

**“I do not believe anyone in this room would say that capitalism was evil. We believe that the society based upon the making of profits is stupid.”**

**—Statement made following a debate on the subject: “Can the Profit System Ever Benefit the Interests of the Majority?” (1989)**

## Myths and fallacies

# Asking the right questions

“I agree with everything you said, but I still think...”

This is a relatively common end to a discussion of the socialist case, or parts thereof. The non-socialist has listened to the arguments from the socialist and finds no error in them. They all make sense, but the final results of the socialist case, somehow, just don't make sense to the non-socialist. We can define these “final results” as follows:

1) Capitalism has not existed through all of human history; 2) socialism, defined as the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution on a world scale, has never been tried; 3) the capitalist class, as a class, contributes almost nothing to the functioning of society; 4) capitalism is a system which inherently exploits the working class; 5) reformism doesn't work; 6) socialism is a desirable, practical society; 7) humans (at least the vast majority of them) are not lazy, vicious creatures; 8) the working class should work to establish socialism.

Points one through seven are also parts of the arguments and facts leading to point number eight but still deserve position as “final results” of the socialist case, for the purposes of this article.

## **The test of time**

Considerable time and effort, and a reasonably large body of literature, suggest that the arguments are sound and do in fact logically lead to the results claimed. The World Socialist Movement has been using a basically unchanged line of reasoning and argument for more than 90 years, and it has stood the

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# TERMINATING the Class Struggle

G.A. Cohen, writing in *The Listener* (9/4/86, reprinted in *World Socialist Review* No. 3), said of Al Capp's lovable blobs, the shmoos, that "the capitalists weren't ready" for them, meaning that they represented a notion of universally accessible abundance flatly contradicting the capitalists' own crabbed, scrooge doctrine of "natural" scarcity. Capp himself, however, came to be quite a reactionary and even resented attempts to draw "revolutionary" lessons from his humor. So probably the shmoo signified for Capp the vision held by the capitalist of other human beings: infinitely disposable, always there when you want them for whatever purpose, ready and able to do, or be, exactly (and no more than) what you want, obligingly rolling over and turning into a meal at your wish. There is even a plethora of the cute little bastards!



## Praise the boss!

For the capitalist, authentic "humanity" is conferred psychologically only on those who have crossed the threshold of capital ownership (presumably by "natural" selection!), on those whose labor power has ceased to be quantifiably measurable, rendering them assessable in only qualitative ways. Capitalists never have to worry about some time-study expert passing on the merits of their investment strategies. Everyone else "out there" is just a humanoid, reducible to a producer of a marketable surplus (owned by the capitalist human), to an owner of nothing but an ability to do work — on terms dictated by capital. Owning capital grants true humanity only to the few who can hoist themselves up to the magical realm of command inhabited by the investors of capital. Capitalists, as promoters of the employment system of

labor, do not see the cheapening and debasing effect their capital has on the people it reduces to a dependency on wages and salaries: for business purposes, they are constitutionally incapable of conceiving of wage-slaves in human terms, because that would imply accepting the socially contingent nature of profit-making.

In the November 8, 1995 *Thistle* (No. 13, produced by the Alternative News Collective at MIT), we read:

Last Tuesday at noon about a thousand college students from UMass [University of Massachusetts]-Amherst, Framingham State College, Harvard, Wellesley, Roxbury Community College, Lesley, MIT, UMass-Boston, Northeastern [University], Bunker Hill Community College and other schools gathered in a raucous demonstration to protest the \$5-\$10B[illion] cuts from the annual \$31B federal financial aid budget for students ["1,000 Students Protest College Aid Cuts in Downtown Boston"].

Capital needs to make education about technology, technical innovations and

technology-related information generally available to society at large. But it only needs to open access to those developments to paying customers. It subsidizes education for a larger number of technically skilled operators and knowledgeable specialists than it actually requires, as well

as for a larger, more diffuse student body (inherited from the pre-capitalist past) of uncertain funding status in the liberal arts and social sciences. When the capitalists make a political project out of increasing one occupational category or another (as they did with teachers in the 60s and 70s during their catch-up-with-the-Soviets anxiety), it matters very little to them whether the number of people trained satisfy either their own needs or those for whose sake they were supposedly educated: we all remember how there came to be "too many Ph.D's" in the 70s— and what capital did about *them*.

If the number educated comes to be larger than required (or is already larger), then capital takes a jaundiced view of "excess" funding. If

the spiral of funding cuts gets eventually to the point where capital can reproduce itself "adequately" with a relatively smaller core of technicians, specialists and managers, it will not worry itself about things like the needs of people who cannot obtain enough money: the unfortunates just stop existing as far as the economists can tell.

## Down with workers!

The tendency of the capitalist class, as noted above, to see the working class as a collection of so many shmoos forms part of a larger ideological need to justify wage labor as part of nature's plan — a need that blinds the "master class" to the repercussions of radically reducing the number of people it employs. As Jeremy Rifkin writes: "For the first time in human history, human labor is being systematically eliminated from the economic process. In

the coming century employment, as we have come to know it, is likely to be phased out in most of the industrialized nations of the world” (“After Work,” *Utne Reader*, May-June 1995).

### **The “social economy”**

A subtle and persistent anemia pervades Rifkin’s otherwise very provocative analysis, and that is his subscription to the conventional notion that an “economy” consists solely of transactions between owners of goods and services. An economy is a phase of social interaction that deals with the production and distribution of wealth; wealth is anything people find useful and derive some benefit from the use of. The market is not a separate sphere of activities from “community-building,” as the distinction Rifkin makes between a market economy and a “social economy” implies. An economy requires no specific form of creating wealth, no specific form of owning wealth, no specific way in which work is done or production organized. A “social economy” is not therefore conceptually viable if it means simply all those activities people carry out that are not market-related. “Economy” is inherently part of social experience. No need exists to define the latter as a separate category from wealth production and distribution.

### **The hard reality**

Rifkin says things that would might make even the typical businessman feel in over his head:

The hard reality that economists and politicians are reluctant to acknowledge is that manufacturing and much of the service sector are undergoing a transformation as profound as the one experienced by the agricultural sector at the beginning of the century, when machines boosted production, displacing millions of farmers. We are in the early stages of a long-term shift from “mass labor” to highly skilled “elite labor,” accompanied by increasing automation in the production of goods and the delivery of services. Workerless factories and virtual companies loom on the horizon.

What gives his argument its punch is the radical economic and social implications the capitalists are courting in tinkering with their own numbers game:

William Winpisinger, past president of the International Association of Machinists, a union whose membership has shrunk nearly by half as a result of advances in automation, cites a study by the International Metalworkers Federation in Geneva forecast-

ing that within 30 years, as little as 2 percent of the world’s current labor force “will be needed to produce all the goods necessary for total demand.”

The pursuit of profit via the pressure of competition forces this on capitalists, of course. But at this point Rifkin pulls back from assessing the impact of his own statements in broader social terms. To speak of “reducing the number of human employees” as he does is a bureaucratic-sounding phrase for “eliminating jobs” (which is the point he is making), since “non-human employees” are necessarily machines, which means they are not employees at all. Since new surplus value can only be produced by “human employees” working in productive occupations, and since these are the very positions that will be getting auto-

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mated, this is just another way of saying that capital is approaching (asymptotically perhaps) an axis of “virtual surplus value” or “virtual profit.” Increases in productivity will flatten out dramatically, but without the reason being admissible, because bad old Marxist economics will be “obsolete” (unless the “new Marxists” come to the rescue). “Non-human employees” constitute fixed capital, and so increases in productivity based exclusively on them are of relatively insignificant importance in the recycling of surplus value; a rate of profit that sinks to the replacement level, sufficing only to maintain the existing stocks of capital, does not exactly bode a glittering, exciting, dynamic future for the investors of capital.

Over the same three decades ahead of us, “green capitalism” will also begin to feel its oats. The timing for this will be most unfortunate for the profit makers, since it means they will have to squeeze the same profits out of means of production that have increased in their cost. Beyond a certain pressure to economize technologically,

capitalists will not be able to lower prices over a very long period of time without endangering their ability to stay in business. The alternative is either to pass the increased costs on to consumers or lose market share.

### **Ecological havoc**

Peripherally Rifkin mentions capital’s indifference toward the ecological havoc it has wrought. Even now, in the throes of triumph, outcries are going up over making the “new world order” pay its way in terms of ecological sustainability. Businessmen are doing their level best to evade (or at least defuse) the issue; but sooner or later it is obvious they will have to pay the costs of converting to sustainable production. It

probably will require some new short-term (capitalist) paradigm: business schools should find it no problem to shift. Shrinking consumer bases do not bode well for this, however. Shrinking governments are reverting to their 19th-century shoulder-shrugging act toward workers (“you didn’t pay for us, after all”). A “social economy” that takes up the cause in a spirit of volunteerism tapping on the “values of community” needs money to undertake its heroic assignment. If, however, the capitalists can’t pay for it without threatening their profits, oops....

Recent articles in *Business Week* and the *New Yorker* (not to mention an entire series in the *New York Times*) ponder forebodingly a future of low-wage earning, increasingly insecure employment, reduced spending power and a general erosion of working-class security; they hint at the ghastly possibility that capital’s hitherto unchallenged legitimacy could go into spontaneous political tailspin — an outcome the Left has only been able to dream of accomplishing. The coming century promises to be a period of long and intense hand-wringing, as all the old clichés on which capitalist hegemony anchored itself dissolve by the very action of capital itself. Can we expect to see, once Eastern Europe and China have yielded up their limited treasures to the machinery of profit, the onset of an era of defeatist gloom among the entrepreneurs of tomorrow?

## Crisis of acceptance

Rifkin displays immense self-discipline in refraining from contemplating the crisis of acceptance implicit in projecting a very large majority of ex-workers, on the one hand, confronted by a yet leaner and meaner class of filthy-rich parasites, on the other. Yet that political face-off is socially the most significant datum of all. It is the material of which social revolutions are made.

In the 1950s, 33 percent of all U.S. workers were employed in manufacturing. Today less than 17 percent of the workforce is engaged in blue-collar work. Management consultant Peter Drucker estimates that employment in manufacturing is going to continue dropping to less than 12 percent of the U.S. workforce in the next decade. ... Drucker says quite bluntly that "the disappearance of labor as a key factor of production" is going to emerge as the critical "unfinished business of capitalist society." ... We are being swept up into a powerful new technological revolution that will set off a great social transformation unlike any other in history ... For the first time in modern history, large numbers of human beings could be liberated from long hours of labor to pursue leisure and community activities.

Rifkin displays in this article his characteristic talent for combining visionary prediction with short-sighted prescription. He defines the problem at the level of the world economy as a whole and then tailors his views to reflect conditions in the U.S. — leaving us to assume he means the same goes for the rest of the world. Business, however, is global only by accident. The globe is not the businessman's natural habitat: the market is. That the market system now covers the globe was never really the design of capital; it was certainly not a capitalist cabal. Markets, under capitalism, have to keep expanding over the long run. Is it not trying just a bit too hard, then, to include businessmen in the outcome of a revolution they have provoked ("we are being swept up"), when the logic of capitalist production throws up a global majority unable to buy its products because it has thoughtlessly gone and fired them all? And not only that, but it has done so in the pursuit of profit, which requires an adequately developed workforce deployed system-wide to produce value in excess of its subsistence requirements. Would it not be more logical to recognize that, with the globalization of capital-driven markets, the whole system of pro-

duction for profit has become anachronistic?

It is capital—the capitalist commanding his or her investments—that determines what the needs of each employable individual shall be, and who shall be employable. For capital to cast most of humanity into the outer, unemployable darkness (thereby placing a subsistence value of zero on them), and to concentrate on valuing the unpaid labor of an increasingly small

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and unrepresentative sample of the human species, demonstrates a perversion of logic of terminal proportions. Rifkin, however, is up to the task of following this logic to its bitter end:

An income voucher would allow millions of unemployed Americans, working through thousands of neighborhood organizations, the opportunity to help themselves. Providing "a social wage" in return for community-service work would also benefit both business and government. Reduced unemployment would mean that more people could afford to buy goods and services [sic], which would spur more businesses to open up in poor neighborhoods [sic], creating additional jobs [sic].

All of the statements in Rifkin's article are adapted from his book, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era* (Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam). In a less pragmatic vein he writes in a "Special to *Utne Reader*":

The year is 2045 ... Less than 20 percent of the adult population works full-time ... The values of the market economy that so dominated the industrial era have steadily given way to a new ethos based on personal transformation, community participation and global responsibility ... As more and more human beings were freed up from formal work in the market economy and began doing community service in the social economy [sic], the values of community began to gain dominance across America and around the world. ("Choosing Our Future," *Utne Reader*, May-June 1995).

One melodramatic pull-quote poses the issue somewhat hyperbolically: "The end of work could mean the death of civilization or the beginning of a great social transformation." But the "death" of a class-divided society, i.e., civilization with its multitude of sophisticated barbarities, would be a good thing, and socialists enthusiastically endorse it. We demand an end to the employment system. Jeremy Rifkin, on the other hand, likes to think capital could be persuaded to usher in the new era, continuing a tradition initiated by Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward* in 1888.

Wittingly or otherwise, Rifkin implies, when he projects a future in which "less than 20 percent of the adult population works full time," that the possibilities for market expansion can come to be insignificant and to cease being the marching anthem of a system he never gets around to naming (capitalism). Forecasting the "end of work" (the reduction of paid labor in the "first sector" of production for profit), unfortunately, spells the end of economic growth to any meaningful extent. It portends the end of business, too.

## Historic terminus

The authorities Rifkin cites are in effect postulating that capital's era of economic growth has reached its limits and will soon come to rest at an historic terminus. Small wonder he thinks "powerful vested interests are likely to resist the idea of providing a social wage in return for community service"! Growth is the sine qua non of a market system. For capital, no-growth equals no-profits. No profits, no production. Capitalists have publicized very loudly their aversion to the idea of attaching non-market burdens to the vehicle of their self-advancement. The whole logic of automation in fact expresses this aversion: business has always pushed automation precisely because it does not reckon in terms of social costs.

Rifkin asks us to picture a "post-market age" in which businessmen still hang around employing people and are still the linchpins of the social organization yet retain very few claims any longer on the

loyalty, sympathy or opportunism of the unemployable majority. Capital would have to pay for Rifkin's social economy, complete with income vouchers. Like Bellamy, he begs the whole question: why keep money at all? Rifkin would undoubtedly cringe at the thought of saying so openly, but the implicit cutoff of capital's historic growth curve leads directly to the sobering question, why do we need capital around anyhow?

### **Can civilization "die"?**

The "death of civilization" would not be a real death, but would only concern capital's obvious mishandling of what the society it had shaped took to be capital's responsibilities. It would launch a great social transformation. The only thing that "expires" is the use of capital to produce wealth: the legitimacy of production for profit. More positively, if we are really thinking about the future now (about our own comfort as a society, a "global village"), we should be turning to the consideration of how to organize the basis of human activity *without* capital. The main question after that is how to keep the world capital has commanded us to make from keeling over until we can work out of society all the residual poisons that the pursuit of profit has infused.

Rifkin's projection, "The good life in the post-market age," speaks of "values of community [gaining] dominance across America and around the world." A world market that supplies all of the world's wealth yet requires only a fifth (or, realistically, some larger fraction) of the world's labor has become an entity of questionable legitimacy. His scenario is not for all that a preposterous one, but he does miss the point that producing wealth is what society is economically all about to begin with. A "social economy" that has gained "dominance" over a "market economy" has, in effect, ousted the entrepreneurs and investors from their control over governments — which, he says in the body of the article, capitalists have caused to "wither away" by superseding governmental functions with their own (corporate) economics.

But if at the same time they have been

busy economizing their way out of a consumer base adequate to the recycling of the surplus-value they need for reinvestment and commercial expansion, have been making themselves socially ugly and politically unpopular, and have painted themselves into a corner that virtually spells the end of economic growth (and thus of significant capital accumulation), society can only judge that capital has ceased to be of crucial importance as a way of organizing the supply of human needs.

A society in which capital occupies merely "consulting" status is no longer under the thumb of the market system. If the marketplace has come to occupy a role significant only to a minority within society (all capitalists and some workers), then the time has arrived when society must decide whether it wants to continue sanctioning the interests of that minority (or more precisely, of those minorities). Deciding in the negative signifies deciding for the abolition of social classes altogether — accomplished through the abolition of wages and capital. Since jobs are the core commodity in the buying and selling that goes on in the marketplace (the buying and selling of people's working abilities), the decline of employment means the decline of the market system and therefore implies an urgent need to emancipate work in

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general from employment slavery.

"Some of the wealth from the high-tech revolution," Rifkin imagines in 2045, "is also being shared with people in the developing nations." There are, then, "developing nations" in the "post-market" world. This implies: (a) they are accumulating capital and (b) their supply of capital is smaller than in the "developed" nations.

(c) "Sharing some of the wealth" also suggests they are poorer than we are. If, however, development has reached its historic terminus, if the poorer populations of the no-longer-very-developing countries had already come to be impoverished as a result of having gotten on capital's payroll, and if the capitalist marketplace is now sinking into a minority status (albeit a still critical one) in the developed countries — can a "social economy" actually exist in the "developing nations"? Do we detect in the gap separating the "post-market" economies from the still-developing ones the latter's permanent inferiority? Rifkin concentrates on how the developed economies could handle the transition without considering the need of all people everywhere to benefit from it simultaneously.

### **Unemployment nightmare**

Already in the closing years of the 20th century (scarcely 50 years before Jeremy Rifkin's dream date), an unemployment nightmare of world-historic dimensions has grown out of capital's happy experiment with people's lives. Again, it is not so off-the-wall to speak of "sharing the wealth": but the wealth has to be produced for the *purpose* of being shared. A separate but equal "social economy" functioning alongside the profit-economy will not do the trick. It has no mechanisms, no process flows, no cyclic reproduction, for carrying the whole thing off. It depends strictly on capital's sense of noblesse oblige. The people who produce the wealth have to own the economy — which is possible only if "enterprises" use no capital and "working people" do not have to work (or do anything else) to get what they need. If Rifkin means that the present owners of the means of production are the ones who will suffer this to be thrust on them by the

compelling verdict of history, he is forgetting why capitalists go into business (to make a profit) and how they do business (suck surplus-value out of the working abilities of their employees).

It is ordinary people alone who can undertake to realign the wealth production

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# billionaire hard ball

The summer of 1994 saw “America’s pastime” jettisoned at mid-season. This marked a most bizarre, and even to this day, unpredictable turn of events. Compounding the confusion and bitter bewilderment of baseball fans all across America was the startling fact that both sides in the conflict — the team owners and the players — were making more money, prior to the strike, than any of their predecessors.

Karl Marx would have been most amused at the spectacle of millionaires who “labor” at playing a kids’ game six months out of the year striking against billionaires who could spend \$5,000 a day for over a thousand years and still have money to spend for a couple of thousand more years; squabbling over who should get what future increased percentage of future revenues. In the post-atomic age of the microchip technological revolution, supply-side economic theorems, etc., the class struggle lives on.

## **Cold shower**

It ground to a halt, in this sacred bastion of the American culture, the voyeuristic enthusiasm of millions of Mike and Mary Middleclass’s (much to their dismay), who would daily cram into stadiums and sports bars, spending over a billion dollars annually on things related to this “game.” A bit

of excitement and fantasy in their limited lives. For a couple of hours you could escape, be totally caught up in cheering “your” team on to victory. You could actually leave the arena or television set with a good feeling inside that like “your” team, you too were a “winner” in this culture of losers. But not anymore! The very grind that you sought relief from has smothered even this fleeting personal satisfaction.

## **Heroes for hire**

The rude awakening is likewise for the players as well. They were riding the ride of every schoolboy’s dream: to keep on playing the game and get a comparatively lavish lifestyle for their efforts. Now ignore just for a minute the illogic of an economic system that rewards these men so richly for doing something that in and of itself is useless. All the while in the real world people are “rewarded” with poverty for doing socially indispensable tasks such as ... well, you can name almost any occupation that impacts your life directly, and it is performed by wage-slaves who can only dream about what some of these guys make. These apostles of hype have transcended the everyday grind of the class struggle that we must endure: ironically, only to be put down by the very class struggle they

thought they had escaped (Twilight Zone-style, admittedly, but class struggle nonetheless).

The owners and players clashed so hard that their interest was knocked clean out of the ballparks and crashed in on the National Hockey League (NHL) arenas. The hockey-team owners locked the players out until they would agree to the same demands that the baseball players were striking against. Many IHL [International Hockey League] players were drafted up into the NHL big leagues, thinking that their schoolboy fantasy had come true, only to find out that there would be no NHL games or even a season to play in. They had mastered a profession that evaporated like a mirage just as they stepped into its highest level.

## **Unraveling of the “games”**

An enigmatic plot twist that seems as though it came from the combined subconscious ethos of Karl Marx and Rod Serling. But this isn’t one man’s nightmare run amok. This is life in the 90s. The unraveling of these “games” just goes to show that no matter how new the world order, how big the pie, how solid the supply, how great the tax break, life under capitalism is just not enough for human satisfaction.

If these hype-driven heroes making so much doing so little feel they don’t have it made and their billionaire bosses making even more for doing absolutely nothing socially useful or entertaining can’t get “enough,” what makes you think you are ever going to work or entrepreneur yourself into making it in this system? Well, the simple answer is to lower your sights and Praise the Lord for the culture of limitations. By accepting second-best and a life of servitude as your highest ambition, you will succeed in grasping/stooping to it.

Unlike Rod Serling, on the other hand, socialists argue that we should all go beyond aspiring to a fool’s satisfaction. We should all team up to win this social game of class struggle once and for all. For we have only our frustrations and limitations to lose — and the ultimate human satisfaction of winning not just the game but the world.

—W.J. Lawrimore

## GET TO WORK, SLAVES!

Few types of literature put capitalist views on class struggle with such explicit and appalling candor as that dealing with “disciplinary problems” in the workplace. With economic development has come a certain mellowing in the shrill tone of the anti-employee diatribes of the 19th-century class-warhawks; but it has lost none of its virulence or its domineering aspiration, for it self-consciously promotes the atmosphere of coercion that justifies unpaid labor as the source of capitalist profit.

The American Management Association (AMA), “the nation’s #1 business trainer!” according to its brochure titled “How to legally fire employees with attitude problems,” is selling a one-day seminar teaching businessmen how to make bad workers go away. In a union-busting age the brochure has no trouble placing a color of soap-operatic individualism on the “problem” of shutting employees up who insist on being unhappy about having to work for their living. You do have to wonder, however, how an audience of unionized workers would receive AMA’s “powerful public speakers ... unmatched in their ability to deliver clear, concise presentations” or whether these speakers would have much luck training them “quickly and thoroughly.”

When you put these two qualities together, you can bet you’ll get training professionals who are on-target and inspirational, and who will provide you with a wealth of valuable information that you can begin using immediately to boost your professional success.

Yes, as a managerial employee yourself, YOU can succeed by mastering the techniques for badgering troublemakers, and those techniques come neatly packaged with all the disingenuousness of a do-it-yourself manual — about as friendly as a cannibal’s cookbook. In fact, the AMA brochure has all the antiseptic odor of a nice, clean prime time sitcom. In telling you how to “protect yourself,” “take the stress out of firing” and “build a ‘litigation-smart’ termination case” when you “stop trying to deal with employees who drive you crazy,” the brochure tidily side-steps the messy problem of why employers have employees to confront in the first place.



In El Salvador, where capitalism made its Liberal-authoritarian debut in the last century, employers take a somewhat more forthright approach to repressing the employee within, reverting to a barely concealed assertion of the rights of a slaveholder



over his slaves. (Some deception, naturally, is indispensable for international public-relations purposes.) No do-it-yourself kits or soap operas for these gentlemen:

Gabo El Salvador forces its workers to work up to 100 hours a week, cheats them of overtime pay, and then pockets their legally required health payments. At 7 am on March 1, Julia Esperanza Quintinnia was refused permission to go home when she fell ill. At 11 pm that night, still working on the production line, she died of gastroenteritis. Co-workers who attended her funeral the next day were fired — and then the workers went out on strike, shutting down the plant and the entire free trade zone. [Human Rights Alert Bulletin, National Labor Committee, 7/1/95]

You might well ask why a woman should be so attached to working for employers like that, that she should feel compelled to work even though working endangered her life. But unless we are to understand that guards physically prevented workers from leaving the premises, the report seems to imply that refusing workers permission to go home sick meant only they would be fired, not massacred, if they left. But you need next to no reflection to remind you that this sort of subjection is normal for capitalism everywhere. It may not be as bad in one place as it is in another, but it is having to endure it *at all* that marks the wage-earning slave.

On the other hand, as the NLC bulletin makes clear, coordinated action by organized workers has something to do with forcing employers to contend with troublemakers in the work force.

Gabo’s management had to sign an agreement to end the abuses and allow workers to organize, and in early April [1995], a union was recognized by the Salvadoran government. Gabo’s response was to illegally lock out the entire union leadership on April 27, then start firing union members. Management is now forcing workers to sign union resignation letters or resign.

At another factory (“Mandarin”), management deployed its not inconsiderable powers of coercion and intimidation to combat the first union organized within the country’s free trade zone (in January 1995), locking them out, firing them and darkly conveying that “blood will flow” if the union stayed; as at the Gabo factory, management was using every trick in the book to make it appear as if workers were distancing themselves from the union.

How a union could do worse by them than their loving, attentive employers requires a pretty wild imagination:

Pay adds up to less than 25 percent of the cost of living for a family of four. Women working there report that they cannot afford enough food for their children.

Which brings us back to being “stuck with problem employees like” Susan, Tom and Lisa in the metropolis. These problem employees come from a working-class

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## RIGHTS & RULES

In response to the 1995 Oklahoma bombing and the threat of more terrorist activity, the lawmakers are giving the law-enforcers more power and the courts swifter and more severe punishment for those found guilty. There are those who fear this will infringe on the "rights" of the average citizen; rights guaranteed by the constitution.

