-holders have more property than the bottom 90 percent. Capitalism is fundamentally anti-working-class and anti-union, exploitative, militarist, elitist, racist, sexist, homophobic and destructive of the environment on which all life depends.

The tragic consequences are human and individual. Ever more men, women and children are homeless. Millions are trapped in low-wage, dead-end jobs, and millions more are unemployed, two-thirds of whom never receive unemployment insurance. One in seven Americans is without health insurance.

Our country is a mosaic of diverse peoples and experiences whose generations of labor have built an economically and scientifically advanced country. They have also created a rich cultural and historical tradition. The existing social system blocks the utilization of these human and material resources to solve the problems we confront.

Instead of promoting community, capitalism pits people against each other, to the detriment of us all. It criminally abuses women and children in the name of "family values." Our national resources continue to be senselessly squandered on preparations for war.

This looting of society and nature casts a shadow of pessimism across the land, shattering parents' dreams of a better future for their children.

There is a spiritual crisis, a profound alienation of people from institutions unresponsive to their needs.

This crisis can only be addressed by a program of radical democratization. It requires that workers should organize to gain influence over their wages, benefits and working conditions and gain democratic control over their workplaces. It includes the realization of full equality, the empowerment of people to control all aspects of decision making affecting their daily lives. Democratization means making institutions, public and private, advance the people's well-being. Only a massive and organized popular movement can turn our country onto a saner path.

- We see the division of our people due to racism as the main obstacle to achieving our goals, and therefore the struggle against racism is central to all our work.

- We are for full employment; universal health care; decent and affordable housing for all; quality, multicultural public education and child care.

- We are for affirmative action and massive infusion

of resources into cities and other areas as steps toward freedom of people from racial and national oppression. Without justice, there is no peace.

- We are for economic, political and social equality of women and for reproductive rights and freedom from sexual harassment, rape and domestic violence. We are for the inclusion of women in decision-making in all areas of political and economic life.

- We defend democratic principles embodied in the Bill of Rights, which are being dangerously eroded.

- We advocate disarmament, the universal abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, an end to the international arms trade and U.S. wars and intervention abroad and the immediate cessation of nuclear testing. We urge the conversion of our economy and our national life from military to peacetime orientation.

- We will work with people around the world to preserve, protect and restore the environment.

- We believe that there must be a fundamental realignment of the political system, new electoral initiatives and the creation of new vehicles to attain political empowerment.

Our vision has an international dimension, seeking ties and cooperation with popular movements and working-class organizations in all countries.

We view socialism as the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion. This vision is not a utopia, but a practical response and solution to the contradictions of capitalist society. We will continue to participate in the ongoing public discussion of how to define socialism in light of contemporary realities. We will continue to assess the experience, including both achievements and failures, of the first sustained attempts to build socialist societies in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. We welcome all those who would like to participate with us in this exploration, while we struggle together to address the immediate problems of our people.

We suggest the following characteristics for U.S. socialism: A society where the promise of democracy is fulfilled by the practice of self-government. A society of social justice, which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights. A society which preserves and builds upon all previous economic and scientific achievements, and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands.

Theoretical Framework. The initiators of the Committees of Correspondence are predominantly people with a socialist vision and a Marxist view of history. Yet we are convinced that we can and must build an organization that

is pluralist, embracing members who have theoretical frameworks other than Marxist. Recent history makes us believe that there must be tolerance, and even more, genuine mutual respect and equality among differing activist views.

We recognize and respect the right of members to think independently about all questions. This frees theory from being officialized, made into a dogma, which tends to lead to its degeneration. A science of society, like any science, requires freedom of thought and inquiry, the clash of opposing views. Its integrity is preserved by the standards of internal consistency, inclusiveness and testing through practice which govern all science.

Marxism arose, historically, from revolutionary movements for democracy. It is still evolving. Marxists continue to have much to learn from people who approach the problems of society from other theoretical frameworks. As Marx said, only change is permanent. The continuing distinct contributions of liberation theology, environmentalism, feminism, theories of non-violent resistance and multiculturalism, non-Marxist socialism and others cultivate the common ground for struggle. We impose no ideological litmus tests. People with diverse views are necessary and welcome in this organization on an equal basis.

Therefore, we are both Marxist and pluralist. We believe different strands of socialist and democratic thought can coexist and enrich each other within the context of a shared political program and practice.

Who We Are. This organization is open to all people on the basis of its program. Our concern is to advance the true interests of the nation and its people.

We are partisan to the working class of all races and nationalities, occupations and industries, who are the immense majority of the people. We believe that the development of capitalism gives the working class and its organizations a unique role as an engine of progress. The organization of workers into effective democratic unions to bargain collectively is a bedrock of the capacity of the working class to defend its interests and those of all the people. We therefore support any and all efforts to dramatically increase the unionized sector of the working class.

Our partisanship requires relentless struggle for the equality of all racially and nationally oppressed peoples — African Americans, Mexican American/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Caribbeans and other Central and South Americans, Asian and Pacific Island peoples, Native American Indians, people of Middle Eastern origin. We recognize the enormous contribution of the African American freedom struggle as inseparable from and essential to all struggles for democracy and social progress.

We are uncompromising partisans of the complete equality of women in society and at home. Women, through their numbers, organization and participation in

every type of progressive movement, have become a critical force for change in society, in our organizations and in personal relations.

We believe that progressive social change requires struggle. We are an organization of grassroots activism, committed to electoral and non-electoral forms of activity.

We are internationalist, and organize solidarity with peoples everywhere struggling for their genuine independence and rights as nations.

We are committed to the struggle against all forms of human oppression — racism and anti-Semitism, sexism, discrimination against the elderly and homophobia. We are for gay and lesbian rights and the rights of the disabled.

We seek the full participation of young people and are energized by the militancy and justifiable rage of a generation who are being robbed of their future.

We are committed to an organization which is from its inception multiracial and multinational, and recognize that this requires ongoing attention and effort.

We practice the democracy we preach. Our leadership is elected by and accountable to the membership. We arrive at major decisions through free discussion at all levels. Our practice is open, tolerant and mutually supportive. We strive for consensus whenever possible.

We seek an atmosphere which fosters the study and development of theory and the acquisition of organizing skills.

Relations With Others. Socialists can only proceed towards their goals, both short and long term, together with others. We do not seek for ourselves any special or privileged status. We do not believe that any one group has a monopoly on wisdom. Diversity is a source of strength and insight.

In our relations with others, we are governed by the principles of mutual respect and honest dialogue. We are willing to explore differences openly and to engage in critical and self-critical exchanges.

We look forward to cooperating with all democratic and progressive groups.

We always seek the broadest unity to achieve immediate goals. Counterposing socialism to reform can only damage efforts at reform and doom socialism to marginalization. We do not seek to compete with, control or supplant the many movements for reform.

We especially seek out dialogue, discussion and cooperation with other left and socialist organizations, and with socialist-minded people who are not affiliated. Together we can make socialism a significant factor in the political life of the country.

This statement of principles of the Committees of Correspondence was adopted on July 19, 1992.

MORNING PLENARY SESSION, SATURDAY, JULY 18

No matter how we came, we must proceed together

by Charlene Mitchell

When one appears before the Supreme Court to present an argument, the first question the justices ask is, "How did you get here?" At that point the lawyer outlines the process of appeal through the different courts that resulted in a hearing before the Supreme Court.

Legend has it that, as he was appearing to present arguments for the ground breaking case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the great lawyer, later to become a justice and the conscience of the court, Thurgood Marshall, when asked this question, responded with a straight face, "Your Honor, I came by taxi."

Most of us came by car, others by BART, and many of us came by one or another air line. But we all came here because the people of our country are suffering the multiple crises of unemployment and homelessness, lack of health care and educational opportunity, racist discrimination and racist violence, anti-Semitism, sexism and homophobia, the dangers of U.S. militarism and attacks on our democratic rights. Our people are looking for ways to struggle, to fight back. We came here because we want to be more effective as the left in these struggles.

We came here to talk together, to exchange ideas and experiences, to assemble much of the left in one place, strengthen our ability and resolve to work together in a way that furthers the unity of the left in our country.

Organizing this conference has been a tremendous undertaking. Present today are people from any number of political backgrounds and trends, that we could come together here guarantees that this will be a very successful gathering. The representative character of this conference is no mistake; hard work and determination and organization made it happen. It could be better, but it is one helluva beginning.

The collapse of socialism in Europe in such a relatively short period of time forced all who called themselves socialist, or politically identified with existing socialism, to rethink their concept of what socialism should be. It forced us to look anew at the changes in science and technology, the changing composition of the work force, developments in the struggles for national liberation and a host of new problems related to all these developments.

On the other hand, the new problems presented new potential for renewing and strengthening the left and building a mass movement for socialism in our country. More importantly it brought us back to the necessity to define our course based on the realities of the present. — on circumstances as they are and not as we hope them to be. We rediscovered the importance of maintaining democratic standards within an organization and, as importantly, to be consistent in the struggle for democracy in society as a whole.

Many of our own weaknesses were exposed to us as we

approached the 1992 presidential elections. Without the candidacy of Rev. Jesse Jackson, the progressive forces had no independent handle to influence the national elections.

We may have as many positions in this room as there are people — maybe a few more making room for those individuals who have more than one opinion — but one thing is clear: we never came together to try to hammer out the best approach. Such is the importance of this conference, where different positions will be discussed. We may not agree, but maybe we will be less divided and better able to find a way to participate in the entire electoral process in this very important election year.

In December 1991, barely half a year ago, a number of members of the Communist Party met in the now notorious Room 211. What began as a moment to take stock and ponder where to go from there has now become a very different entity. People from the Communist Party, from CrossRoads, from the Democratic Socialists of America, from NCIPA, from Solidarity, from the Socialist Organizing Network and many others, including independent leftists and independent socialists, have come together here in Berkeley. We have organized with broad participation this important weekend and we all hopefully will use it well.

Let me return for a moment to some of the other repercussions of the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Most significantly, the transformation of the former Soviet Union left the United States in a near unchallenged position of world leadership. The Persian Gulf War showed that the U.S. had no qualms about exercising its ability to bully the rest of the world to achieve its aims.

Although there were some important demonstrations and actions in protest of the war, the progressive forces were nearly powerless in the face of an onslaught of demagogic, patriotic jingoism and yellow ribbons. This war, fought for no legitimate reason, was the crowning height of President Bush's New World Order.

That New World Order is merely an attempt to continue U.S. dominance over the rest of the world. And that dominance will be backed up by military might. Thus, what was once a bilateral arms race has become a unilateral buildup.

The Gulf War, Bush's acceptance of South African President de Klerk's vision of democracy and his thumbing his nose at the rest of the world at the environmental summit in Rio are harbingers of what is to come.

Previously, the Soviet Union helped to provide a certain balance to rein in the crazies in this country. Now, that balance is no longer there. It is now up to us, the American people to rein in our own crazies. The left must take a major responsibility in organizing this task.

Just as the international scene is fraught with problems, so is the domestic situation.

The country is in one of the deepest recessions, or depressions, since the 1930s and there appears to be no way out. Since 1989, New York City alone has lost 70,000 blue collar jobs. General Motors has announced that 70,000 of its workers will lose their jobs. Steel mills in Indiana and Chicago are closing.

Aircraft production is being shut down. Lockheed has closed its plant in California and moved to Georgia. Amoco recently announced it was laying off 8,500 workers, and Unocal is laying off 1,100. These are not temporary layoffs. They are due to restructuring, which means those jobs will probably never appear again.

The cuts in military production did not reduce the deficit or the military budget. The money is now being spent on highly sophisticated offensive weaponry.

The high rates of unemployment, poverty and hunger, which have been endemic to the African-American community for years, are now being visited on the country as a whole.

This crisis is not something created outside the capitalist system; it is a natural by-product of the contradictions of capitalist development. The socialist experiment in Eastern Europe, while making many contributions to social development, ultimately failed. However, we should not mistakenly conclude from that failure that capitalism's problems can ultimately be solved within the capitalist system.

The attendant frustration that accompanies these social ills has raised the temperatures in the cities to a boiling point. The recent rebellions in Los Angeles and in New York City's Dominican community are just the tip of an iceberg.

Both of these rebellions point toward new possibilities for the left, if we are in a position to take advantage of them. They both reflect the growing militancy and frustration of immigrant communities.

Just as immigrants played a key role in the emergence and growth of the left in the 1930s, so these new immigrant communities can be critical to rebuilding the left in the 1990s.

The immigrant communities of Latinos, Caribbeans, Asians, Middle Easterners and Pacific Islanders, along with the communities of Native Americans and Mexican Americans, combined with the left's traditional base in the African-American community and the labor movement, must be important bases for organizing.

When combined with other energized sectors of the population — the women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement, environmentalists and the differently abled — it is possible to constitute a new majority that can put forward progressive solutions to the country's problems.

These are all democratic movements. That is, their aim lies within the context of expanding and deepening democracy in our country.

The left should be active in and play a leadership role in all of these movements in our unions and at our workplaces. And, we should be present at the community level in organizing around the needs of our communities. We must play a leadership role in bringing these movements into the electoral arena — not as hangers on, but as powerful blocs that can force politicians to speak to our collective agenda.

Exercising the franchise is an important aspect of democracy. The continuing decline in voter participation is not something that we favor or that we can take lightly.

Although our options are severely restricted in 1992, we must maximize what possibilities are present.

The next president will definitely name at least one

Supreme Court justice. This one voice may be critical in determining whether *Roe v. Wade* is scrapped forever and whether labor and civil rights will continue to be weakened.

One more right-winger on the Court will saddle us with a reactionary judiciary for the next 30 years. These stakes are too great to take a passive approach to this struggle.

Those of us who believe that socialism is the ultimate solution to the inequities of capitalism must never forget that there can be no separation between our struggle for socialism and the struggle to expand democracy. There is no other route to socialism except through the struggle for democracy.

At the core of that struggle are the multiracial, multinational, male-female working class and the oppressed peoples. No major social advance can be made without their unity.

We can never allow ourselves to belittle or underestimate the democratic impulses of the American people.

We who organized this conference are very optimistic about what we have put into place for this weekend. That optimism can be fulfilled only to the extent that we struggle to maintain the same degree of mutual trust and commitment to unity that we began with.

The many workshops that are scheduled only approach what is necessary, but they are an important point of departure.

All of these struggles will be discussed over the next two days. They will be discussed in workshops, forums and plenary sessions. We will discover areas of agreement and of disagreement. But as long as we place the struggle to expand democracy as a central focus of our work, I am confident that we will leave this meeting with a renewed commitment to work together.

The Committees of Correspondence, with all of its affiliates, will continue its work on Sunday. We will discuss a statement of principles and organize a structure to facilitate those principles. We invite everyone to affiliate and take part in these deliberations.

We have come a long way in just six months. We have a long way to go. But we have a very good start. We invite you all to explore and widen the path. We have a new century to look forward to. Let's make it one of peace, justice and equality. Let us place a new vision of socialism on our horizon.

Opening remarks of Charlene Mitchell, national coordinator of the Committees of Correspondence, at the July 18 plenary session of the conference.

Learning a new language of solidarity and struggle

by José La Luz

I recently took part in a conference in Panama City of unionists in apparel and textile unions to plan strategy to respond to the corporate-imposed "integration," and something very disturbing happened. We had invited Panama's minister of labor to address the gathering. He was describing the rising unemployment in Panama and the need for jobs. And he said that

if, in the Dominican Republic, they were to lower wages by 10 or 15 cents, Panamians would of necessity have to match this. If in Guatemala they had to lower wages and lower social and labor standards in order to attract capital – namely transnational U.S. capital – Panama would have to match that. And so I became aware of the mindless race to the bottom that we are facing in this hemisphere.

What we are witnessing is a massive lowering of the standard of living and the rights that people like us have fought for throughout generations. We are witnessing this because U.S. and other transnational corporations most definitely have an agenda to develop what they call a new world order. But this new world order doesn't have much to do with the type of vision, with the type of new world order that people like us believe in. Their new world order, which is driven by market policies and neoliberal policies, is all about pitting workers against workers, pitting people against people, in a mindless race to the bottom. We cannot allow that to happen.

The corporate-driven economic integration agenda not only calls for lowering social, labor and environmental standards, for austerity and adjustment programs for workers and the people in our hemisphere, it also calls for privatization – diminishing the role of the state in planning and economic development. It calls for undermining the trade union movement: reforming the labor codes and the hard-won labor-enabling and protective legislation that workers in the hemisphere have fought for. It calls for restricting freedom of association and collective action by workers throughout the hemisphere.

All of these policies, in combination, are creating one of the biggest challenges for the people in the Americas. All of it is driven by the foreign debt, by the perverse transfer of capital – the export of capital from less developed countries to transnational banks like Citibank, Chase Manhattan and Morgan Bank, a transfer which does not benefit the working people of this country. This perverse and sinister transfer of capital must be stopped. We must call for debt relief for developing countries in the hemisphere.

We must call for more democratic control of the economic life of those countries by citizens and not less democratic control of the economy. We must call for participation of workers and their organizations in formulating policies that lead to development and enhancement of democracy, not to underdevelopment and less democracy.

This corporate-driven agenda has in fact achieved many of its goals. We have witnessed how workers have been pitted, one against the other. When I travel throughout the cities and towns of this country participating in seminars and workshops as part of my responsibilities as education director of our union, I hear workers saying things like, "Those goddam Mexicans are taking our jobs away from us." I hear all of those xenophobic and racially-driven biases. And the trade union movement, with few exceptions, has not presented an alternative vision.

In fact, what we are witnessing is the result of the politics of desperation. Witness the Ross Perot phenomenon: people saying, "America first and to hell with the rest of the people of the world." That is what we are seeing from working people throughout the country. And yes, they want alternatives. But the

alternatives they hear sometimes are those that will result only in undermining the very institutions that have the possibility and, perhaps the capacity, to challenge this agenda and to defend their most basic democratic and human rights.

So, yes, we face an enormous challenge. We need to think of an alternative vision – an agenda of integration that's driven not by profits but by human needs. We need to put forth something similar to what the Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico has put forward: a continental trade and development initiative which raises the standard of living of workers in Mexico, workers in Chicago, workers in Los Angeles, workers in New York City. A continental trade and development program that raises the standard of living of the Rivera family in Reynosa and the Rivera family in Los Angeles. That is the type of integration we need.

We need a vision like the one put forth by the Workers Party of Brazil. In 1989, as the Berlin Wall collapsed and pieces of it were being sold as souvenirs in the streets of Berlin, workers had the opportunity to present their own candidate in Brazil, Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, a metalworker from Sao Paulo. He came only six percentage points short of being elected president of the largest country in South America.

The Brazilian Workers' Party has a vision. But it's a totally different vision. It's a very different language from the languages that many of us have spoken – the language that you and I were brought up in and were educated in when we were reading *Das Kapital* and *What Is To Be Done?* It is the language of the Christian-based communities that have organized in the poor *favelas*, based on a radical new concept of democracy and education. It is the language of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian adult educator who talks about transformation and education for change and education for liberation. It is a language that rejects dogma and sectarianism. It is a language that seeks to enhance, and incorporate and integrate workers and poor people, so that they can speak in their own voice and build their own institutions. It is a language very different from the language that you and I are accustomed to in the left. It is a language of liberation. It is a language of change. And that, sisters and brothers, comrades, is the language that we must familiarize ourselves with as we seek to develop an alternative vision of the future for this country.

Real socialism – socialism, social democracy – is no longer young, it's no longer innocent. It's aged. It's tired. Its image is tarnished. Yet, now more than ever, there is a need for a vision that builds on the past traditions and the legacy of the struggles led by people like us. People who are driven by deep-rooted convictions of justice and equality, of human solidarity, and also driven – yes – by the moral imperative that tells us that there is absolutely no place in this world for hunger, for homelessness, for deprivation, and for all forms of violence practiced by the powerful over the powerless. That is the moral imperative.

This, sisters and brothers, comrades all, is what motivated me many, many years ago to become a social and political activist. The reading of *Kapital* and *What Is To Be Done?* came much later.

There is a need to recapture the best traditions of this radical, democratic project that brought thousands of men and

women to participate in all of the struggles that have taken place in this country throughout generations. The struggle of workers to empower themselves by building an institution known as the trade union. The struggle of racially and nationally oppressed people to build institutions and movements to free themselves from the chains of oppression. All of these traditions which enhance democracy and democratic participation must be recaptured as we begin to define a vision that will bring us into the 21st century. o

Plenary address of Jose La Luz, trade unionist and chair of the Latino Commission of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Perspectives on democracy and socialism

by Manning Marable

This conference represents a major step forward toward revising and rejuvenating the social justice vision and democratic politics which we call "socialism."

I would like to focus my brief remarks on domestic electoral politics, and the challenges presented in the political system for the American left in the 1990s and beyond. First, there has been a massive change in the international political conjuncture, which has helped to trigger the collapse of the consensus in the two party system – the longstanding political period of cooperation and domination by the Democratic and Republican parties. This era of a "Likud-Labor" style national unity government in the U.S. may be coming to an end, prefiguring new types of electoral challenges and the rise of independent movements of all types.

Second, let's analyze the recent move to the right by the Democratic Party, from the traditional welfare state liberalism to the search for the so-called "political center," an effort to recapture the allegiance of white, upper middle class, suburban households, and a public repudiation of any "pandering" to "special interests" like African-Americans, gays and lesbians, feminists and labor. This lurch to the mythical "center" has created a vast vacuum on the progressive and left political spectrum, in which environmentalists, union activists, feminists and other traditional liberals are cut adrift from the Democrats' new leadership.

Third, how can the left mobilize to engage effectively in electoral politics? Historically, there has been an old debate about the methods of intervening into electoral politics: either we perceive the Democratic Party as the only viable strategic avenue for advancing political change, or we take a strict third party perspective, which argues that radical change is only possible outside the two-party system. We need to find a third path – an "inside-outside" approach to socialist politics – which promotes creative tactics for building independent politics, while utilizing electoral politics and those progressives who happen to be Democrats in ways which can actually empower the oppressed.

The first factor which has radically changed the context of African-American politics is the post-cold-war international conjuncture, and the collapse of Third World revolutions. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of the Soviet model in Eastern Europe, and the decay and decline of Third World socialist systems represented by Ethiopia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Cambodia and other countries utterly changes the international environment. First, it devalues and discredits any "leftist" or "radical" alternatives in politics, even if such political formations are not Marxist or Soviet-oriented. The recent electoral loss of the Labor Party in the United Kingdom, for example, represents only one of a series of defeats suffered by liberal and left parties. Where social democratic parties are in power, they have consciously moved sharply to the right, to accommodate the new authority and power of Western imperialism. The best example in the Caribbean is provided by the People's National Party government of former Prime Minister Michael Manley. In the 1970s, Manley represented a bold challenge to U.S. power in its historic "backyard"; today, he defines "democratic socialism" as "market economics with a commitment to social justice." Many socialists have become liberals, and liberals have become conservatives.

The old division of "East vs. West" has been replaced by a new geopolitical and economic alignment of "North vs. South." Japan, the United States and an increasingly unified Europe dominated by Germany now largely dictate the entire world's economy and access to technology. With the decline of the left, the conditions for eroding the rights of trade unions, reducing the social wage and fostering ethnic tensions have increased. Throughout Europe in the past five years, there has been a sharp rise of racist, anti-Semitic and ethnic violence against Third World emigrants. This spring, the fascist political party of Le Pen received 14 percent of the French national vote. Fascist parties are developing in Germany and Italy, and England is taking repressive legislative measures against its Black population.

These international factors are important because they profoundly influence what happens inside our own system. The first impact of the post-cold-war period is the collapse of the bipartisan consensus in electoral politics. For decades, the Democrats and Republicans operated within a coalition government: the conservatives controlled the federal executive and judicial branches, and the Democrats usually dominated the legislature. The external "threat" of world Communism and a commitment to the political economy of militarism (what some refer to as the "permanent war economy" or "military Keynesianism") cemented the two major parties together for all practical purposes. There was no fundamental difference on economic, fiscal or foreign policies, for example, between Nixon and Kennedy in 1960, or Carter and Ford in 1976. But with the breakdown of the U.S. domestic economy, beginning after the recession of 1974-75 and accelerating in severity with the 1982-83 recession, along with the decline of cold war tensions, the external pressure which forged the bipartisan consensus began to evaporate.

The external and internal factors fragmenting the coalition form of government greatly increased, leading to challenges from the left, right and center. Such challenges were prefigured

12 years ago by the liberal campaign of Edward Kennedy against Carter in the 1980 Democratic presidential primaries, and by Republican moderate John Anderson's independent race in the general election. The Jackson assault of the Rainbow Coalition in 1984 and 1988 also eroded the connection of the Democratic Party with the Republicans by pushing a progressive agenda. Finally, in 1992, the fragmentation erupted on the far right, as conservative journalist Patrick Buchanan ran a largely symbolic campaign against incumbent President George Bush in the Republican primaries. More effective was the challenge by eccentric billionaire Ross Perot, who launched an independent, "Bonapartist" campaign for the presidency. Briefly, in June 1992, Perot was ahead in national polls, over incumbent George Bush and Democratic challenger Bill Clinton.

All of these independent-style challenges reveal a "crisis of legitimacy" in which people question whether the entire electoral process is relevant to their daily lives. The rationales for both major parties seem to most Americans ineffectual and anachronistic.

The termination of the cold war, secondly, revealed the massive destruction to the U.S. domestic economy caused by the policies of militarism. Much has been written about the defeat of the Soviet Union by the U.S.. But in truth, both sides lost the cold war. The real beneficiaries were the economies of Japan and Germany. The trillions of dollars invested into nuclear and conventional weapons in the decades of cold war confrontation should have been spent on hospitals and neighborhood health clinics, roads and schools, upgrading factory equipment and improving technology. Americans may have the best tactical nuclear missiles in the world, but one cannot ride a missile to work or to school. Because of an absence of a national industrial policy, hundreds of automobile, tire and steel plants shut down. The entire industrial infrastructure of major cities such as Cleveland and Chicago nearly disappeared in a generation. By the 1990s, 37 million Americans were without any medical insurance, and 61 million were without health care at some point in a typical two-year period. The number of homeless doubled in the 1980s, as government investment into public housing sharply declined. Real incomes for young workers dropped by one-fifth between 1970 to 1990. Public transportation systems in many cities deteriorated, making it nearly impossible for inner city workers to compete for the new jobs being generated in the suburbs.

