

MCADP NEWS

Winter 1999

Massachusetts Citizens Against the Death Penalty, Inc.

Illustration: Detail of Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco from the cartoon of a mural by Ben Shahn. © Estate of Ben Shahn, licensed by VAGA, NY, NY.

Co-chairs' Column

Nona Walker & Marty Rosenthal

As we have mentioned proudly many, many times, MCADP is the oldest anti-death penalty organization in the country. Our efforts in the last nine years, in concert with the efforts of a number of other organizations, have made us one of the most successful. Now our unbridled ambition is leading us to want to become a nationwide model for other anti-death penalty groups! The question is, how can we accomplish this?

In a speech in October to the Amnesty International Southern Regional Conference, former Chief Justice Kogan of the Florida Supreme Court, a man who has dealt with some 1200 capital cases as a prosecutor, a defense attorney, and a judge, pointed to our most important task: those of us who want to see the end of the death penalty must engage in a dialogue with the general public. For MCADP, this means that we must do two things. First, we must make our presence known to the many people in Massachusetts who already oppose the death penalty but who do not know of our existence, and we must enroll them on our membership list. Second, we must spread the truth about the death penalty to as many other people as we can reach. Then, when we have convinced those people that execution is not a viable option, we must sign them up as members also!

In essence, our goal is to enlist every person in the Commonwealth who opposes the death penalty as a member of our organization. Then when another bill is being considered in the legislature, we can mobilize thousands of people to contact their senators and representatives. With our new website (www.mcadp.org) and e-mail capabilities, we have the technology to do it. All we need are the names!

Having weathered last March yet another unsuccessful attempt by the Governor to reinstate the death penalty, we have an opportunity now to spread the word and broaden our membership base. As we have

Continued on Page 2

Ehrmann Event Huge Success

Mike Hussey



Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation used the opportunity of Ehrmann Award presentation to unveil the first of their new series of anti-death penalty bus signs. The first one features Andrew Pryor.

The Old South Meeting House in downtown Boston proved a most elegant and appropriate setting for the 1999 Ehrmann Award event, held on Thursday evening, October 7th. Founded in 1729 as a Puritan meeting house and maintaining its appearance as an historic church, it has also long served as a forum for the exchange of ideas concerning the future course of our democracy and echoes with the words of religious, social, and political dissenters. This night proved to be no exception as the speakers at the Ehrmann event continued the hall's tradition of celebrating and promoting the values of human rights and individual dignity.

A crowd of approximately 150 attended the event, which was most ably managed by

MCADP co-chair Nona Walker acting as MC. After guests were gently persuaded to move from the delicious offerings available at the buffet table, the MCADP Special Award for leadership was presented by State Rep. William McManus, a long time death penalty opponent, to Speaker of the House Thomas Finneran and William Nagle, House Majority Leader. These two political leaders were honored for their own steadfast and successful opposition to death penalty legislation in Massachusetts. Both Finneran and Nagle took the occasion to applaud MCADP for its political acumen and the critical role the organization has played in coordinating the legislative hearings and working with other

Continued on Page 2

Massachusetts
Citizens Against
the Death Penalty, Inc.

PO Box 3404
Boston, MA 02101-3404

Co-chairs, Continued from p. 1

said so many times before, we need the help of each and every current MCADP member to do this. Our dedicated staff does yeoman's work, but the three of them simply cannot do all that is needed. So we are asking you to help in the following ways.

First, when you fill out the enclosed form to renew your membership, please give us the names and addresses, including e-mail if possible, of two of your friends to whom we can send membership information. Then tell those two friends how important it is that they join MCADP if they want Massachusetts to remain death-penalty free.

Second, arrange a date for an MCADP speaker to address another group to which you belong, be it a church group, a sports group, a hobby group, or a group of friends. No gathering is too small for our speakers! Then contact our office and we will find a speaker for your event.

Together we can continue the fight, continue to be successful, and establish a model for other states to follow. Please help us spread the word!

Ehrmann Continued from p. 1

groups to successfully defeat Governor Cellucci's latest death penalty proposal. The MCADP Distinguished Achievement Award was presented to the Massachusetts Latino-American Caucus of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Fittingly, this award, which recognized the political courage of the freshman legislators of this group for their unanimous stand against the death penalty bill, was presented by State Representative John Slattery, whose own courageous change of position to oppose the death penalty in 1998 led to its defeat. Rep. Jose Santiago accepted the award for the caucus. Santiago, a former Lawrence police officer, also changed his position on the death penalty after careful consideration of the issue, aided by information and encouragement from Slattery and MCADP members. MCADP board member Horace Seldon paid eloquent tribute to Scott Harshbarger, former Attorney General and presently President and CEO of Common Cause, in presenting him with the Manny Weiner/Victor Reid award. This award was named in honor of the long-time commitment of two stalwarts of the anti-death penalty movement, both of whom unfortunately passed away earlier this year. Mr. Seldon and Diane Juliar, also a long-time

Notes from the Pacific Northwest

Ronnie Friedman-Barone

It has been just over a year since I left MCADP to live in a state where 14 men sit on death row waiting to choose the gallows or lethal injection. I have pondered the differing cultures: in many ways, the ghosts of a frontier mentality fire the legal system of today; its sparse use of capital punishment rests on its mistrust of government; the evangelistic fervor of the Christian Right heavily influences the state's Republican party.

