



**Socialist Party USA  
Anniversary Journal**

# Continuation of the Socialist Party USA Assured!

by Greg Pason / Text Editing by Irena Terdiman

**Continuation of the Socialist Party USA Assured!** That was the headline of the June 1973 *Socialist Tribune* after members and locals from across the United States gathered in Milwaukee Wisconsin to reconstitute (or "continue") the Socialist Party USA. This event was made necessary by major changes to the Party made at the 1972 convention by the so-called "Realignment Caucus" led by Max Shachtman and Michael Harrington.

**Some history from former Milwaukee Mayor and (post 1972) Socialist Party USA Chair, Frank Zeidler...** "By the time of the 1968 convention of the Socialist Party two caucuses had developed representing differences in policy. (Michael) Harrington and (Max) Shachtman were aligned in the majority caucus, called the Realignment caucus because it was favorable to re-aligning the movement inside the Democratic Party for increased power there through its already great influence in sections of the labor movement where Shachtman's adherents had important positions. The Realignment caucus was basically in favor of the war in Vietnam as a means of checking Soviet Communist expansion. The other caucus was the Debs caucus which, as its name indicates, was attempting to perpetuate the ideals of Debs, especially in anti-war sentiments.

By 1970, the Realignment caucus divided into a majority group led by Shachtman and a Coalition group led by Harrington. The issue was over how much support should be given to the war in Vietnam, the Shachtman caucus favoring more support and the Harrington caucus less, but without a pull-out from Vietnam. In both groups, however, there was also a growing sentiment that the term 'socialist' was now too much identified with the Stalinist type of Communism. Even though Stalin was dead his successors were pursuing his policies.

In a 1972 convention of the Socialist Party-SDF (Socialist Party of America), the delegates voted in the majority to change the name of the party to Social Democrats, USA. By 1973 Harrington's Coalition caucus left the Social Democrats, USA, and began a process which resulted in the formation of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee and later the Democratic Socialists of America (1982). Ultimately the SDUSA continued rightward with some leaders supporting first Nixon, then Reagan and ultimately helping the Nicaraguan Contras.



In late 1972 and early 1973, Illinois Socialists, especially Virgil J. Vogel, circulated letters calling for the continuation of the Socialist Party. The Debs caucus continued to function, as did state parties in several places, notably California and Wisconsin. The activity resulted in a conference in Milwaukee in May of 1973. At the conference, upon a motion by Vogel, the conference became a convention of the Reconstituted Socialist Party of America on May 26, 1973.

Since the Socialist Party of Wisconsin had continually maintained an office in Milwaukee from about 1898, the Wisconsin party offered space in its office for a national office for the reconstituted party. The first national secretary of the Socialist Party USA was Abraham Bassford IV of Brooklyn. The new party adopted *The Socialist Tribune*, formerly the paper of the Debs Caucus, as its official paper.

*This paper was published in the Los Angeles area and Bill and Mae Briggs were doing much of the work to put it out.* Reprinted from Frank Zeidler's "Ninety Years of Democratic Socialism"

**On May 26, 1973 the Socialist Party USA was reborn.**

## First Presidential Campaign



In 1976, the Party voted to run our first presidential campaign since the reconstitution. The candidates were Party chair and former Milwaukee Mayor, Frank Zielder and Chicago school teacher and civil rights activist J. Quinn Brisben.

The campaign was an opportunity to put forward the “new and improved” Socialist Party and was the first presidential slate of the Socialist Party (new or old) since Darlington Hoopes and Samuel H. Friedman in 1956.

By contesting the 1976 election, the Party recommitted itself to electoral action and reclaimed the old “Socialist Party of America” tradition. The Zielder/Brisben campaign put the Socialist Party and our platform out for discussion and put faces on the idea of democratic socialism. Like any alternative party campaign, we were ignored by much of the media, but former Mayor Ziedler and future SPUSA presidential candidate Brisben promoted a democratic socialist alternative to Carter and Ford.

