



Michael Harrington Speaking at Reed College.

Photo: Richard Brown

"New American poverty" subject of Harrington talk

by Robert Lothian

A "new American poverty" is sweeping the United States, according to Michael Harrington, national co-chair of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and author of *The Other America*, a book which influenced the war on poverty of the 1960s.

The new poverty is directly attributable to President Ronald Reagan's economic policies, and to a technological revolution sweeping the country, Harrington said. With cutbacks in welfare and social services, and mill shutdowns throwing once well-paid workers onto the streets, poverty has increased dramatically since Reagan entered office, and it is becoming more tenacious, he said.

The picture for the immediate future is anything but bright, according to Harrington. He predicted that a new recession will be in full swing within 12 to 18 months.

The Harvard-educated former social worker spoke at Reed College. He denied that he was campaigning for the mildly socialist policies of DSA, but his talk was full of references to the politics behind poverty in the U.S.

According to Harrington, President Reagan recently celebrated a drop in the nation's poverty population as a "triumph of capitalism."

"He didn't mention the fact that that left a larger percentage of the population poorer, greater than at

any time since 1965 with the exception of 1983 and 1982." That's at a time when the Gross National Product (GNP) is growing at an annual rate of 6 percent, the fastest in 30 years, he said.

"The welfare state in the United States is not for poor people," he said. "The welfare state in the United States does much more for the middle class and the rich than it does for the poor."

The U.S. spends less of its GNP on the poor than any western country, he said, about 20 percent compared to West Germany's 30 percent and more for Sweden and Denmark. "We are the cheapest welfare state in the world, by yards," he said.

The war on poverty programs did work in reducing the number of poor, he said. Head Start, hurt by budget cuts and criticized as a waste by conservatives, turns out youngsters who are less likely to be unemployed and end up in jail, he said.

Contrary to the conservative myth that welfare mothers are "chronic breeders" out to milk the system, Harrington continued, studies have shown that welfare recipients apply for help because the breadwinner of the family has either left or died, that the size of the average welfare family is the same as that of the average American family (two children), and that welfare mothers get off the dole within two years, when they find jobs, he said.

Through the 70s, according to Harrington, families drifted in and out of poverty—over 25 percent of the nation's population fit the definition of poor at some time during that decade.

The poor now include over 2½ million former industrial workers whose jobs have disappeared. They face losing their life savings, which are often tied up in houses they can't sell. "Who wants to buy a house in a dying mill town?" he asked. "This is a group of people whose whole world has been changed."

Particularly scandalous, he said, is a situation where "an entire strata of the population works full time and is still poor."

For solutions, said Harrington, "Above all, what we do is not charity for the poor." Predicting a swing to the left that will sweep away the policies of Reagan and the new right, Harrington proposed a "solidaristic" campaign aimed at eliminating poverty both at home and in the Third World, consciously aimed at the people at the bottom more than anybody else.

"We have to be prepared to go as far beyond Roosevelt's New Deal as Roosevelt went beyond Hoover... will we be radical enough to abolish poverty and increase human freedom?" he asked.

Atiyeh proclaims Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Week

Governor Victor Atiyeh has declared the week of October 6-October 12, 1985 as Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Week. This week ends with the National Day of Unity for Battered Women designated by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The purpose of this week is to encourage people to become more aware of women and children who have been victims of violence and to commend the work done by domestic and sexual violence programs.

In Oregon, this week will be observed by the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the statewide network of programs focusing on domestic violence and sexual assault. Since the early 1970's, the network has grown from a few crisis lines to 34 grassroots shelters, safehome networks and crisis programs. Emergency services for victims are now available on a 24-hour basis in 27 of Oregon's 36 counties.

The coalition estimates that together these programs answered over 50,000 crisis calls and sheltered more than 5,500 women and children, forced to leave violent homes. 22 percent more women and children were sheltered in 1984 compared to 1983—a significant increase in victims able to escape from violence.

