

IN SHORT

Kids for hire

When is a farmworker not a farmworker? When he or she is a sharecropper, according to a 1982 court decision recently upheld by the Sixth District Court of Appeals. The courts found that the Department of Labor could not penalize a Michigan pickle grower for using child labor, since the child's parent was in a "profit-sharing relationship" with the grower and could thus "hire" his or her own children. Growers in the pickle fields usually split a farmworker's harvest 50-50—the highest quality pickles go for \$70 a ton. Each grower, of course, "shares the profits" of many farmworkers, while farmworkers support families on their share.

The case is having implications beyond the pickle fields. In the Midwest and Texas, federal authorities are trying to make farmworkers pay Social Security taxes on their family members' wages. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), leaders of the Campbell's Soup boycott, has taken up the issue because one-third of the pickle industry in Ohio and Michigan is controlled by Campbell-owned Vlasic. Last week the FLOC led a tour of the pickle fields for church groups and political leaders, trying to organize support for its campaign to win a contract with Campbell's—who maintains in this situation, as in its tomato operations, that the growers, not the company, are the employers the workers must deal with. Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower reasons differently. He points to a \$1.39 jar of Vlasic pickles, and notes that the grower and farmworker each got about seven cents out of the deal—the other \$1.25 went to Campbell's. FLOC has petitioned the appeals court to rehear the sharecropping case, as have the states of Texas, Wisconsin and Michigan. "Sharecropping is what the southern growers came up with after the Civil War to hold onto their slaves," notes FLOC leader Baldemar Velasquez. "We want a contract."

Paradise lost

Adam Purple is accusing New York City housing authorities of trying to pave paradise to put up an apartment house, Jon Kalish reports. The city plans to bulldoze the Garden of Eden, a vegetable and flower plot Purple created on six vacant lots on Manhattan's lower east side, in order to build apartments for senior citizens and low-income families. Purple, an eccentric squatter in purple tie-dyed clothes and purple sunglasses, lives without electricity or hot water in an abandoned building overlooking the urban oasis. The city plans to clear the garden and raze the building Purple lives in before the year is out. "I feel like a Vietnamese farmer," he said as a demolition crew began to tear down a building.

But Miriam Friedlander, on the city council's left wing, thinks a better label for Purple is "selfish." Friedlander supports the housing project and wants to move the garden to another nearby parcel of land. "Mr. Purple has been offered another plot. I think he's trying to disrupt what this community needs so badly—housing." Purple's lawyer has gone to court to stop the bulldozers, arguing that destroying the garden would violate a recently enacted state law prohibiting the mutilation of art works. Purple has been certified as an artist by the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, which designated the garden an earthwork.

Hiroshima remembered

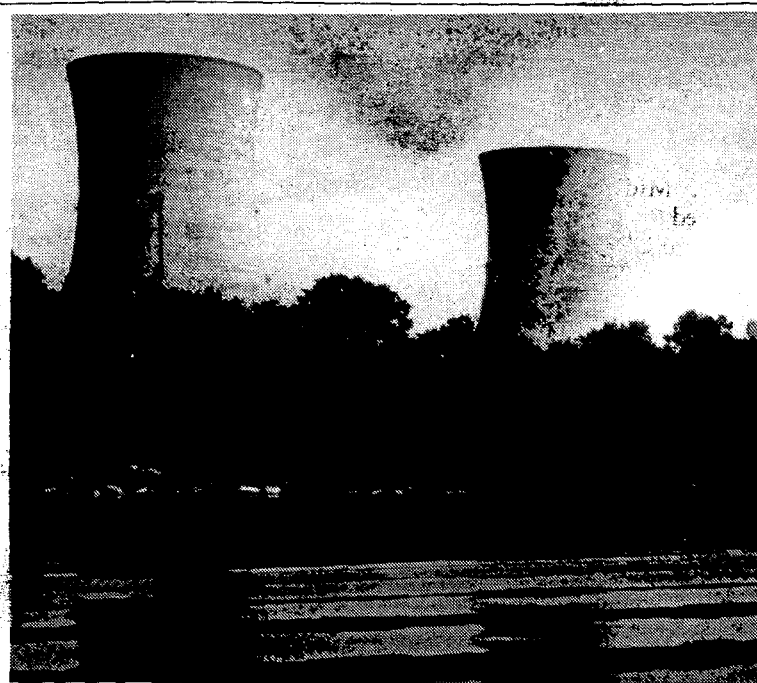
One hundred women demonstrated at a Sperry Corporation plant in St. Paul, Minn., August 6 to commemorate the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Mordecai Spektor reports. The weekend's "Festival of Resistance" was organized by the Minnesota Women's Peace Camp, which has staged several non-violent civil disobedience actions at Sperry over the past 10 months. Thirteen women were arrested when they blocked a gate during the action.