We have all heard the expression, "fight for your rights." The question I have is fairly obvious: if we are guaranteed our rights, why must we fight for them? ... This deserves a derisive chuckle, don't you think?

How many laws have been enacted in the past 200 years? For whatever reason, a law compels you to refrain from some activity or at times compels you to do something against your wishes, such as paying your taxes each year or perhaps serving time in the military. If you are bent on breaking the law about killing people, military service may be your cup of tea: the more people you kill, the more medals you get. Extraordinary, but true.

In the world today there are millions of folks who rely on profits, interest and rents for their livelihood; these people are called capitalists. Most of them are akin to "Mom and Pop" establishments, but there are others who are multi-billionaires. (You can guess who

are the real lawmakers in their respective countries.) In their quest for profits they are twisting arms all over the world, bolstering their bankrupt neighboring nations so that the capitalist system is not jeopardized — a great system that leaves little concern for the average citizen's "rights."

The average citizen, however, has at his disposal a very powerful lever called the ballot box. If the majority of the eligible voters agreed on one course of action and expressed themselves at the polls, they could mold the world into a fit place to live, devoid of war's machinery, poverty and exploitation.

Someone once said, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to gain." He said this about 150 years ago, but you were not listening then. Your time to take action may be running out. There are those who wonder if the human species could survive a nuclear conflict; in the cosmic scheme of things our demise would matter little. The planet would continue its orbit around the sun for many more millions of years, unaffected by the antics of puny earthlings.

## JOB COMPETITION

Some thoughts occurred to me in regard to the inability of workers, young and old alike, to find jobs providing an adequate livelihood, and one that does not degenerate into something less than adequate. Their quest is destined to be an insurmountable task, firstly, because the capitalist system has been noted for relentlessly grinding jobs down to monotonous, degrading and ever more distasteful work of the most mun-

dane nature. The dawn of the computer age has accelerated the process immensely.

The laws of economics can not be ignored. The value of a commodity is reduced in direct proportion to the amount of socially necessary labor time used up in its production. The capitalist must sell more at reduced prices. Production is ultimately curtailed by the inability of the market to purchase. No sale, no production ... no jobs. Around the globe, capitalism (capital and wage labor, for one cannot exist without the other) continually produces a large army of unemployed workers who must survive on welfare. Those who are not on

cheaply as possible — in spite of which the markets become saturated; sales are limited by people's ability to buy, while warehouses threaten to burst at the seams. Such are the effects of production for profit. The writing is on the wall: large corporations are merging; others are declaring bankruptcy; cities, counties and states are crying poverty. Little by little, the topmost ranks of the capitalists are being depleted through consolidation — "the expropriators become expropriated."

Sadly, the young folks today are faced with a "tougher row to hoe." Conditions must worsen: more and more jobs will require less and less skill, and wages (or



welfare must starve; millions die each year of capital-induced poverty. In this country, since the Kennedy era, many people, mostly black, have been forced off the welfare rolls and "mainstreamed" into even worse poverty and insecurity. Another factor to consider is the fact that since 1960 the number of women entering the workforce has increased by 50 percent.

Competition among the world's capitalists requires that commodities be produced as

salaries) will respond to these changes. I recall an author who forecast this problem some 150 years ago, who said, "The forest of outstretched arms entreating for work grows ever thicker, and the arms themselves grow ever leaner." He also had a solution: "Workers of the world, unite!" You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win. Sadly, you were not listening.

...Perhaps it is not too late?



## A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE

All work done in this society called capitalism can be classified as necessary, because no employer would pay for unnecessary work. We must assume that all the work we do is “useful” — in the defense industry, the prison system, advertising, banking, brokerages, the judicial system and many more activities that do not produce “wealth.” I regard wealth as something tangible, like a jumbo jet or silk stockings.

Socialists advocate the establishment of a system of production for *use* rather than the present system of production for *profit*. It would result in all the above work becoming unnecessary. These workers could then spend their time building jumbo jets or perhaps making silk stockings ... or whatever.

I dare say that there are millions of folks engaged in professional sports, music, movie making and many other fields of what we call entertainment. The boss obviously thinks that this is a useful part of his system. I would think that it makes the worker's life more tolerable, and this is the main reason for its existence, though I'm sure the

boss likes to be entertained also. The socialist has no objection to being entertained. Since there would be no money involved in a socialist society, the entertainers would be truly dedicated to what they do.

In a socialist society, as in any other society, mankind must, as the first requirement, produce necessities such as food, clothing and shelter; after that, anything goes — perhaps a trip to the moon? It all depends on your priorities.

I urge you to give some thought to the establishment of socialism ... where fabulous salaries, dividends, landlords and bosses will no longer exist: no wars, no countries, no national boundaries. Instead, a worldwide community of people who for the first time will be able to control their destiny (within the limits of time and space).

With the aid of nature, the workers of the world produce everything you see around you, everything, I mean everything. Why must we buy what we produce? Socialists want free access to all goods produced, owning everything in common with all five and a half billion of our neighbors: true democracy, an administration of things, not a

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*You said it! (continued from page 7)*

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population that can no longer afford for only one of the spouses in most households to be working. Workers go on producing continually more over the years, yet they run from the threat of a poverty that seems only to go on spreading.

It makes no difference whether the employees management sees as causing trouble live in the antiseptic U.S. or in gangrenous El Salvador. Capitalism sees trouble wherever workers cost too much, because maximizing profit ultimately depends on minimizing costs. And as the inevitable falling out between employees and employers proves only too brilliantly, splitting people into two classes with divergent interests leads to only one future: the wrong future.

While Left and Right may sharpen their analytical tools and expand their organizing skills pitting themselves against each other in relentless struggle, workers themselves really com-

governing of beings.

Raise your sights, folks. Make it happen....

—W.H.

mand only one skill in their struggle against capital: their ability to see themselves as human beings who deserve more than capital can afford to let them have.

Aimed by a sufficient majority of the world's people at eliminating the use of capital in the production of wealth, this knowledge would be a force before which all the world's armies would stand useless. The force of human intelligence needed to meet the survival requirements of the human community globally, by comparison, would make the centralized, top-down power of the capitalist class look quaint and parochial, not to mention hopelessly inadequate to the task. The rule of capital presents us with a history of gradually weakening human intelligence globally in the making of decisions affecting the life of the whole society. The time has arrived for the vast majority to shed their Stupid-Training and put on their political thinking caps and end the practice of letting minorities persuade them that they need to be ruled.

—Ron Elbert

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### *Terminating the class struggle (continued from page 5)*

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process so that its basic purpose is to share out the wealth produced among the peoples who make up the world community. This includes workers in all branches of production, their “underclass” colleagues and those who merely work without producing wealth; taken altogether, these are in effect the “new parliament” speaking for the world's actual producers, and it is at this level that all sharing (on a world scale) will have to be done. But mere “employees” could never undertake to impose that criterion on their employers. Workers can only decide to share the wealth if they

themselves control the process of generating and distributing it: if, in other words, acting as or on behalf of the real producers, they eliminate their employers. Labor will first have to abolish capital for any social transformation to take place. But then there will be no question of “economic growth” at all anymore: only of satisfying people's needs, in the context of whatever challenges face the global human community.

For capital, the class struggle is a game not to be won or lost, or even played well. What counts for the capitalist class is to *keep everyone playing the game*: capitalists

usually win, even when they fold. The interest of the working class — of all the world's working people — is to *stop* playing the game, because that is the interest of society as a whole, of the world's human community. (If capitalists could recognize their own social nature, which, as the case Robert Owen shows, is not impossible, they could also appreciate this, even if that insight alone would not make them cease to be exploiters.) It is really up to the working class to make the end-move. Let history record that we were *not* a bunch of shmoo.

—A.D.

# Letters on Socialism

*The following two letters, written by socialists to their local newspapers, found their way into our mailbox not too long ago. We reprint them here to show that, even with a tightening corporate lock on the free expression of opinion in the media, it really is possible to put the case for socialism before thousands of readers who have never before heard of it. Any other comrades who write letters to editors (whether or not they get them printed) can send copies on to the World Socialist Review, and we will print them, too.*

*The first letter is addressed to the editor of the Santa Maria Times (California), and the second, to the Arizona Daily Star of Tucson, Arizona.*

## **MARX MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT\***

I'm going to garner a few passages from a book written 150 years ago ... I write in response to the article, "Working with nothing to show."

The "division of labor" has been going on for more than 150 years ... One author explained what was happening and what would continue to happen, and I quote, "the special skill of the laborer becomes worthless. It is changed into a monotonous force which gives play to neither bodily nor to intellectual elasticity, his labor becomes accessible to all." He goes on, "In the same measure, therefore, in which labor becomes more unsatisfactory and more repulsive, in that same proportion, competition increases and wages decline." And again, "the capitalists vie with one another as to who can discharge the greatest number of employees."

He adds a little humor: "If the whole

class of wage-workers were annihilated by machinery, how terrible that would be for 'capital,' which without wage-labor ceases to be 'capital'."

"Thus the forest of outstretched hands entreating for work becomes ever thicker, and the arms themselves become ever leaner ... Crises increase and become more violent."

The author whom I have been quoting was Karl Marx, and of course we all know that the owners of the communication networks would never give any supportive information about him ... I simply write to let you know that the present conditions were forecast many years ago and they will certainly get worse.

No one can fix Capitalism.

—William Hewitson

\* Heading added by the editor.

## **THE CLASSLESS SOCIETY**

I can still recall my first encounter with racism. It occurred many decades ago at an English elementary school when I was called "Jew-boy."

But I also recall that throughout my life there has not been one day without either a major or minor war. Poverty (which is the economic status of the working class compared to that of the capitalist class) has been continuous and pervasive worldwide —

together with unemployment, insecurity and, of course, racism.

All these social evils have been, and always will be, impervious to reformism for their eradication.

I ask the rhetorical question. What is there so sacrosanct about capitalism that the accusing finger is never pointed at it as the culprit and cause of all these prevailing miseries — except by only a handful of the



population?

As long as the vast majority does not understand how capitalism functions, scapegoats and racism will flourish as red herrings, diverting the working class from its historic mission — the peaceful and democratic elimination of capitalism.

Technologically, wealth can be produced with comparative ease to satisfy the needs of all. Buying, selling and profit are therefore no longer required. They should be replaced with production and distribution solely for use with free access to all goods and services, eliminating money and the wages system.

This will never happen until the world working class realizes, amongst a multitude of other concepts, that the society's fundamental problem is its division into classes — not races. We all belong to only one race — the human race, and we merit a new system of society worthy of our potential and intelligence.

—Samuel Leight

**Page 1 of Insert  
(Literature)**

**Page 2 of Insert  
(Object/DOP/WSM Directory)**

**Page 3 of Insert**  
**("Are you a socialist?")**

test of time, in that it has not been refuted. This strongly suggests that the arguments put by socialists are indeed sound. Non-socialists who find no fault with the arguments or facts as presented still believe that the results aren't "right." How can we explain this?

Society today, in many subtle and not so subtle ways, discourages reason if it starts to delve into the social affairs of society. It is good to use reason and logic at work, to solve problems of production and generate profits, but apply reason and logic to how society works and somehow it doesn't make sense.

Society, as it exists today, benefits from this situation.

Most people agree that those with power and wealth would like to maintain it. Is it at all unreasonable to expect that they, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, use their power and wealth to convince the rest of us that they deserve it? If the rest of us thought that those with power

and wealth didn't deserve it, and that the rest of us did, would we support them? Would we keep making them powerful and rich? Maybe we would if we thought there was no alternative, but what if we knew of an alternative?

One can understand, or one can believe. The two are quite different. Belief does not require understanding, one need only believe that something is, or something works in a certain way, and belief is complete. Understanding is on the opposite end of the spectrum. To understand, one must question all of one's beliefs. Each belief must be shown to be true, not just believed. Understanding requires a scientific approach, using logic, experimentation,

Continued on next page



**1 Capitalism has not existed through all of human history.**

**BELIEF:** Things have "always been like this."

The basic structure of society has never changed and there is no reason to expect that it could.

**WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:**

If things can't change, then those at the top will stay there and the rest of us can do nothing to affect that.

**FACT:** Capitalism is only a few hundred years old, and isn't the same as feudalism, or chattel slavery, or primitive agriculture. Things have changed. Class division (a minority at the top, and the majority on the bottom) has been around for longer than capitalism, but not forever. Today the class division is between the capitalist class and the working class.

**2 Socialism has never been tried.**

**BELIEF:** Russia, Cuba, China, Albania, Sweden, Canada, England are, or were, socialist.

**WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:**

Showing that "socialism in all its forms" hasn't worked steers people away from socialism. It also confuses the issue of what socialism means.

**FACT:** Socialism has never been tried in any country. Most so-called socialists don't have a clue as to what socialism means, and instead promote reforms to capitalism ("alternative" ways of administering capitalism). None of the countries they have governed were wageless, moneyless, leaderless, and democratic — hence they were not socialist.



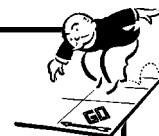
**5 Reformism doesn't work.**

**BELIEF:** Things are getting better.

**WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:**

As long as people believe that society is continually improving, they are not likely to see a need to change the structure of society.

**FACT:** Wars continue. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a day this century in which there was not a war going on. Poverty continues. Even the Left has stopped talking about ending poverty. Now they are content to work to try to make poverty less awful. Several hundred years of reforms, supposedly to solve the problems, haven't even come close.



**How some common beliefs benefit the rich and powerful capitalist class**

**4 Capitalism is a system which inherently exploits the working class.**

**BELIEF:** People get out of society what they put into it.

**WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:**

Society appears to be "just," nobody is exploited, those who work hard benefit, and those who are lazy do not. Capitalism does not take advantage of the working class. Capitalism is not the problem: the problems, whatever they are, lie elsewhere.

**FACT:** Profit is derived solely from labor. The working class produces the wealth, but does not own it. Nor does the working class get paid the full value of what it produces. The surplus goes to the capitalist class.



**3 The capitalist class, as a class, contributes almost nothing to the functioning of society.**

**BELIEF:** Entrepreneurs and capitalists create wealth.

**WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:**

The capitalist is seen as a necessary part of production, and without capitalists, society could not function.

**FACT:** Capitalists don't create wealth, they simply appropriate the wealth created by their employees. Production took place long before there was a single capitalist, and will continue after the working class eliminates capitalism.

## 6 Socialism is a desirable, practical society.

**BELIEF:** It sounds OK, but it is impractical, or it will be like Russia.

### WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If the only possible alternative to capitalism is seen as impossible, or a lie (like Russia), who would work for it? Nobody. The new society is killed in the womb.

**FACT:** Socialism is completely practical. An end to poverty and war, and real democracy in production is clearly desirable. Socialism cannot be imposed from above (as allegedly the Bolsheviks intended), but when the vast majority of the world's population chooses to cooperate, it cannot fail.



## 7 Humans (at least the vast majority of them) are not lazy, vicious creatures.

**BELIEF:** People are lazy or vicious — anti-social.

### WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If most people were naturally anti-social, socialism would obviously be impossible. Further, if most people were anti-social, it would support and excuse the use of daily repression against people.

**FACT:** Human beings are by nature social creatures. Long before class division began, they built societies based on cooperation. A society of more than 5 billion people, living in close quarters, could hardly have come to be because its members wanted to hurt each other and had no desire to work.



## 8 The working class should work to establish socialism.

**BELIEF:** Socialism just isn't possible.

### WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If socialism isn't possible, people won't work to make it happen, and the

capitalist class will remain at the top of capitalist society.

**FACT:** The only thing standing in the way of creating a socialist world is the lack of socialists. It is possible, according to non-socialists who should know, to produce

enough goods and services, without destroying the environment, to satisfy everyone's needs. The working class has a choice. It can live under capitalism, or it can create and live in a desirable society: socialism. Ø

### The Failure of Capital (continued from back cover)

no compunctions about *that*: it sacrificed the handloom weavers to the power looms in the early 19th century, and it had no trepidations about axing Youngstown in the 1970s.) If no one produces in these sectors, then as far as capital is concerned, an economic black hole has replaced the knowable universe there. So what if the cookie crumbles!

Supplanting the role of capital in these sectors with non-capital will in this scenario occur as a choice necessitated by finding a way to eat, or getting eaten. An infrastructure on which a conscious, political majority can build requires setting human energies in motion to meet human needs. That infrastructure's definitive expression will be the revolutionary replacement of production for profit by production for use.

From the vantage point of an expansionist capital, this could produce no impressive results: once production again afforded viable opportunities for profit, capital could always move back in. Economic history is full of the rises and falls of entire industries. But from the vantage point of a capital afflicted with the need to conserve profitability structurally (by denying access to unprofitable categories of investment), it would look much more like a humanity stronger than capital sur-

viving where capital had deliberately chosen not to set foot. In this context, where the alternative was falling into the abyss, the threat of serious discontinuities in production might seem rather moot. (Capital is in retrenchment when the dictates of profit chronically impress on it the advisability of moving out of sectors it formerly created or reorganized when it found it profitable to do so, and a re-migration of capital back to the "bad" sectors fails to follow its exodus from them.)

The rule of capital could go on forever if it enjoyed majority support. To keep that support politically flexible in a period of faltering prestige, capital needs only to shift itself about strategically as the exigency requires. An abolitionist majority will get its best footing proceeding from those areas that fall "outside the box" of the profit paradigm. Capital's very success at shifting about, on the other hand, itself carries with it some risk that an anti-capitalist political majority could emerge around the world, disposed to put the head of capital on the chopping-block, eliminating it historically from the process of production. The only successful revolution will be one that explicitly assumes the failure of capital to meet human needs.

### Continued from previous page

observation, history, and reason. Not all of these scientific mechanisms will always apply to everything we want to understand. A scientific approach doesn't mean that one must be able to set up controlled experiments to prove everything, and in the realm of social affairs that is very often impossible. Understanding is simple once we, individually, start to recognize the myths and lies of capitalism as the myths and lies they are.

It is not the socialist case which doesn't make sense. Brainwashed by capitalism, from birth, people find it difficult to understand when reason confronts their beliefs.

As Marx and Engels wrote, "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." The working class can believe that it should be ruled, or the working class can understand that it can eliminate rulers forever.

—Steve Szalai  
(Socialist Party of Canada)

—Ron Elbert

# The Failure of Capital

Utopian socialists have always as a rule blithely ignored one unavoidable reality. A revolution against *capital* can only happen on the basis of a fully functioning alternative to the capitalist system of production. Setting up a real economy that uses no capital and whose unique *raison d'être* is meeting everyone's needs extends beyond successfully establishing an experiment at the margins of capitalism resting on the latter's implicit prevalence. The record of history shows, however, that wherever capital in its expansionist wanderings has encountered isolated societies fitting the above description, it has without hesitation moved in and assimilated them.

The problem we need to solve, it seems, is how to launch a systemically distinct form of production from within a capitalist setting. The solution can only work if its occurrence affects capitalist production as a whole; yet we can hardly say it is working if it remains isolated from the rest of society. We have no examples of revolution on this scale.

Capital's unparalleled success at revolutionizing production around the world has effectively ended the possibility of any further minority-led revolutions leading only to changes in the ways minorities exploit people. A revolution by the majority, on the other hand, requires two things: first, that majority's economic preponderance at large and second, its conscious interest

in reorganizing production without limits. Being exploited by capital — wage slavery — has already become a way of life for the vast majority of people around the world; so now we have such a unified majority on a global scale (in principle, at any rate, if not yet entirely in practice).

"Reorganizing production without limits" does not mean finding ways to reinvent or circumvent the marketplace: these, after all, have their limits already set by capital. "Without limits" signifies without rules recognized by capital. A revolution for people and against capital will therefore need to show it can actually supplant capitalist production, without serious discontinuities, with forms of organization that implement the principle of "from each according to ability, to each according to need." These initiatives will necessarily ignore basic organizing concepts of capitalism like "effective demand" (since "customers" are individuals defined in terms of how much money they have) and hierarchy of command (i.e., separation between authoritarian owners and managers of resources and facilities on the one hand and powerless employees on the other).

For this reorganization to work, capital itself will have to abandon unilaterally those areas of economic activity it regards as hopelessly unprofitable but that people recognize as essential. Up till now, the closest we have come to this is workers buying out



Uncle  
Winston

businesses that capitalists have abandoned as unprofitable. For supplanting the role of capital to be feasible, capital will have to retrench massively in the future from whole sectors as they become unprofitable, effectively abandoning them to all takers (to pick a few instances out of a hat, local transportation, small-scale housing, food processing or even education).

In an expansionist setting, this "supplanting" activity would ordinarily only reinforce the workings of the capitalist marketplace, effectively turning the flank of the supplanters and forcing them to reintegrate their "escape" into the system. Where capital is historically retrenching, however, it is abandoning sectors of production it has come to regard as a millstone about its neck — sectors whose decapitalizing implies arbitrarily throwing the fortunes of entire communities or social strata at risk. (We already know it has

Continued on page 15



Uncle  
William  
("Chicken") McKinley



# World Socialist Review



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

\$1.00  
No. 15  
Spring  
1999

Final Part

## New Paradigms for Old?

New Democracy  
Statement of  
Principles  
page 15

This issue will conclude the critique of David G. Stratman's provocative book, *We CAN Change the World: The Real Meaning of Everyday Life*,\* the most salient points of which we took up in WSR #14. We apologize to the reader for the considerable lapse of time since that issue, which hopefully has not delayed the revolution too much.

As we have seen, the author develops a case for revolutionary democracy as the ultimate expression of what ordinary working people value most: solidarity and equality. He attacks the spurious "socialism" of the left — most notably, but not exclusively, the Leninist left — as counterrevolutionary in spite of its best intentions. Marx, he argues, gave the left a pernicious theory of revolution that defeated its own purpose, agreeing as it did with capitalism's view of people.

The Marxian paradigm thus remained mired in capitalist assumptions. Ultimately, the working class was to Marx an empty abstraction, an active revolutionary subject taking command of its destiny, yet nonetheless a passive object needing to be led. Lenin could resolve the inconsistencies in Marx's "science of revolution" with his vanguard of the proletariat, but no more than Marx could he manage to overcome capitalism using capitalist values. Lenin's "professionalized" organization of revolutionaries, detached from the class it was to guide into emancipation, ultimately failed because its model of revolution was itself retrograde. The working majority wanted to make a world that was a real community, but their self-appointed leaders on the left neither understood nor desired this.

This issue will deal with the implications of Stratman's critique for the analysis of the class struggle, and especially its assumptions about Marx's methodology, the materialist conception of history.

The article on the rear cover proposes a counter-thesis to Stratman's use of the paradigm concept, which unfortunately does nothing creative with it as a theoretical tool. Stopping with simply advancing a candidate for a new paradigm sidesteps the real issue: focusing the consciousness of the working majority

\* Boston: New Democracy Books, 1995. (Readers may obtain a copy by writing to New Democracy Books, Box 427, Boston, MA 02130 or emailing the author at [newdem@aol.com](mailto:newdem@aol.com).)



on the need to redesign its idea of itself, to cast off its identity as an economic class and definitively terminate the class struggle by beginning a positive, classless reorganization of the basis of society.

In this context, the paradigm change itself we should see as the revolution abolishing class rule, as the mechanics of self-emancipation, and not simply as an intellectual model of the process. Ø

**THIS ISSUE: The conman cometh ♦ Nearer my boss to Thee ♦ Historical materialism ♦ Musings ♦ Outside the box? ♦ Real Communities ♦ So you wanna be a paradigm!**

# The conman cometh

Stratman's notions of a "capitalist model" and a "capitalist vision" play a very central role in his concept of revolutionary democracy: "Capitalism," he tells us, "is first and foremost a system of social control. The vast resources of the capitalist class are directed primarily toward this purpose; profit and economic development are subordinate to this end" (p. 46).

Asked, why is there a capitalist class at all? he would not be able to answer. Why did any such thing as a capitalist class appear in the first place? Were a few evil geniuses out to create and extend a paradigm over the whole of humanity little by little, back in the very beginning? How is it that the system of social control that was feudalism failed? Or chattel slavery? Capitalism inherited the earth from both these modes of production — and that is what they were, modes of production — yet it seems to have become transformed into "first and foremost a system of social control." Does he mean to say the predecessors of capitalism were also "first and foremost systems of social control"? It would be interesting to learn how chattel slavery, feudalism or capitalism ever managed to get past its early years, considering the gross inefficiency of each at implementing the social controls on which Stratman pins so much of his analysis.

