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# New Ground 56

January - February, 1998

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## Midwest DSA Convenes at DSA National Convention

by Bruce Bentley

Approximately 20 members of Midwest DSA gathered for its first annual membership meeting during the DSA National Convention in Columbus, Ohio last November. There was significant local representation from Chicago DSA, Columbus DSA, Greater Detroit DSA and Madison DSA. The purpose of the meeting was to: (1) evaluate the year and a half of political work and fiscal status of MwDSA; (2) decide on whether MwDSA should or could continue being a viable organization and if so, what should its function be; and (3) caucus as a midwest body to get increased regional representation on the National Political Committee.

First, Michael Heffron provided an overview on the state of MwDSA in relation to its political work and financial status. A synopsis of Mike's political work included revitalization of Cleveland DSA; new chapter at Ohio State University; the Balanoff for Congress Campaign in Chicago; the Anti-Columbia HCA Campaign and Debs Dinner in Columbus. Financially, the total income via fundraising was \$33,008.64. Meanwhile the expenses totaled \$44,953.81. This leaves deficit and debt to the National Office of \$11,945.56.

Due to the financial debt it is untenable for either MwDSA or the National Office to further finance Heffron's salary. Mike is now employed with SEIU Local 73 in Chicago. Frank discussion followed on the strengths and weaknesses of MwDSA as well as its future direction. The task of a organizer was enormous in the large geographical area of the midwest. There is natural tension of interests between national/local dichotomy as per the focus of political work. The logistics of supervising an organizer is problematic. Yet the majority of members agreed that MwDSA worked well as a communication and resource network between locals. Members voted unanimously to maintain MwDSA. Its function will be to maintain communications, sharing of resources, political education and fundraising via a quarterly newsletter. The debt will be repaid to the N.O. as per its surplus funds. The possibility of hiring another organizer has not been disregarded, but it is contingent upon viable and surplus funding resources.

Since the convention there have been some new developments in MwDSA. The first newsletter will be mailed around the beginning of 1998. There is an additional \$5000 balance in the MwDSA bank account. Approximately \$4800 will be sent to the N.O. thus reducing the debt to \$7,145.

Moreover, both Greater Detroit DSA and Columbus DSA are making preliminary plans for fundraising dinner events for 1998. This is exciting news. Frankly, my minimal and realistic expectations for MwDSA were a newsletter and the start of fundraising dinners in Detroit and Columbus. This is a fine beginning.

Needless to say, money is necessary for political work. Therefore large fundraising dinner events like Chicago's Debs Thomas Harrington Dinner are a efficient means for fundraising, maintaining organization and visibility for the progressive Left, and as a forum for camaraderie and solidarity. In addition, venues such as the Debs Dinners are ripe opportunities for conferences and political education work with the Center for Democratic Values as occurred at the DSA convention in Columbus.

Lastly, Midwest DSA caucused in order to get midwest representation on the NPC. Our organizing effort paid significant dividends since six representatives from the midwest were elected to the NPC. New NPCers included: from Greater Detroit, Ron Aronson; from the University of Chicago, Daraka Larimore-Hall, Raybblin Vargas and Katie Romich; and finally, former MwDSA organizer Michael Heffron and Bill Dixon from Chicago DSA.

Membership to Midwest DSA is \$25.00 and can be sent to:

