

URPE Newsletter

Union for Radical Political Economics

2006 URPE Summer Workshop/Retreat

Camp Chinqueka
Bantam, Connecticut

Saturday August 20 - Tuesday August 23

Alternatives!

The focus of this year's Summer Conference is ideas on how to move forward: the alternative strategies for our movement today and the alternatives that we envision for the future.

The three scheduled plenaries are:

Policy Alternatives

Restructuring Social Relations Alternatives to Capitalism

The schedule of speakers and workshops is not yet complete (for updates see our website: www.urpe.org). But the preliminary list of confirmed speakers already includes many distinguished radical political economists:

(continued on page 20)

Election Procedure for URPE Steering Committee

The URPE Steering Committee, at its April 9-10, 2005 Spring meeting, voted unanimously to a change in the procedure for the elections of Steering Committee members. The new procedure, which will go into effect immediately, has three components. The first is the adoption of a mail ballot, to be sent to all members. The second is the an extension of the deadline for nominations to the end of the annual Summer Conference. The third is the conducting of the election itself in the period immediately following the Summer Conference. A related decision was to move the Summer Conference to an earlier date, as soon as a suitable location can be found.

Discussion of election procedures has taken place within the Steering Committee over several years, and many URPE members have joined this discussion over the past year. All written contributions to this discussion that have been received to date are printed in this Newsletter, and are also available on the URPE website. (A vote on the proposed amendment on elections procedures will take place, in accordance with the bylaws, at the Summer Conference Business Meeting.)

The change in procedure voted on by the Steering Committee is the result of the Committee's deliberations on how best to accomplish two distinct requirements for democratic elections. The first and most familiar is the right of all people to express their views through the casting of ballots. The second, which is entirely lacking in the forms of democracy practiced by the governments of the US and most other countries, is the right to participate in informed discussion of the issues whose outcome will be affected by the elections. A literature exists on procedures for meeting both of these requirements, much of it under the categories of *(continued on page 3)*

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Printing by Prompt Printing Press.

URPE

The Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) is a membership organization of academics and activists who share an interest in a radical analysis of political and economic topics. Founded in 1968, URPE's members use this analysis to advance various progressive political and social agendas. URPE publishes the *Review of Radical Political Economics*, runs a set of presentations at the academic professional meetings of the Allied Social Science Associations, sponsors a resource/speakers bureau called *Economy Connection*, and holds a Summer Conference on political and economic topics at a family-friendly summer camp in Connecticut. Its members are active in a wide array of professional and activist projects.

The URPE Newsletter

The **URPE Newsletter** is published quarterly by the Union for Radical Political Economics. The Newsletter is a place for URPE members to publish shorter articles and speeches as well as make announcements of upcoming events that might be of interest to fellow members. Articles and announcements can be sent to the Newsletter Editor in the body of an e-mail message, or as an attached file; send to paddyquick@aol.com, or by regular mail to: *Paddy Quick, Economics Department, St. Francis College, 180 Remsen Street, Brooklyn NY 11201.*

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The URPE Newsletter is a good place to publish advertisements for new books! Rates are \$300 per full page (7.5W x 9.3H); \$160 for a half page, and \$85 for a quarter page. Exchange ads are also considered. Please write or call the National Office for more information on this.

Deadlines for submission to Newsletter are January 7 for Winter issue; April 7 for Spring issue; July 1 for Summer issue, and October 7 for fall issue.

Reminder

URPE members should check the membership expiration date on the upper right hand corner of the address label. If your membership has expired or is about to expire, this will be the last newsletter you will receive. Please renew your membership now. (See page 23 for membership form, or contact the URPE National Office.)

Election Procedures *(continued from page 1)*

"Discursive Democracy" or "Deliberative Democracy." A broader category that these issues are part of that is better known in the U.S. is "Participatory Democracy."

The ideal for URPE would clearly be elections that took place at a meeting attended by all URPE members. In its early years, there was a high level of involvement of members in the life of the organization and, in particular, in the annual business meetings. Heated discussion of major issues took place at these meetings, and the subsequent elections for the Steering Committee assured people that their views would continue to be represented in the period between these annual meetings. The election procedures set in place were therefore seen to be entirely appropriate.

Today, however, only a small proportion of URPE members attend the Summer Conference. There are two different reasons for this. One is that some people who subscribe to RRPE are not particularly interested in URPE. But a large number of members who are committed to the organization, and want to participate in it, do not come to the Summer Conference. The date of the summer conference is a major problem, but not the only one. URPE members, whatever the level of their interest in URPE, have other commitments as well as constraints of time and money. The decision to move to a mail ballot addresses the needs of these members.

The Steering Committee believed that it was important to maintain the principle that members should have the opportunity to discuss and debate the issues facing the organization. The Committee therefore decided to move the date of balloting to after the Summer Conference. This means that those who attend the Summer Conference will have the opportunity to talk about issues and candidates, and to nominate additional candidates if they so wish. But voting will no longer be restricted to those who attend the Summer Conference.

The mail ballot will, of course, include the candidates' statements on their goals for URPE, and will thus contribute to the discussion of issues. The mail ballot will thus provide members with an increased opportunity to participate by voting. The Steering Committee is also committed to increasing participation in other forms. In particular, the Committee recognizes the need to change the date of the Summer Conference. Alternative locations will be evaluated in terms of cost, facilities etc.

This article represents the collective views of the Steering Committee, which wishes to thank all those who have participated in the discussion of voting procedures and looks forward to their continuing contributions to URPE.

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

I was informed that my father has passed away in Iran. This is not an unusual occurrence in the view of his advanced age and ailment. What is unusual, however, is that since I departed from Tehran's Mehrabad Airport in May of 1971, he and I could not see each other. I have since been unable to go to Iran and visit my father, first, for being banned—for seeking elementary human and democratic rights-by the Shah of Iran (a notorious dictator that was brought back by a CIA coup, in 1953, as a replacement for the democratic government of Dr. Mossadegh), and, second—for being threatened and blacklisted due to my political and humanitarian activities, since 1979, against the government of Islamic Republic in Iran. As it turned out, the 1953 CIA coup against Mossadegh-like many other coups against the democratic governments in the "Third World"—created a formidable political backlash and resentment that were simmering, for the next 26 year or so, and that unfortunately led to the emergence of the Islamic government in Iran. This led to terrible consequences in terms of staggering human costs, such as this, and we, the Americans-guess what my friends-foot the godforsaken bill!

I have not seen my father for nearly 35 years, and I cannot even attend his funeral, perhaps like many other Iranians in my generation. As a dear friend said in a message from Caracas, Venezuela, "The personal is always political."

Jalil Bina was a retired civil service employee at the Iranian Ministry of the Interior; he died on Sunday, February 27, 2005 in Mashhad, Iran.

Cyrus Bina (URPE member, since 1973; Member of Editorial Board, RRPE, 1980-1990, 2001-2004; Member of the Steering Committee, 2004-2007. binac@morris.umn.edu)

PROCEDURES FOR ELECTING URPE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Steering Committee Election Procedures and Proposal for Bylaws Amendment

A petition for an amendment to the URPE Bylaws was submitted to the URPE Steering Committee on February 9, 2005. The proposed amendment will be submitted to the URPE membership for a vote in accordance with the procedures for such amendments (see below for full text on Bylaws Amendment Procedure). Before such voting can take place, the bylaws mandate a discussion of the proposed amendment by the membership. A call for such a discussion is hereby made in the Spring 2005 Newsletter. (Since it cannot be assumed that all members have access to this website, it is necessary to have the discussion take place both in the Newsletter and on the website.)

Since Newsletter space is limited, members are asked to keep their initial comments to under 750 words, and, if they should wish to participate further in the discussion, to limit themselves to no more than 300 words in a second comment, and no more than 100 words in a third comment. All comments should be sent to the URPE Newsletter Editor. Email correspondence should be sent to paddyquick@aol.com and print comments should be sent Paddy Quick, Dept. of Economics, St. Francis College, 180 Remsen Street, Brooklyn NY 11201. All comments received will be forwarded immediately for posting on the URPE website. All comments received by July 1, 2005 will be printed in the Summer 2005 Newsletter and will also be posted on this website (including comments sent by postal service.) Comments received after July 1 will be posted on the website, but members should remember that they will not necessarily be seen by all URPE members.

A call for comments on the subject of procedures for Steering Committee elections was issued by the URPE Steering Committee in the Winter 2005 Newsletter (which was sent out before the proposed amendment was received). Although comments made in response to this call may not address the specific question of an amendment to the bylaws, all such comments will be included in the URPE Newsletter and on the URPE website.

Proposed amendment

The Change:

Current Language

Art. VIII, D. Election to the SC and the [Editorial] Board shall be held at the annual membership meeting unless an alternative procedure is announced at least sixty days in advance of the elections. All current members are eligible to vote in both elections.

Proposed amendment to the by-laws: (Substitute language in italics)

Art. VIII, D. *Elections of members of the SC and Editorial Board shall be held by mail ballots distributed to all members. A call for candidates and list of vacant positions will be made available to members at least 60 days before the election closes; candidates will be announced to all members at least 30 days before the deadline for voting.* All current members are eligible to vote in both elections.