As in Europe, the crisis of the U.S. economic system permitted the rearticulation of racism as the useful tactic by the right in the political arena. Thus, the emergence of David Duke in Louisiana, receiving 55 percent of whites' votes in that state's gubernatorial election in 1991, or the rise of the racist and anti-Semitic Buchanan, are not isolated phenomena. "Willie Horton" advertisements and the popularity of David Duke are paralleled by the resurgence of racism in Western Europe.

The most disturbing feature of the Clinton-Gore campaign is its strategy of going after the "political center." What they really mean by this is the disaffected, upper middle class, white electorate, which has voted consistently for Republican presidential candidates for decades. Since 1952, the majority of the white electorate has voted for a Democratic presidential candi-

date only once - Lyndon Johnson in 1964. About 60 percent of all whites vote for Republican presidential candidates. About 70 percent of Southern whites consistently vote Republican in general elections. The Democrats are trying to reach this lost group by disavowing their traditional agendas for economic redistribution and civil rights.

The problem with this "Great White Hope" political strategy is that it completely ignores the major demographic, ethnic and class changes which have occurred within America during the past 20 years.

The theory of the political center says that the middle class white voters, people whose incomes are expanding and who dwell in comfortable suburban homes, are pivotal in winning elections. However, this ignores the fact that millions of so-called middle class whites have experienced a severe drop in their standard of living recently. According to the Census Bureau, median income levels, adjusted for inflation, shrank in 24 of the 50 states in the 1980s. After accounting for inflation, the median household income increased to \$30,056, up 6.5 percent, in the 1980s. However, home mortgage payments jumped in the same years by 26.9 percent, to \$737 a month. Thirty two million Americans are poor, and the majority of them aren't Black or Hispanic - they are white. About one-fourth of all poor people are children. These people aren't in the comfortable, affluent "mainstream."

What about Americans who are physically challenged, regardless of their racial identities or incomes? The Census Bureau states that 16 million people aged 18 to 64 have impaired mobility or need assistance to perform basic personal tasks. About 10 million people over the age of 65 also suffer from limited physical mobility. Millions more suffer from physical disabilities or illnesses. Would this group favor or oppose new federal initiatives in health care and entitlement programs for the elderly?

The theory of the political "center" focuses on English-speaking, white, ethnically European people. But America is increasingly multicultural, not white. In the past 10 years, there has been a 40 percent increase in the number of Americans who speak foreign languages in their homes. In roughly one out of nine U.S. households, a foreign language was spoken at home as of 1980. Today, the number of foreign-born residents is more than 20 million. In New York City, for instance, 41 percent of all residents speak a second language at their homes. In the year 2000, one-third of all Americans will be people of color - African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific-Americans and others.

The people of color living in America experience greater social problems than other groups, and have experienced the greatest declines in real incomes, with dramatic increases in poverty rates. From 1973 to 1990, for instance, the incomes for families headed by a parent under 30 years of age declined 28 percent for Latino families and 48 percent for African-American families. The poverty rates for young families in the same years rose 44 percent for Hispanics and 58 percent for Blacks. Along with cuts in federal support for housing, jobs and public transportation, families of color are marginalized more than ever.

The myth of the middle class center emphasizes the importance of white, male income earners. But the new reality of America is that about 60 percent of all mothers of preschool children work, and 75 percent of all mothers of school-aged children are in the labor force. The "Leave It to Beaver" household, mother at home and dad going to work, no longer exists as the norm, despite Dan Quayle's rhetoric. The real "center" of America isn't white, of European descent, and upper class. The vital center is Black, Latino and Asian; it is the physically challenged, working women, people with AIDS, the unemployed, and foreign language speakers. That is the America Clinton cannot ignore.

Given the Democratic Party's abandonment of the New Deal-Great Society tradition, how does the left fashion an effective electoral strategy? We should first recognize that a majority of the American people are totally alienated and disgusted with politicians and politics generally. There is a profound distrust of elections as a means of addressing basic problems. Nevertheless, despite massive disillusionment and hostility, the system grinds on. In the 1990 elections, 94 percent of the members of the House of Representatives who sought reelection won. Using the power of incumbency, negative attack ads to confuse and alienate voters and political action committee slush funds, incumbents are seldom challenged seriously.

We need to change the rules of the political game in order to restore democracy to our political system. The first step should be universal voter registration and holding national elections on Sundays rather than Tuesdays. Over 80 percent of all people with college degrees earning above \$50,000 annually vote, while only 44 percent of all African Americans voted in the last presidential election. In a computerized era, it would be a very simple process for governments to maintain and to update lists of voters and to permit same-day registration. Voting could easily be set up to occur over the telephone, greatly expanding voter access to elections.

Those who generally do not vote are among the most oppressed members of our society. For example, only 38 percent of the unemployed and 35 percent of all Hispanics vote. Making democracy work means increasing the active participation of African Americans, Hispanics, low income and jobless people.

We need a publicly-financed election system to take the corporations and the special interests out of our decision-making process. Our political process mirrors the inequality of America's class system, with the rich and powerful exercising disproportionate influence over our leaders. The savings and loan scandal, costing taxpayers billions of dollars, is the direct consequence of political graft.

We need a "None of the Above" voter option for all candidates listed for particular offices. If voters disapproved of Clinton, Bush and Perot, for example, they could express their opposition by voting for the ballot line "None of the Above" (NOTA). If NOTA won over all other candidates, a new election would be held, with entirely different candidates running for the office. NOTA would make our politicians far more responsive to the public's concerns.

We need fair ballot access for independent parties and third party candidates. The state and federal election laws are deliberately designed to exclude alternative political voices outside the

Democratic-Republican consensus. The signature requirements for alternative party candidates must be reduced, and ballot maintenance requirements for alternative parties should be lowered.

The most single effective step in reforming the political process would be to permit candidates to have cross-endorsements or "fusion" between smaller third parties and major parties. Changing the election rules to permit cross-endorsements would mean that any progressive party could run its own candidates for office on its own slate. But if a major party nominated another progressive on its own ticket for a particular office – let's say, a Ron Dellums or Maxine Waters – the progressive third party could also place his or her name on its ballot. Instead of splitting the liberal and progressive vote, acting as a "spoiler," this strategy would increase our options without wasting our votes.

The cross-endorsement or fusion strategy was outlawed in most states many years ago to discourage the rise of alternative parties to the Republicans and Democrats. But a new dynamic effort to change these anachronistic restrictions on voting is being pursued by the New Party, a group of progressives favoring fundamental, democratic change. The New Party's cross-endorsement strategy could mean a new method for maximizing the power of African-Americans and other oppressed people through the political system.

The left must also go beyond the arena of electoral politics, to revive democratic protest movements for social change. This will require new thinking, new organizations and a new approach toward mobilizing people across racial, gender and class lines. To revitalize activism among young people, for example, we need a new SNCC – this generation's Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. At the high point of the Southern desegregation movement 30 years ago, young people in SNCC led hundreds of sit-in demonstrations and registered thousands to vote for the first time. We need to revive that sense of idealism and militancy, bringing together young people of all ethnic backgrounds for political activism. A new multicultural, radical youth movement could attack issues such as drugs, violence and social issues such as poverty, unemployment and the abuses of young minority people within the criminal justice system. A multicultural, progressive student movement could fight for affirmative action, culturally diverse curricula and increased financial aid programs for young people from working-class and minority backgrounds. We have to utilize every innovation in the popular culture of our young people, including rap music, to reach and to mobilize this new generation.

We can build struggles for popular democracy only if we revitalize the American left around a core set of democratic principles which guide our collective activism. A new American vision of socialism must first be pluralistic. We must reinforce the values of openness and diversity and be tolerant of differences of opinion. We must always remember the words of Rosa Luxemburg, that "freedom is always and only the right to think differently." When the freedom to express unpopular ideas is suppressed, the vital core of democracy dies.

A new vision of socialism must be informed by a broad perspective of human equality and social justice: an unyielding commitment to battle against racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, ho-

mophobia, handicapism and every form of human oppression and intolerance.

A new vision of socialism must be intimately linked to the practical democratic, working-class struggle of American people – connected with the daily campaigns for the rights of labor, fighting at the shop floor against wage cuts, mobilizing communities against plant closings.

A new American socialist vision must be committed to the long-term goal of a common program for left unity – not a unified organization, but a united front of the left, which begins with cooperation on progressive projects. We must promote left dialogue in order to expand our voice to influence the nation's politics and policies.

A new vision for the left must always have an internationalist dimension. We must act in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed people, from South Africa to El Salvador. Even if we must stand alone, we must have the courage to defend the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban people.

Perhaps most importantly, a new vision of socialism must have the courage to seize the historical moment – not to become bogged down in debates about personalities and political organizations from the past. We must always study the possibilities.

We must study the past, but not become blind to history's new. We are challenged to have the historical imagination to fight, with creativity and with originality, for a world without capitalist exploitation, without the oppression of homophobia and sexism, without anti-Semitism and racism, to envision a world without poverty and homelessness and hunger. We can achieve that vision here in our country; we can redefine democracy, which benefits the vast majority of us. Let that historical and political imagination deepen into a commitment to mobilize the many against the privileges of the few. Let our imaginations soar until we achieve in our daily lives those ideals which we share and cherish. And in the memorable words of African-American writer and activist James Weldon Johnson, "Let us march on, till victory is won."

Manning Marable is a member of the Committees of Correspondence and a professor of political science and history at the University of Colorado.

The role of the left in 'Reinventing America'

by Elizabeth Martinez

Good morning to everyone, and thank you for the opportunity to speak at this historic gathering.

One of the good things about surviving a number of decades is that you can speak as an elder, a tribal elder – which means you can say anything you like. I am not exactly sure what tribe this is, but perhaps we can call it one of the lost tribes of the left, that fully intends to find itself!

Finding ourselves will, I think, require going both backward and forward in time. Today we might do well to begin by

recalling that this year is the 500th anniversary of Columbus' so-called discovery: that is, when Christopher Columbus discovered he was lost. Obviously we cannot agree that he discovered America because at least 25 million people already lived on this continent. But what he and later Europeans did achieve was to give birth to the modern world – meaning the world of really existing capitalism, as Egyptian scholar Samir Amin has called it. Fourteen ninety two marked the beginning of European conquest of the planet.

So Columbus did not discover America but he did spark the invention of an America to fit the needs of early capitalism. This invention was based on the seizure of resources by means of genocide and then marketing the fruits of those resources worldwide. This invention arose from the brutal colonization of indigenous populations, which continues today. This invention was needed to justify the importation and exploitation of millions of human beings as slave or semi-slave labor: Africans, Latinos, Asians and Europeans.

This invention is the reason we are all here, together, today.

The Europeans invented an America where indigenous concepts of the inter-connectedness of all living creatures were replaced by competitive individualism. In the newly invented America, the idea of human society surviving by means of cooperation had no place. Indigenous beliefs in planning for the needs of future generations and respecting the environment were denounced as "savage" and "uncivilized." In the case of a later indigenous people, the mestizos, the invented America denounced communal land ownership as "backward" because it failed to generate the profits made by private property.

The invention of America is the reason we are all here, together, today.

The invention of America also required the absolute rule of male and white supremacy. The two went hand in hand. In North America, the English and French invaders prioritized the destruction of female tribal leadership. That was key to Europe's successful colonization. In Mexico, the Spaniards imposed absolute control over women's sexuality in order to guarantee what they called "blood purity." Such "purity" facilitated successful colonization.

The invention of America is why we are all together here, today.

Today socialists, leftists and progressives need to reject the invention and rediscover America. This is not to say that we can or should turn the clock back to some more "innocent" time. This is not to romanticize the indigenous societies, some of which were empires rather than democracies. But I think we all agree that to become a more effective left requires offering people not only a critique of society as it is, but also a vision of how society could be more humanely organized. Rediscovering America will help define that vision in new, non-Western ways.

Most of us here would agree that socialists or leftists need to think in new ways. But this cannot just mean that we no longer embrace the idea of the Leninist party leading the struggle for social change. It cannot just mean that we no longer accept pat formulas about the industrial working class being the key revolutionary force because they can withhold their labor power. It cannot just mean an updated analysis of capitalism that explains its

resilience. It cannot just mean we put sexism and racism on a list of wicked ism's. It cannot just mean that we no longer embrace democratic centralism as an organizational principle.

It has to mean all that, but more.

New kinds of thinking include recognizing human values beyond materialism, beyond Marxism. For example: spirituality and the inter-relatedness of all life – most socialists still have no room for those ideas. For example: defense of the environment – we socialists have taken too much time putting that on our list of important struggles and now it's there, but how deep-rooted? Another example: homophobia. Now it's on the list, but superficially understood. There are other issues that the left has usually avoided, like drugs and crime. We must take them on, courageously.

New thinking also requires grappling with conflicts among different peoples of color. It requires addressing conflicts within the working class, such as racism and anti-immigrant worker attitudes from native-born workers. It requires trying to understand the complex relationship between sexism and racism. Only by opening our minds wide to such issues can we, for example, grasp two historic events this year: the Clarence Thomas hearings and events in Los Angeles after the police who beat Rodney King were acquitted.

Nothing seems more necessary than new ways of thinking about racial and national minority oppression in an age of changing demographics. As a Chicana, I have worked many years to advance left politics among Latinos and been frustrated – like other Chicanos – to see instead the growth of conservative politics. At the same time, most of the left has not taken Latino communities seriously and therefore remained irrelevant to them.

Like the dominant society, most of the organized left has tended to see the struggle against white supremacy in Black-white terms. It has ignored Chicano struggles historically, including the *movimiento* of the 1960s. We saw this problem recently in the mass media's treatment of urban upheaval in Los Angeles. Once again, the Latino factor was severely downplayed.

So we still hear leftists use such language as "African Americans and other minorities." That phrase leaves Latinos feeling invisibilized, not to mention Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The problem is more than being zapped by left terminology; we are zapped programatically as well.

African Americans have clearly been the most consistent, militant population in the United States. But we cannot build a strong and diverse left if we ignore some of the most rapidly growing populations of color. We cannot build a relevant left if we ignore issues like immigration abuse and cultural oppression – which may not be entirely based on skin color, but surely relate to Eurocentric definitions of white supremacy. We all need to learn more of each other's history and experience and culture, as part of new leftist thinking. It still baffles me that here in California a phenomenally small number of socialists take the trouble to learn some Spanish.

New ways of thinking also require new vocabulary. For example: can we really say "working people" unless we make it clear that we mean working-class people? Huge sectors of this society cannot find jobs and are not at work in the familiar sense. Their numbers are likely to increase, including those who are forced to beg. A similar question arises for women who

work in the home only – where are they in our lexicon?

Building a reconstituted left also means developing a new tone of voice: less pat, more aware, more open, and above all more modest and even more humorous at times. We need that new vocabulary and new tone of voice if we want to reach those who are not self-defined socialists or even leftists. We are so accustomed to certain language that we can be oblivious to how dead and dated it sounds to others. Not that we should be imprecise or turn socialism into a hair-spray commercial, but we need to sharpen up our ears and hear the rap.

And finally, new ways of thinking are not possible without looking critically at our own past as leftists. In my case, I spent 10 years in a party-building organism which ultimately self-destructed. We had come to realize that the Marxist-Leninist model would not serve in the contemporary United States and – more importantly – that our party could not resolve this problem because of an intolerable lack of internal democracy as well as a suicidal sectarianism. We had stopped growing and become a self-defined elite.

Unfortunately, we never did a collective evaluation of those long years together, and that was an error. The time must be made to do such evaluations. They are crucial to learning from experience and finding the humility needed to move forward.

Lack of humility or elitism, and the habits of centrism that go with it, are perhaps the most generic weakness of the U.S. left. It means thinking we are special because we have a science that will explain everything; thinking we are special because we work 20 hours a day in the name of humanity; thinking we are special simply because we belong to a historic communist tradition that is indeed filled with revolutionary heroes and saints. Such elitism can be a hard habit to break but it has to be broken.

We must face the need to give up the joy of certainty for the promise of relevance.

Over the past year, in meeting and working with young people – men and women in their 20s or younger – I have been struck to find most of them very anti-elitist among themselves. They are deep into new ways of thinking and new language; they really do not think like older people about many things. A strong left cannot be built if it remains irrelevant to youth. There is enormous militance, intelligence and commitment out there; we have a lot to learn from it. That is essential: learn from them, for starters. If we really listen instead of always talking, we will discover that today's youth are often subjectively left, even socialist, although they don't necessarily define themselves that way. They sense the great need to rediscover America and to look for humanistic values in non-European cultures.

We hear much talk today about the moral decay of the United States, and it is not merely right-wing rhetoric. Who knows moral decay better than the youth?

In a nation where children kill children, the times cry out for a left that can help point the way to a new and different 500 years.

The times cry out – will we heed that cry?

Elizabeth Martinez is an author and activist who lives in Berkeley, California.

Five propositions for the best and worst of times

by Mark Solomon

I would like to offer five propositions for your consideration.

Proposition 1.

We are at the end of an epoch – the epoch of the Third International.

It was an epoch of vast revolutionary change. But that painful, often heroic, often cruel journey through uncharted territory is over.

That epoch deeply affected those committed to transforming change, one way or another. It shaped fervent support for (or opposition to) various political structures and power relations.

The structures and relations spawned by that epoch are, in various ways, in shambles. Some of our most cherished beliefs are called into question. Only the willfully blind would fail to recognize the need for the most profound and searching reexamination.

That is always troubling. But potentially, it is also truly liberating. Old grievances, enmity, even hatred that fragmented the left can be repaired with clear-eyed honesty, mutual respect and a new wisdom grounded on the simple proposition that no one is all-knowing and wise.

Proposition 2.

We need to begin to do something the left has rarely done – try to understand the history, traditions and values of our own working people as essential for defining perspectives for democracy and socialism.

The term “American Dream” is not merely ruling-class hype. It has gestated for centuries, and is internalized in the consciousness of tens of millions of people of varying races and ethnicities.

Starting with nearly ideal conditions for the development of a modern capitalist society, the Founding Fathers promised “A City Upon A Hill” – a place to live for the glory of God and to follow one’s “calling” – to accumulate, grow, define oneself (in terms of property), to succeed, to make life better for the next generation – all to be gained through the fruits of promised opportunity.

Mind and spirit, community and individual, profit and fair price, concentrated wealth and commonwealth were somehow to be reconciled. A system built on the genocidal destruction of Native Americans, on the slave trade, the exploitation of slave labor, the denial of workers’ rights, the “sweating” of female and child labor – was also supposed to be just, fair and democratic. Those contradictions, of course, could not be sustained.

The low level of class consciousness and even lower level of socialist consciousness among the nation’s working people is widely recognized. Ownership of the crucial means of production, historically, was less important than the hope for mobility, for access to property, for a better life, for opportunity, for fair treatment.

Despite that low consciousness and lacerating racial and

ethnic division, the history of bitter, bloody, class struggle in this nation is second to none. At the heart of things – when promises of fairness, justice, opportunity and freedom are manifestly denied – there is social explosion – from slave revolts to Black and white abolitionism, to virtual civil war between labor and capital in the late 19th century, to the Populist movement against banks and monopolies, to the women’s suffrage movement, to anti-imperialism, to the industrial union movement of the thirties, to civil rights and anti-war uprisings.

The great challenge before us is to hammer out a vision of socialism (and a series of concrete steps toward that goal) commensurate and consistent with that tradition of fairness, justice and freedom and that yearning to make life better, more satisfying for working people themselves and succeeding generations. That is, to develop the idea of socialism (or whatever the U.S. working people will choose to call it) as the only way in the long run to achieve those values. In doing that, we need a new respect for direct, clear language, for the way our neighbors’ aspirations are expressed and for the way they see and feel reality. (That’s different from the often arcane, talmudic concerns that have often preoccupied the left.)

Proposition 3.

The left, historically, has been an inseparable part of those struggles noted above. With all the weaknesses of U.S. radicalism, there are historic experiences that should be digested and absorbed into the bloodstream of a resurgent left.

The Socialist Party from 1900 to 1912 sustained a core socialist consciousness among a wide range of workers, intelligentsia, unionists, racial equality activists, ethnics. A healthy pluralism was expressed through scores of newspapers, magazines, lyceum circuits. Electoral and non-electoral activism, etc., ties to the trade union movement – all are instructive and enriching.

The Communist Party manifested a vibrant class partisanship and made large contributions to building the industrial union movement. It had a powerful grasp of the importance of the national question, and a particularly transforming understanding of the centrality of Black liberation and the fight against racism. The CP recognized the struggles of African Americans as revolutionary in their own right and the fight for equality as inseparable from the struggles of working people in general. At its best, it had an extensive, vibrant internationalism; at its best, it had a mass electoral policy that was realistic and constructive.

The New Left taught us much about resistance to arbitrary power and illegitimate authority, about community, about the importance of culture (broadly defined).

Any resurgent left and socialist movement, responding to the complexity of this society and the inseparability of issues, must learn from and honestly absorb the feminist understanding of the ties between patriarchy and economic power, liberation theology’s impassioned embrace of morality, not as an abstraction to be subsumed under economic categories, but as a living, indispensable quality in building binding relationships; environmentalism’s understanding of the basic contradictions and disasters engendered by the reckless assault upon nature; multiculturalism’s deep understanding of this multiracial, multinational so-

ciety, and the inescapable need for every aspect of national life to reflect this diversity. And there is much to learn from many other movements and currents.

Proposition 4.

The Committees of Correspondence

Potentially this is an important, valuable, exciting new resource for the whole movement.

Its success will depend on inclusiveness, on the creation of a solid free space for frank exploration and discussion, where activists can agree and disagree and arrive at consensus as a living process based on joint engagement in action and on exchange of ideas.

There is much discussion about declaratives: "socialist," "Marxist," etc. We have to begin to grasp the implications of the enormous global changes of the recent past. No one need retreat one inch from our vision and from a commitment to a just, democratic, anti-racist, anti-sexist society in every respect ... a society dedicated to ending exploitation and to bringing the wealth created by the working class under their ownership and control. But how to get there, how to assure the realization of that vision, is fraught with uncertainty. If past global experience teaches anything (and what "science" ignores experience?) it teaches that there are no simple answers, that there are many dark corridors that we have yet to light up, that there are problems of degrees of public and private ownership, economic and political organization, culture, power per se, denial, greed, corruption that we have yet to tackle. Our "socialism" should be a "work-in-progress" in which the ideas and experiences of proclaimed socialists and non-socialists, declared Marxists and non-Marxists are needed equally and must be shared and respected mutually.

We need an organization informed by the kindred spirits of Bertolt Brecht and Aretha Franklin. Brecht, who wryly asked how we who want happiness for the people of the whole world can be so cruel to each other? And Aretha Franklin, who told us how to spell r-e-s-p-e-c-t.

Proposition 5.

Back to the American Dream. Globalization and deindustrialization have brought unprecedented corporate looting of the economy, a fast track export of jobs, an assault on already wounded cities, an intensification of racism (exemplified by the Rodney King verdict), growing attacks on women, a health crisis, homelessness, declining education and the rest. The traditional reliance on the competitive game being played fairly, the belief that government would be of, by and for the people and that future generations would have it better than the present generation – all that is being questioned on an unprecedented scale. We are at a point where even the vaunted suburban white male (the object of the "double Bubba" Democratic ticket) is suffering underemployment (from drafting tables to cleaning McDonald's tables) at the fastest rate.

Things are more complicated today than the old "us-against-them" combat. There is a vast diversification of the working population, a growing multiracial component, a great increase in women workers, a resurgent sweatshop economy at the margins of the corporate empire, a transnationalized capital that works hard for nothing less than killing off the labor movement. There is no objective basis for a "vanguard" single agent of change. But there is a need for an organization with a vision and with a determination to unite many identities and progressive interests as much as possible.

Today, we have a hard job that will require all the experience, good will, patience, irony, humor and staying power that we can muster. As Dickens' old saying goes: this is the best of times and the worst of times. In reawakening the great majority's hatred for injustice, in helping to give organized expression to a rekindled concern for fairness and democracy, the perspective is for a new great awakening and for the best of times. Let's do it.

Address of Mark Solomon, a member of the CoC and professor of history at Simmons College in Boston, on July 18.

AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION, SATURDAY, JULY 18

The challenge of changing in a changed world

by Carl Bloice

I'm getting on in years. I have no doubt that I have that proverbial wealth of experience that would be useful to those who follow. But I am equally certain that younger people will have a better facility for grasping the tremendous changes that have occurred and are occurring in this world.

We all have a natural tendency to hold on to old ideas that are a response to the world as we have known it. However, I am certain of one thing. We are confronted with new realities that require new leftist thinking, that require new and radical responses to the world.

Look.

Contemporary thinkers who peer into the future have concluded that the tremendous revolutions under way in science and technology are drastically altering life on this planet. For many it will mean more luxury, more leisure, more space for creative endeavor, indeed more personal liberty.

But at the same time, these futurists say, the trends in the world are for increased stratification between the developed and underdeveloped world – the North and the South – between the classes in the advanced countries, and an accelerated increase in the amount of poverty, starvation and social alienation over most of the globe. The futurists are also convinced that the end of the cold war will be followed by anything but an end of history or a millennium of peace. Rather the forecast is for an increase in ethnic conflict, racial division and violence.

And they say the prospect for preserving the conditions on the planet that make human life possible is bleak, indeed that the defilement of the biosphere continues relentlessly toward disaster.

