

# IN THE NATION

ELECTIONS, 1980

## Harrington for President?



Jane Melnick

By David Moberg

**W**HILE JIMMY CARTER has steadily steered right during his two years in the White House, the left wing of the Democratic Party has increasingly prayed that Ted Kennedy will come to their rescue in the 1980 with a challenge to the President in the primaries.

But Teddy is still saying "no," despite his frequent trips to party dinners and gatherings where he lambasts one or another of Carter's programs.

So Michael Harrington, with the divided approval of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, of which he is national chairman, has decided to explore the possibility of running against Carter in selected primaries. Harrington's cautious hope would be to push Carter leeward on issues, not to defeat him.

Harrington, a widely published socialist writer (*The Other America*, *Socialism*, *Twilight of Capitalism* and other books) and a founder of DSOC in 1973 after the three-way split of the old Socialist Party, would run as a Democrat on a left-liberal issues program such as that advanced by the Democratic Agenda. Although publicly identified as a socialist, he would not press for socialism in his campaign.

Harrington still calls Kennedy the "optimism" candidate. "The basic proposition—as I am now convinced and as I think all of us are, including those who don't like the idea of my candidacy—is that Carter has to be challenged with a candidate," says Harrington. "There's no way we can go into the 1980 convention and fight on issues without a candidate."

Harrington and DSOC members are particularly angry at Carter's abandonment of the 1976 Democratic platform, which they worked to influence.

Harrington envisions his potential candidacy as a left-wing variant of George Wallace's "send-them-a-message" campaign. It would probably not match Eugene McCarthy's 1968 challenge in strength and numbers, one DSOC leader says.

Harrington also believes that his candidacy could "mobilize the left" so that it would be more capable of keeping accountable any Democratic candidate who might replace him as the Carter challenger.

However, as Harrington says, "it's a

sign of the weakness among liberals that once you've mentioned Kennedy, you've exhausted the possibilities." Sen. George McGovern (SD), Cong. Ron Dellums (CA) and former Sen. John Culver (IA) are mentioned by some but less seriously.

Harrington's exploration of a Carter challenge was debated within DSOC at its Nov. 18-19 board meeting in Philadelphia, even though Harrington will ultimately make his decision in late January as an individual. He will want strong DSOC backing but would form a broad campaign committee and not run as a DSOC candidate. The board of the 2,800-member organization split 37 to 17 in favor of checking out a challenge.

Many of the board members tied to organized labor opposed the move. The opposition favored sticking with various coalition efforts—such as the "Fraser coalition" pulled together by the Auto-workers president—and feared that a Harrington candidacy could isolate DSOC and disrupt the new coalitions. Most seem determined to wait for Kennedy to make the challenge.

Proponents of the challenge argue that the electoral left-liberal camp is collapsing and the right is dominating the political arena, that Carter is losing popularity, and that there is a potential left constituency drawn from progressive labor unions, women's organizations, minorities, citizen action groups and students that could coalesce around a Harrington candidacy. Top labor leaders, DSOC strategists concede, will be hard for Harrington to corner, but local and state officials may come out for him.

Unlike the opponents who argued that there would never be enough money or people power to pull off a credible campaign, challenge supporters, such as Harry Boyte from Minneapolis, argued that "it's a great opportunity. We have a Democratic incumbent who's caving in to corporate power. There's no liberal-left candidate and Harrington is well-known."

Jack Clark, national secretary of DSOC, argues that Harrington's candidacy as a socialist within the Democratic Party guarantees his being taken as part of the "mainstream" of American politics. There is, however, considerable sentiment on the left that any challenge within the Democratic Party, rather than through a new third party, will be drowned in that mainstream.

## LABOR

### Coor's strike ends in bitter defeat

By Timothy Lange

GOLDEN, COLO.

**T**WENTY-ONE MONTHS AFTER it began, the strike at the Adolph Coors brewery ended in defeat for brewery workers' Local 336. In a union decertification election held Dec. 13-14, maintenance and production employees voted two-to-one to dump the local as their bargaining agent.

But union leaders here vowed to intensify a strike-connected boycott of Coors beer in the 16 states where it is distributed. "Coors is losing money, but he hasn't seen nothing yet," said union president Jim Silverthorne. He said he was surprised by the margin of the 993-408 defeat, but "was never convinced we would win. I just thought it would be closer. What we heard from people [in the plant] was that we stood a slim chance."

The strike was weak from the beginning. For most of the past year, with more than two-thirds of the union's members back on the job, the strike stayed alive through the efforts of 50-60 picketers and the hope that favorable government decisions on relatively minor unfair labor practice charges would somehow improve the situation. Late last month, the National Labor Relations Board ruled against the union's remaining charges.