Resuming electoral action seemed not to impress the Socialist International (SI) though, and the Party’s application to the SI was rejected as it continued to recognize the Social Democrats USA and the newly formed Democratic Socialists of America. The Party formally withdrew its application in the Socialist International after the 1978 convention and has had an eclectic international policy since, reaching out to many democratic socialist organizations world-wide.

## Ending the 70’s With a Bang

The last few years were a struggle for the Party, but we came out stronger and focused. In 1976 we came off a very positive presidential campaign, but had to regroup after a fire destroyed the National Office in Milwaukee. Records from the Socialist Party of Wisconsin and Socialist Party of Milwaukee were lost and a new National Office needed to be found. Then in 1978 the Party faced a takeover attempt by a Leninist organization, arranged by a group calling itself the “Revolutionary Marxist Tendency” which took advantage of the first (and last) completely “un-delegated” conventions in an attempt to turn the SPUSA into a “Leninist” Party. The group had connections to the Trotskyist “Spartacist League” with some members/associates of that organization joining the day before the convention and then seated. The takeover attempt was rejected and the Party entered a new decade.

**Vote for  
the  
Socialist alternative**

**FRANK P.**

**ZEIDLER**

for

**President**



(Mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin 1948 - 1960.)

**J. QUINN**

**BRISBEN**

for

**Vice-President**



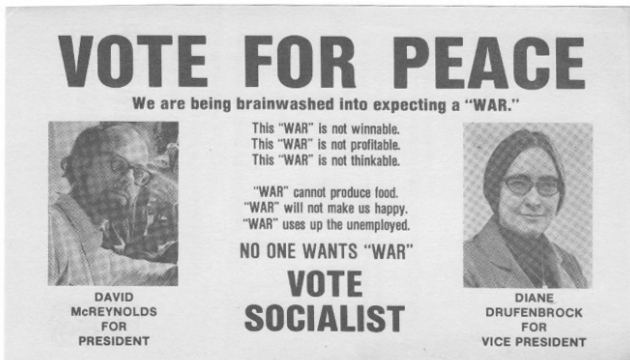
(Chicago, Illinois high school teacher.)

*In some states, these candidates will appear as “Independents.”  
If they are not on your state’s ballot, write them in.*



## A Socialist Response to the “Moral Majority” (1980’s)

In the early 80’s the anti-apartheid movement took hold in the US, there was a growing anti-nuke movement and the “Cold War” was in full force. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher held office in the US and the UK, in that order. The world also faced a growing health crisis with AIDS killing many across the globe and homophobic attitudes increased. The Christian evangelical movement built what they called the “Moral Majority”, setting up new battle lines in the “culture war”. The Socialist Party’s response to the “Moral Majority”, the ever growing military budget, and US militarism was a 1980 presidential slate of openly gay peace activist David McReynolds and Catholic Nun, Sr. Diane Drufenbrok.



David Mc Reynolds was the first openly gay presidential candidate on any party’s ticket and the campaign focused on disarmament and anti-militarism. Sr. Diane joined the party after the 1975 campaign and was active in the Milwaukee Local.

The 1980 campaign helped build new Party Locals and, more importantly, led to recognition of the Socialist Party USA by the Federal Election Commission.

In 1984 the party decided against running a presidential slate, instead working with other forces on a coalition candidate on the Citizens Party line. The Citizens Party was created as a “liberal/left” alternative to the Carter administration, but the Party soon learned to regret their decision to endorse this slate when the Citizens Party’s presidential candidate, Sonya Johnson, refused to affirm support for the socialist movement. At that point the Socialist Party withdrew its support for the coalition and instead focused on building the Party.



### A Socialist-Feminist Organization

In the mid-80’s the Party fully embraced feminism. This came after some serious debate and some hard feelings, but in 1985 we formally became a socialist- feminist organization. The Party also strongly encouraged women to take leadership roles. Many new members filled these roles, including Michigan freelance writer Willa Kinnoyer, who ran with Ron Ehrenreich of New York as our 1988 presidential candidate.

Another member who joined after we formally adopted socialist-feminism was

Iowa City activist Karen Kubby. In 1989, Kubby became the first SPUSA member elected to office in years. Kubby was elected to Iowa City Council in 1989 and served until 2000.