On the one hand, we could write off this highly focused class consciousness of the capitalist class as a paranoid strain of subjectivism, familiar from Trotskyist propaganda —

[Capitalists] strive in every area of life to break the bonds among people from which people draw their understanding of reality and their ability to change it. This socially-imposed isolation is intended to induce doubts in each individual about his or her own worth. (p. 46)

That would be a mistake, however, because the effect of capitalist rule *is* to corrode the self-confidence of ordinary people, and ruling-class ideas *are* slanted against the socially-defined individual; capital *does* divide and conquer through the powerful tool of isolation. The problem is rather that, having deprived the economic of causal status, Stratman finds himself forced to assign to capital (divided up among members of the

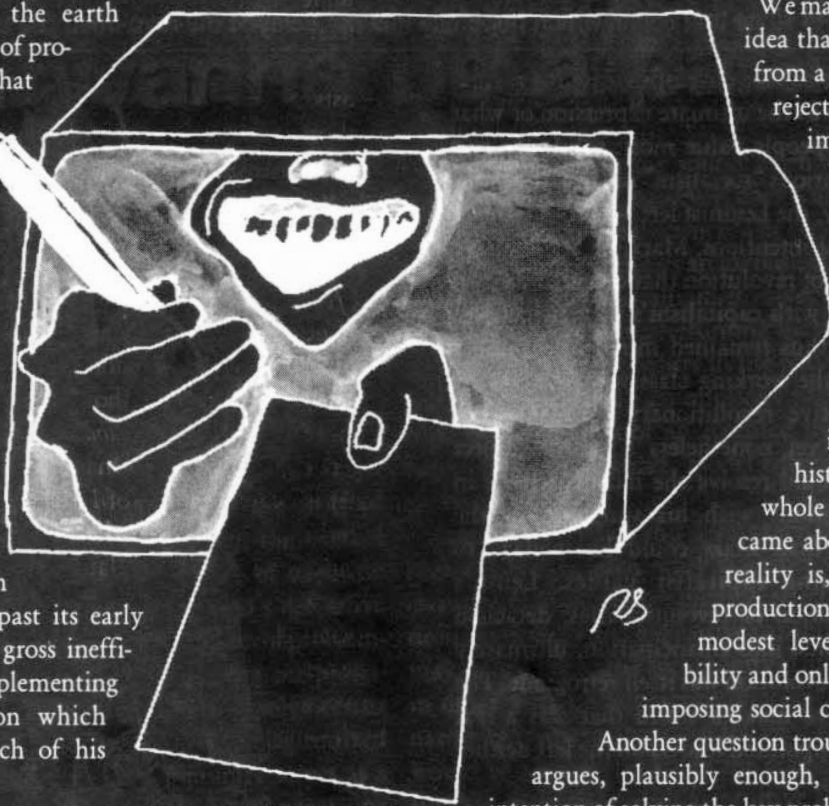
capitalist élite) motives of a purely psycho-political character. Moreover, since "profit and economic development are subordinate to" social control, the ruling ideas of the capitalist class metamorphose from an indispensable implement of thought control into a strategic plan:

[They] encourage in each individual, made to feel personally insecure in his isolation, the capitalist view of other people — that other people are mindless and selfish competitors, imbued with capitalist values and engaged in a lonely battle for "success" ... Their chief goal is to fulfill the capitalist vision of human society, in which the vast majority live lives of brutish passivity, and a capitalist elite produce the material and cultural wealth. Capitalists strive to create a world in which fulfillment comes not from human relationships but from things — from possession and consumption of the fruits of the capitalist economy.

We may say, then, that Stratman's idea that the capitalist class works from a paradigm derives from his rejection of the view of people he imputes to Marx, which leads him to reject the materialist conception of history.

This leaves him only a struggle to impose values and a divisive system of unequal power relations: which effectively makes it impossible to give a solid historical account of how the whole system of social control came about in the first place. The reality is, capitalism is a form of production that started out at very modest levels of manipulative capability and only acquired the faculties for imposing social controls by degrees.

Another question troubles the picture. Stratman argues, plausibly enough, that "the rulers have no intention of solving the key problems, because their continued existence as rulers depends on the problems continuing in some form" (p. 263). If, however, the capitalists never actually achieve historically the fullness of control they are always seeking economically — presumably because the revolutionary impulse of working people partially thwarts them from its total achievement — isn't this saying both the capitalist and working classes share an interest in maintaining the class struggle? That workers, too, in other words, have a stake in being exploited? Capitalists do indeed have an interest in perpetuating class struggle (which they only decry when it threatens to trash their profits) — but the working class has none. It is a matter of record that capitalists don't actively pursue social control unless it supports the general régime of production for profit. It only



makes sense to say so, however, if we assume the primary character of the economic factor.

A case in point is Stratman's treatment of the Kronstadt revolt — which would have become, had it succeeded, a "third revolution" overthrowing the new dictatorship of the Secretariat set up by Lenin's self-appointed Vanguard. Stratman specifically quotes Paul Avrich in *Kronstadt 1921* as referring to "the dictatorship of the Communist Party, with its Cheka and its state capitalism" (p. 148). If capitalism is "primarily" a system of social control and a revolution "overthrew" it, yet the "Communist" Party simply took over this system of social control and modernized it — somehow it seems that either no revolution actually occurred, or it failed to liquidate the capitalist basis of society — was in short a "rebellion" or "failed revolution" — or a much more limited *capitalist* revolution.

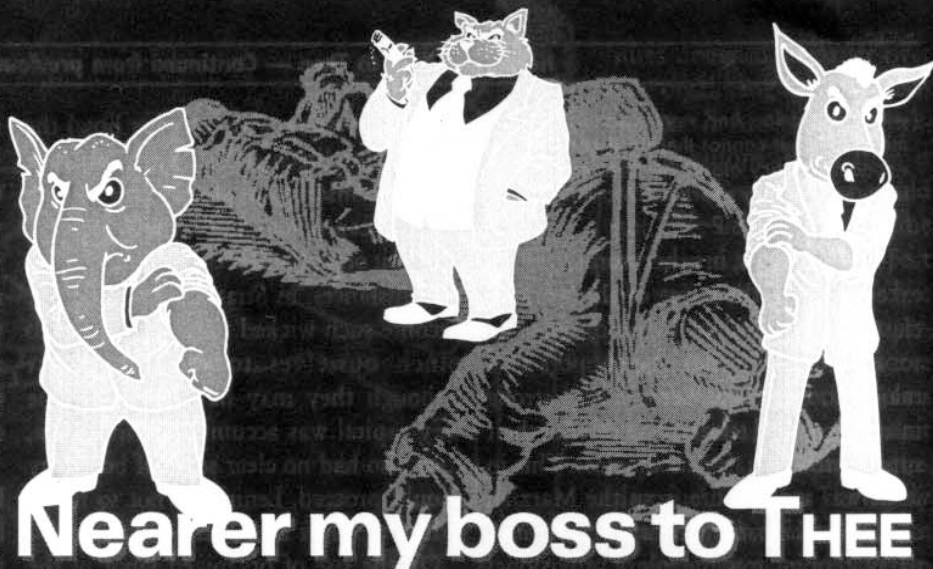
### "Managing" the people

What the Bolsheviks sought directly to control was not a working class still in its infancy, nor a peasantry that already in the post-feudal economy of Tsardom was approaching the brink of anachronism (as a controlled social class?), but the development of an economy that took both classes and converted them into a modern industrial working class. "Management" of each went with the turf; but it was the turf they wanted. It would be absurd to picture them as seeking merely to crush and oppress a social class they knew was still only in its beginnings: and that is the trouble with the notion of the primacy of social control — it cannot avoid representing the economic dimension of class struggle as static.

That said, anyone who can make the following statement has certainly got the basic idea:

The ruling class needs to prevent people from collectively discussing and solving their problems for the simple reason that, at bottom, elite control is the problem. In a revolutionary democratic society, all the talent and intelligence that people could bring to bear on the world's problems would be used to solve them. (p. 265)

—Ron Elbert



## Nearer my boss to THEE

As long as Stratman understands that no system of social control exists in a vacuum — that the economic reason capitalism exists, its need to control and its historical modality together form the basic components of the overall cycle of class rule — it does not ultimately matter that he sees capitalism as *primarily* a system of social control. What capitalists seek control *for* (profit) is at least as important as, if not more important than, its exercise; how control can be accomplished (by private individuals or by the state) strongly conditions which profit strategy gets the best results and the optimal manner in which the ruling class can exploit working people. Taking any one of the components as "primary" still requires dealing with the other two. His emphasis on social control nonetheless involves him quite needlessly in something not unlike reconstructing an original real-life person from a police artist sketch.

This causes his analysis of class-struggle issues to become rigid and opaque. Let us consider two of his instances: the Bolsheviks' betrayal of the working class following the October Revolution and the "betrayal" of U.S. workers by union leaders after the Second World War.

*\* In using Marx this way, Lenin was only the early ancestor of today's "Marxist economists," who are very good at finding Marxish reasons why one development strategy or another will or won't work — but who don't seem very eager to use their analytic skills to show workers they can think their way out of a system that in general works only for employers.*

On page 147 he runs through a list of some very dirty laundry, cataloguing the duplicity and opportunism of the Bolsheviks — with Lenin and Trotsky actively, even frenetically, in the lead — concluding that "the Bolsheviks pursued relentlessly, in every sphere of life, policies which were entirely consistent with their view of workers and of social change." They did their level best to squash, punish and destroy every semblance or vestige of working-class initiative in the service of Lenin's "vision" of Marxified economic development.\*

We should ask, however, why the Bolsheviks *wanted* to seize power in the first place. On the strength of Lenin's interpretation of Marx, they sought to introduce some radical reforms affecting who could accumulate capital and for what reasons; in keeping on many of the same individuals who had managed the system under the Tsarist régime, the Bolsheviks were only being consistent with this interpretation. A real working-class revolution, ephemeral as it would have been, was absolutely anathema to them; their rationale was well expressed by Martov (quoted by Maurice Brinton in "The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control, 1917-1921"):

The First Trade Union Congress also witnessed a heated controversy on the question of the relation of the trade unions to the state. The Mensheviks claiming that the revolution could only usher in a bourgeois-democratic republic, insisted on the autonomy of the unions in relation to the new Russian state ... Martov [speaking for the Bolsheviks] put a more sophisticated viewpoint: "In this historic situation," he said, "this government cannot represent the working class alone. It cannot but be a *de facto* administration connected with a heterogeneous mass of toiling people,

with proletarian and non-proletarian elements alike. It cannot therefore conduct its economic policy along the lines of consistently and clearly expressed working-class interests." (Brinton, p. 33)

The Bolsheviks, in other words, did not take power in the name of the working class because they had not promised to do so: in their search for the support of a majority, they — at Lenin's very strong insistence — had tendered an offer of their support to Russia's peasant class. This in itself was a departure from the Marxian concept of *abolishing* the wages system. A party stepping into the role of provisional government could not even theoretically govern directly for the benefit of workers if every decision would have to be negotiated with the peasantry as well. But more importantly, the real impact of that "alliance" was the implication that governing for two classes meant continuing — in fact, strengthening — the institutions of class rule: a treadmill the Bolsheviks could not have gotten off even had they wanted to. But they were disingenuous enough to know beforehand they would face this dilemma.

On top of all that, seeking to govern a multi-national, multi-class system independently of all classes and nationalities meant, again on the strength of Lenin's interpretation of Marx, perpetuating an arrangement favoring some kind of capital accumulation for its own sake, since that was the only economic strategy open to the Bolsheviks that could secure their legitimacy as a ruling elite. If in *What is to be Done?* Lenin had laid out his non-Marxist concept of an organization of professional revolutionaries, in *The State and Revolution* he took a string of quotations from Karl Marx and twisted them around with specious arguments to get Marx's retroactive sanction for Lenin's project of a building a capitalist state over the bones of the autocracy.

Pushing the economic dimension of Lenin's "vision" and his "view of the working class" into the background may allow Stratman to paint the Bolsheviks using bold colors and dramatic lines, but that is about all it accomplishes — render-

ing it a mystery why (or even how) the Russian intelligentsia could not only take it on themselves to decide the fate of Russian capitalism, but actually manage to pull it off in the face of the most chaotic circumstances. In Stratman's hands they become such wicked villains we have to pinch ourselves to remember that although they may have modified the way capital was accumulated in Russia, they also had no clear sense of how they should proceed. Lenin was not so much riding the tiger as herding the sheep.

On the rise of organized labor in the United States, Stratman writes: "The modern labor movement in the U.S. was founded in the thirties on the basis of struggles which challenged capitalism,

**The aim of abolishing capital is a political one, and any struggle having that for its object goes well beyond the boundaries or limits on which trade unionism is premised — goes, in fact, in a wholly different direction.**

sometimes implicitly, sometimes openly" (p. 191). Struggles, it goes without saying, can "challenge" capitalism in two ways: either they can defy business as usual without questioning any of the assumptions on which capitalism organizes the life of society; or they can aggressively contradict those assumptions and be either implicitly or explicitly hostile to business in all its forms. The ordinary purpose of organizing trade unions poses the first kind of challenge; because this range of activities relies on, rather than questions, the basis on which society is organized, counting all its gains and losses in terms of what the system can do for people, it tends to be economic rather than political in character.

Any form of organizing that is essentially economic in character cannot be revolutionary, no matter who the organizers are or what they think they are doing. Just as the economic is a subset of the social, so the political is a subset of the economic: schematically speaking, that is, we first choose how we will organize

society, which carries with it a certain kind of economy; then we have to choose the politics that go with that economy. If workers organize solely to protect themselves from capitalists, none of their organizations can lend themselves to revolutionary projects, i.e., overthrow capitalism, replace it with something adequate to the satisfaction of human needs (or that affirms values of equality and solidarity).

To say, consequently, that the "modern labor movement ... was founded ... on the basis of struggles which challenged capitalism" raises a few questions. If worker organizations aim to achieve no more than to equilibrate the relationships between their members (or even workers at large) and the capitalist class, they neither challenge capitalism as a form of society nor rest on struggles that do. The aim of abolishing capital is a political one, and any struggle having that for its object goes well beyond the boundaries or limits on which trade unionism is premised — goes, in fact, in a wholly different direction. Getting hit often enough

with a billy club in itself gives rise to no revolutionary attitude. A trade union that became a revolutionary organization would by the mere fact have ceased to be a trade union, even though it might untraditionally combine both economic and political forms of organizing.

### Strong feelings breed radical ideas

In view of the decline of "the modern labor movement," we may well ask to what extent capitalism was actually challenged in the thirties. If workers were trying to give expression to basic human values in their actions against capitalism by lining up behind those among them who saw an opportunity for themselves in reaching a deal with capital (the "Reuther group"),\* how strong a desire to break free of an oppressive, anti-human system did this represent? From the perspective of socialist (democratic) revolution, strong

\* Frank Marquart, *An Auto Worker's Journal: The UAW from Crusade to One-Party Union* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975); p. 120.

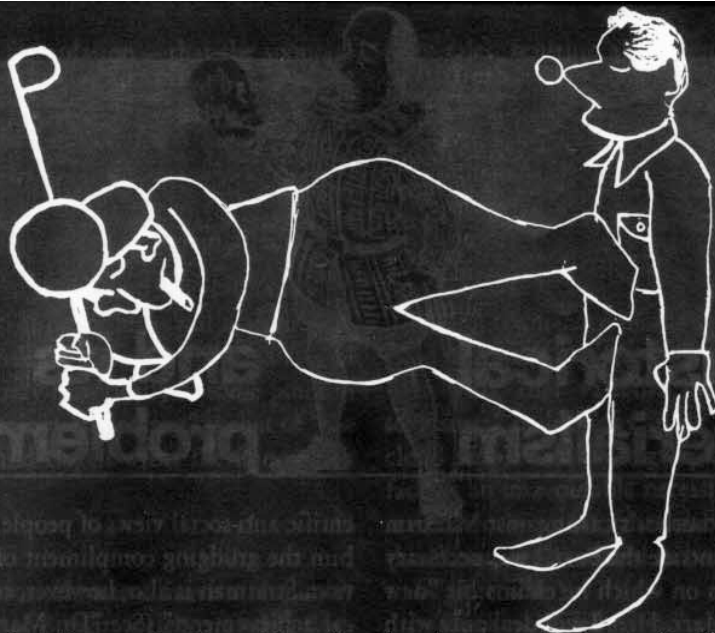
feelings have a radical articulation; absence of a radical articulation signifies questionable (possibly no) motivation. Workers who put their organizing energy behind individuals or organizations having either a pro-system or an ambiguous attitude are at best not sure of what they want.

"What the working class did not know it knew" was that capital could not promise people even decent survival. Capital's power to compel and degrade diminished only slightly in the political dimension, as workers voiced their disapproval but not their rejection. The spectre of revolution faded rather quickly as Nazi aggression provided capital with a Bismarckian trapdoor, enabling it to demonstrate its indispensability to society by winning a war against tyranny. Stratman needs to explain, at all events, how if the economic factor is so puny, a crisis of social control can require an economic depression to trigger it.

The author's use of overstatement, on the other hand, casts the capitalists in giant perspective:

The great Flint sit-down strike in auto which first established the CIO was followed by a wave of sit-downs and other strikes across the country — more than 10,000 in 1937 ... The more far-seeing members of the corporate class correctly saw that their best response to trade unionism would be to sanction and legalize it. They could then strive to keep trade union struggles within the economic dimensions of capitalism. With their struggles regulated within an institutional framework, union members could be demobilized by union officials, who would have the legal obligation to uphold labor contracts negotiated with management. (p. 192)

This does no good at all for our grasp of the forces at work. I would challenge Stratman to back up his assertion that the capitalist class's "more far-seeing members" devised a conscious and deliberate strategy aimed primarily at neutralizing an incipient *anti-capitalist* revolution. The challenge posed by the organizing drives of the 30s did not threaten the interests of capital (except with a drop in the rate of profit); the reason it let the New Deal get past it (in the U.S.) was only



surely designed to paper over the organizing gap between workers in America and workers in Europe. For a time it worked. Granted they could not have done it without the active and interested support of well-to-do renegades like Roosevelt, they furnish a perfect example of how some members of the working class can delude themselves that capital will somehow someday work for them. The highly dramatic scenario Stratman presents hovers uncertainly between a *potentially* revolution-

ary situation and a counterrevolutionary master stroke staving off an *incipient* revolution.

What explains the dénouement much better is the rescue of capital from the jaws of working-class protest by the subsequent return of prosperity: the wartime investment bonanza, followed by U.S. domination of postwar capitalism for most of the period of recovery. The manifest inability of Keynesian fiscal magic to "transfer" sufficient wealth back to the working class to end the Depression (owing to the government's need to pay the bills that deficit spending policies incurred) is widely recognized. This does not prevent Stratman from seeing in the New Deal chicanery the outlines of a strategy. What the infuriated businessmen of the thirties did was resign themselves to waiting for an opportune moment to rescind Roosevelt's reforms; and they made many efforts in that direction long before the seventies. They staged a generally successful comeback in the 50s, with gag-laws like the Taft-Hartley Act and other "no-strike" initiatives. They moved into high gear in the 70s to disorganize labor, which had already definitively lost the initiative long before, during the war years.

### False sense of insecurity

The New Deal was by no means generally accepted as the price businessmen would have to pay for curbing the urge to revolution. It was largely the work of a reformist-minded working class who seized on the spectre of revolution as an excuse to push through a series of mea-

asures designed to paper over the organizing gap between workers in America and workers in Europe. For a time it worked. Granted they could not have done it without the active and interested support of well-to-do renegades like Roosevelt, they furnish a perfect example of how some members of the working class can delude themselves that capital will somehow someday work for them. The highly dramatic scenario Stratman presents hovers uncertainly between a *potentially* revolution-

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### CREDITS

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# Historical materialism and its problems\*

So wide of the mark is the author's case against Marxism that a separate article ("Outside the Box?") was necessary just to identify the points on which he claims his "new paradigm" supersedes that of Marx. Here I will deal only with his specific criticisms. Stratman builds his whole case, first of all, over the assumption that Karl Marx established a paradigm, the "science of revolution."

Marx's belief that he had discovered a "science" of revolution rests on his notion that the relations of production and the economic forces which they constitute operate independently of men's will. He does not mean by this that individual thought or initiative is not possible or not a real factor in society, but that individual acts often have results contrary to their intent, and that the economic forces constituted by the sum of individual actions act according to their own laws (p. 165).

"The power of Marxism to inspire and to mislead," he states on page 168, "derive from the same source: its credibility as a science of history and revolution." Attributing to Marx the creation of a "science of revolution" (though he never documents the origin of this phrase, making it sound as though Marx proudly congratulated himself on giving birth to such a thing), Stratman proffers a "new paradigm" that will really put revolution on a scientific footing.

Who, however, actually coined the phrase, "science of revolution"? Can revolution itself be a science? What would this make of Stratman's reliance on Thomas S. Kuhn's concept of scientific revolutions, which are revolutions within science? [See "So you wanna be a paradigm!"] For now we might only ask whether a science can "mislead" either practitioners or society at large. If capitalism is bad for people, can there be a *science* of what is bad for people? To qualify Marx's historical materialism as a "paradigm," we would have to be able to say, not simply that Marx drew together a vast body of competing models for the analysis of society (and he manifestly did not), but that his revolution in social science was referenced on the work of the peer group of society as a whole. In the sense of marshaling the widely varying opinion of a "community" of scientists, Marx did not succeed at bringing off any revolution.

## Did Marx establish a paradigm?

But Stratman manifests a tendency to confuse the political revolution of society at large with the kind that occurs among specialists; half the time he is excoriating Marx for his unsci-

entific anti-social views of people, and the other half is paying him the grudging compliment of having "scientized" revolution. Stratman is also, however, confused on Lenin's "theoretical achievement." (See "Dr. Marx and Mr. Lenin," *WSR* 14) Marx not having established a paradigm whose conditions have since become possible (a revolution will have to occur first), Lenin could not have added anything to one. The new (first) paradigm that still awaits us in the future will be the work of the revolutionaries, not of their predecessors.

Assuming for the sake of argument that Marx did establish a paradigm, why does it need replacing? It turns out this really breaks down into two problems: one that Stratman ignores, and a second that ignoring the first causes him to misread. Marx, says Stratman,

accepted the capitalist view of human motivation: "individuals seek only their particular interest," he declared (Marx's emphasis). For Marx, self-interest is fundamental to historical materialism as a science. Only self-interest is scientifically valid as a motivation; the rest is "ideology" (p. 165).

In *The German Ideology* Marx takes up a wide-ranging discussion of capitalist society in his time and how it, as a class-divided society, had evolved into its then-existing form. On page 54 of that book he considers the concepts of class and individual interest, discussing not the individual but the division of labor that accompanied the breakup of community-based (and therefore community-owned and controlled) wealth production on the introduction of private, individually-owned and controlled wealth production. He elaborates on how the "communal" interests of social individuals, denied institutional expression under the new, radically opposed, régime of private property, became distorted into "particular" interests defined according to economic class. He nowhere states or implies that this "particularization" was a natural phenomenon or even assumes it as a logical point of departure.

In fact, his "view of human nature" takes roughly the same perspective as Stratman's, in that the social individual is taken as primary, the cooperative urge is assumed as basic, and the spontaneous acceptance of all individuals as members of the community (Stratman's condensed "equality") is considered as given. Also like Stratman, Marx views these qualities (of real individuals, not "passive" masses guided only by "particular" interests) as repressed and ignored, implying — and perhaps

\* All citations are to the International Publishers editions.

Stratman missed an explicit formulation — that the spontaneous human urge to social relations characterized by solidarity and equality was only *kept in check* by a ruling-class policy of social control. Unlike Stratman, Marx confronts the economic dimension of this straightforwardly and is consequently not embarrassed by its incessant tendency to reappear as part of the problem.

Thus, “self-interest [egotism] is fundamental” only to Stratman’s (very one-sided) critique of historical materialism. Marx uses it only to characterize the distortion of human social relations that comes over society historically at some point in its development. His own concept of “interest” is that of “the communists” for whom he and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*.

### Illusion vs. solidarity

What *is* fundamental to historical materialism is community solidarity, that original state of human society styled “primitive communism.” Stratman makes no acknowledgment of the concept. Marx, on the other hand, considered it basic; Engels, especially, explored it in some depth in *Origin of the Family, State and Private Property*. It is not likely he or Marx would then simply put it aside when examining capitalist production and its predecessors. People calling themselves communists long before the Kremlin crew ever existed were profoundly and fundamentally in synch with the notion that “most people are engaged in a struggle to humanize the world.”

In the *German Ideology* Marx displays a keen sense of the interaction between ideas as items of knowledge and ideas as false beliefs. When he talks of individuals seeking “only their particular interest,” he is distinguishing this mistaken sense of purpose from the one they would seek if they were to set aside the false assumptions they are driven to adopt by the class disorganization of human society, sanctioned and implemented by themselves and their forebears.

The problem he is trying to solve here is, how do real individuals finally disembarass themselves of all the fake values loaded into their minds by so many generations of a history based on illusion? The “pursuit of particular interest,” then, is a recognition of that pursuit’s falsity, its antithetical character to the real interest of all human beings — their mutual community with one another. Nowhere in *We CAN Change the World* does its author show any appreciation of the problem of illusion in studying the history of ideas. His Marx lacks all sense of what the original Marx termed “fetishism.”

People can demonstrate a very strong tendency to reproduce, in the highest degree, conditioning designed to neutralize their efforts at conceptualizing human social relations on a human basis. They will cite chapter and verse of the standard capitalist

fairy tales, resisting all attempts at reason. Marx, in talking about this counter-revolutionary (or reactionary) tendency in people’s attitudes, focuses on the question of just how adequate human knowledge is to the real world it forms a material element of. Hegel’s statement to the effect that “appearances deceive” postulated a discrepancy between what exists and what people *think* exists. This concern follows Marx all the way into *Capital*.

Taking cognizance of the possibility that people may, for good reasons or bad, not understand anything about what they deal with, that varieties of misconception — “false consciousness” or ideology in its more systematic forms — may cloud people’s ability to grasp the nature of the repression they face, is an unavoidable necessity for anyone interested in the revolutionary transformation of society. (If Stratman imagines this is not, or has ceased to be, a problem, he will find things to be otherwise.)

In speaking of “illusions” and “alien forces existing outside [individuals], the origin and goal of which they are ignorant” (*German Ideology*, p. 54), Marx is thus placing the emphasis on the attitude of ignorance, not (as Stratman has it) on the social relations by which individuals cooperate to carry out private property’s division of labor. In making this switch of construction, Stratman has made it seem that Marx renders the individual hopelessly entrapped in a matrix of short-range, egoistic calculations that exclude relations of equality and solidarity. Marx,

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coming from a much broader and deeper philosophical background, considered that effective revolutionary action required a consciousness that stayed in touch with the reality of the human condition. Under the various forms of class ownership of the means of wealth production that have come and gone, the official versions of this sense of reality — including the ability to understand it from a human perspective — has become more and more attenuated and degraded, less and less “real” in human terms.

