

By Joan Walsh

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST Church in downtown Albuquerque is not on the campaign trail for most New Mexican politicians. But it's a daily stop for hundreds of people—poor, unemployed, elderly and transient—who come for the hot lunch the church serves free of charge, no questions asked.

Democratic Senate candidate Judy Pratt found herself at the church in late July, in the company of the Rev. Judy Wagg, who distributes food and clothing to Albuquerque's poor through a program called the Storehouse. The congregation's men's society was serving macaroni and beef casserole to a group that mostly fit Wagg's description of Albuquerque's underclass—one-third families and new poor, only recently fallen on economic hard times; another third stricken by illness, alcoholism or drug addiction, capable of leading independent lives with some temporary help; a last third incapacitated by physical or emotional problems and unlikely to ever support themselves again.

Not everyone fell into Wagg's categories, though. Outside the church some of the crowd seemed like the cast of a Reagan commercial on the poor. "Judy, Judy Pratt, how you doing?" asked a swaggering young man sporting several tattoos and two women friends. No, he wasn't a registered New Mexican voter, he told Pratt. They were just passing through, having some lunch. "We've been to Denver, Chicago, L.A., just trying to have a good time." An unemployed mover told Pratt he liked Reagan and hated welfare. "Most people here don't want to work," he confided, and several listeners nodded agreement.

Pratt was finally rescued by a group of women and their children who'd heard a politician was in the crowd. They told her how budget cuts had hurt their families, how their children couldn't find work. Did Pratt know of any jobs? "I worked for years, paid my dues. Now all I have is Social Security. I shouldn't have to suffer," said an elderly black woman with medical problems.

"You deserve better," Pratt told her.

"I sure do, sugar, God bless you," said the woman, hugging Pratt.

Then all the women hugged her. "I'm going to come back here with voter registration forms," Pratt told them. "There are a lot of poor people in this state and we have to express ourselves by voting."

Registering the poor.

To an extent, that sums up Pratt's strategy for winning the Senate seat currently considered safely held by Pete Domenici, Senate Budget Committee chair. Since she entered the Democratic primary late last year, Pratt, a three-term state representative from Albuquerque, has modeled her campaign on Harold Washington's mayoral victory in Chicago, believing that a mobilization of poor and minority voters—in New Mexico mainly Hispanics—could add up to a winning constituency behind her left-liberal politics.

Voter registration has already made a difference in New Mexico. Only 55 percent of the state's eligible voters turned out in 1978, when Domenici beat Democrat Toney Anaya by 23,000 votes. Although in 1982 registration fell from its 1980 high, turnout of registered voters was at a record 72 percent, electing Anaya as governor and Democrat Jeff Bingaman to the U.S. Senate. Registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans two to one.

Much of the increase in registration and turnout has been the result of drives among Hispanics, most notably by the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP). This year alone Southwest has registered more than 20,000 additional Hispanic voters, field director Richard Martinez says. And when voter registration closed September 25, there was more good news for Pratt and the Democrats: election officials said registration had jumped more than 175,000 since voting rolls were purged in mid-1983, and almost 100,000 new voters

NEW MEXICO

Campaign counts on votes of the poor



CAMPAIGN

Judy Pratt is counting on high voter turnout.

were added just since the state's June primary.

Yet Pratt's election is still considered a longshot by observers in New Mexico and nationally. Domenici was thought likely to face no Democratic opposition until Pratt announced her plans to challenge him. Then former state party chair Nick Franklin jumped into the race, attracting the support of the regular Democratic organizations, and Anselmo Chavez declared his candidacy, threatening Pratt's claim on the Hispanic vote. But Pratt beat them both with a well-organized grassroots campaign symbolized by her walking tour of New Mexico, in which she went door to door discussing issues and registering people to vote.

Pratt's was widely considered a "movement" campaign, attracting strong support from women's groups and labor, along with many new to the electoral process. Hats went off to her when she won the June primary, but the dismissals began almost immediately. Her victory was due to her ability "to excite people who already shared her thinking," wrote one newspaper, implying she'd never be able

to move beyond that committed core.

"We recognized immediately that the danger for us was that Domenici and others would try to portray this as a fringe campaign—a left campaign—which it's not," Pratt said. "We're running a broad-based effort, drawing together diverse areas of the state."

But so far, Pratt's attempt to broaden her base has been hampered by a serious lack of money. She had hoped to raise \$750,000 for the race, but so far she's collected less than \$200,000 and fundraiser Bettie Naylor thinks the campaign might have to make do with less than \$300,000 by November.