*MwDSA,  
P.O. Box 1073,  
Columbus, OH 43216-1073*

## **DSA National Political Committee**

*·Unrestricted Female·*

**Theresa Alt**, Ithaca NY DSA

**Marsha Borenstein**, New York City DSA

**Lynn Chancer**, New York City DSA

**Rachel Dewey**, Central New Jersey DSA

**Barb Ferrill**, Colorado DSA

**Julia Fitzgerald**, New York City DSA

**Karen Marie Gibson**, at-large New York DSA

**Katie Romich**, Chicago DSA

**Liz Ryder**, Los Angeles DSA

*·Minority Female·*

**Virginia Franco**, San Diego DSA

**Raybblin Vargas**, Chicago DSA

**Juanita Webster**, New York City DSA

*·Unrestricted Male·*

**Ron Aronson**, Greater Detroit DSA

**Bill Dixon**, Chicago DSA

**Jeff Gold**, New York City DSA

**Mike Heffron**, Chicago DSA

**David Knuttenen**, Boston DSA

**Michael Lighty**, San Francisco DSA

**Frank Llewellyn**, New York City DSA

**Tim Parks**, Los Angeles DSA

**Joe Schwartz**, Ithaca NY DSA and Philadelphia DSA

*·Minority Male·*

**Daraka Larimore-Hall**, Chicago DSA

**Bill McIver**, Colorado DSA

**Eric Vega**, Sacramento DSA

· *Youth Section* ·

**Jessica Shearer**, (Bryn Mawr College) and **Oscar Owens**, (NYU)

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## Media in the Public Interest

by Gene Birmingham

"In the Soviet Union, capitalism triumphed over communism. In this country, capitalism triumphed over democracy." (Fran Lebowitz, in *The Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Dec. 28, 1997, p. 22) That summarizes the day long conference on "Media De-Regulation and the Public Interest", co-sponsored by Chicago Media Watch, Justice Through Action and Loyola University, at Loyola on Dec. 13, 1997. Conservatives used to call liberal programs "creeping socialism". Now we witness creeping fascism become leaping fascism, as conference speakers dealt with The Telecommunications Act of 1996, court interpretations of the First Amendment, and experiences of censorship.

Calling the Telecom Act "the heist of the century", Professor Emeritus Jerry Landay of UIUC described how corporations have been allowed to replace government in control of the media. The Supreme Court, by stating the doctrine of corporate personhood, allows corporations to be treated as persons in application of First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and the press; and in application of Fourteenth Amendment rights of due process of law and equal protection of the laws. In one case, it was decided that the Fairness Doctrine governing use of the airwaves contravened First Amendment rights of broadcasters.

Professor George Gerbner of Temple University pointed out how TV, the vehicle for "those with lots to sell and nothing to tell", has replaced family, church, community and nation, as storyteller for our culture. The good life is depicted by the ability to spend, while the poor appear on newscasts as druggies and criminals. Violent crimes continue in spite of people's disliking because they are produced for the world market, where image and action, which need less translation, are cheaper to produce. TV's life story is one of domination and repression, telling viewers the difference between the powerful and the vulnerable, with women and minorities portrayed as victims.

Paul Klite of Rocky Mountain Media Watch, showed how the "news" has been reduced to reports of crime, disasters, weather and sports (the only industry which gets such free coverage), and trivialities such as cooking, entertainment features and chitchat among news presenters. The purpose is to attract viewers for advertisers. Coverage of real news or issues is easily omitted without viewer concern.

Washington attorney, Kathleen O'Reilly, and Robert McChesney of the University of Wisconsin, said the Telecom Act of '96 is based on lies. One was that it promised more competition, but has instead resulted in more mergers. Seven baby Bells have become five. Our economy is not based on competition but on

elimination of competition. The Telecom Act was a preemptive strike to get the telecom industry out of the public sector. A few global alliances are in the making to run the world of communication, making severe damage to democracy inevitable.

Even local efforts to use the media, a far cry from corporate owned outlets, face censorship. Salim Muwakkil, senior editor of *In These Times*, called attention to the mainstream media's almost complete ignoring of the Million Woman March in Philadelphia, compared with coverage of the Million Man March and Promise Keepers rally in Washington, D.C. Do you recall how little was broadcast about the French elections which returned Socialists to power?

Claudia Valenzuela, who hosted the Voice of Guatemala before it went off the air in 1996, expressed concern that people in the U.S. be informed about how the peace accords are being put into practice there.

The most blatant example of censorship was the personal testimony of Napoleon Williams, who described being harassed for his attempt to produce Black Liberation Radio in Decatur, IL. Trumped up charges of his being a violent parent resulted in loss of custody of his children. When he interviewed a DCFS worker by phone on his station, he was charged with eavesdropping. The worker had declared him to be a fit parent, for his listeners to hear. What makes the whole affair sound phony is the failure of authorities to bring his case to trial. He is left to suffer harassment. E-mail Napoleon at: [napoleonwilliams@usa.net](mailto:napoleonwilliams@usa.net); or phone (217) 423-9997.

