

CCDS MOBILIZER

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Spring 2009

Planning for COC Education Fund Symposium and CCDS Sixth National Convention

Hundreds of members and other progressives are expected to come together to discuss and debate the most critical issues of our time at a national symposium on “Capitalism in Crisis: Socialism for the 21st Century,” sponsored by the Committees of Correspondence Education Fund, July 23rd, and the CCDS 6th National Convention, July 24-26, 2009. Both events will be held in San Francisco at the Whitcomb Hotel.

“Democracy Charter”

The Symposium will be opened by Jack O’Dell, historic figure of the South’s civil rights movement, presenting his “Democracy Charter.” Prominent activists from labor, immigrant rights, peace and justice movements will follow discussing “Building the Progressive Majority in the Age of Obama.” A second panel, with representatives of several socialist organizations, including CCDS, the Communist Party USA, the Democratic Socialists of America, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, and Solidarity, will hold a roundtable discussion, “Conversation on the Left.”

An evening of international solidarity will feature representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the South African Communist Party, the European Party of the Left and Germany’s Die Linke (The Left) Party. A representative of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has been invited.

Strategies for building the progressive majority and envisioning Socialism

Following the Symposium, Friday through Sunday, CCDS members, friends, and guests will continue the discussion in plenary and workshop sessions of strategies for building the progressive majority and the socialist future.

On Friday evening, the Kendra Alexander Foundation will host a welcoming reception for international guests and celebrate founding member and CCDS Co-Chair Charlene Mitchell.

These four days will be of critical importance for the future of CCDS as an organization and the left generally. Conversation on these issues cannot come at a more critical time.

As Charles Dickens wrote about the time of the French Revolution, “This is the worst of times and the best of times.” On the one hand, millions of people experience home loan foreclosures, massive job loss, rising economic inequality, two wars; threats of irreversible environmental damage; and disproportional pain and suffering in all these policy areas experienced by people of color, women, workers, and youth.

But this is also a time of hope for a progressive agenda.

Anyone who viewed Pete Seeger singing “This Land is Your Land” at the Lincoln Memorial two days before the inauguration of the first African American president, with Woody Guthrie’s verses challenging private property and supporting class struggle, realizes that progressive political struggles have been reaffirmed.

Election of national leadership

The convention, as the highest decision-making body of our organization, will elect National Co-Chairs (the four Co-Chairs, Charlene Mitchell, James Campbell, Mark Solomon, and Leslie Cagan will be retiring from those positions) and members of the National Coordinating Committee (half are elected at the convention and the others in a mail ballot).

CCDS members in good standing have voting rights at the convention. Bylaws procedures also allow members from local CCDS chapters or state organizations to cast votes as representatives of these bodies as well.

The convention will debate, revise, and move for adoption of a new “Goals and Principles” document. This new



CCDS at the April 4, 2009 United for Peace and Justice sponsored March on Wall Street calling for No to Wars and Wall St. Bailouts.

proposed document significantly revises the founding document to more appropriately address the CCDS political vision for the 21st century. Also, the convention will be asked to debate a series of resolutions proposed by the National Coordinating Committee to guide the organization’s work over the next three years.

CCDS members are encouraged to submit nominations for positions of national Co-Chair and National Coordinating Committee. Nomination forms must be submitted with signatures of five members in good standing.

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CCDS Membership by Local Area

Report as of 5/20/09:

	Current	Arrears
Alabama	1	0
Alaska	2	0
Arkansas	1	0
California South	26	25
California North	92	39
Colorado	3	3
Connecticut	3	7
D.C./VA/MD	9	4
Deleware	3	0
Florida	4	2
Georgia	3	2
Hawaii	2	0
Iowa	2	1
Idaho	0	2
Illinois	15	7
Indiana	9	2
Kentucky	8	2
Louisiana	0	1
Maine	1	0
Massachusetts	21	11
Michigan	4	1
Minnesota	7	2
Mississippi	1	0
Missouri/Kansas	3	0
Montana	1	1
Nebraska	2	0
Nevada	1	0
New Hampshire	0	1
New Jersey	7	3
New Mexico	1	0
New York City & LI	76	40
New York Upstate	3	0
North Carolina	2	2
Ohio	6	0
Oregon	11	2
Pennsylvania Eastern	4	1
Pennsylvania Western	6	2
Rhode Island	1	1
South Carolina	9	6
Tennessee	1	1
Texas	4	0
Utah	1	0
Vermont	1	0
Virginia	1	0
Washington	7	3
Wisconsin	1	0
West Virginia	0	1
TOTALS:	370	179

Who We Are

CCDS is a national membership organization dedicated to democracy and socialism with local chapters in several cities. We are active in struggles for peace, justice, democracy, equality and hold a vision of a socialist future.