"My rule of thumb is that women have to go to three times as many people to get the same amount of money as a man, and this is a small, poor state," says Naylor, a National Women's Political Caucus leader who's a veteran of many women's campaigns, including Texan Ann Richards' successful race for state treasurer. "Plus, Judy's a working-class person without the kind of money connections a lot of other candidates have. She's also very principled."

A progressive state.

Yet Pratt remains convinced she can defeat Domenici. "I'm not interested in a campaign I can't win. I don't care about just raising issues—voters won't take you seriously. We looked closely at Domenici's voting record and determined that he could be beaten."

Central to Pratt's conviction is New Mexico's legislative history. "This is a progressive state," she says, pointing to its status as the only state in the South or Southwest without a right-to-work law.

IN THESE TIMES OCT. 10-16, 1984 7

As chair of the House Labor Committee she is counted among the strongest supporters of union rights in the legislature and has benefited from staunch AFL-CIO backing in this race. And as one of the earliest states to ratify the ERA, New Mexico shouldn't re-elect a senator who voted against ERA extension and opposes choice.

She also believes the state is too poor to vote Republican, with almost half its population minorities. Forty-second in per capita income, New Mexico generally suffers an unemployment rate several points higher than the national figure. In northern Mora County, the rate is 40 percent. On the Navajo Reservation it's 65 percent and in the state's mining areas it's as high as 30 percent. In literature and public appearances Pratt hits hard at Domenici's support for Reagan budget cuts, especially his two votes against extending unemployment benefits.

Military spending, the nuclear freeze and foreign policy have also been among her central campaign issues. Polling identified "Domenici's Dirty Dozen," 12 issues on which Domenici's voting record put him at odds with New Mexican voters, and defense policy figured prominently. Domenici has tried with some success to position himself as a moderate on military issues, urging Reagan to settle for a 9 percent defense budget hike when the president was proposing a 13 percent increase. But Pratt and her advisors believe voters can be made to see Domenici as Reagan's staunch ally on military affairs by publicizing his votes against the nuclear freeze and for new weapons, including the MX, B-1 and nerve gas.

The military spending issue can cut both ways in defense-dependent New Mexico, however, since defense contracting there totals twice the state's annual \$1.4 billion budget. As an executive board member of the national Jobs with Peace campaign Pratt is careful to talk about ways to cut spending without costing jobs. "We have to make clear that we're talking about planning, we're talking about converting to other job-producing industries," she said. "You also point out that the state is still 42nd in per capita income. We're a military reservation."

"Year of the woman?"

With Geraldine Ferraro on the presidential ticket and six women Senate candidates, this is the Democrats' "year of the woman," Pratt notes. But she, like the other women Senate hopefuls, are finding that the party's verbal enthusiasm for their candidacies isn't quite matched by dollars. Pratt received \$12,500 from the party earlier this year, and expects to more than double that by the end of the race. But it's been slow going.

"They want to see poll results, they want to know where we believe Domenici's vulnerable," said campaign manager Ann Watkins in July. Notes fundraiser Naylor: "There are so many more races to spend money on, they don't want to put even nominal sums into a campaign that can't win."

Given that Domenici is expected to raise \$2.5 million, Pratt can't win a spending war. Right now she's counting on a high turnout, and some circumstances are working in her favor. A recent court ruling that New Mexico's reapportionment discriminated against Hispanic and Indians resulted in a special primary election last month that fielded additional minority candidates for the November state legislative elections. "That should motivate a very strong turnout among those groups," says SVREP's Martinez.

She can also count on a committed cadre of staff and volunteers, some of whom, like former Wisconsin State Rep. Midge Miller, have come from out of state to work for a candidate they believe in. While acknowledging Domenici's lead in the polls and in fundraising, Miller points out that "this isn't a state where a big media blast is all it takes. My grassroots experience and work with people tells me we can win. Otherwise I wouldn't be here. I could have worked Wisconsin for Mondale and Ferraro. We just bought a sailboat. I have plenty of things to do with my time."

MILITA

LORDSTOWN, OHIO

A DOZEN YEARS AGO WORKERS at this sprawling bluff factory complex made themselves a symbol of rebellion on the assembly line. As a tough new management team attempted to fire about 450 workers, increase workloads on what was billed as the world's fastest auto assembly line and enforce strict discipline, the 8,100 workers building Chevrolet Vegas and vans fought back with everything they had: they slowed down, followed instructions to the letter (thus fouling production), sabotaged cars and eventually went on strike.