What can be done? Speakers urged support of candidates who stand for campaign finance reform, making possible election of legislators willing to change policies. Use state anti-trust laws in court. Operate teach-ins. Talk back to the stations. Observe Turn Off TV for a Week efforts. Pursue court tests of First Amendment cases. Demand that additional space on TV made possible by digital technology be allocated for public use. Promote a Common Property Amendment to the Constitution.

Carl Davidson of Networking For Democracy urged the Left to get together on the subject of communications: set up stations and web sites; provide access to the media in poor communities through Community Technology Centers, where people could learn possibilities and be trained; become producers, not just consumers of telecom; and push for an end to political commercials.

Nazi German government appointed a propaganda minister to tell lies to gain and hold power. '90's government in the U.S.A. has given the propaganda job to Big Business, which uses incredibly better media, to scapegoat women and minorities, justify the use of our prison system as concentration camps for minorities, and replace white, blue-eyed, blondes with the economically well off as a new version of the master race. And using ignorance to gain mind control doesn't even hurt... *yet*.

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## Reorganized Illinois Citizen Action

by Ron Baiman

On a cold and blustery Friday evening in mid- December, the newly re configured "Citizen Action of Illinois" (ICA) gathered in Bloomington, Illinois, to chart the direction of this most important of progressive Citizen groups in Illinois for 1998. There were three meetings. The ICA Board met, then the Policy Council met. This was followed by ICA's 22nd Annual Convention.

The ICA Board is currently chaired by Mitch Vogel of the IFT. Members includes Tom Balanoff, Marca Bristo, Carl Gallman, Robert Kilbury, Paul Korman, Bill Magee, Joseph Moore, Dell Morrison, and Alice Palmer. The Board functions as an executive committee for the larger Policy Council (currently of 88 members), on which I serve as a representative of Chicago DSA. Other prominent DSA members, such as Quentin Young, are also on the Policy Council. The Policy Council is chaired by Bill Magee of UNITE.

Key business items at the Friday meeting included approval of the ICA's 1998 budget of \$960,000, approval of a 1998 political strategy, and fundraising plans. It also included a review of 1998 program resolutions: the famous "Blue Book" or list of ICA positions on everything.

ICA appears to be on sound financial footing after its troubles last year which resulted in the resignation of long-time director and founder Bob Creamer. It has been reorganized and has taken on a new name (its old name was Illinois Public Action) under the direction of John Cameron. Cameron had served as Associate Director under Creamer. Judging by the mood of the Council and staff and the Convention the next day, ICA has weathered the storm in good shape and will continue to serve as a vital venue for progressive politics in Illinois. The extent of support for the organization was apparent during the crisis, as progressive community rallied with important financial contributions to insure its continued existence. Major contributors include UNITE, SEIU, ATU, the Illinois State Council of Carpenters, as well as individuals such as Cook County Clerk David Orr.

The "Blue Book" is a laundry list of resolutions on a wide variety of issues in a wide range of venues: local, state, federal and international. Review of the Blue Book elicited proposals and modifications from the Council including strong support from housing activists and Latino community representatives to reform the TIF's law to prevent Daley's current abuses, and suggestions from me to put in language opposing international bailouts of investments with tax payer money to fund repressive regimes such as Indonesia. Congressman Bernie Sanders has been charging that these bail-outs to regimes which violate worker and civil rights are illegal under a law passed last year by Sanders and Representative Barney Frank, both leaders of the Progressive Caucus in Congress which DSA has helped to organize.

Other changes which I proposed or strongly seconded include stronger language on consumer's right to know whether food has been irradiated or genetically altered, international financial regulation, and democratization of the Federal Reserve. Dr. Sydney Bild and Bill Magee conveyed Dr. Quentin Young's desire to endorse the "Bernadine Amendment" on Universal Health care in Illinois. I was "volunteered" to write the economic proposals.

John Cameron than outlined a draft strategy including a major strategic focus on education funding and tax reform, managed care reform, and campaign finance and ethics reform. All these issues are supported by overwhelming percentages of Illinois voters according to polls. Cameron outlined a targeted paid media and complementary grass roots activism (including ICA canvassers) in 6 targeted legislative districts in Illinois, arguing that paid media without back up support was ineffective.

