

## INSHORT

## Sue the bastards

Even though insurgent Ed Sadlowski's 1977 campaign for the presidency of the Steelworkers union proved unsuccessful, the union leadership decided to give itself an extra measure of protection. In the wake of Sadlowski's defeat, the union added a novel provision to the union constitution prohibiting any candidate for union office from accepting campaign contributions from outside the Steelworkers' current membership. Obviously, such a rule would favor the incumbent leadership—which has ready access to union funds and resources—over any uppity challengers.

That point was not lost on the U.S. Court of Appeals, which recently ruled against the union in the *Edward Sadlowski v. United Steelworkers of America* lawsuit, which challenged the legality of the provision. Noting that the rule represented "the first attempt by an American labor union to so restrict financial support for candidates for union office," the court said that the ban "would leave union members practically at the mercy of every entrenched group of incumbents." Specifically, the court ruled, it violates sections of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, a labor law that evolved out of hearings on corruption in the Teamsters and other unions.

Labor lawyer Joe Rauh, an attorney for the plaintiffs, offered this assessment of the Appeals Court ruling: "The bastards got beat. This case should be a real shot in the arm for the union democracy movement."

## Bracket creep meets Bonzo

In recent years, income-tax critics have been especially vocal on the subject of "bracket creep"—that is, the tendency for people to be pushed into higher tax brackets as inflation (artificially) boosts their incomes. Now tax expert Allen D. Manvel, writing in *Tax Notes*, says that taxes in recent years have been modified so that the IRS' take of our incomes hasn't really gone up disproportionately because of inflation.

But the most troubling finding in Manvel's research was that the proposed Reagan tax cuts of 30 percent over three years would "operate to the material disadvantage of low-income taxpayers." For example, the proposed cuts would continue to protect middle and upper-income taxpayers against the ravages of bracket creep as their incomes are inflated. Not so for a couple with an annual income of \$6,000; their tax cut would compensate for only about 39 percent of the creep's extra burden—leaving them with scant funds to invest in condos.

## Skip the flowers

Mother's Day did not begin as a Hallmark® of commercial holidays. Writing for the Pacific News Service, Michael E. Hamel-Green reminds us that the first Mother's Day celebration in the U.S., which took place in 1872, "was actually conceived and organized by the poet and women's suffragist Julia Ward Howe as an occasion for women to voice their opposition to military conflict."

Following Howe's lead more than a century later, the Mother's Day Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament will march on the White House this Mother's Day, May 10, and spend the next day presenting a petition for joint U.S.-Soviet disarmament to members of the House and Senate. Speakers at the May 10 rally will include Dr. Helen Caldicott (whose Women's Party for Survival spearheads the coalition), Benjamin Spock and Barry Commoner. Call (617) 923-9542 for details.

## What a swell idea

Associate publisher Bob Nicklas reports that an *In These Times* Seattle Associates Group fundraiser on April 11 raised \$500. Revelers were especially generous with their liquid assets at the cash bar. Just a few days later, a Madison, Wisc., Democratic Socialist Alliance fundraiser brought in an additional \$300 for the paper. Our thanks to both groups.

Bob points out that one such fundraiser per week could bring in more than \$15,000 annually. He's standing by at (312) 489-4444 to help organize more of these events.

## They talk, too

The San Francisco Mime Troupe has launched a spring tour of the Midwest and Northwest, presumably with their usual mixture of politics, drama, music and humor. This latest production is called *Americans, or Last Tango in Huahuatenoango*.

—Josh Kornbluth



Like other members of the Plowshares Eight (IN THESE TIMES, March 18), Daniel Berrigan isn't just waiting around to be sentenced. Following this appearance at an April 18 rally across from the UN protesting U.S. intervention in El Salvador, Berrigan and two other Plowsharers were arrested on Good Friday for causing trouble at the military-minded Riverside Research Institute in New York City.

## Southern left will rise again

NEW MARKET, TENN.—Drawing on grassroots organizing experience in rural and urban communities across the South, more than 75 social activists from 11 southern states met here at the Highlander Center in early April to discuss ways of "building a socialist presence in the South."

