

ELECTIONS

Electoral defeat in L.A.

By Dave Lindorff
LOS ANGELES—The electoral left here suffered a severe blow this spring when two left candidates for state assembly and a third for city council were trounced by the establishment political forces.

Despite high hopes for at least one left victory, two new establishment Democrats were elected to traditionally Democratic assembly seats and the city council's longest-term member took his seat for still another term—while three left candidates began analyzing the causes of their defeat.

Ruth Yannatta.

In West Los Angeles, Ruth Yannatta came in second, with 27 percent of the vote, behind Mel Levine (30 percent). While she lost by only about 1,500 votes, the loss is significant because the campaign had been targeted by the California Campaign for Economic Democracy, and because the district is considered to be one of the most liberal in the state.

The district went to Tom Hayden in his unsuccessful campaign against former Sen. John Tunney for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate last year. It also supported the unsuccessful Farmworkers' Initiative and Nuclear Safeguard ballot measure. It didn't go for Yannatta.

Money wasn't the problem as it was for the other two campaigns. Yannatta's campaign spent nearly \$100,000 compared to Levine's \$140,000.

According to Yannatta, the problem was that there simply weren't enough liberal voters. She claimed her organization's post-mortem of the vote, precinct by precinct, showed that she had garnered nearly all the liberal Democratic vote, while Levine, who was endorsed by Sen. Alan Cranston and Sen. Hubert Humphrey, collected the conservative Democratic and liberal Republican vote. "I'm not sure I could have won, given my strategy of going to the liberals and radicals in the community," Yannatta told IN THESE TIMES. Oddly, the Yannatta campaign tended to ignore those who had despaired of the

electoral process. Little effort was devoted to registering new voters. "Our sense was that those who weren't registered didn't want to be," said Yannatta.

Several Yannatta volunteers maintained as well that very little effort was made to get out the minority vote. Yannatta confirmed this.

While claiming that "we did extensive work in the Japanese and Chicano areas," she added that the overall effort, especially among blacks, was minor.

"The truth is that minority groups don't vote," she said. "It's one of those myths that needs a lot of discussion. If you're doing movement politics, you do well with minorities, but not in elections."

Despite Yannatta's attempt to put a good face on the outcome, the mood at her defeat-night party last month was disappointment. For a while she had been considered a front-runner, but as most of her opponents dropped out and it became a two-candidate race, she lost momentum and, ultimately, the race.

James Stanbery and Burt Wilson.

The best effort came in the city council race, where Peace and Freedom party member James Stanbery took 35 percent of the vote in a run-off against City Council member John Gibson, a conservative Democrat.

Run-offs against incumbents are rare in Los Angeles, and Gibson was so surprised at having Stanbery as an opponent that he ran an unabashed, old-fashioned red-baiting campaign against him, calling him a "Communist" and an advocate of the violent overthrow of the U.S. government—both not true, said Stanbery.

But as the young Harbor College political science professor observed, "It worked."

The candidate who fared worst was consumer advocate Burt Wilson, who, like Yannatta, was seeking a state assembly seat. Outspent three to one by the winner, moderate Democrat Mike Roos, Wilson came in near the bottom in a field of 12 Democrats.

Wilson summed up the problem faced by all three candidates, though he was referring only to his own campaign. "We failed to get our issues across. I ran as a consumer, but the issue in the campaign was law and order."

Both Yannatta, a consumer activist who has served as assistant director of Gov. Jerry Brown's new Consumer Affairs Department, and Wilson, a well-known fighter against the state's utilities industries, may have been victims of what a recent Harris poll found to be general consumer dissatisfaction with consumer activists.

As Wilson sees it now, consumer issues are not a good basis for a campaign. "The problem is, if you save people money, they don't see it," he said. "There's no general feeling of victory, because prices keep rising. The only people who know when you win something are the people involved. It's preposterous, but that's the reality."

