



#131

July – August, 2010

<http://www.chicagodsa.org/ngarchive/ng131.html>

Village Board Gags on Justice

by Tom Broderick

As far as the current Oak Park Village Board of Trustees is concerned, there will be no living wage ordinance for Oak Park. On Tuesday, July 6, 2010, the Village Board met for the first time to consider the report generated by the Community Relations Commission (CRC). In January 2009, the Village Board assigned the CRC to study the impact that a living wage ordinance would have on Oak Park.

The CRC was tasked to study this because in November 2008 there was a referendum on the Oak Park ballot asking if the Village of Oak Park should enact a comprehensive living wage ordinance covering workers who were either directly or indirectly paid using Village dollars. During our great recession, the voters of Oak Park said "YES" by a 20% margin.

Taking their responsibility seriously, the commission spent thirteen months working through the ramifications that a living wage ordinance would have on our Village. John Murtagh, who was the CRC Chair, said this was the first "meat and potatoes issue" the commission had dealt with in some time.

Commissioners did individual research and held a conference call with Dr. Amy Glasmeier of Pennsylvania State University. She developed the PSU Calculator, which is used to calculate what a living wage would be in various geographic areas. The commissioners wanted to better understand the methodology behind the calculator.

Thirteen months of struggle and two public forums later, the CRC voted seven to two to submit their report to the Village Board. That report included a recommendation that the Board enact a living wage

ordinance. As the vote took place, there were many strong endorsements that a living wage ordinance was good public policy and represented the values of our community. Commissioner Bob Kane said he had voted against the referendum but now felt strongly that this made for good public policy.

After the vote, Murtagh, who voted against the report, said that the commissioners on the CRC were likely the most knowledgeable people in Oak Park on the issue.

So what happened? Bias and

ignorance took center stage at the July 6th Board meeting.

Cecil Hunt, the current chair of the Community Relations Commission made a very good presentation of their report, including the recommendation that the Village Board enact a comprehensive living wage ordinance.

After Hunt made his presentation, the Board allowed three speakers in support of and three speakers against the ordinance proposal to address the Trustees. They also allowed Bamshad Mobasher, *(Living Wage continued on Page 4)*

Mobilizing for Jobs: National March and Rally

by Bill Barclay

One of the prominent themes at the US Social Forum was the need for a jobs program appropriate to the scale of the jobs deficit: a loss of 8.2 million existing jobs since December 2007 plus the 7.3 million already unemployed at that time (as of June 2010 there were another 8.6 million underemployed, working part time but wanting full time work). An important outcome of both the USSF and the larger political discussion of employment is the call for a national Jobs Rally and March in Washington D.C. on **October 2, 2010**. Several groups are already involved in organizing for the rally, including Jobs with Justice, NAACP, and several unions. More information is available at <http://onenationworkingtogether.org>. Ideas for local actions in early August are also under discussion.

Chicago DSA is considering organizing a bus to go to the rally. If you are or think you might be interested in going to the rally, please let the Chicago DSA office know. We estimate the cost/person at \$75, not including food, if we can fill a bus. Call us at 773-384-0327 if you are interested in joining people across the country for this extremely important rally. It's our chance to get the political and the pundit classes focused on the real deficit: the jobs deficit.

These mobilizations are urgent and important. While private sector jobs are indeed being added to the economy, at the current rate of increase, it will take decades to replace the jobs lost during the formal recession. For a look at the numbers, see this PowerPoint presentation prepared by the Chicago Political Economy Group: <http://www.cpegonline.org/multimedia/JobsProgramNow.ppt>.

CHICAGO DSA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SYNOPSIS • MAY 15, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 Noon in the Chicago DSA office by acting chair, Bill Barclay.

MINUTES of the meeting of April 10, 2010, were approved as printed, with the notation in the final paragraph that should have read by the addition of the italicized word, "Confederation of Northern Illinois Peace Groups."

DEBS DINNER. Roman provided a printed report showing paid amount was approximately \$19,000.00 with some income still due and some possible expenses remaining. Treasurer's Report will provide final totals at a later date.

CONTRIBUTION REQUEST. It was moved by Baker, seconded by Birmingham, that Chicago DSA send \$150.00 for membership dues to the Illinois Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Motion carried.