Unduly alarmist? Perhaps. But I have yet to see the alternative scenario presented with any conviction. If anyone anticipates things moving in some other direction they should spell it out. Indeed, when most of us look into the future we engage in expectation of more of the same or – in our more optimistic moments – engage in wishful thinking with little more than desire and determination to back it up.

That's not good enough. Not in our country. Not in the world at this time. Not in this new age.

For instance, it was not fortuitous that the two greatest social explosions of the past 50 years occurred in South Central Los Angeles. That epitomizes the new world, where the "Blade Runner" image reflects the new globalization of capital – the new world order of gleaming glass skyscrapers towering over pockets of extreme poverty, of communities locked out of the projected riches of the next millennium.

These contemporary social trends are fully consistent with the Marxist view and I, for one, have no doubt that they are the logical conclusion of capitalism as a system and its response to the modern era. However, they run counter to nearly all the sce-

narios Marxists and other socialists have drawn for the world.

Capitalism turned out not to be in terminal crisis, ready to collapse at any moment. The balance of forces in the world did not shift irreversibly in favor of socialism, national liberation and working-class advance. The societies run by Communist Parties turned out not to be best able to assimilate the scientific-technological revolution, protect the natural environment or to provide anything close to material abundance.

This all confronts us with a set of fundamental questions. The question of where we go from here is far more than the elaboration of a set of principles or an organizational chart – as important as those things are. The challenge before us is more than the need to elaborate a set of tactics to engage in struggle to stem the tide of reaction and to win social advance.

The working class, the trade union movement, the African American, Native American, Asian and Latino struggle for equality, the women's movement and the youth are confronted with a new reality shaped by the globalization of capital and production, vast changes in the organizational forms for production and the revolutionary, long-term implications of the changes brought on by the new level of the scientific-technological revolution. The changes underway are as fundamental as those brought on by the demise of feudalism in Europe or the Industrial Revolution.

I have said some of these things a number of time over recent months and it always evokes the question: What is the answer? My answer is I do not know. But I am persuaded that new realities demand new approaches. The time has come to cast off illusions. The time has come to end sterile debates about controversies that are often a hundred years old.

The time has come for us to root out sectarianism and know-it-allism and put our heads together and do some serious investigation, debate and theoretical work. The time has also come for a new sense of activism.

One thing is certain: the current trends in world and national development are not for – as Clinton says – an advance in democracy.

Rather, it is for an ever more rapid erosion of democracy and the concentration of power and decision-making over the future into the hands of an ever smaller elite stratum.

If we are to defend our living standards, if we are to halt the growing impoverishment and alienation of working people, if we are to seriously deal with growing joblessness and homelessness, if we are going to do anything meaningful to halt the growing class stratification of the world and our country, we are going to have to fight like hell. We are going to have to say over and over to ourselves and to others looking for a progressive path that Frederick Douglass uttered one of truest things that could be said for any time: there simply is no progress without struggle.

Nobody is going to do it for us. There is nothing more noble than engaging in joint effort to reshape and improve our communities, our country and this earth – our only home.

But we should be clear about the meaning of the takeover of the Democratic Party by the Democratic Leadership Council.

It is a reflection of the class attitudes of the neoliberals and the fact that, in fashioning the new economic order, millions of oppressed people, women and youth are being dealt out, considered expendable. What happened in Madison Square Garden amply illustrates the chasm between appearance and reality. It illustrates the cynicism of the rich and powerful. It illustrates dramatically the quandary we on the left find ourselves in at this critical turn in human history and the history of our country.

I will, no doubt, hold my nose, grit my teeth and clutch my airsickness bag and vote for Slick Willie. I will probably urge others to do so and may even in the end walk a precinct. But I will never refrain from stating clearly what he is, what he represents, or play down what he has done. We should never get caught in that trick bag again.

The Democratic Party right wing has kicked its left and progressive wing in the teeth. It was not a spontaneous thing. It has been in the making for a number of years. Progressive people, groups and movements were left with a feeble, protesting voice and no leverage.

Someone said to me recently that this is the real world. Perhaps. But it was the real world in 1948 when my parents and neighbors sat around the kitchen table in South Central Los Angeles and decided the real politic thing was to pass over Henry Wallace and vote for Harry Truman. It has been the "real world" every four years every since.

We should resolve now that we will build a consensus among a section of the electorate and the potential electorate that we will never be put into that situation again.

Ross Pea-row has demonstrated the potential for three parties in this country – all three right of center. We should resolve to demonstrate another reality – that there exists the base for a fourth party on the left. And further that we are not it.

My saying this does not result solely from personal disgust at meaningless political compromises. It arises from my view of the nature of the era in which we live. It flows from a conviction that for all its platitudes and liberal rhetoric, the platform of the Democratic Leadership Council doesn't begin to address the kind of critical issues that face us and others with whom we share this planet in the next millennium. It may deal with the realities of U.S. politics but it does not reflect the realities of this world at this time.

If there is any justification for the existence of the left, and if we are to be effective, it lies in that slogan I learned from the Quakers: "Speak Truth to Power." And do so in a language everybody can understand.

Address of Carl Bloice, a member of the CoC and journalist who returned last year from five years of reporting from the Soviet Union.

The new world order and where we go from here

by Leslie Cagan

In the spring of 1970 I was organizing with the Venceremos Brigades to Cuba. We planned a benefit one night in New York City, only to find that the managers of the space we had rented had made a mistake and had told a gay liberation group that they could also be there that same night. In the course of trying to sort it out, one of the Brigade organizers turned to a friend of mine, a strong supporter of the Cuban revolution, and said, "Let's get away from those people." My friend said, with all of the courage he could muster, "I am one of those people."

Today I am proud to speak to you as an out lesbian, whose work is to try to change U.S. policy toward Cuba. Like everyone else here, I have been thinking a lot about the complexities and difficulties of the times we live in, trying to understand our role at this moment. Believe me, I have no blueprint, no formula and certainly no easy answers. Everyone here realizes the seriousness of the moment. We could easily run down the list of crises we face. Earlier today we heard from several people who eloquently laid that out. So I thought perhaps I could just get into the topic at hand. But I can't simply jump into the topic of the role of the left in 1992 and beyond without first taking some stock of the reality around us.

There *is* a new world order. The Soviet Union is gone. Socialism in Eastern Europe has collapsed. The structures of international capital are shifting, as regional relations are being redefined in Europe, the Pacific rim, Latin America and the Middle East. Of course, not all the elements of today's international order are new. There are currently some 35 military conflicts, civil wars or wars between nations. Virtually all of the developing world is drowning in unpayable debt and nuclear weapons are still stockpiled, tested and ready to be used.

Had there been any doubts about the new world order, the United States obliterated them last year as it pulled out all the stops to pursue war in the Persian Gulf. It used all of its diplomatic, economic and media powers to buttress the all-important point about U.S. military superiority. There is one and only one military superpower in this new world order.

And what about here at home? The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan represented the consolidation of the electoral power sought by the right wing. For 12 years, the right wing has set this country's social, cultural, political and economic agenda and it has taken a devastating toll. Millions of people homeless and hungry. Over 100,000 people dead from AIDS, with nearly one million more with the HIV virus. Soaring unemployment, layoffs and permanent job losses, plant closings, farm foreclosures. Thirty seven million people without any health insurance, and that is just the tip of the health care crisis. The infrastructure of our cities literally crumbling. A global environmental crisis.

Federal, state and local spending for social programs continues to be dramatically cut. Billions are poured into bailing out the savings and loans thieves. The structure of taxes allows the rich to become richer while the poor, the working class and

the unemployed are forced further into poverty. The national debt is wildly out of control and at the same time we may be in the midst of one of the largest consolidations of economic power ever. Look at the airline industry, the food and agricultural industry, the mass media, retail business and the move to privatize government functions.

Racism goes unchallenged, even encouraged, by the nation's leaders as job, educational and housing opportunities are systematically denied to African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Arab Americans and Native peoples. The violence of institutional racism is matched by escalating racist violence on our streets, only to be outdone by the often deadly combination of police brutality and government indifference.

The social crisis extends in other directions as well. The fastest growing category of hate crimes in this country is against lesbians and gay men. The right wing has placed initiatives on the ballot in Oregon and Colorado which, if passed, will essentially outlaw lesbians and gay men. We are on the verge of completely losing control over our own bodies and our own reproductive lives. The right to abortion is undermined and sabotaged. Women are battered, raped and sexually assaulted at work, at school, on the streets and in their own homes every minute of every day – and the vice president of the United States dares to talk about family values.

We are living in a terrible and dangerous time. I haven't said all this to demoralize you, though it is indeed a depressing moment. But maybe I just watched too much of the Democratic convention on TV this past week.

This – and forgive me for having left out so much more – is all backdrop to what I really want to talk about. That is us, the left in the United States. I said before that we had to take stock of our complex reality. One part of that must be an honest assessment of our own strengths and weaknesses. I would love to stand here and talk about our strengths, but I am convinced that we will be unable to move forward unless and until we come to terms with our weaknesses.

The bottom line is the question of effectiveness. Are we, the left, able to effect change? We may not like it, but I think the answer right now is "No." I am not saying that we never effected change or that we never will again but right now we are weak, fragmented, confused about direction, lacking in theoretical clarity and severely lacking in resources. We, the left, the socialist left, are marginalized in America. This is not a criticism, merely a reflection of what I see.

Above and beyond a few well-placed individual leftists, are we having an impact on the policies and programs of government on any level? Are we changing the way people think, their consciousness or understanding of how the systems of oppression work and interact with each other? Are we able to mobilize enough people to hold onto our earlier victories of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the lesbian and gay movement and other mass movements for social equality? Are we effective in what we have set out to do? I think, unfortunately, that the answer is, "No."

The left as such is not an identifiable force or player in the political life of this country. I will go further to say that the

broader progressive movement, every issue and constituent-specific movement, is also in trouble. There is no coherent vision of what we are fighting for, let alone a strategy for getting from here to there. Lots of people throughout this country are hard at work every day. What does it all add up to?

I want to be very clear about something. I am not suggesting that this is how things have to be or will remain. I am saying that unless and until we acknowledge the limitations of our own movement and our own work we will never get beyond them. We can not afford to play games with ourselves and say that if we only did this thing or that thing we would be on the right track. Too much is at stake. I don't have all the answers, but I do believe that the process of getting ourselves on the right track must have at its core a large dose of humility. Let us be honest about ourselves, with ourselves.

So where do we go with all this? We must take seriously the theoretical challenges of the day. What happened in the Soviet Union? Why did socialism collapse in Eastern Europe? How much was it specific weaknesses in the specific theories that guided the practical program of the Soviet leadership for 70 years and how much was it the particular dynamics of their interaction with the capitalist world? Was the weakness in the theoretical construct or in the ways those ideas were used and implemented?

We are overdue for a comprehensive updating of our analysis. We need to break away from the traditional left notion of a single, primary contradiction and a principle conflict. That idea has too often led to pushing aside issues – issues of race and gender and sexual orientation – which ended up weakening our analysis. Too many times, leftists have been johnny-come-latelies to vibrant social movements, movements which are important in and of themselves and which shed new light on the hierarchies of oppression and the dynamics of power. Instead of expanding the parameters of our theory by incorporating the insights of feminism or the environmental movement or the movements of different peoples of color, the left has too often tried to make sense of new social, political or even economic struggles by attempting to fit them into theories of another era. And when they didn't fit, they were either forgotten or at best paid lip service.

We need to understand more fully what the politics of identity are all about – what we gain from it and how it limits us. It has been a factor in the development of almost every social movement. Where does it fit into our theoretical framework?

Our theoretical-strategic work needs to include a reexamination of issues of organization and leadership. We need to create structures which expand democracy internally as well as create mechanism to confront racism, sexism, homophobia and other oppressive behaviors, not as an afterthought but as a fundamental principle. Creative leadership which comes from and remains responsive to its base must be encouraged and nourished.

The size of this country and diversity of its population challenge us to find ways to organize ourselves so that we remain rooted in our neighborhoods and workplaces while we are part of a national structure. For change to be lasting it must be systemic and the process of change itself must be a process in

which massive numbers of people are directly involved. We must commit ourselves to building from the bottom up, rejecting vanguard organizational forms.

We need to think bigger. That means acknowledging just how big the monster that we are up against is. But it also means stretching the parameters of our own goals and our own work. We live in a country of 250 million people, on a planet of over five billion people. We need to think big.

We need to be clear about the task of building unity. Last year, during the Gulf crisis and war, I learned a hard and painful lesson. As the anti-war movement split into two major camps, there were many who said the single most important thing was unity. But unity at what price? Maintaining basic principles was also important. For instance, the principle of opposing military intervention as a way to solve problems between nations. The most important thing we could do last year was to provide vehicles for our people to articulate their opposition to our government's drive toward war. Unity among a small number of left organizations was *not* the most important thing. All too often our notion of unity is reduced to the narrow concept of left unity and not the broadest, most expansive concept of bringing together whole constituencies.

We must always be clear about our definition of politics and political struggle. Politics is the struggle for power. We know that power exists in elected office. We can not abandon that arena to those who would prefer to lock us out. We need to run people for government on every level, although I don't believe that we start with the presidency. While we support specific Democratic party candidates, we must find ways to run more people as independent and third-party candidates. We also need to help bring together those new third-party initiatives. Perhaps people will decide to build three, four, five new parties; but perhaps, with some effort, those forces can be brought together, making everyone stronger.

We also know, if we know anything at all, that real power resides in the economic, social and cultural institutions of this country. We must be about the business of contesting for power in all of those arenas. We must reject the idea that one specific arena of struggle is inherently more important than others. Everything is needed.

As leftists, as socialists, we have to do double duty. We need to build the left and at the very same time we need to continue to play the central roles we always play in broader progressive movements. The struggles for housing, for voting rights, for money for AIDS, against police brutality, for full reproductive rights, for basic civil rights for lesbians and gay men, against all forms of discrimination, against military intervention and nuclear weapons, for a safe and clean environment, just to name a few – all need to be strengthened. We need to bring our organizing skills as well as our political perspective to those movements.

This is where the left has often run into trouble. How many times have you been in meetings or conferences of people working to secure some change, some reform, something new, when someone gets up from the Revolutionary Vanguard League of Proletarian Workers and Peasants and the Struggling Masses – or some such group – almost like a visitor from another

planet descending upon an indigenous movement, only to strangle the creativity of the moment. My image is perhaps a little too harsh, but I think you know what I mean. Too often, leftists have taken up work in mass movements with the attitude that "We know the answers and we will bring you the truth." In addition to the arrogance of it all, people have been so busy giving the correct line that we have stopped listening.

We need to bring progressive movements closer to one another by helping people to see the need for systemic change. We need to help build, not just a series of issue-specific struggles, but a broad movement for justice and peace, at home and internationally. As leftists, we need a socialist organization. What this country needs is a mass based, independent, multi-issue, racially and culturally diverse, national organization capable of struggling on many fronts, using many tactics, simultaneously.

Before I end, I want to say a few words about Cuba.

I talked before about the new world order. The central defining characteristic of this new order is the disappearance of a counterbalance to the United States. Cuba, a relatively small nation of 10½ million people, for over 33 years has said "No" to the United States. She has paid a heavy price as Washington has imposed its longest and most severe economic embargo. Today Cuba stands virtually alone as it works to get through one of its most difficult economic periods and refuses to play by Washington's rules. But for those of us who believe in socialism (however much we are committed to rethinking and redefining exactly what that means) there is no place else on earth like Cuba. Cuba and the Cuban revolution, whatever criticisms you might have, remains a beacon of light, a source of inspiration, a symbol of what is possible. Jesse Jackson is right when he implores us to keep hope alive. In the international arena, it is Cuba which keeps hope alive.

Cuba needs the support and solidarity now coming its way from movements around the world, but we also need Cuba. Doing what we can to help Cuba stay alive, to allow the Cuban people to continue their historic experiment in socialism, can only help our own efforts in the long run. I encourage those of you who have never been to Cuba to go. If you've been before, it's time to go again. (As a matter of fact, we can help you get there; pick up one of our leaflets and talk to me sometime this weekend.) I urge each of you to find a way to help get Washington off of Cuba's back and let Cuba live.

Let me close by coming full circle. I have no blueprint or formula for changing this country; no one does. But together we can and we must figure out the questions, explore the possibilities, revitalize our theories and strategies and begin to define new ways of doing our work. I believe that we can and will some day build a mass movement strong enough to contest for economic, social and political power. That is our challenge as we look toward the next century. Let us boldly and creatively face this challenge as we tackle the immediate demands of the day.

Leslie Cagan is executive director of the Cuba Information Project.

Making the alternative budget a reality

by Ying Lee Kelly

I see by the notes that I'm identified primarily as an aide to Ronald V. Dellums. I have to tell you that what I'm going to be saying I've not discussed with him. So I stand totally on my own on this. Particularly since I'm going to be less formal than Carl and Leslie. Those two talks were absolutely wonderful, and I'd like to be able to build on that. Just one comment on Leslie pointing to Cuba as a beacon of light in our modern age. I would also like to say, since I was born in China in 1932, that to me, in spite of Tianamen Square, China is a beacon of light. And let me say why, because I think it does need explaining.

It's hard to believe that a city like Shanghai, when I left China in 1944, could have people sleeping out in the street, dying on the street, being sick on the street – like Calcutta today and pretty soon, I suppose, San Francisco and Berkeley. The China that I left in 1944 was probably 99.5 percent poor and desperate. The China that exists today has no hunger, and people are housed and people are clothed. That to me is a miracle of the century.

And although I can deplore Tianamen Square, I have to say that the people who were killed by the colonialists – the United States, Britain, Germany, France – name the European countries – and the people who were killed by Chiang Kai-Shek, their puppet, were many, many, many times more than the thousands who were killed in Tianamen Square. You never hear about the mass murder of the millions who were allowed to die by starvation and by privation. There was no dignity to life.

And I want you to remember that when those television screens were focused on Tianamen Square, there was no fear in the faces of the people who went up to the tanks. It was unfortunate that there was a betrayal, but the fact that there was no fear speaks a great deal about the last 30 or 40 years. It's a social experiment of an incredible scale that I think succeeded far more than we have ever acknowledged and certainly acknowledge today.

I'm going to talk about organizing at different levels. I would say, just to build on what Carl and Leslie have said, that the vision I think many of us share is that there should be economic justice everywhere, and that the U.S. should be out of everywhere. I absolutely agree with the previous speakers, that there is tremendous urgency. These are terrible and dangerous times. But, as others have said too, this may provide us with opportunities. I think, however, that it's very, very scary in that we see our ranks very definitely thinning. Also, as our hair thins, our movement is getting older and we don't have enough young people.

This is a very intimidating roomful of people. I know that many of you are intellectuals of high calibre and activists with many decades of work behind you, and that each of you has done a great deal of analysis. I'm not a theorist. I've been accused of being an ideologue and, though I have read some semi-heavy stuff, most of the time I think of myself essentially as a

Democratic Party hack. I've been a Democratic Party convention delegate three times. I was a McGovern delegate, and I've been a Jesse Jackson delegate twice. I went to the 1972 McGovern convention. I wore Viet Cong pajamas and a hat, and we tried to stop the bombing of the dikes – ah, those ancient times. So I'm going to be talking from a very unruly head and probably an even more unruly heart.

What makes some of us collaborate, if you will, with the Democratic Party? I think that I have to wave this document, "A Budget for New World Realities and the Rebuilding of America for 1993," which is the Congressional Black Caucus budget and the House Progressive Caucus budget [applause] for these United States for 1993. Some of you have heard [Rep.] Ron [Dellums] say that when he asked [House Speaker Tom] Foley for time to address the national budget in 1993, just a couple of months ago, he proposed that a day be set aside to discuss the administration's budget, a day be set aside to discuss the Democratic Party budget, and a day be set aside to discuss the alternative budget. Foley said, essentially, "You and your supporters may be interested in discussing those on an eight-hour basis, but the Bush administration doesn't want more than two hours to present their over one trillion dollar budget, and the Democratic Party really doesn't want more time than that."

So in the eight-hour discussion that Ron and the Black Caucus helped to organize, they presented their budget in the morning and there was a discussion in the afternoon. No one from the media watched it, listened to it or reported on it. The only reporter there was a local reporter and a member of the journalism department here, and she was absolutely disgusted. She went out into the media corridor and said, essentially, "What do you think you people are doing?" That budget got 77 votes. That is shameful. Absolutely shameful.

We can talk about our vision, we can talk about what the left can or can not do, but one of the primary tasks, as long as we are being taxed, is that we get some control over this budget. And if we can't control it in the next year, that we give it as much exposure as possible.

Those of us in the Eighth Congressional District, soon to be the Ninth Congressional District, don't need to call me up to tell me to ask Ron to support this. He assumes that he has your support. But we've got to figure out a strategy whereby we can look at the votes in Congress and say, "This is where we can get 200 more votes." And we must talk to everyone we know in every one of those other constituencies, and make sure that at least that budget is discussed, because this is an eminently readable budget.

This other piece of paper that I want to wave before you says, "Reinvest in America." I'm also Northern California chair for Common Agenda, a coalition of several groups that is trying to pull behind the Congressional Black Caucus. It used to be a very powerful coalition with a wonderful monthly newspaper, but it's been reduced lately, like everything else. But it has come together again. It meets once a month, on Mondays. They have divided up the pie so that education, health, reduction of the military, agriculture, economic conversion, infrastructure and transportation, children and families, energy and the environment, housing, the S&L loan bailout, deficit and taxes are all

shown here, on one sheet.

We need to be working immediately with the churches, with unions, with the unemployed and the homeless. We need to be working in a broad coalition to say that there is nothing for the homeless, there is nothing for housing or education, unless it is contained in the alternative budget. The least we can ask for is this alternative budget, which is a modest, but achievable, an eminently pragmatic, if you will excuse my use of the word, budget. No one can say that this is irresponsible, that it is pie in the sky, or that it is theoretical. It is real, it has been put together by national groups, coalitions, unions like SEIU [Service Employees International Union] and a lot of local unions. It is possible. So I ask that all of us work immediately on it so that when the Congressional Black Caucus and the House Progressive Caucus get together the beginning of the year – hopefully, when Bush is out of office – that we will have a chance to talk about a budget that will at least give us some time to plan for the world we all deserve.

Address to the CoC conference of Ying Lee Kelly, legislative aide to Rep. Ronald Dellums.

We meet not to mourn but to organize

by Herbert Aptheker

We have experienced devastating blows to the Left. The incessant attacks from the imperialist world were damaging but not decisive. The anti-humanist qualities of that world made resistance inevitable. That resistance was embodied in the socialist vision. Alas, it helped produce not a fulfillment of that vision but finally the nightmare embodied in the term "Stalinism." The nightmare was a distorted response to the horrors of imperialism – its wars, with mountains of dead, its colonialism, with oceans of insults and tears, its intensified racism with its fearful suffering.

The anti-human system remains, but it is senile. Here at the capstone of that system, in 1990, the 20 percent of the population of the world's richest countries had 80 times greater wealth than the 20 percent of the poorest. If one compares the richest and poorest 20 percent of the world's people, the income differential is 150 times greater.

This inequality is at the root of the turmoil characterizing the globe.

That turmoil, resulting from exploitation, will end only when the exploitation is terminated. Reactionary policies, from

Reaganism to fascism, do not resolve the contradiction; rather, they intensify it. Liberal policies, while preferable in human terms, at best palliate the crisis; at best they postpone grappling with the roots of the crisis.

Only radical policies confront the root of the crisis; indeed, radical means getting to the sources.

Awareness of the human suffering induces a radical therapy. From Joe Hill to Debs to Gurley Flynn, to Robeson to Du Bois, this has been the clarion call – don't mourn, organize.

For this reason we meet. And we meet with experiences behind us. These experiences have included matchless heroism and accurate diagnoses and important – if partial – advances. They have included also, alas, dogmatism, sectarianism, rigidity, even fanaticism. The goal, let us never forget, is a humane social order; it cannot be reached by rigidity, not to speak of cruelty.

I believe that all with a common goal of a society characterized by the absence of poverty, racism, divisiveness and the presence of sufficiency, dignity and beauty must comprehend that such a goal requires radical therapy.

Attempts to maintain exploitative and inhuman social orders in the name of conservatism eventually end in fascism. Attempts to alleviate the worst excesses of such a social order may reduce them but will never remove them. Eventually, they, too, because they do not succeed, may yield to a policy of blood and iron.

Only a commitment to transform such a social order can really succeed in that goal. Such a commitment requires unity among those committed to the goal. Such unity, in turn, requires a repudiation of dogmatism, a welcoming of allies, a democratic practice. Only a democratic practice can eventuate into a democratic society.

That society will mean an absence of exploitation and domination; equality not domination; equality of all, both sexes, all nationalities, all religions and no religion. Such a society will consider violence – let alone war – as anachronistic. Such a society will witness the flowering of the arts, of science, of humanistic behavior. Such a society will be civilized living together of liberated women and men.

Such a society is worth a lifetime of commitment. Such a society should be our goal. Our behavior in striving for such a society must coincide with the quality of life we collectively seek to create.

To participate in the effort to reach such a goal is the ultimate purpose of life. Let us vigorously, joyously, incessantly, defiantly, help create a truly human social order.

Address of Herbert Aptheker, historian, author and organizer.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY EVENING, FRIDAY, JULY 17

VIETNAM

A path of renovation and democratization

by Ngo Thanh Nhan

I am very happy to be with you today as part of the Vietnamese progressive movement in the United States. Living here, we are part of both the Vietnamese revolution and part of the long and proud struggle of the U.S. people for peace, justice and social progress. I am also happy to be able to tell you that, despite the changes in the international balance of forces and the not-so-new "new world order," the Vietnamese revolution is alive and kicking! Vietnam today is involved in a dynamic process of attempting to define its own road to socialism, fraught as it is with contradictions and many pitfalls.