Bylaws Amendment Procedure (Article X of the URPE Bylaws)

A. Amendments to these By-laws (hereafter, Amendments) may be proposed by a majority of current SC members or by any twenty current URPE members.

B. Due written notice and description of any proposed Amendments shall be given in the notice of the next meeting of the SC or of the membership. Before any proposed Amendment is ratified, the membership must be given an opportunity to discuss it, either at the first membership meeting following the proposal or other suitable forum allowing the participation of all URPE members and announced in advance by the SC.

C. Proposed amendments may be ratified provisionally by a two-thirds majority of current SC members. All proposed Amendments, including those provisionally ratified by the SC, must be ratified within a year of their initial proposal by a two-thirds majority of the voting URPE membership, provided that ballots are submitted by at least 50 members or 15% of current URPE membership, whichever is smaller. Any provisional Amendments that fail to be ratified by the URPE membership are immediately terminated, and may not subsequently be proposed for provisional ratification by the SC.

Introduction (by URPE Steering Committee)

The URPE Steering Committee (SC) has discussed the procedures for SC elections several times during the past few years, including the possibility of moving to the use of absentee ballots or mail ballots, but never came to an agreement among the SC members on any one change in procedures that seemed to clearly improve the existing process.

On September 1, 2004 the SC received an email request from 15 URPE members that the SC vote to change to a mail ballot. (A full copy of this letter is given below.) This request was discussed at the Fall SC meeting which took place on September 18-19, 2004. The Minutes of this meeting record the following: "[The SC] decided to solicit comments for the website and/or newsletter on what would be the best procedure for steering committee elections." URPE Newsletter, Fall 2004 p.9. The Winter Newsletter, which went to press early in January, contained "A Call For Comments on the Procedures for Electing URPE Steering Committee Members" and included a commitment to publish all comments received on the URPE Website, and all comments received by April 7 in the Spring Newsletter. On February 9, the Steering Committee received a proposal, with the requisite number of signatures, for a by-laws amendment, which will be put to a vote of URPE members in accordance with the bylaw procedures for amendments. In the meantime, the call for comments on the current procedures provides an excellent opportunity for members to express their opinions on this important question.

All comments received to date are printed below in the order in which they were received, beginning with the September 1, 2004 email, and numbered for ease of reference. Future comments will be posted on the URPE website, and those sent to the URPE Newsletter by July 1 will be printed in the Summer Newsletter.

I. URPE Elections: Toward A More Democratic Voting Process (September 1, 2004)

As most URPE members know, the Steering Committee (SC), URPE's 12-member governing committee, is elected at the organization's summer conference. We believe that all members of URPE should have the opportunity to elect the organization's Steering Committee, whether they attend the summer conference or not. The simplest way to implement this change is for the SC to vote a change to a mail ballot for all members, and announce the change in accordance with bylaw provisions. Bylaws also allow a member initiative to change them, but this more complex process will not be necessary if the SC makes the change in election procedure. We are writing to urge the SC to adopt this procedural change in order to make URPE's elections more democratic.

Reasons for the proposed change:

1. Of the approximately 100 people who have attended the summer conference in most years (fewer in 2004), only 30-35 have been current URPE members. In recent years 25-30 members have voted in the elections. Thus, approximately 10% of URPE membership elects its governing committee. They are predominantly members who reside in the northeastern part of the U.S.

2. URPE is a membership organization. Its bylaws specify: "all current members have the right to vote on URPE business or in URPE elections as detailed in article VIII below (Article III.A). Article VIII states: Elections to the SC and the [Editorial] Board shall be held at the annual meeting unless an alternative procedure is announced at least sixty days in advance of the election. All current members are eligible to vote in both elections" (Article VIII.D). Current election procedures, while conforming to the letter of the bylaws, in fact limit the opportunity of members to participate in SC elections by requiring them to attend the summer conference--a requirement that in effect disenfranchises a large majority of our membership. We further note that the URPE practice diverges from those of other organizations for progressive economists such as ASA and IAFFE, which use mail ballots, and we feel this reflects unfavorably on URPE.

3. The Editorial Board election was changed to a mail ballot involving all URPE members in 2003. The number of members who voted in the 2003 election was 90, triple the number who voted the year before at the summer conference.

Suggestions for implementation:

4. Both SC and Board members are currently elected for three-year terms, with approximately one-third of each group elected each year. Candidates are solicited in the spring via a note in the Newsletter and on the website, and elections take place in the summer. An URPE elections committee could solicit candidates for each body through the Newsletter and web site, provide statements of candidacy for publication before the election, admin-

ister the election (with assistance from the National Office for the mailing), receive and count the ballots and announce results. The elections committee might be composed of one member from each of the SC and Board, and one other URPE member not serving on either

Respectfully submitted by:

David Andrews, Lourdes Beneria, Steve Cullenberg, Jim Devine, Doug Dowd, Bill Dugger, Chris Gunn, Rebecca Hovey, Gary Mongiovi, Fred Moseley, Kamran Nayeri, Frank Thompson, Tamar Diana Wilson (and two other URPE members)

II. Call for a Change in URPE Steering Committee Election Procedures (Introduction to proposed change in bylaws printed above) February 9, 2005

For over a year numerous URPE members have been seeking a change in URPE's election procedure to a mail ballot for members of the URPE Steering Committee. (The Editorial Board is already elected by mail ballot.) The Steering Committee (SC) has not found the time to deal with the issue, so this is a more concrete proposal for change.

Article X of the current by-laws provides the framework for petition by a minimum of 20 members for a by-law amendment. This petition seeks a mail vote with ballots sent to all members. Due notice of the vote on this amendment must be provided, and members must be given a forum (e.g. the Newsletter and URPE web site) to comment on the proposed change. We recommend that the Steering Committee appoint a sub-committee of independent (non-Steering Committee) URPE members to conduct this discussion and vote.

Introduction and petition for bylaws amendment submitted by:

Randy Albelda, David Andrews, Hamid Azari, David Barkin, Lourdes Beneria, Stephen Cullenberg, James Devine, Christophre Georges, Don Goldstein, Christopher Gunn, Robin Hahnel, Martin Hart-Landsberg, Marianne T. Hill, Fadhel Kabour, Frederic S. Lee, John Marangos, John McDermott, William McDugger, Gary Mongiovi, Paulette Olson, Michael Perelman, Geoffrey Schneider, Frank Thompson, Chris Tilly, Zdravka Todorova, John Willoughby

III. Individual comment by Don Goldstein (February 21, 2005)

Thanks for the newsletter's invitation for comments on how we elect our Steering Committee.

I think it's really important that we get the broadest possible participation from the membership in choosing our leadership. That should be the primary criterion for election mechanisms. And I think that clearly a mail or email ballot process would get us the broadest possible participation. (I have no preference between the two; convenience, cost, verifiability, and other such issues could be used to choose between them.) The newsletter, the website, and/or special emails could be used to allow candidates to make their views known in advance of elections.

Summer conference balloting just isn't getting us a large enough body of our members participating in choosing the Steering Committee. I agree with those who do not want to undermine the summer conference by removing any of its functions that draw people there, lacking urgent reasons for doing so. But in this case, I don't think Steering Committee elections are a big draw, and there is an urgent reason for doing the election differently.

Don Goldstein, Allegheny College dgoldste@allegheny.edu

IV. Individual comment by Paddy Quick (March 7, 2005)

I agree very much with the need to increase participation of URPE members in Steering Committee elections beyond those who are able to attend the Summer Conference. I welcome the input of so many URPE members into the discussion of this issue. I am confident that this discussion and its outcome will lead to an increase in the involvement of members in our organization, so that it can better accomplish its goals.

The problem, of course, is that a fairly small proportion of the URPE membership attend the Summer Conference where these elections have traditionally taken place. Thus although people did not have to attend the Summer Conference in order to run for the Steering Committee, only those who attended were able to vote.

Discussions of the issues facing URPE, and of the candidates up for elections are important for any system of democratic decision-making, and the Summer Conference has provided an important forum for such discussions to take place. These have often been lively (to put it mildly!) and, in the past, involved a large proportion of the URPE membership. But the decline in attendance at the conference has had the effect of significantly reducing the participation by all members in both discussions and decision-making. It is time for a change.

The issue of electoral procedures has been discussed several times over the past few years, including both the possibility of absentee ballots and mail ballots, but the Steering Committee (on which I currently serve) never reached a decision on what the best procedures would be. When the Committee received an email (dated September 1, 2004) signed by many members, requesting the use of a mail ballot, it decided, at its Fall meeting, to invite members to discuss the issue in the Newsletter and on the URPE website. Although the Committee announced this decision in the Fall 2004 Newsletter, it was unable to get the call for comments in print until the Winter Newsletter. The intention was to reach, within the year, a decision that accorded with the wishes of URPE members.