NEW GROUND. Roman reported that a number of articles are expected. Some were volunteered at the meeting.

A CENTURY OF MAY DAYS CONFERENCE. Birmingham reported that the workshop he led on May 2 consisted of discussion of a bibliography of books on Religion and Socialism, and a list of faith based organizations involved in issues of social justice.

NORTH SHORE BRANCH. Baker reported no response yet to the web site he set up.

CONFEDERATION OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS PEACE GROUPS. Strobel reported that about 40 people attended the April 17 meeting in Batavia seeking to bring Labor and Peace groups together to deal with

worker issues. A follow up meeting is planned for June 12 in the UAW Hall in Montgomery, IL.

LABOR SUPPORT. Roman reported on two Labor issues which deserve DSA support. Here Local 1 will recognize the anniversary of the Congress Hotel strike in June, 2010. There is no contract yet. It is a type of issue that DSA should support.

The United Electrical Workers can use support for activity in the southwest suburbs. They had already demonstrated Labor needs at a McCormick Place House Wares Convention. Roman suggested a post card mailing to the DSA list calling for support of the Labor activities. It was moved by Birmingham, seconded by Baker, that Chicago DSA support these labor activities. Motion carried.

COALITION TO SAVE COMMUNITY BANKING. Strobel reported efforts to get the FDIC to rescind its decision to have US Bank take over Park National Bank; or at least to get US Bank to adopt a community benefits agreement and keep programs of Park National Bank in areas of need. The coalition will also address the issues of Mortgages and Foreclosures. A Public Meeting is planned for the evening of June 8 at Hope Community Church in Austin to get support for US Bank's commitment to community benefits. A demonstration is planned for June 9 at US Bank, which will be either a celebration of its agreement for community benefits or an additional push for it to do so.

GREATER OAK PARK BRANCH. Broderick reported an Oak Park Village Board meeting in May asking that the board adopt a Living Wage Ordinance for Village Workers. He urged the Village Board to meet with the Community Relations Commission to discuss the LWO.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING. It was agreed to hold the meeting on Saturday, June 19, 2010 at 12:30 PM. Agenda includes election of officers and adoption of annual budget.

ADJOURNMENT. The meeting adjourned at 12:55 PM.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

After a short break a Membership Meeting was called to order for the purpose of discussing a Jobs Program Proposal, led by Bill Barclay. The program has been presented in Democratic Left. Highlights of the proposal are:

- 8 1/2 million jobs have been lost, in addition to those who have given up looking for work and are no longer listed as unemployed.
- Jobs needed now are in Construction, Human Social Services, and Green Technology.
- Good jobs should include a Living Wage, Training, Supervisory Labor, and Unions right to organize.
- Public funding estimated at \$875,000,000, to be paid for by taxing Financial Trading Assets.

Discussion of the proposal followed.

Adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 2:10 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Birmingham, secretary

CHICAGO DSA MEMBERSHIP MEETING SYNOPSIS • JUNE 19, 2010

The meeting was called to order in the Chicago DSA office at 12:35 PM by male co-chair, Ron Baiman.

MINUTES of the Executive Committee and Membership Meeting of May 15, 2010 were approved as printed.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS. Barclay nominated Michael Baker for re-election as treasurer, seconded by Broderick. Motion carried. Barclay nominated Bill Pelz for re-election as Political Education Officer, seconded by Roman. Motion carried.

Elections are for two year terms. No candidate was available for Female Co-chair.

ADOPTION OF ANNUAL BUDGET FOR JULY 1, 2010 THRU JUNE 30, 2011. Baker presented a printed budget proposal showing estimated income of \$24,350 and estimated expenses of \$27,460. The projected budget deficit led to a discussion of fund raising. Pelz suggested selling DSA T-shirts. Barclay moved that Pelz confirm the cost and report back as to a possible fund raiser in connection with the Debs Dinner of 2011. Motion carried. It was moved by Barclay, seconded by Pelz, that the Annual Budget as presented be adopted. Motion carried.