Knowing that the NLRB decision would renew Coors' previous demands for a decertification election, and not wanting to have a vote date set too near to Christmas, Local 366's leaders called for the election themselves.

The problem, according to unofficial spokesperson Ray Marcouillier, was that 510 strikebreakers working on the plant could vote on the union question and 480 brewers still on strike could not. NLRB rules prohibit voting by workers if they have been permanently replaced for more than a year. "Coors won with 70 percent," Marcouillier said, "but if the strikers could have voted and the strikebreakers couldn't, we would have got 70 percent."

Bill Coors, who last year called strikers "monkeys," labeled the vote "a great victory for our people." He claimed it was the workers' "declaration of independence. This is the first time in 44 years that the company will be able to work directly with employees without having to go through a third party." Bill's brother Joe, the unreconstructed conservative whose millions have financed a dozen rightist causes, said after the election that his company is not anti-union.

But Coors is a prominent supporter of the National Right-to-Work Committee. The committee has targeted both New Mexico and Colorado as states in which to

end closed-shop laws. Moreover, Local 366 isn't the first union to be stomped at the brewery. Since 1960, 17 other unions, from glassblowers to pipefitters, have been eliminated by the Coors' brothers. Several of the beer distributorships the company controls also have been deunionized.

Whether or not they were represented by a union, Coors workers have been subjected to polygraph tests, rotating shifts, seniority changes, and grotesque dismissal practices. It was these issues, not wages or benefits, that led Local 366 to initiate the strike and boycott in the first place.

In April 1977, union leaders promised a quick victory—three months at the most—and 92 percent of the union members voted to go out. It soon became apparent, however, that with the boycott as the primary weapon, defeating Coors would take a very long time. Hundreds of workers decided they couldn't wait that long and returned to their jobs, crippling the strike.

With the strike over, Local 366 leaders say they will step up the AFL-CIO supported boycott in hopes of "exposing" the company. The polygraph tests and brother Joe's political contributions will be a major focus of this exposure, according to Marcouillier.

Although the company denied for

months that its reduced sales for the past year and a half had anything to do with the boycott, officials now admit that it's not doing the brewery any good. But corporate communications officer Craig Kuhl told IN THESE TIMES that Coors' toughest opponent in overcoming the sales slump is not the boycott but the competition from other beer makers.

Coors is still safely in fifth place among the nation's brewers, but it, along with No. 4 Pabst and No. 3 Schlitz, have been hurt by an advertising campaign of No. 2 Miller and No. 1 Budweiser. In 1976, Coors spent less than \$2 million on advertising, most of the money paying for unsophisticated billboards and TV spots. In response to the other brewers' marketing strategy, however, Coors has spent \$10-12 million this year for skillfully produced commercials, including one that claims the company is a wonderful employer and ends with the slogan, "Our people make it better."

Coors has also introduced a "light" beer to compete with Miller's, and is rapidly expanding its distribution area. Kuhl said the ads and new light beer is helping Coors gain on Pabst and Schlitz. The ad campaign and growing regional market seem likely to make the boycott a good deal tougher to continue effectively.

But Marcouillier says he, for one, will not give up. "The public has supported us well, and we see no reason why they should stop now. The practices we are fighting are still going on at Coors. We're not down and out by a long shot."



## CITIES

# Kucinich doesn't trust Cleveland banks

By Al Di Franco

CLEVELAND'S MAYOR DENNIS J. Kucinich has been holding office with a gun to his head since early spring, when forces began gathering for the Aug. 13 recall initiative. The mayor fought a door-to-door battle, surviving the contest by a scant 235 votes. But the powers that control Cleveland have taken their revenge.

In his 1977 campaign and again last August, Kucinich promised that there would be no tax increases and that the Municipal Electric Light and Power Co. (Mun Light) would remain in public hands. But now with the first big-city default since the Depression hanging over Cleveland, Kucinich has been forced to propose a public referendum in February on the sale of Mun Light and on a one-half percent income tax increase.

After an eleventh hour Dec. 15 city council meeting that ended with the city in default on \$15.5 million in notes, Kucinich also announced drastic layoffs—about 20 percent—of police, firefighters, garbage collectors, laborers, and other city employees in order to save money to pay \$14 million of the \$15.5 million to six Cleveland banks.

## Charges of bank blackmail.

The banks refused to refinance the city's debt unless Kucinich agreed to sell Mun Light to the privately-owned Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company (CEI). Seven CEI directors are also directors of four of the banks that hold city notes.

Charging "blackmail" and "You can't trust Cleveland Trust," Kucinich entered the bank on Dec. 18 and, with supporters surrounding him, withdrew his personal savings.

Mun Light has been at the heart of the default crisis. The power system, according to Muny commissioner Rich Barton, now supplies only 20 percent of the city's electricity needs, but has service lines "sprawling over two-thirds of the city."