H.L. Mitchell, a longtime socialist and one of the original organizers of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU), said it was "the second southern socialists conference in over 40 years." Mitchell recalled that the first conference he attended was in April 1939 at the Delta Cooperative Farm in Rochdale, Miss.

This year's meeting, organized by members of the New American Movement (NAM) and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), drew twice the number of expected participants, about half of whom were people that did not belong to either organization but felt the need to consider socialist alternatives in the Reagan era. Equally unexpected was the broad spectrum of more than 30 organizations represented, from local and state groups working on single issues to southern members of national organizations (for example, the National Organization of Women, ACORN and the American Civil Liberties Union) to organized labor.

For some who came, the threatened loss of federal funding on which many activist strategies have depended seems to have forced a new look at liberalism and a new openness to socialist alternatives. For others, the community outcry

against Reagan's budget cuts is providing an opportunity to take socialist analyses out of the closet and present them as viable alternatives.

Mitchell caught the spirit of the meeting when he began by calling himself "an ecumenical socialist—I belong to everything." Parallels with the past were striking as Mitchell provided a summary of minutes of the 1939 southern conference and recalled its original purpose of "mobilizing the South" and "building a political organization that would ultimately lead to a socialist economic order." Stated one 50-year veteran of southern labor struggles, "Union busting may be more intense now than it was 15 years ago, but it's not any more so than it was in the '30s."

No master plan was developed at the meeting, but those present agreed to begin building a regional network, planning a larger conference next year and working on a coherent political strategy for the South. Such a strategy would involve resurrecting the strong traditions of militant trade unionism and black-white unity, and building on what's positive in southern culture—particularly the social gospel, the extended family and southerners' closeness to their rural roots.

The common perspective of southern socialists at the meeting was that the majority of southerners are not more conservative or apathetic than their northern counterparts, as is often portrayed. But the right does have more control over economy and culture in this region than it has elsewhere.

As NOW's Wanda Noblitt said, "Being rural, being southern, it's hard for people to grasp the power they have. They've been taught to conform and they have no strong examples of dissent because that history is never celebrated. We have to be that example."

—Laura Batt

## SHAD protests nuke too much

NEW YORK—In an unprecedented action, a Long Island utility is seeking a whopping \$2 million in damages from members of an anti-nuclear group who tried to block construction of a \$2.2 billion nuke plant 50 miles east of Manhattan.

The legal action by LILCO (Long Island Lighting Co.) is aimed at the SHAD (Sound and Hudson Against Atomic Development) Alliance, a loose-knit coalition of protesters—mostly residents of the area—opposed to the Shoreham nuclear plant now slated for completion by late 1983. SHAD has been organizing regular demonstrations at the construction site for years.

LILCO claims SHAD members are violating its private property rights—which it views as more important than the demonstrators' First Amendment guarantees of free expression—and is seeking a court injunction against all future protests on or near the construction site. Moreover, the utility wants cash damages so it can pay for increased security measures, construction delays and an undetermined amount of property damage as a result of the protests.

Civil libertarians and anti-nukers view the suit as part of a large corporate counter-offensive indicative of business confidence in the Age of Reagan. They fear an award of damages in this case will forestall future demonstrations by small, community-based anti-nuke groups nationwide. SHAD, for example, has no salaried staff or formal organization and just barely manages to pay its own utility bills.

"This is the first time that a utility has tried to deny Americans their right to protest," said Edith Tiger of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, which is handling SHAD's defense. "A win here would clear the way for the same intimidating tactics by the phone company, Con Edison, defense contractors, anybody."

LILCO has been joined in its suit by nine construction unions that believe the protesters have jeopardized the livelihood of the 2,600 members employed on the project.

Both sides in the case have been taking depositions for several months now. LILCO has been extremely broad in its questioning of defendants. Utility attorneys have asked SHAD members to provide names of people who attend meetings, and to reveal where the meetings have been held, who took minutes and who's on the mailing list. A printer's records have been subpoenaed and organizational bank records sought.

Attorneys for SHAD say it is possible the case will go to trial this spring or summer in New York state supreme court. A negative verdict, they add, will be appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

The suit has hampered SHAD's ability to organize further protest activities against the nuclear plant, since organizers have been preoccupied with defense efforts and fundraising to cover legal expenses. LILCO also has serious fiscal problems: It recently asked the state's Public Service Commission for a \$228 million rate hike, of which \$34 million would go toward completion of the Shoreham project.