Continuing to draw lessons from the victories of 1996 and defeats of 1994, Cameron proposed making Illinois Senate President Pate Philip into a negative symbol much as Newt Gingrich was pilloried in 1996. Philip's reputation as a racist and sexist, and his single handed blocking of the Governor's (serious) Education reform bill, as well managed care protections, children's health care, and campaign finance should make him a good target.

Cameron's political strategy priorities were passed. After some discussion of fundraising plans the meeting was adjourned.

The ICA Convention followed on Saturday. Several hundred attended and heard remarks by Illinois gubernatorial and other candidates (Poshard, Burris, Burns, Schmidt, and others).

Poshard made the most forceful remarks: pro-labor, supporting income tax financing of education and public financing of elections. The characterization of him as "the most conservative of the candidates" appears to be based on his personal "right to life" and gun control positions which he did not discuss.

Burriss emphasized his experience and pragmatism (you can't get elected by advocating an income tax increase) in the form of a pledge to increase support for education without an income tax increase.

Burns also advocated increased support for education without an income tax hike. He stressed accountability in government and campaign finance reform.

Schmidt paralleled Burns' remarks, stressing his pro-choice and gun control positions as opposed to George Ryan.

Overall it would appear that on economic issues Poshard is the most progressive of the candidates. If Poshard can keep his socially reactionary positions as personal convictions, which he would not act on politically, he might be the best candidate assuming he could get elected. He was much more animated and populist than the other candidates who came across as elitist technocrats by comparison. Though Schmidt has been endorsed by Netch he is a friend of Daley's. Burn appears to be positioning himself as a "good government" candidate but thereby lacks populist substance. Burriss likewise came across as pragmatic but not inspiring.

The convention continued with a luncheon presentation of the "*Milton M. Cohen*" award to Frank and Bee Lumpkin, stalwart radical activists, both of whom have had a long and vital history with ICA, in the tradition of Milton Cohen.

The Convention then split into workshops on Health Care, Clean Air and Safe Food, and Utility Deregulation. I attended the latter and again expressed my disagreement with the basic principle of deregulation including the current bill which, to its credit, ICA was one of the key groups in opposition. This, perhaps, was what led to the attack on Creamer's financial management. ComEd's giveaway to the retail association gives early vindication that the nay sayers (against deregulation, for re-regulation) were right.

The final event was a roundtable plenary on "Getting Money out of Politics" which included Tom Bream (speaking for Tom Balanoff who had to cancel at last minute), Jan Schakowsky, and Cindi Canary (of Illinois Campaign for Political Reform). Jan was excellent as usual. Bob Creamer was also recognized by the floor for his outstanding contributions to the organization.

ICA is a vital and important forum for progressive politics in the state both for networking and for implementing progressive political strategy. It has important expertise in the legislative arena in the form of an experienced, highly personable, witty, and dedicated "Springfield hand", William McNary, as well as other competent staffers. There are not many other professional staffed organizations on the left, especially at the state level. ICA is a critical organization of the left which should be a major component of any

coalition or alliance of the left as contemplated at the most recent DSA convention.

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## **William W. Winpisinger, 1924 - 1997**

by Bob Roman

William W. Winpisinger, DSA National Vice-Chair and retired President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, died on December 11th, the day after his 73rd birthday.

"Wimpy", as he was affectionately known, began his career as an automobile mechanic, having learned this trade in the Navy during World War II. He started his IAM membership in IAM Automotive Lodge 1363 and quickly rose from shop steward to local lodge president. In 1951, only 26 years old, he became one of the youngest members ever appointed to the IAM's national field staff.

Winpisinger was elected President of the IAM in 1977. He quickly gained a reputation for being blunt and outspoken by calling for George Meany, the then President of the AFL-CIO, to retire, observing that, at 83, Meany was too old and too conservative to lead a workforce with an average age in the 30s.

In 1980, Winpisinger led a walkout of some 300 delegates and alternates from the Democratic Convention to protest the Convention's nomination of Jimmy Carter for President. The electronic media ignored the walkout, and Carter operatives blocked the aisles, pushing protesting delegates into seats.

Earlier at the 1980 Democratic Convention, Winpisinger had addressed a Socialist Caucus organized by the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, one of the predecessor organizations of DSA. Some 100 people, including 40 delegates, came to their feet, as Winpisinger concluded the caucus with a real stem-winder. Someone shouted, "Wimpy for President". Winpisinger replied, "I'm president of the only thing I want to be president of right now. By the time I learn this job, I'll be ready to retire, and that's it altogether."