Annual membership is \$36 (\$18 for low income, unemployed, seniors, youth). Household membership is \$48. Add \$5 additional for a subscription to *Dialogue & Initiative*.

Send check payable to the CCDS to: Membership Dept., 6422 Irwin Ct., Oakland, CA 94609 or go on-line: www.cc-ds.org

Dialogue & Initiative

Subscribe to *Dialogue & Initiative*, a publication of the Committees of Correspondence Education Fund, Inc.

The Summer 2009 issue will include:

- Interview with Leslie Cagan
- "In the belly of the beast: challenging US imperialism and the politics of the offensive"
- "Challenging misperceptions of US policy in Israel/Palestine"
- "China: market Socialism and environmental degradation"
- "How Bush made it worse: George W and the Middle East"
- "Blue-Green insurgency gets fired up at the DC Green Jobs conference"

Sub is \$10/year;
\$5 with CCDS membership

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Member contributions to this publication are welcomed.

This issue edited by Harry Targ, Ted Reich and Pat Fry

CCDS Activities Around the Country

Midwest

Members and friends of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS) discussed how to build an effective progressive majority at its semi-annual Midwest regional meeting in West Lafayette, Indiana on April 25.

Mildred Williamson, member of the CCDS National Executive Committee, opened with four problems that she said were critical for the Left today.

First, and most basic, we need to figure out how we can analyze and overcome our differences. Second, we need to ask ourselves how we should act when we disagree with the new Obama administration. Third, we need to discuss how we can most effectively address issues that are not being addressed. And finally, we have to develop more effective techniques to reach out to different sectors of the progressive movement.

Issues Central to a Progressive Coalition

Williamson then discussed issues that have not been adequately addressed. By framing the impacts of economic crisis around the so-called "middle class," the particular nature of the economic crisis in poor and working class communities, particularly communities of color, has been ignored. She said progressives must begin to address the consequences of long-term economic crisis; mortgage foreclosures, and how drug laws discriminate against the poor and people of color.

Janet Tucker, CCDS National Organizer, confirmed that in rural, as well as urban Kentucky, unemployment, homelessness, racism, and criminalization were problems for poor and working class people long before the current crisis. In addition, mountain top removal has destroyed the environment and communities while it has brought new wealth to elite energy companies.

John Wilborn, a Louisville CCDS member, called for progressive groups

to demand the firing of Tim Geithner and Lawrence Summers; the establishment of a commission to investigate the causes of the financial crisis; and the restoration of the Glass-Steagall Act and revocation of the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 to reregulate the financial sector of the economy.

Activating the Progressive Majority

European nations, all capitalist, have progressive policies concerning health, transportation, education, and the environment Ted Pearson, CCDS National Executive Committee member, pointed out. While President Obama's job description is to oversee and advance the interests of capitalism, people in motion can work inside the system as well as outside it to achieve the modest but significant reforms that Europeans have gained.

Berenice Carroll, West Lafayette CCDS member, added that all the issues discussed must include assessing the particular effects of the economic and political crises on women. She added that building a progressive majority involves networking with women's organizations as well as others that have been mentioned.

Finally, Ira Grupper, CCDS Labor Task Force coordinator, urged CCDS to expand its organizing work and to include discussions of causes in analyses of the economic crisis.

- Harry Targ, Midwest Region Coordinator

South

"Socialist Activism and the Civil Rights Movement: Building a Progressive Majority" was the title of a Southern regional conference of the CCDS held on March 21 and attended by 30 activists from 5 states.

Jim Campbell, CCDS Co-Chair called the conference a "great beginning in this difficult southern region of our country.

Held in the historic city of Charleston South Carolina, attendees were provided a unique glimpse of that history at an informal gathering

on Friday evening with Jim Campbell, a Charleston native and Bill Saunders of the hospital workers' union District 1199 in Charleston sharing personal memories intertwined with Charleston history and landscape.

On Saturday, additional historical analysis reflecting on the long history of struggle, from the time of slavery through reconstruction, was provided by a panel including presentations by Kerry Taylor, history professor at the Citadel, Brian Kelly, Queens University, Belfast, Ireland, and CCDS leader Meta Van Sickle, education professor at the College of Charleston

During the lunch break, clips from a film-in-progress on the life of Anne Braden by Anne Lewis and Mimi Pickering of Appalshop (www.appalshop.org) was shown. In the film, Braden, a historic political force in the South, pointed out the intersection of race and class and the need to fight white supremacy. Her life was a testament to the claim she made in the film that people get involved in social justice movements because they see that a different world is possible.