The purpose of Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Week is to draw attention to the shocking magnitude of the problem of violence against women and children. "The fact that this week has been set aside and people are being made aware of the problem of domestic and sexual violence makes me feel that the work that I do is doubly worthwhile," stated a survivor of domestic and sexual violence, also a volunteer for Central Oregon Battering and Rape Alliance. "I sincerely believe that the problem of domestic and sexual violence can begin to be solved if only enough people become aware of the problem and begin to do something positive about it." The theme of this week's activities is the determination to change the attitudes and values that support violence against women and children.

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FACT: In 1980, the U.S. Government's Commission on Environmental Quality reported that chlorine added to water increased the risk of urinary tract and gastrointestinal cancer.

FACT: Bottled water isn't regularly monitored for some toxic chemicals, except in states like New York where monitoring is required. In 1982, the Suffolk County, New York health department tested bottled water sold in the county and found potentially hazardous chemicals in 46 of 110 brands.

FACT: The EPA has identified serious groundwater contamination in 34 states.

FACT: The United States Geological Survey pinpoints sources of contamination in every state.

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Guide to best films on apartheid published by Media Project

Media Network is pleased to announce the publication of a guide to the best films on apartheid and the Southern African region—the latest in a series of acclaimed resource guides to films on current issues.

The *Guide to Films on Apartheid* contains lively, evaluative descriptions of over 40 films, videotapes and slideshows on South Africa and the region. Each entry includes title, length, format, producer, price, distributor, and includes a description. In addition, there is a list of information and resource centers, and tips on how to plan a successful program.

The guide is available for \$2.00 plus 50¢ postage from Media Network, 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011. Cut rates are available for bulk orders.

Going beyond the headlines and two-minute TV news clips, the films included in the guide portray the issues in immediate, human terms; they provide as well the background to the rapidly intensifying crisis. They focus on the history of apartheid and the legal system which maintains white-minority rule in South Africa, as well as showing the efforts of Black South Africans to resist apartheid. There is also a section of films which puts apartheid in the broader context of other countries in the Southern African region.

Media Network is a national membership organization that supports the

use of alternative media for grassroots organizing and education. Its Information Center is a clearinghouse for information on films, videotapes and slideshows on a wide range of social issues. Previous Media Network publications include a *Guide to Films on Central America*, *Guide to Disar-*

ment Media, and a *Guide to Films on Reproductive Rights*. They are available from Media Network for \$2.00 plus 50¢ postage per copy.

Publication of the *Guide to Films on Apartheid* was made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Oregon Taxpayers United hails sales tax proposal defeat

Defeat of the proposed Oregon sales tax was hailed by Oregon Taxpayers United (OTU) as proof that Oregonians feel that they have been taxed enough and want taxes lowered, not shifted.

OTU is a non-partisan coalition of grassroots activists whose primary concerns are government spending and tax limitations.

John Vandenberg of Milwaukie, a retired physician and OTU Chairman said, "The citizens of Oregon have reached the breaking point. Their firm rejection of the sales tax proposal demonstrates that they have been taxed to the limit and will not accept any more tax-increase schemes."

"Oregonians have prevailed in their call for a responsible level of taxation in spite of the numerous special-interest lobbies that benefit from massive state and local government spending."

OTU sponsored Ballot Measure 2, a tax limitation amendment which lost by a narrow margin in November 1984. The organization vigorously opposed the sales tax proposal and has filed a new tax limitation amendment. Assuming enough signatures are acquired, the new measure will appear on the ballot in the general election in 1986.

"Our role as watchdog of our state's tax policies on behalf of Oregon taxpayers will continue," Vandenberg added. Long an OTU activist member of the OTU Board of Trustees, he recently succeeded founder Ray Phillips as Chairman of the organization. Phillips asked to be relieved as chairman but will remain active as Honorary Chairman and member of the board.

OTU is headquartered in Portland and has approximately 10,000 members state-wide.



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