### Youth Liberation

In the late 80’s the Party reorganized our youth wing “Young Peoples Socialist League”. Ken Meyers of NYC worked with volunteers (including the current National Secretary Greg Pason) on new youth liberation/sexual liberation campaign and Dan Robrish printed and edited “The Torch” in the Los Angeles office. YPSL introduced socialism to new young member and as a new generation of young members took active organizing and leadership positions in the Party.



Karen Kubby

## The “Clinton Years” (1990’s)



The 90’s began with the US invading Iraq. The Gulf War was a wake-up call to the anti-war movement and the Socialist Party joined the forces against the war. Party members, including former presidential candidate David McReynolds, spoke at anti-war mobilizations even as war became “popular” again. A “short war” seemed to open the door to increased US intervention.

In 1992 the Party voted to run 1976 vice-presidential candidate J. Quinn Brisben and Bay Area union activist Bill Edwards as our presidential slate. Edwards was a former Longshoreman and leader in the Bay Area anti-apartheid movement and Brisben was a long-time civil rights activists. Sadly half-way through the campaign Edwards passed away and

the Party held a special election for a vice-presidential candidate. As a result, the Party selected playwright and author Barbara Garson as VP. Garson was the author of the anti-Vietnam War play “MacBird! and working as a journalist. The NewYork Times posted the following tongue in cheek report:



*BARBARA GARSON, the author of the Vietnam-era play "MacBird" and a longtime member of the Socialist Party, got a message on her answering machine early in August: "We're sorry to tell you that the Socialist Vice-Presidential candidate, Bill Edwards, has died. We would like your help in writing a press release for the newspapers. And also, would you like to run for Vice President?"*



Barbara Garson

The 1992 campaign was an organizing success with a focus on Party building, healthcare and civil rights issues. Quinn Brisben brought a folksy charm and Barbara Garson brought some celebrity to th campaign.

From 1992 to 2000 the political landscape was changing (at least on the surface) and Socialists had to deal with the reality of the end of the “Cold War” and the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the beginning of the first Democratic administration since Jimmy Carter.

The “honeymoon” some liberals expected ended quickly with the failure of healthcare “reform” and continued to go downhill with the “end of welfare as we know it”. Clinton continued to push for cutting public services, expanding free trade and generally acting as a Republican. As a response, the Party mobilized around single-payer healthcare and joined the movement against Newt Gingrich’s “Contract With America”.

This new left/liberal response to the Clinton administration helped to jump-start many new movements across the country. In New Jersey the Party held its first congressional campaign in years, with Greg Pason running for the House of Representatives, a campaign that helped maintain FEC status and which garnered a National Organization for Women endorsement. And in Oregon, the Party became” ballot qualified”, making it the first stat in a very longtime in which the Socialist Party was on the ballot without having to petition.



Mary Cal Hollis

With the Republican “sweep” of the 1994 congressional elections and a growing anti “globalization” movement, our 1995 convention in Cambridge, MA nominated new member Mary Cal Hollis & Eric Chester as our 1996 presidential slate.

Mary Cal Hollis, a Colorado-based activist, brought renewed energy to the campaign and along with Eric Chester, campaigned across the country. The campaign spread the Party’s message in the Mountain West and helped to organize locals, including North Carolina and Colorado.

## Looking for Unity on the Left

As the “Contract For America” gained steam in the mid-90’s and the Clinton administration continued to move rightward, there was momentum for some sort of unity amongst the democratic left. The Socialist Party USA joined with the Democratic Socialists of America, Solidarity, Freedom Road, Committees of Correspondence (who split from the Communist Party USA in the early 90’s) and the Independent Progressive Politics Network in two years of regular discussions. The project was called the “CCCC” (Communications, Consultation, Coordination and Cooperation) project. The project last about 2 years with regular meetings in New York City and a handful of contingents at national demonstrations, but disagreements on independent political action and other issues led to the project being dissolved.