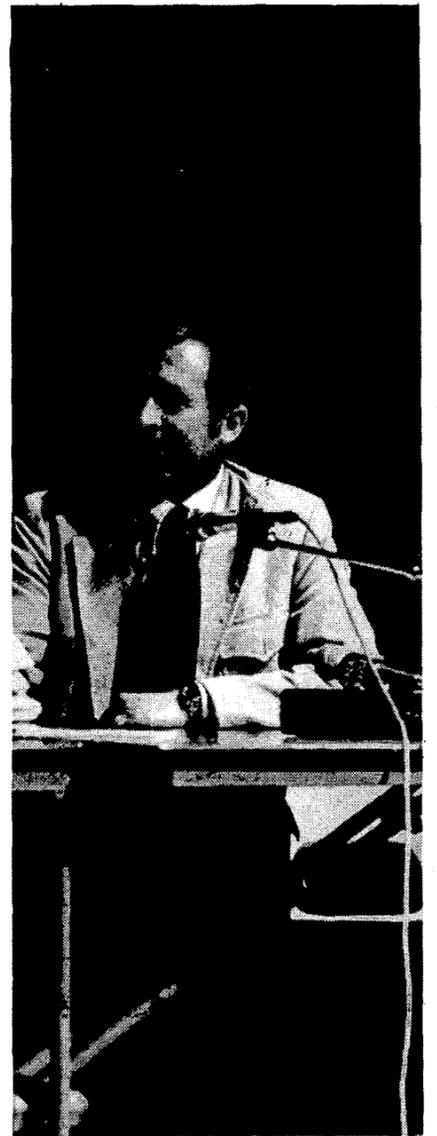
Wilson, chair of the Los Angeles chapter of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, had soft-pedaled his socialist positions during the campaign, to the point of even trying to have mention of his title in DSO deleted from a local newspaper article. He now thinks that was a mistake.

In a post-election interview with an L.A. Times reporter Wilson said the next time he runs he will run as a democratic socialist—out front. As he told IN THESE TIMES, "The main thing it would do is get some attention for the campaign. It was very dull, and the media ignored it entirely. I wasn't able to even do any consciousness raising."

The question raised by all three campaigns is: should left candidates run to win or to raise issues? Particularly in the Wilson and Yannatta cases, where the candidates actually felt they had a chance to win, they soft-pedaled or back-pedaled on positions, and in the end there seems to be little to show for the work and money spent.

But all three candidates believe there is a "next time."

The question left from from all three left electoral campaigns in L.A. is whether candidates should run to win or raise issues... or how to do both.



Burt Wilson's loss in the race for a State Assembly seat was the biggest disappointment. He landed near the bottom in a field of 12.

By Frank Warner

WASHINGTON—Government bureaucrats who try to prevent their subordinates from disclosing government corruption, waste and deceit may begin to have a more difficult time if some 200 people, including many federal employees, who gathered in Washington late last month have their way.

The occasion was a "Conference on Whistleblowing" June 24-25, sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies' Project on Official Illegality. Highlighted by testimony from prominent whistleblowers, the conference began to wrestle with the difficult problems facing individuals who reveal government wrongdoing.

Criticism focused on the civil service system, which Robert Vaughn, associate professor of law at American University, called a system that "enforces conformity and does not encourage personal responsibility."

Dr. J. Anthony Morris described his treatment at the hands of that system. At a time when his superiors promoted—and four major drug companies geared up for—the swine flu vaccination program, Dr. Morris wrote the *New York Times* and others to criticize the program as worthless and even dangerous. A week later he was fired.

The result in his case was that some 40 million Americans were vaccinated against a "non-existent disease" and more than 400 were killed by the vaccination. Morris argued that a law was needed that would provide some sort of protection to people who want to dissent.

Alan Campbell, chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, told the conference that in order to make appeals of management actions against federal employees more fair he might propose splitting the Civil Service Commission into

THE BUREAUCRACY

How to make whistleblowing safe

Highlighted by prominent "whistleblowers," the Washington conference grappled with the current lack of support or protection for those who expose government wrongdoing.

two independent agencies, with one body to handle appeals.

But Campbell, who got a little testy under continued questioning, said he had not yet developed any specifics that would fulfill President Carter's 1976 campaign promise "to seek strong legislation to protect our federal employees from harassment or dismissal if they find out and report waste or dishonesty." He did say, however, that "when dissent is inconsistent with the mission of an agency, management must be able to deal with it."

A. Ernest Fitzgerald, the Air Force efficiency expert whose job was abolished after he told Congress of \$2 billion in cost overruns on the C-5A airtransport program, countered this by pointing out that federal agencies often have both "stated goals" and "real goals," which are not always consistent with one another. The conflict between the two is what leads many federal employees to feel very bitter about their agencies.

They think they are doing their jobs properly and cannot understand when their actions meet with disapproval.

Fitzgerald stressed the importance of federal employees knowing the real mission of their agency. Not knowing the real goals might lead a federal employee to lose a promotion or a job by accident. Disagreeing with the real goals ought not to be done without careful thought, he explained, because "you can't count on help."