CONTRIBUTION REQUEST. It was moved by Strobel, seconded by Baker, that Chicago DSA contribute \$20.00 toward a request to sponsor a veteran's attendance at a conference sponsored by Chicago Iraq Veterans Against the War. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT. Baker presented a printed report showing a balance of \$10,634.42 in the checking account, \$343.28 in bulk mail, \$182.56 in stamps, and \$72.16 in petty cash. It was noted that about \$1,800.00 remains due for the Debs Dinner, so that about \$20,000 will be realized as total income for the dinner.

CONFERENCE OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS PEACE GROUPS. Barclay reported on the June 12 meeting at the UAW Hall in Montgomery, IL. Amy Dean, author of "A New New Deal", spoke on how to create a Labor/Peace Group Coalition. The group adopted "Jobs For Illinois" as its name. An interim committee was appointed to draw up plans for a meeting in September.

CONGRESS HOTEL STRIKE. Roman reported a smaller turnout for picketing the hotel on June 14, the seventh anniversary of the strike than a year ago. About 7 to 10 DSA members were present, displaying the DSA banner, along with representatives of several unions.

Civil Disobedience Action is planned for July 22. DSA members are asked to volunteer. Unite Here Local 1 is pushing to extend living wages to employees of concessions at O'Hare Field. Articles on both issues will appear in the next issue of New Ground.

COMMUNITY BANKING. Strobel reported that the Coalition for Community Banking is still pushing US Bank to keep agreements for the good of the community. While it is legal to work on abandoned houses, US Bank wants to board them up. An attorney is working with three clients to ask US Bank to stop illegal boarding up.

GREATER OAK PARK BRANCH. Broderick reported that the Oak Park Village Board will hear recommendations for a Living Wage Ordinance. The Community Relations Commission has endorsed the Ordinance, but people opposed will be allowed to speak. Three people pro and con will address the Board. It was moved by Roman, seconded by Pelz, that Chicago DSA make a post card mailing to DSA members in the 60302 zip code area and to DSA members nearby outside of Oak Park. Motion carried.

NEW GROUND. Deadline for the next print edition is July 10.

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS. Barclay reported an effort by Jobs With Justice to encourage unemployed workers to meet with volunteers to help workers to support a jobs bill and fill out job applications. A meeting is planned for Monday, June 21, at 10:00 AM. JWJ is looking for people to meet with workers.

AMERICA SPEAKS. Baiman reported that a non-profit group from Washington, D.C. wants to gather opinions on the federal deficit. After offering his opinion to the leadership that the trade deficit had to be part of the discussion, Baiman was relieved of being a participant. There is hope that his ideas will be included in the presentations whether or not he is allowed to speak.

Adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 2:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Birmingham, secretary

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Chicago Democratic Socialists of America
1608 N. Milwaukee Ave., Room 403
Chicago, IL 60647
Voice: (773) 384-0327
Email: chiildsa@chicagodsa.org
Web: www.chicagodsa.org

The opinions expressed are solely those of the authors. Contributions welcome, including letters to the editor. Letters should be less than 500 words. The deadline for the next issue is September 7, 2010.

Robert Roman, Editor
Hugh Iglarsh, Culture Editor
Contacts

Tom Broderick, Greater Oak Park DSA,
(708) 386-6007

CDSA Executive Committee

Ron Baiman, Male Co-Chair,
(708) 445-9052

[vacant], Female Co-Chair,

Gene Birmingham, Secretary,
(630) 787-9909

Michael Baker, Treasurer
(773) 968-8616

Bill Pelz, Political Education Director,
(773) 960-5648

Bill Barclay, Greater Oak Park DSA,
(708) 386-1371

Other News

compiled by Bob Roman

CDSA Convention

A synopsis of the membership meeting is on page 2, but in summary, all the incumbent officers were re-elected without opposition, except for the female co-chair position for which there were no candidates at all.

The meeting also adopted a truly skeletal yet deficit budget, anticipating a loss of about \$3,000. We do have the reserves to cover this, and deficit budgets have been typical for the Chicago local though we sometimes end up pretty much breaking even or even adding to our reserve. The big variable is our annual dinner. In June, it's very hard to predict the next year's dinner gross or net. The years we've done well have been covering for the years we've not.

It may not show in the synopsis, but the meeting was not happy with our fiscal condition. The deficit is not so bad except that there is also not much money for doing things, including replacing some of our aging computer equipment and software. This kind of budget worked, after a fashion, last year. It might work this year. It's not a tenable situation for much longer.

