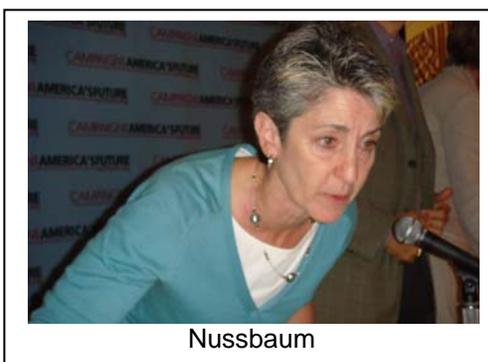


“I learned about revolution in Cuba.”

AFL-CIO Official Traveled to Cuba as Young Radical on Weather Underground-sponsored Venceremos Brigades

A top official of the AFL-CIO is stonewalling questions about her participation in an illegal 1970 trip to Communist Cuba organized by Weather Underground terrorist Bernardine Dohrn.

Karen Nussbaum, the executive director of Working America, the community affiliate of the AFL-CIO, was asked about her visit to Cuba after speaking at a panel at a “progressive” public policy “America’s Future Now!” conference on June 1, 2009, in Washington, D.C. It was sponsored by the Campaign for America’s Future and Institute for America’s Future.



Nussbaum was apparently stunned by the fact that someone had uncovered an aspect of her background that has been carefully omitted from her official biography. She refused to answer and walked away. Obviously embarrassed, she also pretended that she didn’t hear the follow-up questions about her trip as a young radical to the communist-controlled island. But according to one account of her trip, she declared that she “learned about revolution in Cuba” and praised Castro for providing “free health and educational care to every person in society...” She also declared, “I was part of the Black Panther Support Committee” and said she was a member of the “Draft resistance movement” opposing the Vietnam War.

Nussbaum’s “Working America” AFL-CIO affiliate claims to represent “10 million union men and women and millions of workers without the benefit of a workplace union...” One of its current campaigns is congressional passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, in order to make it easier for the AFL-CIO to obtain members.

Director of the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor under President Clinton and a contributor to the Huffington Post, Nussbaum’s trip to Cuba was sponsored by the Venceremos Brigade, a group run by the Cuban intelligence service, the DGI, which included several members of the communist terrorist Weather

Underground. Young people on the trips were indoctrinated in the communist philosophy and given training in terrorism.

“We were in Cuba for a couple of months,” she said.

According to declassified intelligence information, the Venceremos Brigades (VB) were created in 1968 by Cuban Communist officials to bring members of the New Left to Cuba ostensibly to cut sugar cane but actually for training and brainwashing. “The arrangements for the VB were made by future Weathermen Julie Nichamin and Bernardine Dohrn who had numerous contacts with officials at the CMUN [Cuban Mission to the United Nations], including officials who were suspected members of the DGI,” one government document says.

Nussbaum founded the organization, 9 to 5: The National Association of Women Office Workers, which led to Jane Fonda, also known as “Hanoi Jane” because of her support of the Communist Vietnamese, making the film “9 to 5.” Fonda’s website features a photo of Fonda, Nussbaum and her husband, a former official of a group called Citizen Action who became a public relations executive in such firms as Fenton Communications. Citizen Action was implicated in a fundraising scandal in 1997 and was forced to close.



The AFL-CIO’s Nussbaum refused to answer questions about her trip to Cuba.

Nussbaum had just completed a speech on a panel at the “America’s Future Now!” conference which on June 2 honored her boss, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, as one of several “Progressive Champions.” Another award winner was Rep. Barbara Lee, herself a recent visitor to Cuba and apologist for the Castro regime.

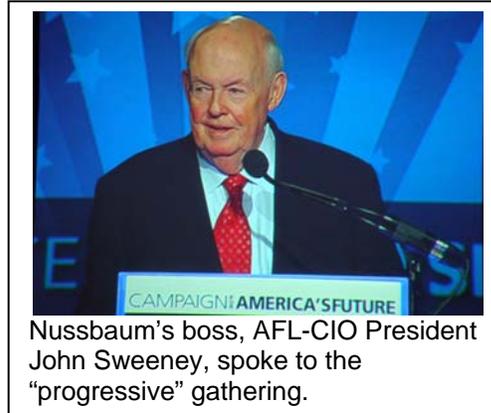
In 2002, however, Sweeney signed a letter to Castro protesting the regime’s interference with labor union activists on the island. Another such letter was sent by Sweeney in 2003. According to the 2008 State Department human rights report, Cuba is a “totalitarian state” that features “severe restrictions on worker rights, including the right to form independent unions...”

