

MINUTES -- MADSA MEMBERSHIP MEETING
MARCH 1, 2008

The meeting was called to order at the Friends Meeting House in Decatur, with 19 people in attendance including the two speakers.

BUSINESS MEETING

- 1) Our Douglass-Debs dinner, planned for November 8, will again recognize people who have contributed to building a progressive movement in Atlanta. (See newsletter article.) Bill Lucy, secretary-treasurer of AFSCME and president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, has been invited to be the keynote speaker. We want to honor people in the Grady Hospital Coalition; Nan Orrock; and Sen. Vincent Fort. Honorary chairs: Nancy Lenk (deputy director, AFSCME local), Charlie Flemming (last year's honoree; president, Atlanta-North Ga. Central Labor Council).
- 2) Newsletter will be mailed out this week. Thanks to designer Barbara S. and Norm.
- 3) Education Committee is working on public outreach re economic and social justice and internal education for members (including relevance of Marx; vision of socialism from various perspectives). Will meet two weeks from today in Norm's condo club room along with the steering committee. All interested members are invited. All the steering committee meetings are open as well, and we invite participation.
- 4) Milt reported that DSA is calling on locals to support progressive candidates for Congress and the Senate, mainly through fundraisers and volunteering. Al Franken (MN) and one other have been suggested; more details will follow.
- 5) Barbara J. gave highlights of her participation in the DSA National Political Committee; see her article in our upcoming newsletter.
- 6) WRFG has requested that local organizations "sponsor" public affairs programs during their fundraising marathon, first week in April, by helping pitch on the air for contributions, answer phones, etc. Barbara J. proposed that we sponsor Adam's Thursday noontime talk show in this way and maybe one evening or Sat. program. Passed unanimously. The steering committee will work out the details and email members.
- 6) Charles suggested we show a film on Haiti and invite a speaker from the local Haiti support group. Other suggested topics for upcoming meetings included Ted Brodek's talk on his trip to Venezuela. Steering committee will plan the next meeting.
- 7) Yael announced that Naomi Klein and Bill Fletcher (who spoke at our convention) will be speaking at a national conference of Historians Against the War to be held in Atlanta April 11-13.

HUMAN RIGHTS PANEL

Jorge Lawton, long-time human rights activist and director of South to North Communications, moderated.

Laura Moye, deputy director of Amnesty International's southern office and chair of Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty presented her powerpoint: "A People's History of Human Rights." She reviewed the evolution of the concept of human rights from early times through the Enlightenment and its acceleration after WWII as people's movements worldwide pressed the United Nations to formulate a global Bill of Rights, which became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Another theme was the divisions between supporters of a limited range of political and civil rights vs. those who also stress economic and cultural rights.

Ajamu Baraka, executive director of the U.S. Human Rights Network, a coalition of 200 organizations, reviewed the growth of the movement that focuses on human rights violations within this country. He also reported on his participation in a delegation of 100 U.S. human rights activists to a meeting in Geneva last week of the international monitoring committee for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). They presented a response to the US government's report on its compliance with CERD, one of only three international human rights treaties that our country has signed. The committee used the delegation's document to guide them in questioning the U.S. government spokespeople and will issue concluding observations Friday March 7.

Jorge reviewed highlights of the experience of countries in the southern cone, especially Chile, where in the 1970s the US helped to violently overthrow the Popular Unity government led by President Salvador Allende that had attempted to provide the basis for human rights for all its citizens.

The question and answer period covered many issues including the composition of the CERD monitoring committee; the role of corporations and the view that the government has an obligation to contain corporate power when it violates human rights; the role of the World Bank, WTO, IMF and trade policies; collective (public) vs. corporate property rights; the language of human rights as an organizing and educational tool; and the question of violence (armed struggle) in defense of human rights.

Ajamu reported that Jobs With Justice is forming a coalition to promote a human rights charter for the City of Atlanta and urged us to seek information about that campaign.