



the yankee radical

(617) 354-5078

October-November 2013

Raise Up Massachusetts !

By Harris Gruman

Raise Up Massachusetts (RUM) is a state-wide coalition of 89 community, labor and faith organizations that came together this summer to raise the floor for a million low-wage workers. Right now RUM is working to gather 226,000 signatures by November 20 to place measures on the 2014 ballot that would:

- raise the minimum wage to \$10.50/hour, while indexing it to keep up with the cost of living;
- and allow workers to earn paid sick

time to care for themselves and their loved ones.

There's no more direct way to improve the incomes of the poorest workers than to raise the minimum wage. And without paid sick time they will still lose a day's pay (if not their job!) when forced to stay home to recover from illness or to care for a loved one. By fighting for and winning these policies we can dial down economic inequality, hold our elected

officials accountable, and inspire people to work for progressive legislation and candidates.

Economic inequality in the United States has reached levels not seen since the crash of 1929 and is, like then, destabilizing both our economy (witness the crash of 2008) and democracy. Aside from climate change, it has become our most pressing societal

(Cont'd on page 2)

DSA Monthly Meeting

National Convention, Local Campaigns

WHEN: Thursday, Oct. 10, 7 pm
WHERE: Encuentro 5,
9B Hamilton Pl., Boston (2nd Flr)

This meeting will discuss issues facing Democratic Socialists of America on both the national and local levels. The BDSA exec board will convene at 7 pm, followed by a more open political discussion beginning around 8 pm. Members and friends are invited to both.

To start with the national: we'll review the organizational and political resolutions to be debated at the October 24-27 DSA national convention in Oakland, CA. So far Boston DSA has elected only three delegates, so it's still possible for you to become one—visit

www.dsausa.org before the meeting to learn what being a delegate entails

We will also go over our signature gathering efforts in the Raise Up Massachusetts campaign, responses to the GOP government shut-down if it's still going on, our upcoming conference with MA Peace Action, and the October 15 Democratic congressional primary election. And although DSA stayed out of the recent Boston Mayoral preliminary and has made no endorsement in the Walsh vs. Connolly final, we can discuss this as well should anyone wish to do so.

At our November 14 meeting we hope to have a briefing from Right to the City, a national alliance of racial,

environmental and economic justice organizations that emerged in 2007 as a response to urban gentrification and the displacement of low income communities (www.righttothecity.org). (In the Boston mayoral prelim RTC endorsed John Barros, one of the more impressive losing candidates, but has so far made no endorsement in the final.) Former board member Nancy Goldner will also give a talk on her work for a public bank sometime this winter.

DSA meetings take place the second Thursday of each month at the time and address listed above. Any changes will be noted on our website: www.Dsaboston.org.

SHORT TAKES

Public Bank

The Massachusetts Public Bank Working Group is meeting Saturday, October 19, 10 am, at 20 Linwood Street Apt. #3, Boston--near the Roxbury Crossing T stop on the Orange Line. RSVP DSA member Nancy Goldner if you'd like to attend or just want more information: jplouise@comcast.net.

Home Town Boy Makes Bad

So, wrong-about-everything Larry Summers, former Harvard President and key architect of Bill Clinton's disastrous financial de-regulation policies, has withdrawn his name from consideration as Chair of the Federal Reserve Bank. What did it was growing opposition from 5 Democrats on the Senate Banking Committee led by Jeff Merkeley of Oregon and

Sherrod Brown of Ohio. According to the 9-16 *NY Times*, our own Senator Warren also had "misgivings" about Obama's preferred nominee. But before conceding, the White House hired Jim Messina and Stephanie Cutter to talk up Summers to the press. Keep that in mind should you happen to catch the latter representing "The Left" on CNN's revived *Crossfire*.

—Mike Pattberg.

DSA Statement on U.S. Action Against Syria

(Passed by National Political Committee, 9/2/13)

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) opposes United States military intervention in the civil war in Syria. While we support the mass Syrian uprising against the brutal Assad regime, U.S. military power cannot liberate the Syrian people. Therefore, for the reasons outlined below, we urge our members and friends to lobby Congress to reject the president's request for the authorization of the use of force against Syria.

The international community must condemn the use of chemical weapons on civilians in Syria and support the

United Nations inspectors' efforts to discover the perpetrators of such violence. But even if it is determined that chemical weapons were used by the Assad regime, a unilateral air strike by the United States would not cease that threat. U.S. air power cannot surgically take out those individuals who can deploy such weapons. What it will do is kill many innocent civilians. And our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrates that United States troops on the ground only serve to increase the level of violence in civil wars.

DSA does believe that the international community should provide humanitarian aid to the millions of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and elsewhere. In addition, the United States and all other countries should engage in the necessary diplomacy to press Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah to cease their military aid to the Assad dictatorship. This would enable the Syrian people to liberate themselves, a task that cannot be accomplished by external powers.

