



Have a seat: The 911 Contemporary Arts Center in Seattle has given window shoppers something to think about, a citywide exhibit titled "Eyes of Love—Windows on AIDS." Pictured here is "Feast for Bacchus" by Robert Yoder, a 26-year-old Seattle sculptor. Susan Sagawa, who curated the show, describes her first impressions of the Yoder window: "The table is full of glass goblets, filled with grapes, fruit and foods. It just looks like a banquet. Then you look close, and the knives are not the type you use for food—they could really hurt you. You look closer and see that everything is in a state of decay. You get this macabre feeling. You get this feeling of nausea—something that is tempting and luscious is really very nasty, and you say, 'What really is going on here?'" Artist Yoder explains, "A lot of the things that I do deal with attraction and repulsion. Sometimes there is a very thin line between the two, and that line is what I aim for. When you look at the window from a distance it looks attractive, but once you get closer, you are looking at something very different. That is how I feel about AIDS. You want to get close to someone, but there is this fear. There is this attraction, but something is telling you to be careful, to not just jump right into the first thing that you see." Yoder's installation will be in the window of Mike's Old Clothes at 3414 Fremont Ave. N., until March 14.

Affordable housing for the union

BOSTON—In the coming months Congress will decide whether to amend the Taft-Hartley Act and thereby legalize an innovative labor contract negotiated here. Last December Boston's dynamic Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union Local 26 pressed hotel owners into agreeing to set up the nation's first "affordable housing" trust fund for workers. The problem is that Taft-Hartley—which governs much of U.S. labor law—enumerates the kinds of union trusts that can be established, and a fund for affordable housing isn't one of them.

The controversial measure, which may become a model for unions across the country, will provide money to help union members pay for the up-front cost of renting an apartment or the down payment on a home. In Massachusetts the average single-family home sells for \$219,000.

"It gets the unions back into the communities, where they belong," says Bruce Marks, the local's housing program coordinator and spokesman. "They should never have left the communities. We're dealing where our members live—our members are the communities."

The union had prepared for the issue and the contract negotiations over the last three years, both inside and outside the local. Before the agreement was reached, Local 26 members had threatened the city's hotels with the first hotel strike ever in Boston, one that would not be

easily forgotten. Local 26's charismatic president, Domenic Bozzotto, said his members were organized not only to picket outside, but also to go into hotels and disrupt operations, staging sit-ins and civil disobedience actions, even handcuffing themselves to fixtures in hotel lobbies.

Housing costs in Boston have risen an estimated 20 percent each year over the last four years. The union estimates that by the year 2000 the city will have gained 69,000 service jobs, but 32,000 rental units will have been lost through condominium conversion.

About 60 percent of Local 26's members work in the "back of the house" as low-paid housekeepers and dishwashers. The 3,500 workers

covered by the new contract are 55 percent women; 60 percent of the members are minorities; 30 percent are non-native English speakers.

The union included on its 165-member negotiating committee every ethnic and racial group found among its members. "The myth is that you can't organize immigrants," says one union supporter. "That's wrong—those are the strongest groups. That's the strongest coalition."

Employers resisted setting up the fund, fearing it would set a precedent for negotiations in other cities. They argued that the trust fund violated the Taft-Hartley Act and that they could not agree to an illegal agreement.

The contract calls for an employer contribution of 5 cents per hour (\$500,000 over 18 months) to go into a trust fund. If Congress fails to amend Taft-Hartley within 18 months, the money will go into another type of fund for union members.

The union does have support for the amendment in Congress, but passage is no sure bet with a sitting Republican president. Local 26 spokesman Marks says that the Republicans have been calling for the private sector to pick up the slack on social problems. Now, Marks says, the private sector is saying that picking up the slack is illegal. "They can't have it both ways," he says.

The next test will be on Capitol Hill, where Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) will introduce the necessary amendment to the Taft-Hartley Act.