Meanwhile many people signed a petition for a bylaws amendment and the bylaws amendment procedure is currently underway, including use of the Newsletter and the website for the (mandated) discussion of the proposed amendment. It is clear that all those who signed the petition for the amendment wish to be able to participate in SC elections even if they are unable to attend the Summer Conference, but I am not sure if everyone realized that the process to change the procedures was well underway, or that an amendment is not necessary in order for such a change to take place.

While I am in favor of changing our system of voting, I do not think the proposed bylaws amendment is a good idea. I think, in general, that bylaws should not specify procedures. The problem with specifying procedures in any organization's bylaws is that it can lock an organization into a method of operating that can become outdated or inappropriate over time. For example, within a few years, people might want to move to a system of email voting. If the proposed amendment were passed, such a change would require another bylaws amendment. Under the present bylaws, by way of contrast, it was a simple matter for the Editorial Board to change its voting procedures three years ago (from an election at the Summer Conference to a mail ballot) without having to go through the (necessarily) drawn-out process of getting approval for a bylaws amendment.

Similarly, the Steering Committee can, by a simple majority vote, change the procedures for Steering Committee elections, and I am in favor of its doing so. This issue will be discussed at the upcoming Spring 2005 meeting of the Steering Committee. The minutes of this meeting will be included in the Spring 2005 Newsletter, so that members can read what, if anything, is decided at this meeting. Regardless of the outcome of this meeting, the bylaws amendment will, of course, be put to a vote.

I look forward very much to hearing the ideas of other members.

Paddy Quick (paddyquick@aol.com)

V. In Defense of (Voting at) Summer Conference by Patty Lee Parmalee (March 31, 2005)

Let me admit right now, it is a problem that so few people vote for the steering committee. I'll come back to that. But first—

1. I believe it is largely (not exclusively, of course) due to the fun and camaraderie of the summer conference that URPE has survived for these 27 years while other organizations have fallen by the wayside. During the most partisan of times, the conference has been a venue where dueling leftists got together and listened to each other with respect. It has nurtured new generations. It has given grad students a chance to be treated as equals. It has given people a chance to get to know each other three-dimensionally, not just through their academic personas. It has integrated activists with theorists. The Summer Conference is a vacation with a purpose. Attendance at it should be encouraged, not marginalized.

2. Voting for the leadership body at the summer conference provides an opportunity for the electorate truly to know the candidates, by hanging out with them in late-night discussions, seeing what kind of Mensch they are. Voting for someone you've never met on the basis of little bioblurbs is almost meaningless. The qualification for SC membership is not your publications or even your political positions, but whether you're a sensible kind of

person, who has some feel for URPE's special qualities, and who's willing to work.

3. One of the main jobs of the SC is organizing the summer conference, anyway. It helps for the people doing that to have been there.

4. Though we have instituted a new procedure whereby candidates are supposed to announce in advance, often there just aren't enough. The fact is, new candidates are often identified (arm twisted, too) at the summer conference, and that is not bad. See #2.

5. It's no secret that it's both a strength and a source of some tension that URPE combines activists with academics. Not that anyone is completely one or the other, but some people feel themselves pulled to one pole or the other. To accommodate both sets of interests, an agreement was reached to hold SC elections at the conference and Ed Board elections by mail.

6. URPE also has a structural anomaly in that you are automatically a voting member if all you really want is to subscribe to the journal. You can be a member without subscribing, but you can't be a subscriber without membership. Thus, the potential electorate includes people who may not have any interest in how well the organization is run. It makes sense for them to vote on the journal, but not on the SC. I am embarrassed to admit how many times I've sent in ballots to organizations I belong to without having any idea who I'm voting for (blurbs notwithstanding), just to participate.

On the other hand: there are people who do care about URPE and can't make it to conference, and there are indeed too few votes cast. I propose as a solution the same system civil government uses: absentee ballots. The request for a ballot should be received by summer conference date, and the ballots should be mailed to those who request them as soon as the nominations are completed (i.e. during or right after conference) with a one-week deadline for returning them (in a blank envelope inside the one with voter's return address). Absentee ballots would then be counted together with those from the conference, in a fair, monitored procedure to be established.

This in no way prevents the dreaded takeover by one aroused faction or another! It only helps to assure that the nominating procedure finds the best people, and that those who vote have some interest in and knowledge of the organization itself.

Patty Lee Parmalee <publiccleaningpost@earthlink.net>

VI. Response to some of the discussion to date, by Chris Gunn (April 6,2005)

It is good to read that Paddy Quick is now in favor of a Steering Committee vote to move to a mail ballot for Steering Committee elections. This marks a 180 degree shift from November 2003, when a motion to make this change was offered at the fall meeting of the Steering Committee, and Paddy both spoke and voted against the motion. The motion was defeated by a vote of 9 to 2, with the SC staffed by many of the same people who are on it today.

I hope the SC will vote this change. However, nothing precludes it voting to reverse itself in another year, and move the voting back to the summer conference. The by-law change establishes the principle that URPE, a membership organization, makes it as easy as possible for all members to participate in electing its governing board.

So please, vote the change, then move forward and vote for democracy with the bylaw change. If a viable email voting system is available in the future, it will be a relatively simple task to make it available to members for this election.

Christopher Gunn

Prospects and Challenges of Having the WSF 2007 in Africa

In 2007 the World Social Forum (WSF) will take place in an African city, moving this 'global anti-capitalist assembly' outside Brazil for only the second time since its inception. This will raise anti-capitalist mobilization to a new level in Africa, although the speed and depth of its process will vary across countries. At the same time, Africa's unique contribution to the social forum process will depend on where the WSF is today as well as the state of the African Social Forum (ASF). Therefore, both the impact of the WSF on Africa and, in turn, the ability of Africa to propel this worldwide process to a new height, critically hinge on the current state of the ASF.

When this event was moved to Mumbai—a poor Indian city—in 2004, many doubted that it would be successful there. All subsequent assessments though have rated the WSF in India a remarkable triumph for the movement. It gave a platform to the oppressed and excluded to voice their demands and encouraged the spread of social forums in India and elsewhere in East Asia. But what seems to have been India's unique contribution? It introduced an improvement in the methodology that allowed many revolutionary left currents to organize panels in the official WSF program. From India onwards, the WSF seems to have shifted leftward and this was quite visible in the political atmosphere at WSF 2005 compared to the past.

The general lack of information about the state of the ASF has created uncertainty about the capacity and preparedness of Africa to host the 2007 WSF. Surely if any problem appears to threaten having this event in 2007, the International Council of the WSF and other continental forums will rally to aid the ASF to stage this event. This kind of support is consistent with the international solidarity so fundamental to the world anti-capitalist movement.

Regardless of this, the ASF is likely to gain some logistical know-how to organize the 2007 event from its continental forum set for January 2006 in Morocco. Next year, although the WSF will still take place on the same days, it will be decentralized. In line with this new format, continental social forums should be smaller replicas of the massive gatherings we have seen in Porto Alegre and Mumbai. Existing forums with experience in organizing such assemblies, like the European Social Forums in Paris and London, should be well prepared for this. Looking at the crucial indicators then, like organizational and financial capacity, Africa should be ready to host the WSF, barring unforeseen hiccups.

With a major international anti-neoliberal gathering set to take place in Africa, it is natural to expect this event to propel mass mobilization and the revolutionary left to the forefront. Or will it just be, as many of the detractors of the WSF say, a short-lived "carnival of the anti-global-

ization rabble-rousers dominated by NGOs"? Maybe 'arts and crafts sales' will overshadow the 'art of leftwing political activity'? Despite what its enemies claim, the WSF has established itself as a political force building an alternative to capitalism. Porto Alegre shaped this image with its politics of the participatory budget, while Mumbai gave the radical left a more prominent voice. Is the ASF able to sustain this radicalizing momentum? This is the decisive test.

Ultimately, even this minimal contribution to the global anti-capitalist movement will depend on the political orientation of the major forces inside the ASF and the nature of its activities. A few well-funded NGOs, academics and a couple of trade union officials dominate the secretariat, according to limited public information on the ASF. The trade unions, especially COSATU delegates, made a strong case for 'pluralism and inclusiveness' in the preparations for WSF 2007 at one of two big sessions that the ASF organized in Porto Alegre. Many participants at this session, including speakers from the International Council and other continental forums, endorsed this message as it echoed the spirit of the WSF. Other speakers who supported this slogan, however, raised questions about the 'secrecy' surrounding the functioning of the ASF secretariat. Speaker after speaker expressed the need to build a mass-based social forum process in Africa that is rooted in socialist alternatives to neo-liberalism.

The presence of socialist militants in the ASF is heartening. Yet a broader and balanced view of its activities reveals worrying signs of weakness too. Although its secretariat now meets more frequently in different countries on the continent, it is unclear on what basis organizations are represented. In addition to this lack of internal democracy, the dominance of NGOs that must follow the dictates of their rich paymasters, is a legitimate point of division and conflict. At the recent WSF in Porto Alegre, less than half a dozen panels had some connection with the ASF, including a report back session of its December 2004 meeting in Lusaka. Crucial issues ranging from civil wars and debt, to the status of women and youth in a continent ravaged by HIV/AIDS, were on the agenda at this report back event. While the Zimbabwean Social Forum (under the control of NGOs) organized a lively session that large numbers of youth from across the world attended to understand the political situation in that country, no other African country attempted to do the same. These are indications of the slow and uneven level in the evolution of social forums in Africa after the first four years of the WSF.