## Anti-Globalization Movement Grows/McReynolds for President

In October of 1999 the Party held our convention in Secaucus, NJ and nominated David McReynolds for president and Mary Cal Hollis for vice-president. Left and (some) liberal activists were increasing their call for a break with the Democrats. While we were nominating McReynolds/Hollis, the Greens were working on nominating Ralph Nader. With issues like “free trade”, globalization and healthcare on the table alternative party campaigns received more coverage than usual and the Party took advantage of it with McReynolds appearing on television and radio across the US.



At the same time, the anti-globalization movement was growing. This culminated with historic Anti-IMF demonstrations in Seattle in the November of 1999, when labor, environmental and anti-globalization activists converged to shut down the meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The protests against trade agreements supported by the Clinton administration (NAFTA, et al) grew and many Party members were there.

The 1999 actions were followed by the April 20, 2000 (A20) mobilization in Washington, DC and many other mobilizations as the anti-capitalist movement grew. The 2000 elections were historic for all the wrong reasons and while Nader was a popular scapegoat for Democrats, the problems with US elections (and the Electoral College) were front and center. The Party and the US had to deal with the results.

The Los Angeles Local thanks  
MAGGIE PHAIR for her kindness,  
generosity and strength, which  
helps our Local thrive and gives  
us all something to aspire to.

**Maggie, you are a true badass**



## Celebration and Tragedy

The year 2001 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Socialist Party of America and the SPUSA marked the anniversary with a conference in Milwaukee Wisconsin. The conference brought out more than one hundred members and supporters and featured a forum that was covered nationally on C-SPAN TV and radio. Panels and discussions and speeches marked the anniversary in the historic Hotel Wisconsin.



The anniversary celebration did not last long as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the Bush administration's rush to war with Afghanistan and Iraq immediately became the focus of the entire left (and most in the country). Military intervention increased across the globe as did harassment and detention of immigrants and anti-war organizations. The "USA PATRIOT ACT" found support in both mainstream "liberal" and "conservative" camps and the anti-globalization movement quickly morphed into the anti-war movement.

The Party's national office in Manhattan was close by the site of the September 11th attacks and the area was locked off for over a week. The Party held a small national convention just one month later in Boulder, CO passing our "No More Victims Anywhere" statement on the impending military escalation.

2003 marked some of the largest anti-war actions ever held world-wide. February 24<sup>th</sup> marked a mass call for international protests and Socialist Party members joined actions nation-wide. We also joined a growing anti-war movement as we became a member of the United for Peace coalition.



Walter Brown

At our 2003 convention the Party nominated Walter Brown for president and Mary Alice Herbert for vice-president. Walter was a former Democratic State Senator. Mary Alice joined the Party after years of involvement in the Vermont Liberty Union Party.

Walt was an active campaigner, but it soon came out that he personally opposed abortion and considered himself "pro-life". This caused concern amongst a few locals and a recall referendum was called. The referendum failed and the campaign continued. Walt worked hard on ballot access and Mal also toured the country. The campaign ended up being the most successful, as far as vote totals and ballot access, in decades.

### Stop the War At Home



In 2004 the Party held our first National Organizing Conference since the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The conference was held in Oakland California and

*Working for Left Unity,  
Organizing a Progressive Majority*

**Keep On Keepin' On!**

**Solidarity Greetings to the**

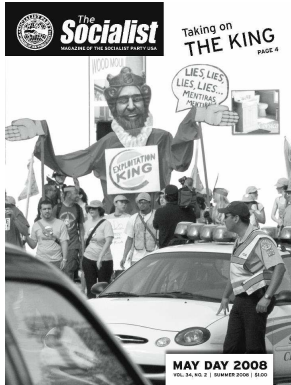
**Socialist Party USA**

From the  
**Committees of Correspondence  
for Democracy and Socialism**

featured Farouk Abdel-Muhti, a Palestinian political prisoner that members in the NJ and NYC worked to support and free. The campaign against the USA PATRIOT ACT and detention of immigrants was a key party focus for a few years. Sadly, Farouk died only a few months after his release from detention, but managed to add much life and activity to the Party office during that short period.

Later in 2004, Party activists helped organize protests at the Republican National Convention in NYC. Members from across the US attended and took part, some of which were arrested and held in the infamous “holding facility” near the NYC tow-yard.