A panelist on the subject of “A New and Enduring Progressive Majority?,” Nussbaum talked about her efforts to get conservative union members to vote for “progressive” candidates. She indicated this is a struggle since many union members have conservative social views, own guns, and go to church often. It was after her presentation that she was asked about the Venceremos Brigades and refused to answer.

Organized labor is a major backer of the conference, which features officials of the Obama Administration, anti-Israel activist Naomi Klein, and several representatives of ACORN, the controversial federally-funded group implicated in illegal voter registration activities on behalf of the Obama presidential campaign.

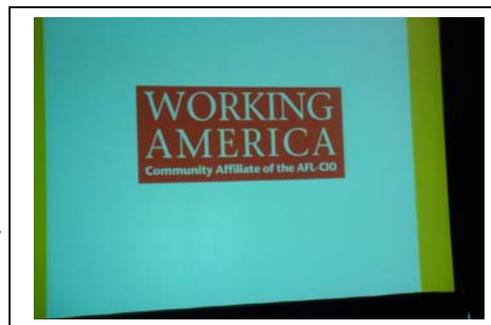
On June 1, Obama Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and Howard Dean participated in a panel demanding “Affordable Health Care for All.”

Nussbaum’s official bio says that she has been active for four decades in the organized labor movement, including at the Service Employees International Union and the AFL-CIO. But another document available on the Internet and entitled, “Voices of Feminism Oral History Project,” includes extremely damaging information about Nussbaum’s involvement in pro-communist and anti-American groups. In the document, which is said to be based on an interview Nussbaum gave in December 2003, Nussbaum talks not only about her participation in the Venceremos Brigades to Cuba but her support for the Black Panthers, a militant black power group that attacked the police.



The document quotes her as saying that the Venceremos Brigade trip to Cuba “was actually something that was tied into the Black Panthers who were helping to lead these educational sessions for people who were going. So I signed up. I quit school and decided to go to Cuba in the winter of ’70.”

Asked “What was Cuba like in 1970?,” Nussbaum said the dictatorship was “thrilling, you know. It was a society that was combating racism, that had provided free health and educational care to every person in society, that had reduced income inequality more dramatically than any place else on earth, that had created literacy in an illiterate country by having middle schoolers going out and teaching adults. It was very, very exciting. So, that was terrific -- and to understand what struggle was like.”



In discussing the Veneceremos Brigade, Nussbaum told the interviewer that it was “a way to demonstrate solidarity with Cubans and against the US policy...” Asked for more details, she explained, “There were all kinds of political activists. There were a lot of Weathermen who were in the Brigade, who were the left split off from the SDS and a huge array of young leftists who were there and so we talked politics all the time.”

The SDS and the Weathermen were the predecessors of the Weather Underground organization, the group which bombed police stations and killed police officers in the U.S. Two leaders of the Weather Underground, Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn, are political associates of President Obama and helped launch his political career in Chicago.

Nussbaum also has ties to Chicago, having studied at the University of Chicago before quitting to go to Cuba. The Cuba trip, however, was illegal because she had no “official clearance” to go there, she acknowledged. Asked if the trip had “helped you solidify somehow, a more practical application of your politics,” Nussbaum replied, “Well, I just learned a lot. I learned about revolution in Cuba.”



Communist and socialist literature was available at the “progressive” conference.

Under AFL-CIO President Sweeney, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, Nussbaum and other “progressives” have flourished. “There’s been lots of change in the labor movement,” she said.

BANKS NUTTER: And what was that experience like for you? I mean, was it a part of the progression? This was part of the politics of the time to make that statement to volunteer to do this labor, but at the time, was it anything more than that?

NUSSBAUM: Well, at the time, it just seemed great. Well, this is very exciting. It’s a lot better than going to class at the University of Chicago, that was clear. And so I was delighted to have this opportunity and it was very exciting. Now it was a real hothouse, though. There were all kinds of political activists. There were a lot of Weathermen who were in the Brigade, who were the left split off from the SDS and a huge array of young leftists who were there and so we talked politics all the time. And politics got played out there. There were racial problems in the brigade. There were huge problems between men and women. There was this just beginning to grow women’s movement, and if you can believe it, there was this huge debate about whether women should wear bras while we were cutting cane. But that was the insanity of the time, too.

Source: <http://www.smith.edu/library/libr/ssc/vof/transcripts/Nussbaum.pdf>

Voices of Feminism Oral History Project

Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College
Northampton, MA