Unlike many other big cities, CEI and Muny wires are frequently accessible in the same places. "All you have to do is call up and say 'Hey, I want to switch,'" Barton said of the system's competitiveness with CEI. He said 89 percent of Muny's customers were residential. They enjoy an approximate 6 percent savings in electric bills over CEI service, he said.

According to Barton, the only reason that more people don't switch from CEI to Muny is that since at least 1968, CEI has planned to undermine Muny Light "financially, politically, and operationally."

## Anti-trust suit.

Pro-Kucinich forces say CEI's motives in the Muny bid are to gain monopoly power and to avoid paying damages in a \$329 million anti-trust suit that the city, backed by findings from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, is taking to court in February.

CEI insists that no deal can be made unless the anti-trust suit is dropped—a move the Kucinich administration opposes as adamantly as it opposes sale of the utility.

Barton says the \$329 million is the damage done to Muny by CEI by refusing to sell electricity, forcing it to run its generators without rest.

In a dispute over rates, Muny withheld about \$14 million from CEI, of which \$11 million has now been repaid. But only \$3.6 million of the CEI bill has come from Muny revenue, according to Barton, the rest coming from Cleveland's general fund.

Muny's own generating plant is shut down and decaying on Cleveland's Lake Erie shoreline. But Barton said that there is no need to repair Muny's generating plant if new power can be brought in, and that the electric system can be spared major capital investments.

Critics of CEI and the predecessor ad-



Photos/Steve Cagan

## Cleveland's mayor was forced to call for a vote next February on public power and an increase in taxes.

ministration of Republican Mayor Ralph Perk say the plant would be in working order today if Perk had not allowed it to decay in the effort to promote the Muny sale.

## CEI challenges Barton.

Along with anti-administration forces, CEI challenges Barton's claim that Muny is making a profit. Barton said the utility will realize about \$1.4 million after adjustments for capital depreciation. He predicts a \$2 million profit for 1979.

In an earlier attempt to compromise on Muny, Kucinich proposed a three-member panel to govern Muny for 18 months and sell it if it failed to make money. The city council rejected this plan. The administration pointed to the rejection as what it called opponents' fears of being proven wrong on Muny's profitability.

To Barton's claim that, since July Muny "has been taking away more CEI customers than they've been taking from us," CEI Public Relations supervisor Charles Barry said, "I don't know. We've never looked into anything like that."

CEI also refuses to deny that it will ask the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio for a rate hike in order to pay for the Muny purchase. Barton says a Muny purchase would mean bigger electric bills for customers of both systems.

## UAW opposes sale.

Don Coleman, chairman of the Cleveland-area Cuyahoga-Medina County United Autoworkers Community Action Program, said the union is "historically opposed to the sale [of Muny] because at least in theory it offers some competition" to CEI.



Above: Two Kucinich supporters demonstrate Dec. 18 outside the Cleveland Trust Co., one of the banks that the city defaulted to. Below: Dennis and Sandy Kucinich emerge after withdrawing savings from Cleveland Trust.

Kucinich's personnel director Sherwood "Bob" Weissman, told IN THESE TIMES that the city's financial crisis was "contrived rather than real"—contrived by business and political leaders bent on destroying Kucinich and Muny Light.

Weissman, with more than 20 years of labor organizing experience, including leadership of a United Auto Workers local at a Cleveland Chrysler plant, vowed the city would not give in to threatened work stoppage by city workers protesting the layoffs.

"All these unions have no-strike contracts. They're dealing with the most pro-labor administration they've ever dealt with and we have no intention of tolerating the attempt by the unions to dictate political and governmental policy in violation of their collective bargaining commitments," Weissman said. "We would have no choice but to stand up very vigorously to any effort to distort labor's role in this matter," he said.

Weissman said the city would "make the best of it" under the handicap of drastically reduced city safety and labor forces.

"That means we will concentrate police on street assignments and bring to an ab-

solute minimum the number who work in specialized units and desk jobs," he said.

## State will not rescue.

Weissman added that "firefighters work only 4 percent of their time at most, anyway. The only reason for the number of firefighters is in order to be able to station them in the excessive number of firehouses that exist in all old cities based on the horse-and-buggy era. So it may take a minute longer for a response to some fires, but it will make no significant difference in terms of fires."

Weissman said there was "no possibility" for outside emergency help from the National Guard or Ohio Highway Patrol. "The city can't lay off their own safety forces and expect the state to come in and do it for them," he said.

On a possible state financial bailout, Weissman said, "Since this is a contrived crisis, it's unrealistic to expect that public officials are going to be interested in coming to our rescue."

He predicted, however, that Kucinich would run for a second two-year term and that "people will vote out the city council that cooperated in contriving this crisis."