## New Activist and Electoral Campaigns



In 2006 Immigrant workers across the US took back May Day and hundred of thousands gathered in cities across the US. The Socialist Party had locals which were already focusing on immigrant rights and took on immigrant workers issues as a key campaign. Locals were already working on anti-immigrant detention work and the Party also recently became involve in the Fair Food campaign of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Members in Florida, New York, and New Jersey were working on the Coalition of Immokalee Workers campaign and joined in the Taco Bell, McDonalds and Burger King campaigns, while other locals continued their work with anti-detention activism and other solidarity and ally work.

In 2006 and 2008 the Party held our organizing conferences in Michigan. We held our first at Wayne State University and the second in Ann Arbor. At both of those conferences we were introduced to Jerry Levy's performance of “Marx in Soho”. Jerry served as Co-Chair from 2007 to 2009 and his performances continue as a Socialist Party fundraising staple.

The 2007 national convention was held in St. Louis Missouri. Two new Party members were nominated as our presidential slate. Brian Moore of Florida, a former Green party candidate for Senate, was nominated for president. The vice presidential candidate was Stewart Alexander, a long-time member of the Peace & Freedom Party.

The 2008 campaign received more coverage than most with CNN, Fox News and even Comedy Central covering the campaign. Moore/Alexander was on the ballot in eight states and helped secure ballot access in Ohio for future campaigns.



Brian Moore

## Obama, Occupy, & the Tea Party

The 2008 election of Barack Obama seemed to restore some hope to liberals and the possibility of a national healthcare program was on the table. But like in the Clinton administrations, single-payer was ruled out. The result was a reform, “Obamacare” which neither provided healthcare for all nor addressed the problem of for-profit insurance companies. As the “contract on America” mobilized the right in the Clinton years, the Tea Party mobilized the right against the so-called “socialist” Obama.

**CSP** CHICAGO SOCIALIST PARTY  
*For jobs, peace and freedom*

**Comradely Greetings from  
the Chicago Socialist Party**



At the same time the right mobilized in the “Tea Party” the left joined the growing ranks of “Occupy Wall St.” From day one, Socialist Party members were at OWS, from the first rally on Wall St to the first night at Zuccotti Park.



“Occupy” brought (and brings) people together to protest income inequality and the fundamental problems with capitalism. The Party helped run teach-ins in Zuccotti, organized local “Occupy” actions across the country, and joined Occupy Los Angeles during our National Convention. The entire NYC Local Committee was arrested on the Occupy march across the Brooklyn Bridge, a group which included Party Co-chair Billy Wharton.

### Facing a Second Obama Term /Lesser Evil Politics

The entire left was coming to the realization that the Obama election just brought forward more of the same; war and economic inequality- something the Socialist Party was obviously aware of. In June of that year, the movement discussed these issues at the US Social forum in

Detroit Michigan.

2010 was a very active year for the Party. The Party took advantage of a ballot access victory during the Moore/Alexander campaign and ran Dan LaBotz for US Senate on the Party’s own line, we also hosted a National Organizing Conference featuring peace activist Cindy Sheehan and took advantage of having our national committee in Detroit around the 2010 US Social Forum and had a full contingent there including a handful of workshops. The LaBotz campaign ended up receiving 25,000 votes (an incredible result for a Socialist on the Socialist Party line.



Stewart Alexander & Alex Mendoza

In 2011 the Party’s National convention nominated former vice-presidential candidate Stewart Alexander for president and Dallas SPUSA activist Alex Mendoza as vice-president and a new National Committee. In 2012 the Party has increased our visibility and contested elections in about a half dozen states. We had some great election results, and Stewart and Alex traveled the country promoting the message of democratic socialism. We also had a big victory in New Jersey, where Socialist Party member Pat

Noble (19yrs old) was elected to school board in the town of Red Bank.

**The Party faces the next decade with optimism.**

# SOLIDARITY!

The Greater Indianapolis Socialist Party persuaded 3,614 voters to VOTE for SOCIALIST Representatives to the Indiana State House of Representatives in 2012.



Eugene V. Debs



Powers Hapgood



Norman Thomas



## Solidarity

Art Kazar Forest Park, IL.