When I first moved to Washington State, I spent many an hour searching the library books depicting the history of the state. I'd thumb through hundreds of books, first checking the indices to see what was listed under the death penalty, and if that proved fruitless, I'd look under prison system or criminal justice. To my consternation, the subject was rarely if ever mentioned. I thought I must be looking in the wrong books or in the wrong places, but I almost always came up empty. Chapters and chapters about pioneers, Indians, logging, and fishing were always there, but the death penalty passed by with hardly a whisper.

But nothing seemed to say much to or about Massachusetts, until this week, with the protests that have accompanied the meeting of

the World Trade Organization.

Why? Because of the approximately 50,000 who have taken to the streets to express their views, the vast majority speak with a clarity, poignancy, anger or eloquence about a whole host of WTO issues. But none do it with such breadth of knowledge as those concerned about the wasting of the environment, a subject that has captivated the psyche of the region since and before the pioneers came west.

It is this persistence that so reminds me of the fervor of those who will not allow Massachusetts to legalize state-sanctioned murder. It is their unceasing knowledge about salmon streams or growing seasons or clear cutting that puts me in mind of the hundreds upon hundreds of students of criminal justice—attorneys, civil rights workers, academics, district attorneys — who intimately know and breathe the injustices of the prison system and speak of them so often, so knowledgeably, so eloquently that the death penalty does not have a chance to rear its knight hawk's head and assures me that Massachusetts will always speak with the clarity and eloquence that will keep the state death penalty free.

opponent of the death penalty who accepted the award in behalf of Harshbarger, who was unable to attend, praised Harshbarger for his many years of dedicated and principled outspokenness on the issue and his never-ending fight against legislative initiatives to restore the death penalty in Massachusetts.

Perhaps the most moving and powerful words of the night were spoken by the Massachusetts representatives of the national organization, Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation who received the 1999 Herbert and Sara Ehrmann award in recognition of their unceasing campaign to abolish the death penalty. Among the group's members accepting the award were Tom Lowenstein, Richard Nethercut, Andrew Pryor, Robert Cushing, Julia Oberweiss, and Connie Reidy. State Representative Byron Rushing commended the members of the group for their personal courage and political hard work, which included appearing before the Commonwealth's Joint Legislative Committee on Criminal Justice to urge them to reject the proposed legislation restoring the death

penalty and conducting a teach-in and rally protesting Gov. Cellucci's death penalty bill. Each member of the group spoke simply and directly to the loss of their loved one to murder and how that loss could not and should not be avenged by state sanctioned murder. Their remarks brought a reverential stillness to the crowd and stood out as a poignant and strong rebuke to those who would dare speak in their names in support of the death penalty.

The event proved quite a success in terms of recognizing and saluting old friends in their tireless work in opposition to the passage of a death penalty bill in the Commonwealth. Some new faces, including special election victors Reps. David Linsky, Mark Caron, and Marie St. Fleur, were on hand to thank MCADP for our assistance in their recently concluded campaigns. The event also proved successful from a financial standpoint, raising \$13,000 after expenses. The money raised, as well as the spirits energized by the night, provide a good start of another year's hard work in opposition to the death penalty.

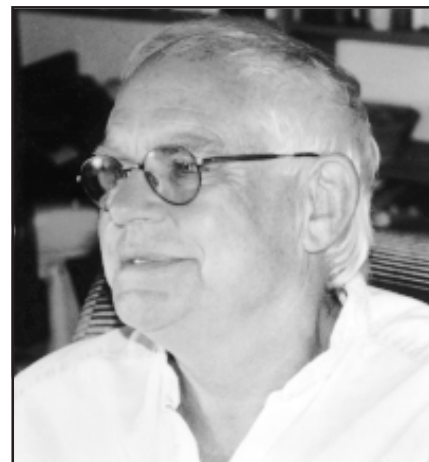
MCADP member author of *Proximity to Death*

Bill McFeely, renowned Reconstruction era historian and death penalty opponent, has just published a personal account of his experience as an expert witness for an Atlanta lawyer representing a defendant in a capital case, *Proximity to Death*, published by W.W. Norton. In a recent interview with the *Boston GLOBE* before a Boston Public Library appearance, Professor McFeely recounted his association with several Atlanta attorneys who regularly defend people facing the death penalty. "These people will keep at it... These lawyers are dealing with death. It's a grim subject. When they lose a case their client dies..." (*Boston GLOBE*, Nov. 16, 1999, p. D4)

As a consequence of his time in Atlanta, Professor McFeely regularly corresponds with death row inmates

A Cambridge and Wellfleet resident, Professor McFeely taught at Yale and Mount Holyoke College. More recently, he taught American history at the University of Georgia. Now retired, he devotes himself to writing.