Mim Olson, a peace activist from Marshall, Minn., said the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was an attempt "to assert U.S. power during the post-World War II reconstruction." Olson called on Sperry to stop its production of first strike nuclear weapons—Pershing II, MX and cruise missiles. Sperry received \$1.5 billion in government contracts in 1983. Sperry is contracted to produce an electronic trigger for the ground-launched cruise missile, and shipboard computers and navigation systems for Trident fleet ballistic missile submarines.

Holiday gift ideas

As your mailbox begins to fill up with fall, winter and holiday catalogs, you may still be unable to find the household tools you need at truly unbelievable prices. If that's the case, check *Nuts and Bolts at the Pentagon: A Spare Parts Catalog*, published by the Defense Budget Project of the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. It's a compendium of Pentagon waste, pulling together items that cost next to nothing at a hardware store but that the military pays hundreds, even thousands of dollars for. Included are the notorious 12-cent allen wrench that cost \$9,609, and the \$17 hammer the Navy paid \$436 for. There are less well-known luxuries like the \$11 tool box that goes for \$652, and the \$28,840 computer printer—a nice gift idea—that McDonnell Douglas charged \$145,950 for. The catalog is good for more than a laugh—it examines the congressional audits and testimony about the overcharging controversy, explains the complicated purchasing and payment process that the military says distorts the prices and reports that even federal investigators have concluded that internal efforts at reform are not likely to produce "meaningful or lasting improvements."

—Joan Walsh



TMI worker wins suit

HARRISBURG, PA.—A mid-July victory in a suit brought by a fired nuclear worker against a Three Mile Island clean-up contractor signals a grudging concession by the nuclear industry that workers' rights to safety must be reckoned with.

Two weeks after the March 1979 accident at the Three Mile Island (TMI) nuclear plant near Harrisburg, William Pensyl was hired by Catalytic, Inc., to work in the clean-up of the damaged reactor. Pensyl's primary responsibility was to undress the men who worked cleaning up the radioactive core, a job that entailed peeling off their five pairs of boots, two pairs of coveralls, two hoods, three pairs of gloves and their full-face respirators. The "undressers" themselves wore layers of plastic garments and a respirator.

When Pensyl was hired he was told in a training session that nuclear radiation was "like x-rays," but that extra protective garments above the minimum could be worn as desired. Said Pensyl, "In the beginning of the clean-up they weren't too sure what they were doing and let us use whatever we wanted. Things went slow but I felt pretty well protect-

ed, before the change."

The "change" came three years later on Aug. 12, 1982, when Pensyl's Catalytic supervisor announced that respirators would no longer be used by the undressers. Later, Pensyl's attorney, Arthur Schwartz, called the order a "public relations move and an old-fashioned speed-up." He explained, "By saying that respirators aren't needed, they are trying to create the illusion that it's getting safer inside, that management has things under control." Workers can put in five-hour shifts without respirators, but only work two hours wearing them.

Fearing that he'd be dangerously exposed without the respirator, Pensyl refused to work and was fired on August 30. The company said he was "unmanageable" and in violation of the six-year "no strike" provision of the TMI Recovery Act which was signed by all unions working at TMI.

Pensyl's union, Laborers International Union of North America Local 1180, was unsure how to proceed since it was under contract to provide laborers. When it did not file a grievance, Pensyl decided to pursue it him-

Abortion vote slowed, not stopped

BOSTON—Reproductive rights advocates in Massachusetts began the summer expecting to face a November referendum that could have outlawed abortion in the state. Now the issue won't make the ballot until 1986, but the change may favor the anti-choice forces.

The anti-abortion lobby has

for years been working through the state legislature to put the abortion issue directly before the voters. To alter the Massachusetts constitution, an amendment must be approved by two successive legislatures, and then placed on the ballot. Meeting in a constitutional convention in January 1983, the State House and Senate passed a resolution that the state's General Court "may regulate or prohibit" abortion, and private and public abortion funding, services or facilities.

Pro-choice groups, expecting that a second constitutional convention this year would get the

self.

Attorney Schwartz argued his case on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's principle that workers' radiation exposure should be kept "as low as reasonably achievable" (ALARA). The ALARA guideline acknowledges that there is no safe "threshold," and prescribes cautious, conservative workplace procedures. In Pensyl's case, scientific evidence established that Pensyl's fear of exposure was justified and that Catalytic's order to remove the respirators contradicted the ALARA guideline.