Peter T. Jacobs
Economics Department, University of the Western Cape,
South Africa March 2005

URPE News and Announcements

REPORT FROM THE URPE STEERING COMMITTEE

A full set of minutes of the April 9-10., 2005 Steering Committee meeting can be found on pages 15-16 of this Newsletter.

The result of the Steering Committee's deliberations on election procedures is reported in the article which begins on page 1 of this Newsletter. This was one of the major issues addressed at the Spring meeting.

The other major issue was URPE finances. The 2004 Business Meeting at the URPE Summer Conference directed the Steering Committee to prepare a contingency budget, since members were concerned about the projected shortfall in revenue for the coming year. A full report on URPE's current and projected budget will be provided to members in the Summer Newsletter, since there is not sufficient time to prepare this report for the current Newsletter. While some steps have been taken to raise revenue (such as increasing the membership fee for people who do not subscribe to the journal) and to cut costs (such as cancelling the allocation of funds for an Economy Connection assistant), these were not sufficient to correct the large and growing imbalance. The Steering Committee decided therefore that it would not be possible to continue the position of National Office Director after September 2006. This decision was a very hard one, since the Steering Committee is fully aware of how much it owes to the current National Office Director, Germai Medhanie, for his work in rescuing URPE from near disaster by putting URPE's finances into order, and for his dedication and commitment to putting the goals of URPE into practice. Much still needs to be done to plan for the future reorganization of the work that is currently being carried out in the National Office, and it is more important than ever for URPE to have Steering Committee members who are committed to the organization and willing to put in the time and effort needed for it to carry out its role.

URPE Book Series - Contract with Pluto Press

The Steering Committee is pleased to announce that a contract has been signed between URPE and Pluto Press (PP) for the publication of a series of books entitled "Radical Political Economics." Pluto Press is an independent progressive publishing company based in England (www.plutobooks.com), whose books are distributed in the United States by the University of Michigan Press. The URPE book series will be aimed at the general reader, and is intended to be of particular interest to undergraduate students. URPE will be responsible for the solicitation of manuscripts and the recommendation of such manuscripts to PP, and PP has agreed that the academic judgment of URPE will be respected and accepted. The book contracts will be between the individual authors and PP, and URPE will play a significant role in the editing of manuscripts. Since PP will be undertaking the risks of publication, it is understood that PP has the right to refuse a manuscript.

URPE will receive a small fee (400 pounds sterling or approximately \$750) for each book published, but this is not intended to be a money-making venture for URPE. Our goal is rather to provide a wide audience with an introduction to radical political economics. The model for the series is the Cornerstone Book Series put out by Monthly Review Press in the 1990s. The Steering Committee has delegated responsibility for the series to a subcommittee consisting of Al Campbell, Paddy Quick, and Alfredo Saad-Filho. The subcommittee will be soliciting manuscripts in the near future, and invites URPE members to contribute suggestions as to appropriate topics and authors.

SYLLABI

It is getting to the end of the semester, and those of you who teach and who modify your syllabi as you go along (or even write them as you go along!) should have them about finished for the semester you have just taught. Please send them to me now (before you forget!). We are slowly building up a healthy base of syllabi on our web site that we can all draw on when we set out to teach some heterodox topic that we have not taught before. In solidarity, Al [Al@economics.utah.edu]

Steering Committee Elections

There will be four (4) vacancies on the 12-person Steering Committee to be filled by elections this summer. Three of these positions are at-large and one is the Women's Caucus position. The term of office is 3 years. The continuing members (with the dates of their terms of office) are:

Cyrus Bina (04-07)	Al Campbell (03-06)	Graham Cassano (04-07)
Lester Henry (03-06)	Doug Koritz (04-07)	Laurie Nisonoff (03-06)
Paddy Quick (03-06)	Alfredo Saad Filho (04-07)	

Thanks to those who are leaving the Steering Committee, Peter Bohmer, Robert Kemp, Patty Lee Parmalee and Ellen Frank (Women's Caucus Rep), for their service.

URPE members wishing to run for election to the Steering Committee must submit a statement of under 1000 words. The statement must include all 7 of the following items:

- (a) Your name and an address at which you can be contacted (by email, postal mail and/or telephone.)
- (b) Name of one URPE member who is nominating you.
- (c) Years during which you have been a member of URPE.
- (d) Highlights of work and avocations
- (e) Highlights of academic/activist accomplishments.
- (f) Your own ideas regarding the most important tasks for the Steering Committee in the upcoming and subsequent years.
- (g) The amount of work you expect to be able to do for URPE and any specific tasks that you would like to work on.

All statements should be sent to both Paddy Quick (editor of the URPE Newsletter) and Al Campbell (web-master). See page 2 of this Newsletter for addresses. Statements received by Paddy Quick by July 1 will be printed in the Summer 2005 Newsletter. All statements will be posted on the URPE web-site (www.urpe.org).

The procedure for electing the Women's Caucus representative is understood to be the responsibility of the Women's Caucus.

Elections for at-large positions will take place through mail ballot. Although members are encouraged to submit their statements by July 1, nominations for at-large positions will be accepted up to the end of the URPE Summer Conference, August 22, 2005. Elections will take place through a mail ballot which will be sent to all members. The mailing will include the statements of all nominees.

RUN FOR THE URPE SC!

The Steering Committee always needs people with ideas on how to strengthen our fight against mainstream economics and against the unjust society it justifies. We need people with energy and time to carry out their ideas. In particular right now for the new Steering Committee we need someone very interested in working with graduate students to involve them in URPE and make URPE even more relevant to their needs, and we need a Treasurer, someone to continue the process of tightening up URPE's finances to free up the resources we need for the many opportunities we have in today's world. But please don't think that is all we need—we need people looking to carry out any project to strengthen URPE, strengthen the fight against mainstream economics, and strengthen the fight for economic justice.

REPORT FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE REVIEW OF RADICAL POLITICAL ECONOMICS

URPE/RRPE Archive at Cornell University

The URPE/RRPE archive was established by Howard Wachtel while he was managing editor of the RRPE. The archive has been added to by the current managing editor, both with journal material and documents from the national office when it moved from New Haven to Amherst. The University Archivist Elaine Engst and the University Records Manager Eileen Keeting have been extremely helpful in handling these efforts. Researchers can access this material by traveling to Ithaca, New York. Please consult the archive Web site <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu> in advance, since the bulk of the material is stored off-site from the library, and must be transported in before viewing. The collection number for the Union for Radical Political Economics Records is #3791. Scholars should refer to this number when asking for the materials. Those traveling to Ithaca for this purpose are invited to contact Managing Editor Hazel Dayton Gunn for logistical assistance (hg18@cornell.edu).

RRPE Editorial Board Elections, 2005

It is time once again to announce the upcoming elections for editorial board members for the Review of Radical Political Economics. Members serve three-year terms. In addition to reviewing about 10 manuscripts a year, members spend both time and effort conducting the business of the RRPE. This is a major personal commitment, and an important way to contribute to URPE. If you are interested in working as part of the RRPE's editorial board, please contact the managing editor (Hazel Dayton Gunn, Dept. of City & Regional Planning, 105 W. Sibley Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; email hg18@cornell.edu). Election statements are due to the managing editor no later than June 1, 2005; they will be posted on the URPE Web site and sent out with the mail ballot.

Philadelphia "Reality Tour" 2005 ASSAs, by Hazel Dayton Gunn

The Philadelphia "reality tour," organized in conjunction with the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU), was a great success. About 25 URPE members went on the bus tour. To my great surprise the tour leader was Galen Tyler, the current director of the KWRU. Galen spoke for 2 1/2 hours: about his life story from homeless parent to director of the KWRU; about the history of Kensington from prosperous industrial center to derelict and abandoned properties; about workers with decent incomes to people scavenging for recyclables and fighting for governmental assistance. All this within a few miles of affluent downtown Philadelphia. At the end of the tour, we were able to present KWRU with a check for \$500 to aid them in their cause.

Following the tour was an outstanding panel discussion on welfare led by Randy Albelda. Dawn Saunders gave a historical perspective, pointing out the irony of history repeating itself with little gains in sight. Heather Boushey talked about welfare policy reform in Washington and the lack of progress there. Randy took us through the state of welfare since welfare reform and what we can expect in the future. There were close to 50 people in the audience. After the panel many URPE members and friends went to dinner at Vietnam, a restaurant a few blocks from the conference hotels, to continue the discussion and get caught up with each other.

Our ASSA kick-off event focused on local political economy at each ASSA site is the first panel of the ASSAs. We will continue to use an event of this kind to build community among URPE members, highlight to others the issues we are concerned about, and promote URPE/RRPE. I am currently working with Chris Tilly and Robin Hahnel on an event for the Boston ASSAs in January 2006. The theme will be labor. Stay tuned.

