

Metro Atlanta DSA – Minutes: February 24, 2006

The meeting was called to order at the Friends Meeting House in Decatur, with introductions; 19 in attendance.

Treasurer's report (Austin): We have \$1,023.02.

Membership report (Milt): We picked up 7 new members in the past month, from a national mailing and attendees at meetings. We now have close to 70 members in the metro area and are aiming at 100 by the end of the year. Membership is \$35, or \$15 for people on a fixed income.

Newsletter: Barbaras Segal (designer) and Joye (copy editor) are finishing the first issue of a MADSA newsletter, which will be sent soon by email and by snail mail to those not online.

Dan White announced the upcoming dedication of a statue of FDR in the F.D. Roosevelt State Park, Pine Mountain GA, part of an ongoing effort to reconnect Georgians with our New Deal history.

Milt reminded us of the upcoming U.S. Social Forum, and the need for volunteers and workshop proposals. See www.ussf2007.org.

The DSA national convention will be held in Atlanta Nov. 9-11 (Veterans' Day weekend), featuring an awards dinner Nov. 10 at the IBEW hall, hosted by our chapter. We will be selling tickets to the public, raising funds through ads in a program book, and giving awards to people who have contributed to the Atlanta progressive community.

Upcoming meetings:

- March 31: Employees' Free Choice Act. This will protect some organizing rights, and is potentially the first piece of labor-sponsored legislation passed since 1933. We are inviting someone from the Labor Council.
- April: Kempton and Norm are organizing a panel of people from faith-based organizations who are veterans of organizing for low-income urban people's issues.
- May: We are inviting someone from WAND to speak on nuclear power, fuel reprocessing and bomb production issues in Georgia.

Barbara J. announced the John Ross talk that DSA is sponsoring and recommended that everyone check out the Infoshop at 840 DeKalb Avenue (behind the Neon Company and IFO Signs, four blocks west of the Inman Park MARTA station).

Joe Parko gave a slide presentation about his visit to Palestine/Israel, especially the West Bank, in March 2005. His group met with Mordechai Vanunu, who had revealed Israel's development of nuclear weapons and was subsequently imprisoned for 18 years and kept in house arrest thereafter. Estimates are that Israel currently has about 400 nuclear weapons (seldom discussed). They then met with B'TSelem, the Israeli Information

Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, which works on issues such as killing of Palestinian civilians by Israeli military forces, restrictions on the movements of Palestinians, the separation wall, illegal settlements on Palestinian land, status of East Jerusalem, holding and treatment of Palestinian prisoners, and demolition of c. 12,000 Palestinians' houses considered illegal by the Israelis or where the families of individuals who are considered dangerous were living. They also explored issues of civilian deaths; the impact of the wall on the Palestinian's ability to farm (for ex. Bethlehem is now completely sealed off and is a dying city); the differences between the rights of Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel; and the settlements. They visited students at Bir Zeit university in Ramallah; a prisoners' support group; an Arab town that had been destroyed by the Israeli army when the state was established; and a checkpoint at Bethlehem. He discussed restrictions on Palestinian civil liberties, torture of prisoners, harassment at checkpoints, arrests of children, continuing construction of illegal settlements and "Jewish only" roads, and the issue of water rights. The group also met with members of the growing movement of Israeli "refuseniks" who refuse military service in the West Bank; a leader of the Israeli peace bloc (Gush Shalom); the director of the Arab Association for Human Rights; Rabbis for Human Rights (who pick olives for Palestinian farmers cut off from their land); Christian Peacekeepers protecting Arabs in a village near Hebron; the Dome of the Rock; and a pilot "peacebuilders" class at a school run by the Holy Land Trust. His group joined the Trust in a nonviolent march against the occupation.

Joe Parko's article on the visit is in the current issue of the Great Speckled Bird.

A brief discussion following Joe's presentation focused mainly on the marginalization of Israel's Socialist elements.