### “Self-interest” and ruling ideas

While considerations of solidarity and equality are never out of reach, Marx assumed it would take a real, global, all-pervasive emergency to awaken this ever-present urge to be human from the semblance of slumber, something like hypnotic sleep, inflicted on it by the acceptance of ruling ideas. And he further assumed this emergency would take an immediately economic form, since this is the basic level at which *all* members of society must live their lives. This, in turn, was the whole reason he took up the study of political economy. He did not set out to be a better economist than Smith or Ricardo, but to defeat them using their own logic by bringing out its internal

contradictions. (It does not help that Stratman isolates selected passages from *The Holy Family* where it suits his brief but assiduously avoids mentioning the “humanistic” passages from Marx’s other writings, which would seem to embarrass him.)

The egoistic focus of class-divided society keeps generalizing the scope of repression, on the one hand, as it calls on ever more radical concepts to overturn the hegemony of each incumbent ruling class, on the other hand. The pursuit of “self-interest” thus defined, as a thorough reading of the *German Ideology* will disclose, forces the crime of private property back onto increasingly systematic and universal justifications. Capitalism is but the last, and the most inclusive, of these conceptual robbers’ dens.

Beyond that frontier Marx (and Engels) held that the initial impulse of the working class to rule society (in the manner of its “betters”), under the impetus of casting about for means of dealing with the threat of annihilation of the last shreds of human decency, would eventually pressure people to question their assumptions — the “ruling ideas” planted in their heads — and realize that they must instead lay the foundations for a social order based on what Stratman calls human values of solidarity and equality. (Stratman must explain how he differs with this if he finds himself compelled to acknowledge that people initially fail to realize which direction they need to take their struggle to humanize the world.)

### Self-interest as a problem

Though he is otherwise clear enough on the *object* to attain, he does not understand Marx. The “self-interest” with which he sees Marx as “unscientifically” hobbling the working class Marx never intended to be applied to it, *since abolishing the rule of egoistic self-interest was precisely the problem it had to solve*. The misconstruction placed on “self-interest,” however, leads Stratman to the entirely false conclusion that Marx saw slaves, serfs and wage-earners as a congeries of isolated individuals — the same as the

capitalist does. Collapsing them all together into the persona of the wage-earner, on the other hand, Stratman draws the further inference that the exploitation of isolated individuals implies their victimization, their passivity, and this he writes down as Marx’s error. This accounts for the glaring discrepancy between his statements about the “Marxist paradigm” and the citations sprinkled throughout *The German Ideology* unmistakably affirming the social character of the individual.

Thus, he honestly believes that for Marx, real people were nothing, and the revolution was everything: “Historical materialism,” he thinks, “can be described as Marx’s attempt to show that history is moving inevitably in the direction of fulfilling humankind’s nature — a nature of which class society, in particular capitalist society, has deprived it. The subject of this history is humanity’s ‘species be-

**The working class is composed of those human beings who get pushed into a subhuman (economically defined) status within human society by other human beings who make use of power and privilege to compel the majority to spend their lives making the minority wealthier and still more powerful.**

ing” (page 164). On this question Stratman missteps, however.

The phrase “species being” refers only to the quality of basic humanity possessed by all social individuals — what people have often referred to traditionally as “human nature.” Capitalism denies human social nature, because it operates on the sub-social plane of economic relations, but no Marxist — not even Marx himself — would attempt to argue that it “deprives humankind of its nature.” Capital does not have a “vision” or “world view,” as Stratman imagines: it only aims at reshaping the image of human nature in strictly sub-human (economic) terms: since it is in the nature of economic relations to divide and analyze, this is how it defines and controls the human

beings whose lives contribute to its power over them. This aim turns economic relations into a weapon against natural social relations within human communities.

As Marx saw it, *people* make capital happen; it is ultimately the working class’s own self-defeating support of capitalism and its institutions that keeps them enslaved as employees (or worse). A quality so abstract and general as human nature (“species being”) could likewise never serve as the subject of any history — let alone the one Stratman believes Marx envisioned: it would not qualify even as a primary factor for historical materialist methodology.

### What is the working class?

To speak of Marx defining the working class “by what is done to it” (by capitalism, p. 164) rather than “by what it does” (for itself) is little more than a rhetorical flourish. Stratman may mean that people have an urge to solidarity and equality that they find little or no support for under capitalism: but that is just what Marx thinks, too.

The problem is that one cannot define something called a “working class” apart from capitalism, nor can one distinguish a capitalist élite from a working-class majority without alluding to the anti-social policy of capital, its need to control that majority, or the general sub-human (economic) focus of capitalist thinking. The working class is composed of those human beings who get pushed into a subhuman (economically defined) status within human society by other human beings who make use of power and privilege to compel the majority to spend their lives making the minority wealthier and still more powerful.

Humanly speaking, no matter what people may want to do in the context of their social nature, their attribution of legitimacy to the practice of production for profit (which leads, by many processes, to the power of capital over them) — the fact that they find capital blocking the way — means they are defined “by what capital does *to*” them. Being human means, in general, only attempting to live (and especially work) with one’s fellow



human beings in a cooperative framework; Stratman's formula for this is "believing in equality and in commitment to each other." And of course it is revolutionary.

It is therefore specious to argue that Marx is agreeing with the premise of capital in accepting as a *fait accompli* the point of departure that capital has already configured: the exploited status of the majority of humans. It is equally specious to argue that Stratman, in isolating the two characteristics of the human condition that he thinks define the values and attitudes of "ordinary working people," has hit upon a definition of the working class in terms of "what it does," when both he and Marx agree that it is above all a case of human beings denied the opportunity to exercise their human nature: both ends imply each other. As we have already seen, Stratman's emphasis on the dimension of social control as primary leads him necessarily into such verbal morasses, involving as it does a corresponding strong de-emphasis on the economic dimension. It would certainly be hard to explain capitalism — or any other system of social control — without understanding its economic dimension; and Stratman only makes it harder on himself in minimizing that dimension.

### Vision and class struggle

Even so, no one can fault Stratman for an upbeat rendering of the balance of the class struggle. Words like "vision" and "sharing" have, however, acquired a certain currency emanating out of upscale professional-managerial circles, and such words occupy a prominent place in his vocabulary. A vision is different from a program or a point of view. As this use of it makes clear, it can indicate something on the order of "sense," though remaining vague and imprecise in its implications; an earlier incarnation was the phrase, "crude (or rough or primitive) sense of justice." The word "vision" allows Stratman to abandon the constraints of objective analysis — which, while it may mark a symptomatic dropping off of public confidence in the authority of economists (and, more generally, in experts across the board), is

hardly an improvement over the alleged Marxist paradigm.

The "articulation" he mentions is obviously left to the future, and he is only trying to elucidate a starting point along lines he thinks bear the stamp of the future. In this he is making a real leap of faith, since no institutional basis yet exists for such a theory. More than anything, he has written a book expressing a profound disillusionment with all previous organizing efforts. He has torn up any theoretical connections he might have relied on for the sake of an intuitive reformulation of the notion of class struggle — a reformulation he cannot validate historically.

**He has thus created the very artificial risk of getting bogged down over the long run in the already-been-tried dilemma that wasted the efforts of so many Social Democrats: what one socialist has described as "the slippery slopes of reformism."**

However, in imagining he has refuted Marx — and acting out of a pervasive, though very understandable, ignorance of the contributions made by world socialism to the theory of revolution — he has not produced the theoretical breakthrough he believes he has; and at the same time, he has forsaken those very points of reference capable of making his discourse universally accessible to social science — specifically, the insights of historical materialism. He has thus created the very artificial risk of getting bogged down over the long run in the already-been-tried dilemma that wasted the efforts of so many Social Democrats: what one socialist has described as "the slippery slopes of reformism."

### A paradigm for capital

"Marx's model of history," Stratman argues, constitutes a paradigm, "an explanatory model through which scientists interpret their data and make sense of the world which they observe," and it has met with conditions it cannot explain; although he also wants us to think it was

never a legitimate scientific model in the first place, failing as it did to meet the standards of an "adequate" revolutionary theory. However, presented as a counter-paradigm that "sees with new eyes" conditions missed by "the Marxist model" and that "works in a new world" (in Kuhn's phrase), revolutionary democracy turns out to be a mere string of philosophical generalities — in themselves empty of content. For all the grand talk of paradigms, Stratman's alternative model promises all — but the spade work is not performed.

He nowhere explains his references to a "capitalist theory of history and social development" — none, at any rate, that systematically state a theory of society or social development proving capitalism is bound to triumph (as he believes Marx is supposed to have done for socialism). Possibly he is thinking of Ayn Rand and her Objectivism. In claiming, furthermore, that "capitalist and Marxist theories of history and social development ... have remained within the same paradigm of history," Stratman is suggesting that capitalism itself *works* on a paradigm.

### The profit orbit

Unless he is making political economy the "science" of capitalism and having it adopt a view of human nature that provides a "paradigm of history driven by economic development," capitalism as a system (even of social control) is not a science. (Nor is revolution.) Individual capitalists have their views and their philosophies: but these only approach something typical to the extent that they confine themselves to the orbit determined by profit. Capitalism's mode of production might be called the "profit" paradigm, except that abolishing wages and capital is necessary to establish a *first* paradigm.

Political economy (along with economics), as I explain elsewhere, is not a separate science, and its legitimacy as a branch of social science is in any case dubious (see "So you wanna be a paradigm!"). If Stratman *is* referring to political economy, then in equating what he perceives to be "Marx's theory of history" with a capital-

ist one, he is implying that Marx was never more than a flamboyant and pretentious economist. On this reading, we should not consider him a “revolutionist” at all.

Yet that is the basis on which he claims Marx’s “model” has failed. But as we have seen, this equation is riddled with faulty assumptions: those relating to Marx’s “vision” of social change and (not less importantly) the rather dogmatic insistence that Lenin and the Bolsheviks, piloting their “Marxist” ship of state, shared that vision *and attempted to implement Marx’s ideas on communism*. No one has ever uncovered any evidence to that effect, nor can Stratman come up with any that is not some form of apologetic in behalf of the Soviet Union. And in any case, it is not Marxists who are the scientists agreeing on an explanatory model — it is every human being alive. Marx only sought to provide people with a methodology which he was confident met the criteria for scientific research.

On page 163, Stratman writes:

Scarcity — the need for economic development — led to the creation of classes in human society; class society — inequality — is the basis of economic development; the creation of a classless society is dependent on the overcoming of scarcity — that is, on the development of the productive forces of society to a point where scarcity is replaced by abundance.

This is inaccurate on two counts. First of all, Marx did not make economic development “the driving force of history”; capitalism did. The term “development” means increase of commodity wealth as a result of capitalist investment; pre-capitalist economies characterized by production for exchange can only be said to have “developed” if we in the 20th century decide to call the long-term changes they underwent “development.” All Marx argues is that wealth production in some form is the central characteristic every human society has in common, that wealth in class societies takes the form of commodities and that the capitalist form of wealth production in particular takes the form of economic development.

In the second place, Marx never held that scarcity was the natural condition of human society; he may have used the word “primitive” to describe the human

community before it fell into the ways of private property and production of goods and services for sale on the market at a profit (as he did in the phrase, “primitive communism,” which indicated an assumption of spontaneous abundance as the original starting point for the human species — another name for human society). Marx likewise posits no inherent “need” for economic development: he recognizes that it can occur — and will occur if conditions favor it. Once we assume its occurrence as given, certain necessities spring from that assumption. Only capitalists *need* to develop their markets. He is equally silent on the original ancient motives or reasons people could have had for introducing commodity exchange, as he is on the question of how common ownership would work; what examples of the latter he gives are pointedly speculative, serving only to illustrate.

### Original state of equality

However, if we are to assume an original state of equality — and Stratman implies Marx did — then are we not (including Marx) to conclude that people are all by nature equal individuals with their own talents and abilities, at least as far as access to opportunities for satisfaction are concerned? Marx based the concept of exploitation on *working ability* (labor-power). He did not borrow it from Adam Smith and David Ricardo. How does Stratman explain Marx’s development of a theory assuming human equality and solidarity and his simultaneous adoption of theories assuming exactly the opposite? What sense would it have made for any economist to *assume* the inevitable destruction of the system of production whose development he advocates?

Similarly, Stratman has a tendency to homogenize consciousness, ascribing to the capitalist class as he does a “method” and a “model” or “paradigm.” Capitalists, in Stratman’s universe, have a plan; they know what they want, how to get it and what they are doing. He mistakes capital’s need to *repress* with a proactive policy of *control*. Repression, on the other hand, implies precisely a *lack* of control. His control thesis requires the capitalist

class to perceive itself beating down a subservient social class it has itself created. At the same time, the workers’ obnoxious (revolutionary) humanity pushes capital to countermeasures responding to a fear for the profitability of investments.

### Whose contradiction is it?

We must ask how capital could *both* view human beings as a passive mass, as part of the problem, not the solution, and yet still recognize the revolutionary threat implied in workers’ halting efforts to reimpose their thwarted humanity — to reorder their lives on a basis of equality and solidarity? For if capital’s perception of human beings so abstracts from their real lives as to see in them nothing but the butt-end of a bottom line, capitalists cannot believe revolution is even possible. They cannot respond to a threat to do the impossible: they can only respond to the threat of taking their specific stocks of capital and redistributing them to other would-be capitalists (exactly what the Bolsheviks did).

The horn of the dilemma is therefore either that the capitalist class sets about actively crushing the threat of human revolution, thus negatively validating the notions of solidarity and equality, and rendering Stratman’s pronouncements on capital’s view of human beings inapplicable; or its view of the human beings it controls is fatally conservative, and capitalists cannot even conceive of the possibility of a revolution in the *basis* of society. Either it achieves its goal of total control, dooming the terrifying concept of democratic revolution to oblivion, or it falls victim finally to its own corrupt interpretation of human nature — dooming to the cutting-room floor Stratman’s hypothesis of social control as the governing, primary factor.

I would submit, in defense of the combined economic and political thesis world socialists work from, that the latter is indeed the case, that the long-term response of business to worker inroads on profit margins made in the sixties (pp. 122-136) sprang from a desire to protect their market position.

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Concludes on page 14

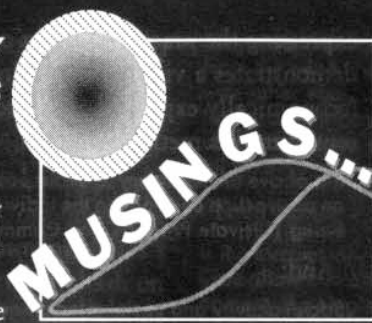
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# DEMOCRACY 'R' US

Capitalism was not designed to be fixed.

Do you ever wonder why millions are spent during a campaign to get someone into office? Obviously there is a great deal at stake.

Candidates are identified by their ideology. If a Socialist candidate entered the race, his only monetary support would be supplied by the Socialist Party, and they would have to rely on donations from the members, and they are unlikely to have any rich "Perots" to help them. Since we are the only party that represents the worker, it follows that the government is owned by those who can spend millions on campaigns. They pass all the laws in their favor. Nevertheless, even with all their power, they cannot make capitalism do their bidding. It is like trying to steer a boat without a rudder. Even with all the most able professors of economics, all the captains of industry, at their disposal, no one can fix



something that cannot be fixed.

We must replace capitalism with socialism.

"Once a socialist, always a socialist" is a saying familiar among socialists. When you have become convinced that reforming capitalism doesn't work (for the have-nots), there is no other alternative.

## THE REASONING DEPARTMENT

Many years ago folks thought that the earth was flat, and those who ventured too far afield would surely fall off the edge. It was also thought that the sun circled the earth.

All through history folks have been making keen observations, only to discover that they cannot always believe their senses.

We see only what is seeable. We hear only

what is hearable. We can't see through steel or hear the flea cough, and since our brains are fed information via our senses, it, too, is limited in its ability to reason correctly. We must distinguish between theory and fact and between fact and fiction — and though we humans are the only reasoning beings on this old planet, our priorities in the Reasoning Department are easily sidetracked, it seems. We make an awful mistake when we allow "leaders" to do our thinking for us. Don't you know that's a good way to get fleeced?

This is where I make my sales pitch: socialists do not have (or recommend) leaders. A socialist candidate would flat-out tell you that he doesn't want your vote unless you want socialism. Reforming capitalism is not on our agenda. Our political opponents have been doing that for over 200 years. Can you picture a system without money? No buying or selling, no bribing, no graft, no drug dealers, no robberies, no mugging, no advertising ... Just free access to all we produce.

"From each according to his or

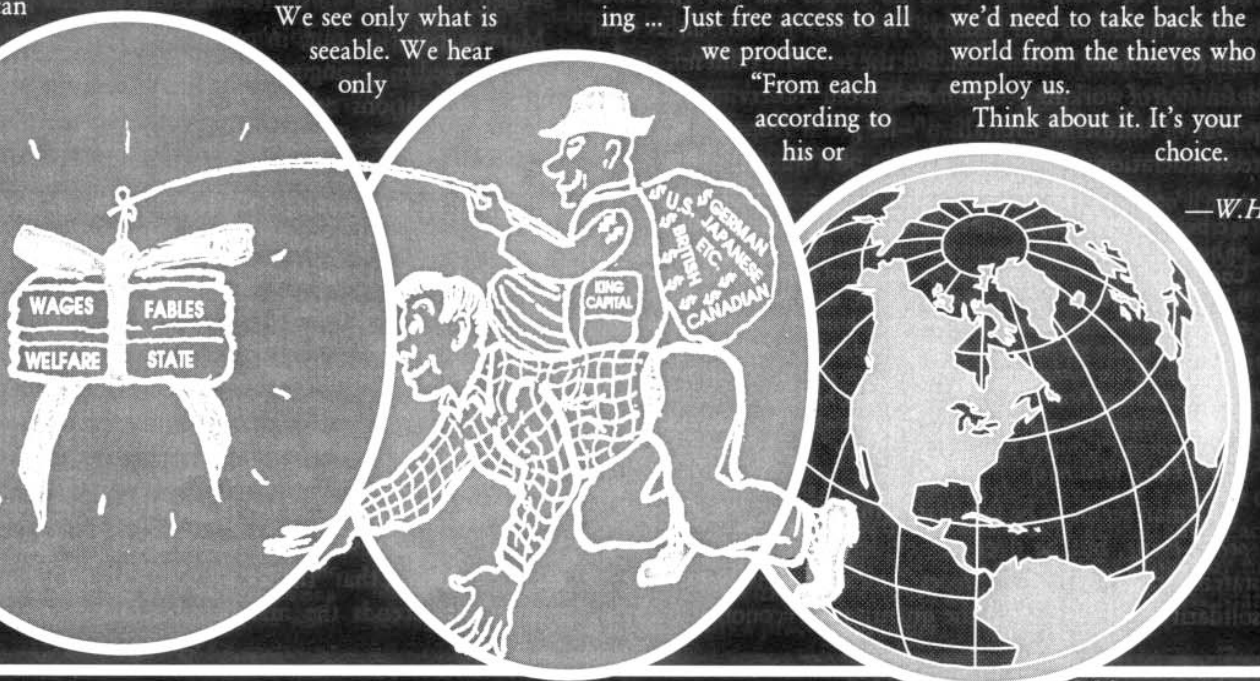
her abilities, to each according to his or her needs."

All we need for that arrangement is a majority of folks who want socialism. Can you imagine a world without money or the need for it? A world without advertisements, no stocks or bonds, no Wall Streets, no banks or brokerages, no governments, no subject class, no prisons or prisoners, no one person with authority over another (except perhaps a mother over her child), no poverty and no wars ... Did you realize that a true democracy is impossible where leaders and governments exist? The very word "govern" presupposes a subject class needing to be governed.

If we could persuade the 60 percent of the U.S.'s eligible voters who don't now bother to vote (and their fellow workers everywhere else) to look into something really worthwhile — eliminating the wages-and-salary system in favor of free access and free working associations of women and men — that would be all we'd need to take back the world from the thieves who employ us.

Think about it. It's your choice.

—W.H.



## Is marxism in crisis?



# OUTSIDE the box?



If David Stratman's grasp of Marxism is any indicator, the Kremlin's long Reign of Error amounted to a deadlier smear campaign than any plot the Right could ever have hatched. Seeing Marx through his eyes, it becomes evident that Leninism, far from being understood as a derivative of Marxism, has taken on the reverse role in most people's minds: however Lenin saw or did things, that was how Marx must have meant them.

Marx's model of history did not see working people as conscious agents of change who act on the basis of their own anti-capitalist values. Instead, observing the savage power of industrial capitalism, Marx defined working people primarily as dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces who, when they are moved to action, are moved by these same forces. While he believed the capitalist and the working class to have opposing interests, Marx saw them motivated by essentially the same goal—to get a greater share of the wealth ... Capitalism and Marxism both see ordinary people as the passive victims or beneficiaries of the actions of elites, within a history driven by economic development and self-interest. (p. 7)

The author seems to have learned what he knows of Marxism from the Leninist Left, who got themselves so boxed up with their icon of Marx they could no longer tell the difference between invention and history. The Marx he denounces (and aims to displace) is their icon. But the real Marx did not get his definition of working people merely from "observing the savage power of industrial capitalism"—he got it from a long, hard reconsideration of what it meant to be a human being:

Man is not merely a natural being; he is a *human* natural being. He is a being for himself, and, therefore, a *species-being*; and as such he has to express and authenticate himself in being as well as thought. Consequently, *human* objects are not natural objects as they present themselves directly, nor is *human* sense, as it is immediately and objectively given, *human* sensibility and human objectivity. Neither objective nature nor subjective nature is directly presented in a form adequate to the *human* being. And as everything natural must have its *origin* so man has his process of genesis, *history*, which is for him, however, a conscious process and thus one which is consciously self-transcending ("Critique of Hegel's Dialectic" in TB Bottomore, *Karl Marx: Early Writings*).

Stratman seems to be familiar with Marx's use of the phrase *species-being*, but he does not evidently know of the above statement. A "conscious process" means precisely an urge to solidarity that transcends the quantitative economic relations

expressing the practical aspects of living in community. Marx demonstrates a vivid sense of this tendency toward solidarity (economically expressed as cooperation) and incorporates this sense into his methodology:

It is above all necessary to avoid postulating "society" once again as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual is the *social being* ("Private Property and Communism," *Early Writings*).

And:

Social activity and social mind by no means exist *only* in the form of activity or mind which is directly communal ... Nevertheless, communal activity and mind, i.e., activity and mind which express themselves directly in a *real association* with other men, occur everywhere where this direct expression of sociability arises from the content of the activity or corresponds to the nature of mind ("Private Property and Communism").

As if that were not enough, he states, point-blank, in the "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic": "Man equals self-consciousness." Now, this is not exactly the language of someone who sees (working) people primarily as "dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces." Marx only approached the study of political economy through his interest in human activities as exemplified in labor. What he analyzed from that vantage point was capitalism's effect on human labor.

In a famous little screed written in 1871, his critique of the Gotha Program, Marx testily challenges and refutes an entire series of demands making up the German Social Democrats' political manifesto (or program). In that critique he rebukes his comrades for descending into the very kind of economics-dominated thinking for which Stratman criticizes him. One example:

...wages are not what they appear to be, namely, the *value*, or *price*, of *labor power* ... the wage worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, *to live*, only in so far as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co-consumers of surplus value); ... the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labor by extending the working day or by developing the productivity, that is, increasing the intensity of labor power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labor is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labor develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment.

Marx is pointing out, in other words, that while workers *might* succeed in getting more pay for the same work (or better working conditions or benefits), this will not change their condition of slaves. This implies, logically, that slavery is not the normal condition of the mentally active human being (as he argued in the previously quoted passages) and that the emancipation of the working class has nothing to do with agitating for economic improvements.

Stratman is also apparently unfamiliar with the famous quote from the Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*, according to which "the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their *social being* that determines their consciousness." [Emphasis added.] Given the statements made by Marx in his early writings (quoted above), what else can he mean by this but that "the social, political and intellectual life process" transcends the merely economic aspects of life in

general? The Preface from which this particular passage is taken, and which is usually quoted under the shadow of Marx the economist (and therefore out of context), is ordinarily the one taken by people who consider themselves opponents of "Marxist ideology" as proving Marx's "determinism"—a tendentious rehash on which Stratman's whole rebuttal stands or falls.

So "Marx's model of history did not see working people as conscious agents of change who act on the basis of their own anti-capitalist values"? Marx did not see the humanity for the economics? That certainly doesn't come out in the following statements:

The propertied class and the proletarian class express the same human alienation. But the former feels comfortable and confirmed in it, recognizes this self-alienation as *its own power* and thus has the *semblance* of a human existence. The latter feels itself crushed by this alienation, sees in it its own impotence and the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel's, "in the midst of degradation the *revolt* against degradation," a revolt to which it is forced by the contradiction between its *humanity* and its situation, which is an open, clear and absolute negation of its humanity (*The German Ideology*, p. 20, quotation taken by the editor from *The Holy Family*).

These are the very same points Stratman makes, *thinking he has discovered Marx agreeing with capitalist assumptions*. Moreover, says Marx, the "all-round development of the individual will only cease to be conceived as ideal, as vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual comes under the control of the individuals themselves, *as the communists desire* (Editor's Introduction, quoting an abridged part; my emphasis)." Are these the same "communists" who took power away from the workers in 1918, under Lenin's guidance, so no annoying peasantry could eject them from the government?

Does Marx define "working people primarily as dehumanized and passive victims of economic forces who, when they are moved to action, are moved by these same forces" in this passage?

Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well;

language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men ... Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all (p. 51).

Then again,

If the circumstances in which the individual lives allow him only the (one-) sided development of a single quality at the expense of all the rest, if they give him the material and time to develop only that one quality, then this individual achieves only a one-sided, crippled development. No moral preaching avails here. And the manner in which this one, preferentially favored quality develops depends again, on the one hand, on the material available for its development and, on the other hand, on the degree and manner in which the other qualities are suppressed (p. 105).