—Eric Nadler



## ELECTIONS

# Santa Monica tenants get revenge in sweep of city seats

By Neal Goldberg

SANTA MONICA, CA

**S**ANTA MONICA'S REAL ESTATE developers probably wish they could get into a time machine and go back to the 1950s. With the April 15 victory of a city council slate pledged to rent control and to "human scale" development, the real estate interests have become an unpopular minority in a town they once ruled.

Santa Monica used to be a sleepy ocean-side retreat for the well-to-do. But in the middle '60s, at the urging of developers, an expressway was built linking Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles.

Santa Monica's business elite, eager to cash in on their properties, tore down hundreds of vacation houses and built apartment buildings in their place. Workers from downtown Los Angeles eager to escape the smog and middle-class professionals attracted by Santa Monica's sense of community began flocking to the city. Once one of Los Angeles County's wealthiest

## A broad alliance blocked landlords' efforts to gut the nation's strongest rent control law.

communities, its income is now below the county average.

About 75 percent of Santa Monica's citizens are renters. During the late '70s, these citizens found themselves squeezed by skyrocketing rents. In the wake of Proposition 13, which reduced landlords' property taxes, many tenants expected rent reductions, but instead they saw their rents increased.

Santa Monica since has become the center of California's renters' rebellion. In 1979 it voted in a strict rent control ordinance and elected a slate of pro-rent control candidates, led by consumer activist Ruth Yannatta Goldway. But the city developers and real estate interests did not take their defeat lying down. Over the last two years, they have organized with the aim of taking back the Santa Monica City Council and revoking the rent control ordinance.

On April 15, they had their latest test. A slate of candidates organized by the developers' Citizens Congress faced a slate organized by the Santa Monicans for Renters Rights (SMRR). The pro-rent control slate swept all four city council seats, as well as winning two school board seats and a vacancy on the city's rent control board. Last week, the victorious majority appointed Ruth Goldway as Santa Monica's mayor.

Santa Monicans for Renters Rights, which ran both the 1979 and 1981 campaigns, is composed of four main groups: the Santa Monica chapter of the Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED), the Santa Monica Democratic Club, the Fair Housing Alliance, and the Ocean Park Electoral Network. For this year's campaign, about 3,000 active supporters donated \$5 or more.

The Coalition won significant labor support. The County AFL-CIO, which had refused to endorse the 1979 slate, backed the SMRR in 1981. Other unions, including the Retail Clerks, Culinary Workers, Teamsters and United Auto Workers, lent their active support. Dolores Press of the Retail Clerks was one of the four victorious city council candidates.

"While the Progressive Alliance is dis-



banding on a national scale, we have put together on a local level a genuine progressive alliance," SMRR campaign manager Derek Shearer commented.

By means of the union phone banks, the coalition was able to contact 30,000 voters out of a potential electorate of 54,000. From this initial canvass 20,000 supporters were identified, and then targeted for an election-day get-out-the-vote drive.

The Citizens' Congress, set up two years ago to fight the rent control forces, was largely composed of conservative Republicans. They outspent the rent control coalition about three-to-one. When an early survey showed that 65 percent of Santa Monicans supported rent control, they changed from being openly antagonistic toward rent control to maintaining that they would enforce the rent control laws more "reasonably."

"They tried to usurp the rent control issue," Dolores Press said. "The priority for our candidates became clearing up the voters' confusion about the issues."

### Court hassles.

The rent control issue was further clouded by a lower court statement one month before the election that sections of the Santa Monica law might be unconstitutional.

The Santa Monica law rolled back rents to April 1978 and limited increases to an annual 7 percent or a percentage of the "historical" rather than current market value of the landlord's property. Calculating rents on the owner's original investment, rather than the property's inflated market price, was intended to discourage real estate speculation.

But Los Angeles County Judge Richard Lavine offered a "tentative opinion"

that the use of historical investment and the 7 percent yearly increase was "confiscatory." He gave the city 90 days to respond.

SMRR candidates campaigned against the judge's ruling. They promised to fight it through the State Supreme Court. Campaign manager Shearer estimated

that the ruling could increase some Santa Monica rents as high as 150 percent.