With an historian's perspective, Professor McFeely noted in his *GLOBE* interview, "The Abolitionists must have thought theirs was a hopeless cause, but eventually they prevailed... I hope [with this book] I've opened the discourse a little bit."



Greetings from the Executive Director

Martina Jackson

MCADP has had an eventful year. As a result of pending and actual departures from the House, we lobbied for and won early consideration of Gov. Cellucci's expanded death penalty legislation. As coordinators of the Commonwealth's anti-death penalty coalition, we met regularly with a broad range of organizations; planned lobbying efforts; and organized testimony before the joint Committee on Criminal Justice hearing on the death penalty. Among those answering our call to testify were Bernard Cardinal Law, Canon Ed Rodman of the Episcopal Diocese, Don Mohammed of the Nation of Islam, Rabbi _____ Bernstein on behalf of the American Jewish Congress and other distinguished religious leaders; US Rep. William Delahunt; former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger; several district attorneys; twelve murder victims' family members, among them Andrew Pryor; and a number of exonerated death row inmates.

In the weekend before the House vote, we made 3,500 calls to our membership urging them to call on their representatives to vote "no." As you know, we won by an eight vote margin, an improvement over last session's 80-80 vote tie. Among our special successes was the establishment of a new Bristol County Chapter which fielded 35 calls to the newly elected Rep. George Rogers.

We have been actively involved in the special primaries and elections this spring, summer and fall with six major victories in our column: State Reps David Linsky in Natick; Mark Caron in Southbridge; Jack Keough in Springfield; Pam Resor, newly

elected senator from the Marlborough/Acton area; Cory Atkins, who replaces Pam Resor as representative from Acton. Most recently, State Rep. Joan Menard won the Democratic Primary and will almost certainly replace State Senator Thomas Norton from Fall River, after a special election on December twenty-first, when she faces two "write-in" Republican candidates who also qualified in the November twenty-third primary.

At the same time, we've added some exciting legislative freshman to our lobbying ranks, among them Jarrett Barrios/Cambridge, Michael Festa/Melrose and Brian Golden/Brighton, all of whom testified on our behalf at the March hearings. They have joined Reps. John Slattery, Paul Caron, Paul Demakis, and Jay Kaufman in persuading colleagues, while Cambridge's Rep. Alice Wolf has been mentoring anti-death penalty candidates. We must say a special word of thanks to Belmont Rep. Anne Paulsen who masterfully led the March floor fight.

This fall we launched our chapter-building campaign, enlisting the support of State Reps Kaufman and Paulsen to organize their colleagues in an initiative to establish a strong Middlesex County chapter. Rep. Kaufman's kickoff meeting with supporters from Lexington, Bedford and Lincoln was enormously successful in enlisting new MCADP membership.

Our annual Ehrmann Award Program was a great success, as Committee Chair Mike Hussey's report indicates. We are particularly gratified that the House leadership, the Honorable Speaker Thomas M. Finneran and

the Honorable Majority Leader William P. Nagle accepted our invitation to be recognized for their long-term commitment and work against the death penalty.

This November, in a sobering reminder that there are no guarantees in the politics of the death penalty, two days before the end of the legislative session State Senator Brian Lees, (R, East Longmeadow) introduced the bill rejected last March by the Massachusetts House. The Senate voted 21-16 in favor of the bill, disregarding the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice's "ought not to pass" recommendation. The legislation now returns to the House which has already voted against it. Arlington MCADP members are urged to contact State Senator Robert Havern (617-722-1432) who voted with us this time.

Of special interest is the special primary on Jan. 11, 2000 to determine the candidates for the seat of retiring Rep. Harold Lane (D, Holden). There is only one anti-death penalty candidate, David C. Bunker.

As we move into the Millennium, we recognize that 1999 was a particularly good year for us, but with several special elections yet to be won, we cannot be complaisant. Ours is an ongoing struggle. We are a symbol to the nation. If we were to reinstate capital punishment, we would set a similar path for the remaining eleven anti-death penalty states.

Thank you for responding to our calls for support in 1999. We wish you and your families a happy, healthy holiday. Let us resolve to launch the new millennium with renewed determination to keep Massachusetts free of the death penalty.