Happy Anniversary to my beloved Socialist Party USA. Solidarity forever, comrades! Let us keep the flame burning in very dark times.

Cmde. Darren W. Lyle, Arlington, Massachusetts

In solidarity, from Colorado. --Jeremy

## ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS



Northern New Jersey Socialist Party

<http://socialistparty-nj.org/north-jersey.html>

ROSALUX-NYC.ORG

# ADVISORY

## EXPLICIT SOCIALISM

# ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG NEW YORK OFFICE

PUBLICATIONS | EVENTS  
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Happy Anniversary! Let's always remember our history!! What's now the Milwaukee Socialist Party began in 1898 & in 1901 what's now the Socialist Party of Wisconsin was started. Finally in 1905 what's now the S.P.-U.S.A. was born. After much history & infighting the S.P.-U.S.A. was reconstituted in 1973 in Milwaukee, Wis. Unfortunately there is still much infighting to this day. Yes, the S.P.-U.S.A. is still trying to rid itself of it's "grandfather". That's shameful. Ken Smith, Hartford, Wis, a 35 year member.

Check out *The Socialist* on-line



[www.socialistparty-usa.net/the-socialist.html](http://www.socialistparty-usa.net/the-socialist.html)



## Socialist Party of Monmouth & Ocean Counties



*Bringing the spirit of the Socialist Party USA  
and the struggle for democratic socialism to  
the Northern Jersey Shore area since 2011*

[www.SocialistPartyMOC.org](http://www.SocialistPartyMOC.org)

# Pat NOBLE

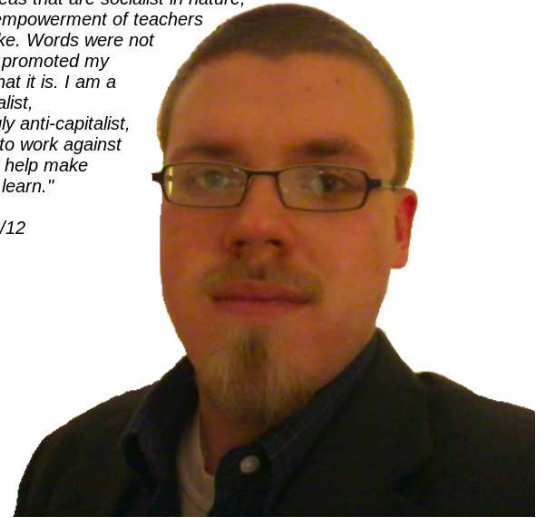


Red Bank Regional High School Board of Education

*Elected on November 6th, 2012 with 54% of the vote*

*"While officially non-partisan, the message of this campaign was clear. We promoted ideas that are socialist in nature, specifically the empowerment of teachers and students alike. Words were not minced, and we promoted my candidacy for what it is. I am a 19 year old socialist, uncompromisingly anti-capitalist, and I would like to work against budget cuts and help make students free to learn."*

*-Pat Noble, 11/6/12*



**In Memory of Janet Johnstone,  
who said:**

**"The language of the  
revolution will be Spanish."**

**FROM MAGGIE PHAIR**

## *Happy 40th Anniversary! Socialist Party-USA*

*"The master and slave, the lord and serf  
of past ages, are gone, and the capitalist  
and wage workers of our day must follow  
them." -Eugene V. Debs*



**★ Memphis TN**

*¡Solidaridad Pa' Siempre!*



CONGRATULATIONS ON OUR FORTIETH  
ANNIVERSARY

AND

COMRADELY MAY DAY GREETINGS

FROM

Robert E. Meggison

Attorney at Law

Belfast, Maine

# A special thank you to **David McReynolds** from the Socialist Party NYC

The New York City local of the Socialist Party USA would like to take the opportunity of this 40th Anniversary to pay tribute to its longest-standing member **David McReynolds**. David has witnessed the party's growth from its earlier form as the Socialist Party of America through to its present structure as the Socialist Party USA. He has not only contributed to our history but has helped insure our continuity.



Thank you David for your camaraderie and service in the past, present and future!