Gruman; Continued from Page 1

threat; as author Jared Diamond has noted, it also undercuts efforts to address de-militarization and renewable energy. And Massachusetts, despite our reputation as a liberal bastion, has as high a level of economic inequality as the average state (about equal to that of Mississippi!), and one of the fastest-rising ones too.

Over 75% of voters support a \$10.50 minimum wage and earned sick time. Yet despite overwhelming Democratic majorities in both chambers of the Massachusetts State Legislature, there has been little political will to take on corporate lobbies and address issues of economic fairness. Earned sick time has been languishing for nine years in the

legislature, and indexing the minimum wage to the cost of living is always rejected. If the minimum wage had only kept up with the cost of living since 1968, it would be \$10.58 an hour today.

But the Bill de Blasio victory in the recent New York City Mayoral primary is another sign the public is now more motivated to vote for candidates who support issues of economic justice. By securing enough signatures on November 20 to get our proposals on the 2014 ballot, we will gain leverage to win them legislatively next spring or by referendum next fall. Either way, the public will gain a litmus test for judging candidates for Governor and other offices.

The ballot initiative was enacted in our state to give popular issues a chance to win if the legislature blocks their passage for years thanks to special interest lobbying—sounds like it was created just for our campaign! Our message to one million struggling working people: "Help is on the way! Rise Up—Raise Up!"

To get involved in signature gathering near you, visit RaiseUpMA.org.

Former Boston DSA Chair Harris Gruman is Political Director of Massachusetts SEIU. To volunteer with other DSA members on this campaign contact Yankeeradical@dsaboston.org.

A Call for Convergence— Toward a New National Agenda

By Cole Harrison

WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 24, 1-5:30 p.m.
WHERE: TBA
(www.masspeaceaction.org)

Many agree on the need for a more democratic nation based on social justice, sustainability, employment, and peace. So on November 24 Peace Action, DSA, Progressive Democrats of America and the American Friends Service Committee are sponsoring a conference to help forge a common agenda—or at least cooperation—among different progressive constituencies. Speakers include SEIU Political Director Harris Gruman, BU Professor of Political Science Neta Crawford, and climate activist Ben Thompson.

Our groups share many values, aspirations, and goals. We are working to avert climate catastrophe, raise the minimum wage, prevent new U.S. wars, protect vital public programs and organize around dozens of other important issues. But to turn things around we need a vision of a green economy, a just society, and a new foreign policy that connects the issues—a vision that can mobilize a social movement toward a society that works for everyone. We need a message that points more clearly to the future we seek.

How do we work together? How can we connect with the millions of people who agree with us but are not yet

involved? Our conference format will emphasize small group discussions, sharing ideas and listening to each other.

The great ballplayer/philosopher Yogi Berra once said: “You’ve got to be careful if you don’t know where you’re going ‘cause you might not get there”. We hope this convergence will lead to a clearer sense of where we’re going and how to get there while there’s still time. Please join us.

For the conference location contact: info@masspeaceaction.org, 617-354-2169, or www.dsaboston.org.

Cole Harrison is Executive Director of Massachusetts Peace Action.

Carl Sciortino for Congress

Boston DSA has endorsed State Representative Carl Sciortino in the October 15 Democratic primary election to fill the vacant congressional seat formerly held by Senator Markey. This questionnaire was sent to the candidates on September 7; aside from Rep. Sciortino’s reply below, only State Senator Will Brownsberger responded. On September 12, DSA co-sponsored a Progressive Voters Forum with the five Democratic candidates; to hear an audio link visit www.dsaboston.org. To see a Progressive Massachusetts questionnaire covering additional issues, visit <http://progma.us/142FY6t>.

Candidate:	Carl M. Sciortino Jr.
Reply Date:	09-11-13
Website:	www.CarlforCongress.com
Campaign Phone Number:	(617) 419-0706

- Especially in the south, voting rights for previously excluded groups seem to be under attack. State legislatures have been enacting Voter ID laws designed to eliminate “voter fraud”, which has been described as a solution in search of a problem. Many civil rights groups feel that these and other changes in election law will make it more difficult for African Americans, poor people, and students to vote. Do you favor federal legislation to restore and update the voting rights protections recently weakened by the Supreme Court?

The Supreme Court decision was a disappointment and a major setback for civil rights. I think Justice Ginsburg said it best in her dissent, where she wrote that “throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”

Paid for by Boston DSA; not authorized by any candidate or candidate’s committee.

There is clearly a need for continued vigilance about how racism infringes upon people's right to vote in this country, even today. We need look no further than modern debates around voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, ending early voting in selective areas, and lack of adequate voting equipment in many communities of color. These instances, unfortunately, exemplify the systematic disenfranchisement of voters that the Voting Rights Act was designed to protect against.