—Mark Feinberg



A new face for São Paulo

In one of her first acts as the mayor of São Paulo, Brazil, Luiza Erundia da Souza changed some city laws. (*In These Times*, Dec. 7, 1988.) According to *El Periodista* of Buenos Aires, bicyclists and roller skaters are now allowed in São Paulo's Iberpuera park. Gays can now enroll in the municipal ballet school. Graffiti, an expression of the people, can no longer be erased from the buildings along city streets. Describing her philosophy as a mixture of Christianity and Marxism, Erundia says, "Marxism is an tool of analysis that can be used to attain justice, while the church offers space for exercising solidarity and generosity."

First lady to run for president

Raquel Blandon has become the first women ever to run for president of Guatemala. Blandon, a 46-year-old lawyer, hopes to secure the nomination of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). Previously accused of being a left-wing extremist, she has been the subject of fliers that say she is an armed revolutionary who goes by the name "Comandante Claudia." Blandon supports the Land for Peasants Movement and has demonstrated with Guatemalan homeless women. Her two opponents for the PDC nomination are party director Rene De Leon and Guatemalan Foreign Minister Alfonso Cabrera, who is being supported by Blandon's husband, President Vinicio Cerezo.

Thatcher's hatchet

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher seems to have found in Lord Chalfont the right man to oversee Britain's Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA), the television regulatory body that is responsible for making sure that British broadcasters adhere to that country's new and growing number of censorship regulations. Former commoner Alun Gwynne-Jones is a one-time Labour Party minister, military intelligence officer and journalist. More currently, Lord Chalfont has been the director of a private security firm known as Zeus. According to a recent report in the *Observer* of London, between 1983 and 1985, Zeus was contracted by an unknown entity to spy on anti-nuclear protestors. According to the *Observer*, one of those protestors, Hilda Murrell, "was later found murdered in mysterious circumstances." Her murder remains unsolved. Lord Chalfont has been a supporter of the media watch group, Media Monitoring Unit. He wrote the introduction to a Unit pamphlet that accuses the British news media of left-wing bias and anti-Americanism. Lord Chalfont is also connected to: Committee for a Free World, the U.S. group that seeks to free Latin America from the communist threat; the Institute for the Study of Terrorism, a British-based group that attacks the African National Congress and supports the Renamo rebel movement in Mozambique; and Freedom in Sport, a group that works to retain sporting links to South Africa.

Going for his heart

Last week the Gray Panthers of Philadelphia sent President George Bush a Valentine package that included: a coat hanger for "do-it-yourself" abortions; 50 pennies to help reduce the deficit; a gold-plated toilet seat to cut down hanky-panky defense contracting; an empty plate for the hungry; a large, sturdy box to be recycled as a shelter for the homeless; and sparklers for a thousand points of light.

Out of site...

Ten years after the accident at Three Mile Island, problems with the cleanup continue. The most recent controversy centers on the fate of 2.3 million gallons of radioactive wastewater at the plant site. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) recently approved a plan by General Public Utilities Nuclear Corporation to boil the water away in an evaporator. The resulting residue would then be subject to further and more manageable waste management. Critics say this disposal method has one problem: the resulting steam would carry into the environment all of the water's radioactive tritium (a radioactive isotope of hydrogen) and traces of all of the other radioactive isotopes and chemicals. The Susquehanna Valley Alliance, the local anti-nuclear group, is appealing the NRC decision.

By Daniel Lazare

NEW YORK

ANYONE WHO ATTENDED A RECENT DAVID Dinkins fund-raiser hoping to hear something fiery and inspiring was in for a disappointment. Dave Dinkins doesn't do fiery. He doesn't inspire the masses or rouse the faithful. Instead, his forte is healing wounds, bridging differences or (less charitably) causing the lion to lie down with the lamb by lulling both to sleep.

His performance at the \$1,000-a-plate fund-raiser at the Tavern on the Green on February 1 was typical. After enthusiastic introductions by Harry Belafonte, Gloria Steinem, American Stock Exchange Chairman of the Board Arthur Levitt and others, Dinkins took the mike to declare that after two months of thinking about running for mayor, he had nearly made up his mind, and what's more, when he did, "I think you'll like the answer." That bombshell out of the way, he went on to thank, Oscar-style, a number of people for giving him a hand in politics over the years. Then, finally, he got to the heart of the matter—the meaning of a Dinkins candidacy.