ECONOMY CONNECTION UPDATE

by Ruthie Indeck, Coordinator (201-792-7459 or soapbox@comcast.net)

Understanding Capitalism

"Awesome! You were so passionate—you made economics sound like it wasn't dead!" These comments were made to Paddy Quick by a young man who attended a workshop on "Understanding Capitalism" led by Paddy and Frank Roosevelt at the March conference of the Young Democratic Socialists: "When Bush Comes to Shove."

Paddy described capitalism as a system of production for profit, characterized by tremendous wealth and tremendous poverty, accumulation of profits that are then plowed back into production, increasing concentration, and the necessity for perpetual growth. She talked about the efforts of the working class to establish a basic floor to their income through fighting for programs like Social Security, and the current attacks on these programs. Capitalism has always been global, she said, starting from the early days of the slave trade and exploitation of East Indians and Native Americans, through the colonial era, up to the present. Today trade agreements like NAFTA are furthering unemployment and low wages in both the US and Mexico, and Africa is a net exporter of capital to the developed world. Paddy talked about how individual nations still protect their own corporations militarily, even in the midst of a global economic system. Ending on a note of optimism, Paddy stressed the need to organize globally and to strive for racial unity, and quoted Marx's exhortation: "Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains."

Frank, who just finished (with Sam Bowles and Richard Edwards) a new edition of a textbook coincidentally entitled *Understanding Capitalism*, elaborated on Paddy's introduction with many examples of how capitalism works. He started with a definition of capitalism from his textbook: "Capitalism is an economic system in which employers, using privately owned capital goods, hire wage labor to produce commodities for the purpose of making a profit." He described it as a system that tries to privatize everything, is based on greed, and controls workers through dividing them and keeping a large portion unemployed. It creates the perception that there are no classes and everyone has the same chance for success. Capitalism is a recent phenomenon, he said, and is not "the end of history!"

One concept that generated a lot of interest during the discussion period involved the need for companies to keep growing. Workshop participants wanted to know if a company could reach a profitable plateau and stay there. They also wondered whether capitalism could self-destruct.

Social Security

Mark Weisbrot, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research and co-author with Dean Baker of *Social Security: The Phony Crisis*, spoke about "What's Wrong with Social Security?" at the Unitarian Church of Staten Island on March 20. He told an audience of around 50 people that Bush's Social Security campaign was based on a "huge lie" and that even the trustees of the Social Security trust fund, who base their calculations on predictions of very slow economic

growth, feel that Social Security will be fine for the next 37 years. Mark said that any shortages that arise after that period can be fixed by a partial reversal of Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy. He listed some tricks being used by Bush and friends: accounting tricks, using big numbers to scare people (one opponent on a Fox TV debate didn't even know where one of her major figures had come from!), predicting slow growth for the economy but high returns for the stock market, and pretending the trust fund doesn't exist and that its bonds won't be paid back by the government. Don't make any compromises, Mark warned: that would be like saying "Don't cut off all five of my fingers—just take three!" During the discussion period one audience member said that during the 30s opponents of Social Security tried to instill a fear of socialism. "I was around then and I recall! Wall Street and millionaires hope to benefit by the destruction of Social Security," she continued, to a prolonged round of applause. See <http://www.cepr.net/> for many great articles on Social Security.

Every Monday morning Morton Mecklosky hosts a series of three talk and music radio shows on WUSB, 90.1FM, Stony Brook. He conducts interviews with insightful questions and a sense of humor. You can tune in through the internet: www.wusb.fm/website. During January and February he invited four Economy Connection members to be interviewed about Social Security and related topics: Trudy Goldberg on Jan. 31, Sumner Rosen on Feb. 14, Paddy Quick on Feb. 21, and Rick Wolff on Feb. 28. Trudy and Sumner are members of the National Jobs for All Coalition. See their website for more great info on Social Security: www.njfacc.org/SSpage.htm.

Like Mark Weisbrot, none of these speakers think Social Security is in crisis—each provided government statistics to back this up, and each expressed the view that impending Social Security bankruptcy is the Second Big Lie, comparable to using weapons of mass destruction as a justification for invading Iraq. "Both claims fall flat on their face," Sumner said. "Privatization would create the real Social Security crisis," Trudy explained. Sumner called the stock market a "crapshoot" for ordinary people.

While there were several common themes to the programs, each speaker had a unique focus: Trudy highlighted the US job situation and the political uses of the anti-Social Security campaign; Sumner gave a historical perspective; Paddy situated the campaign in the context of a general attack on the working class, and Rick added the student viewpoint and Democratic Party politics to his critique of neoliberalism.

One common theme was the dramatic role Social Security has played in reducing poverty, compared to the devastating poverty of the 30s. A related theme is the way in which the economic crisis of the 70s, and the attempts by those in power to recoup their losses since then, have contributed to the attack on Social Security. Rick pointed out that "middle class" expectations are coming undone, as shoppers move to Wal-Mart. "US workers are deeper in debt than any workers on the planet, and more than at any time in US history." As Sumner put it, "The

fruits of progress are increasingly being appropriated by those who own the means of production.” Sumner explained that the amount of money in the trust fund is determined by both the number of workers employed and by their wages, so creating more jobs at higher wages would be one of the most effective ways to increase the value of the trust fund. Instead, by eroding the reliability of retirement, the campaign is designed to ensure a continuing supply of workers for the low-wage sector, following welfare “reform.”

While speakers mentioned the benefits to Wall Street and the politicians that receive their campaign contributions, a theme that received more attention was the political purpose of the attack on Social Security. “One of the basic reasons it’s being attacked is that it is so successful,” Trudy commented. “They can’t destroy it in the way they destroyed welfare, by claiming the recipients are ‘unworthy.’ Social Security is a universal program, serving nearly everyone. They can’t say all of us are unworthy, so instead they are claiming that the system is financially unsound, that it will fail us.” Sumner said, “The attack on Social Security is an attack on the heritage of the New Deal, the embodiment of the role of government as protector of the victims of capitalism’s powerful ‘creative destruction’; the message is that the only valid role for significant government is the permanent war economy.” Paddy pointed out that both Republicans and Democrats want to roll back social programs. They gutted welfare, are now attacking Social Security, Medicaid will be next, and then Medicare. She placed this attack in a global context. With a few exceptions, such as Cuba, health care and other social programs are under attack around the world. In response to questions about the role of the Democratic Party, Rick thought that the Democrats might be planning to compromise on Social Security as part of a political survival plan because they feel Republicans have the votes, and that Democrats are not giving working people much incentive to vote for them.

The threat of socialism was a common argument used by conservatives in the 30s, and Morty asked questions about how socialism fits in today. Paddy would have preferred a retirement system based on socialist principles and human rights, rather than the insurance system that Social Security became, but she also feels that it was an understandable compromise for 1935 and that we should fight to defend it. Sumner noted that Social Security was created in the first place because of the Depression era collapse of capitalism, and that Roosevelt saved capitalism from its own excesses. Sumner feels, however, that we can fight to make US capitalism achieve a state of full unemployment at high wages, even though it has never happened in the past. Rick said that capitalism has always produced attempts to organize society differently, and that in spite of some false starts in 20th century, reports of the death of socialism are greatly exaggerated. It will be tried again.

Last but not least, speakers talked about fighting back. Young people, already worried about jobs, the war and a possible draft, are being victimized by a propaganda war, and those who are attacking Social Security are trying to separate the old from the young and to replace solidarity with “survival of the fittest.” The common message was that we must overcome

political divisions, and workers must organize themselves as they did in the 30s.

In the Classroom

“He was just what the doctor ordered, down to the last detail,” reported a Maryland high school economics teacher who had invited EC member and Public Citizen researcher Tyson Slocum to speak to her students. “He was clear and succinct, and by the end of his talk two students were ready to become interns at Public Citizen.”

The class had been studying government regulation of corporations. Tyson described how deregulation led to the demise of Enron, once the darling of the media, lawmakers, and Wall Street. “Once you remove government control and oversight and totally trust corporations, there is simply too much financial incentive for corporations and their executives to cheat.” Tyson also spoke about other aspects of corporate responsibility, using Wal-Mart as an example. He explained that Wal-Mart’s low prices are based on goods purchased cheaply from China and sold by US workers who aren’t paid enough to fully take care of their families, who then need government-subsidized social services. The higher taxes are paid by workers, not corporations: “In America today, those who own and control capital get tax benefits while those who work pay more. Is that fair?”

The textbooks for this classroom are provided by Junior Achievement, which also sends speakers. URPE speakers provide much-needed balance. Jessica Todd also spoke to this class about the minimum wage (*more in the next issue*), and a few other talks are under discussion.