He pointed out that the legal work to get him another job with the Air Force had cost some \$400,000. And unless the Supreme Court orders those legal fees paid by the government, it is unlikely many lawyers will be willing to take similar cases in the future.

Ralph Nader put in an unexpected appearance at the conference and observed that as things are now, "if you do your job, you lose your job." He recommended the establishment of a "whistleblow-

er's fund," supported by a voluntary checkoff system.

The checkoff system, said Nader, would provide government workers an easy way to contribute a little of their monthly paychecks to pay for full-time lawyers and staff who would be able to defend whistleblowers in court, sue government lawbreakers, give advice to employees, lobby for new legislation and hold more public conferences on whistleblowing.

The conference discussed possible legislation such as an "Openness in Government Act" that the Project of Official Illegality has drafted. It would make government officials personally liable for any retaliation against employees who in good faith speak out against the actions of their agencies. It would also allow employees who have been abused to go directly to court with their problems and recover attorneys' fees if the courts found in their favor.

U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) had staff members at the conference encouraging federal workers to come and present information for a project he has begun to determine the extent of official illegality and what sorts of remedies might be adopted to curtail it. As part of that project he has sent a letter to federal employees asking for information on the whistleblowing problem.

Though the incidence of whistleblowing has increased in recent years, it was clear that there was a long way to go before those who risk their careers and futures would be protected, if not actively encouraged, in their efforts to bring efficiency and honesty to governmental affairs.

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IN THE WORLD

Israeli workers back Labor

The Labor party stayed in control of the Histadrut, Israel's labor federation, but Likud gained support.

In elections to the Histadrut, Israel's general federation of labor, took on unusual importance this year. They followed by one month the May 17 "revolution" in which the rightist Likud coalition ousted the Labor alignment after two generations of continuous rule, stretching back to the pre-state era.

Labor managed to maintain its hold on the workers' organization, garnering 56 percent of the vote, only a two percent drop from its 58 percent total in 1973. But Likud increased its vote dramatically, from 23 percent in 1973 to 29 percent.

The results are paradoxical. Likud's recent gains reflect a deep dissatisfaction among Israelis with the economic situation and with the Labor establishment's corruption and degeneration after so many years in power. But the support for Labor in the Histadrut reflects some class consciousness among Israeli workers, who understand that the Likud policies of uncontrolled "free" enterprise, unemployment to fight inflation and compulsory arbitration are against their interests.

Socialist beginnings.

Founded in 1920 by the few thousand Jewish pioneers then trying to settle the country, the Histadrut was never a typical trade union movement. Its main function was to provide otherwise non-existent cultural and social services to its members. Politically, it was the tool of utopian socialists within the Zionist movement who believed that without the creation of a Jewish working class there would be no Jewish national home—at best it would be a colony living on the backs of Arab labor.

They were an idealistic lot, intent on turning a substantial portion of European Jewry—mostly urban in position and outlook—into a new, rural based proletariat. The movement fought Jewish employers in Palestine who were hiring the cheaper, more plentiful Arab laborers. Thus the seeds of a national conflict were sown. The few attempts to organize Jews and Arabs together failed.

By the 1930s, the Jewish labor parties, based in the Histadrut and led by David Ben-Gurion, held undisputed control of the Zionist movement. The labor movement at least partly controlled many new industrial enterprises, and it organized nationwide health and transportation services. By 1948, the Histadrut had become a shadow government for the solidifying Jewish community of over half a million.

Capital for land purchases, development and industrial investment was only to be found abroad, however. And the donors, especially the large ones, were not socialistically inclined. They maintained some direct control of their money's use in private investment and in institutions such as the Jewish National Fund, but they basically had little to worry about. The Jewish labor movement saw its main task not as a struggle against capital—that could come later, if at all—but as the leading force of the movement to build a Jewish national home in Palestine, by whatever means necessary. As long as the workers' movement proved most effective in pursuing this goal, its class rivals were willing to cooperate.



Prime Minister Menachem Begin (left) presides over his first cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, June 26. Seated around the table from his left are two cabinet secretaries, Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann, Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, Immigration Minister David Levi, Education Minister Zevulun Hammer and Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan.

Haves against have-nots.

Only later was the Histadrut's "trade union department" founded. It actually created most local unions, the reverse of the process in normal capitalist development, where local unions band together to form federations. The unions were thus centrally controlled: to this day the Histadrut leadership is elected nationwide, on a party basis, not from shop representatives.

And the Histadrut's role as boss has grown as Israel has developed into an advanced capitalist society. It is the second largest employer (after the government), especially in large-scale industry and services. Thousands of workers not organized in local unions join it solely for its health

insurance. All in all, about 80 percent of the population belongs (Arabs have been accepted as members since the '60s).