"I have a strong commitment to integrity in government at every level," he began. "I believe in a fair and equitable distribution of resources. I support thoughtful, responsible fiscal guidelines." As the platitudes grew thicker, eyes throughout the room began to glaze. "I will bring us together...a climate of hope for all New Yorkers...stand on the threshold of a great decision...momentous judgment."

"Hey," whispered a contributor with impeccable liberal credentials, "stay awake, stay awake."

Duking it out: As has been widely pointed out by now, Dinkins, New York City's highest elected black official—who last week declared his candidacy for mayor of New York—is no Jesse Jackson. Unfortunately for his supporters, though, he's not even a Michael Dukakis. True, he's bland, colorless and boring like the governor of Massachusetts. But whereas the Duke could still lay claim this time last year to administrative competence (before the Massachusetts economy began falling apart last summer, that is), Dinkins, due to a personal lapse some years back, can't even do that. From 1969 to 1972 he forgot to pay his income taxes, an issue that began weighing heavily on his campaign before it had even gotten off the ground. So far, the more he's tried to say what happened, the more belabored his explanations.

"I procrastinated...I neglected it...I changed my law offices, I changed jobs," he told *New York* magazine's Joe Klein. "I haven't committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law." When someone asked at a recent forum hosted by the New Democratic Coalition how he would respond to a Koch-style frontal assault on the issue, Dinkins responded with a plaintive cry for help. "If you're talking about 60-second sound bites, you have to get some of those special media experts to tell me how to do that," he said, according to the *New York Times*.

So there he is, this year's great liberal hope to topple Ed Koch. But if Dinkins isn't exciting, effective or inspiring, what is he? The possibilities at this point are:

A. a weak candidate who may nonetheless prevail against an even weaker Ed Koch;

B. a way of harassing the mayor from the left until former U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giu-



Koch's Democratic challenger David Dinkins: few credentials, no charisma.

Mayoral candidate David Dinkins—I lull New York

liani, the likely Republican candidate, can finish him off from the right; or

C. an example of the lemming-like impulse of New York City liberals to throw themselves into the sea every four years over the mayoral race.

The answer? Probably not A, unless Koch fouls up outrageously in the Democratic pri-

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mary and all but hands Dinkins a victory on a silver platter. As for B and C, however, odds at this point are that both are right. After a dozen years of railing against Koch, New York's liberal Democrats have damaged the mayor a bit while hurting themselves a whole lot more. So marginal have they become as a political force that they've reduced themselves to serving as standard-bearers for the GOP. At the February 1 Dinkins fund-raiser, the sentiment among many was summed up by the initials ABK, anyone but Koch, even if it's Rudi the Ruthless.

Speak softly and carry no stick: How did liberals arrive at this impasse? In a word, race. In a racially diverse, highly charged town like New York, a black running for city-wide office has several recourses. He can try to soar over the minefield by appealing to ideology or common class interests that supersede racial divisions. Or he can try to tiptoe through it, treading as lightly and carefully as he can, trusting to God and his campaign strategists.

As a big-city politician with modest ambitions and no discernible overriding political beliefs, Dinkins has opted for the latter. His strategy has been to speak softly and diplomatically on all occasions so that no one can take offense. Nonetheless, he's made a few blunders along the way.

In February 1985, for instance, he was part of a cabal of black politicians that spiked a promising mayoral bid by Herman Badillo, New York's best-known Puerto Rican politician, by throwing their support behind

Denny Farrell, a little-known Democratic clubhouse politician who happened to be black. The consequences were disastrous. Hispanics cried racism and voted en masse for Koch, while Farrell was all but laughed out of the race. Four years later, Badillo got his revenge when, on the eve of Dinkins' big night at Tavern on the Green, he allowed a group of supporters to announce that they were starting a movement to draft Badillo for mayor. For Dinkins, it was a rude reminder of many Latinos' smoldering resentment.