It was a traditional fight against management speed-up, carried on with exceptional militancy and flair, but it was more than that. It was a defense of a hard-won informal system, enforced with immediate penalties of disrupted production, that gave workers an unusual amount of control over their assembly routines. But it was also a rebellion against degradation by management and by a tiresome, deadening world of work. Although few noticed at the time, it was a protest against management obsession with production that undermined workers' desires to do high quality work. It was also an uncompromising expression of solidarity and a fight for greater democracy at work.

Although some pundits overplayed it, it was also a part of the rebellious times as the very youthful work force—some of them disgruntled Vietnam vets, many sometime college students, others part of the counter-culture—sought control over their own lives, which was the battle cry of so many movements spawned in the '60s. No more "shut your mouth and break your back" for them.

The auto industry is very different now than it was then. Many survivors of the earlier battles are now older, and they have been subjected to a decade of economic insecurity and a political drift to the right that has taken its toll. Anyone seeking the Lordstown of 1971-72 will be surprised to find more talk of labor-management cooperation, pride in the plant's number one quality ranking and concern about keeping sales of its car, the Cavalier J-car, and its van at the top of GM's charts.

But anyone who thinks that Lordstown workers have been completely tamed or turned conservative and that the aspirations of yesteryear have been abandoned for a new realism is wrong. The old spirit of battle lingers in the plant like a ghost, according to self-styled "pragmatic radical" Ed York. It is a specter that draws respect, despite whatever has happened since, and few at Lordstown want to abandon that image.

"We didn't lose our balls," shop chairman Al Alli said indignantly. "We just use them a little less frequently. People think things have changed, but they haven't. If management takes care of people, we won't fight them. But relations with management haven't changed that much since the wars. Management hasn't changed at all. They're still rotten bastards that will suck the blood out of you. Don't believe [Lordstown workers] are mellowing out. Maybe they've mellowed 'cause management isn't fucking with them as much. I get upset when they say we've mellowed. We haven't."

Yet some things have changed. The major catalyst for transformation on both sides of the labor-management divide appears to have been the deep auto depression of recent years. After a history with few major layoffs, Lordstown suddenly lost one full shift in its car plant

for nearly a year and a half. Small car production in the U.S. was in jeopardy. And laid-off auto workers joined an already vast pool of unemployed steel workers from nearby Youngstown.

"I was off a lot of that year and a half," Dave Zambino said. "I picked up odd jobs and volunteered at the union. That's where a lot of people started thinking more seriously about job security."

Now the Lordstown factory is running six days a week, nine hours a shift. Some old grievances about overwork, excessive hours and unfair discipline are returning. But the chill of unemployment, reinforced by the threats of foreign competition, outsourcing (subcontracting work) and new, automated and computerized technology, persists.

In the spring of 1982, many local leaders of UAW Local 1112, in opposition to their local president who was on the national bargaining committee, helped organize the fight against the concession contract. The local voted heavily against it. This year the local leadership, with sentiments ranging from deep misgivings to mild enthusiasm, is recommending that the members vote for the modest contract just negotiated (see *In These Times*, Oct. 3). They are likely to follow that advice, but without much zeal.

The hope will be that the contract will bring job security, but many have grave doubts about the effectiveness of the job security plan and some fears that it may ease the company's plans to introduce labor-saving technology and find low-wage, possibly foreign sources, for many parts. Since there is a widespread feeling that concessions did not save jobs but merely fattened corporate profits and executive bonuses, people are bitter that the old contract was not restored and that there is so little new time off and improvement in the base rate of pay. Yet recent experiences at Lordstown—plus a fatalism that the contract is irreversible—help explain why the pact is likely to pass throughout the GM empire.

The intensity of the "wars" diminished after 1975 at Lordstown, and the work continued fairly steadily in the mid-'70s despite dropping Vega sales and recession layoffs. A new plant manager was less confrontational, and anxieties about holding a job increased as the local economy took a nosedive. In 1981 Lordstown was one of three plants where GM started building the new J-car—a small, front-wheel-drive model. But by January of the following year, the company began phasing out the second shift. Despite the layoffs, the local fought the concession contract, which did not save any jobs.

Yet management was able to pick away at the local, using the layoffs and the club of competition for jobs with the other J-car plants. While production was down, GM switched from a system of rotating, "tag" relief from the line to a system of mass breaks from work. According to local president Rudy Gasperek, that eliminated 500 to 600 jobs—jobs that were prized because they offered more variety. The union felt powerless to fight it.