In early March Barbara Garson, author of *Money Makes the World Go Round*, made a return visit to the Economics Society at St. Francis College in Brooklyn. She spoke about increasing job insecurity, a topic with personal relevance for students about to enter the job market. She described the “sense of security before the 70s when you could always get another job that would cover rent and food, even if it wasn’t ‘fulfilling’ vs. the insecurity of both blue and white collar workers today.” She also saw these changes when she revisited Thailand after their currency collapse. Barbara talked about some of the reasons the seventies brought such desperation for financiers, and led to what some call the era of globalization or global finance.

Calls for Resources

EC received a request for a Left view of rational choice theory. Carole Biewener, Max Sawicky and Peter Dorman responded. A writer in NYC needed information on the economic legacy of the Bush Sr. presidency. EC sent some *Dollars & Sense* articles by John Miller and excerpts from Mike Meeropol’s book *Surrender*. (Mike is also part of the URPE Social Security campaign—he reports that he has been giving talks and radio interviews on Social Security, and his testimony at the Springfield, MA City Council helped to pass a resolution to keep Social Security intact.) EC helped a professor look for a speaker on taxes, and talked with a television producer about the possibility of having economic commentary on a show about red and blue states.

Minutes of URPE Steering Committee Meeting, April 9-10, 2005

(The following is a preliminary set of minutes, and has not yet been formally approved by the Steering Committee.)

Saturday morning (April 9, 2005)

Chair: Doug. Minute-taker: Paddy

Present: Cyrus Bina, Al Campbell, Graham Cassano, Doug Koritz, Patty Lee Parmalee, Paddy Quick, Alfredo Saad Filho + Germai Medhanie (ex officio) and (for a portion of the meeting) Gary Mongiovi (RRPE liaison)

1. Budget Germai presented budget information, on both annual and quarterly basis. He has completed the transition from using an academic year (Sept. 1 - Aug. 31) to a calendar year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31). The SC discussed both the overall data and individual budget items from both the NO and the RRPE. The discussion led to the conclusion that URPE has a serious and growing gap between projected revenue and expenses.

Motion: No funds can be committed this year to the David Barkin lecture series. Approved 7-0-0

Motion: Funds previously allocated for an EC assistance but not yet spent must be eliminated from the budget. Approved 7-0-0.

Doug's generous offer to donate a computer for the use of the National Office was gratefully accepted.

It was agreed to continue the discussion of the overall budget problem throughout the 2-day SC meeting.

2. RRPE Report from Gary. Gary reported the concern of Hazel Dayton Gunn (RRPE Managing Editor) over the failure of the SC to have a functioning Treasurer in place. SC members expressed their regret over the circumstances of individual SC members which led to this problem, and promised to address the matter during the weekend. Hazel asked, in particular, if approval for the RRPE 2006 budget could be given before the start of the upcoming fiscal year. The SC agreed to authorize the RRPE budget at its Fall 2005 meeting. The SC also agreed that Hazel should be responsible for all subscription-related matters, and that she should be informed in advance when URPE reports on RRPE-related issues (e.g. in the Newsletter or on the website.) Doug suggested that it might be possible to reduce costs by coordinating purchases by the NO and the RRPE.

Gary reported on the progress of the digitization project.

Motion: That the SC allocate an additional \$3000 for completion of the digitization project. Approved 7-0-0.

Motion: That, in view of the critical financial situation of URPE, the RRPE Editorial Board be asked to organize a special fundraising letter for the digitization project, with the understanding that any funds over \$3000 resulting

from this letter be available to the Ed Bd for related expenses. Passed 7-0-0.

Al requested that the Ed Bd and the SC coordinate a drive to obtain library subscriptions from institutions where URPE members are employed but which do not have current subscriptions. This would require an analysis of data on individual and institutional subscribers. Gary agreed to discuss the feasibility of this with Hazel. The SC would appoint a person to work with Gary on such a project.

Germai asked if it would be possible for Sage to subsidize the ASSA party. Gary said that it would be possible to talk to them about allocating a portion of the URPE marketing funds for this purpose.

The SC and Gary discussed possible ways in which SC and Ed Bd members could interact more in informal ways.

3. Sustainer Letter Graham reported that \$2,200 had been contributed so far as a result of the sustainer letter sent out. He will do a follow-up letter. It was agreed that in future a separate letter to members in OECD countries might be useful.

The SC broke for lunch at 12:30 p.m.

Saturday Afternoon (April 9, 2005)

Chair - Cyrus. Minute-taker - Alfredo

Present - Cyrus, Alfredo, Graham, Al, Paddy, Doug, Patti + (ex officio) Germai.

1. SC Elections: Long discussion of procedures for SC elections. The SC will invite nominations of candidates in the next newsletter and at the conference.

Motion: Candidates nominated by the deadline of the next newsletter will be able to include their statements in the newsletter. Nominations will finally close at the end of the Summer conference. Approved 7-0-0.

Motion: After the Summer conference and the completion of the list of candidates the SC will send a paper ballot to all URPE members, with a structured statement by each one of the candidates. Approved 6-0-1.

Motion: The Summer Conference fee will include a one-year URPE membership (with an option not to join). Approved 7-0-0.

Motion: The Women's Caucus will make its own decision about how to run the elections of their SC representative. Approved 7-0-0.

2. Review of SC vacancies to be filled: Vacancies: Women's caucus, plus 3 at large. Suggestions of names welcomed.

3. Procedures for voting on proposed amendment to the by-laws:

Motion: Vote on proposed amendment to the by-laws will take place at the Summer conference business meeting: approved 7-0-0.

4. Summer conference: Review of the organization for the conference and the plenaries. Discussion about possible names for the remaining plenaries, and about the workshops. Organization of the business meeting.

5. Possibility of change in the place and/or date of conference: Extensive discussion about changing date of summer conference to earlier in August. General agreement on need to make this change for 2006. Graham, Paddy, Germai, Patti, Doug will check different possibilities.

6. Conference evaluation form: Doug will draft an evaluation form for the Summer conference.

7. Proposals for change in schedules for SC meetings: If the Summer conference moves to a time and place when more people can attend, one of the SC business meetings could be held at the Summer Conference, reducing travel costs for URPE and enhancing the role of the conference. Another possibility is to meet at the ASSA as well, depending on the location. No decision made.

Adjourn: 16:55.

Sunday morning (April 10, 2005)

Chair: Patti. Minute-taker: Alfredo

Present: Patti, Doug, Paddy, Graham, Al, Alfredo, Cyrus, + ex officio: Germai, Ruthie.

1. URPE and people of color: Graham reported on the importance of recruiting African-Americans and other people of color who are working in the broad area of political economy (including economics and related social sciences). Discussion about alternative ways to build bridges incrementally, including the possibility of a joint conference. Graham and Cyrus to explore different possibilities.

2. EC report: Ruthie reported on Economy Connection activities and listserv. Discussion about the ways to reach out to different audiences. One possibility is to advertise in different places that are not always associated with the traditional URPE audience. Listserv: clarification of criteria for sending emails. SC decides to maintain the current procedures, with Ruthie as moderator.

3. Report on graduate student reps: Al reported about the current difficulties, which are largely due to the lack of co-ordination and feedback from the reps. Al is now sending emails to obtain further information about the current activities, and suggestions for what the reps may do. URPE has agreed to pay \$500 per annum to the reps for at least 1 meeting with other grad students, plus 2

events, and they should also make sure at least one student (besides the rep) attends the Summer conf. Suggestion: to maintain the program for another year, but the reps will be paid only if they deliver.

4. Report on the book series: Paddy reported that the contract with Pluto has been signed, and we have in place a committee consisting of Paddy, Al and Alfredo that is currently considering suggestions of possible books.

5. Fred Lee and heterodox economists: Suggestion to link with Fred Lee and ICAPE. Al will liaise to see if it's possible to link through ICAPE.

6. Website: Al reported on the site and its maintenance. We need a webmaster, and Doug volunteers. Doug will have absolute authority over the site (there is no need for consultation over the content of the site, except Economy Connection material). Suggestion to include links on the website with other organizations and personal webpages. Approved 7-0-0.

7. Links with other organizations: Graham reported on discussions with AESA/Rethinking Marxism. Graham will contact them to strengthen these links. Paddy will approach *Dollars & Sense* to increase links.

8. Regional meetings: Doug reported on Upstate NY meetings. This offers a possible strategy to rejuvenate URPE.

9. Matt Edelman project: Report by Doug and Cyrus.

10. Newsletter: Paddy reported on the newsletter. Suggestion of incremental build-up of archive on website. Doug and Germai to see if this is possible, and to seek back copies. Graduate reps to get extra copies to distribute at conferences.

11. Treasurer: Al is voted new treasurer, 7-0-0.

12. Membership fee: Vote to raise the fee as of next year's membership (starting in 2006) from \$20 to \$25, approved 7-0-0.

13. NO director position: Review of earlier discussions of URPE budget.

Motion: Because of the current financial difficulties URPE cannot continue the NO director position from September 2006. The Steering Committee expressed its deep appreciation for the work of the current NO director, and its regret that this cutback is necessary. Approved 7-0-0.