Thus, it is not surprising that workers farthest from positions of power, especially the young, the poor and the Oriental Jews, do not see the Histadrut or the labor establishment that founded it as their representative. These sectors voted most heavily for the Likud in both elections. David Shaham, Labor party activist until 1975, wrote in *New Outlook* (June-July, 1977) explaining Labor's defeat in the general elections, that it "ceased maintaining its socialist content, developing instead a mixture of lip service to ideological principles...and a pragmatic approach...total-

ly bound to the goal of developing the economy at any price and of course, the prime goal of staying in power.

"Matters came to such a point that at times, the main struggle of the workers' parties was waged against the workers' desire to improve their condition. Most strikes are wildcat strikes by employees of the state, which was controlled by the labor movement, and against the labor federation, which acts as a tool of state rule."

He goes on to describe how managers of state and Histadrut controlled institutions, bent laws to increase drastically their standard of living. "All this was covered by a curtain of hypocrisy. On May 1, the red flag flew over heavy industrial plants, big banks, the large insurance companies and retail chains, over tax offices and health clinics—over all the bodies and institutions which the people on the street did not envisage as belonging to them or to the working class, but on the contrary, as collectively representing the exploiting class. All sorts of 'yes'-men stood at attention at their conventions to the sound of the 'Internationale.' The labor movement's ideology came to be that of the 'haves.' The 'have-nots' found consolation elsewhere."

Labor wins back voters.

Yet despite the Likud gain, Labor came out of the Histadrut election still in firm control. Some of the reasons are the same as those that always gave Labor bigger victories in the Histadrut than in parliament: some workers support the right's ultra-nationalism, but vote Labor in the Histadrut out of a consciously-perceived class interest. (They fail, of course, to perceive the connection between Israel's defense expenditures—35 percent of its GNP—and the economic burden that workers are forced to bear). Also, the hard core of the right's truly capitalist members and their ideological supporters are not Histadrut members.

In the recent campaign, Labor very effectively used the spectre of unemployment (openly advocated by the new Likud finance minister Simha Erlich) to win back some voters; others were shocked by the result of their anti-Labor "protest vote" in May. Many, especially Histadrut employees, were wary of the Likud's plan to sell profitable Histadrut enterprises

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Begin forms cabinet

On June 20, one day before the Histadrut elections, Likud leader Menachem Begin presented his government to the new parliament and won the confidence of 63 out of 120 of its members. The coalition includes Likud's 43 seats (three factions: Begin's ultra-nationalist Herut, Finance Minister Simha Erlich's strongly pro-capitalist Liberals, and La'am, a conglomeration of small parties led by a former associate of Ben-Gurion's faction); Gen. Arik Sharon's Shlomzion (two seats), which is now totally integrated with Likud; and the National Religious party (12 seats), always a partner of Labor in the past, which has grown closer to the Likud's chauvinism. The NRP received the important Interior Ministry (now including the police), Education (always held by Labor in the past) and Religious Affairs.

The ultra-orthodox Agudat Yisrael party (five seats) refrained from accepting cabinet portfolios, but agreed to support the government in exchange for some key parliament committee positions and a few additional theatrical concessions, such as repeal of the relatively liberal abortion law, stricter Saturday blue laws, and exclusive recognition of orthodox converts to Judaism. Finally, Moshe Dayan abandoned Labor to accept the foreign ministry, a move that aroused protest among bereaved 1973 war families, who consider him responsible for Israeli

losses, and, at first, even among some Likud leaders.

Negotiations were held with the new Democratic Movement for Change (15 seats), which had hoped to be in a pivotal position after the election. But Begin was able, and obviously preferred, to form a government without the DMC. The official unbridgable difference was Begin's refusal to endorse what the DMC (and Labor) consider the principle of "territorial compromise" in exchange for peace. A Begin acceptance of some similar formula under international pressure could provide a rationale for DMC's joining later.

There are several ways in which Begin might lose his majority. Some of the Liberals in the Likud, who historically opposed religious coercion, may rebel when Begin's promises to the religious parties come to a vote. If Begin stands up to American pressure, and a break in relations or war is the only alternative, some of these same Liberals, or perhaps some of the religious MPs may bolt.

Such an occurrence would lead to new elections, unless Begin—a man intensely devoted to his principles—refuses to step down and resorts to undemocratic rule. Some very reasonable people think that he is quite capable of such a move, if he perceives that enough of the key power-holders and masses support him. —David Mandel