Secretary of Labor Raymond Donovan finally upheld Pensyl's right to refuse work after an initial Department of Labor (DOL) ruling found Pensyl "insubordinate." After Donovan's decision, Catalytic agreed to a settlement of back pay and reinstatement in a non-nuclear job.

Already there are reports that those working without respirators at TMI were contaminated by inhaling radiation. "Though we've won our case, Catalytic has succeeded in getting the job done without respirators for the past two years," Pensyl notes. "The back pay—that's peanuts to them."

But Pensyl may be underestimating the impact of the case. In firing him, Catalytic was asserting that workers are not to exercise their own judgment on issues of safety, but to trust the judgment of the company. The DOL ruling, however, reasserts the workers' right to act on their reasonable fears when working in hazardous industries. The Pennsylvania state legislature, aware of Pensyl's ordeal, is now considering nuclear worker safety regulation.

"The Reagan administration cuts back dramatically on the government's role in insuring safe workplaces," says Tony Mazzochi of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers. "And guys like Bill are saying, 'Okay, then give us the power to protect ourselves.' We need empowered workers' health deputies in every workplace."

—Marge Harrison

referendum on the November ballot, began a statewide campaign to locate and mobilize supporters of legal abortion. But in a June convention, the legislature passed a more stringent amendment that will have to be voted on yet again and won't appear on the ballot until November 1986.

It was a partial victory for anti-abortion forces, because the old resolution was considered legally flawed and open to challenge if passed. The new resolution allows Massachusetts to restrict abortion, but not outlaw it (as long as the Supreme Court's

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



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Roe v. Wade decision stands). The state could restrict access by prohibiting Medicaid and insurance funding and limiting where and when abortions could legally be performed. In cases where a mother's health is endangered by carrying the fetus, the resolution will allow courts to decide that abortion cannot be performed until the woman's life is actually in danger; the threat of danger would not be sufficient.

The anti-abortion movement is banking on Reagan's re-election and the prospect of his naming new, anti-choice Supreme Court justices by November 1986. Such a Court would most likely overturn *Roe v. Wade* and give states the sole right to regulate or outlaw abortions.

Anti-choice groups were also pessimistic about the referendum's chances in 1984. Recent polls show the great majority of Massachusetts residents (79 percent) do not believe that the government has the right to interfere with a woman's right to choose abortion. Even a substantial minority of Catholics do not want the state to have such power. But the Catholic Church in Massachusetts is sure to increase its anti-abortion lobbying and rhetoric, and the recently installed Archbishop Bernard Law is expected to play a major role in mobilizing the pro-life forces.

MASSCHOICE is the center of pro-choice organizing in Massachusetts. It reaches the public through traditional grassroots organizing methods—house meetings, postcard tables, political skills workshops and fundraising events. The MASSCHOICE PAC has backed five candidates for the Massachusetts Senate, and if they win there will be a pro-choice majority in the State Senate. The group is working with Planned Parenthood, the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union, League of Women Voters, NOW, R2N2 (a national reproductive rights group), Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights and Catholics for a Free Choice.

Nationally, anti-abortion forces have grown more assertive in recent years. Bombings and other violent acts aimed at abortion clinics have increased. Campaigns to put anti-choice referenda on state ballots are occurring nationwide. In Oregon, Washington, Arkansas, Colorado and Michigan enough signatures have been collected to put referenda that prohibit state Medicaid funds for abortions on this November's ballot. The National Abortion Rights Action League is working to defeat these referenda and is currently challenging the validity of the signatures, in an effort to keep the referenda off the ballot this fall.

—Mona Hochberg

Citizen Action eyes election

PITTSBURGH, PA—The Citizen Action network, with 22 state affiliates, has traditionally been a loose confederation of organizations sharing common agendas in their home states but no national program. That's been gradually

changing, and this election year has accelerated the process.

Its leadership conference in Pittsburgh the last weekend in July, co-sponsored by its training institute, Midwest Academy, highlighted the group's plans for an electoral offensive to defeat Ronald Reagan and elect left and liberal candidates to national, state and local office. Citizen Action will work for seven U.S. Senate candidates, 44 House hopefuls, 54 state and local officeholders, and is sponsoring a voter registration effort to register 750,000 new voters.