William Winpisinger was presented with Chicago DSA's Thomas - Debs award in May of 1989, a few months before he retired, at the 31st Annual Thomas - Debs Dinner (see below). Milt and Sue Cohen also received the Thomas - Debs award at that dinner, and the featured speaker was Dr. Quentin Young.

Winpisinger was described as a "seat of the pants socialist" because his radicalism came as much from an outraged sense of justice as from a rationalized commitment to an ideology. As such, he was very much a radical for our times. And because retirement had not slowed him down, our loss is more than just sentimental.

## **William Winpisinger**

You have been an inspiration during these years of Reagan-Bush reaction.

You have spent a lifetime fighting the good fight for the members of the International Association of

## Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

You have helped metal and aerospace workers throughout the world as a member of the Executive Committee of the International Metalworkers Federation.

By working for a sane nuclear policy for all people in advocating the conversion of arms production to peaceful purposes, and as a founder and president of the Citizen / Labor Energy Coalition, the organization that protects the interests of energy consumers, you have been exemplary.

You have been a credit to the Democratic Socialists of America as a Vice Chair with your work, and with your industrial program "Let's Rebuild America".

Above all your life has been a constant act of sharing your time, your energy, and your enthusiasm. The Norman Thomas - Eugene V. Debs Committee is honored to present you with its award on this 6th day of May, 1989.

# Yours for the Revolution

by Fred Whitehead

"*Yours for the Revolution*": *The Appeal to Reason, 1895-1922*. Edited by John Graham. 322pp, University of Nebraska Press, 1990. \$19.95 paperback

In 1915, the largest circulation Socialist newspaper in the world was the *Appeal to Reason*, published in a small southeast Kansas town called Girard. Few today, even among Socialists, are aware of this, so profoundly has our own history been stripped away. With 700,000 subscribers, the *Appeal* was a powerful voice for justice and freedom in America's heartland.

Arising from the social ferment of the 1890s, the *Appeal* recognized the ideological weaknesses of Populism, which it criticized in a friendly but penetrating way. The capitalist class could not be reformed it would have to be replaced by the working class.

Under the editorship of J.A. Wayland, the *Appeal* combined a popular style of writing with an astonishing range of weekly themes, topics and issues. Wayland himself contributed his "one-hoss" column, notable for clear, jargon-free prose.

Sections of this anthology encompass "common sense and political philosophy", the class war, the land question, the Socialist Party and socialist culture, and the impact of World War I with its avalanche of anti-radical repression.

For a vivid documentary history of the *life* of early 20th Century Socialism in America, this is an outstanding book. It includes cartoons, illustrations and photographs of figures like Wayland, Debs, etc. It illuminates how the newspaper was built into the level of true "mass media". From a scholarly standpoint, it has been sharply criticized for various errors by Professor Sharon Neet, but it is still a good start on the way to recovering a vital part of our radical heritage.

# New Party Update

by Bruce Bentley

The Chicago New Party continues to move forward, playing a vital role in progressive left politics. Organizationally its membership has grown to 690 members. The New Party is presently hiring a second organizer and hopes to hire a third in '98.

The New Party's political program centers around the Living Wage Campaign. Despite the defeat of the Living Wage Ordinance by a vote of 31 to 17 in the City Council last July (see *New Ground* #54, page 1), the New Party will turn this apparent defeat into a tactical tool in the 1999 aldermanic elections against two incumbents who voted against the ordinance.

The two target aldermen are Sam Burrell of the 29th ward and Vilma Colom of the 35th ward. Both Burrell and Colom were cosponsors of the Ordinance who none-the-less ended up voting against the Ordinance. The New Party thinks that Burrell and Colom are particularly vulnerable as these wards are potential bastions of New Party strength. The 29th ward is located within the congressional district of Representative Danny Davis who is also a member of the New Party. Meanwhile the 35th ward is within the district of state representative Miguel Santiago.

New Party member Willie Delgado is running against the politically stained Miguel Santiago who faces corruption charges. The New Party plans to take advantage of this municipal geopolitical scenario and focus its resources in these wards and districts to support Davis and Delgado and, ultimately, to defeat Burrell and Colom.