The afternoon panel concentrated on the political work going on in the

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**IN MEMORY OF OUR
COMRADE
ALICE CORRELL**

HANLEY HEMMINGSON

Hanley Hemmingson was a principled, courageous, thoughtful man of action who was a radical political activist since the Great Depression. His letters-to-the-editor number in the hundreds, each written to create a world of peace and justice - his most cherished values. Monthly, and at age 94, Hanley made a three-hour round trip to attend Oregon CCDS meetings. His contributions and his companionship will be sorely missed.

Convention

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Members and friends of CCDS can register for the convention on-line at www.cc-ds.org and can register at the convention site, the Whitcomb Hotel, 1231 Market Street, San Francisco. Reserve rooms at special convention rates by calling 800-227-4747.

For further information, contact karl@cc-ds.org or 415-863-6637, or the CCDS national office at national@cc-ds.org or 212-868-3733 or visit the CCDS web page: www.cc-ds.org.

All are encouraged to participate in pre-convention discussion of the "Goals and Principles" draft document. Go to: <http://www.cc-ds-discussion.org>

CCDS Around the Country

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post-election South in the midst of the economic crisis. Panelists included Brett Bursey, Executive Director., SC Progressive Network; Erin McKee, Charleston AFL-CIO Labor Council; Saladin Muhammad, Black Workers for Justice; Jack Teller, Iraq Veterans Against the War; and Bill Saunders. All were united on the need to build the progressive majority and the unique opportunities and challenges present today

The day ended with participants looking forward to continuing CCDS work in the Southern Region and building on the long tradition of Socialists in the south. As CCDS works to build toward our National Convention in July, the Southern Region plans to hold meetings regularly. - *Renée Carter, Southern Region Coordinator*

New York Metro

On March 24 the New York Metro CCDS held a public forum on "The Economic Crisis and How it Affects New York." Presenters were William Tabb, Marxist economist, author and frequent contributor to *Monthly Review*

magazine; Coraminita Mahr, Vice president, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East; and Mark Solomon, National Co-chair of CCDS. The forum, held at the 1199 SEIU union hall, was well attended.

"What is the Role of the Left in the Age of Obama?" was the question posed and discussed by NY Metro CCDS members and friends on May 6. Roger Green, Executive Director of the Medgar Evers College, DuBois/Bunche Center for Public Policy led off the evening's discussion. A former NY state legislator, Green concentrated on legislative programs such as the drastic reformation of the prison-industrial complex, including the *complete* overhaul of the Rockefeller drug laws and the Census Bureau's enumeration of prisoners where they are incarcerated rather in their communities of origin. This practice skews legislative representation and federal and state funding to favor smaller and rural communities. - *Ted Reich*

Louisville

The Louisville study group (Socialist Education Project) meets, usually, once a month and is going strong. Our most recent meeting, on May 12, had 13 participants. The April session was attended by 17 people. Our most recent topic was: "Empire in the Academy? The Corporatization of Universities." June's topic will be "The Great Financial Crisis: Causes and Consequences," by John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff. - *Ira Grupper*

New York City - Left Forum

New York City's annual "Left Forum" this year was a solid success. Under the theme "Turning Points", more than 2,000 participants met at Pace University, April 17-19, to take part in 200 panels with 600 speakers.

A CCDS panel was well received with lively discussion on "Building a Progressive Majority and Advancing a Vision of Socialism" with CCDS leaders Carl Bloice, Mark Solomon, Carl Davidson and Renee Carter. Carl

Davidson presented Van Jones' program for Green Jobs for inner city youth, but framing it as a larger structural reform project that could, if done right, unite a progressive majority and help get us out of the current crisis. "At the same time," said Davidson, "we have to unite a militant minority around socialist tasks" and offered the solidarity economy movement and its projects as practical examples of cooperative forms that could, within the capitalist present, point to a socialist future.

Carl Bloice followed with a warning that the problems of inter-imperialist rivalry still existed in a multipolar world, as did the problem of militarism and the need for disarmament as a path to greater global equity. He also stressed the need for popular resistance to Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan escalation.

Renee Carter described some of the practical organizational work in the South, including a recent CCDS conference in Charleston, SC. "It showed people are very hungry for socialist ideas and groups like ours."

Mark Solomon, CCDS Co-Chair, presented a very practical organizational model for organizing the progressive majority. Based on the Majority Alliance Project in Boston, which is pulling together dozens of existing organizations "to work wholistically" on a range of projects where progressive majorities exist - such as ending the wars and developing green jobs. At the same time, they work to take issues with large minority support, such as Palestine self-determination or gay marriage, and develop new ways of thinking to get them to become majorities. Critical to both sets of work has been to build wider alliances with the labor, youth and community forces who emerged as activists in the Obama campaign.

Forty people attended the panel, most of whom knew little about CCDS. They learned more in the discussion, which covered a number of bases, from rightwing populism to community base-building.

- *Adapted from an article by Carl Davidson*