As a member of Congress, I will cosponsor the Voter Empowerment Act to address the aftermath of this unfortunate decision. This bill aims to increase accessibility, accountability and integrity in the electoral process. The legislation would modernize voter registration by facilitating secure ways to take advantage of existing technology.

As part of this legislation would you include the repeal and banning of state laws prohibiting former felons from voting?

Yes, I would.

2. In 1994 President Clinton pushed through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) over the opposition of most House Democrats and the AFL-CIO. Since then successive administrations have sponsored additional trade deals based on the same pro-corporate NAFTA model, most recently President Obama's proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership, which under the guise of "free trade" would also re-write many domestic non-trade policies. To smooth the way for TPP the president is now requesting Fast Track Authority from Congress, which would speed up a yes/no vote without amendments. Would you vote for or against Fast Track?

I would vote against Fast Track of the TPP.

Do you favor refocusing U.S. trade policy around the concerns of workers, family farmers, food safety, small business and environmentalists both here and abroad, not just the interests of wealthy investors and corporations? (<http://www.tradewatch.org>)

Yes, I do.

3. Last November voters in 91 Massachusetts cities and towns voted by a 3 to 1 margin for the "Budget for All" (www.Budget4Allmass.org), urging our Congress-people to support the Back to Work budget proposal of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. This budget would stop cuts in Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security; fund investments in manufacturing, schools, housing, healthcare and mass transit; help transition to a green economy; close corporate tax loopholes while raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000, and redirect runaway military spending to job creation. The CPC Back to Work budget voted on last March expressed these priorities, and was supported by then Rep. Ed Markey. If elected will you vote for the CPC budget next March?

I am the primary sponsor of the Budget for All bill in the State House, and I will vote for the CPC budget.

4. With millions of workers unemployed or underemployed and millions more living in poverty, Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) has re-introduced his Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Training Act (H.R. 1000), which would establish a trust fund to direct funding to employment and training programs for the unemployed (www.njfac.org). Would you support this legislation?

Yes, I would.

5. In recent decades economic inequality has risen to the highest levels since the 1920s. The Inclusive Prosperity Act, sponsored by Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN), would create a Financial Transaction Tax (H.R. 1579) that levies a small fee on the trading of major financial assets while allocating raised revenues for health care, investment in education, reduction of student debt and the development of green energy (AFL-CIO Now, 4/17/13). Would you vote for this legislation?

Yes, I would.

Paid for by Boston DSA; not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

6. President Obama has described the climate crisis as the global threat of our time. But he is also considering a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline that many environmentalists oppose, including former Vice President Al Gore and noted climate scientist James Hansen. Do you?

I have clearly, and without any equivocation, opposed the Keystone Pipeline, unlike others in this race. We cannot afford to make it easier to burn carbon from the tar sands if we ever hope to reduce our carbon emissions. I will use my bully pulpit as a member of Congress, as well as my vote and advocacy role within the Congress, to keep our focus on investments in renewable energy sources, rather than more carbon-based fuels. I will also be an unapologetic advocate for a carbon tax, because it is the best way to reduce America's carbon footprint.

7. The House Republican majority has attempted to defund Planned Parenthood and roll back women's reproductive rights, including access to abortion and even contraception, especially in the District of Columbia. Will you oppose such future efforts?

I will strongly oppose these efforts. I have a 100% pro-choice voting record from NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, and I am the author of the Buffer Zone bill, to protect women when entering abortion clinics.

8. In a resounding and unexpected victory, the Iranian people recently elected Hassan Rouhani as their new President, the most moderate candidate of those permitted to run. But even before his inauguration the U.S. House has passed H.R. 850, which would impose a de facto oil embargo on Iran and limit President Obama's ability to lift sanctions even if a deal on Iran's nuclear program looks likely to succeed (<http://www.niacouncil.org>). This legislation was opposed by Obama, former U.S. ambassador Thomas Pickering and the *NY Times*, among others; Congressman Jim McGovern voted against it. Would you?

Yes, I would.

9. In 2009 President Obama sharply criticized Israeli expansion of their illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, while also urging negotiations for a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Since then Israel has continued its land confiscations, which have been criticized by human rights groups but almost never in Congress. Will you speak out against these ongoing settlements that are now endangering the new peace negotiations?

Further expansion of settlements is a roadblock to the peace process, and I appreciate that President Obama has done a remarkable job of critiquing our allies while supporting the peace process. I also applaud steps taken on both sides recently, which show willingness to sit down and resume peace talks.

10. The continuing slaughter in the Syrian civil war concerns us all. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have accused the brutal dictatorship of Syrian President Assad of using outlawed Sarin gas against his own citizens, including children. But the rebels are influenced---some say dominated---by Al Qaeda and other Sunni Islamic extremists. As this is written President Obama is calling Congress back into session to authorize some sort of military strike, which some fear could lead to yet more bloodshed and civilian deaths without resolving the military stalemate. In a September 1 statement, the International Crisis Group (www.crisisgroup.org) says that a military attack unsanctioned by the UN will have no international consensus, and might trigger violent escalation both within Syria and possibly the region without necessarily weakening Assad, while setting back diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict with a political settlement.