Stratman seems to have uncritically accepted every statement ever made by anyone calling himself or herself a Marxist as automatically up to Marx's own standards; as though "Marxism" was the corpus of all such statements, to which anyone could add another piece and the totality of which was a system of beliefs whose only requirement for coherence was that it stay philosophically consistent—Marxism being whatever "Marxists" said it was.

### The economic dimension

His adverse judgement of Marx's ideas thus leads him to a horror of anything economic in the discussion over what constitutes a revolution through which human beings really do liberate themselves from the deadening insanity of the class struggle. It also deprives him of an ability to assess soberly the actual possibilities of ending capitalism.

Marx's emphasis on the economic dimension of social interaction, it is true, does follow capitalism's emphasis on the same; for capitalism, however, this emphasis is an end in itself, since it takes the exploitation of the work people do and carries it to technical perfection. The economic is dominant, for Marx, solely because it provides the means of realizing socially defined ends; it represents a prac-

tical kind of social activity whose function is to implement generally defined needs. Historical materialism (which is nothing more than Marx's methodology for analyzing capitalist and other class-divided social orders), on the other hand, appeals to the whole broad range of human experience in order to place capitalism within an analytic matrix: the economic dimension of the analysis is strictly relative to the social dimension and represents merely the definitive start-

ing point in a continuous cycle of human social experience.

Marx gives a succinct explanation of the materialist conception of history in a letter to a Russian man of letters, P.V. Annenkov (dated

December 28, 1846). "What is society," he asks, "whatever its form may be? The product of men's reciprocal activity. Are men free to choose this or that form of society for themselves? By no means ... men are not free to choose their productive forces — which are the basis of all their history — for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity."

Values (of solidarity and equality) are a subjective way of describing relations in human society. By themselves they have no content — they require some kind of objective correlation. Marx sought to provide this by anchoring his analysis at the mid-level of human experience — the sub-social or economic, as opposed to the sub-economic or political level. In the passage quoted, he points out how as humans we do not have the ability to create an economy from scratch any more than we can, for example, decide whether or not we will be born or who our parents will be. This we might speak of as the "given half" of reality. The half of reality Stratman wishes to concentrate on we might call its "creative half." What we receive as historical givens we change as we respond to them, creating a new set of givens for succeeding generations. Each generation is cumulatively bound by the choices of all preceding generations. Marx continues:

**Values (of solidarity and equality) are a subjective way of describing relations in human society. By themselves they have no content — they require some kind of objective correlation.**

Because of this simple fact that every succeeding generation finds itself in possession of the productive forces won by the previous generation which serve it as the raw material for new production, a connection arises in human history, a history of humanity takes shape which has become all the more a history of humanity since the productive forces of man and therefore his social relations have been extended. Hence it necessarily follows: the social history of men is never anything but the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not.\*

### The role of economics

He also pointedly defines economic development as a vehicle of human social life: "as men develop their productive forces, *that is, as they live*, they develop certain relations with one another ... the nature of these relations must necessarily change with the change and growth of the productive forces." [My italics] Where Marx merely *includes* the economic dimension as a primary, formative element, Stratman has him *reducing* social interaction to transactions in the marketplace.

\* *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Correspondence 1846-1895, Vol. XXIX, New York: International Publishers (1935).*

Marx's change of focus in his economic writings, culminating in the three volumes of *Capital*, involves no abandonment of his earlier humanism; on the contrary, his economic analysis reinforces his social (and socialist) assumptions by pushing them deliberately into the background.

Engels, writing in 1890 to J. Bloch, puts it in a more down-to-earth fashion:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., ... even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories ... also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which ... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.

Just to drive his point home, he follows up with a couple of historical illustra-

tions: "Without making oneself ridiculous it would be difficult to succeed in explaining in terms of economics the existence of every small state in Germany, past and present, or the origin of the High German consonant mutations..."\*\*

The economic sphere only provides the basic outlines for all other kinds of experience—but it is there that we must start if we are adequately to reconstruct the historical dynamic of social change. An appropriately Marxian focus sees the capitalist obsession with the economic dimension as a primary deficiency that people must understand they need to cancel if they are really to emancipate themselves from the rule of capital. From a Marxian vantage point, Stratman's (frankly very commendable) use of a non-Marxian phraseology confirms his prejudice and reinforces his conviction that he has formulated a new, an alternative, conception of social change. Therefore he thinks he has understood, critiqued and superseded Marx, arriving at a different destination in the process, where in reality he has merely added an elaborately unnecessary detour to a path leading to very nearly the same destination.

—Ron Elbert

\*\* *Ibid.*, pp. 475-6.

### Historical Materialism (continued from page 10)

*To recapitulate:* Marx never shared the capitalists' assumptions about people or their role in the making of history, or about human motivation. His grasp of economic theory was that of an interested layman with a philosophically committed social bias — making his use of it methodologically secondary rather than primary as Stratman implies. He considered the notions and perceptions capitalists hold about human society (and human nature) to be illusions. Stratman never advances any arguments to explain how Marx, to have agreed with these notions "objectively," must have therefore not realized that he really didn't *mean* they were illusions. Marx repeatedly acknowledges (as above) the role and power of illusion in clouding human thinking; Stratman dismisses it.

—Ron Elbert



# NEW DEMOCRACY

## statement of principles

We live under a dictatorship of the wealthy. Most people want a better world. We can only achieve a new world by openly declaring our goals:

David Stratman was invited to reply to the issues raised in these pages regarding his book, *We CAN Change the World*. The pressures of other commitments, however, have not allowed him to follow through on this, so he has opted to send *New Democracy's Statement of Principles* as a substitute.

1. We are for revolution to create a real democracy. We call on people everywhere to end elite rule and to create real democracy based on principles of solidarity and equality. Democracy means ordinary people shaping all of society with their shared values. It means people together freely deciding their goals and how they will cooperate to achieve them. This includes transforming the goals, organization, and control of work to create an economy where the productive wealth of society is used to meet the human needs of all.

2. Revolution to achieve real democracy is necessary and possible. Revolution is necessary because the problems we face are rooted in a system of elite rule that controls people by attacking relations of solidarity and equality. These problems cannot be solved without creating a new society. Revolution is possible because the struggle of ordinary people to humanize the world is the force that drives history, and because most people

want the new world that only revolution can bring.

3. Our confidence in the possibility of revolution comes from our confidence in ordinary people. Capitalism, communism, and socialism have all led to societies in which an elite holds the power. None of these systems is democratic. Communism and socialism failed as alternatives to capitalism because they accepted capitalism's view that economic development is the basis of human development, that self-interest is the primary human motivation, and that ordinary people are a passive mass or a dangerous problem. The basis of a new society is a new, positive view of people.

4. The everyday struggle of ordinary people to humanize the world creates the wealth of society and whatever positive human relationships exist within it. Most people in their everyday lives struggle against a culture based on competition and exploitation. They strive in their families and workplaces to create relationships based on equality and commitment to each other. People's everyday lives have revolutionary meaning.

5. Class struggle is a struggle over what values should shape society, what goals it should pursue, and who should control it. It is a struggle over what it means to be a human being. The values of the capitalist class are

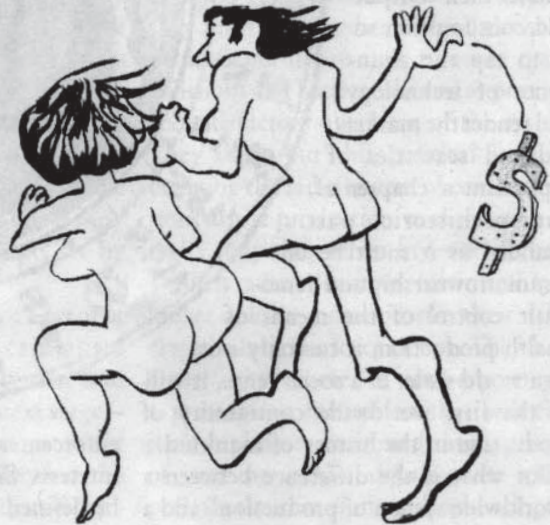
inequality, competition, and control from above. The values of the working class are equality, solidarity, and democracy. The goal of working class struggle is to transform the whole world with its values. The most personal acts of kindness and the most public acts of class war are part of the same struggle to humanize the world.

6. The revolutionary movement must not be based on politicians or union officials or business structures or the

courts but on ordinary people themselves as the driving force and leaders of change.

7. Revolutions are built on hope. The revolutionary movement will unite ordinary men and women of every race and nationality in a movement in which our confidence in our ability to change the world comes from our confidence in each other.

8. We invite all who agree with these principles to join New Democracy.



## Who said it — Marx or Stratman? (a quiz)

Did Marx see the working class as passive and helpless victims, as author David Stratman contends? Of the 12 statements below, pick the ones you feel sure Karl Marx made. See how your choices compare with the correct answers given upside down on the bottom.

- The all-round development of the individual will only cease to be conceived as ideal, as vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual comes under the control of the individuals themselves....
- The human individual cannot understand himself or be understood except as part of something larger. His ideas about himself and other people are rooted in society. They come from his interaction with other human beings and his understanding of his own relationship with them ... The human individual, in other words, is a collective being. Each person is a living and developing product of people working together. What distinguishes a human being from other animals is that he is capable of understanding the human and collective source of his development as a person, and by understanding it, to shape its direction.
- It is not only the material of my activity — such as the language itself which the thinker uses — which is given to me as a social product. My own existence is a social activity.
- Revolutionary consciousness consists of workers' consciousness of themselves as the collective source of value in society and the source of revolution.
- Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process.
- Precisely because it is based on ordinary people as the makers of history, a revolutionary democratic movement must openly challenge capitalist goals, values, plans, policies and power with its own revolutionary vision.
- We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.
- The need for revolution comes from the dehumanizing nature of capitalism in the daily life of all who live within this system ... The possibility of revolution comes from the values and ideas about human life which most people share, and the nature of the struggle against capitalism in which they are already engaged.
- These values and ideas—cooperation, solidarity, equality—have their roots in human nature and are continually recreated by people as they engage in productive activity.
- Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.
- ...the social history of men is never anything but the history of their individual development, whether they are conscious of it or not.
- Human beings, however, do not exist as "communities" or "collectives" or "classes" or "nations," but as individuals. These collective terms merely define relationships among aggregations of individuals. While people's social nature has profound effects on their thoughts and actions, it does not determine their activities or efface their being as individuals.

Sources: *The German Ideology*, New York: International Publishers (1972); *Early Writings*, tr. & ed., T.B. Bottomore, New York: McGraw-Hill (1964); *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Correspondence 1846-1895*, Vol. XXIX, New York: International Publishers (1935); *We CAN Change the World*, Boston: New Democracy Books (1995).

Answer Key: DS = David Stratman, KM = Karl Marx; page citations follow; Answers: 1—KM German Ideology (GI) 32; 2—DS 251; 3—KM ("Private Property and Communism") \* 158; 4—DS 271; 5—KM (GI) 47; 6—DS 267; 7—KM (GI) 47; 8—DS 5; 9—DS 254; 10—KM (GI) 51; 11—KM, Letter to P.Y. Annenkov, \*\* 7; 12—DS 252.





European cities of antiquity were essentially no more than pestilence-ridden slave-marts. Feudal serfdom, in contrast, the model for which grew out of the slave-colonies on the great estates, and so spread to northern Europe, produced not only the community of the manor, but also a new kind of community: the free, or chartered, town having a relatively unattached population.

With the disintegration of the imperial markets, commodity production's invasion of agriculture may have been set back severely, in terms of quantities sold in the marketplace; but feudal production was enhanced by comparison, because the number of captive producers was vastly greater, and the seizure of their surplus labor — the legal robbery of a major portion of the goods and services the serfs produced — was much more efficient than the slave-owner's crude seizure of the producer's entire person. (Chattel slavery had of course by no means disappeared.) But the fortified guild-marts of the free towns still clung to a precarious existence on the edge of the system of agricultural commodity production, which in turn still took up only a part of society's total survival effort.

The community-form typical of capitalist production is a still more advanced outgrowth of the feudal town. Its dominant feature, however, is its ability to expand and concentrate in tune with developments in the system as a whole. Moreover, it does not exist at the margin of that system, but forms its center — since capitalism tends toward concentration of ownership and control, and requires a high labor-mobility, a workforce that can reach the workplace in time to produce an adequate profit.

### The open mass-city

The typical expression of the capitalist community is therefore the open mass-city which, in the most highly developed countries, as the descendant of the ancient slave-emporium and the feudal guild-mart, has absorbed the entire population formerly engaged in subsistence agriculture, except for a decreasing proportion of wage-earners on the farms.

Under capitalism, then, the form of community typical of its mode of production reaches an absolute maximum of

social development. The universal market system guts or subordinates all local communities. The capitalist city is no longer a true community of production, in its most developed condition, but a huge employment agency servicing a number of production units (factories, mines, mills), together with a group of supporting services whose purpose is to avoid excessive waste in the distribution of the surplus value produced.

It furnishes the negative image of the original social community: it exists solely in the technical sense, as an *economic* community, a creature of the marketplace. The concentrating of the vast majority of the world's people in such gargantuan employment colonies makes the community technologically malleable — capable of undergoing almost any rearrangement, within the limits set by the market.

In preparing the world for the advent of the community of need, capitalism thereby causes the world's division into communities to evolve to its next stage — that of production for use on a world scale, whose realization lies beyond the capabilities of private property and capital accumulation.

### A world community

Thus it is no longer of such overriding importance where people live as it was in the times of our remote ancestors, whose communities were concretely defined, culturally cohesive, technologically isolated geographical units. What counts primarily is people's identified social needs and the corresponding pool of human working abilities, plus the whole mass of labor performed to service those needs.

The concept of location is not part of the community of need; the community of production runs itself on the basis of information provided by a worldwide system of communications, and it is the job of those individuals who put in some time at local workplaces to deliberate on the range of issues affecting them. (That will be about the only sense in which work routines and production planning still constitute "jobs.") This includes daily discussions with consumers as well, and with other producers elsewhere. Both groups (producers and consumers) taken

together form a natural community which functions as a discrete whole, on a democratic basis, in a world-system of similar communities.

The ownership side only comes into play when this collection of diverse communities discusses the coordination of production and product distribution. The owners tell the production workers what they will need, if it can be produced, and take what they have said they needed before. But when the times comes to exercise their social interest as owners, they must get together with all the other owners and discuss how to avoid major collisions and bottlenecks and to promote the satisfactory operation of the system. They carry out this political function utilizing the same system of communications as the production workers, who are really only themselves in work clothes.

With administrative institutions no longer able to coerce people, their deliberations lack the force of law. They have rather the character of news reporting — a present-day institution that will find itself rapidly transformed into a process of ongoing public debate over which policies the community should adopt.

And so the notion of a community of production tends toward the technical, economic side of world socialism, while the concept of a worldwide *system* of production tends toward the social and political sides. Discussing socialism from the standpoint of its worldwide character, we put the emphasis on social relations, while discussing the communistic organization of production, we stress the local, daily, analytic aspects of the actual system itself.

Democratic control exists on both levels, but oriented differently in each case: worldwide, it tends to be more political, and locally, more economic. In both cases, there is no trace of money to be found, except in museums. No one works for wages. People do not have "jobs" as in the old days. Capital is no longer used to produce wealth. There are no frontiers anymore, other than the eternally fugitive ones of language and culture. And an indefinite expansion of the means of communication will consign even the "language barrier" to an exhibit room perhaps adjoining that of hard currency and credit.

—ROEL

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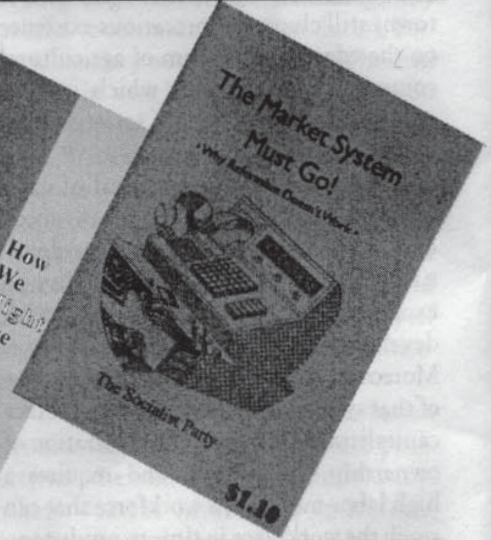
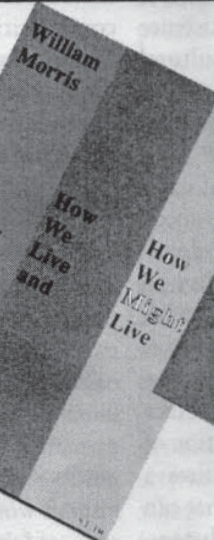
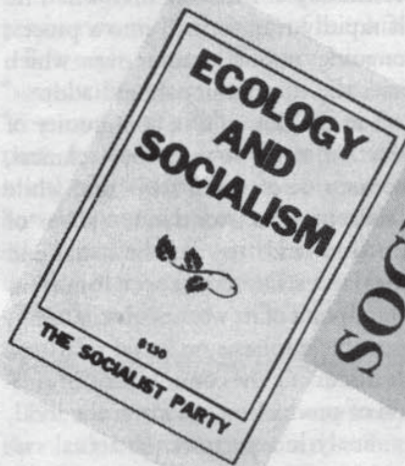
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**Capitalism, even with reforms, can not function in the interests of the working class.** Capitalism, by its very nature, requires continual "reforms"; yet reforms cannot alter the basic relationship of wage-labor and capital and would not be considered, to begin with, if their legislation would lead to disturbing this relationship. Reforms, in other words, are designed to make capitalism more palatable to the working class by holding out the false hope of an improvement in their condition. To whatever extent they afford improvement, reforms benefit the capitalist class, not the working class.

**To establish socialism the working class must first gain control of the powers of government through their political organization.** It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power gives control of the main avenues of education and propaganda—either directly or indirectly—and of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush ill-conceived working class attempts at violent opposition. The one way it is possible in a highly developed capitalism to oust the capitalist class from its ownership and control over the means of production and distribution is to first strip it of its control over the state.

Once this is accomplished the state will be converted from a government over people to an administration of community affairs (both locally and on a world scale). The World Socialist Party of the United States advocates the ballot, and no other method, as a means of abolishing capitalism.

**Members of the World Socialist Party do not support—either directly or indirectly—members of any other political party.** It is always possible, even if difficult in some instances, to

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vote for world socialism by writing in the name of the Party and a member for a particular legislative office. Our main task, however, is to make socialists and not to advocate use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither individual "great" personalities nor "revolutionary vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class "must be the work of the working class itself." Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administrators to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**There is an irreconcilable conflict between scientific socialism and religion.** Socialists reject religion for two main reasons:

- Religion divides the universe into spiritual and physical realms, and all religions offer their adherents relief from their earthly problems through some form of appeal to the spiritual. Socialists see the cause of the problems that wrack human society as material and political. We see the solution as one involving material and political, not spiritual, means.

- Religions ally themselves with the institutions of class society. Particular religious organizations and leaders may, and frequently do, rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment and worse for their efforts. But they seek their solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish. One cannot understand the development of social evolution by resorting to religious ideas.

**The system of society formerly in effect in Russia, and still in effect in China and other so-called socialist or communist countries, is state capitalism.** Goods and services, in those countries, as in avowedly capitalist lands, were always produced for sale on a market with a view to profit and not, primarily, for use. The placing of industry under the control of the state in no way alters the basic relationships of wage labor and capital. The working class remains a class of wage slaves. The class that controls the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value eating class.

**Trade unionism is the means by which wage workers organize to "bargain collectively" so that they might sell their labor power at the best possible price and try to improve working conditions.** The unorganized have no economic weapon with which to resist the attempts of capital to beat down their standards. But unions must work within the framework of capitalism. They are useful, then, to but a limited extent. They can do nothing toward lessening unemployment, for example.

In fact, they encourage employers to introduce more efficient methods in order to overcome added costs of higher wages and thereby hasten and increase unemployment. More and more the tendency of industry is toward a greater mass of production with fewer employees. Unions must, by their very nature, encourage such development although they are also known, occasionally, to resist this natural trend through what employers like to call "featherbedding." As Marx put it: instead of the conservative motto, "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," the workers ought to inscribe upon their banner "abolition of the wages system." Ø



*Membership in the World Socialist Party of the United States requires an understanding of and agreement with what we consider to be the basics of scientific socialism. We have always been convinced that a worldwide system based upon production for use, rather than for sale on a market, requires that a majority of the population be socialist in attitude. Events since the establishment of the World Socialist Movement have, we maintain, proven the validity of this judgment. If you are in general agreement with these statements, we invite you to join our organization.*

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# THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## object

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

## declaration of principles

### The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

**THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.**



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treat opposing "interests" as a threat and to divide themselves accordingly into antithetical classes. The quality of universality that needs to apply to social science for it to function is fundamentally hobbled, thereby severely inhibiting the rigor with which those few specialists who exercise the occupation can reason. Ideas representing mutually conflicting interests add another level of complexity to the picture by stating those interests as competing universalities.

Social scientists, furthermore, cannot conduct laboratory experiments: they are always necessarily part of the experiment themselves. How, therefore, can we evaluate social experience scientifically, if we simply work with the restrictions and conditions of natural science? Obviously, only an equivalent kind of methodology will work. Since, however, ordinary kinds of social interaction require the use of judgment at every level by non-specialized generalists, we would need to transform the earth's entire population into a gigantic peer group to satisfy the conditions set forth by Kuhn.

### Scientists as generalists

How could such a "peer group" function? When the "scientific community" is society, the specialist cannot "apply" theories at the level of society as a whole. Instead, a world community of generalists has to concern itself with problems of social science, and only to the extent that these are societal problems. To the extent these same generalists interest themselves in social questions that are not problem-solving in character, they step out of their roles as scientists.

Following Kuhn, we can translate the distinction between socialism as a point of view, a movement and a system of production into a distinction between what he calls a "circular argument" designed to persuade; an as yet very small "community" of enlightened, emancipated workers; and a scientifically designed set of institutions that

actually produce the results promised by the first two. Obviously, bridging the gap will depend on a sufficiently large majority of workers working scientifically with the instruments of production — the laboratory equipment needed to conduct the "experiments" that articulate the paradigm's capacity for defining "puzzles" to solve.

For the "community" of workers to become *the community* requires a rewiring of their thought patterns above the sub-social (economic) level, where people's ideas mingle with and influence their habits. This rewiring is necessary to build human thought into the system of production; without it, the instruments of production do not become the equipment by means of which the community practices social science.

**Following Kuhn, we can translate the distinction between socialism as a point of view, a movement and a system of production into a distinction between what he calls a "circular argument" designed to persuade; an as yet very small "community" of enlightened, emancipated workers; and a scientifically designed set of institutions that actually produce the results promised by the first two.**

This does not, however, confer on economics as we know it, or on political economy in its previous incarnation, the status of a science in its own right. Emancipated workers converting themselves into an emancipated society carrying on an emancipated production (where wealth is produced for the use of human beings rather than for the profit of capitalists) will not require so extensive a body of theoretical concepts as today's economists, whose job in no small part involves justifying the diversion of the value of the wealth produced to enlarging the rate of profit (and specifically, justifying the

wage rates set up to ensure this outcome). Marketing concepts and concepts relating to exchange of goods and services are superfluous from the standpoint of the "use" paradigm.

As both a mode of production and a set of theoretical propositions to be implemented practically, capitalism represents bad social science. The task of social scientists (every living person) is to set it aside for a mode of organizing society (producing and distributing wealth) that puts the administration of society on a scientific (democratic) basis. With modern communications technology, people can at last run the world democratically.

### A failure to communicate

Early attempts at democratic revolutions foundered for lack of ability to spread quickly around the world, given the paralyzing inadequacy of communications on a worldwide scale; Marx and Engels called them "utopian" for this and related reasons. Capitalism as a system is "fully developed" at each stage of its evolution, but one can easily understand how, reviewing the Anabaptist and Digger movements from the vantage point of 19th-century industrialism, Marx and Engels might very well have concluded these

early, aborted revolutions never stood a chance. Overwhelming difficulties of communication still hobbled human consciousness as late as the last century. Marx and Engels did not manufacture any "laws" asserting the impossibility of revolution before the advent of industrial capitalism, as Stratman claims. (In fact, he ignores altogether the importance of communication as a problem.)

Given that economic relations are sub-social in character, economic measurements cannot be independently quantitative, but only relative to the social interrelationships they refer to. The only valid quantitative approach to measuring economic relations can be relative to the social requirements that give rise to them. This was in fact Marx's special

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contribution to social theory, the ability to track quantitative potential at the social level to its economic realization at the sub-social level. Hence his "laws of motion" of capitalist production must be considered qualitative — not quantitative — in character.

Considerations of quantity in social science generally have to give way to those of quality. A revolution in the qualitative assessment of social data could therefore not be restricted to a group of professional researchers, since holistic criteria require unrestricted input from society as a whole. So Kuhn's "scientific revolution," translated for social science, does indeed become Stratman's "democratic revolution."

### Is economy a science?

Although political economy was characterized by the "constant reiteration of fundamentals," in the 19th century, the material did not permit the design of "special equipment for the task" (Kuhn, p. 18), which means that the current discipline of economics represents only a "revolution" by mimicry; the semblance of paradigm transition is bogus, since the "inexactness" of economic research is only arguably based on laboratory-like methods. Beyond this, however, the interdependence of all social knowledge makes it impossible for any one social discipline to detach itself from the field as a whole. The ambition of economics to do just that — in contrast to Marx's socially grounded methodology, which relativized the insights of political economy to the study of society as a whole — makes the whole connection between "economics" and economic (social) science a spurious one. Modern economics remains but a glorified version of early political economy on the question of science — and its traditional tight dependency on the interests of investors of capital renders each advance more suspect.