The promise of our revolution has been written in the blood of two million Vietnamese. Many Americans have also given their lives to this process, either as anti-war activists or as cannon fodder of the U.S. government's war. We were able to endure such tremendous sacrifices because we believed, as our President Ho Chi Minh said, that "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom." For the Vietnamese people, most of whom are peasants, this meant, first of all, freedom from colonialism and foreign aggression. The victory of the Vietnamese people also meant freedom from hunger and poverty, literacy, basic health care and education. To most of those who made the revolution, nationalism and socialism were interwoven threads. The great victory of the Vietnamese people over U.S. imperialism in 1975 constituted a necessary precondition for the development of a just and equitable society – a socialist society.

But the liberation of the country was not enough. Vietnam – the world's third poorest country – devastated by years of war, embarked on what was then the generally accepted model for building socialism. It embarked on large scale heavy industrial production and collectivization without the necessary infrastructure, finances and management experience. In the countryside, the peasants had to sell their crops to the government at such low prices that incentive to grow was eliminated and food shortages began to develop. The bureaucratic subsidy system of management resulted in scores of inefficient enterprises, hyper inflation and shortages. As standards of living plummeted, the Vietnamese Communist Party began a process of renovation which they call *doi moi*. Conceived of before perestroika in the Soviet Union, this policy sprang from the knowledge that one cannot build socialism or expect popular support if one's citizens are hungry; that one's people will be hungry if the peasants are not motivated to grow food. The Party also criticized what it felt were idealist notions that socialism could be achieved in a short time and that socialism, of necessity, means the complete elimination of the private sector and market economy.

Since 1989, this renovation has been systematically developed and implemented in both the economic and political fields. Economically, Vietnam has reversed its hasty nationalization of all enterprises. While the state sector is still seen as the key sector, various forms of ownership – from private and family ownership to joint state-private ownership to collective ownership – are allowed and encouraged. This has resulted in a freeing of the productive forces and a great variety of consumer products available for the people. The results in agriculture have been even more dramatic. With the advent of the contract system, in which peasants can exercise more control over their production and can keep more of the profits, there have been several years of bumper harvests. Last year Vietnam was the world's third largest exporter of rice.

In keeping with the needs of the people, a focus on unwieldy large scale industrial products has been replaced by a threefold emphasis on agriculture, light industry and production for export. There has also been more attention paid to environmental issues such as reforestation.

The elimination of the two-price system, where government workers received ration coupons with which to purchase goods at subsidized prices, resulted in Vietnam being able to control its money supply, tame inflation and reduce the activities of the illegal money exchange market. Vietnam also passed a new foreign investment law which allows up to 100 percent foreign ownership of companies and which has generated millions of dollars in investments – the largest amount being from Taiwan. Vietnam has been successful in trading with all of its ASEAN neighbors and almost every country in the world except for the United States.

Politically renovation means developing the democratic essence of socialism. The Vietnamese revolution is premised on the idea of a worker-peasant-intellectual alliance – a concept recently updated from the worker/peasant alliance to reflect the importance of a scientific approach. During the many years of war the Communist Party functioned, of necessity, in a highly centralized manner. Since the end of the war, the country has been working to define the appropriate roles for the Party, the government apparatus and for the people's mass organizations. Here also, the Party has criticized the tendency towards formalistic rather than real democracy in the old model. While the Party does not believe that democracy requires other parties, it stresses that the people must actually be able to run their own society and that the Party substitutes itself for the people at its peril. Now, the Party's role is seen as leading the society in terms of the broad goals of building socialism. The actual running of the government and its institutions is defined as the role of the national assembly and the governing bodies. The people's organizations – such as the women's union, trade unions and youth union – are seen as the means by which the entire population is actively involved in determining the policies which affect their communities and the country.

In practice, this means that the Communist Party does not make all decisions as in the past. Contested elections for the na-

tional assembly, for local offices and even for directors of factories are held. If the candidate proposed by the Party is unpopular, then he or she is defeated. The national assembly, which is empowered to make all laws, has been reinvigorated and has been quite outspoken in demanding changes from the government and Party. Vietnam has also been developing a system of laws which make clear the rights and responsibilities of every citizen. The legal system is seen as a framework for socialist democracy.

Vietnam has also encouraged a greater freedom of expression of the media, which have led in exposing corruption and incompetence.

The progress in building what is referred to as a socialist oriented market economy is nothing short of remarkable in the world's third poorest country. The contradictions and difficulties are perhaps even more sobering. This new creature – a socialist market economy – contains the seeds of the old and the new. The development of a private sector has created a growing gap between rich and poor and spawned corruption within the Party and the state. The closing of unproductive enterprises has increased unemployment. The government's inability to collect taxes and difficulties in managing the new economy have resulted in a lack of funds and the deterioration of health care and education services. Lack of adequate customs laws have resulted in the market being flooded with imported goods which threaten Vietnam's industry.

And, most worrisome, is the tendency to see everything as a commodity. This has resulted in a rise in prostitution and crime. The influx of the worst of western commercial culture threatens Vietnam's own national culture. Left unchecked, these problems will probably undermine the people's confidence in the revolution. Every institution in Vietnam is keenly aware of the need to take action against corruption – financial and spiritual. How to do this is a hot topic of debate at the highest level of the Party and government.

With its years of successful leadership of the struggle for national independence, the Communist Party is still respected and trusted by the majority of Vietnamese. With the advent of the new agricultural policy, the peasants attribute their better standard of living to revolution. So, if the problems I mentioned can be tackled, we do not expect to see a repetition of the situation in Eastern Europe. Of course, there are many questions about whether a multisector economy will create forces dedicated to restoring capitalism or whether it is possible for these forces to express their interests within the current mass organizations. And it cannot be denied that the upheavals in other socialist countries have had an effect on the people's thinking in Vietnam. Vietnam is, along with Cuba, blazing a new path towards socialism – a socialism which is not determined by a mechanical model or blueprint, but which is based on the concrete situation and needs of its people.

Throughout this process, Vietnam has continued to maintain the importance of internationalism and solidarity. It has stood firmly with Cuba, with the ANC and with the Palestinians. Following the uprisings in Los Angeles, the spokesperson for Vietnam's Foreign Ministry issued a statement that the events in L.A. were a symptom of racism and the violation of

human rights.

It is time for us to, once again, stand with Vietnam. The U.S. government maintains an economic and trade embargo against Vietnam. This embargo not only prevents trade, but prevents Vietnam from receiving World Bank and IMF loans greatly needed to rebuild its infrastructure. The embargo and lack of diplomatic relations also hurts the U.S. people since it prevents Vietnam from buying the products that we as workers make – trade which would generate much needed jobs here. The lack of relations with Vietnam is a barrier for healing the wounds of war for many American veterans.

The U.S. government has linked relations with Vietnam with the accounting for U.S. MIA's and with the situation in Cambodia. Both of these issues are a smokescreen for continuing the U.S. war against Vietnam. We have a responsibility to end this war once and for all – to extend our hands in peace and friendship with Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people have made incalculable contributions to our movement in the United States. Many of us came to political consciousness during the war. Now, our hopes for a living, breathing example of socialism rest with Vietnam and a very few other countries. We ask all of you to support the Vietnamese people by doing everything in your power to end the U.S. trade embargo and establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Friendship and solidarity between our two peoples will flourish and enrich both our countries. I urge you to circulate the resolution for peace with Vietnam which you will see during the conference – to get your unions and community organizations to adopt it as a statement of the will of the U.S. people.

In these difficult times internationally, we can take courage and inspiration from our sisters and brothers in Vietnam. We can see the future of a truly just and human society – a society "ten times more beautiful" as Ho Chi Minh said. Or as someone else said, a society of, for and by the people.

Presentation by Ngo Thanh Nhan, of the Association of Vietnamese in the United States.

CANADA

Forging a new coalition for radical change

by Judy Rebick

Good evening, it is a great pleasure to be here. I would like to tell you about a new development in Canada: a broad progressive coalition that includes the organized labor movement, including the Canadian Labor Congress, which is our equivalent to your AFL-CIO, the largest labor federation in the country. You may not be aware that we just had a convention of the CLC and elected a very left-wing leadership, including as president Bob White, former president of the Canadian Auto Workers, which broke away from the UAW on an anti-concession platform, and Jean Claude Pareau, leader of the postal

workers.

The Action Canada Network is a multi-issue progressive coalition at the national level of the labor movement, the women's movement, students, teachers, farmers, nurses, and includes a Quebec wing, called *Solidarité Populaire*. Progressive church organizations are an important part. It is a rather extraordinary exercise because it started as started as a single-issue coalition against the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement and had enormous political impact. We were able to turn around public opinion on the Free Trade Agreement from maybe 20 percent who were against initially to a majority of people in Canada who were against the agreement at the time it was signed. Unfortunately, because we have three parties, the two parties that opposed the agreement got the majority of the vote but the one party that supported the agreement won the election. Now we are stuck with this free trade agreement, and it will get worse we think with NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement among U.S., Canada and Mexico].

We decided the end of that struggle in 1988 that we would keep the coalition together and develop what we call a People's Agenda. It is really a socialist agenda, although we don't call it that. The reason we don't call it that is that we have people who participate, for example, in the Council of Canadians, which is primarily a Canadian nationalist organization and is not socialist and which has people in it who support the Liberal Party in Canada.

The Action Canada Network has managed to have a very important influence on Canadian politics, particularly in the present constitutional discussion. We were able as a coalition to present alternate political perspectives to those being presented by the federal Tories and the other political parties. We have the New Democratic Party in Canada, which is a social democratic party. But as often happens with social democratic parties, when push comes to shove, electoralism and being worried about getting the vote comes before socialist or even democratic principles. We find that as a popular organization outside that political party we are much more able to present bold left alternatives than the political party itself, particularly on the constitutional issues.

Canada is deeply divided on political perspectives between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The New Democratic Party has been primarily based outside Quebec and has never understood the national question very well and been willing to take a stand on it. It has been their Achilles' Heel. In the context of the constitutional debate, where the ruling party has been trying to implement a very right-wing agenda through the constitution, the Action Canada Network was actually able to present an alternative point of view and to defeat the worst aspects of that proposal.

Politics in Canada is very different from here in the United States. As you know, our labor movement is much more progressive and all of our social movements are more progressive. Maybe I'll just talk for a moment about the women's movement. I am known as a radical and a socialist in Canada, and I am the president of the largest women's organization in

the country. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women recently adopted a Women's Agenda which is based not only on the traditional demands of the women's movement – on choice and child care and pay equity and affirmative action. We, and I mean the broad women's movement, have come to the conclusion that for women to achieve equality, it is not enough to win small reforms here or there, that we are basically faced with a society, with institutions that are built by white men for white men and that unless we transform those institutions, unless we fight the right-wing agenda, we will never win equality for women. Our Women's Agenda is a very radical agenda which takes up a broad range of economic and social issues, including racism and homophobia. This agenda was adopted by 550 women's organizations, from women's centers to rape crisis centers to women's committees of unions.

What's happening in Canada is that a whole range of social organizations are taking on a progressive agenda. They are going from a focus on single issue agendas to a much broader struggle for social justice. This is very exciting for us, but at the same time we have a polarization. We have right-wing forces, ultra-right and even fascist forces developing and an ultra-right party which has gotten some success, particularly in western Canada. We have a ruling party which tries to slavishly follow the Bush administration agenda. But what is happening in Canada is very exciting and shows some of the potentials of building socialism in the '90s.

I will conclude with this. I notice in your brochure that you talk about achieving women's equality as a democratic issue. Personally, I think that that is wrong. I think that for socialism to be relevant in the '90s, we have to reject the Marxist notion that the central struggle for socialism is the working-class struggle against capitalism and understand that the struggle of women for equality, the struggle of racial minorities against racism and for equality, the struggle of gays and lesbians against homophobia, the struggle of people with disabilities for full access and participation in society are also central to the struggle for socialism in the 1990s.

What we have learned in the left and in the women's movement in Canada is that we also have to struggle inside our own organizations, because if we replicate patriarchal and racist relations of domination inside our own organizations, then we can't attract those people who will be the leaders of the fight for social justice in the 1990s. In the left, with all due respect, and I was part of the left, we can't have white men telling us that they know what the correct line is, and in the women's movement, we can't have white women thinking that they understand the reality of all women. And so for me the struggle for socialism or social justice in the 1990s is the struggle to develop a new process, a new understanding of developing theory, which comes from all of our experiences and not just those who happen to have the most access to power in our organizations.

Address of Judy Rebick, President, National Action Commission on the Status of Women and member of the New Democratic Party.

EL SALVADOR

On the path of the democratic revolution

Sigfrido Reyes

I

I am greatly pleased to be able to be here with you today, in response to the Committees of Correspondence invitation to the FMLN [Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front]. Please accept our fraternal, revolutionary greetings in the name of all the *compañeros* in El Salvador, who are making the maximum effort to consolidate a process of change that will take us to the establishment of a just and democratic society.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of this kind of event for revolutionaries and democrats all over the world, in view of the need to seek answers to the challenges contemporary history has imposed on us. We must creatively renew our thought, reaffirming our principles and clarifying what new possibilities are ripening for social change in our countries. After the events of the East, with the bourgeois politicians and ideologues claiming victory for capitalism over socialist ideals, it has become urgent for us to make an enormous effort to draft new strategies and proposals so that our peoples' demands for democracy, economic development, social justice and civil liberties will find a path for their fulfillment. All these goals, in our opinion, are inseparable from socialism. A socialism that does not incorporate these ingredients has no possibility in the future.

In El Salvador, we are on our way out of a stage, prolonged for many decades, from which democracy was absent. For the greater part of the present century we suffered under a bloody military dictatorship, at the service of a powerful oligarchic minority. With the support of several North American governments, this dictatorship immersed the country in a bloodbath, committed monstrous crimes, sponsored the disappearance of tens of thousands of farmers, workers, students, teachers and many, many more, and suppressed the most basic freedoms.

We have recently concluded a stage of nearly 12 years of revolutionary armed struggle led by the FMLN, in which the Salvadoran people astonished the world with our incredible ability to wage struggle under tremendously unfavorable conditions, against an army trained, armed, financed and led by successive Washington administrations. Throughout this period, the progressive sectors of the entire world, including, of course, the most advanced sectors of North American society, gave continuous and vigorous support to our people to carry forward our struggle. With actions that can only be compared to the unforgettable mobilizations against the Vietnam War, hundreds of thousands of North Americans all along the length and breadth of this vast country united in the efforts to cut off official support for the brutal dictatorship in El Salvador. The attempt to transform El Salvador into a proving ground for the doctrine of Low Intensity Conflict was defeated not only in the mountains

of Chalatenango, Guazapa and Morazan, but in the streets and parks of San Francisco, New York, Washington and other cities.

In January of this year, a transcendent Peace Accord was reached between our Frente and the government and armed forces of El Salvador. Having demonstrated the uselessness of counter-insurgency strategies, and the fiction of the military's puppet civilian governments, the FMLN undertook a vigorous effort to achieve peace in El Salvador and to lay the bases for democracy in our country. This effort actively involved the international community, and it broke through the most tenacious resistance, including the resistance of the government of the United States. After more than two years of complicated negotiations, peace was able to be a reality in El Salvador.

II

In our opinion, the Peace Accords outline a plan for a new country, backed up by a broad national consensus and unprecedented support from the international community. The Peace Accords are the fruit of the method of consensus, supported by the pluralist participation of all the political and social forces in society.

The Peace Accords establish a set of Salvadoran reforms for the sickness of the Salvadoran political, judicial and socio-economic system. Above all, they are indispensable reforms in the military institution to remove it from the hegemonic, totalitarian role it has been playing for the past 60 years, and subordinate it unconditionally to civilian authority, democratically generated and constituted. They are reforms that will make the electoral system clear and trustworthy, and therefore, make the governments that will arise from elections worthy of respect by all. They are reforms that will make the judicial system effective, speedy and reliable, and will give rise to a new National Civilian Police, following the disappearance of the repressive apparatus created by the Military Dictatorship.

The Accords eliminate the military and police doctrines of so-called "National Security," according to which the mission of police and military force should be to persecute and smash the "internal enemy." Without ridding our country of this type of doctrine in military thinking, it would be absolutely impossible to think of democracy in El Salvador.

The Peace Accords constitute the first definitive steps on the long road toward higher levels of social justice, especially in relation to the land question, which has been and continues to be the deepest and most fundamental axis around which our convulsive history has turned, and one of the most influential causes in unleashing the war. The other cause was the absence of democracy, the wiping out of freedom and the massive violation of human rights.

To fulfill the Peace Accords means to aim El Salvador toward the future, to prepare it to be favorably reinserted in the ever more independent world, full of more and more complex challenges taking shape at the end of this century.

The FMLN has the decisive will to fulfill these Accords, accepting the difficulties and dangers of struggle in exclusively political setting. We believe that with our resolve, plus the support of all those in the world who have stood at our side all these years, we will be able to overcome the resistance of the

business and military sectors in El Salvador who are opposed to the Peace Accords.

To make sure these changes become irreversible and to deepen the democratization in our country, the FMLN is proposing to boldly enter into the Government in 1994. For the 1994 general elections, we intend to form a broad opposition bloc that will bring in all the political and social forces who are committed to deepening the changes begun in the Peace Accords. For the FMLN, this means devising a pluralist policy of alliances that can involve sectors such as Christian Democracy, Social Democracy, Social Christians, organized labor and cooperative sectors, women's organizations, environmentalists, Christian base communities, and all those who agree on the goal of ensuring that the past of militarism and repression shall never again be repeated in our homeland.

III

It is essential to ask ourselves what the Peace Accords represent in the long path of making the revolution in El Salvador. Measured in the context of our history and our reality, they represent a great advance. Nevertheless, they are not everything. In our judgment, what we have begun in El Salvador is a new stage of struggle in more favorable conditions – but it certainly represents struggle on the political, ideological, economic and social terrain.

In this stage, the great tasks of the democratic revolution must be fulfilled completely: To establish a political system of a pluralist character, that responds to the needs of the majority, respectful of human rights and civil liberties. To plant the bases of a more just socioeconomic system, that can overcome the present oligarchic and neoliberal model by one that includes a strong popular pole, with enterprises owned by the workers and individual small and medium business people, that ensures that these sectors can be productive, competitive, and influential in the national economy. The foregoing is possible only if the plurality of forms of property is ensured, in such a way that the private capitalist forms can coexist interrelated with and complementary to the collective (cooperatives and other associated forms of a social character) and state forms. Additionally, the new participation of our economy in the world economy must be favorably resolved.

Democratic revolution means advancing effectively in the demilitarization of the country, with the dual proposition of eliminating any danger to the full exercise of democratic freedom and ensuring the bases for economic and social development by reducing high military spending. In this stage, the conditions for our country's exercising an independent foreign policy in accordance with the interests of our people must be ensured, participating in redefining North-South relations.

It is in the framework of this plan and this pace that we propose the necessity of later passing over to higher forms of social development, such as socialism. Our idea of socialism is a system that places into the hands of society, not of the state, the means of production, distribution and communications, as well as economic development, the political system and the government, which presupposes recognition of the diversity of ideas and parties.

The role of the state should be concentrated in supporting and ensuring social development and gradually become weakened as a coercive apparatus, to give way to a growing perfection of social organization and self-development.

Our idea of socialism is inseparable from democracy, for only democracy can provide the channels of expression for the various thoughts and interests present in society. We declare ourselves in favor of a democracy which transcends the concept of representative democracy, and which can open the doors to direct participation of the popular majority in the great decisions of state. This democracy must also include the establishment of mechanisms of popular control over the organs of state power.

We who fight for socialism must make efforts to redesign the model we offer, to draw lessons, from the positive as well as negative aspects of the experience left us by the countries of the East. It is important to study more deeply the original thought of the founders of socialism, incorporating the advances of contemporary social science, as well as the dramatic modifications the technological revolution has introduced into the relations of production at the local and international level.

In the FMLN, we believe that the socialist proposals of today must be far removed from the failed, rigid models. We say: "We must think with our own heads, to seek responses to our own realities." We believe we are faced with the opportunity to burst forth with our own thinking, offering a balanced combination of flexibility and creativity, such as we did throughout the armed struggle and during the negotiations that ended in the Peace Accords.

The present century has witnessed impressive social and political experiments, authentic revolutions in the history of humanity. The coming century will bring us great advances and great changes. We haven't the slightest doubt that the struggle for socialist ideals will be one of the great generators of such changes, since these ideals offer humanity the opportunity to end the increasingly abysmal misery, hunger, sickness and ever greater backwardness, and lack of freedom and respect for individuals and their rights.

Address of Sigfrido Reyes, representing the Political-Diplomatic Commission of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front of El Salvador. Reyes is a member of the Salvadoran Communist Party. Translation by Buddy Clark.

SOUTH AFRICA

We shall end minority rule and apartheid in any guise

by Hlatshwayo Madoda

In 1990-91, at a conference called CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa), both the ANC and the government and other groupings committed themselves to a new constitution that would be adopted on the basis of unity, democracy, nonracialism and nonsexism that would create a new South

Africa. The process started at CODESA has now been deadlocked. The problem, fundamentally, is with the ruling white minority party, which continues to seek ways to guarantee itself continued power regardless of its electoral support. The regime insists that the political majority, no matter how large, should be subjected to a veto by minority political parties – in the main, white political parties. Unless the government comes forth with a firm commitment to full democracy based on internationally-recognized principles and acceptance of sovereignty, the process cannot move forward.

After many years the struggle inside and outside South Africa was brought to a point where we all generally accepted that it could be peaceably resolved. The ANC went to the General Assembly [of the United Nations] and put forward the conditions under which it was prepared to enter into negotiations with the de Klerk government. Among the most important was that the negotiations must be undertaken only in an atmosphere free of violence. The General Assembly was in full agreement. Indeed, the South African government itself adopted this position – free discussions without intimidation, a clear, easy political atmosphere in the country, and no violence. However, as we all know, the violence has continued and the ANC feels it cannot continue negotiations as long as the people are being slaughtered.

It is not only the ANC which is pressing the issue of violence. Other, non-political, independent organizations have pointed out the de Klerk regime's involvement in the violence. An independent organization, Community Agency for Social Equity, has issued reports which found that the violence appears to be switched on and off at strategic moments. "Behind the scale of brutality is the clear evidence that the violence erupts at points when it most weakens the ANC and its alliance and dies down dramatically when it would most harm the government of F. W. de Klerk."

The report notes that two political parties clearly seem to be benefitting from this violence: the National Party, which is running the government, and the Inkatha Freedom Party of Mr. Buthelezi. To the ANC, it is definitely beyond a reasonable doubt that the violence in South Africa is both organized and orchestrated. It is specifically directed at the democratic movement, whose activists, members and supporters make up the overwhelming majority of its victims. This constitutes a cold-blooded strategy of state terrorism intended to create conditions under which the forces responsible for introducing and entrenching the system of apartheid would also have the possibility of imposing their will on a weakened democratic movement.

It is widely acknowledged that agreements the ANC has reached in the past with the de Klerk government, particularly those aimed at curbing violence, have not been carried out. For instance, the government has made no effort to implement agreements reached bilaterally between Mr. de Klerk and Mr. Mandela [President of the African National Congress] on cultural weapons and hostels – areas over which it clearly has control. And it continues to blame the ANC for the violence. Faced with the horrendous escalation of violence, as evidenced in the Boipatong massacre and taking place in the context of the negotiations deadlock, the ANC has been forced to withdraw from

the multilateral negotiations process. From the ANC's point of view, the blame lies squarely with the regime. Only the regime has the law-enforcement personnel and legal authority to stop the violence and act against the perpetrators. The government has an obligation to protect the lives and property of all the people. It has failed to do so.

The central thrust of the violence is to weaken the ANC and the democratic movement as a whole. The ANC maintains that the government is responsible for the violence, both by acts of omission – such as failing to enforce the agreements – and acts of commission, particularly the role played by its security structures. International organizations such as the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International have also charged the government with failing to act against violence and failing to bring to justice the individuals involved in the violence.

No action has been taken in a number of situations where policemen were involved and Inkatha was involved. Nonetheless, Mr. de Klerk consistently points the finger at the ANC. The ANC believes that de Klerk may, on the one hand, be committed to a new dispensation against apartheid in South Africa, but perhaps, on the other hand, may not actually have control over the security apparatus. The ANC would like to assist de Klerk, not only in terms of the self-interest of the mass democratic movement, but also in his own interests, by having the United Nations involved in monitoring the violence. With the U.N. physically in the country, monitoring the police and the so-called violence from the ANC, de Klerk could indeed be free to carry on legitimate negotiations at CODESA, based on internationally accepted principles of democracy. We have in South Africa in 1992 an awkward situation where the vote of Africans is supposed to count for about three-quarters of the vote of someone who is white. This is what they are pushing at CODESA. The government wants everything to pass parliament on the basis of a 75 percent plurality, which would mean totally weakening the vote of the victims of apartheid. In U.S. history, Black people were once counted as three-fifths of a person in apportioning representation. In South Africa, in 1992, our vote is supposed to be worth three-quarters. Obviously, this is unacceptable.

This is one of the fundamental problems here. Their perception of the African people is as less than human. In spite of the so-called new era and the so-called new regime, they still hold their fascistic fantasies dearly. Although the ANC is prepared to negotiate for a dispensation that will accommodate all South Africans, including the reactionary whites, it is dealing with people who are still wearing cold war blinkers. De Klerk does not see our struggle for freedom as being legitimate. He cannot see the ANC leading the people of South Africa – all of them, Black, white, Colored, Indian. To the contrary, he acts as if the fascist whites have the right to bring in a new South Africa. But, they have no capacity to change the country. Even as we are speaking today, they are engaging in covert anti-democratic actions. They do not compete openly, democratically, with the ANC's new ideas. To the contrary, they murder: not just ANC people but so-called sympathizers of the ANC.

Apartheid is alive and well in South Africa. Last year, after

Mr. de Klerk declared that apartheid was history, President Bush rushed to lift the sanctions. We need the sanctions now, more so than ever. Apartheid will not wither away and it will not be dismantled by de Klerk or Bush. We have to keep the pressure on.