With the information available to you as of now, do you think you could support the president's coming authorization request? Why or why not?

I came out right away in opposition to the use of force in Syria, while my opponents waffled on the issue and waited to see the way the political winds were blowing. I felt the United States had not exhausted its diplomatic options, and I am extremely skeptical of entering in any conflict without clear goals or an exit strategy.

Paid for by Boston DSA; not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

The Socialists Who Made the March on Washington

HAROLD MEYERSON

The story of the radicals behind—and in front of—the demonstration that changed America



AP Photo, File

The Team Assembles

“In 1956, when I was a student at Brooklyn College, Mike Harrington told Tom [Kahn, another Brooklyn College student] and me to go up to this office in Manhattan, on 57th Street, to work with Bayard Rustin,” Rachele Horowitz remembers. Harrington (who was to author *The Other America*, which sparked the War on Poverty), Horowitz, and Kahn were all members of the Young People’s Socialist League, a democratic socialist organization of no more than several hundred members nationally. Rustin, their elder, boasted a longer left pedigree: a brief sojourn in the Communist Party in the ’30s, then—repudiating the Communists and affiliating himself with the Socialist Party—working for socialist A.J. Muste’s Fellowship of Reconciliation; founding the Congress of Racial Equality with fellow socialist James Farmer in 1942; doing time in Leavenworth during World War II for protesting the segregation of the armed forces; traveling to India to study nonviolent civil disobedience with the Gandhi-ites; and endeavoring to integrate interstate bus travel in the South a decade before the Freedom Rides began (for which, during one trip, he was badly beaten). When Harrington suggested that Horowitz and Kahn go help out Rustin, whom they’d not met before, he was organizing a national support network for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which had begun just a few weeks earlier.

This was the genesis of the network of democratic socialists who seven years later were to conceive, organize, and set the themes for the March on Washington.

Handsome, stylish, and dynamic

(Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee founder Stokely Carmichael said Rustin seemed to be wearing a cape even when he wasn’t), Rustin “blew our mind” when she and Kahn met him, Horowitz recalls. Theirs was hardly a unique response. Carmichael’s reaction upon first encountering Rustin, he wrote decades later, was to think: “This man was a radical activist, an intellectual, *and a strategist*. That’s what I want to be when I grow up.”

“We wanted to change America and here were these people who were doing it,” says Horowitz, who in later years became the political director of the American Federation of Teachers. The group Rustin had assembled to assist the boycott and its leader—the Montgomery minister Martin Luther King Jr., still in his mid-twenties—was called In Friendship. Also in the office when Kahn and Horowitz reported for duty were Ella Baker, a veteran civil-rights activist who’d belonged to a splinter anti-Stalinist communist grouplet (the Lovestoneites) in the ’30s, and Stanley Levison, a successful businessman who’d left the Communist Party some years earlier. A young Bob Moses, who later at great personal danger was to head up voter registration drives in Jim Crow Mississippi, also showed up to volunteer. The immediate task at hand was putting together a rally at Madison Square Garden that would raise funds and demonstrate national support for the bus boycott. Rustin had already gone south to help King conceptualize and put in motion the first of the fledgling civil-rights movement’s mass nonviolent civil-disobedience campaigns as part of the boycott. A year later, Baker was to become the key organizer for the group of

black clergy that King would assemble and lead, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC). Levison was to become, with Rustin, one of King’s chief counselors.

Rustin, working both with and for the unchallenged leader of the civil-rights movement, the venerable A. Philip Randolph, became the central figure in taking that movement national. For Rustin and Randolph, as for King, Baker, Levison, Harrington, Horowitz, and Kahn, the challenge confronting African Americans was always two-fold: to tear down the legal edifice of segregation that imperiled and degraded Southern blacks, and to remake the American economy into a more egalitarian social democracy under which—and only under which—black Americans could actually prosper.

Seeds of the March

Randolph had been at this work longer than anybody else. In the 1910s, he founded and co-edited *The Messenger*, a Harlem-based socialist newspaper. It was the heyday of American socialism; under the leadership of the gaunt and tireless Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist Party had become, as it was never to be again, the political vehicle for hundreds of thousands of urban and rural workers. Randolph, like Debs, was sentenced to prison for his opposition to U.S. involvement in World War I. Unlike Debs, who served more than two years behind bars, Randolph drew a term that lasted just a few days. In the 1920s, a number of Pullman car porters asked him to head up their efforts to build a union. It was as thankless a task as could be imagined—white workers’ efforts to form unions in the Twenties were suppressed,

and black workers' efforts were suppressed even more brutally—but in 1937, after the Supreme Court upheld the National Labor Relations Act, the Randolph-led Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters compelled Pullman to sign a contract that gave its members both job security and a raise.