Though neither Marx nor anyone else might qualify (yet) as the creator of a paradigm in Kuhn's sense, he seems to have come closer than most other social thinkers, going by the extent to which the insights of historical materialism can be

found, lurking unannounced in many cases, in the underlying assumptions of a wide variety of social writers and theorists. Kuhn himself, in defining scientific revolutions — the way in which scientific knowledge is acquired — as a function of occupation, of the history of professional activity, is demonstrating an implicit acceptance of historical materialism, in this context, that goes well beyond simple acknowledgment. He is basing his whole account of scientific development on it and in the process adopting what any Marxist would recognize as a materialistic slant.

**Kuhn's concept of "paradigm" relies heavily on the notion of community — community achieved on the basis of a commonly understood and accepted methodology. Society has yet to reach this point; reaching it will mean the fusion of political and scientific revolution on a global scale.**

If social science has consequently not yielded its "first paradigm" so far, that is because the real scientists — those people in society at large who man the "laboratories" of work and production are not able to direct the course of "normal scientific" development. Production — and work in general — is still a "problem" because it remains in the hands of a pre-scientific elite, the capitalist class. Everyday work (in an industrial context) as "normal science" will require the reorganization of wealth production and distribution ("distribution" being a general term that accounts for the bulk of non-productive work) by the producers and distributors. This would constitute a scientific (democratic) or socialist revolution, in that the limited "normal science" of production would achieve paradigm status by virtue of a change of consciousness on the part of the producers (Stratman's "values"). This putting of labor on a social-scientific basis would also, through the ending of the pre-scientific elite's control over wealth produc-

tion, put away the "problem of scarcity" inflicted on the pre-paradigm majority.

People cannot treat each other as objects for manipulating — which raises the knotty methodological problem of how scientific theory can emerge from the mutual interaction of subjects. What can constitute a social equivalent for laboratory experimentation on objects? Whatever form the answer takes, the restriction of research to a relatively small number of professional specialists does not function satisfactorily as a framework for studying the complexity of human social relations, even though this kind of arrangement has proven efficacious for the study of (non-human) nature. Since the purpose of experiments in "normal science" is to carry out highly structured, specific and practical activities "applying" an accepted paradigm, the "laboratories" of social investigation have to be reconstructed as abstractions: each discipline is a type of laboratory abstracting its specific kind of social information from the undifferentiated welter of empirical data.

Because professionalism in a pre-paradigm period like ours cannot carry the full weight of scientific knowledge (owing to the restriction on the numbers of social science practitioners), the ability to know "with precision" what an as-yet unestablished paradigm should lead us to expect cannot get beyond the level of intuitive reasoning. And since "anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm" (Kuhn, p. 65), social scientists are limited, in the present period, to projecting different logical conceptualizations of "normal science" and "anomaly." What makes social science different from natural science is the much greater importance of many-sided communication for all aspects of social science.

### The social-science paradigm

To get the paradigm, however, is a little more difficult, because it must transcend the specialties: the nature of a paradigm, for social science, involves a more complex interrelating of investigative methods than does a paradigm in natural science. For this reason, the maximum input from

society at large is necessary, so that the paradigm that emerges will be sufficiently general to achieve a consensus.

Kuhn's notion of a paradigm requires, in addition, a whole establishment with an official economic standing — implying a degree of social acceptance Marxism simply never enjoyed. While the Soviet Union may have seemed an exception, it did not become the case throughout most of capitalism; but most importantly, even in the “socialist fatherland,” from as far back as the Kronstadt Revolt, the workers ceased to take seriously the régime's “Marxism” (to say nothing of its claims to be “socialist”). The real social scientists of Russia — its worker and peasant populations — were denied input into the alleged paradigm and also the opportunity to practice. Its politically controversial character beyond the frontiers of the Leninist states subjected it to a degree of marginality not inflicted on the practitioners of “normal science.”

### Marxism and the “first paradigm”

This exclusion on the part of official society, guided by the ruling capitalist class, could not have corresponded for its part to one “vision” or (not the same thing) “paradigm” or “model” competing with another. As we can gather from the mere persistence of a profit-eating state-capitalist class, the materialist conception of history never replaced political economy as the preferred methodology of the “Communist” Party (and certainly not of the traditional capitalists — though, as I have already stated, this is not the level on which to look for paradigm change.) Nor did Marx's methodology replace capitalism, a *system of production for profit* — whose rival is not Marxism but a system of production for use. Finally, as Kuhn suggests, the mark of a paradigm is its economically stable recognition, the concomitant of a science's “maturity.”

We have not reached the point where historical materialism is more than a strong competitor among a number of “alternate constructions.” The ability of the capitalist class to marginalize Marxism politically and thus deny it the necessary economic stability indicates symptomatically Marxism's failure to meet the

minimum terms of a Kuhnian paradigm. It may be the best effort made to date, but the Marxian analysis of society has yet to establish a “first paradigm” — upon which social scientists are in general agreement — for social science as a whole. Assuming that it does, a scientific-political revolution will have to occur with it, installing ordinary working people as the scientific “peer group” making the decisions (democratically) about how to run society, conferring on themselves, through the criterion of production for use, the economic stability necessary for this.

Kuhn's scientific revolutions represent a series of moments when scientists rethink systems of general relations applied to traditionally accepted data sets (“fundamentals”). A scientific revolution creates the “first paradigm,” and once that happens, all subsequent evolution in a field occurs as a series of paradigm changes. These shifts affect all thinking in the field, because the first paradigm turns that field into a community, a whole.

Before the revolution, thinking and problem-solving were in the hands of individuals and were pre-scientific in the sense that the outcome of their investigations was not what today we take to be science. It is only *after* that first establishment (which Kuhn later qualifies as more of a piecemeal process) that all subsequent change takes the form of shifting from one paradigm to another. Kuhn's concept of “paradigm” relies heavily on the notion of community — community achieved on the basis of a commonly understood and accepted methodology. Society has yet to reach this point; reaching it will mean the fusion of political and scientific revolution on a global scale.

### Change of consciousness

Paradigm change is thus more than simply intuitive reorganization of interpretation. The “paradigm change” Kuhn describes translates into the “change of consciousness” posited by socialists as a prerequisite for eliminating capital and abolishing wages. This change is by itself the key factor in making the revolution. Of course, changes of consciousness do not materialize out of thin air, and Kuhn's “crisis” and “anomalies” find their equiva-

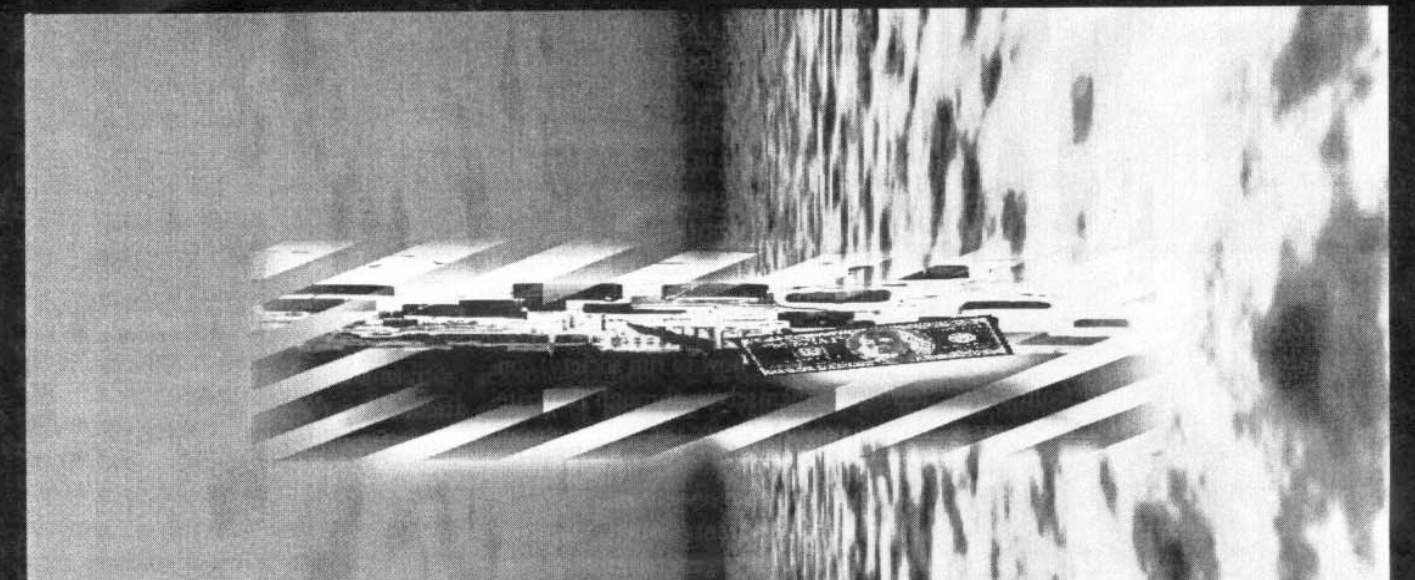
lent in the same kinds of problems in the system of wealth production. The material basis for the revolutionary change of consciousness, in other words, is the way humans operate the capitalist economy: the economy (*not* their economics) is their laboratory, their equipment, their methods.

### The paradigm is the revolution

Stratman makes a serious mistake in discounting the importance of the economic factor, believing as he does that Marx placed a crippling emphasis on material conditions. This blinds Stratman to the fact that the “paradigm change” is itself the revolution, not a factor separate from it. A “new paradigm” is precisely the outcome — the end rather than the means. What he comes up with short of that will not have the character of a paradigm; nor is his critique of Marx at paradigm level as he imagines. The role of consciousness is intimately bound up with the use people make of their economic relations with each other. And since this is generically true of human society, any “vision of a new society” that aspires to be people-driven cannot safely ignore this practical and theoretical limit. Failure to take it into account will only provide the basis for new élitist adventures, not a new basis of human society, a “different world” to work in (Kuhn, p. 111).

A system of wealth production is itself, from the perspective of social science, a paradigm — not merely the body of propositions that articulate it. World socialism does not have an analysis of capitalism conceptually separated from the production of wealth, as Stratman does. This first paradigm can only be implemented at the point of revolution, which is the point at which people “convert” to the idea that they are the social scientists; Stratman goes along with conventional reasoning in seeing paradigmatic possibilities (the occurrences of revolution) in a pre-revolutionary context — and also in limiting the practitioners of social science to professional specialists. This is what allows him to fashion Marx into a “scientist of revolution” and Lenin into a Marxist.

—Ron Elbert



Social science, democracy and "seeing with new eyes"

# So you wanna be a paradigm!

*Given author David Stratman's frequently repeated assertion that he has devised a new paradigm that boldly goes where no Marxo-capitalist has gone before, some questioning of sources is in order. While Stratman has attempted an ambitious, even a brilliant, stroke, closer examination of one of his major sources, Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,\* raises serious questions. True, Marxists are given their last cigarette and a chance to expound their obsolete views before Stratman's new paradigm dispatches them to the grave of history, but it is all for nothing: the bullets are blanks. Neither Marx nor capital ever established a paradigm to begin with. What follows is an independent attempt, based on Kuhn's book, to explain why.*

As Kuhn sees it, paradigm changes are the stuff of scientific revolutions, which result from the mutual collisions between incompatible models of scientific investigation. A first paradigm establishes a field's definitive model, narrowing that field's legitimate boundaries of problem-solving through the defeat of various contending pre-professional schools of thought, each one attempting to resolve a crisis of theory in the discipline. The paradigm thus legitimized within the newly formed professional community serves as a methodological foundation for focusing on the most promising questions to ask.

The newly anointed professionals throw themselves into solving puzzles derived from the newly unified set of questions, a phase of the cycle Kuhn terms "normal science." Eventually, however, normal science, which works so well precisely because it can concentrate on very narrowly defined issues, boxes itself into a new crisis, to which the scientific community again responds by raising insurgencies against the ruling paradigm; one of the rebel conceptions at length succeeds in gaining acceptance or endorsement by the majority of scientists in the field. Its achieving paradigm status marks the occurrence of another scientific revolution.

This has a convincing sound when applied to the natural sciences. How much, however, does Kuhn's notion of "normal science" apply to social science? The clear lines grow fuzzy. The term "revolution" implies an exercise of political judgment, so that overturning a paradigm involves the judgment of scientists. Kuhn links this overturning inextricably to professional activity. Trained specialists in the natural sciences float novel and "unprecedented" assumptions past each other, trying to cope with the crisis of an accepted model, and ultimately a better, but incompatible, model emerges out of the period of confrontations.

That social science and democracy should be indispensable complements to each other describes something all forms of class-divided society implicitly reject — the attribution of decision-making and evaluative capabilities to each individual making up the social community. Under existing conditions, in other words, the practice of social science finds itself too narrowly restricted to allow for very much of the parity that would be required to apply the concept of "scientific revolution" to it. In light of this, intuitive approximation exercised by narrow strata of professionals specialized by occupation is the best social science can offer.

Further reductions of applicability emerge when to the exclusion of the majority from decision-making we add the repercussions of parsing human intelligence by class or economic interests. Not only do a relative handful arrogate the right to decide to themselves, but the effects of exclusion are existential in their impact: people who are privileged only to make small decisions rearrange the exercise of their native human intelligence to conform energetically with the reduced scope allowed them. The "false consciousness" that goes with economic "interests" causes socially conditioned individuals to

\* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1970).

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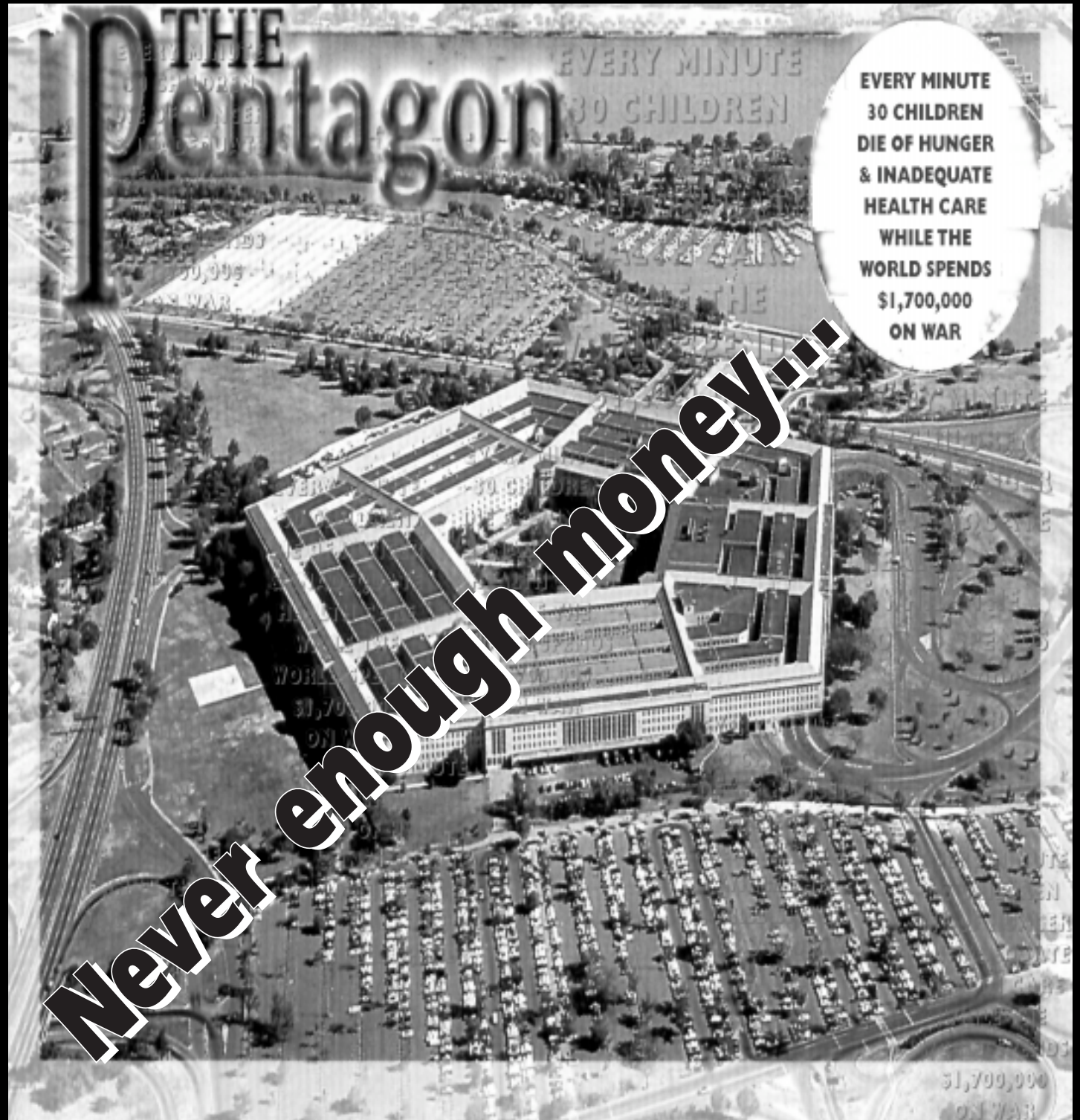


# world socialist review

No. 16 • Summer 2001 • \$2.00



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states



**INSIDE:** socialism and religion • making things go • what is crime? • never enough money • economics of socialism • musings • family values

# Socialism and religion

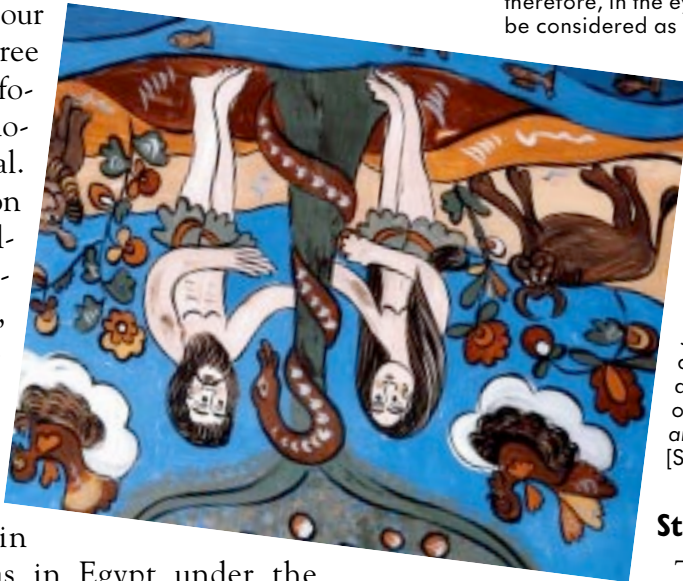
Scientific socialism rejects the delusive concepts that make up religion. This does not mean that socialism is committed to any fanatically narrow conceptions of rationality such as characterized some nineteenth-century materialisms. It means that socialism is opposed to superstition in any and all forms. Socialists see human beings as fully capable of shaping human life, subject only to the limitations posed by the material world.

The reason for our opposition has three principal points of focus, historical, philosophical, and social. Historically, religion has always been allied with the authority of the state, and the state has always been the instrument of power of a ruling class. The role of priestly classes in

antiquity, such as in Egypt under the pharaohs, is not particularly germane to a discussion of the alternative to capitalism, but if we consider the institutions of religion at the time of the first development of capitalism the case is plain enough. From the Middle Ages even up to the nineteenth century the Church commanded real political power, and it played a role in the control of territories. The Church could dictate what human behavior was allowable and what human ideas were allowable, and worked hand in glove with political rulers in support of such state-like political forms as then existed. In Europe the Church proclaimed an ostensible ethic that posited certain obligations of the powerful toward the powerless, of the rich toward the poor, but there was never any means by which this ethic could be enforced. As capitalism began to develop, even this ethic went by the board, and religious doctrine during and after the Reformation was more and more shaped to match the ethics and the needs of the new economic forces. Organized religion, particularly certain forms of Protestantism (for example, Calvinism and, later, Methodism), quickly developed such doctrines as the divine obligation of men to become rich — a notion that both grew out of and grew up in

support of the developing capitalism of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries — in other words, lent “religious” support to the material strivings of this new class of go-getters. A good example of this is an incident of some commercial warfare in India during the eighteenth century:

The incident [the “squalid Ruhela war” staged by the English India Company in 1774] raised one significant question: by what moral right did the Company conquer lands in India? The evidence strongly suggested that the Ruhela state was orderly and flourishing and, therefore, in the eyes of eighteenth-century Englishmen, deserved to be considered as civilized. Moreover, its inhabitants were fulfilling, unknowingly of course, the will of God, who had ordained that the fruits and treasures of the earth belonged naturally to those who used them to the best advantage. Post-Reformation theology had provided a mandate for European expansion in America and Africa where, it was alleged, native populations had ignored or neglected what God had provided. Amerindians and Negroes could be evicted from their lands by interlopers who had the will and capacity to develop them. The law of man concurred with that of God: at the time of the Ruhela war Captain James Cook was cruising in the Pacific armed with a ruling of Justice Sir William Blackstone, who had declared that Australia was ‘terra nullius, a land owned (as yet) by no one. (From *Raj: The making and unmaking of British India*, by Lawrence James [St Martin’s Press, 1997])



## Stations, please!

The old ethic concerning obligations toward the poor of course dropped by the wayside, and then as now the moneyed class resisted all attempts to impose on them any social obligations beyond their own success and their families’ comfort.

Perhaps even more than in the Middle Ages, religion became a vigorous defender of class society, and by the eighteenth century, attempts to “rise above your class” (except by becoming a proper capitalist) were viewed with intense moral opprobrium by the religious institutions of the day. Catholicism and Protestantism alike preached against the evil of evading, or complaining about, the “station” to which God had “appointed” you. Thus, by the nineteenth century, there was good reason for working people to see religion as one great enemy of their welfare and of their attempts to better their lot by collective action. The brutal efforts of the state to keep working people in subjection (membership in the equivalent of unions could be punished by hanging in the eighteenth century) found ready support in the organized religions of the day and still do, in places like South and Central America. In our own times we had the example of Vietnamese Catholicism aiding and abetting the dictatorial state of South Vietnam; in

Israel and various Arab countries strong forces are at work attempting to make religion an integral part of state power.

It stands to reason, therefore, that socialists learned to look upon religion with a hostile eye. A long history of abuse, oppression and betrayal lies behind that hostility.

Socialists are opposed to religion on philosophical grounds as well. Scientific socialism developed during a great upsurge of philosophical controversy in the nineteenth century, when the doctrines of materialism, both naive and sophisticated, came to challenge the irrational principles of revealed religion. Scientific socialists are materialists, that is, they hold that human history has been shaped not by supernatural forces, not by gods endowed with miraculous powers, but by material causes that can be analyzed, traced, accounted for, and to some extent controlled. They see all attempts to explain human history, human institutions, and for that matter human life by an appeal to divine, mystical, or supernatural intervention as doomed to incoherence and futility. Their position, in part, is that while no “god” ever invented a human being, human beings have invented all sorts of gods — in other words, religion puts the cart before the horse.

### **Rational and real understanding**

The distinction between supernatural and material explanations of phenomena is crucial for socialists, because it is tantamount to a distinction between, on the one hand, seeking for rational understanding and rational control of human history, and on the other, throwing up one’s hands in the face of divine mystery and some mysteriously designed “destiny” beyond any rational explanation. In other words, socialists feel that belief in what they regard as the illusions of religion stands in the way of any real understanding of the world. All the prayers in the world will not grow a blade of grass, but human rationality can and has produced abundance. No mystical ritual will ever prevent a flood, but rational land use can and has. The incoherence and confusion that can be sown by religious belief is grimly illustrated by the fact that while the Allied Powers in the first World War were calling on “God” for aid in the mighty struggle, the belt buckles of German soldiers bore the

motto, *Gott Mit Uns* (God is with us). No god caused the slaughter of tens of thousands of men at Passchendaele, but the misguided belief in one certainly contributed its shameful share.

**Humans are seen as unclean by nature and powerless to better themselves without the help of some divine being.**

The imposition of a religious sanction by all sides in most wars (and not just modern ones) is connected to the third heading under which we can discuss the socialist hostility to religion, and that is the baleful social effects of religion. Unquestionably implicit in some of the facts already mentioned is the power of religious belief and religious practices as forms of social control. Such fairly recent events as the Church’s silencing of

activist priests who were siding with oppressed communities in Central and South America and the current Pope’s blathering about the “terrible plague” of abortion while maintaining a politic silence on issues like worldwide hunger and poverty simply carry on religion’s long history of siding with the status quo and keeping people’s attention diverted from their real needs.

### **Teach us to sit still**

The rhetoric and the principles of religion are rife with proclamations of human unworthiness and helplessness, and full of exhortations of humility and acceptance of one’s lot. One of the core messages of

Christianity figures in a sanctimonious passage in T S Eliot’s famous poem “The Waste Land” — “Teach us to sit still,” in other words let us not be agitated, by oppression, by want, by injustice.

Christ’s own advice was similar — “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and render unto God the things that are God’s.” Don’t meddle with what may be being done to your actual life — leave things to the hand of God and don’t make waves. This tranquil passivity has long been a major recommendation of religion.

The rhetoric, and consequently the teachings, of religion are designed to inculcate concepts of human unworthiness and powerlessness. All have sinned and



all fall short of the glory of God, and “the sins of the father shall be visited on the sons.” Under the aegis of religion, humans are seen as unclean by nature and powerless to better themselves without the help of some divine being.