Toward this end, the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and other democratic forces in the Black communities, such as Azanian Peoples Organizations and the Pan-African Congress of South Africa, are all going to be involved in a general strike on Aug. 3. We are asking for solidarity. The ANC views the international community and its solidarity efforts as essential to our struggle. Let's keep the faith.

Today's situation is new for everybody, not only for the left movement in the United States. The situation that is in transition in South Africa is new both for South Africans and for the solidarity movement. Recognizing this, the ANC National Executive Council, meeting at the end of May, called on the ANC to organize international solidarity conferences in the areas where it has been operating most effectively: the Pacific Basin, Europe and North America. At these solidarity conferences, the ANC will present to the movement its reading of the new situation, and the solidarity movement will present to the ANC its reading on new developments. This conference is planned in November in New York City. These conferences can only be a success if the grassroots are involved. The comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was enacted because of the pressure from the grassroots. Mr. Reagan vetoed it thrice, but Congress overruled him. So it's very, very important that the grassroots be mobilized, that they hear directly from the people who are involved on the ground on the new situation that has arisen and how the ties, based on equality, should be enhanced.

We share the situation the left finds itself in in this country today. The ANC itself, as an organization, is still reeling from the new situation it is confronted with. Not only does it have to fight against the apartheid monstrosity, but the ANC has to rebuild organized structures within the country, working through at least three different traditions that have arisen in the course of the struggle. The ANC has a tradition of struggle from the UDF [United Democratic Front – a coalition of legal mass organizations – Ed.]. The second stream is the people who participated in the struggle by spending most of their lives in prison. And that's a large number of people – not only in the leadership but also among the rank and file. The third stream in the ANC today is composed of people like me, people who have spent 29 plus years in exile and struggled in exile. This indicates some of the tasks that the ANC is confronted with. Thank you for the support. *A luta continua! Amandla!*

Address of Hlatshwayo Madoda, deputy head of the African National Congress mission to the United States.

GERMANY

Toward a new vision of democracy and socialism

by Andrea Lederer

Good evening. First, please excuse my mistakes in English. It's the first time I've given a speech in English. I want to thank you for inviting me to address this conference. Gregor Gysi, the chair of the Party of Democratic Socialism in Germany, asked me to greet you and wish your conference all success. He is very interested in being in touch with the CoC next time he's in the United States.

I listened to your discussions today with great interest. A lot of the questions remind me of discussions we are having in Germany, and I think these are questions which also concern the left movement in Europe. This is not surprising because the left has to act under completely new conditions today.

I want to inform you a little bit about the situation in Germany after unification. First, what the German government calls unification is in reality a kind of political, ideological, social, economic and cultural annexation of the former GDR [German Democratic Republic]. This is true despite the 1990 elections in which people voted for the Christian Democrats. The consequences are deep economic problems, a large budget deficit, and we estimate that it will take 10 or 15 years to equalize living standards between east and west Germany. If this is a sample of integration between west and east Europe, it's not a good sign. And in eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics there are problems which are quite similar to or worse than those in the former GDR.

The social situation for the people in east Germany is very bad at the moment. The rate of unemployment is between 30 and 40 percent, and I know some communities which have 80 percent unemployment. So you can imagine that there is anger and desperation, and I think the government is a little worried about this situation. They don't know what sort of movement may develop.

Women – as is often true – are the main losers in this situation. In the former GDR, 95 percent of the women worked outside the home, and they were also able to have a family. Now they are the first ones to lose their jobs and they have lost child care as well, because all the child care facilities that existed in the former GDR have closed.

Racism is growing. You have probably heard about the recent attacks on refugees and immigrants. We're afraid that the extreme right wing will succeed in recruiting people by exploiting the social problems, and this is becoming a real movement. We're giving a great deal of attention to developing ways to combat this.

What I'm saying today is not very friendly about the country I come from, but that is the way we see it. In the arena of foreign affairs this German government talks a lot about its growing international responsibility. The first step they have planned is to change the constitution so that German soldiers

can act worldwide with U.N. troops or with the Western European Union military community. Unfortunately, I will have to leave this meeting earlier than I had planned because an extraordinary session of Parliament has been called for Wednesday to begin changing the Constitution, due to the war in Yugoslavia. The German government wants to be part of the U.N. troops and we think that is a very dangerous step. They are thinking militarily after the cold war instead of thinking about how to make peace in the world and how to use the country's economic power to create a better and more equal worldwide economy. I think that should be the task. We hope that the peace movement will wake up and take to the streets against this development.

There is a third feature of the present situation: I think not only Germany, but all of western Europe, is going to build walls around itself against refugees and immigrants coming from the so-called Third World and also coming from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We have some treaties which make it very hard for those people to get into countries where they can survive, and we have had some very bitter discussions about the right of asylum. The government also wants to change this article in the Constitution and we are trying to fight it in alliance with all concerned organizations.

Now I want to say something about the PDS. The PDS comes out of the SED [Socialist Unity Party] in the former GDR, and we have had a lot of discussions over the last two years because of the implosion of existing socialism – a lot of discussions about the history of this first effort of socialism, and also about the mistakes that were made. At the moment, the PDS' main base is in east Germany, where it has 180,000 members, as contrasted with only 600 members in west Germany. So we have a lot of work to do.

The system makes it very hard to build a left movement. Out of a total of 662 members of Parliament, we in the PDS have 15 – two from the west and 13 from the east. They belong not only to the party but also to, for example, the women's liberation movement, and include people who worked in independent movements and who are seeking an alliance so that together we can learn about all left thoughts and ideas, find out how we can work together and build a movement against the negative developments I have described.

In east Germany there are about 10,000 members of the party who work in local governments in very small communities, larger towns, in the county parliaments, in the Bundestag. At the moment, we're discussing a new program. The first draft has been published and now the rank and file is discussing it very intensively. In January of 1993 there will be a convention and we hope that we will adopt a new program.

The way the media deals with us in Germany is a bit rough. They try to make everybody believe that the original idea of socialism is dead. We don't believe that: We think it is very necessary to analyze everything that happened in the last 40 years, and not only in the GDR. We are very open to discussing mistakes and we think that it's necessary to develop a new concept of socialism, to learn how we can really achieve democracy and equal rights.

This is the first time since the 1950s that socialists or left members of a democratic socialist party have served in Parlia-

ment and the majority don't like this situation. They try to isolate and discriminate against the PDS. For example, they're investigating Hans Modrow, who was prime minister when the GDR underwent these big changes. At that time Helmut Kohl and all the west German politicians were eager to meet with him; now all they want is to put him out of parliament. So right now we're trying to organize international solidarity around this.

I think we should be realistic. In Europe, progressive thinking people and left movements are in a weak position now, and we have to discover how we can be more effective in our work and come together and not be as divided as we are today. Regarding the question of whether to be a movement or party, we, too, had a lot of discussions. One person said, "The PDS is both a movement and a party," but in my opinion that's probably not possible. The PDS decided to be a party, but it sought the most developed standard of inner democracy, and it is open to all progressive thoughts and ideas and movements. This is necessary because of the fact that feminism or ecological consciousness, for example, and also ideas about how to act against racism in society, are mostly developed outside parties, in independent movements, and it would be a big mistake not to come together, discuss all these ideas, and find ways to struggle together. That is a very necessary experience for us.

We try to form alliances with all who are opposed to the current developments in Germany, including Germany's plans to play a part in the so-called new world order. We try to work together with the peace movement, women's liberation movement, with the movement against racism and for the rights of refugees and immigrants. Activists in these movements may not want to be in a socialist party, and I think we have to accept that. We have to be very open to criticism of socialism as it existed. We have to try to convince people about new ideas of socialism, but we can only influence them by coming together, working together, doing things together, demonstrating together. One very good example of how movements can work together occurred at the G7 summit in Munich.

There were 25,000 people on the street, demonstrating against this kind of world order. And 500 people were taken to prison because they were blowing whistles and for one second they were louder than the Bavarian music that was greeting Mr. Bush. These experiences are really good for developing new discussions and ideas and at times it may also be possible to be in one organization, if people think that is necessary.

The last thing I wanted to tell you about is an exciting new effort. A call was issued for the founding of Committees for Justice. The main goal of these committees is for people to organize themselves in east Germany, try to express their interests, their demands, and try to again be more collective than at the moment. Because one of the effects of unification has been to isolate people, divide working people between east and west and prevent them from coming together to express their collective interests. It's very necessary to say to people, "You must be engaged again; you cannot wait for someone or some party; you must go out, meet people who have the same interests, come together and try to stand up to the government and the parliament so that they don't continue their policies."

This call was signed by a lot of writers, artists and politicians from east Germany, and also by several artists and writers from west Germany. It's not about a party, it's about committees – and it's an exciting experience because this alliance is very broad, including politicians from the PDS, like Gregor Gysi, and east German Christian Democratic politicians. I imagine that there will be a lot of problems, but we must try to figure out how we can work together.

Since the extreme right wing exploits social problems to recruit people, it is necessary that progressive people deal with the social problems and contribute to solving them. We cannot leave the field to those who make nationalist, chauvinist and racist arguments against refugees and immigrants. We must be faster and better than they are, so that people will be drawn to us, not to them.

The exchange of experience is very important for us on the left. It has been very valuable for me to talk to people in the west and east European left movements, and I'm very glad also to meet you here. I certainly hope that we can continue this contact. We will try also to invite people from the United States to our conferences, so that we can work together to build international solidarity against these developments in the world.

Address of Andrea Lederer, member of the German parliament and a leader of the Party of Democratic Socialism.

INTERNATIONAL GREETINGS

... from Austria

The Communist Party of Austria sends greetings of solidarity to your Conference on Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s.

We sincerely hope that your discussions and the results of your conference will contribute to the necessary and far-reaching renewal, and the rallying of Communist and other forces in the USA.

The CPA, too, is involved in a process of political, ideological and organizational renewal and a critical examination of our history – while preserving the positive traditions of the Party in the struggle against war and fascism, for the democratic and social rights of the working people, for the national sovereignty of Austria, and international solidarity.

We view such a renewal as the indispensable prerequisite for a revolutionary Marxist party of the left to live up to the new tasks and today's totally changed national and international situation.

*Franz Muhri, Secretary for International Affairs
Communist Party of Austria*

... from Canada

Best wishes for a successful conference in Berkeley.

Your deliberations come at a most critical juncture in American and world history. Transnational corporations and reactionary forces are attempting to script the content of our age in their brutal, triumphalist, capitalist image, while popular, democratic and working-class movements put up fierce and

growing resistance.

That resistance will be strengthened immeasurably to the extent that it is armed with the best socialist theory available – theory stripped of dogma and based on the rich and diverse legacy of the international labor and popular movements.

In our own hemisphere, the TNC's have their own special agenda wrapped up in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and George Bush's "Initiative for the Americas."

We, in the popular struggle in Canada, are buoyed by the latest very positive results from the Canadian Labour Congress Convention, and the conventions of other unions and mass peoples' organizations. But we, too, keenly feel the need for a more coherent socialist alternative and better organization of socialists from which to advance overall strategies and alternatives in the fight against big capital.

A new welcome spirit of internationalism is in evidence within the Canadian working class. Let us be among the first to demonstrate this to you with the hand of friendship and solidarity across our common border.

We look forward, with great anticipation, to the results of your conference. We also look forward to sharing experiences with you as we pursue our common destiny in the struggle for progress and socialism on our continent.

Your northern cousins,
*George Hewison
Communist Party of Canada*

... from Great Britain

British Communists are happy to send greetings to your conference and hope that your deliberations will prove fruitful for the development of a democratic and socialist future for the USA.

Communists and socialists all over the world are now having to reexamine their history, philosophy, politics and organizational principles in the light of events in the former Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Our party believes that the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism remain valid, but accepts that Communist practice has too often been at variance with the lofty ideals of our theory.

The end cannot justify the means, if the means used put in doubt in the desirability or validity of the end.

Communists must exercise the most consistent commitment to democracy, participation and accountability to prevent any abuse of power or authority.

The CPB supports all initiatives to discuss and work out strategies to root the ideas of peace and socialism in the hearts and minds of working people and their allies.

We wish your conference all success and look forward to receiving, in due course, its conclusions and documents.

With all best wishes – yours in solidarity,
*John Haylett, International Secretary
Communist Party of Britain*

... from Hungary

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party wishes great success to your conference on "Perspectives for Democracy in the

'90s". We share your opinion that "the times require us to tackle anew both the theory and strategy for social change."

We hope that your conference will contribute to developing a new concept of socialism and, at the same time, to the cooperation of all left forces.

*Gyula Thürmer, President
Hungarian Socialist Workers Party*

... from Italy

Unfortunately it is impossible for us to be present at your meeting but we wish you a successful conference. Please let us know about your initiatives and send us your documents (the other way round is not so useful because ours are written in Italian, a much less-well known language).

We also are committed to rethinking the communist experience and this is why we have insisted on keeping the word *ri-fondazione* (which is difficult to translate into English but means "found, once more, the communist movement") because to go on as if nothing had happened would be absurd, and our theory and practice have to be revisited in depth.

If we keep the word "communism" it is, first of all, because in Italy it means a lot for the whole country, but also because we believe that only by carrying in mind the concepts this word expresses, is it possible to recognize the new contradictions of our era, and only within the horizon communism has designed is it possible to overcome these contradictions.

We are sure there will be many common fields in which we can work together and positively exchange our views.

Fraternal greetings,
Partito della Rifondazione Comunista

... from Russia

Dear colleagues,

We greet your conference and we hope for future cooperation with U.S. left democratic forces, especially trade unions and workers' movements. Real solidarity of left democratic forces should be one of the main factors of the resistance to the

growth of right liberals' ideas, of the struggle against the threat of authoritarian regimes in our country and reactionary forces in the West.

*A. Buzgalin
Russian Organizing Committee of the Party of Labor*

... from Spain

Dear Comrades,

We have received your material of May 15th, informing us of the convocation (this coming July 17-19 in Berkeley, California) of a Conference with the theme, "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s."

At this time it is not possible for our Party to attend this Conference and, we send our best wishes for its success, convinced that this initiative represents an outstanding contribution to the unity and renovation of the U.S. Communist Party for the cooperation and convergence of those forces on the left in your country, spurring the fight for peace, social justice and solidarity.

We urgently ask that you send us all the materials, documents and resolutions of the Conference. Accept, dear friends, in solidarity, our fraternal greetings.

*Federal Committee
Communist Party of Spain*

... from South Africa

From the SACP we send our warm greetings to your conference. The theme you have chosen is, of course, THE big question. It is the central concern preoccupying our party here.

We look forward to hearing and reading about your discussions, which, we are sure, will be robust, critical, self-critical, and comradely – that is, in the best traditions of both democracy and socialism.

Amandla!
*Chris Hani, General Secretary
South African Communist Party*

DOCUMENTS

The following press release was issued by the Committees of Correspondence.

National Gathering of Left Activists Tops Expectations; Committees of Correspondence Launches Building Drive

A national conference of left activists, held on the Berkeley campus of the University of California July 17-19, exceeded all expectations in both attendance and level of unity achieved among the diverse group of over 1,300 participants.

The conference, called by the Committees of Correspondence, served a dual purpose of providing a space for left dialogue and debate about their role in the political life of the country and decision-making for the future of the Committees themselves.

At Sunday's closing plenary session, members of the Committees voted to begin building for a founding convention of a new socialist organization to be held in the winter of 1993.

Many of the participants had already affiliated to the Committees, and more than 250 others joined in the course of the weekend.

The conference, titled "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the 90s," featured extensive discussion about the crisis in world socialism and strategies for countering the rightward shift of American politics over the last 12 years.

Charlene Mitchell, coordinator of the Committees, said the situation "forced all who called themselves socialist, or politically identified with socialist countries, to rethink their concept of what socialism should be ... We rediscovered the importance of maintaining democratic standards within an organization and, as importantly, to be consistent in the struggle for democracy in society as a whole." She urged the building of a movement for socialism "based on the realities of the present, on circumstances as they are and not as we hope them to be."

Historian and political scientist Manning Marable argued that "the collapse of the consensus in the two party system prefigures new types of electoral challenges and the rise of independent movements of all types."

"We are challenged," he said, "to have the historical imagination to fight, creatively and with originality, for a world without capitalist exploitation, without the oppression of homophobia and sexism, without anti-Semitism and racism, to envision a world without poverty and homelessness and hunger."

"We initiated this call to renew our work in the face of the

country's current economic crisis and we were sure the conference would attract a lot of support," said Kendra Alexander, chair of the host California Committees of Correspondence. "But the weekend turned out better than our staunchest optimists had predicted."

"We are now in a position to build a new kind of organization that can really have an impact on the country's politics and work to improve the quality of life in our country."

A major portion of the three days of conferring was taken up with 43 workshop sessions on a variety of theoretical and more immediate political topics.

Two-fifths of the conference participants came from outside the San Francisco Bay Area, including 150 from New York, 100 from Los Angeles and contingents from Illinois, Minnesota, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, D.C. and the Pacific Northwest. Others came from Kentucky, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Hawaii and other states; the total number of states represented was 35.

Several hundred conference participants who are members of, or on the staff of, trade unions held special caucuses and workshops on questions confronting the labor movement and the challenge of its revitalization.

A youth caucus played a dynamic role in the workshops and plenary debate. Many of the youth participants met the following weekend to discuss national organizing.

One-third of the conference participants were people of color and half were women. Women and African-American and Latinos were especially prominent in leadership roles throughout the conference.

International guests, observers and reporters came from Austria, Canada, Japan, El Salvador, South Africa, Germany, Canada, Zaire and Vietnam. Messages of greetings came from organizations and parties in many countries, including Russia, Britain, Hungary, Italy and Spain.

In the final session, the Committees of Correspondence, an activist network initially formed last December mostly by former members of the now-splintered Communist Party, adopted an interim structure and a statement of unifying principles.

"We view socialism as the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion," reads the adopted statement. "This vision is not a utopia, but a practical response and solution to the contradictions of capitalist society. We will continue to participate in the ongoing public discussion of how to define socialism in light of contemporary realities.

"We will continue to assess the experience, including both achievements and failures, of the first sustained attempts to build socialist societies in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. We welcome all those who would like to participate with us in this exploration, while we struggle together to address the immediate problems of our people."

The statement says the new group is "both Marxist and pluralist" and holds that "different strands of socialist and democratic thought can co-exist and enrich each other within the context of a shared political program and practice."

Asserting the new formation to be internationalist, the

statement pledges "solidarity with peoples everywhere struggling for their genuine independence and rights as nations." It states its firm commitment to an organization which is "from its inception multiracial and multinational."

The meeting of Committees of Correspondence affiliates elected five co-chairs: National C of C Coordinator Charlene Mitchell of New York; author and social scientist Manning Marable, of Boulder, Colorado; union organizer Rafael Pizarro of New York; journalist Carl Bloice of New York and California C of C Chair Kendra Alexander of Berkeley.

It also elected 30 members to a National Coordinating Committee; other NCC members will be elected by members in the various states.

The members elected to the NCC at the Conference, in order of votes received, are: Angela Davis (San Francisco), Gus Newport (Berkeley), Elizabeth Martinez (San Francisco), Alva Buxenbaum (New York), Leslie Cagan (New York), Peter Camejo (Alameda, Calif.), Giuliana Milanese (San Francisco), Robert Chacanaca (Freedom, Calif.), Mildred Williamson (Chicago), Barry Cohen (New York), Mark Solomon (Boston), Barbara Lee (Sacramento), Maudelle Shirek (Berkeley), Raahi Reddi (New Brunswick, N.J.), Margy Wilkinson (Berkeley), Yvonne Golden (Florida), Mary Idosidis (Mill Valley, Calif.), Pat Fry (Detroit), Marty Price (Oakland), Frances Beal (Oakland), Marshall Garcia (New York), Betty Kano (Berkeley), Michael Myerson (New York), Sharon Stewart (Los Angeles), Carmen Rumbaut (San Antonio), Maurice Jackson (Washington, D.C.), Geoffrey Jacques (New York), Arthur Kinoy (Montclair, N.J.), Melinda Brown (Los Angeles), Leslie Shaheen (New York).

The Committees of Correspondence co-chairs met in the nation's capital August 7 and set the first meeting of the group's 65-member National Coordinating Committee for the weekend of October 3-4.

STRUCTURE

The following resolution on interim structure adopted on July 19.

How We Are Organized

1. An Interim Organization Based on Democracy, Flexibility and Activism

The Committees of Correspondence Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s Conference initiates an interim national organization, based on the Statement of Principles adopted by the Conference.

We are an interim organization based on democracy and flexibility. We envision convening the founding convention of this new organization by the end of 1993. This interim, transitional structure is designed to provide the maximum possible democracy, inclusivity and coherence for our work between now and our founding convention.

The Committees of Correspondence base our activities on the fullest discussion by our members of all proposals and activities, local and national. CoC members will have the greatest voice and participation in defining the nature of our organization, what it will undertake and participate in, at all levels. We value flexibility and collectivity, and expect to see this process grow and develop as we build toward our founding convention.

2. Membership Based on Equality and Inclusiveness

A. Eligibility. Membership is open to all who want to join. All one needs to do is sign a membership form and pay an annual national membership fee.

B. Rights. All members have equal rights, including: the right to be informed about, discuss and participate in deciding all important questions before the organization; the right to vote, to elect and stand for leadership, to participate to the degree that one chooses, to attend membership meetings and conventions, to receive all membership publications and materials, to participate in referenda and surveys.

3. Local Organization - Vibrant Structures at the Grass-roots

Active local organizations of the Committees of Correspondence are indispensable for mobilizing the energy, creativity and initiative of our full membership.

A. Formation. Local organizations may be based on a city, community, area, electoral subdivision, workplace, common area of work, type of work, area of political activity, or common desire to explore a particular theoretical or ideological question.

B. Coordination. Our goal is to form organizations in every state and designated sub-state area. Local committees are encouraged to form state and regional means of communication and cooperation.

4. Accountable and Representative National Leadership

A democratically selected and accountable national leadership is crucial for ensuring that the will of our membership is clearly formulated and effectively translated into action. It is especially important that our national leadership be representative of our membership in every sense, inclusive in terms of race, nationality, gender, class, age, and geographic area, sexual orientation and physical ability; and also inclusive of people with different political and organization experiences who are now within the Committees of Correspondence, as well as those who join as a result of our conference, and those who will be attracted to join over the next 18 months.

A. Responsibility. The role of the national interim leadership is primarily to develop the process of preparation for founding a new organization, which includes: building its base, facilitating discussion and debate among the membership, reaching out and interacting with other democratic and left forces to involve them in this process, initiating development of positions on urgent national and international issues and organizing involvement in struggle around some of them. This would include the regular and timely issuance of publications and other materials and travel to represent the national interim organization. The method of function-

ing of the elected leadership must allow for the fullest inclusion of those now in the CoC, as well as those who will be joining over the next 18 months.

The interim national leadership is accountable to the membership. All policy statements and position papers will be circulated to the full membership. The leadership will develop means of circulating documents that originate with local bodies and individual members. Methods of conducting membership referenda and polling will be developed.

B. National Coordinating Committee. The NCC shall consist of:

State representation. One representative per state or existing sub-state area (to be elected by the membership in each state, subject to recall, following the conference). Sub-state areas shall be determined by the NCC in consultation with the entire state. New state organizations shall have the right to similarly elect a representative.

At large. 30 members at large, to be elected at the Conference. By 2/3 vote, the full NCC may add up to 10 more at-large members over the course of the next 18 months to insure the composition (racial, national, gender, class, age, geographic, sexual orientation and physical ability) of the full body and its political inclusiveness and to allow for larger participation from some of the larger areas. At least 15 percent shall be 30 years of age or younger. If necessary, the NCC may poll the membership on any additional increase in size.

C. National Co-Chairs. The Conference shall elect five National Co-Chairs representing the direction and breadth of the CoC, and committed to building and expanding it.

D. NCC Executive Committee. The Conference establish an Executive Committee of the NCC.

Because the NCC can only meet infrequently, there is a need for a smaller body, subordinate to the full body, politically representative of it, to discuss and make recommendations to the fuller body regarding political and organizational questions and initiatives and to plan for the founding convention. The five National Co-Chairs shall be members of this body.

At its first meeting, NCC shall elect additional members, including a treasurer, to the NCC Executive Committee. The NCC Executive Committee is responsible and accountable to the full NCC. The NCC Executive Committee shall not make nominations for membership in the NCC. Vacancies on the NCC Executive Committee shall be filled by the NCC.

The NCC Executive is a working body, able to meet frequently and regularly. The NCC Executive may include members from any area committed to working on a consistent collective basis.

Agendas shall be distributed in advance to all NCC members. Any NCC member may have voice on any agenda item. Meetings of the NCC Executive are open to all NCC members.

Those elected as national chairs and at-large NCC members shall meet at the close of the Conference to set a date for the first full meeting of the NCC and to set up whatever working groups are necessary until then.

The NCC may establish other working groups and committees composed of members throughout the country and based in different locales.

The following points are referred to the NCC for action, subject to a referendum of the membership.

F. Paid Staff. The NCC shall have authority to hire national staff. At least one staff member shall be part of the elected leadership of the organization (national co-chair or member of the NCC Executive Committee). Other staff positions, as finances permit, may be filled by individuals not necessarily elected to leadership positions.

The second staff position could be a national organizer, associate director or editor of publications. The third position could be an Office Manager/Administrative Secretary and coordinator of volunteers. Future staff positions could be added, with priority going to field organizers, based in regions.

5. Finances

A. Accountability. CoC members are entitled to full information about our organization's finances. Leadership bodies are mandated to keep complete records, operate within agreed-upon budgets and issue regular reports to the membership.

B. Membership fee. The basic individual membership commitment to the CoC is the annual membership fee of \$10. The annual membership fee is national.