T-shirts will not solve the problem, but they could be a fun and useful contribution anyway. So we're going to have union-made **Chicago DSA t-shirts** for sale, and we're going to have a **contest** for the design. Email (chiildsa@chicagodsa.org) or mail your design entry to the Chicago DSA office. Entries will be judged on aesthetics, practicality, humor, and politics. What will you win? A t-shirt, at least, but maybe more. Deadline? To be announced but sometime 2010.

Greider @ the Dinner

CAN TV recorded William Greider's talk at the 2010 Debs — Thomas — Harrington Dinner for later broadcast to Chicago cable subscribers, but it's now available to all on the web: <http://www.cantv.org/VIDEO-BringAmericaHome.htm>.

YDS

The Young Democratic Socialists have a new national organizer, Andrew Porter. Porter is a graduate of the College of Wooster, where he had begun a campus group, Ice Cream Socialists, that quickly affiliated with YDS. Since graduating, he's worked at a number of green organizing and policy jobs, so he's not so green, in a manner of speaking.

The annual YDS Summer Retreat will be held August 5 through 8 at the Valley Brook Inn in Wurtsboro, New York. For more information, go to <http://www.ydsusa.org>.

Labor Support Work

The Chicago Department of Aviation is putting the O'Hare Airport concession contracts up for bid. UNITE HERE Local 1 has contracts covering the workers at some of these concessions, and Local 1 and friends have been petitioning Commissioner Rosemary Adolinoto to include a living wage in the request for proposals to be sent out. See <http://www.chicagodsa.org/ngarchive/ng130.html#anchor338961> for more details. Chicago DSA members are involved in this campaign, and we may be asking for your help too.

In addition to the front page of *New Ground 130*, Chicago DSA sent out over 700 postcards advertising the 7th year anniversary picket and rally in support of the Congress Hotel strike on June 14. We targeted the downtown zip codes and our list of labor activists for the mailing. Nearly a dozen DSA members were in attendance and Chicago DSA's new banner made its second public appearance.

Warehouse Workers for Justice tells us that *New Ground* readers have contributed well over \$500 and that contributions are still coming in. They're using the money to pay warehouse worker to canvass fellow-workers on job conditions, research that no one else has been doing, apparently. You'll be hearing more about this in the future.

Living Wages

There's been a considerable amount of material regarding Living Wage campaigns in Oak Park, Chicago, and Cook County (Chicago DSA has been a part of them all) published in *New Ground*.

(Other News continued on Page 4)

Join DSA — To Change the USA!

You are invited to join this grand enterprise of fundamentally changing our civilization! Dues include subscriptions to DSA's national magazine, *Democratic Left*, and Chicago DSA's *New Ground*. Dues are:

\$75 Sustainer; \$45 Regular; \$20 Low-Income or student; Busted (\$1 to \$19) \$ _____

On the other hand, send me:

1 year subscription to *New Ground* (\$10.00); More information about DSA; enclosed is a contribution of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____ Email _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____

Return to: Chicago DSA, 1608 N. Milwaukee, Room 403, Chicago, IL 60647, Please make your check payable to Chicago DSA. Contributions and dues are not tax-deductible.

(Living Wage from Page 1)

co-author of the CRC report to make a short statement.

Ron Baiman, co-chair of Chicago DSA, who drafted our original proposal, discussed the studies made on existing living wage communities and how little negative impact had been recorded. Rich Pokorny, chair of the Unity Temple Social Mission Committee addressed the positive aspects of government intervention and oversight, raising the question "Where did our great recession come from?" Pokorny also gave the Board 500 post cards signed by Oak Park residents who still think a comprehensive living wage ordinance is a good idea. Reverend C.J. Hawking, Executive Director of ARISE Chicago spoke of the moral imperative of paying wages that lift workers out of poverty. She also provided a copy of *Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy*, a book written by Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce, to each of the Trustees.

Martin Noll, chair of the Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC) said that OPDC is "unalterably opposed" to a living wage ordinance. Kim Goldschmidt, President of the Oak Park~River Forest Chamber of Commerce and Bob Loro, owner of Loro Auto Works in Oak Park also spoke against the proposal. One of them actually said enacting a living wage ordinance would be an insult to those workers who already make one.