Furthermore, most devotional religions focus on the “salvation” or “purification” of individual persons. Asian Buddhism similarly focuses on the “illumination” of disparate individuals and encourages its practitioners to

turn away from the “temptations” and the problems of the world around them. All this harmonizes only too well with the divisiveness fostered by the phony “individualism” pushed by the fans of capitalism. The concept that the world can never improve until individual persons cleanse their consciences, so popular among Romantic and Victorian writers, is a clear echo of the preoccupations of western religions. (Remember when the automobile manufacturers were crying that legislation to make cars safe would be futile and unfair, and that the only “solution” would be to focus on the individual drivers? Same thing.)

In the end, then, when religion looks at the actual world at all, it promotes ideas of social cohesion only for the preservation of the status quo, and it ignores or even condemns collective efforts toward human betterment. Both western

and non-western religions, whether the Christianity of the west, the animist religions in parts of Africa, or the savage religions of ancient Mexico, have placed the “needs” and “powers” of the “gods” above the needs and powers of mankind. Religious hierarchies side with

the ideology of the ruling class of the moment, and offer explanations of human history that are mere fables.

Socialists, with their perception that society is organized around different classes, maintain that radical human betterment can come only as collective betterment, and that the “salvation” of single individuals is an illusory distraction. Socialists

maintain that the illusion that this “salvation” is to be won by fealty to some mythical divine force is just that, an illusion. They also reject the western religious concept that mankind is by nature evil and doomed because of some legendary mankind-damning crime. Socialists maintain that “human nature” is shaped by the material forces of history. The socialist position is an empowering concept that frees people from nonsensical, disabling concepts of universal unworthiness on the one hand and universal helplessness on the other.

— Thomas Jackson

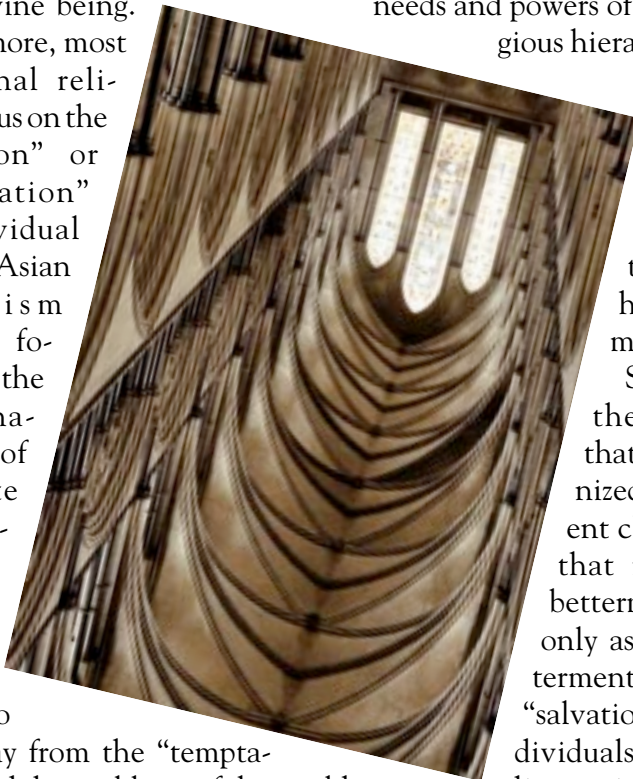
**ALL PARTY  
EVENTS ARE OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC**

# Making Things Go

When we learn as children that getting money allows us to do things (without necessarily understanding the obligatory character of it), that realization generates an expectation that is lifelong in its durability. One of childhood’s many lessons, in a society that runs on buying and selling, is that getting money makes things happen. People routinely rely on this institutional or systemic paradigm and pass the information on, in the process, to each subsequent generation, which incorporates it behaviorally without question as a fundamental assumption.

When a four-year-old expresses a relationship between “going to the place where the monkeys are” and “getting some money,” he or she has learned to formulate — even before understanding the somewhat abstract term, “zoo” — the assumption that getting money makes things go. Contradicting that assumption years later — stating that people can run society without buying and selling (or in general trading) anything — will produce a “gut” reaction tantamount to, “You mean *none* of my peers and my elders knew what they were talking about? Go fish!” The childhood lesson has acquired the force of a belief or conviction.

That this belief is expectation-driven thus implies, on the one hand, that it constitutes a popular, behaviorist version of a system paradigm (Capitalism Works) and, on the other hand, that the popular (i.e., working-class) acceptance of capitalism rests on an assumption dating back to childhood. People will use



this assumption relentlessly in pursuit of some kind of advantage or other, even when the facts might counsel otherwise. In this case facts become awkward (or even preposterous) counter-instances, and people ignore or trivialize them because they fail to mesh with the system paradigm (in the version they understand it) that is generic to whichever class has offspring to raise. We might even call this the “generic” version of the system paradigm (“getting money makes things go”).

Nothing said thus far is in itself socialist. A socialist implication turns on some element of reasoning that implies, explicitly or implicitly, the abolition of the wages system (and beyond that, common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production); which in turn rests on the assumption that we can operate society efficiently on the basis of the rule, “From each according to ability and to each according to need” (without in other words subordinating human social interactions to the precondition of making transactions in the marketplace).

From the socialist perspective, the question is, How does the “capitalist assumption’s” failure to live up to expectations translate into the perception that abolishing the wages system on which it rests will “make things go?” How does a crisis of confidence in capitalism become a new consensus that production for use is socially functional for purposes of satisfying everyone’s assumed needs (the basis for assuming them originating with the individuals them-

selves), where capitalism’s production for exchange has manifestly failed to deliver the goods? For the real problem is that understanding the system doesn’t work in random instances does not mean understanding it cannot work. To make that connection, people need to have a sense or model of what does work.

**The real problem is that understanding that the system doesn’t work in random instances does not mean understanding it cannot work.**

The question for socialists therefore remains standing. Its resolution will come at the same level as the childhood lesson: when people begin to realize they can make things go without depending on capital. They might specifically find themselves, for instance, having to make capitalism work in some acceptable way but learning the hard way they cannot — by investing the capital themselves. At that point the criterion of production for use finds its natural application, and it enters the system’s agenda as a strategic contender.

— Ron Elbert

#### Guest Editorial

## What is crime?

*One of the pillars of capitalism is its concept of “crime.” Civilization, the class-divided distortion of human social communities, has always needed to find ways to rationalize the advantages cultivated by the rich and to keep the poor in their place. Capitalism brings a new tone of elegance to this: redefining crime as unreasonable behavior rooted in a weak and passive “human nature,” its spokesmen set Capital on Nature’s throne, rendering it neutral and incapable of committing crimes against society. The following essay is reprinted from the May 1997 issue of the Coalition for Prisoners’ Rights Newsletter; as a critique of the endemic struggle between the capitalist and working classes, it is very well put. (For further information, contact them at Box 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1911.)*

### Why are we writing about workers as well as prisoners?

One reason is that the same people are sometimes workers and sometimes prisoners. There is no unbroken line between the two groups. Another reason is that the same social and economic system exploits us — when we are prisoners and when we are workers. But the most important reason is that we have all been had when we were taught to think about crime.

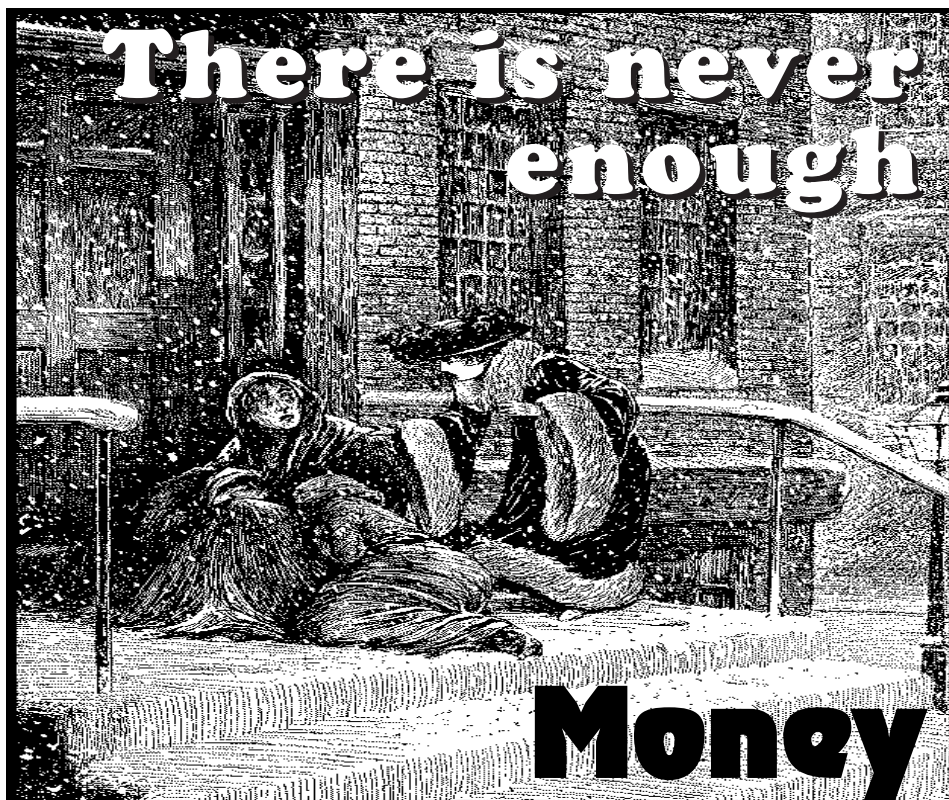
The Coalition for Prisoners’ Rights believes that crime is the bad, oppressive things people do to each other. The more people you hurt, the bigger criminal you are.

So the big criminals in our country are the people who are rich when others are poor, those who make profits from other people’s misery. The big criminals are the people who cripple us at our workplaces, control the manufacture of unsafe cars and other products, and send us to fight the people of other countries to make the world safe for their investments. The big criminals give us diseases through our food, air, medicine and water — cancer, black lung, birth defects.

Street crime is a very small part of all the crimes really committed each day. Even mobster crime is small in comparison to unemployment, homelessness, the bad food, education and medical care that hurts so many of us. Yet we have been taught to believe that street crime and organized crime are big enemies to us. And when we believe that, the real, big criminals are safe.

The Coalition believes that enormous changes are needed to rid ourselves of the system that results in the big crime in this country, and that workers and prisoners, the unemployed, the disabled, the retired — all poor, minority and working people — have to work together to stop the big crooks.

The big crooks — the owners and bureaucrats and politicians who protect their interests at our expenses — don’t have horns or fangs or shifty eyes, just like the people now in the pen don’t. Maybe they’re nice people, just trying to be comfortable like the rest of us. But the pursuit by these few of comfort and wealth and power means violence and oppression against the vast majority of us, and it’s more than a crying shame. It’s a crime. ◊



tic formulas sold to us at election times — reduce the spending from this military or space program and apply it to education, spend more or less on the environment and less or more on new highways, spend more on mental health prevention and education than on building additional state hospitals, and so on. Thus there is always the push by advocates of this or that reform for you to cough up money for it out of your wages, as though the burden for the problems generated by a fundamentally inequitable and exploitative social order should fall squarely upon the shoulders of that class that produces the wealth for the owning class, as though that were not enough of a favor for it.

**...or abolish its class foundation?**

**T**he entire premise of voting for political parties which aim to operate the capitalist system as effectively as possible (Democrats, Republicans, Liberals, Tories, Laborites, Greens, Social Democrats and those parties which have called themselves socialist or communist incorrectly to mean a society of state management of the economy) is that the problems which beset us are not an inevitable product of a society of haves and have-nots, but rather are the result of its mismanagement.

According to this logic, people starve because of the nature of the political regimes in which starvation is rampant, because those governments squander money on expensive military programs, or insufficient money is being taxed and/or redistributed. This is the outcome of the limited Great Man Theory of History you were taught in school or in college. Rather than questioning the basis of a society founded upon class division, upon production for sale rather than for need, upon the pri-

vate ownership of the means of producing wealth, you were taught that the problems generated by such a society are the outcomes of poor leaders running the country, of faulty economic tinkering, of outdated policies, and the like. Such thinking ultimately benefits the owning class, which perpetuates the myth in the media of effective versus incompetent politicians, of laws that require changing, of crises that are being well or poorly managed.

**Manage the economy...**

The very existence of a society of haves and have-nots is never in question. The fact that billions of people die of starvation or live in shoddy housing or wear substandard clothes in a society with the technological means to produce abundance while the class that lives off profit, rent and interest does so in utmost luxury is somehow rendered invisible in the argument of how best to manage the economy. Instead, the solutions to the problems generated by the capitalist system are reduced to simplis-

There is hardly a river in the world which the local population is not campaigning to protect, barely a species which it is not the subject of a drive to save. There are tens of thousands of charities to feed the hungry, support this youth group, modify this law for women or that one for children. What else is governmental policy or people's support for several among an almost infinite number of available and important causes but an absurd juggling of issues as well as a ludicrous balancing act of this capitalist problem against that one?

At no point in this political process does the question ever arise as to whether there exists enough money to fund these causes, or if there ever can be. Of course the basic assumption is that there is not. Hence the necessity for this aforementioned nauseating prioritizing of goals — each of which is equally essential. The abolition of the need for money is never entertained, for this radical and essential solution would also mean abolishing the class foundations of society, which governments exist to maintain. For those of us

who must work in order to survive, it would mean our liberation forever as a working class and as a human species from the miseries imposed upon us by a money society (such as war, starvation, poverty, mental illness, ecological devastation, and the daily stress imposed upon us by the wages system itself — from budgeting for essentials to the hierarchical nature of the workplace).

But why precisely is there not enough money to go around? For this, one would have to examine what money is. I have used the first few chapters of Karl Marx's monumental study of money, *Capital*, Volume One, but such basic relations are also described in traditional capitalist economics textbooks.

Money evolved out of more primitive exchanges, such as barter, in which producers needed to meet face to face to exchange commodities, things produced in order to sell them, of like value. Money is that commodity which reflects the values of all others. Originally, money itself took such forms as sheep or cloth, but metal coins won the day as the most efficient commodities since they could be precisely weighed, reproduced perfectly, and easily carried around. The value of all commodities is determined roughly by the amount of labor power embodied within them. The application of labor to raw materials is the inescapable source of wealth from which the capitalist economy may never flee, even while money is increasingly represented digitally in the modern age. Still, even in a digi-

tal form, the global sum of money is always roughly the value of all commodities in the world. In theory, all commodities may be turned back into money, as presumably most are once sold. Should governments attempt to print money in amounts greater than the value of commodities it represents, they will devalue the money, creating inflation.

### **Cold and brutal reality**

Money is the commodity that exists to reflect the value of the sum total of all other commodities. If the availability of world money always reflects the value of all commodities throughout the world marketplace, then states could only generate more money to meet needs (feed the hungry, clean the rivers) without inflating the economy by increasing

the amount of commodities. However, the amount of commodities is determined by the market itself, not by need but the ability to buy them with ready money (what capitalist economics calls "demand"). It is chilling to think that the amount of food, clothing, housing, and other consumer goods and services, is determined only by the amount of money chasing them, but this is the cold and brutal reality of the market economy.

There is also no escaping this reality. Even in state capitalist economies which falsely called themselves "socialist" or "communist" (for example, the old Iron Curtain countries, or modern day Cuba or China), government funding of farming or manufacture has not produced an

abundance of wealth for the working class in excess of the limited amount that its wages can procure. Just as in any other market economy, the vast majority of the population in those countries must work in order to survive, selling its energies to state enterprises rather than private concerns, but its wages still reflect the rough amount required to reproduce its class. Those wages are often lower than in the so-called First World, where centuries of unionized activity improved working conditions, training requirements, health benefits and the like, so considerably increasing the values deemed necessary to reproduce it. But wages in no country are so high as to swiftly elevate the non-owning class into the owning class, much as it does at times happen to the odd enterprising worker (if he or she began a successful company), or some lucky worker who won the lottery. (This is the American Dream, after all, which only a small handful will ever realize; for the rest, dreaming will be all it will achieve.)

### **Artificial scarcities**

People starve quite simply because they do not have the money to buy food (the rich in those countries where starvation is rampant fill their bellies very well, and food is often exported while the claim of underproduction or drought is being bandied about as the official explanation in the media). Housing is vastly inadequate for the majority of the population merely for lack of cash. There is absolutely no reason in this highly sophisticated technological era why any of our needs should go unfulfilled but for the limitations imposed by the market system. It is an economic system that produces artificial scarcities and waste on such a gigantic level that it holds back

**The abolition of the need for money is never entertained, for this radical and essential solution would also mean abolishing the class foundations of society, which governments exist to maintain.**

*Continued on next page*

progress for our species, relegating the vast majority of its people to second-class citizens who must spend their whole lives struggling to make a living (for themselves and more importantly for their employers who hired them).

Such an antiquated social system must be abolished and replaced by one in which the goal of production is to meet needs instead of for sale. When the means of production are in the hands of you and me, we will produce all goods and services with the sole aim of meeting our needs. We will thus no longer require money, since the goods produced will no longer be commodities. They will belong to all of us, and who today thinks of buying back his coat each morning before heading for work? The world's resources shared and democratically controlled by all humanity, we will voluntarily (instead of as today, coerced, by the imperatives of survival) exert our energies in all areas of production or distribution which appeal to us, freely, and take freely from the common store of wealth produced. This is what liberation from capital will mean — no more money, no wages, no buying or selling, no poverty, no nation-states so no more war, no bosses.

It is likely in such a society bereft of the immense waste produced in the market economy today (think of the millions of unemployed or starving workers or those murdered in wars, or the totally unproductive occupations which squander our resources such as banking, ticketing, selling, advertising, exchanging,

policing, militarizing, insuring, and the like), that we will each only need to work a day or two a week to sustain a highly abundant economy, although human nature being what it is, it is likely we will want to exert our creativity far more often than that. It is only in a society in which we are forced to work or

else face starvation that we develop fantasies or trends of laziness, not to mention the laziness of that class of employers we sustain in utmost luxury due

to our extraordinary generosity. Paul Lafargue extolled two centuries ago the worker's "right to be lazy" in the title of his socialist classic, in opposition to the conservative motto still supported by employers and unions alike: "The right to work."

### Money must go

So the next time you anticipate providing support to this campaign, charity or political cause or policy, bear in mind that the market

economy is not capable of producing sufficient money to actually fund more than a handful of those competing goals. Of course, even funding does not suggest realizing, and since the market economy is the cause of the problem, even a well-financed campaign is incapable of producing lasting solutions. The only effective solution would be to bring us into harmony with those goals, by the world's people achieving democratic ownership and control of the world's resources, and thereby transcending the scarcities imposed by the market system, realizing the abundance we are capable of today but which will only be possible in a nonmarket economy. When money goes, the problems caused by a lack of it will almost immediately go with it.

In conclusion, we urge you to stop campaigning for this or that cause within the context of the capitalist economy, since capitalism is only capable of producing a finite amount of money in relation to the finite value of goods and services that can be sold. Campaign instead for the abolition of the need for money, and for its replacement with an economic order in which meeting our needs is the only goal of production. Money once improved the means of exchange and with the advent of industrial capitalism ushered in an epoch of rapid scientific advance. Now it holds back the potential of such an advance. It is time humanity liberated itself from those economic limitations and entered into a higher phase of social and economic organization based on abundance instead of scarcity, and freedom instead of wage slavery. Join us. Be part of the solution. As another socialist classic economic analysis by Philoren a hundred years ago prophetically declared in its title, *Money Must Go*.

— Dr. Who

**It is time humanity entered into a higher phase of social and economic organization based on abundance instead of scarcity.**





# Is there “turnover” under production for use?

The concept of turnover is related to production for exchange, in particular to the production of surplus-value by wage-laborers. If society becomes the owner of the means of production, then what happens to surplus-labor and the production of surplus-value? Surplus-value is of course a form of exchange-value, the money-form of commodities produced by living labor in excess of its daily requirements. If society as a whole replaces the capitalist as the owner of the means of production, and therefore replaces him also as the employer of labor, then the mass of laborers — the entire population capable of working — becomes the employer of itself.

## No more 9 to 5!

Under capitalism the need to produce at a profit always requires that there be a greater supply of laborers than those actually employed. But who are those actually employed? They are those employed for as much as an entire day at a stretch, perhaps five, six or seven days in a row. If the employment structure is reorganized to permit access by the entire population, as its own employer, then a worker need put in no more time than that required to produce an average supply of necessities, and he/she can then step aside for his/her replacement; the actual time spent working will naturally vary from case to case. This will provide for the needs of society (not to mention any extras desired and found to be worth the effort) and at the same time leave

no one unable to contribute to the production necessary to meet them. (Industrial production is simply taken as the norm in this case.

In fact all kinds of activities, isolated as well as socialized, will be constantly flowing in and out of one another.)

Thus, each person will be putting in just as much work time as is socially required to keep the wheels of society turning, yet there will be no need to calculate the maintenance of some level of surplus-labor, since fluctuations can always be adjusted on the spot, as the case might require. The productive powers of technology, being by definition always in excess of individual needs, can eminently absorb the labor of a large number of mutually self-replacing individuals in the same location — and not only that, but one individual can also perform different kinds of labor in unrelated fields on the same day, during the same week, month or year, etc. Production for use is, above all else, enormously flexible.

## The abolition of turnovers

The question of accounting for all the labor, however, has to be considered. “Turnover of capital” applies to production for exchange; does it

continue under the form of “turnover of use-values” under production for use? Marx, in *Capital*, Vol II (Ch IX), points to the fact of qualitative differences in the turnover of various parts of fixed capital: “It is therefore necessary to reduce the specific turnovers of the various parts of fixed capital to a homogeneous

form of turnover, so that they will remain different only quantitatively, namely, according to duration of turnover” (p 184). The circuit of capital which he selects to reduce these specific turnovers is the circuit of money-capital. The question is, in a moneyless society, how will this reduction be accomplished? Or will there be any further need for it? In so far as it is capital

alone which is to be turned over, the abolition of capital will be also the abolition of turnovers. Is the concept of the “turnover,” in other words, socially necessary?

“We assume that value is always advanced in money,” he says, “even in the continuous process of production, where this money-form of value is only that of money of account.” The “value” is exchange-value. Since the a discontinuation of money is the cessation of commodity production (money being the universal commodity), it follows that the only remaining measure of turnover is the circuit of productive capital. But capital is money, and money (and wages) has now been abolished. There is no “productive capital.”

**One of the advantages of living without money, of having free access to the means of life, is that tedious calculations relating to purely formal needs (such as accounting) are reduced to a small fraction of what they were before.**

Pass this copy on to a friend!

Continued on next page

There are only use-values of production and use-values of consumption. Can there be a turnover of use-values which is qualitatively homogeneous?

One of the advantages of living without money, of having free access to the means of life, is that tedious calculations relating to purely formal needs (such as accounting) are reduced to a small fraction of what they were before. Counting money is essentially an exercise of the imagination, not an act of intelligence. (This is a well-known fact to the rich, especially in regard to taxation.) Accounting for the turnover of fixed capital, consequently, is ultimately but a highly refined exercise of the imagination. The amount of really useful mental exercise is quite small; and it is this which constitutes the only part of the notion of "turnover" that is socially necessary.

### Capitalism: Just too complicated

When fixed capital "turns over," the machinery is worn completely out and can be used no more. If, however, the machinery (the building and so on) is accounted for not as

capital but as a useful instrument of social production, its life is really the combined working hours multiplied by its total product over the entire period of its use. Whatever term future generations may devise for "fixed capital," it will turn on this concept. The qualitative uniformity of this measurement thus goes well beyond the machinery's own specific use-value, which cannot by itself be translated into the language of production as a whole. One will only have to compare the product-hours with the consumption to have a scientifically determined idea of the needs of the production system, a quantitative measure good for all kinds of products.

That is how a society of working owners of the means of production will regulate affairs at the factory, or at any other place where labor is performed. It will make all the sophisticated procedures of capitalist economics seem as cumbersome and unwieldy to our descendants as the suits of armor once worn by knights now seem to us.

— ROEL



## On Second Thought

From the *Western Socialist*

**"You people like to talk. You are a bunch of ivory-towered theorists! We need action, not talk." Essentially, this is the argument given us by one of our "activist" correspondents from New York.**

**Inasmuch as we have heard this line for many years it is instructive to note how our "activist" opponents have progressed. The results of their efforts are written in the totals of the 1964 Presidential Elections.**

**The Socialist Party of America, after 60 odd years of activity ran no candidates while many of their better-known leaders either supported President Johnson openly or remained mute.**

**The Socialist Labor Party, after some 75 years of activity polled, according to a report in the New York Times of 12/13/64, a total of 42,511 votes. Granting that hampering tactics on the part of election officials cut the true vote it could not have been by any significant number.**

**The Socialist Workers' Party, after some thirty years of "correct," "Leninist-Trotskyist" activity polled a total of 28,510 votes.**

**Allowing for all reasonable doubt in tallying accuracy, the "activists" could not have polled more than 2% of the total vote.**

**Moral: The so-called revolutionary activists offer nothing basically different than the avowedly capitalist parties. Has their activity not all proved worthless? We say, "yes." It still holds true that there can be no substitute for socialist education. Action is essential, but only socialist action will bring socialism. That's why we insist on making socialists first.**

— From our "Ivory Tower" No. 1, 1965

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## **WILL CAPITALISM COLLAPSE?**



The computer industry has made tremendous strides in the past 30 years. Most businesses have been forced to adopt some form or other of this "labor-saving device." I would hazard a guess that every job has been touched by the effects of this technology since its inception.

The computer is a machine and like the "steam engine" has propelled us forward and created what I would term a revolution in production methods, resulting in a drastic reduction in "labor time" contained in each commodity, reducing its "value" and consequently its "price."

remain on the shelves and the economy suffers. These are laws that cannot be changed and must eventually cause Capitalism's demise. The death-pangs will be long and painful, as Marx predicted. "Capital not only lives upon labor but like a Lord drags with it to the grave the corpses of its slaves."