C. Sustaining membership. Every member may make a voluntary commitment to assist the organization in the form of a sustaining membership contribution. A fixed percentage of the sustaining contribution shall be divided between the local organization and the national organization. The division shall be determined in the case of each locality by the NCC in consultation with the local organization.

(Alternative 1) The sustaining membership contribution shall go to the national organization.

(Alternative 2) The entire sustainer sustaining contribution shall remain with the local organization. However, each local organization shall accept an agreed-upon financial commitment to the national organization.

C. Local finances. Local organizations may develop their own finances as long as they are voluntary and not exclusionary.

D. Treasurer. The conference mandates the NCC to make regular, public financial reports. The NCC is also mandated to fill the position of treasurer.

6 Publications.

A. Newsletter/Discussion Bulletin. The Conference mandates the continuation of the *Corresponder* and *Dialogue and Initiative*. The NCC shall elect the editors and editorial boards, and organize a financial and circulation plan to sus-

tain these publications.

B. Cooperation. We mandate our leadership bodies to initiate organized discussions and exchanges with existing publications, to see how we can help them increase their influence and circulation, and also how these could become a vehicle for the expression of the views and activities of the CoC.

C. Press Fund. We empower the NCC to initiate, during the period prior to the founding Convention, planning for the development of a new national press. This could take the form of a new publication, or, as we develop and dialogue, a new relationship to existing publications. The NCC is empowered to organize a Press Fund, which could become the beneficiary of individuals' donations and wills, and would have the most prominent and respected trustees that our new organization can assemble for this purpose.

RESOLUTION ON CUBA

In support of the people of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution

Whereas: Since 1959, the people of Cuba have struggled valiantly to build a society free from U.S. domination, free from exploitation, placing human needs as the first priority on their country's social agenda; and

Whereas: Cuba stands as a beacon of hope for the struggling nations of the world and the people of the United States, and has eliminated illiteracy, hunger unemployment, institutional racism, homelessness, and has been an example of friendship and solidarity with people's movements throughout the world; and

Whereas: The progress of the Cuban people takes place in the context of the 32 years of criminal U.S. blockade, enforced by the U.S. not only directly against Cuba but also by coercive pressure on countries throughout the world; and

Whereas: Every attempt is now being made to further tighten the blockade and to starve the Cuban people into submission; and

Whereas: The Committees of Correspondence recognizes that, in the midst of the present social and economic crisis facing the people of the USA, the federal government is using millions of tax dollars to undermine and coerce the people of Cuba:

Be It Resolved That:

- The Committees of Correspondence opposes the criminal U.S. blockade and travel ban which infringes on the inalienable right of the people of the U.S. to travel freely; and
- The Committees of Correspondence hereby issues an urgent call to its affiliates and friends to actively and immediately work to defeat passage of the Toricelli Bill, which seeks to further tighten the stranglehold of the blockade; and
- The Committees of Correspondence, in order to educate the

people of the U.S. towards ending the blockade, normalizing relations and providing immediate material aid to mitigate the hardship it has caused, endorses the U.S./Cuba Friendship Caravan and urges all CoC affiliates and friends to support this crucial effort. □

SOLIDARITY

Resolution on the rights of nations

The Committees of Correspondence believes our country's foreign policy should be premised on the right and necessity of all countries and communities to participate in the processes that will shape the future and our lives on a multinational, binational and regional basis.

The preservation of peace, protection of the natural environment and the guarantee of sustainable development across the globe are not feasible tasks if left dependent on the will of powerful transnational corporations or entirely on the governmental policies of existing nation-states.

Rather than receding in the post-cold-war world, the threat of foreign military intervention and outside involvement in regional conflicts has grown. This is reflected in outright invasions and wars such as in Panama and Arabian Peninsula and growing threats to act militarily in Central Europe. The use of military force to resolve such conflicts - even those undertaken behind the shield of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the United Nations - must be opposed.

Our country must respect the right of self-determination of all countries and promote peaceful conflict resolution and the promotion of mutual interests around the world. Our country should act in the international arena in support of those peoples and nations asserting their independence and search for the means to rise from poverty and economic underdevelopment.

All forms of imperial conduct must end. The right of the peoples of Cuba and Vietnam to determine their own destiny free from outside interference, subversion and threats instigated from Washington. The blockades of Cuba and Vietnam must be immediately lifted. We must work toward achievement of full normalization of relations between these two countries and our own.

We call for the granting of immediate independence and the right of self-determination to Puerto Rico and all remaining U.S. colonies.

Our country should promote and contribute to the elaboration of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on the sovereignty and security of all states in the region and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

Our country must give full support to the struggle for a free South Africa, based on full democracy premised on one-person-one-vote and join in guaranteeing the international isolation of apartheid until that goal is achieved.

We call for advancing the standards of living, health, safety

of workers on both sides of the US-Mexican and U.S.-Canadian borders and protection of the natural environment. We oppose the corporate agenda, embodied in the Bush Administration's U.S.-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Agreement designed to super-exploit labor throughout the hemisphere and raising new threats of air and water pollution.

The time has come to heal the wounds of war between the United States and Vietnam and to establish a true and lasting peace between our two nations. We urge the lifting of the trade embargo currently in place against Vietnam. We urge the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. Full diplomatic, political and humanitarian relations will enhance dialogue, allow the resolution of the remaining issues between our two countries and will be of great benefit to our two peoples.

In Cambodia, the U.S. government must fulfill its responsibility to ensure a true and lasting peace with justice, to prevent the return to power of the Khmer Rouge and to assure that its leadership is brought to trial under international law for genocide against the Cambodian people.

We call for strengthening solidarity and friendship between our peoples and the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

While the United Nations organization is excellently placed to play a historically critical and constructive role in the tasks of

preserving peace, mediating regional conflicts, encouraging national reconciliation, protecting the environment and combatting hunger, disease and underdevelopment. At the same time steps should be taken to thwart the now observable efforts to turn the world body into an instrument of policy of one power or group of powers.

On solidarity with the people of the Congo

Whereas, the people of the Congo-Zaire are today engaged in intense struggle to achieve national sovereignty, democracy and socio-economic justice, and,

Whereas, the main obstacles to attaining these goals are the world colonial powers, led by the United States, using the policies of the "new world order, and employing the services of the Mobutu Sese Seku dictatorship,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Committees of Correspondence extends wholehearted solidarity and a pledge of support to the people of Zaire-Congo, their legitimate trade union (O.S.T.) and other organizations, particularly the Workers and Peasants Movement of the Congo.

WORKSHOPS, SATURDAY, JULY 18

The CoC conference workshops were held in two sessions – morning and afternoon – on Saturday, July 18. In each workshop, those attending could sign up to continue to communicate about the particular subject. Anyone who was unable to attend a particular workshop but who wishes to be informed of any available material on a given subject and to be included in future mailings should so indicate on the enclosed response card.

GLOBALIZATION. What Are the Implications for Labor and the Left of the Scientific and Technological Revolution and Globalization of Capital and Labor? **Morning presenters:** Jan Gilbrecht, Representative, California Nurses Association, Oakland; Gerald Horne, Prof., Black Studies Dept., UC Santa Barbara; Dick Walker, Prof, UC Berkeley, Dept of Geography; **Facilitator:** Mel Pritchard, activist, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, San Francisco. **Afternoon presenters:** Mike Eisen-scher, former Silicon Valley union organizer, SF; Clark Everling, prof, Empire State Labor College, NY; Maria Pizarro, Chicago; **Facilitator:** Carol Pittman, organizer, Local 1199, NY.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS. How Can the Left Help Develop a Revitalized, Democratic, Class-Conscious Labor Movement? **Morning presenters:** Maria Abadesco, Business Representative, SEIU Local 790, San Francisco; Karen Osmondson, SEIU Local Staff Trainer, Watsonville, CA; Gail Sullivan, West Coast Organizer, Teamsters for a Democratic Union; **Facilitator:** Terry Alaimo, Vice President, Local 1199 Health Care Union, New York. **Afternoon presenters:** Kay Eisenhower, SEIU Local 616, No CA; Carol Lambiase, Intl Rep, UE, CT; Ron Teninty, Intl Rep, Teamsters, No CA; **Facilitator:** David Shelton, President, San Francisco School Bus Drivers, UTU Local 1741.

UNORGANIZED. What Should Be the Left's Role in Organizing the Unorganized? Can labor's current decline be arrested? **Morning presenters:** David Bacon, labor journalist and organizer, Berkeley; Paul Friedman, Vice President for Organizing, Local 1199, NY; Alicia Montes-Matzger, Intl Rep, International Longshore & Warehousemen's Union; **Facilitator** Maria Pantolja, United Electrical Workers field organizer, No. CA. **Afternoon presenters:** John Case, former UE organizer, Philadelphia; Minerva Solla, Field Rep, SEIU Local 250; Ellen Starbird, Labor-Studies Instructor, Laney College, Oakland.

STANDING TOGETHER – LABOR. Standing Together and Showing Support. How to respond to racism, sexism and anti-immigrant prejudice and other divisions within the labor movement? How to build labor solidarity and links with nationally oppressed communities? **Presenters:** Lenore Colbert, Vice Pres/Occupational Safety, Local 1199, NY; Joan Levenson Cohen, past president, NY Coalition of Labor Union Women, UFT, NY; Rafael Pizarro, Organizer, Local 1199, NY; Howard Wallace, Field Rep, SEIU Local 250, San Francisco.

STANDING TOGETHER – COMMUNITY. Standing Together and Showing Support. How to respond to racism, sexism and anti-

immigrant prejudice and other divisions among our communities? How to build solidarity and links among nationally oppressed and other communities? **Presenters:** Laura Head, Prof Black Studies, SF State Univ; Ray Markey, Pres, NY Public Library Guild Local 1930, AFSCME, NY; Carmen Rumbaut, worker and immigrant rights attorney, San Antonio; **Facilitator,** labor and community activist, Detroit.

STRATEGY. What Is an Effective Strategy? Responding to monopoly capital in the era of the permanent replacements (strikes, in-shop actions, community alliances, international solidarity). **Morning presenters:** Ignacio de la Fuente, Intl Rep, Glass, Molders and Pottery Workers Union, member-elect, Oakland City Council; Betty Hughley, Vice President, Local 1199, NY; Leanna Noble, Field Organizer, UE, Los Angeles; **Facilitator:** Corinne Comer, Secty-Treas, HERE Local 28, Oakland. **Afternoon presenters:** Larry Daves, labor attorney, San Antonio; Annmarie Draham, Field Organizer, UE, No CA; John Reed, Vice President, Local 1199, NY; **Facilitator:** Shelley Kessler, Asst Exec Officer, San Mateo County Labor Council.

AFRICAN AMERICAN. What Lies Behind and Beyond L.A.? What strategy for African-American liberation? What is its place in the general struggle for democracy and social advance? **Presenters:** Frances Beal, CrossRoads National Board, freelance writer, Oakland; Charles Brown, CoC Coordinating Committee, Detroit; Ishmael Flory, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Chicago; **Facilitator:** Franklin Alexander, co-chair, African Americans for Peace and Justice.

LATINO/CARIBBEAN. A Powerful and Growing Political Force: The Latino/Caribbean Peoples' Struggle for Equality and Justice. What are the new perspectives in the Chicano/Mexicano, Puerto Rican and Caribbean communities? **Presenters:** Linda Coronado, Director, Volunteer Services, Cook County Hospital, Chicago; Willie Gerena Rochet, National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, NY; Edith Moise, Asst Principal, Bilingual School, NY; Joe Navarro, Chicano community activist, Denver; Nelson Valdez, Vice Pres, Local 1199, NY; **Facilitator:** Marshall Garcia, Exec Vice Pres, Local 1199, NY.

ASIAN PACIFIC. What Are the Dynamics of the Role of the Asian-Pacific Community within the Working Class and the Nation? What is the relationship between the anti-discrimination struggle of the Asian/Pacific peoples and the general movement for social emancipation and democracy? **Presenters:** Sumi Cho, founding member, Korean Americans for Progressive Action; Daz Zio Paras, labor activist, No CA; Masao Suzuki, Nihonmachi Outreach Committee, San Jose; Nellie Wong, poet; **Facilitator:** Dan Nishijima, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance.

WOMEN. The Women's Movement: a Critical Factor in the Economic, Political and Social Life of the U.S. Today. What should be the theoretical and practical response of the left? **Presenters:** Angela Davis, Prof of History of Consciousness, UC Santa

Cruz, Roma Guy, Director, San Francisco Women's Building; Sandy Patrinos, Women for Racial and Economic Equality, Chicago; Facilitator: Cathy Tashiro, health care worker and designer of programs on workplace diversity.

MULTIRACIAL LEFT. How Can We Build a Multi-Racial, Multi-national Left Movement? A critical question for the survival and effectiveness of the left. **Presenters:** Jose Cervantes, Chicano political activist, Seattle; Kerega Hart, Socialist Organizing Network; Carol Ann Robins, factory worker, Philadelphia; Leslie Shaheen, organizer, Local 1199, NY; Facilitator: Jim Brough, Political Action Coordinator, California School Employees Assoc, Santa Cruz.

QUINCENTENNIAL. Five Hundred Years of Resistance. The quincentennial: racist distortions and myths. **Presenters:** Robert Chacanaca, community activist, Watsonville, CA; Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, prof, Cal State Hayward, SF; David Muga, Ethnic Student Center, Western Wash State Univ, Bellingham, WA; Facilitator: Roberta Goodman, initiator, United Against Genocide, 1992.

STRATEGY. Where to From Here? What next in the struggle for democracy in the United States? **Presenters:** Ann Ginger, Director, Meiklejohn Library, Berkeley; Atiba Mbiwan, youth service worker, Providence, RI; Michael Myerson, writer, NY; Mike Welch, Administrative Assistant, National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, NY; Facilitator: Tom Edminster, Exec Board, United Educators of San Francisco.

ELECTORAL. What Should Be the Place of Electoral activity on the Left's agenda? What would be an effective strategy for this year, the 90s and beyond? **Morning presenters:** Yolanda Alaniz, candidate for Seattle City Council; Bill Collins, a founder of Citizens for Proportional Representation, Cincinnati, Ohio; James Vann, national co-chair, National Committee for Independent Political Action, Oakland; Facilitator: Victoria Missick, teacher & multi-cultural movement, NY **Afternoon presenters:** Dr. Margie Akin, Peace and Freedom Candidate, 40th CD, Riverside, CA; Keith Carson, Leg Aide to Rep Ronald Dellums, Oakland; Arthur Kinoy, National Co-Chair, NCIPA, Montclair, NJ; Sam Perez, Puerto Rican political activist, NY; Facilitator: Mark Allen, legislative aide, late John George, Alameda County Supervisor.

NEW WORLD ORDER. Confronting the 'New World Order.' The multinational corporations, inter-imperialist rivalry, anti-imperialism and the struggle for peace, disarmament and non-intervention. **Morning presenters:** Susan Borenstein, former exec director, National Chile Center, NY; Conn Hallinan, prof of journalism, UC Santa Cruz; Erik Larsen, Marine conscientious objector recently released from prison for refusing orders for Gulf War; Facilitator: Shantika Emker, student of Marxist philosophy. **Afternoon presenters:** Roger Burback, Center for the Study of the Americas; April Knutson, Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, Univ of Minn, Mpls; Gus Newport, former mayor, Berkeley; Facilitator: Organizer, Local 1199.

ENVIRONMENT. The Left, Ecology and the Environmental Movement. What are elements of an effective strategy? Labor & community concerns, confronting environmental racism and forging unity in struggle. **Presenters:** Henry Clark, exec director, West County Toxics Coalition, Richmond, CA; Adrian Price, San Francisco Green Party; David Schwartzman, prof of zoology, Howard Univ, Washington DC; Ruben Solis, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Texas; Facilitator: Sheila Sexton, environmental and community activist.

SOCIALIST US. Toward a Socialist United States? Reshaping the vision and charting a path. Is it possible? On what basis? **Presenters:** Dr. Keith Baird, DSA, Atlanta; Barry Cohen, CoC Implementation Committee, NY; Matthew Hallinan, DSA, No CA; David McReynolds, National Co-Chair, Socialist Party, NY; Denise Young, Rochester CoC, NY; Facilitator: Anne Mitchell, organizer, Writer's Union, NY.

GAY/LESBIAN MOVEMENT. Building the left in the gay/lesbian movement and strengthening alliances in all the people's movements. **Presenters:** Tom Boot, Black gay socialist activist, No CA; Harry Hay, Radical Faerie Political Network; Pat Norman, Exec Director, California AIDS Intervention Center; Dr. Maggie Rubenstein, bisexual activist; Sushawn Robb, Harvey Milk Lesbian Gay Democratic Club; Facilitator: Pam David, lesbian/gay activist, San Francisco.

LEFT UNITY. Getting It Together: How Should Broad Left Unity Be Built? Speaking freely of differences and defining the basis for united action. **Morning presenters:** Peter Camejo, Cross-Roads Advisory Council, Oakland; Gil Green, author, NY; Vivian Stromberg, exec dir, MADRE, NY; Facilitator: Pat Harris, Vice President, Local 1199, NY. **Afternoon presenters:** Kendra Alexander, Chair, CA CoC; Judith Pasternak, Managing Editor, National Guardian, NY; Carla Wallace, Steering Committee, Kentucky Rainbow Coalition, Louisville; Ethan Young, Cuba Update, NY; Facilitator: Ron Johnson, housing activist, San Jose.

HEALTH. The Challenge to Our Health. What next in the struggle for national health care? The fight against aids and infant mortality and for a rational system of preventative medicine for all. **Presenters:** Marilyn Albert, R.N., New York State Nurses Assn; David Cohen, Intl Rep, UE, Springfield, Mass; Dr. Tolburt Small, Harriet Tubman Medical Center, Oakland; Mildred Williamson, AIDS health worker, Chicago; Facilitator: Dr. Peter Orris, Governing Council, American Public Health Assn, Chicago.

YOUTH MOVEMENT. The Role of the New Youth Movement on the Left. The voices and instruments for struggle of young people devastated by the current crisis. **Presenters:** Hatem Bazian, former student body pres, SF State Univ; Dominique di Prima, host, KRON TV's "Home Turf," San Francisco, Leonard McNeil, Youth and Militarism Program Coordinator of American Friends Service Committee, Oakland; Facilitator: Zhenya Spake, youth activist and construction worker, No CA.

YOUTH EXCHANGE. An exchange of experiences among progressive youth activists. Helping to define the issues, methods and aims of the new movement among young people. **Presenters:** Lateef Daumont, raptivist, Cenceremito, Oakland; Eric Quesada, youth service worker, East Palo Alto, CA; Raahi Reddy, student activist, Rutgers Univ, NJ; Facilitator: Kim Davis, elementary school counselor, SF.

ECONOMIC CRISIS. Homelessness, Joblessness, Poverty & the Enduring Economic Crisis. What should be the role of the left in shaping strategy and building an effective fightback. **Presenters:** Max Anderson, health rights activist, Berkeley; Bill Sorro, housing activist, San Francisco; Billie Wachter, housing activist, San Jose; Facilitator: Martha Bragin, Children's Aid Society, NY.

SOCIALIST CRISIS. What is the Meaning of the Crisis of Socialism in the World Today? Recent events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and their implications for the left in the West. Looking at China, Vietnam and Korea. The threat to Cuba: How to respond? **Morning presenters:** Carl Bloice, former Moscow correspondent, PWW; David Englestein, Marxist scholar and teacher, SF; Danny Rubin, CoC Implementation Committee, NY; Leon Wofsy, UC Berkeley faculty, retired; Facilitator: Carol Esteves, Berkeley community activist. **Afternoon presenters:** Max Elbaum, Managing Editor, CrossRoads, SF; Erwin Marquit, Prof, Univ of Minn, Mpls; Margrit Pittman, journalist, NY; Facilitator: Yvonne Golden, retired principal, Alamo Park HS, SF.

BATTLE OF IDEAS. Culture and the Battle of Ideas. How are the arts and entertainment being used by the ruling class to propagate racism, violence, sexism and hopelessness? What is the role of artists and the arts in advancing a progressive agenda? **Presenters:** Geoffrey Jacques, Asst Editor, Local 1199 News, NY; Michael Parenti, lecturer and author, Berkeley; Alice Sunshine, National Writers Union, SF; Facilitator: Bonnie Castillo, La Raza Bookstore, Sacramento.

THE BATTLE OF IDEAS. Strategies for influencing and creating inroads in the news and information media. **Presenters:** Steve Rhodes, Bay Area Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting; Pat Scott, General Manager, KPFA Radio, Berkeley; Jim Smith, Newspaper Guild, Los Angeles; Facilitator: John Trinkl, writer, National Guardian, SF.

PEOPLE'S ART. How to Combat Defunding, Denial of Access and Cooptation? **Presenters:** John Crawford, publisher, West End Press, NM; Jon Fromer, Freedom Song Network and TV producer, SF; Rinda Frye, actor and professor of drama, Louisville, KY; Peggy Lipshutz, artist, Chicago; Marty Price, writer and community activist, Oakland.

SOCIAL CRISIS. The Growing Social Crisis - Urban and Rural. How should the left view the problem of crime, delinquency and drugs? Is there a way to halt the destruction of communi-

ties? **Presenters:** Millie Cleveland, youth advocate, Oakland; John Talbutt, Asst to the Pres, AFSCME Local 371, NY; Jim Schmidt, Rochester CoC, NY; Facilitator: Coraminita Mahr, Vice President, Local 1199.

EDUCATION. The Crisis of Public Education. What is needed to create a school system which is free, universally accessible, multi-cultural, integrated and which truly prepares young people for adult life? **Presenters:** Alva Buxenbaum, AFT Local 2, NY; Jack Kurzweil Vice President, Cal Faculty Assn, San Jose; Pedro Noguera, Berkeley School Board; Facilitator: Richard Hoyen, Caribbean activist, NY.

PEACE AND SOLIDARITY. Taking Apart the Military Behemoth. How can we win disarmament agreements, end military interventions, and convert our militarized economy to a peacetime orientation? **Presenters:** Al Fishman, Co-Chair, Michigan SANE-Freeze, Detroit; Libby Frank, Peace Information Project, Philadelphia; David Reed SF Anti-Apartheid Committee; Marti Schmidt, National Lawyers Guild, Seattle; Facilitator: Merle Ratner, Co-coordinator, National Network of Indochina Activists.

RELIGION. Religion and the churches as a force for radical social change. **Presenters:** Rev. Ben Fraticelli, Exec Director, Northern California Ecumenical Council; Louisa Lavulo, Pacific and Asian American Center for Theology and Strategies; Mr. James Treat, Bay Area Native American Ministry; Rev. Jack Zylman, NAARPR, Birmingham; Facilitator: Rev. Dorsey Blake, Director, Center for Urban-Black Studies.

LEFT ORGANIZATION. The Culture and Organization of Grassroots Empowerment. **Presenters:** Michael Dover, Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Ann Arbor, MI; Lee Schore, Director, Center for Working Life, No CA; Daniel Solnit, Green Party, No CA; Facilitator: Daniel Walker, Mothers Against Police Harassment, Seattle.

COMMUNICATIONS. Telecommunications in the '90s: A Tool for Left Organizations. A demonstration/discussion of telecommunication tools and resources available to the left. **Presenters:** Geoff Sears, Exec Director, Institute of Global Communication; Steve Willett, Sysop of the Initiative BBS.

SENIORS. Seniors and the struggle for radical social reform. What role for the left in their movements for health care, economic security and racial equality? **Presenters:** Ida Kinney, President, Pacoima Interfaith Senior Club, So CA; Helen Lima, Oakland Non-Partisan Legislative Club of Seniors; George Sandy, Past President, Congress of California Seniors.

SPIRITUAL VALUES. Progressive Politics, Social Values, Spiritual Traditions. **Presenters:** Rev. Daniel Buford, minister, teacher, wood sculptor; Fania Davis, attorney, artist, Oakland; Dennis Jennings, Berkeley Indigenous Peoples' Day Coordinator; Facilitator: Rachel Richman, political activist, Berkeley.

Socialists discuss right niche for left

By Katherine Corcoran
Tribune staff writer

BERKELEY - What's left?

With the American Communist Party fractured and the Democratic Party nominating a centrist presidential candidate who quotes the Bible and speaks to the "forgotten middle class," it's a question some people are asking these days.

And what better place for such a question than the University of California at Berkeley?

More than 1,100 people from across the country gathered at Wheeler Hall yesterday to discuss the future of leftists in the United States. They were invited by the Committees of Correspondence, a group of former Communists who quit the party of Gus Hall last year because they said it had become too dogmatic.

Angela Davis:
Leftists need to "see new realities ... new ways to move toward the ideals that we as socialists and Communists believe."



Leaders of the weekend conference, which continues today, say their goal is to find a new role for socialism in the American democratic system.

"What might appear to be groping and disarray is really the healthiest po-

sition we could take during this time," said author-professor-activist Angela Davis, who was Hall's presidential running mate in 1984.

Leftists need to "see new realities ... new ways to move toward the ideals that we as socialists and Communists believe," she said.

And they were encouraged by the turnout. Organizers had only expected 700 people at the conference, which yesterday focused on how the left could revitalize the labor movement and be more effective in fighting for social justice for ethnic and racial minorities, women and gays.

Participants today will discuss adopting a statement of principles and talk about forming a permanent alternative to the Communist Party, one that would welcome diverse leftist groups.

But to call it a new political party would be too optimistic, said Manning Marable, historian and syndicated columnist.

"It's doubtful, but we'll see," he said.

Some say turmoil among leftists in this country is nothing new. "There has never been in this country a strong and viable left-wing movement," says Democratic political consultant Cliff Staton of San Francisco.

He attributes that to the Horatio Alger aspect of American culture, in which people strive to move up as individuals rather than as a social class.

"We've had a less-defined class system," he said.

Jon Carroll, a San Francisco Chron-

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icle columnist and veteran of the Free Speech Movement of the '60s, says the traditional issues of the left are either outdated or, in the case of civil rights, have been subsumed by mainstream politics.