A hero not just in Harlem but throughout black America, Randolph headed up the new Negro National Congress, an organization of socialists, communists, and liberals—until 1939, when the communists prevailed upon Congress to back the Hitler-Stalin pact (wherein the USSR temporarily abandoned its opposition to Nazi Germany and joined it in carving up Poland). Randolph condemned the pact and the communists and quit the organization. He remained, however, a totemic figure in African American circles. As the nation began to gear up for World War II, he saw an opportunity to advance the legal and economic status of blacks. By late 1940, the nation's burgeoning aircraft factories were employing fully 100,000 workers, but only 300 of them were black. President Roosevelt, Randolph realized, could remedy this situation by an executive order, and so, in January of 1941, he conceived the idea of a march on Washington. Fully 100,000 blacks would come to Washington, he said, for a rally at the Lincoln Memorial. They would demand the desegregation of both defense work and the armed forces themselves, and the establishment of a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the desegregation of the defense industry. "We loyal Negro-American citizens demand the right to work and fight for our country," Randolph proclaimed. His never-very-affluent union put up seed money for the march, and as the scheduled date for the action, July 1, drew near, the march was greeted with great enthusiasm in the black press and throughout the black communities in Northeastern and Midwestern cities.

It also caused considerable alarm in the White House. The president invited Randolph to meet with him and turned on the fabled Roosevelt charm. "Phil, what

year was your class at Harvard?" Roosevelt asked. Randolph, whose manner and erudition left the impression that Harvard had merely been a way station en route to Oxford, had actually been to neither. When Roosevelt told Randolph that the march might disrupt the nation's (still completely segregated) capital and asked him to call it off, Randolph cordially replied that the hopes of black America were too high to call off the march. No, he continued, the march would go on.

One week before the march was to take place, Roosevelt caved. He issued an executive order desegregating factories working on defense contracts, and established a Fair Employment Practices Commission to enforce the order. Roosevelt chose not to mandate the desegregation of the armed forces, but Randolph knew a victory when he saw one and called off the march.

He revived the idea in 1948, demanding the desegregation of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This time it was Harry Truman who invited Randolph to the White House and asked him to stop the march nonsense. Again, Randolph declined. Again, an American president (this time, in need of urban black votes in the upcoming election) blinked: Truman ordered the desegregation of the armed forces, and Randolph again canceled the march.

The Emancipation March for Jobs



AP Photo

By the time John F. Kennedy arrived in the White House, the number of blacks in Northern cities had grown substantially—not least as a consequence of Randolph's success in winning the desegregation of defense plants. But the Great Migration from the South was

accompanied by a transformation of rural poverty into urban poverty; black rates of urban unemployment and underemployment remained high, and African Americans' entry into more remunerative jobs encountered all manner of obstacles. Michael Harrington noted the declining number of African Americans in manufacturing jobs in the early '60s and feared that the growing automation of production would further marginalize black workers. The solution required not just powerful civil-rights legislation at the national level but also a governmental commitment to providing full employment. In his 1962 volume on poverty in the United States, *The Other America*, Harrington wrote: "If all the discriminatory laws in the United States were immediately repealed, race would still remain as one of the most pressing moral and political problems in the nation. Negroes and other minorities are not simply victims of a series of iniquitous statutes. The American economy, the American society, the American unconscious are all racist. If all the laws were framed to provide equal opportunity, a majority of the Negroes would not be able to take full advantage of the change. There would still be a vast, silent, automatic system directed against men and women of color."

Harrington's perspective—that black equality required not just the abolition of Jim Crow but massive structural changes to the economy—wasn't his alone. It was also that of the circle of socialists—including Randolph, Rustin, Baker, Horowitz, Kahn, the aging socialist leader Norman Thomas, and, from afar, King—in which he moved. An organization that Randolph chaired, the Negro American Labor Council, began discussing what action it could take to address the plight of urban black workers in 1961. Rustin started taking soundings for some kind of national demonstration in 1962, and in December of that year, he and Randolph began talking about a march on Washington. Randolph asked Rustin to write a prospectus for such a march, and with Kahn and Norman Hill, an African American socialist activist, he co-authored a paper calling for an

“Emancipation March for Jobs” that he presented to Randolph in January 1963 (the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation). The proposal called for bringing 100,000 demonstrators to Washington for a two-day mobilization: the first day, lobbying Congress and the administration; the second day, staging a rally at the Lincoln Memorial. The march to the rally would circle the White House, just as a Rustin-organized march for a civil-rights platform had encircled the Los Angeles Sports Arena when it hosted the 1960 Democratic National Convention. (Harrington had been the on-the-ground organizer for that action.) The demands of the marchers at the proposed Washington action would focus on legislation banning racial discrimination in employment and the establishment of a Fair Employment Practices Commission to enforce it (Roosevelt’s FEPC order had expired at the end of World War II), a doubling of the minimum wage, and a federal commitment to job creation.