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## CoC NCC

by Jim Williams

The National Committee of the [Committees of Correspondence](#) met in Chicago during the weekend of November 16.

Key topics included the Living Wage campaign and the best ways that CoC could contribute to this movement. Methods of improving the current national proposals were discussed.

A discussion was led by participants in an international conference on Neo liberalism that was held in Cuba this past summer. Respondents noted a large participation from most Latin American countries, some European countries and from India. Discussion around the conference focused on how to bring this discussion into the U.S. movement, and how to inform the movement on struggles against Neo liberalism (or "Globalization").

A number of papers were submitted to the NC on the "Schwartz Proposal" that was being considered by DSA. Predictably, there were "pro" and "con" papers. The Schwartz proposal on movement strategy, however, was tabled by the CoC. The content of the discussion, of course, goes on.

The next NC-CoC meeting will be held in San Francisco in April, 1998.

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## Other News

Compiled by Bob Roman

### Stan Rosen

Stan Rosen, veteran DSA member and labor educator, has moved to New Mexico after having "retired" from the University of Illinois a year or so ago. While Stan is planning to return to Chicago periodically, he'd love to hear from his comrades in Chicago. He asked us to pass along his new address. Get in touch, especially if you're planning to visit New Mexico:

*Stan Rosen*  
*PO Box 5496*  
*Santa Fe, NM 87502-5496*

### Bruce Bentley

Bruce Bentley is returning to Cuernavaca, Mexico, to continue his study of Spanish, Mexican culture and politics. He is planning to return to Chicago, possibly by August. Bruce has taken a leave of absence from his position as Chicago DSA's representative to the Midwest DSA Steering Committee. *Harold Taggart* has been appointed, *pro tem*, in his place.

### Illinois Labor History Society

The National Park Service has given the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument a National Historic Landmark designation. The monument is in the Forest Home (Waldheim) Cemetery in Forest Park. The Illinois Labor History Society holds title to the monument. A dedication ceremony is being planned for Sunday, May 3rd at 2pm at the monument site. For additional information, call (312) 663-4107.

### Campaign for Better Health Care

The Illinois Campaign for Better Health Care is planning it's Spring campaign around HB 626, the Managed Care Consumer Bill of Rights.

HB 626 is a piece of state legislation that protects consumers in managed care plans. The bill passed the

state House but stalled in the Senate. They have targetted a number of Senators for pressure.

To find out how you can help, call CBHC at (312) 913-9449.

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank Perry for his comradely and thoughtful comments ([New Ground, #55, Nov/Dec, 1997](#)) on my review of Christopher Pierson's *Socialism After Communism: The New Market Socialism* ([New Ground, #54, Sep/Oct, 1997](#)). Perry is continuing on these pages a debate which he and I have had for some time and I welcome this opportunity to publicly exchange views with him on this topic.

I believe that Perry's remarks reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of Pierson's and my own views. Pierson's major critique of Market Socialism is that it is based on the presumption that an approximate form of socialism will emerge form market relations if only the ownership of firms is socialized. This, however, will not be the case, as, left on their own, markets, will, over time, increasingly undermine socialist goals and values, regardless of how agents within markets are constituted (see for example, *Capital*, Vol. I, Chap. 25). For example, Leland Stauber's vision, as outlined by Perry ([New Ground, Jan/Feb, 1997](#)) would likely create very large inequities of wealth and power between communities, and would do nothing to make accountable the sectional market power of oligopolistic and monopolistic firms vis a vis other communities, states, and nations.

Because of this, Pierson, who explicitly endorses the socialization of private capital in his book, and I, are not advocating "Market Social Democracy" as Perry contends but rather "Socialism with Markets". The latter requires extensive centralized and decentralized democratic planning *in addition* to the socialization of private capital ownership in order to achieve and maintain socialist goals.

Markets will always be with us but they should not rule over us. In addition to socializing profit, socialists must guide restrain, and otherwise restructure markets, in order to achieve socialist goals. This will require extensive and radical political democracy.

In Solidarity,

Ron Baiman

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Add yourself to the Chicago DSA mailing list ([snail mail and email](#)).

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