Motion: If the necessary savings in overall budget are not achieved for the 2005 fiscal year, then the 2006 COLA may not be possible for both URPE employees. This will be discussed in the Fall meeting, as a last resort. Approved 7-0-0.

Meeting adjourned: 12:30.

**Union of Radical Political Economists
Call for Papers - URPE at ASSA Meeting
Boston, Massachusetts January 5-8, 2006**

(Editorial note: The deadline for proposals, May 1, means that this Newsletter may arrive too late for people who have not yet put in their proposals. Most people have received this information through our listserv. The inclusion of this announcement is intended to inform all members of important URPE activities.)

URPE invites proposals for individual papers and complete sessions for the URPE at ASSA annual meeting. URPE welcomes proposals on radical political economic theory and applied analysis from a wide variety of theoretical traditions.

The **deadline** for proposed papers and sessions is **May 1, 2005**.

Proposals for complete sessions should include the session title, a brief description of each paper, and the names, institutional affiliations, and email addresses of the chair, discussants, and presenters. Proposals for sessions should contain four papers. If you are proposing a complete session, please arrange to have discussants for your papers and a chair for your session. As the organizer of this session, you are responsible for conveying administrative information to session members, including confirmation that the session has been accepted, the time and location, and deadlines.

Proposals for individual papers should include the title, the abstract, and the author's name, institutional affiliation, and email. Individuals whose papers are accepted may also be expected to serve as a discussant for a different paper at the meetings. If you list the areas you prefer to discuss, all attempts will be made to match your preferences. Individual papers that are accepted will be assigned to sessions and each session will have an assigned organizer. It is the organizer's job to convey administrative information to session members, including confirmation that the session has been accepted, the time and location, and deadlines. URPE has no paid ASSA staff, so those presenting papers must share the burden of organizing.

We regret that high quality individual papers may be turned down due to the inability to place them in a session with papers with similar themes. For this reason, we strongly encourage proposals for full sessions. The number of sessions we can accept is limited by ASSA, and we regret that high quality sessions may be turned down as well.

Please note that the date, time, and location of sessions is assigned by ASSA, not URPE. You should receive word from URPE that your paper/session was accepted by mid-June. ASSA will not assign dates and times until much later in the summer.

Please note that at least one of the authors of any paper **must be a member** of URPE. Contact urpe@labornet.org or 413-577-0806 for membership information. We will confirm membership for accepted proposals.

A completed copy of the Program Registration Form (below) is required with your submission. Submissions will **NOT BE ACCEPTED BY EMAIL. Only applications received by the May 1 deadline will be considered.**

If you have any questions, please contact one of the URPE at ASSA coordinators:

Robin Hahnel American University
rhahnel@starpower.net

Kristen Sheeran St. Mary's College of MD
kasheeran@smcm.edu

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Understanding Capitalism

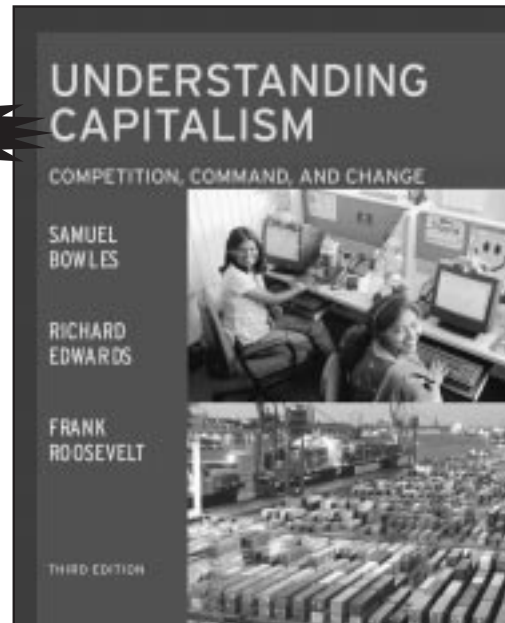
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Third Edition

New edition!

The third edition of *Understanding Capitalism: Competition, Command, and Change* is an introduction to economics that explains how capitalism works, why it sometimes does not work as well as we would like it to, and how over time it not only changes but also revolutionizes the world around us. The “three-dimensional approach” of the text focuses on *competition* in markets; *command* in firms, governments, and international relations; and *change* as a permanent feature of a capitalist economy driven by technical innovation and conflict over the distribution of income.

The book covers the standard topics of supply and demand, market competition, imperfect competition, aggregate demand, inflation, and unemployment. It emphasizes the extraordinary dynamism and material productivity of the capitalist economy; the psychological foundations of human behavior; the logic and limitations of Adam Smith’s invisible hand; technical change and the new information-based economy; global economic integration and its impact on national economies; the impact of economic activity on the environment; and inequality both within and among nations. In addition, it provides a critical evaluation of the tenets of neoclassical economics, a clear introduction to contract theory, and material drawn from new research in behavioral, institutional, and information economics. *Understanding Capitalism: Competition, Command, and Change*, Third Edition, is ideal for undergraduate courses in economics and political economy.



Features of the Third Edition

- Offers a new chapter on the behavioral foundations of economics, showing that the selfishness of the “economic man” leaves out the important role of other social motives and demonstrating how individual tastes and values evolve in response to experiences
- Includes a new chapter that examines how economic success (and poverty) are passed on from parents to children and also looks at the increasing inequality of income and wealth along lines of race and gender
- Presents a completely revised and expanded treatment of the revolutionary changes that have been associated with capitalism over the past three centuries
- Provides boxed treatments of issues that can serve as the basis of classroom discussions
- Defines important terms in the margins throughout the text
- Contains a section entitled “Sources of Economic Information” that helps readers locate relevant outside data, both in print and online

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City Council Resolutions on Social Security

(Mike Meeropol reports that the following resolution was passed by the City Council of Springfield Massachusetts, and that a similar resolution has been put before the New York City Council. New Yorkers are urged to support the resolution, and URPE members in other parts of the country are encouraged to take similar steps.)

Whereas: Social Security has been a highly successful mainstay of the American system of Social Insurance since the end of the Great Depression, providing inflation-proof pensions, disability and survivors' benefits for millions of Americans at minimal cost, and

Whereas: The Bush Social Security Commission has outlined a plan for a system of individual accounts that would be universally available to all workers, at an administrative cost that is far less than is currently charged by the private sector, and

Whereas: The President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security believes that it can allow workers to convert their savings into annuities (lifelong income flows) at a minimal cost (financial institutions typically charge workers 15 to 20 percent) and

Whereas: According to the Reports of the Social Security Trustees and the Congressional Budget Office, even if no changes to either the revenue collection structure or the benefit structure are made, the current social security system will pay full benefits till 2042 (Trustees) or 2052 (CBO) and 73% of promised benefits thereafter, and

Whereas: Personal accounts that would replace Social Security's promised benefits would do nothing by themselves to close the revenue gap after 2042 (or 2052) but would require significant cuts in guaranteed benefits, and

Whereas: Replacing the Social Security pension in part with personal accounts would mean losing a guaranteed benefit for one with an uncertain return, (with higher administrative costs to the program by at least factor of 10 and possibly by a factor of 30-40 based on the experience of other countries that have privatized their Social Security systems), a return that would probably be no higher than in the current system when realistic projections of stock returns consistent with the Trustees' assumption of 1.8 per cent economic growth for the next 75 years are used,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Springfield City Council urges Congress that if they wish to create a system of private accounts such as one proposed by the President's commission, then such accounts must only be a voluntary addition to Social Security completely separate from the Social Security system, so as to facilitate savings without jeopardizing the core retirement income promised by Social Security. Given the importance and current health of the program, there is no reason to have any cuts in the guaranteed benefits provided by Social Security.

ALTERNATIVE RESOLUTION [introduced to the NY City Council]

Whereas: In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted the Social Security Act, an ambitious social program to assist Americans and their families to cope with many of life's difficulties, such as unemployment, death, disability and old age; and

Whereas: Since its implementation, the Social Security Act has aided untold numbers of Americans and is considered the most successful domestic program in our nation's history; and

Whereas: Social Security continues to provide important economic assistance to disabled persons, widows and widowers, dependent children and retirees; and

Whereas: Currently, President George Bush is endangering the retirement benefits of millions of Americans with his plan to dismantle the current Social Security system; and

Whereas: President Bush has called for the introduction of personal accounts that would allow individuals to put a portion of their Social Security contributions into diversified index funds; and

Whereas: According to a recent New York Times editorial, the President's proposal to privatize personal accounts could actually contain hidden costs, thereby leaving retirees with less money; and

Whereas: The proposed privatization of Social Security contains risks associated with stock market dependency and, according to numerous advocates, could be especially detrimental to lower wage earners; and

Whereas: According to many analysts, the President's plan does not include reforms to strengthen the Social Security system or solve for the predicted short fall of finances that may, in the long term, create huge deficits in the program; and

Whereas: Others have raised concerns that under President Bush's proposed changes, those entering the workforce today could face more than a 25 percent cut in the retirement benefits they're counting on; and

Whereas: Social Security is meant to be a safety net, not a risk, for workers; and

Whereas: Today's working Americans deserve the guarantee that Social Security will be there for them when it is their turn to collect their earned benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Bush Administration to abandon its efforts to dismantle the current social security system.