To date, Citizen Action has had little national recognition. Some of the stronger state organizations, such as the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, California's Campaign for Economic Democracy and the Illinois Public Action Council, have attracted notice. Through its Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition, it mobilized enough grassroots opposition to help kill Reagan's proposal to decontrol natural gas (a rare and unexpected defeat for the administration), which in turn prompted Mobil Oil to exorcise the organization in several of its "public service" Op-Ed advertisements. Earlier this year, Citizen Action began a National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards, and already a significant strengthening of national Superfund legislation appears within its political reach.

But electoral work will demand most of the network's national energy this year, absorbing much of its combined \$1.8 million budget and 1.5 million members. A door-to-door canvass in 300 congressional districts is pitching both the Citizen Action agenda as well as its chosen candidates.

The electoral emphasis is only part of a deeper organizational change. Formed in 1979 as a coalition of autonomous state organizations, in the last year the network's localism—in politics and in money—has yielded to greater central control and national focus. National Board and staff members speak of much that remains to be done; Citizen Action, in national terms, is still in its nascency. But the consolidation to date has been dramatic, and the future direction clear.

Both of these changes—going electoral and going national—are in large measure a response to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Among the many changes that Reagan has wrought, the left can thank him for at least these: he has pushed hundreds of disparate local organizing efforts into national politics, and he has taught them that elections are a necessary arena for political activity. Citizen Action is a striking example of this new type of organization: national, yet rooted in local communities, and combining elections with the more traditional tactics of protest and direct action.

At least some people see clearly what is happening. Listen to the Heritage Foundation, think tank of the New Right. They recently discovered the "Hidden Agenda, Hidden Danger" in Citizen Action: it had "succeeded where others have failed" to offer community groups "a path to mainstream power."

—David Blankenhorn

Briefing: Connecticut's two Democratic parties

WEST HARTFORD, CT—There are two states of Connecticut: one with the second-highest per capita income in the U.S., another with three of the poorest inner-cities. Connecticut has two Democratic Parties, as well. One elects anti-Reagan liberals to the U.S. Congress. The other elects state legislators who oppose tax reform, social services and plant-closing legislation.

In such a setting, Miles Rapoport seems to be running in the wrong race. Not only is he waging a reform campaign for state office, he's also challenging a powerful five-term incumbent Democrat in West Hartford, one of the state's wealthiest suburbs. He even gave up his job as director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG), a grassroots organization founded by Ralph Nader, to do it.

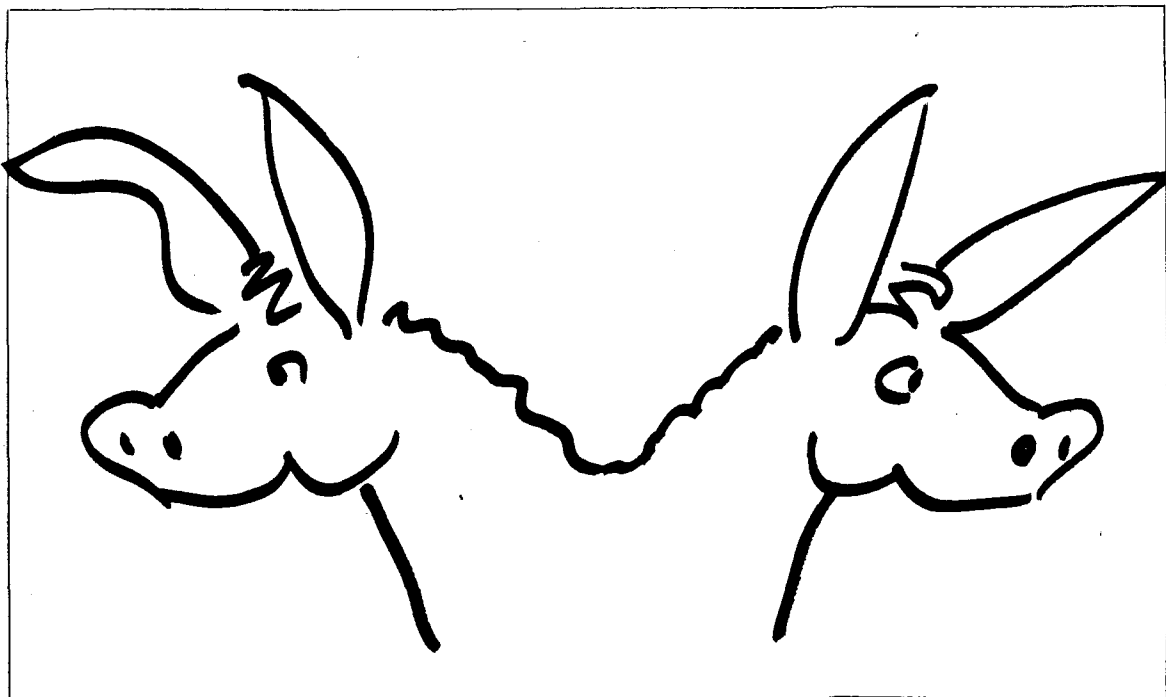
But Rapoport believes reform politics can sell in the suburbs, if packaged properly.