Around the same time, management introduced quality monitors, production workers picked by the company to talk to fellow union members about quality problems. A quality of work life (QWL) program was also started, with regular, paid, voluntary meetings after work for departments to discuss minor gripes. Management also tried to show its commitment to better quality assembly, especially after engine problems with the car in the first year.

"In some respects we are partners," said Jim Tripp, a union benefits representative. "We've always been for quality, and now they are. Also, we are competing against some UAW members. We feel our product is better than Chrysler or certainly Toyota.... In the past quality would go out the window for production. It would take blood on the assembly line to stop the line. That's not the case any more. We said seeing is believing. So they stopped the assembly line to get things right. That's what convinced workers. They said, 'They'll stop doing it tomorrow.' Then they thought, 'Maybe the company was serious.'"

"We always wanted a quality car, but we didn't have control over that," Gasperek said. "They said they were going to build a quality car, and they stuck to this to the letter. It's the first time in 18 years that they've done that. As a result, people got excited. They allowed people to give their ideas. We had working knowledge. But they hired us from the neck on down."

By reaching first place in the corporate quality audit, Lordstown could make the case that it should get a second shift restored when sales improved. As a sign of cooperation, grievances also dropped to a low of 250 (compared with a backlog of 3,500 just before local negotiations started this year). But as workers extended the hand of cooperation, management was also taking things out of that hand—eliminating jobs, increasing workloads, playing on competitive pressures among plants.

"The attitude has changed completely," electrician Frank R. Bagaglia said. "There's more cooperation, more participation in company programs and people are more alert on quality. But I don't think it's been reciprocated. It's a one-sided deal. Workload has increased, radically so, and with the blessing of the workers. People had the attitude: 'We know what's expected, and here it is.'"

"Due to the recession a lot of people accepted more work," van plant inspector Denny Choleva said. "They added one little thing to my job in December last year, one this past changeover. Not big things, but they still increase the workload. It was a different situation [in 1971-72]. People were less willing to take it. But they saw what happened in the

Valley with steel, the one shift, the plants closing in Cleveland. Last August they moved the El Camino to Mexico. If they can do that with the El Camino, they can do it with the van, the J-car or anything else."

Some workers still fight increased workloads, but management has become more sophisticated and patient in intensifying work. Instead of mass layoffs and dramatic job changes, one job at a time may be eliminated and one screw here, one clip there, distributed over many other workers.

Also, the union has changed its stance. In the past it would argue for a "50 percent job," Alli said, and now it's up to 75 percent. Gasperek argued as well that there was not overwork but a "balancing" of different jobs. As a result, York complained, "they've skimmed off all the gravy out there."

To insure the return of the second shift the local union temporarily restricted transfer rights and suspended all formal grievances over workloads. Earlier they had let the line speed creep upward by two cars an hour.

"We sat down and looked at areas where they needed local relief and compromised in some areas," Vice President Bill Bowers said. "We let people get back into the swing of things and told management we wouldn't resort to formal procedures. We had people out 18 months. They were completely out of everything—unemployment, supplementary unemployment benefits—and when they did return to work, they were willing to do a little bit more."

But the union's leaders are sensitive to the charge that they were competing with union brothers and sisters at other plants to get the jobs and insist that no concessions were made in the local contract. "GM is trying to" foment competition between plants, shop committeeman Paul Cubellis said. "But we say we're not competing with you [the other locals]. We're brothers. For the last six or seven months we've been that tight" with the other J-car locals, he gestures, "after we first met last January."

"We were going through rough times," shop chairman Alli said. "We did some things to keep our people working. We roll with the punches, and now when times are good, we expect management to roll. We cooperated a little bit more with management in rough times."

But many workers and local union officials see the era of cooperation at the local level under new strains, despite the emphasis placed on cooperation in the national agreement. After suffering serious job losses with the change in relief methods, the shifting of inspection responsibilities to assemblers (eliminating one-third of the inspectors), and the increase of workloads, workers face threats of outsourcing and automation.

Already, special convertible tops are made at a nearby supply plant, which the UAW tried to organize and lost narrowly in its first election. A small parts line that employed at least 20 people per shift was subcontracted. But management had to bring back bumper assembly that was outsourced, because the quality was too poor. There are continued threats to go to parts suppliers paying far lower wages. Management has talked about eliminating the seat cushion department (80 workers per shift and long a center of union militancy). The instrument panel assembly—100 workers per shift—might have been sent to a nearby GM subsidiary, Packard Electric, if that local's leadership had succeeded in establishing a spe-

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