Ultimately, of course, the march for jobs became a “March for Jobs and Freedom,” the official name of the iconic event that would come to be known as the March on Washington. Randolph and Rustin had both long argued that the civil-rights movement could only succeed if it were raised to a national level, that only federal power could overcome the laws and customs of such apartheid states as Mississippi and Alabama. To that end, Rustin had organized three mini-marches on Washington in the late '50s: The first, called the Prayer Pilgrimage, brought roughly 25,000 to Washington to mark the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and to hear King deliver a powerful speech in which he closed with the demand, “Give us the ballot!” The second and third were marches in support of school integration, as efforts to desegregate schools in Little Rock and other Southern cities were met with white violence. “Bayard said, ‘We’re going to keep marching and marching and marching until somebody pays attention,’” Horowitz recalls. “The usual suspects” behind these marches, she says, were Randolph, Rustin, and King. “They

were a training ground for the movement,” she adds, noting that Ezell Blair, one of the four students who initiated the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960, had joined her and Kahn in working on these D.C. actions.

But if the initial focus of the 1963 march was primarily the plight of blacks in the North, that’s partly because the civil-rights struggle in the South that winter lacked a high-profile, ongoing campaign. In the spring, however, King and the SCLC began a mass campaign demanding the desegregation of public facilities in Birmingham, Alabama. Bull Connor, the aptly named county sheriff, turned fire hoses and attack dogs loose on the demonstrators, including a large number of school children, a spectacle broadcast on the then-new nightly television network newscasts. King, Rustin, and Randolph quickly decided to expand the purview of the march to Southern civil rights as well as Northern economic rights. The murder soon thereafter of Medgar Evers, the NAACP’s Mississippi director, made the new Southern emphasis even more prominent.

Randolph publicly announced the march in the last week of March, at which point he had the support chiefly of such black union leaders as Cleveland Robinson and such heavily black (and left) unions as the Packinghouse Workers. The more establishment black organizations—the NAACP and the Urban League in particular—responded coolly to his announcement, casting a cold eye on both its social democratic message and the confrontational way that message would be delivered. Roy Wilkins, who headed the NAACP, asked Randolph to forget the march and focus instead on a mass lobbying effort. But as the events in Birmingham riveted the nation’s attention, momentum for the march built. King’s SCLC joined the Negro American Labor Council as a co-sponsor. On June 11, Kennedy went on national television to announce he was sending a civil-rights bill to Congress that focused almost exclusively on the desegregation of public facilities. In early July, both the NAACP and the Urban League endorsed the

march, soon to be joined by the United Auto Workers, the American Jewish Congress, and other mainstream liberal groups. Rustin issued a public call that listed the rally’s demands, and to the initial list of economic items, he gave increased emphasis the federal enforcement of voting rights and added the enactment of Kennedy’s civil-rights bill.

Nonetheless, like Roosevelt and Truman before him, Kennedy sought to dissuade the civil-rights leaders from going ahead with the march. Invited once again to the Oval Office, this time in the company of his fellow civil-rights leaders, Randolph was the one who told the president no. The march would go forward.

Trading Militance for Numbers



AP Photo

With the march an inevitability, the administration decided if it couldn’t lick it, it would join it—or at least, try to make it less confrontational. March permits were issued on the condition that there would be no circling of the White House. “Boy, did they know how to pressure us,” says Horowitz, who was by then working as the March’s transportation coordinator.

As the list of sponsors and the projections of the number of marchers grew, and as the White House gave the march its wary, guarded blessing, Randolph and Rustin were compelled to diminish the militance of the protest. The two-day event was scaled back to one. The mass lobbying gave way to lobbying just by the leaders of the sponsor organizations. “Bayard always knew we would have to trade in militance for numbers,” Norman Hill recalled. Wilkins and Whitney Young, the head of the

Urban League, were opposed to having any civil-disobedience part of the march or rally, so such plans were dropped as well.

Still, Horowitz says, the increasing establishment imprimatur that the march had won had its rewards: On the early morning of the march, at Rustin's suggestion, New York City Mayor Robert Wagner ordered the subways to start running on their rush-hour schedules at 4 a.m. so that demonstrators could catch their early buses and trains. New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered his toll-booth operators to provide demonstrators with maps showing where they could park in Washington.

As he had in 1941, Randolph initially envisioned a march of roughly 100,000 participants. Through the efforts of supportive unions, churches, and civil-rights groups, and the drum-banging of black and liberal media, the buzz around the march grew steadily louder. Horowitz, in charge of coordinating the transportation to and from Washington, calculated on the eve of the action that 67,000 people would come to the capital on chartered trains or buses. That number didn't include those who came by regular commercial trains or buses, or those who drove or just showed up from somewhere in metropolitan Washington. The media pegged the crowd at 200,000, and both the rally and the entertainment preceding it were carried live on all the networks.