The social welfare state did not work, said Carroll, now a supporter of Bill Clinton's bid for the presidency. "The thing we were all wrong about is how much it is possible for government merely to provide money for problems and solve them

that way," he said. "It did seem people did not work very well without profit motives."

Leftists agree that they had become isolated.

The Communist Party USA broke apart at its 25th convention last December because a third of the more than 2,500 delegates thought it failed to give up "intransigent, obsolete ideas" that even Eastern Europe and Russia had abandoned.

"What we began to realize is that American socialism has to speak an American language," said Marable. "It has to be

grounded in American tradition and capture the imagination and commitment of women and men trying to improve their daily lives."

The former party members decided to create the Committees of Correspondence, an interim group named after Thomas Paine's organizers during the American revolution.

They want to become a force in American politics, filling the void created when the Communists became too rigid and the Democrats too conservative.

Sunday, July 19, 1992 ★★★★★ A-3

MONDAY, JULY 20, 1992

San Francisco Chronicle A17

Radicals Gather at Berkeley To Assess Left Wing's Future

Eleanor Shapiro
Chronicle Correspondent

Radical professor Angela Davis and nearly 1,300 other leftists met at the University of California at Berkeley this weekend, hoping to revitalize an American left battered and exhausted by internal factionalism and by the dissolution of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Many of those present at the conference, including Davis, are members of a new group called the Committees of Correspondence. They had sought to democratize the highly traditional Communist Party USA until they were effectively shut out of the group's convention in December.

"We've all learned some things," said Gil Green, 85, who

quit the party in December, after more than 60 years. "There is no organization that can have all the answers." The Communist Party, under decades of leadership by Gus Hall, had opposed recent changes in the Soviet Union, despite protests by many members.

"Many of us wanted more democratic discussion, and we were concerned about the party being irrelevant," said Kendra Alexander, California chair of the Committees of Correspondence.

She said that because "the Democratic party has situated itself in the center and appeals to largely white, upper middle class voters," there is now room for "a third political party that can actually vie for political power in this country."

The idea for yesterday's con-

ference began in December, when about a third of the delegates at the national Communist Party convention in Cleveland were shut out of effective participation. They wanted to democratize the party, which still had an estimated 2,500 members across the country.

Many of those at the conference, entitled Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s, credited recent changes in the Soviet Union for the new spirit of openness among the American left.

Journalist A. B. Magil, 87, said, "The opposition movement in the Communist Party was stimulated in large measure by the reforms (in the Soviet Union); and by the fact that the Gus Hall leadership really resisted supporting those reforms."

Reborn socialists regroup

Committees of Correspondence hold surprisingly frank confab

By Marcy Rein

San Francisco—Shaken by a world turned upside down, capitalism run amok, organizations run aground and ideology run dry, nearly 1,400 activists gathered in Berkeley July 17-19 to discuss "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s."

Democratic socialists came. One-time Marxist-Leninists came. Unionists and feminists, young "rap-tivists" and environmentalists came. Friends who'd lost touch caught up. People estranged for years by sectarian turf wars found common ground.

The Committees of Correspondence, the nascent organization formed last winter by dissident members of the Communist Party USA, called the conference, which began drawing new unity and broke with old, top-down styles of organizing. (A number of independent leftists played key roles in organizing it.) More concretely, it set interim structures and leadership in motion to plan a 1993 founding convention for a new socialist organization. It also offered participants the chance to regroup, to theorize, strategize and schmooze.

Still, it was only a conference; it will take hard work, patience and political

Like Sanchez, most participants brought years of experience facing, in Mitchell's words, "the multiple crises of unemployment and homelessness, lack of health care and educational opportunity, racist discrimination and racist violence, anti-Semitism, sexism and homophobia, the dangers of U.S. militarism and attacks on our democratic rights."

That litany of crisis echoed throughout the weekend, along with the recital of the worldwide blows to the left. Black studies scholar Manning Marable drew the thread from the collapse of the Soviet Union through the right turn of the People's National Party in Jamaica to the Democratic Party's "lurch to the mythical center ... in search of the 'Leave it to Beaver' vote."

Concern for new ways of thinking and doing also reverberated, from the main speeches to the business meetings.

"New kinds of thinking include recognizing human values beyond materialism, beyond Marxism," said Elizabeth Martinez, a Chicana writer/activist on the editorial board of CrossRoads magazine. "For example: spirituality and the inter-relatedness of all life ... defense of the environment. ... Nothing seems more necessary than new ways of thinking about

Andrea Lederer, a member of the German Parliament from the Party of Democratic Socialism, described the building of the PDS from the wreckage of the East German state party to a multi-tendency group with live ties to the women's, environmental and anti-racist movements.

When it came to developing its unity statement, the conference re-opened discussion—after two votes to close—in order to expand and strengthen the section on women's issues. The move was as startling as the inclusion of the workshop on progressive politics and spiritual traditions, which proved one of the most popular.

Participants in the women's and lesbian/gay workshops talked—some for the first time—of bringing their issues of gender and sexuality to a hostile left.

"It took my husband a good five years after we were married to let me know he was gay," said Angela Mohr of Seattle. "And he led me to realize I was a lesbian."

But because of his membership in the Communist Party, in the '50s, he was so entrenched in the old-guard positions that he didn't feel free to come out for many many years. ... He is awestruck by the transformation."

Dealing with the conference business of

News Analysis

imagination to nurture the new ties, shed the sectarian past, and give shape and program—especially program—to the call for "radical democratization."

"There's a lot of possibilities, and no guarantees," said Kendra Alexander, a key conference organizer who was one of the leaders in Northern California of the split from the CP.

"People came here wanting something," said Charlene Mitchell, the Committees' political coordinator. "Where we were even three weeks ago is so different from where we are right now ... and the reason is that people were so, so determined."

And Gilbert Sanchez, who works with gang youth in Los Angeles, said, "Things are so fragmented right now that we're basically ineffective as progressive people. We need to work together so we can provide an alternative viewpoint."

"There's a lot of possibilities and no guarantees.' The first step will be figuring out how to build a radically democratic process.

racial and national minority oppression in an age of changing demographics. Most of the organized left has tended to see the struggle against white supremacy in black-white terms. ... New ways of thinking also require new vocabulary ... developing a new tone of voice: less pat, more aware, more open," she said.

Jose LaLuz, chair of the Latino Commission of the Democratic Socialists of America roused a packed hall with his

call to "recapture the best tradition of the radical democratic project." He offered as a model the Workers' Party in Brazil, influenced by the language and organizing of the Christian base communities, which came within 5 percent of winning the 1989 presidential election.

members were among the most wary of anything resembling democratic centralism.

The broad-based organizing of the conference was reflected in the event and in the leadership that emerged. "I was concerned that [the conference] would be heavily dominated by ex-CP'ers," said one independent socialist, Leslie Cagan of the Cuba Information Project, who played a key role in last year's mobilization against the Gulf war. "But my sense is that it has a pretty good cross-section interim structure and leadership, activists burned by over-centralism exercised their right to question so zealously they barely got through the agenda. Some former CP

continued from page 3

"lack of humility or elitism, and the habits of centrism that go with it. ... New ways of thinking are not possible without looking critically at our own past."

Joseph Schwartz of DSA's political committee regards the Committees as a positive development, though not without reservation. "The range of takes [on the conference] is 'interested to quite skeptical,'" he said, "but some will be watching how quickly the practices of the organization become democratic."

The tasks of political definition are no less delicate than the organizational. The statement of principles approved at the conference defines socialism as "the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion."

The group rejected democratic centralism and agreed to call itself pluralist as well as Marxist (noting the paradox but postponing its resolution). Other potentially divisive issues await more debate—the Committees' relation to the Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO, for example, and strategies for African-American liberation.

Clear politics will depend in part on the organization's development of a program for action. "As important as our discussions are," said Alexander, "people will join us based on what we do in the struggle; we

aren't relevant unless we're actively involved ... in the process of working with people [and] we find common ground."

Though old divisions may be healing, a chasm remains between the leftists represented at this conference—most of whom found their vision in the '60s or earlier—and

Young people have the same views, goals and ideals as the so-called leadership of the left in general, but there's no inclusion happening.

militant '80s and '90s activists.

"Young people have the same views, goals and ideals as the so-called leadership [of the left in general], but there's no inclusion happening," said Dominique DiPrima, host of the only Bay area major-media TV talk show by and about youth. "That's the saddest thing, the

biggest mistake. ... Why do open-minded people buy the media hype about African-American and Latino youth?"

The conference made a start, with two youth workshops and a youth caucus that won—by acclamation—an agreement that 15 percent of the coordinating committee should be under 30.

The left, it is a'changing

The times, our language, our assumptions have all changed. "It's no longer intuitive in certain circles that socialism is part of the emancipatory project," said DSA's Schwartz.

The vacuum on the left may prove the unifying force. "Our best organizer is Slick Willie Clinton," said Marable. "There is hardly anything, not just on the left but on the progressive level, which is led, has a real core of activists who are people of color, which is profoundly feminist, which also has links to working-class formations. This weekend all those elements are here. ... We can play a role never before played by the left."

Nick Alexander, Max Elbaum and John Trinkl contributed to this story.

reflective of a much broader constituency around the country." People came from 30 states, though the crowd had a bi-coastal feel; close to a third of the participants were people of color, about half were women.

Longtime activist Carl Davidson said that the conference "was probably the best grouping that you're going to get together. If the left is going to regroup and renew itself, it's got to be out of this framework."

The temporary National Coordinating Committee elected at the conference is 60 percent women and three-fourths people of color. Though four of the five co-chairs (Alexander, Mitchell, Carl Bloice and Rafael Pizzaro) are ex-CP members, the

fifth, Manning Marable, is not; at least nine members of the 30-person committee also came from other political traditions.

The committee comes in with broad-brushed political unity and, in Alexander's words, "virtually all the organizing questions on the table for review and discussion."

The first course will be figuring out how to build a radically democratic process. "It's not just that democracy is nice; it makes your politics more relevant, because they are drawn from varied experiences," said Alexander.

Models for maximizing participation are in short supply. "There are skills the women's movement has developed over the last 15-20 years that could be useful," suggested Rebecca Gordon, an editor of *Lesbian Contradiction: A Journal of Irreverent Feminism*. She noted feminism can show "ways to help people say what they need to and see how what they say connects to other people, to help the group see what its will is and how to implement that."

Martinez noted the need for "explicit internal structures to combat racism, sexism, homophobia." That need was illustrated in one of the plenaries, when white people rushed to the microphones to talk about dealing with their racist behavior—while people of color waited at the back of the line.

The openness to dialogue was pervasive but not universal. Some representatives of Trotskyist groups in attendance—though by no means all—were clearly present in pursuit of their own agendas, not the conference's. During plenaries and workshops, they lined up to read prepared statements reiterating long-held positions unrelated to the topics at hand.

"We need to learn how to not close debate but also not permit small sects to take over and interfere with the free flow of ideas," suggested Fran Beal, a Committees of Correspondence coordinating committee member from Oakland.

This points to "the most generic weakness of the U.S. left," said Martinez,

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Communist Party At National Leftist Conference



NEW DIRECTIONS: These disenchanted Marxists are headed in new directions. Pictured are Manning Marable, an internationally syndicated columnist, and Kendra Alexander with a friend, at the recent National Conference of Socialist Committee Correspondents at U.C. Berkeley.

By Charles Aikens, **Voice** Staff Writer

Manning Marable, a noted historian and syndicated columnist who is published in more than 250 newspapers nationwide, and in other parts of the world, said the most important event he has witnessed during a sterling journalism career was the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

"I had arrived at Ebenezer Baptist Church, the first person there at 5 a.m., — and it was so emotional: The leader of millions of Black people had been silenced, and I felt the voice of non-violence had been perman-

ently blocked by an act of racism."

Marable had been attending a week-end long meeting of socialists, many of whom had been invited to UC Berkeley by the Committees of Correspondents, a group of former Communists who had quit the party of Communist leader Gus Hall after deciding that it had become too out of touch with today's society.

"I see a real desire for change," said Marable, who was participating in workshops as a presenter and listener. He was talking about the recent Ross Perot decision as a third candidate in the



RAP SESSION: Angela Davis (center) chats with friend Kendra Alexander and an unnamed feminist lecturer.

presidential race elections to resign from his attempts to challenge the Democrats and Republicans.

As Marable sat outside UC Berkeley's Wheeler Hall, one could see that he was well known, as numerous persons from different parts of the country came by to chat with him, even as this interview was taking place.

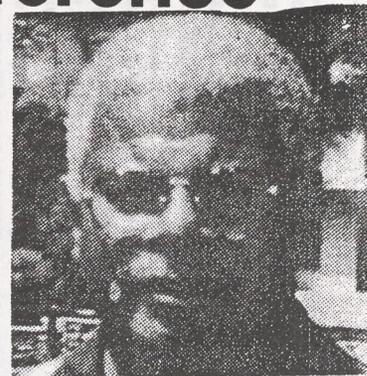
"I think there needs to be a progressive anti-racist voice to the left of the Democratic Party," said Marable, as former Berkeley Mayor Gus Newport stopped to say hello and to listen to Marable talk.

"People who are former communists, independent or radicals

as myself, need to close ranks and build a progressive party or movement," said Marable. "Because if George Bush wins, it will be disaster for Blacks."

"Bush got elected by using the racist Willie Horton ploy, and still says he will do anything to win. Bush is a sophisticated racist, one who pretends he is not, but gives us David Souther and Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court. Clarence Thomas, is the whitest man in America, and we can expect worse from Bush if he wins.

"Bill Clinton," Marable continued, who gave Jesse Jackson the stiff arm, "has ignored millions of potential voters of Black



FORMER BERKELEY MAYOR: Former Berkeley Mayor Gus Newport, now a college lecturer in Massachusetts, lends his views on the national presidential race.

and Latino groups, in an effort to go after white upper middle class voters. But that could backfire, as there are 31 million African Americans, 24 million Latinos and about 7.5 million Asians."

In addition, Marable said, "there are 31 million below poverty, with most of them being white. Clinton is moving away from Democrats, and is trying to create a second Republican party. This dilemma poses a great danger, in that neither of the two major parties will speak for African Americans and the poor.

"The low income and unemployed both need a voice," Marable continued. That is the

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Socialists

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purpose of this meeting. We want fundamental change and real democracy that will challenge the capitalist system, as neither party is doing it. "Jesse Jackson was compromised, because he was flirting with Perot, and Clinton knew about it. Clinton was able to get at Jesse because Jackson had dismantled the Rainbow Coalition in 1988, while refusing to build an independent political organization outside the Democratic Party.

"If Jesse had run as an independent in 1988, African Americans would be better off today, because we would have made a strong statement that would have challenged the system. But Jesse refused, and he ordered the local Rainbow leaders to be appointed by himself in a Chicago meeting in 1989. By making the appointment, Jesse lightened his control over the Rainbow organization, and I said in a column that we had been seeking to back a movement, and not just a man."

Marable continued, saying, "With the state of society being what it is, there will be a greater fall off of incumbents." Gus Newport nodded his agreement.

Newport said that in the 19th Century, 70 percent of all white adult males voted, and it still ex-

ists today. "But Jimmy Carter was elected by appealing to the poor people. He said, 'You can't beat the Republicans by going after a white moderate base,'" Newport said.

"There is a massive vacuum, with nothing speaking for the grassroots," said Newport, now a university professor in Massachusetts.

Marable continued, saying, "Two weeks ago, a deal was nearly cut between Jesse Jackson and Ross Perot under the suggestion of Bill Strickland, calling for a Perot and Jackson ticket, and most of Jackson's people were getting set to unite with Perot."

Nevertheless, Marable said, "Jesse wanted to speak at the Democratic Convention, and Democratic Party chairman Ron Brown, played hardball with him and told him that he could not, unless he endorsed Bill Clinton."

Newport, a former radical Berkeley mayor said, "Perot is not as opportunistic as Clinton, who seems to be saying 'F--k Black America. But you can't beat the right wing at their own game. It's going to be a dirty campaign. Clinton might wind up doing something to his wife, with so much stuff coming out about his womanizing."

Newport added that the Republicans likely have much information on Clinton that may be revealed in the "coming nasty campaign months," and that the youth "could be the ones who will suffer, as they have so little direction."

Kendra Alexander, another respected socialist who attended the conference, said some of the 1,100 people attending from throughout the country had gathered to discuss the future of leftists in the United States. "They had been invited by the committees of correspondents, who were fashioned after the founders of the Declaration of independence who had also met when they felt things were not going right before 1776," Alexander commented.

"A country that can walk over homeless, needs its ways revised. We do not know what to expect at this time, as we are in the process of formulating, but some of us met last year, and it was decided that if we as Blacks were not part of the group now run by Gus Hall, we could seek to find a new role for socialism in the American democratic system. "What might appear to be a search for something such as dissaray is really the healthiest position we

could be in."

Angela Davis, who was Gus Hall's presidential running mate in 1984, said, "We need to see new realities and new ways to move toward the ideals that we as socialists and communists can believe in."

Earlier, in a rap session with leftists and feminists, Davis said, "Many of us had believed when we started that revolution knew that the struggle would be continuous."

The Communist Party of the U.S. had broken apart at its 25th Convention last December because a third of the more than 2,500 delegates thought it was failing to give up stagnant ideas that even Eastern parts of Europe and Russia had abandoned.

Marable said, "What we began to realize is that American socialism has to speak an American language, and it has to be grounded in American tradition to capture the imagination of women and men trying to improve their daily lives.

Angela Davis concluded, saying, "Whatever we do, we need to talk with the young people, to see what is on their minds, and to capture their energy, "because we all know, some of us do not move as fast as we once did."

1,400 meet in U.S. to examine perspectives for democracy and socialism in the 1990s

UNITED, RELEVANT LEFT NEEDED

Pat Fry

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Beyond all expectations, nearly 1,400 U.S. leftists participated in a three-day conference here, agreeing to launch an 18-month organizing drive that will culminate in the founding of a new national socialist organization.

The conference, entitled "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the 1990s," was organized by the Committees of Correspondence, an initiative formed last February in the aftermath of a political split within the U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA).

The political significance of the conference can be weighed in one very important aspect, said Charlene Mitchell, national coordinator of the C of C. "In February when the

Discussion on perspectives for an organized socialist left in the U.S. and all the accompanying questions involved culminated last month in the impressive conference reported below. For Canadian socialists, much in the U.S. experience will ring familiar as efforts here to chart a cohesive path continue in face of many of the same problems and promise.

idea of the conference was first set into motion, we were talking about 200 participants. By the end of June we thought maybe 700 people would attend. That nearly 1,400 attended speaks to the fact that people are searching."

Broad diversity of participants

The composition of the participants was reflective of the broad social and political makeup of the country's working class and progressive movements. More than one-third were people of colour, one-half were women, more than one-half were people under 50 years of age, more than 300 were trade unionists.

Politically, the attendees included former and current members of the CPUSA, former and current members of the Socialist Workers Party, members of the Democratic Socialists of America, the Rainbow Coalition, and the National Committee for Independent Political Action.

International guests and observers came from Canada, Austria, Japan, El Salvador, South Africa, Germany, and Vietnam. Messages of greetings came from organizations in many countries including Russia, England, Hungary, Italy, and Spain.

Socialism and democracy

There was significant participation by people active in the youth and student movements of the country, the trade union movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the Viet Nam solidarity movement, the Salvadoran, Nicaraguan and Cuban solidarity movements, the gay and lesbian movement and the women's movement.

Five people were elected as national co-chairs and 30 others were elected to the National Coordinating Committee. Of the 35 elected, over half are women, and more than two-thirds are people of colour predominantly African American. Three youths, five trade unionists, a California state legislator, the former mayor of Berkeley, and a current member of the Berkeley city council were elected. About one-third of those elected were not previously members of the CPUSA.

The size and political diversity of the conference were not the only aspects that exceeded expectations. In the months preceding the conference, local and national discussions debated whether the new venture should identify itself as socialist, some fearing that it would be unnecessarily exclusionary.

However, as the proposed principles of unity were discussed and adopted, it became apparent that the conference was united on the principles of socialism and democracy.

The adopted "Where We Stand" document outlines a vision of socialism for the U.S. — "a society where the promise of democracy is fulfilled by the practice of self-government. A society of social justice, which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights. A society which preserves and builds upon all previous economic and scientific achievements, and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands."

The document notes that the initiators of the Committees of Correspondence are "predominantly people with a socialist vision and a Marxist view of history. Yet we are convinced that we can and must build an organization that is pluralist, embracing members who have theoretical frameworks other than Marxist. Recent history makes us believe that there must be tolerance, and even more, genuine mutual respect and equality among differing activist views."

Further the document elaborates socialism as "the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion. This vision is not utopia, but a practical response and solution to the contradictions of capitalist society. We will continue to participate in the ongoing public discussion of how to define socialism in light of contemporary realities. We will continue to assess the experience, including both achievements and

failures, of the first sustained attempts to build socialist societies in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. We welcome all those who would like to participate with us in this exploration, while we struggle together to address the immediate problems of our people."

The principles reject dogmatic thinking, and urge freedom of thought and inquiry, the clash of opposing views. Among the important non-Marxist theoretical contributions noted are liberation theology, environmentalism, feminism, theories of non-violent resistance and multiculturalism.

Process has no blueprint

The conference strongly endorsed internationalism and participation in solidarity movements "with peoples everywhere struggling for their genuine independence and rights as nations." Specific resolutions were adopted in solidarity with the people of Canada and Mexico in a common struggle against the corporate monopoly-government engineered North American Free Trade Agreement. A resolution in solidarity with the people of Cuba against U.S. aggression was also highlighted in a special resolution.

C of C leaders are the first to point out that the process that was initiated last February has no blueprint, and the steps taken have been one at a time without knowing what the next one will be. The next step was clearly outlined by the conference participants — an 18-month organizing drive across the country that will build a representative founding convention for a new organization (more than 1,500 have become members thus far). The precise nature of the organization, said Mitchell, will be determined through this process.

Generation gap on the left

Carl Bloice, a former leading member of the CPSU and former Moscow correspondent for its paper People's World, one of 18 fired from that paper following the party's purge last January, wrote this letter in the Guardian just prior to the Berkeley conference:

One of the last things my friend, Guardian (and Tribune) Moscow correspondent Fred Weir said to me before I left Moscow last fall was, "We have the task of trying to help the next generation of socialists understand what happened here."

Now, after being home for a year, I have come to the conclusion that a key task of the generation of Marxists over 30 is to aid the next generation of radicals in making some sense of what happened in the United States, to sort out what we did right and where things went wrong.

Right now, young people are very skeptical of us — and with good cause. Dogmatism, sectarianism, narrow-mindedness and commandism turn them off, as do continuing pointless battles over things that happened as long as a

century ago. Until we can jettison that useless baggage, young people will avoid us old and "new" leftists like the plague.

Those of us working for the Committees of Correspondence conference in Berkeley this month are somewhat in a state of shock from the positive response from around the country.

Anyone who undertakes to make a contribution to the much-needed regrouping on the left and finding a new basis for unity across organizational lines takes on an awesome responsibility. The next generation is listening. They want to hear what we say about the past, the present and the future.

They will find their own way, regardless of what we conclude, but we will go farther, faster, if we're all together.

Campus hosts 'left' conference

Groups reconsider Western socialism

By Dan Lee
Contributing Writer

In response to the decline of communism, Western socialists are banding together to create a movement combining traditional socialism with the values of democracy and pluralism.

The new face of Western communism was unveiled at a national conference held on the UC Berkeley campus last weekend. More than 1,300 people gathered in Wheeler Hall to take part in the conference, called "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s."

The three-day gathering was sponsored by the Committees of Correspondence, a group that split away from the Communist Party USA last year. They were joined on campus by labor organizations and a number of left-wing groups.

The conference represented what members called "a realignment in the

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Kendra Alexander chairs the Committee in California.

STAFF PHOTO BY SHANE KAO

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U.S. left," which they said was due to recent national and international developments.

"Our greatest challenge is to have the historical imagination to build something new," said Manning Marable, a University of Colorado political science professor who spoke at the conference.

The activists expressed hope that a new, more democratic movement could unify fragmented progressive groups into a coalition where members could exchange ideas and experiences openly.

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, members of the Communist Party USA called for a re-examination of their strategies at the party's 25th National Convention last December in Cleveland.

When the party's leadership chose to not depart from traditional Marxism-Leninism, a third of the party, including the Northern California and New York chapters, voted to secede and form a new organization.

They named the new group the "Committees of Correspondence" after an organization led by U.S. patriot Thomas Paine during the American Revolution.

"Many of us come from traditions of the left, thinking we had all the

Conference

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answers," said Kendra Alexander, chair of the California Committee of Correspondence.

"We may not agree, but maybe we will be less divided," said Alexander who is also an aide to Berkeley City Councilmember Maudelle Shirek.

But the realignment comes at a time when leftists say they see a vacuum in progressive politics. Conference-goers attributed this emptiness to the Democratic Party's shift to the political center.

Speakers criticized Democratic presidential nominee Bill Clinton, saying his strategy was a search for the "Leave It To Beaver Vote" — namely white, upper middle-class Democrat who have voted for Republicans in the last three presidential elections.

"(Such a strategy) ignores the demographic and ethnic changes (in the United States)," Marable said. "(It ignores) the fact that America is no longer 'Wonder Bread.' It is a multi-cultural society."

Marable said the real, "vital" center of America, lies with African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans.

"That is the real America that Clinton misses to his peril," Marable added.

The conference addressed issues ranging from the labor movement to the status of women and racial issues and included an international spectrum of political speakers. Progressive and socialist groups from Canada, El Salvador, Germany, South Africa and Vietnam reported on the state of progressive movements in their countries.

U.S. Left Forces Chart New Course

By Shashi Dalal

The fog of disarray and disorientation in the U.S. left movement that many establishment pundits asserted would be permanent in the wake of the dissolution of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, was lifted as over 1,300 progressives and left-oriented activists gathered from around the country to launch a new organization that addresses "the profound conviction to the fact that our country needs a human alternative to the anti-human system of capitalism."