Dinkins has done somewhat better with Jewish voters. In October 1985 he issued a clear and unequivocal denunciation of Louis Farrakhan, a gesture of no small courage considering that the upshot was a thinly veiled death threat delivered before a screaming crowd of 25,000. ("When the leader sells out to people, he should pay a price for that—don't you think so? Do you think the leader should sell out and then live?" Farrakhan asked at a rally in Madison Square Garden to screams of "No!")

A few months later, however, in a speech at an East Side synagogue, Dinkins noted that "security for Israel, the Palestinian homeland, apartheid in South Africa, affirmative action and quotas" were some of the areas where Jews and blacks would have to disagree—leaving some members of the congregation shaking their heads as to what had led Dinkins to conclude that Jews per se were tolerant of racial segregation in South Africa.

Toward New York's burgeoning Asian population, Dinkins' record has been similarly mixed. He helped broker an agreement ending a black boycott of Korean shopkeepers in 1985. But when black nationalists launched a similar racist drive against Korean merchants in Brooklyn last summer, he remained silent when a bit of moral leadership might have helped. During last year's bizarre Tawana Brawley episode, he kept silent for months before finally volunteering that Brawley's advisers were not helping

matters by making "wild charges, unsubstantiated and, I am confident, untrue." Considering that Al Sharpton had already compared the state attorney general to Hitler, and Vernon Mason had accused him of masturbating to hospital photos of the alleged kidnap victim, this judgment was measured, to say the least.

On the more purely political question of how to reform New York's unusual Board of Estimate, a quasi-senate in which each of New York's five boroughs has an equal say, Dinkins has emerged as an unexpected defender of a system in which votes in mostly white Staten Island are counted eight times as heavily as votes in more racially mixed Manhattan—unexpected, that is, until one realizes that, as Manhattan borough president, Dinkins now has a seat on the board and therefore a vested interest in the status quo. On the explosive issue of Mayor Koch's pilot program to distribute clean needles to intravenous drug users, he has lined up with the rest of the black political establishment in opposing it on the grounds that it will encourage drug use, even though it is the only effective measure to halt the AIDS epidemic now racing through the ghettos.

In sum, Dinkins is a play-it-safe pol of no particular beliefs and no discernible strategy for standing up to the economic and political forces that control New York. He's a man of exceedingly temperate nature who will do anything to avoid a fight—one who believes that problems are there to be finessed, evaded and ignored until they go away, rather than met head-on.

Mr. Bland meets Mr. Brawl: Ed Koch, of course, is the exact opposite, a political brawler, a street fighter, a man of a thousand opinions, many of them crackpot (e.g., charging rent for residents of homeless shelters, labor camps for drug offenders, etc.). Where Dinkins has been silent about Gov. Mario Cuomo's latest round of budget cuts, the mayor has gone on the warpath, comparing the guy to an "800-pound gorilla" who must be stopped. But where people once found rhetoric like this amusing, lately the act seems to have worn thin.

Since his brutal assault on Jesse Jackson in last April's Democratic primary, the media has grown notably less friendly to Koch. While the semiofficial opinion-makers are grateful to him for blocking Jackson's candidacy, they're disturbed that he seemed to enjoy it so thoroughly. Did he have to look so gleeful as he went in for the kill? In the current kinder, gentler climate, Koch stands in violation of this newfound sense of politesse.

Nonetheless, Koch continues to enjoy certain strengths. Despite his recent stroke, he's still effective on the campaign trail, as quick-witted, knowledgeable and humorous as Dinkins is dull. His strong suit continues to be his management of the city's fiscal affairs, and he is one of the few politicians in America who can earn points with the voters by imposing a program of fiscal austerity. The more he cuts, the more people seem to believe that his brand of financial discipline is the only thing standing between them and another fiscal crisis like the one in 1975.

Koch may be crazy, but the average voter seems to think that only someone a little wacko can hold a city like New York together. Dave Dinkins has yet to convince them that they're wrong. Given his mediocre record, it's unlikely that he will. □

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