(continued from page 1) Confirmed plenary speakers include:

Gar Alperovitz
Allin Cottrell
Susan Williams McElroy
Frances Fox-Piven
Robin Hahnel
David Laibman
Julie Matthaei
John Miller
Bob Pollin
Hector Saez

The David Gordon lecture will be given by David Laibman.

In addition to the plenaries and David Gordon lecture, the conference includes many workshops. URPE is particularly pleased this year to welcome presentations from *Rethinking Marxism* (see below). For updates on the conference schedule, please visit www.urpe.org.

There are still many opportunities for members to participate in and contribute to workshops. The Summer Conference provides an opportunity for URPE members to share their ideas and preliminary research results in a sympathetic environment. Anyone interested in this is encouraged to contact Al Campbell who is responsible for the Summer Conference schedule (see page 2 for contact information.) We welcome, in particular, graduate and undergraduate students, both as presenters and participants.

RETHINKING MARXISM received an invitation to participate in the upcoming URPE Summer Camp. We have accepted the invitation with gratitude and in the spirit of cooperation that we think is manifesting itself across progressive communities—increasingly, urgently, creatively.

We are particularly happy to renew our involvement in the URPE project because this gives us a way to honor the critical role that URPE has played historically (since its inception in the 1960s, down to these so-very-different times) in creating a space of heterodoxy for progressive-minded economists. This Newsletter itself has functioned as a veritable network center for political economists of all types. We value this gathering function for its ability to generate hope, creativity, camaraderie, and energy, through good times and bad.

We at RETHINKING MARXISM have been moved by many of the same deep forces that have animated URPE and other heterodox streams (such as IAFFE, ICAPE, and others). Cutting across the differences of focus and of time and place of formation, each heterodox stream has had the double task of, on one hand, defining its focus, and, on the other hand, negotiating the terms of dialogue with others. Those of us associated with RM have been working very diligently at both these tasks, trying to identify the theoretical specificities of Marxism and distinguishing it from other specificities. When we have sought to be clear about these distinguishing marks, we have done so in order to enable more (not less) clear, honest, and productive conversations with other theoretical traditions.

We are pleased to be able to bring our hopes and energies to this renewed cooperation with URPE.

The Boards of Directors of Rethinking Marxism and of the Association for Economic and Social Analysis

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THE SUMMER CAMP: ITS BENEFITS AND ITS COSTS

The URPE Summer workshop/retreat will meet at Camp Chinqueka in Bantam, Connecticut. The camp is on a beautiful lake and conference participants can swim (with life-guard provided) and boat. The camp also has tennis courts and a soccer field. Many people enjoy hiking in the area. Children are welcome, and people who register before August 10 will be provided with professional child-care from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (with breaks for meals). (URPE is one of the most child-friendly organizations in the United States.) The cabin accommodations are “basic”—double-bunk beds (with firm mattresses) in cabins with bathroom facilities— people should bring their own pillows and sleeping bags. URPE organizes cabins in many ways to accommodate all the people who attend: single gender and mixed gender cabins, a cabin for kids (whose parents approve), and even a cabin for “snorers.” The camp facilities for handicapped people are not ideal, but most people can be accommodated, and the most accessible cabin is reserved for people with difficulty walking. Those who have special needs are asked to contact the URPE National Office. The camp food is rated “very good” by past conference attendees. Both vegetarians and vegans will enjoy the meals that are regularly prepared by the camp’s kitchen staff. Again, anyone with special needs is asked to contact the National Office.

Directions to the camp can be obtained from our web-site (www.urpe.org) or by contacting the National Office. The camp is about 90 minutes from New York City.

The fees listed below for the URPE Summer Conference include the conference, lodging in communal cabins or in self-provided tents, and meals. Conference fees are determined on a sliding scale (see below for suggested classifications.) Check-in for the conference begins at 3 pm on Saturday, August 20, and continues throughout the conference. The conference ends after lunch on Tuesday, August 23, 2005.

	<i>Very Low Income</i>	<i>Low Income</i>	<i>Middle Income</i>	<i>High Income/Institution</i>
ADULTS				
Entire 3 days/3 nights:	\$140	\$150	\$200	\$307
Daily Rate:	45	55	75	115

SPECIAL RATE for STUDENTS : \$75

CHILDREN ages 12-18

Entire 3 days/3 nights:	\$70	\$95	\$125	\$185
Daily Rate:	25	40	50	65

CHILDREN ages 3-11

Entire 3 days/3 nights:	\$50	\$60	\$80	105
Daily Rate:	20	25	30	40

MAXIMUM FAMILY RATE

Entire 3 days/3 nights:	\$250	\$310	\$460	\$610
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Children aged under 3 are free.

Lodging off-site. For those of you who prefer lodging off-site, there are many bed and breakfasts and hotels in the area, although they are on the expensive side . We will post a list of lodgings in the area on our website <www.urpe.org>. If lodging off-site, subtract \$10 per night per person (\$30 for the entire conference.)

Sliding Scale

Number of household members	Very Low Income	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income
1	\$0-9,100	\$9,101-15,150	\$15,151-35,000	over \$35,000
2	\$0-10,100	\$10,101-19,150	\$19,151-50,000	over \$50,000
3	\$0-12,100	\$12,101-23,150	\$23,151-55,000	over \$55,000
4	\$0-14,100	\$14,101-28,150	\$28,151-60,000	over \$60,000

SUMMER CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Note: There may be a change in the fee schedule for the Summer Conference, with a lower rate for people with heavy travel expenses, and the possibility of a higher rate for people with low travel expenses. People who register now will receive refunds if there is a reduction in the fees applicable to them. Registering now guarantees that you will not be assessed higher fees if they go into effect in the future.

Please return to:

URPE National Office, Gordon Hall, University of Massachusetts, 418 N. Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002-1735.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____ E-mail: _____

Summer address and phone if different (Give applicable dates): _____

1. Income level (circle one): Very Low Low Middle High/Institution

2. Number of people registering:

Age group: Adults Children, 12-18 Children, 3-11 Children under 3

3. Childcare needs? Specify ages of children needing child care:

Please note: [Child care is guaranteed only to those who register for the conference before August 10]

3. Number of people needing vegetarian food _____

4. Will you be attending? (circle one): Entire conference Selected day(s)

Date and approximate time of arrival _____

Date and approximate time of departure _____

4a. For day visits, circle day(s) and meal(s) in attendance:

Sat. dinner Mon. breakfast /lunch/ dinner

Sun. breakfast /lunch/ dinner Tues. breakfast /lunch

5. Lodging preferred (circle one): Co-ed cabin Single sex cabin Space for pitching tent

6. Are you an URPE member? (circle one): Yes No No, but will become one by paying dues now!

7. STUDENTS! CHECK HERE IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR THE SPECIAL RATE _____

8. Payment form for all registrations:

Total conference fees (see page 17) _____

(Conference fee includes costs of conference, lodging, and meals)

New URPE membership with RRPE and newsletter (\$55/\$30 if low income) _____

New URPE limited membership with newsletter only (\$20) _____

\$10 late registration fee (registrations after August 10) _____

Special: If lodging off-site, subtract \$10 per night per person, \$30 for entire conference* (_____)

TOTAL DUE: _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (minimum deposit required): _____

BALANCE DUE UPON ARRIVAL: _____

A non-refundable deposit of \$30 per adult plus any membership fees must accompany this registration.

Checks payable to URPE. *Off-site lodging discount not available for scholarship recipients.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: Income level: Very low____ Low____ Middle____ High____

Amount received: \$_____ Total

\$_____ # adults: _____ # days _____ or entire conference _____ scholarship Yes/ No

\$_____ # ch12-18: _____ # days _____ or entire conference _____

\$_____ # ch2-11: _____ # days _____ or entire conference _____

Dues: \$_____

URPE Membership

There are two types of membership in the Union for Radical Political Economics:

Full Membership with *RRPE* journal and Newsletter subscription

Limited Membership. with Newsletter subscription only.

Both types of membership carry equal voting rights in URPE. (To participate in the URPE sessions at the Allied Social Science Association meetings, you must be a member of URPE.)

Circle option chosen, and make checks payable to URPE.

Full Membership (includes one-year subscription to the *Review of Radical Political Economics* and the quarterly URPE Newsletter Please note that *RRPE* subscriptions are entered on a calendar year basis.)

Low-income/student \$30

All other individuals \$55

Send **Full Membership** dues to:

Hazel Dayton Gunn,
Dept. of City and Regional Planning,
106 W. Sibley Hall,
Cornell University,
Ithaca NY 14853

Limited Membership (Includes subscription to the quarterly URPE Newsletter)

All individuals \$20

Send **Limited Membership** dues to:

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Gordon Hall, University of Massachusetts
418 N. Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002-1735.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Institutional affiliation: _____ (optional)

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Would you like your name and address to be listed in a Directory of URPE members? Yes/No

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