Updates from Around the State

Political Director's Update

Tom Lowenstein

This has been an exciting and successful year for Massachusetts Citizens Against the Death Penalty. Our new staff hit the ground running and played a key role in helping to defeat Gov. Cellucci's latest attempt at reinstatement by a seven-vote margin. We also helped elect anti-death penalty candidates in special elections across the state and welcomed a new Bristol County Chapter to MCADP.

As the year winds down, I am focused on building our organization at the grassroots level. I have been active this fall speaking to groups across the state, including church groups, police groups (particularly interest-

ing!) and local activists. A chapter-building meeting in Lexington in October, hosted by Rep. Jay Kaufman, is serving as a model for upcoming meetings in Cambridge, Charlton, and other cities and towns.

We have come to a crucial turning point in our efforts to keep the Death Penalty out of our state. In the next few months we must solidify the gains we have made in both public opinion and in the State House. The only thing certain is that Governor Cellucci will introduce another bill as soon as he can, and we all need to work even harder in the year ahead to ensure that we are ready to defeat it.

Bristol County Chapter

Rev. Susan H. Lee, President

The Bristol County Chapter began with a meeting at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Fall River on November 19, 1998. A small but determined group decided to write letters and arrange visits to our state representatives to persuade them to oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty in Massachusetts. Over the next few months, we wrote to all the Bristol County state representatives and senators and arranged for visits of constituents to Rep. David Sullivan, Rep. Robert Correia, Rep. Michael Rodrigues, and Rep. George Rogers. Shortly before the March vote in the State Legislature, we conducted a postcard campaign through area churches, asking congregations to write a note to their State representative expressing their views. We were especially pleased with the response of Rep. Rogers to a visit and phone calls organized by Marlene Pollack. After publicly favoring the death penalty, Rep. Rogers agreed to oppose it and was a crucial vote on March 29. Our Chapter

also circulated a petition and forwarded the names to the appropriate state representative.

Out of these various efforts, we compiled a mailing list of over 80 people interested in preventing the return of capital punishment to our state. In June 1999 we issued our first newsletter, The Bristol Report, and adopted the motto "Killing People is the Problem, not the Solution." In October 1999, we agreed to support the candidacy of Rep. Joan Menard for the Senate Seat vacated by Sen. Thomas Norton and did phone banking and visibilities for her in the weeks before the November 23 Primary election. Our plans for 2000 are to continue meeting on a monthly basis (the third Thursday at St. Luke's), to issue three newsletters per year, to expand our list of supporters, and to build up our constituency through churches. Our immediate plans are to arrange Sunday visits to area churches by members of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation.

RENEW NOW!

Enclosed is an MCADP membership envelope. Please take time to join or to renew your membership. Our strength depends on our numbers. You are the power that makes us effective. Members help us in electing anti-death penalty candidates as well as persuading elected officials to vote with us.

We must keep Massachusetts among the handful of states opposing the death penalty, particularly now when so many people nationwide are pushing for a death penalty moratorium. If you'd like to join a chapter – or start one – please contact Tom Lowenstein, at 617-338-1040.

Hampden County Chapter

The Hampden County Chapter of MCADP has had another exciting and productive year. We started our public activity with a news conference, hosted in Springfield by Mayor Albano, opposing the Governor's bill to reinstate the death penalty. Through the spring and summer we were active in all the special elections for State Representative that took place in our area, and were able to help Jack Keough win a tough race in what had been a pro-death penalty seat!

This summer our 9th annual Sacco-Vanzetti memorial program drew more than 150 people and much local press attention, including a live broadcast from our event by Springfield Channel 40!

As the year winds down we are working closely with the MCADP people in Northampton to revitalize our Hampshire County Chapter, and are already planning our 10th annual Sacco-Vanzetti event, which will be next August 23rd and will be the best one yet!

Our group meets the first Thursday of every month in Springfield; for information call Saul Finestone at (413) 567-3451 or email him at CAJOWL66@aol.com.

Worcester County Chapter

At present there is only one candidate, David Bunker, who is opposed to the Death Penalty running for the seat of First Worcester State Representative. He needs our support in terms of money, sign holders, and phone calls.

In 1999 members of the MCADP and the Worcester County Chapter helped to elect Mark Carron, (D-6th Worcester District) to the House and Pamela Resor, (D-Middlesex/Worcester) to the State Senate.

In March we held a news conference in the Worcester City Council chambers to speak out against the death penalty. Speakers included Andrew Pryor, whose nine year old daughter Sarah was kidnapped and murdered in Wayland, and Connie Reidy of Worcester whose 18 year old son Michael was fatally stabbed.

We then testified before the Joint Legislative Committee on Criminal Justice at the Statehouse.