But while rent control was the main issue of the Santa Monica campaign, it was not the only issue. The SMRR and the Citizens' Congress also did battle over high-rise and commercial development. Santa Monica has had no problem attracting investment. But according to the SMRR, the growth of high-rises has been outstripping the city's sewer system and threatening its "human scale" environment.

The candidates also quarrelled over crime. The Citizens' Congress sponsored an initiative that would have mandated the city to spend more on crime, while suggesting that police spending decisions be removed from city council control. The rent control coalition countered with an initiative that set up "community-based crime control," which emphasized better street lighting and requiring landlords to provide better locks. The rent control coalition initiative passed easily, while the Citizens' Congress initiative was defeated.

On election day, the Citizens' Congress showed their desperation. They reportedly hired students for \$50 to tear the rent control coalition's campaign literature from citizens' doors.

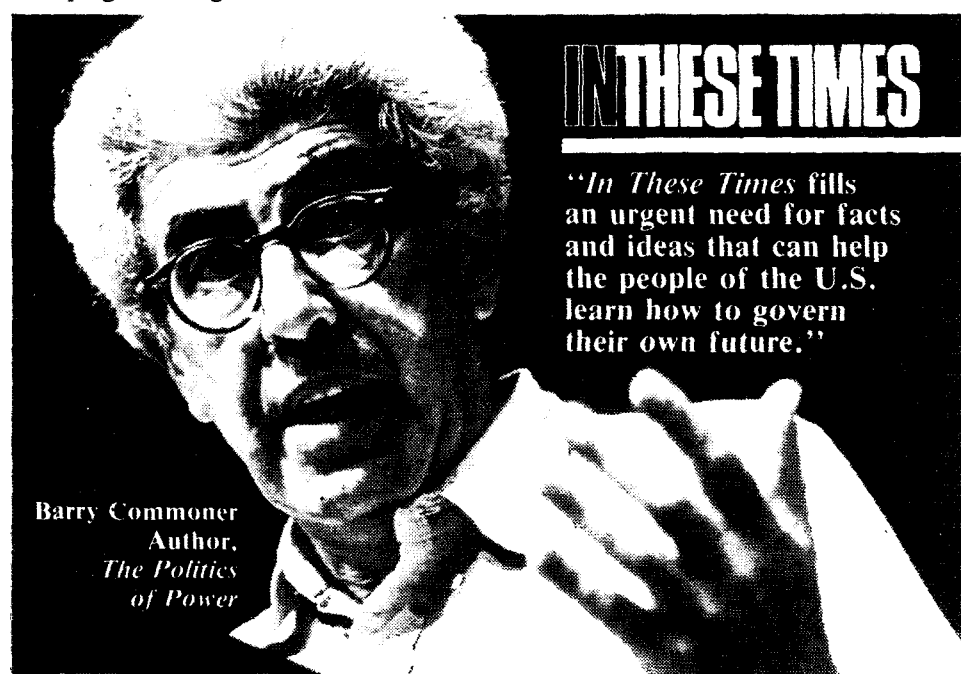
When the election results came in, showing a rent control coalition sweep, the Citizens' Congress made one last effort to stop them. They sued to overturn the results on the grounds that the election ballots, which required voters to punch holes for their candidates, were slightly off-center. But a judge threw that complaint out of court.

When the new city council convened last Tuesday they passed a six-month moratorium on high-rise development and condominium conversion.

The new council members are optimistic about what they will be able to accomplish. "We can show the nation what local government can do when government is no longer at the service of business interests," CED organizer Tom Zane, one of the successful candidates, said. "We can make Santa Monica a model of economic democracy for the nation."

Zane's comments reflect a certain giddy post-election enthusiasm. Santa Monica is both too small and too well-endowed, geographically and economically, to serve as a model for many American cities.

But the factors that make Santa Monica different—"Our problem is not attracting investment, but controlling it," Shearer said—also make it immune to the usual corporate blackmail that has undermined other attempts at local democracy. Even if the victorious coalition cannot make Santa Monica a model for the nation, it will certainly have a chance to make it a model for its citizens. ■



Barry Commoner  
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