King's speech, of course, was the part of the rally that immediately became history, and rightly so. But neither he nor the other speakers focused exclusively on the kind of racial discrimination that Kennedy's bill would outlaw. A look at the signs that the marchers carried, or a reading of the speeches they heard, makes clear that the need to create a more just economy was a central theme as well. "Yes, we want public accommodations open to all citizens," Randolph proclaimed in the speech that opened the rally, "but those accommodations will mean little to those who cannot afford to use them." Two days later, he made this argument even more pointedly at a post-march conference convened by the

Socialist Party. "The white sharecroppers of the South have full civil rights," he said, "but live in the bleakest poverty."

What the Socialists Did —and What They Couldn't Do

Of the many reasons why socialism never became a major political tendency in the United States, as it did in Europe, is that working people—more precisely, white working men—gained the franchise here during the Jacksonian era, well before socialism had developed into a mass movement in Europe or America or anyplace else. In Europe, by contrast, it was chiefly the agitation of socialist parties in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that led to the creation of universal manhood, and in some places womanhood, suffrage. Socialists brought ordinary Europeans the vote, which powerfully legitimated socialism for tens of millions of Europeans.

No equivalent legitimation happened in America. While there had been socialist movements and sects throughout the 19th century, the American Socialist Party wasn't founded until 1901. That party, the Communist Party, and their various offshoots attracted thousands of activists during the 20th century, and their most enduring and significant achievement was to have seeded and helped form the movement for civil rights that led to the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which went beyond Kennedy's initial proposal to also ban racial discrimination in employment) and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. But despite their central role in the movement that led to the extension of the franchise to Southern blacks, American socialists experienced no gains for their movement equivalent to those their European counterparts had won. While Randolph, Rustin, and King were all democratic socialists, as were many of their colleagues and lieutenants, they did not march for civil rights under a socialist banner. To have done so would have been to make the attainment of civil rights all the more difficult. Nonetheless, the power of their economic perspective has been felt in black America from their time until this

day. For decades, the proposed budgets of the Congressional Black Caucus spelled out what was essentially a vision of a social democratic American economy.

That vision, of course, was not realized. Accommodations were desegregated, but just as Randolph and his associates feared, the number of Americans who could afford to use them—who could afford college and medical care, to cite just two institutions that are legally open to all regardless of race and nonetheless beyond the reach of millions of Americans—remains well below any decent standard. Capitalism devoid of social democracy, the socialist planners of the march believed, would never produce the broadly shared prosperity that was needed if blacks and other racial minorities were to win more equal economic opportunities. Fifty years after the March on Washington, those socialists' presentiments have been tragically borne out.

*Harold Meyerson is Vice-Chair of Democratic Socialists of America. This article was originally written for the American Prospect website: www.prospect.org. For further reading on the march and the socialist left, see two new books: *The March on Washington* by William P. Jones, and *A Freedom Budget for All Americans* by Paul Le Blanc and Michael D. Yates. In addition to biographies of Randolph and Rustin, another valuable source is Michael Harrington's 1973 volume, *Fragments of the Century*.*

Yankee Radical

P.O. Box 51356
Boston, MA 02205
Phone: 617-354-5078

e-mail:

yankeeradical@dsaboston.org

Web:

<http://www.dsaboston.org>

Editor: M. Pattberg

2013 Boston DSA Awards Reception

Last June 7 Boston Democratic Socialists of America presented our annual Gene Debs/Norman Thomas/Julius Bernstein award to Jennifer Doe, Shelagh Foreman and Andi Mullin at the Somerville home of Dick and Roberta Bauer. Honorary Co-Chairs of the event were Cambridge Peace Commission Director Brian Corr, MA SEIU Political Director Harris Gruman, State Representative Denise Provost and SEIU 888 Communications

Director Rand Wilson, who all reminisced—sometimes humorously—on the achievements and legacies of our honorees.

Jenn Doe recounted some of the many labor struggles she has helped organize in her 10 years with Jobs with Justice, as she now takes time off to be with her new baby. Shelagh Foreman, Program Director of Massachusetts Peace Action, reflected on lessons learned from her more than three decades in the

peace movement and current efforts to prevent a new war with Iran. Andi Mullin, Director of the Campaign for Our Communities, thanked all of her “minions” who helped CFOC lead the fight to fund our state’s public services through progressive taxation—and almost won!

This year’s awards reception attracted a larger turnout than some in the recent past, and seemed to be enjoyed by all. Thanks to all who made it happen!

PATRONS

Susan Davidoff

Jeff Knudsen

David Knuttunen

Michael Patberg

Maxine Phillips

Michael Schwartz

SUPPORTERS

Marie Ariel

Trudy Bauer

Vic Bloomberg

Tom Canel

Lamont Cranston

DISSENT

David Duhalde

Shelagh Foreman

Harris Gruman

Cole Harrison

In These Times

Julia Johnson

S. M. Miller

Monte Pearson

Marcia Peters

Ruth Weizenbaum

So Who Are Debs, Thomas & Bernstein?