They were all willing to talk about how few workers would benefit from the proposed ordinance, but it took Village Trustee Colette Lueck to elicit that very few businesses would be impacted -- only some of those receiving Village dollars.

There was much confusion and concern over enforcement of the ordinance. There was concern over the difficulties that businesses would face in living up to the agreement. There was concern that the CRC proposal did not cover workers with disabilities. There was concern that the CRC proposal exempted workers who worked fewer than 20 hours per week. The Village Board had many questions and concerns. How did they address them?

At least six of the Trustees thanked the CRC for their hard work. Then President David Pope asked for a motion to receive the report from the CRC. Trustee Ray Johnson asked for an amendment to receive the report but strip it of the recommendation to enact a living wage. After brief

discussion, Trustee Jon Hale seconded with a declaration that the referendum that received a 60% "YES" vote was "thankfully non-binding." "This isn't California," he continued. He also said that if those who voted for the referendum were Trustees, perhaps they'd think and act differently.

A vote was taken to strip the CRC report of the recommendation to enact. Trustees Ray Johnson, Jon Hale, John Hedges and Jan Pate voted "yes." A special note on Trustee Pate: she is the Board liaison to the Community Relations Commission. At the July 6th meeting, she said she had been "kept apprised" of the commission's work. Pate didn't make it to one of the CRC's regularly scheduled meetings during the thirteen months they spent deliberating the proposal.

President Pope and Trustees Colette Lueck and Glenn Brewer voted against stripping the recommendation from the report. The recommendation to enact was removed.

President Pope then called for a vote to accept the report as amended. The vote was identical. The report without recommendation was received. Unless any Trustee wants to pursue a living wage ordinance for Oak Park, the issue will go nowhere under this Board.

(Other News from Page 3)

Now links to most of these articles are available in one place: <http://www.chicagodsa.org/ngarchive/livingwage.html>.

The 2010 US Social Forum

The 2010 US Social Forum was held in Detroit from June 22 - 27th. An estimated 10,000 people attended one or more of the USSF's hundreds of panels and workshops. DSA and YDS sponsored 4 workshops: "A Permanent Jobs Program for the United States," "Movement Building and the Atlanta Fighting Foreclosure Coalition," "Reclaiming the Ivory Towers: Students Achieving Access and Affordability," and "WTF is Socialism Anyway???" The Campus as a Battleground of Class Struggle." The "Permanent Jobs Program" workshop was conducted by members of the Chicago DSA (the presentation can be found at www.cpegonline.org). In addition, DSA held an "Ice Cream Socialist" open event to meet and talk with other socialists and those curious about socialism, DSA and YDS.

Instead of trying to find out the answers to the questions they were raising, instead of accepting the judgment of the body they asked to research the issue, the very body that Murtagh said probably said knew more about the issue than anyone else in Oak Park, our Village Board decided to say "NO" to the voters and say "Thanks but no thanks" to the CRC.

What next? This is a setback, but not necessarily a defeat. The three co-sponsors of this fight are Greater Oak Park DSA, Unity Temple Social Mission Committee and Oak Park Coalition for Truth & Justice. We must figure out how to broaden the coalition and move forward.

We must also keep an eye on the next election for Village Board Trustees. Some of the Trustees who chose to disregard the "YES" vote by the people of Oak Park may want to seek their support in the next election.

We will assess our commitment to the issue and deliberate on ways to broaden and strengthen support for a government policy that improves the lives of human beings in measurable and meaningful ways. This is a proper function of a democratic government.

In addition to the workshops and forums, DSA staffed a table for the entire time of the conference. This gave us a chance to talk with other USSF attendees and to distribute our recently completed "Social and Economic Bill of Rights (EBOR)." EBOR is the product of DSA's Economic Security Working Group that was established at the 2009 DSA Convention held in Chicago. EBOR exists in both a short 4 page form, perfect for distributing at rallies and meetings, and a longer background version that develops rationales of each of the 10 rights described in the short form. The short form is available from the Chicago DSA office; the longer paper can be found on the national DSA website, dsausa.org.

A special thanks to the Detroit DSA chapter for all the work they did in preparing for the USSF and DSA/YDS participation in the event.

Bill Barclay contributed material to Other News.