His campaign for the September 11 West Hartford Democratic primary, which has attracted the support of local women's and labor groups as well as the CCAG, will test that proposition. A local newspaper

death," Rapoport says amid the rattle of a computer printer in his cluttered West Hartford campaign office. But the 34-year-old organizer believes he can convince residents that a progressive income tax would replace a system of unfairly "selective" taxes, including an unincorporated business tax that effectively taxes the incomes of doctors and lawyers but not officers of corporations.

Because 26 percent of the 18th assembly district is 65 or older, Rapoport also feels Kemler is vulnerable for voting against senior citizens programs. And since many upwardly mobile families move to West Hartford to put their kids in decent public schools, he considers their disagreement over education funding an advantage as well.

His success in attracting 200 volunteers and \$18,000 in contributions so far—both high totals for a state representative candidacy—makes his campaign less quixotic than some people believe. But he admits he has an uphill fight. Kemler has never even faced a primary before and always wins the general election handily.



has dubbed the race a "fight for the soul of the state Democratic Party." Rapoport's opponent, Joan Kemler, symbolizes the party's conservative leadership, which Rapoport refers to as "business-as-usual" Democrats. As an assistant majority leader Kemler often enforces their agenda. She opposes programs for the elderly, stiffer scrutiny of utility rate hikes and increased state aid for education. (Connecticut ranks 45th of the 50 states in funding local public schools.)

Rapoport and Kemler also disagree on the issue that perhaps most divides the two Connecticuts and the two Democratic Parties: the institution of a state income tax. Urban state legislators have tried in vain for years to institute the tax and overhaul the current regressive system, which relies largely on a 7.5 percent sales tax.

"Many people feel being for an income tax is the kiss of

If Rapoport wins, however, he will join the 20 or 30 Democratic legislators trying to disrupt "business-as-usual" at the state capitol.

Forty-five miles south of West Hartford, left activists are working on a different challenge for the state legislature. Unlike Miles Rapoport, Pat Dillon is no longshot: two years ago she lost her bid in New Haven's 92nd assembly district by a heart-breaking 57 votes, a margin of .78 of 1 percent. Now she wants a rematch.

Dillon, an outspoken feminist and pro-labor New Haven alderwoman, also faces an entrenched state representative. Her opponent, Republican Rosalind Berman, daughter of a union organizer, has her own ties to women and labor. She has proposed and supported important state legislation on daycare, abortion, marital rape and confidentiality for rape victims. She

was one of only two Republican candidates for state office backed in 1982 by the local Central Labor Council; the endorsement helped her squeak by Dillon in the election. Berman is favored to receive the endorsement again.

Both Berman and Dillon have voted consistently for labor. But according to an organizer for the labor council, Berman is seen as more "professional," sending letters, for example, to remind members of favors she's done for them. (Dillon points out that as an unpaid alderwoman she doesn't enjoy the franking privileges Berman does.)

Perhaps more importantly, the labor council organizer said, many traditional male unionists consider Dillon too "abrasive." Dillon hasn't backed down, for example, from confronting the city's male Democratic administration and passing an ordinance that cut off city-sponsored memberships in male-only institutions.

Dillon is a tough campaigner. Her close showing in 1982 shocked political observers, who considered Berman unbeatable. Dillon has earned loyal community support for helping to found the city's battered women shelter, backing Yale University's largely female clerical union in labor disputes and passing an ordinance that requires 6 percent of city contracting business to go to firms

headed by women.

Unlike many political activists her age, Dillon, 36, has developed an uncanny ability for working within the Democratic Party to pass such legislation. In that sense she identifies with Geraldine Ferraro, who, like Dillon, talks about her working-class Catholic background.

Ferraro's campaign may actually affect Dillon's race, because Connecticut's party lever greatly affects many state races. Half of Dillon's district is the impoverished Edgewood neighborhood, which will likely vote overwhelmingly Democratic. But the other half encompasses the upper-middle-class Westville section of town. Feeling there about the Mondale-Ferraro ticket may well decide the fortunes of the local left in November's state elections—and whether Connecticut's "other" Democratic Party gains clout at the state capitol.

—Carole and Paul Bass