Boston DSA’s annual reception bestows one of two awards named after democratic socialist leaders of the past century: either labor/civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph and DSA founding Chair Michael Harrington—or Gene Debs, Norman Thomas and Julius Bernstein. This year it was the latter.

After organizing railroad workers into a single industry-wide union, labor leader **Eugene Victor Debs** (1855–1926) ran for President five times on the Socialist Party ticket. His final campaign in 1920 was waged from the Atlanta penitentiary where he was imprisoned for opposition to World War One.

Norman Thomas (1884–1968) did Debs one better, running as the Socialist Party presidential candidate six times between 1928 and 1948. He became an independent voice for democracy and human rights and a critic of both

capitalist and communist dictatorships, while also opposing much of U.S. foreign policy and the nuclear arms race—“No Tests, East or West!” In 1957 he helped found the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, which evolved into today’s Peace Action.

Coming out of the local labor movement, **Julius Bernstein** (1919–1977) served as State Secretary of the Socialist Party in the 1950s and ‘60s, leaving with Michael Harrington in 1973 to form the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, a forerunner of DSA. For many years he was Director of the New England Jewish Labor Committee, and later Chair of the State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Like A. Philip Randolph but on a local level, Bernstein worked to unify the labor and civil rights movements in com-

mon struggle, focusing especially on housing discrimination.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Congratulations to all the awardees, and particularly my dear friend Shelagh Foreman. We’ve worked together for decades, including a time when I was Chair of Mass Peace Action, and I can say with certainty Shelagh is the heart and soul of Peace Action, and an inspiration to all of us in the peace movement.

Here’s to a world beyond war, where artists like Shelagh can focus on making the world a more beautiful place, having won the fight for peace.

Eleanor LeCain, Governor,
Red Sox Nation, Washington DC
Former Massachusetts Assistant
Secretary of State


the yankee radical

Democratic Socialists of America
P. O. Box 51356
Boston, MA 02205

Presorted
First Class
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Boston, MA
Permit No. 1141

INSIDE

<i>Raise Up Massachusetts</i>	<i>p. 1</i>
<i>DSA Meeting</i>	<i>p. 1</i>
<i>Short Takes</i>	<i>p. 2</i>
<i>Statement on Syria</i>	<i>p. 2</i>
<i>Convergence</i>	<i>p. 3</i>
<i>Carl Sciortino</i>	<i>p. 3</i>
<i>March on Washington</i>	<i>p. 6</i>
<i>DSA Awards Reception</i>	<i>p. 10</i>



JOBS WITH JUSTICE

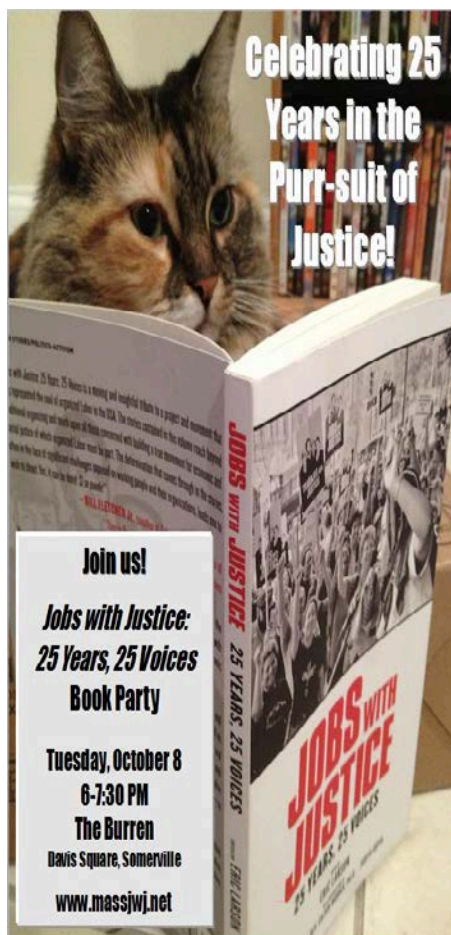
“Good luck Jenn and thanks for all of your great work.”

Massachusetts
Jobs with Justice

DISSENT

Salutes

Jennifer Doe
Shelagh Foreman
Andi Mullin
and
Celebrates 60 Years of Critical
Thinking on the Left



Celebrating 25
Years in the
Purr-suit of
Justice!

Join us!
*Jobs with Justice:
25 Years, 25 Voices*
Book Party

Tuesday, October 8
6-7:30 PM
The Burren
Davis Square, Somerville
www.massjw.net

In honor
of

Selma Lenihan
&
Simone Plastrik
Maxine Phillips