"For the majority of working people, and especially racially and nationally oppressed people, this system does not work, because capitalism is fundamentally exploitative, militarist, elitist, racist, sexist, homophobic and destructive of the environment on which all life depends," the declaration of principles adopted at the conference said.

The conference, entitled "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the 90s," brought together activists from all arenas of social, economic, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, environmentalists, labor and left forces, meeting at the campus of the University of California at Berkeley over the weekend to chart a socialist, pluralist and democratic course of a shared political program and practice.

After a spirited welcoming

message Friday night from Berkeley Mayor Loni Hancock and Berkeley Councilwoman Maudelle Shirek, and an invigorating exchange of greetings, experiences and views of guests from Canada, El Salvador, Germany, South Africa and Vietnam on "The Role of the Left on the Eve of the 21st Century," over 1,300 attendees were ready to tackle the range of dramatic issues facing a renewed and committed left forces in more than 50 workshops Saturday.

Speaking at the Saturday plenary, Charlene Mitchell, national chair of the Committees of Correspondence which originated the idea of the conference, spoke of the profound changes worldwide — the collapse of socialism, the emergence of the U.S. as the undisputed world leader but beset with profound internal economic, social and political crises, the rise of racism and hate violence, all stemming from the "Decade of Greed" of the 80s of Reaganomics and senseless spending on weapons of mass destruction.

Mitchell called on the left forces to build a new democratic majority to lead "a fightback, because the problems of capitalism cannot be solved within the capitalist system."

Manning Marable, newspaper and radio columnist and historian at Colorado State University at Denver, Colorado, remarked that there was "a collapse of bipartisan consensus" on economic, foreign and domestic policies among the elites; "a loss of legi-

timacy" of the two capitalist parties — the Republicans and Democrats — as seen from Ross Perot's candidacy, and earlier, that of David Duke and Pat Buchanan, all appealing to disaffected upper middle class voters, while the victims of Reaganomics and Reaganism — labor, women and minorities — are made to be irrelevant in the political process in the globalization of production.

Marable called for the building of a third party to right the wrongs of Reagan-Bushonomics.

A trade unionist and chair of the Democratic Socialist of America, Jose La Luz spoke of the transnational corporations' world agenda of moving jobs to low wage areas, pitting workers against workers, people against people, and nation against nation, lowering wages and standards of living everywhere, degrading the environment, undermining the labor movement worldwide, foisting austerity budgets and privatizing taxpayer-owned companies, and limiting the role of the state in economic policies.

In light of the offensive of the big business, Luz called for a radical agenda for worldwide linking of struggles for change, liberation and the economic upliftment of millions of people.

Elizabeth Martinez, a Latino author, and Leslie Cajan, a broadcast journalist and head of the Cuba Information Project, both called for the progressive forces to come out of its "cocoon" which has "limited its own power to effect changes."

"A society where the promise of democracy is fulfilled by the practice of self-government. A society of social justice which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights. A society which preserves and builds upon all previous economic and scientific achievements, and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands..." is the kind of vision for America which the conference adopted, to be mustered by bringing in all the disenfranchised to a third or fourth political party "which can actually vie for political power in this country," as one attendee put it.

The conference was convened by the nationwide-based Committees of Correspondence, a new network of long-time activists initiated last December following a deep division in the Communist Party-USA, over democratizing the party and making it relevant to the 90s in light of the changes in the composition of the working class.

Other left organizations, as well as independent progressive activists, rallied to the new developments in the left forces.

The conference ended Sunday with adoption of the principles of declaration, structures and elections to the national bodies of the Committees of Correspondence. A founding convention is slated at the end of 1993.

For further information, contact: Committees of Correspondence, 533 Valencia St., S.F. 94110, or call (415) 863-6637.

Barkeley - Metro Reporter July 26 '92

Communists look ahead

By Dan Lee
Contributing Writer

Last weekend's national conference on "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s" ended Sunday with a day-long discussion and debate on the future of the Committees of Correspondence as a national communist organization.

Members from committees nationwide chose a statement of principles, an interim structure for the fledgling group and an interim leadership. Conference organizers said they hoped the Committees of Correspondence would serve as a basis for a new, multi-issue, left-wing political party by the end of 1993.

The statement of principles proposed at the conference condemns the "anti-human system of capitalism" and calls for a "massive and organized popular movement . . . (to) turn our country onto a saner path." The platform affirms the democratic principles of the U.S. Bill of Rights but also advocates socialism, stating, "We view socialism as the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion."

The platform envisions American socialism as a "society where the promise of democracy is fulfilled by the practice of self-government. A society of social justice, which guarantees employment, housing, education and health care as human rights . . . which preserves and builds upon all previous

economic and scientific achievements and which redistributes the vast wealth and power now held in a few hands."

The committees approved the proposed statement of principles with only minor amendments.

Debate on the proposed interim structure was longer and more difficult. Frustration grew and tempers flared over the issue of democratic representation of all the committees to the national organization. In the end, the committees postponed some organizational decisions in order to find time to hold elections for the interim leadership.

Despite such difficulties, conference organizers said they were pleased with the results. Alice Sunshine, media coordinator for the conference, said, "(The long debate) didn't surprise me at all, given the diversity of the people here. But, hey, that's okay. That's what we wanted."

Berkeley's Kendra Alexander, one of five people elected national co-chair for the committees, said the lengthy debate shows that members feel "this is their organization and that they have something to say."

Alexander also said she was encouraged by the progress the committees made at the conference toward a new political organization. "It's a good start," she said.

The Committees of Correspondence were organized by former members of the Communist Party who broke away from the party after its 25th National Convention last December.



CHRISTINE T. ANDERSON

Beyond the New Covenant Addressing a conference gathered in Berkeley July 17-19, leading socialist thinkers like Angela Davis tried to articulate a new vision for the American left.

The lessons of Ross Perot

Leftists drop party line and call for unity

THE AMERICAN LEFT, a fragmented and ineffective lot, is finally trying to end its years of ideological bickering and organize around the specific problems facing the country. If the now-defunct candidacy of Ross Perot taught the left anything, it's that Americans are ready to leave the two-party system behind.

At a July 17-19 conference in Berkeley, Angela Davis, Manning Marable and other prominent Socialists were joined by hundreds of other left-thinking activists to hammer out a common strategy for uniting labor activists, women, gays, African Americans and other groups abandoned by both Republicans and Democrats.

"There are specific issues we need to gather around — police violence, reproductive rights — and one very practical result of this conference is renewed confidence in our ability to tackle those issues," said Davis. "What we're trying to

figure out now is how to deal with the macro perspective, but at the same time visit issues that have been considered minor, such as violence against women. While we're fighting our wars, women are getting beaten up at home."

The conference, entitled "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s," drew members of the Democratic Socialists of America, Freedom Socialist Party, the Rainbow Coalition, Green Party, the National Organization of Women, and a wide range of other socialist, progressive and labor groups. At least 300 of the attendees signed on to the conference's organizing group, Committees of Correspondence. COC was originally founded as a more democratic alternative to the Communist Party USA, but COC now seeks to act as an umbrella group for all progressive and left-thinking people.

The conference received rave reviews from participants, who seemed surprised at the organizers' openness to new ideas. "I've never been to a left conference where everyone listened so much," said a San Francisco activist. "Usually people just want to tout their particular line."

But many problems lie ahead in forming a unified left-leaning coalition in America. Will the many small parties — Peace and Freedom, the Greens, NOW's new 21st Century Party and other sectarian leftists — ever put aside their differences and work together?

As Americans look for alternatives to the moribund two-party system, the unity conference was a step forward for the left. But as always on the left, talk is cheap and very plentiful.

Laura Proctor

A Jump Start and No Turning Back

Max Elbaum reports on the Committees of Correspondence national conference.

Mobilizing 1,300 people to discuss "Perspectives for Democracy and Socialism in the '90s" might have provided energy enough for one weekend. But an even more powerful jolt struck halfway through the July 17-19 gathering. Sometime late Saturday afternoon, the cumulative impact of an open atmosphere, provocative plenary presentations and a sense of collective possibility began to hit home. The result: hundreds of activists who had come to Berkeley eager to exchange ideas but extremely reluctant to join (much less help lead) any organization-building effort changed their minds.

Even before the end of Sunday's "organizational business" plenary, it was apparent that something more than another forum for left dialogue was lurching into existence. During the weekend 400 new affiliates joined the Committees of Correspondence, the conference's sponsoring group, which had been initiated last December by dissident members of the Communist Party USA. The assembly approved an initial statement of unity and temporary organizational structure. Finally, the delegates elected 11 unaffiliated socialists as well as 24 former CPUSA members to leadership positions; the 35 people chosen included 70 percent activists of color and 60 percent women. Bottom line, the conference successfully launched an "interim organization" whose purpose is to reach out further, hammer out a political perspective, and call a founding congress for a new socialist and activist organization in 18 months.

The meeting was not without problems, and some attendees walked away more frustrated than enthusiastic. Criticism centered on the uneven

quality of conference workshops; the relative absence of discussion about past errors by left – especially communist – parties; and the difficulties in finding procedures that ensure openness but allow effective decision-making. But shortcomings and all, the conference marked a watershed in current efforts to regroup and renew the U.S. left. That watershed consists of three main accomplishments.

First, the assembly made a decisive break with top-down and ideologically monolithic models of organization. Such undemocratic forms had been the immediate legacy of activists who recently left the CPUSA as well as veterans of other "vanguardist" organizations. The degree to which pluralism was vividly experienced at the very center of this formative event makes reversion to any "we-have-the-answers" sect all but impossible.

Second, the weekend achieved a significant meshing-together of activists from previously estranged currents of the socialist left. The section coming out of the CPUSA (itself increasingly diverse in outlook) remains the largest single component. But a definite political broadening occurred, and numerous activists with other histories now share a major role and stake in this effort.

Third, the size and spirit of the gathering, and the outpouring of determination to "make this work," gave those present a big boost. The left has suffered one battering after another recently, causing many conferences to end on a pessimistic note. This time hundreds of people concluded that the left might really be able to unite and rebuild.

Translating these gains into a durable organization won't be easy. It will require skill, creativity and patience to turn desire for "new approaches" into a coherent vision and strategy; to transform democratic sentiments into a functioning democratic organization; to galvanize fragmented activism into collective work. Above all, the Committees must

MAX ELBAUM is the managing editor of *CrossRoads*. Besides writing this article, he participated in a team covering the conference for the *Guardian*, and offers thanks to team members Nick Alexander, Marcy Rein and John Trinkl for their contributions to developing a comprehensive summation of the gathering. Marcy Rein wrote the report which appeared in the *Guardian* (August 12, 1992).

find ways to bridge the gap between the entire "organized left" and the most vital energy in today's popular movements, especially among youth. And much depends on conditions that are beyond the control of the entire left: the political mood of the country, the ebb and flow of movements, the course taken by big capital.

Recognizing the complex challenges ahead, Committee activists seem determined to reject pat-formula approaches or reliance on ideological magic bullets. Willingness to experiment is the order of the day. That orientation, combined with the wealth of talent and experience now joined in a common project, give this effort an impressive start.

PROCEEDINGS AND COMPOSITION

The conference actually consisted of two inter-related agendas. Friday evening and Saturday were slated for dialogue and debate. Plenary and workshop speakers reflected a wide range of views and no resolutions were put on the floor. Sunday was reserved for decision-making; participation remained open to all, but voting was restricted to those who had signed on.

Four to six hundred people came from outside the San Francisco Bay Area, the rest from this region's large left. Thirty states and several countries were represented, with the largest non-Bay Area delegations coming from New York (150) and Los Angeles (50). Between one-quarter and one-third of the participants were activists of color, though in some sessions the percentage in attendance dropped as low as 10-15 percent. African Americans were much better represented than Latinos, Asians, Native Americans or Arab Americans. Special meetings which drew many but not all the labor activists present numbered upwards of 300. Women made up at least 50 percent of the gathering. Extensive efforts to involve youth made the age composition better than at many left conferences but still far from ideal: at most 15 percent of those present were under 30. The majority were between 30 and 55, and roughly a quarter were from the generation radicalized in the 1930s and '40s.

Examined from a "map of the left" angle, the conference brought together four main constituencies: (1) former members of the CPUSA; (2) veterans of other attempts to build a "revolutionary vanguard" along Trotskyist, Maoist or Stalinist lines; (3) activists from the democratic socialist tradition who are interested in cooperation with people historically to their "left"; and (4) "independent" activists whose main identification is with a specific social movement rather than a particular ideological tendency. One of the conference's main successes is that well-known individuals coming from each of these sectors won election to the leadership.

Even so, the Committees' roots among grassroots-based independents - who make up the ma-

majority of socialist-minded people in the U.S. today - remain tenuous. Progress has been greatest in involving independent labor and African American activists. Not surprisingly, these are the movements historically given top priority by the CPUSA. Unaffiliated activists from the women's, student and youth, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian, Native American, immigrant rights, lesbian and gay, environmental and peace and solidarity movements all had some representation among delegates and on workshop panels, but in all these areas there is a long way to go.

The conference's first major session was a Friday evening international solidarity night. The purpose was to stress the continuing link between struggles here and abroad, but also to emphasize the worldwide character of the left's restructuring process. The most striking aspect was the ideological breadth of speakers, who shared experiences from Germany's Party of Democratic Socialism (which grew out of the former ruling party in East Germany), Canada's "social democratic" New Democratic Party, the Vietnamese communist movement, El Salvador's FMLN and the African National Congress.

The political peak of the conference came at the standing-room-only plenary the next morning. The session sparkled because none of the four featured speakers played it safe; each prodded the audience to re-examine one or another long-held assumption. José LaLuz, trade unionist and chair of the Democratic Socialists of America Latino Commission, began by insisting that "there is life after a party" and argued that the entire left needs to pull together to recapture its roots in "the radical, democratic project." Historian and writer Manning Marable offered some new ideas for an "inside-outside" socialist electoral strategy and called for "a new SNCC...that utilizes every innovation in the popular culture of our young people, including rap music, to reach and mobilize the new generation."

Author and activist Elizabeth Martinez followed with a call for new ways of thinking that included "recognizing human values beyond materialism, beyond Marxism. For example: spirituality and the inter-relatedness of all life." Martinez also challenged the left's inertia in breaking out of a purely Black-white model for understanding the fight against white supremacy: "We still hear leftists use such language as 'African Americans and other minorities' . . . leaving Latinos feeling invisibilized, not to mention Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders."

Closing the plenary was historian Mark Solomon, who spoke as a member of the Committees of Correspondence: "The epoch of the Third International is over. . . . The structures and relations spawned by that epoch are, in various ways, in shambles. . . . Only the most willfully blind would fail to recognize the need for the most profound and searching re-examination. That is always troubling.

Speakers at the conference's international solidarity evening were Madodo Hlatshwayo, Deputy Chief, African National Congress Mission to the U.S.; Andrea Lederer, member of the German Bundestag from the Party of Democratic Socialism; Ngo Thanh Nhan, Association of Vietnamese in the U.S.; Judy Rebick, Canada, executive director of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and member of the New Democratic Party; Sigfrido Reyes, El Salvador FMLN Political and Diplomatic Commission. The session was chaired by Gus Newport, and also featured "raptivist" Boots Riley of The Coup.

But potentially it is also liberating. Old grievances, enmity, even hatred – that fragmenting of the left can be repaired with clear-eyed honesty, mutual respect and a new wisdom grounded on the simple proposition that no one is all-knowing and wise.”

The 40-plus workshops following the plenary covered a gamut of issues. Some were excellent, others disappointing, but the overall impact underscored the breadth of experience tapped by conference organizers. Workshops examining the “Crisis of Socialism,” “Left Unity” and various issues facing the labor movement were predictably well-attended. Perhaps less predictable but quite encouraging were the large turnout and lively interchange at workshops on “Culture and the Battle of Ideas” and “Progressive Politics and Spiritual Traditions.”

Like its morning counterpart, Saturday evening’s plenary avoided any coddling of the audience. Featured speakers were former *People’s Weekly World* Co-Editor Carl Bloice, Cuba Information Office director and out lesbian Leslie Cagan, legislative aide to Rep. Ron Dellums Ying Lee Kelley and historian Herbert Aptheker. Aptheker presented the conference’s bluntest summation of the “nightmare of Stalinism”: “We meet with experiences behind us. Those experiences have included matchless heroism and accurate diagnosis and important – if partial – advances. They have included, alas, dogmatism, sectarianism, rigidity, even fanaticism.”

DEMOCRACY IS NOT SIMPLE

Five hundred people returned for Sunday’s decision-making session, which was based on a draft statement of principles and draft structure proposal circulated in advance. The documents were the product of broad input from Committee members and friends, and as well as strenuous (and remarkably successful) efforts at compromise among drafting committee members.

The plenary procedure was to open the floor for amendments, entertain one-speaker-for and one-against on each, and then vote. This method gave just about anyone who wanted to propose changes a chance to do so. But it also meant that the items most important and controversial for the majority (such as debate over whether any new organization should be explicitly Marxist) did not get any priority in allotting discussion time. Instead, priorities were determined largely by who rushed to the microphone first – and in many cases these people were disproportionately white, male and/or members of small sects pushing a narrow agenda.

The draft statement of principles ended up being approved with few changes. Many of the most widely supported amendments were efforts to strengthen the document’s wording on the fight against racism, sexism and homophobia. Sentiment that improvement was needed on the issue of women’s oppression was particularly strong.

The sharpest controversies concerned the Committees’ structure. These reflected concerns especially among former CPers about the danger of too much power being invested in any small leadership group. Sentiment ran strong against locating an executive committee in any single city, and over a quarter of those present voted against having any executive committee at all. The structure finally approved called for a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) made up of 30 at-large members elected by the conference, one representative to be elected by each state or region, and up to 10 additional members to be added by the NCC to ensure breadth and inclusion. Five national co-chairs were also to be selected, who along with additional individuals chosen by the NCC would make up the NCC’s executive committee. It was emphasized throughout that this was an interim structure with a life-span of only 18 months.

Eighteen people were nominated for co-chair and 160 for NCC; the voting took place by secret ballot. The elected co-chairs (in order of their vote totals) were Manning Marable, Charlene Mitchell (political coordinator of the Committees going in to the conference), Kendra Alexander (chair of the California Committee), Carl Bloice, and Rafael Pizarro (an organizer with 1199 in New York). All had played leading roles in getting the Committee process this far. The NCC results (listed in margin note) likewise brought activists who had contributed much to the pre-conference work and/or the conference proceedings into leadership.

The all-day plenary was grueling and often frustrating, but dozens of “exit interviews” revealed the high energy and optimism among those who stuck it out: Typical were comments by Carl Davidson, a leader of SDS in the 1960s and a central figure in the Maoist party-building movement of the 1970s: “This is probably the best grouping you’re going to get together. If the left is going to regroup and renew itself, it’s got to be out of this framework. . . I’ve been waiting 15 years for this to happen.”

The Committees emerge with 1,500 members and considerable momentum to face the knotty problems now on their agenda. One is more carefully defining the group’s political identity. During the buildup for this conference there was extensive debate about whether or not a new organization should be explicitly socialist, and to what extent if any it should proclaim allegiance to Marxism. The documents prepared for the meeting projected a socialist group that is “informed and nourished” by Marxism . . . both Marxist and pluralist.” This approach seemed in tune with membership sentiment; the conference revealed little support for building a non-socialist organization or, at the other extreme, for trying to re-establish a Marxist-Leninist party. But an in-depth debate remains to be held.

The majority seems to favor a socialist organiza-

The 30 people elected to at-large positions on the Coordinating Committee were (in order of their vote totals): Angela Davis, Gus Newport, Elizabeth Martinez, Alva Buxenbaum, Leslie Cagan, Peter Camejo, Giuliana Milanese, Robert Chacanaca, Mildred Williamson, Barry Cohen, Mark Solomon, Barbara Lee, Maudelle Shirek, Raahi Reddy, Margy Wilkinson, Yvonne Golden, Mary Idosidis, Pat Fry, Marty Price, Frances Beal, Marshall Garcia, Betty Kano, Michael Myerson, Sharon Stewart, Carmen Rumbaut, Maurice Jackson, Geoffrey Jacques, Arthur Kinoy, Melinda Brown and Leslie Shaheen.

tion that combines openness and pluralism (the best elements in the social democratic tradition) with collectivity, grassroots activism and a stress on organizing among the most oppressed (among the factors which constitute the positive legacy of communism). That seems a sensible goal, since it targets a "political space" that could attract large numbers and impact mass politics. But the idea has been floated before, and it is easier said than done.

Heading in this direction also raises the concrete issue of the new group's relationship with Democratic Socialists of America. The immediate differences between the two are clear enough: The Committees are much more multiracial and give more priority to anti-racist struggles; most members hold far more positive views about Lenin's contributions to socialism. DSA has a much more consolidated pluralist tradition and a more clearly formulated political identity (as "the left wing of the possible"). Comparing sentiment within the two groups on stances toward the Cuban Revolution, Zionism and the Palestinian struggle, or the Second International would reveal immense differences.

At the same time, there is no longer a neat demarcation between one side that is "communist" (considered revolutionary or authoritarian, depending on one's perspective) and another that is "social democratic" (considered reformist or democratic, again depending on one's view). The situation is far more fluid and complex, and there is every basis for a constructive and strategic relationship between what are now the two largest socialist organizations in the country. A lot of responsibility rests with the leadership of both groups to maximize the positive potential inherent in this new situation.

LOOKING OUTWARD

Mainly, though, the Committees will be looking outward, trying to carve out an identity in relation to mass politics rather than traditional left labels. Debate over such issues as electoral strategy, orientation to the labor movement, and a socialist perspective on the urban crisis, health care and education will be high on the agenda.

So will broadening the base of people involved in this "ground floor" stage of organization-building. The strength of people of color leadership at the very center is a major plus for reaching out to grassroots activists in oppressed communities. Leadership composition in other respects is weaker. The proportion of labor activists is too low; the mandate to have 15 percent of leadership be under 30 is not yet met; only one open lesbian and no openly gay men are so far on the NCC. Elections in the regions, as well as the provision for co-opting ten additional members, may yet correct these imbalances.

Important as leadership composition is, this process will be built largely at the base. Over the next several months local and regional Committees

will be getting organized. Much depends on their ability to involve a broad range of activists and become an integral force in ongoing mass movements.

Two additional items require attention. As Elizabeth Martinez noted in her plenary remarks, "New ways of thinking are not possible without looking critically at our own past. ... The time must be made to do such evaluations." The Committees are (rightly) future-oriented. But their foundation will be unstable unless the roots of longstanding problems in socialist and communist parties are confronted more deeply.

A final prime concern is how to make democracy work. The turn to giving every voice a hearing has been made. The tasks now are to find methods that ensure majority decision-making on main policy questions, and to establish structures that promote effective leadership while fully empowering the membership base.

A LIFETIME OF COMMITMENT

As they look ahead, most Committee activists are in a flexible mood. Simplistic answers are suspect – as well they should be. In times like these, quick-fix gimmicks only inspire allegiance from those who aren't facing reality. The entire left is in a complex transition period due to world-shaking changes in the conditions around us. Sure-fire models, guaranteed breakthroughs and all-encompassing organizations do not come out of periods like these.

But the Committees of Correspondence do provide a vehicle to navigate this transition collectively. It gives an important component of the left community a mechanism to sort out lessons, pass on experience, maximize their contribution to mass struggles. It offers activists a way to work – together with other groups and individuals – toward revitalizing the socialist project. This is a unique opportunity at an urgent political moment.

The conference revealed a deep desire to seize the opportunity at hand. The gathering's emotional climax took place Saturday when Herbert Aptheker addressed the assembly. Still recovering from a recent stroke, he spoke softly but with tremendous moral and political force:

"Only a democratic practice can eventuate into a democratic society. That society will mean an absence of exploitation and domination. Equality, not domination; equality of all sexes, all nationalities, all religions and no religion. Such a society will consider violence – let alone war – as anachronistic; Such a society will witness the flourishing of the arts, of science, of humanistic behavior. Such a society will be civilized living together of liberated women and men. Such a society is *worth* a lifetime of commitment. ... Let us *vigorously, joyously, incessantly, defiantly*, help create a truly human social order."

The audience left the hall determined to do just that. ■

Discussions are under way about publishing the main conference presentations as a special pamphlet. For information about this or other aspects of its work, contact the Committees of Correspondence, 11 John Street, Room 506, New York, NY 10038, (212) 233-7151.

Important meeting for American left

David Kidd

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

The American left took an important step on the weekend of July 17-19 when over 1,200 activists met at the first Committee of Correspondence (CoC) conference here. The CoC was formed in December 1991 when a significant group quit the Communist Party (CPUSA) because of its inability to change its rigid structure and command-style socialist politics.

The name is a reference to the American revolution and to the name of groups that had formed in opposition to the British crown in the 1770s. It also reflects the decision of the CoC

to begin the process to build a larger left by using interim, loose-knit open structures that will attract new members and develop new politics.

Representatives of left organizations and activists from the labour, feminist, anti-racist, environmental and peace movements came from across the U.S. for the conference. Over 20 workshops were held on the first day and numerous caucuses formed for people to network.

Most people at the conference joined the CoC but many also maintained a healthy reluctance to not jump into anything new too quickly without thorough discussion. Others were cautious due to difficulties the left has

had in working together due to political differences and sectarianism. Often the delegates that spoke the sharpest against selecting a structure that they felt would replicate the top-down nature of their previous experience were the ex-members of the CPUSA.

But overall there was a spirit that this was something new and that it was part of the process to build a united, pluralist left. One of the elected co-Chairs, Manning Marable, said "Let our imagination soar until we achieve in daily life the ideals that we hold in private."

David Kidd is a Toronto activist who attended the CoC. The Tribune will carry a full analysis next issue.

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