It may be important to note that only about 23 percent of the work-force is engaged in the production of commodities. All the other industries fail to produce wealth: they sim-

filling them up again, but you do not produce values doing useless work. You can pay someone to slam-dunk a ball all year but he will not add to the GNP. He will get his share of the "wealth" in the commodity, but he will not take part in its production.

The amount of "wealth" available is controlled, firstly, by the amount of labor time, "socially necessary labor time" in the commodities, worldwide and by the market's ability to purchase. I repeat, "wealth" can be released only by the

It seems apparent that as the number of workers required to produce saleable commodities is reduced, the number of capitalists that the system can support must also be reduced. As Marx predicted, "Capital is concentrated into fewer hands."

## **WILL IT EXPLODE?**

I feel I must add to my foregoing observations, because I realize that there is a very important fact that must not be overlooked. Though the mass of commodities produced worldwide is the repository of wealth and is owned by the employers worldwide, I should bring to your attention that all expenses derived by the purchase of weapons of war, plus all expenses pertaining to maintenance of the Pentagons of the world and all their branches, must be classified as useless labor in a purely ethical sense. It is my belief that any weapon, whether it be a fighter plane or nuclear submarine is designed for the purpose of mass destruction of the human race and therefore must be classified as useless, in ethical terms.

I stress the word ethical because these weapons do fit the description of being a commodity, and like all commodities contain "socially necessary labor" and are a repository of



The total amount of commodities worldwide represents the total amount of wealth available for distribution. The wealth can only be released at the time of sale; till then the commodity is merely a repository of wealth. If the market cannot buy, goods

ply partake of the available wealth contained in the commodity. All professional sports, the military, advertising, most government departments, financial, sales, etc. do not produce one loaf of bread. You may work hard digging holes in the ground and

commodity's ultimate sale.

As was pointed out 150 years ago, the mode of production comes in conflict with the method of distribution. Recessions, slumps, depressions, crises, whatever you may want to call them, become more frequent and more violent.

*Continued on next page*

“wealth.” Furthermore, they are bought and sold like all commodities ... However, weapons of war are not commodities that the average worker is likely to buy, indeed are not part of the food, clothing and shelter that his wages represents. Only the employer would purchase weapons of war to protect his holdings world-wide and can be regarded as an expense for all those engaged in their purchase. You can guess who operates these weapons and dies in the process. “When will they ever learn...”

One could say that \$45,000.00 watches and million dollar rings are not aimed at the workers’ market either. Commodities have no morals or ethics; they are impervious to criticism and do what the economy dictates.

During times of relative peace, our lord and master closes down some of his military bases, temporarily, but only those that he feels he can do without. A penny saved is a penny earned, as they say.

We should consider the colossal waste attributed to this small minority of folks

who own all the unsold commodities of the world and the means for producing them. They use a good proportion of manpower and natural resources for the sole purpose of laying

claim to the largest share of profits.

The vast majority of folks act like a giant clone who barely has the energy or desire to move one foot ahead of the other: will this

giant awaken to his plight in time to save himself from oblivion?

At this point in time it seems unlikely from where I sit. What do you think?

— W.H.



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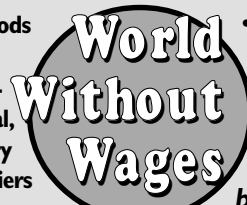
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## object

**The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.**

## declaration of principles

**The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:**

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

**THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.**



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

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## the world socialist movement

**THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**, Box 1266, N Richmond, 3121 Victoria

**BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN [AUSTRIA]**, Gussriegelstr. 50, A-1100 Vienna. JOURNAL: *Internationales Freies Wort* (\$1)

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**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (INDIA)**, 257 Baghajatin "E" Block (East), Calcutta 700 086 • wsp.india@worldsocialism.org

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This issue of the *World Socialist Review* was published at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

**To establish socialism, the working class throughout the must gain control of the powers of government through their political organizations.** It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power means control of the main avenues of "education" and propaganda, either directly or indirectly. It also means control of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush working-class attempts at violent opposition to the effects of capitalism. Moreover, the police and the armed forces are often used to combat workers during strikes and industrial disputes with employers. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state. Once this has been accomplished, the state will be converted from a coercive government over people to an administration over things and community affairs. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. Socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

**The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.** Indeed, by its very nature, capitalism requires continual reform. But reforms cannot alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Whatever the reformers' intentions, reforms function only to make capitalism run more smoothly and to make present-day society more palatable

to the working class by holding out false hopes of a fundamental change or radical improvement. In the long run, reforms benefit the owning, capitalist, class rather than the class that produces the wealth. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

**The World Socialist Party does not support, directly or indirectly, any political party other than our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement.** We can only oppose those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The form of society once in effect in the Soviet Union, and still more or less in effect in China and Cuba now, was not and is not socialism or communism.** It was a dictatorial, bureaucratic form of state capitalism. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are produced primarily for profit and not primarily for use. Nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alters the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

**Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities, their mental and physical energies, at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.** Workers without such organizations have no reliable economic weapons with which to resist the attempts of employers to beat down their

standards. But unions necessarily work within the framework of capitalism and are useful, therefore, only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between wage-labor and capital. They can only react to capital's fiat, particularly in the case of long-term issues like automation or unemployment. Every wage or salary increase, in fact, only spurs employers and investors to accelerate the replacement of humans by machines in the workplace. If anything, instead of foolishly selling themselves short by demanding "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," workers would do far better to follow Marx's advice and simply abolish employment altogether.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history.** While some concepts of spirituality, loosely defined, are not necessarily incompatible with that conception, socialists see the problems that wrack human society as material and political, and their solutions as likewise material and political, not supernatural. Particular religious leaders may rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment or worse for their efforts. But where this means that they seek solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish, they demonstrate a lack of understanding of the development of social evolution, and socialists cannot endorse their views.

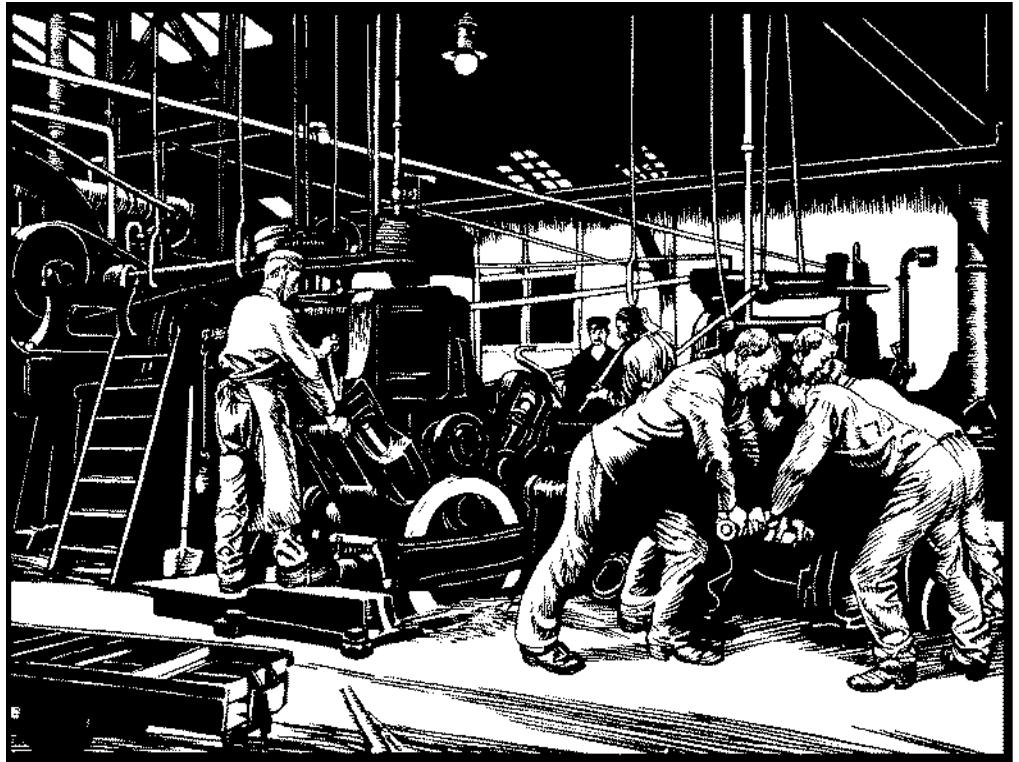
By the same token, membership in formally defined religious denominations or adherence to their beliefs can defeat people's best intentions unawares. The doctrines of organized religions traditionally locate the solution to society's problems in the individual's salvation and remain fundamentally indifferent to the fate of the human social community. At their most progressive they seek only to modify the existing institutions of a class-divided society, and at their most reactionary they openly obstruct even that desire. Such confusion over goals in an organization claiming to practice scientific socialism would sooner or later undermine its revolutionary character, for the tendency of such thinking is to confine discussion of capitalism's problems to the horizon of existing society, a blindness fatal to the socialist viewpoint. ∅

# Family Values

Even from a purely individual vantage point, an increasing sense of vulnerability ought to lead people to a heightened sense of solidarity. A more acute awareness of susceptibility, for example, to disease or injury, and of their repercussions, should draw people closer together in spite of social and economic pressures to move apart. A very human sense of family always survives intact within us, however the marketplace may lead us to drift away from each other economically.

In a larger and more basic social sense, all of us belong to the same family of human beings, and we all have an unquitting, underlying mutual acknowledgment of our common interests as a human community. In the pre-capitalist past, it is true, this acknowledgment generally limited itself, in a practical, economic sense, to culturally defined factors (e.g., the ancient — though not the modern — concept of nationhood). Because human (community) consciousness is limited by the technology of communication, individual “societies” usually stopped at the boundary of culture in their recognition of “natural” common interests, leaving any further extension of this acknowledgment to the unimplementable (pre-materialistic) spirituality of the philosophers.

While capitalism has finally brought this down to earth, making primary an insistence on the practical and economic side of human activity, it has also retained and even intensified the marketplace’s tendency to push people into antagonistic, sometimes warring, sub-territories. From these bases, they seek first their ego-centrally defined advantage and only afterwards *consider the advisability* of some limited “larger” liberality. It is precisely this selfish impulse, however, that exaggerates the deep human sense of vulnerability we all inevi-



tably feel when beset by adverse conditions.

Thanks to its emphasis on unifying economies globally, capitalism has brought the human tangle of separate cultures and “societies” into a single world focus, reinforced by late developments in communications technology. But it has also sharply increased our mutual antagonism toward each other’s interests as individuals in the marketplace. Never before has the spirit of community, anywhere in the world, been so beleaguered.

But a rising tide raises all boats. The much-ballyhooed “acceleration” of change that humanly speaking looks so insane also brings vast new developments quickly into human view. Trends once too big for ordinary people to grasp are now easily communicated to a much more highly integrated — and interactive — audience engendered by capital itself. Capitalism’s human majority is thus bigger, potentially better informed and more active than any subject class in world history.

The time has therefore come to render accounts for civilization’s long, dark history: a global family reunion is brewing after all these millennia. Just when the prospects for socialism have never looked worse, they have never looked better. ◊



# world socialist review

journal of the world socialist movement in the united states



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No. 17

Spring/Summer 2002

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## In this issue

**Do we have  
free will?**

**Top 20  
Nonmarket  
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**Democracy  
for the first time**

**Middle-class  
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**... and more ...**

# Who is responsible for this mess? (Do we have free will?)



When we say humans have free will, we are really saying that we are responsible and answerable for every thought and every feeling. Let us be in no doubt about this term. Free will means that we are culpable for everything we think, feel or do. It means that we only have thoughts and feelings that we want to have. Can any sane human being look at him or herself and say that? Free will is, like belief in a supernatural force (be it God or whatever), a primitive and simplistic way of explaining away human actions without the need to explore the complex subject of motivation. Free will expresses the school playground way of looking at the world, where "good" and "bad" people come into conflict with one another and where morality is summed up simply in terms of "Good" vs "Evil." The criminal justice system of all countries under capitalism is rooted in this hangover from the ancient and medieval past, in which one's master (in heaven God and on Earth his representatives: princes, judges,

etc.) bestows rewards on the "good" and metes out punishments to the "bad."

Like the medieval God, who was "Absolute Truth" independent of the material universe, so our human will is supposed to be a law unto itself, free of external motivation and hence answerable for its transgressions. If the will is, on the contrary, not free and independent, but subject to motivation as is everything else in the material universe, the will, and therefore the individual, cannot possibly be answerable for what it does: i.e., how we think and feel; how we "behave." The ideologists of capitalism in its revolutionary period (when it struggled with the feudal nobility and the nobility's ideologue, the Church) went out of their way to expose the ideological and moral ingredients of the feudal system such as the notion of free will that went hand in hand with confessional and gibbet. The most extensive philosophical treatise in English on the workings of the human mind is John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, written in 1689.

**The World Socialist Party is an organization without leaders. Its resources are shared by the entire membership, and its decisions are rendered democratically. We practice the democracy we preach!!!**

**RON COOK'S MASTERFUL DAMNING PORTRAYAL OF THE DEBILITATING EFFECTS OF THE MARKET AND CLASS SYSTEM ON HUMAN LIFE AND CULTURE, AND ON THE PLANET, TOPIA! YES — UTOPIA! YES — UTOPIA!**  
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In this book the myths of innate ideas and of free will are extensively dealt with and exposed for the rubbish they are. Thought is traced to sensation. Without external pressure (motivation via the bodily senses) there can be no thought. Before Locke, Thomas Hobbes in his "Leviathan" was one of the first since the materialist philosophers of antiquity to examine Man and his senses as a natural, functioning organism free of the straitjacket that in Europe had for centuries been imposed on thought by the Christian religion: a religion which is founded upon the notion of human guilt and redemption through faith, and which, as an ideology, falls to the ground without this essential ingredient: free will (hence, culpability).

No sooner, however, was modern capitalism consolidated throughout most of Europe than such philosophical libertarianism was curtailed, or rendered neutral and harmless by being made a mere topic for academic dissertation, and the churches were again called upon (not without difficulty in France, where the capitalist revolution had been marked especially strongly by anticlericalism) to provide, throughout the 19th century and the era of industrialization, moral justification for the new class rule.

The basis of this is the thoughtlessly still accepted term, "free will." Thoughtlessly, because it takes but a mere glance at oneself, how one is and what one is (the result of one's past and constantly evolving present, with all its unstoppable sense-impressions, feelings, thoughts, mannerisms and neuroses, etc.), to know that free will is a ludicrous notion altogether. We are not responsible for our thoughts and feelings, nor for our ideas and opinions. We are what we are, and we each continue to evolve throughout the course of our lives in being motivated one way or another. We do take decisions and think we make choices, but in fact even these are subject to an antecedent and a consequence. They are part of the constant flow of uninterrupted progress (leaving aside severe illnesses or psychological paralysis or death) that is each person's life. Each decision taken in life is the result of thoughts and feelings determined by what preceded them, giving rise therefore to a course of action and other feelings and thoughts with their own consequences.

To quote Nietzsche:

**The truth is, class rule (exploitation of the many by the few) requires guilt. The entire system of "justice" is based on the deliberate (if quietly buried) fallacy of free will: of will that acts independently of causation and is therefore culpable.**

...belief in freedom of will is incompatible precisely with the idea of a continuous, homogeneous, undivided, indivisible flowing: it presupposes that every individual action is isolate and indivisible; it is an atomism in the domain of willing and knowing. (From *A Nietzsche Reader*, Penguin, 1979, p. 58, extract from *Human, All Too Human*.)

But a society such as modern capitalism (and feudalism before it), in which a minority owns and controls the means of life, a control from which the majority is excluded (so that this excluded majority can be obliged to work for the minority),

needs the ruled majority to feel culpable. So we each feel guilty, instead of demanding the Earth for ourselves. The fat person feels guilty. The lonely person feels guilty. The unemployed feel guilty. They might not always think of themselves as guilty, but the message is driven home and is made to dwell often in their subconscious. How pathetic it is to hear prisoners repent of their "guilt" and seek "spiritual solace" for their crimes in the hands of priests, "educators" and "welfare" workers. How pitiful to read of soldiers weeping over their "cowardice" for not being as accomplished at murder as their superiors would like them to be. How angering to hear schoolchildren, students, and workers being regularly humiliated for falling short of the boss's or the teacher's "expectations." And, worst of all, how sickening to hear a man about to be burned alive in the electric chair repenting for having ended up there and repeating the murmurings of a theological hack who gets paid to turn his emotions unctuously on and off.

The truth is, class rule (exploitation of the many by the few) requires guilt. The entire system of "justice" is based on the deliberate (if quietly buried) fallacy of free will: of will that acts independently of causation and is therefore culpable. A socialist society will recognize the sheer complexity of every individual human being. In a world where we all walk the Earth as free human beings, none being deprived by another of his human birthright of life and free access to the means of living, there will be little, if any, crime. But people will also know how to restrain anyone who poses a threat to others, without any question of punishment, which will be a thing of the past. And human beings will be at last able to face their motivations, accept their complexities and make their

*Continued on next page*

decisions without the shadow of guilt hanging over their heads. This they are now just beginning to do, thanks to the psychological and scientific advances made in human self-comprehension through the last few decades.

But in the words of one 18th-century French philosopher: "One more effort!" That effort must be

socialism, a world of free access and common ownership by everyone on our planet. Even that effort must and will be the result of motivation: of the knowledge of its necessity driving us forward — into real freedom!

— Anthony Walker

## What about freedom in socialism?

We are taught that America is the Land of the Free. For instance, there is freedom to travel anywhere you want — as long as you can afford a ticket. There is freedom of speech — until you try to use it in a shopping mall. And there is freedom of the press — if you happen to own a press.

Do we have the freedom to make meaningful decisions about our own lives? No way. All our choices are constrained by the need to earn a living. Without money, we aren't free to do anything.

Real freedom will only be possible in a world of free access. In socialism, we will have freedom to do whatever we want with our lives, secure in the knowledge that access to our needs is no longer dependent on our ability to pay.

— K.E.

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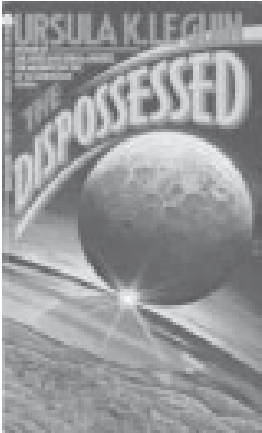
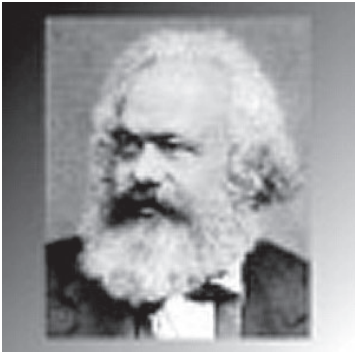


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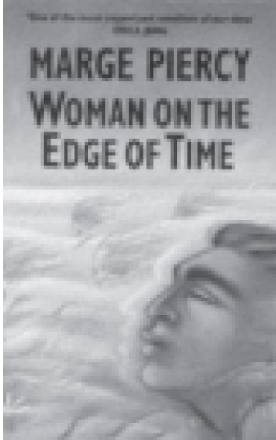
# Top 20 Nonmarket Literary Classics for Socialists

<p><b>#1</b> <b>THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO (1848)</b> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels</p>	<p>In the revolutionary year of 1848, Marx and Engels penned a manifesto that went beyond the events to articulate what had not been so clearly or radically expressed — that a class war was in progress between a rapidly developing industrially-based capitalist class (which at that time was winning major victories over the dwindling feudal system) and working class with antagonistic interests. This document boldly proclaimed that this dialectical antagonism of interests (thesis-antithesis) would only be resolved when the working class seized the means of production for itself and established a communist society (synthesis). Today at the dawn of the 21st century the struggle is still on, and the classless society is yet to be achieved. This renders this historically perceptive document of sufficient importance for those seeking an improved social order to warrant placing it at number 1 in our Top 20.</p>	<p><b>#2</b> <b>THE DISPOSSESSED (1974)</b> Ursula LeGuin</p>	<p>Some might query the placement of this novel so high in the list, but it is perhaps the finest fictional account of a true libertarian socialist society. It remains a popular item in the United States on the university and high school literary curriculum, as well as a highly enjoyable and easy read to propagate nonmarket socialist ideas.</p> 
<p><b>#3 and #4</b> <b>WAGE-LABOR AND CAPITAL (1849) VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT (1865)</b> Karl Marx</p>	<p>For those who find Capital too challenging, these short booklets clearly outline Marx's theory of exploitation — how workers are economically exploited by the capitalist class — and why the only enduring solution to such iniquity is the abolition of wage labor altogether.</p> 	<p><b>#5</b> <b>NEWS FROM NOWHERE (1890)</b> William Morris</p>	<p>Perhaps the second best fictional account of a libertarian socialist society. Unlike The Dispossessed, which was written by an author pursuing Taoist themes, this novel was written by one of history's most prolific socialists who was particularly adept at expressing how the free society would liberate humankind's creativity. In exploring that psychological dimension, this novel is in a sense very modern, despite some sexist carryovers from the Victorian era. Many people around the world know William Morris's wallpaper, but few are aware that as a member of the Socialist League he spent the latter decades of his life promoting the moneyless and stateless society.</p>
<p><b>#6</b> <b>NONMARKET SOCIALISM IN THE 19th &amp; 20th CENTURIES (1987)</b> Ed. Maximilien Rubel &amp; John Crump</p>	<p>In my view, this book was critical in outlining many distinct political traditions which struggled for the moneyless society of common ownership, such as the World Socialist Movement, the Bordigists, the DeLeonists, the council communists, the Situationist International, or the communist anarchists. Reading the book tended to validate for me the strength of the nonmarket socialist tradition which sprouted in different forms in different lands in different times during those two centuries.</p>	<p><b>#7</b> <b>ABC OF ANARCHISM (1929)</b> Alexander Berkman</p>	<p>This brilliant writer and Emma Goldman's lover articulated clearly in this book as few others have the argument for the free communist society. He answers all the frequent questions socialists encounter about the compatibility of socialism with so-called "human nature" (e.g., whether greed would undermine a nonmarket economy) and how a society without leaders or money would act as an unleasher of productive forces and of human creativity rather than as a detriment.</p>

**Top 20 Nonmarket Booklist (cont.)**

<p><b>#8</b> <b>THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY</b> (1981) Edited by Ken Knabb</p>	<p>The Situationist International was neither an alleged socialist or anarchist organization, nor even a traditional political entity seeking to organize for the revolution. Still, its critique of capitalism was profoundly nonmarket, and its wide body of writings and its very spirit inspired socialists and anarchists alike. Its greatest theoretical contribution which warrants its place in this Top 20 is the theory of the Spectacle, which develops beyond Marx's theory of Ideology. However, unlike ideology, which expresses the interests of the capitalist class, "the Spectacle" refers to the many cultural forms (often images) that distract working people from the relations of class society by providing an imaginary but alienating experience of the real world.</p> <p>Advertising for an infinite series of commodities, the endless repetition of wars, crimes, politicians or pop stars, or what passes for "news," mold an artificial world that poses as novel: new commodities, new "celebs," new events imported from around the world such as the World Trade Center bombing or the latest wave of starvation in Africa. But this projection is in reality just a rehash of itself, pure banality passing as originality. There is obviously no escaping the alienation of property and class society, but the Spectacle provides a type of stupor which keeps people tuned into the false realm of appearances, a commodified pseudo-reality.</p>	<p><b>#9</b> <b>THE ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL MANUSCRIPTS (1844)</b> Karl Marx</p>	<p>Not only one of Marx's earliest writings (unpublished at the time) but his most profound phenomenological and theoretical exploration into the realm of human alienation. It explores how society rifts humankind into such divisions as man and woman, worker and capitalist, country and town, work and leisure, humankind and nature. It postulated free communism (a society in which the means of providing life are owned in common) as the abolition of such divisions, and hence of human alienation, and the realization of human nature, as well as of humanity's philosophy and religion, which as philosophy and religion have only been able to express alienated man.</p> 
<p><b>#10</b> <b>THE DAY IS COMING (1944)</b> William Cameron</p>	<p>This extraordinarily well-written work by a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain describes the life of a worker who is devoted to quality craft yet finds himself in an economy driven by the need to produce shoddy and ugly commodities, and to devalue and debase the human condition at the same time. This is also a heart-wrenching tale of this man's efforts to raise his family in the ruthless and exploitative economic order which values profits over people. Finally, it is one of the few fictional accounts of the English socialist movements of the late 19th Century, featuring members of the Socialist League and such luminary figures as William Morris and Oscar Wilde.</p>	<p><b>#11</b> <b>THE RAGGED-TROUSERED PHILANTHROPIST (1914)</b> Robert Tresselt</p>	<p>Another fictional account of a worker struggling to make ends meet whose conversations with workers about socialism and its theory of exploitation are among the most memorable scenes. This classic novel found popularity among the members of the early Labor Party in England, paradoxically as the latter did not advocate socialism but a theory of state-guided capitalism in which the government spends heavily on public programs and provides welfare, rather than a socialist program of abolishing wage labor and commodity production and bringing the productive machinery into the hands of the whole community, as this book so powerfully pleaded for.</p>
<p><b>#12</b> <b>MARX WITHOUT MYTH (1975)</b> Maximilien Rubel and Margaret Manale</p>	<p>This was one of the best shorter accounts of Marx's life and writings. It broke down his productive life year by year, and was penned by a French Marxologist (an academic whose specialty is the life and work of Karl Marx) who was also a libertarian. His anarchist communism meant refreshingly not only that he did not fall into the pompous and historically incorrect position of attributing to Marx himself later Leninist or Labor state-capitalist theories which became falsely labeled "socialist" or "communist" or even "Marxist" after Marx's death, but that he shared with Marx his pursuit of democracy, free communism, the movement of workers to abolish wage labor, and his humanism. Most of Rubel's writings have remained in French, and this paperback is one of the few works available to English readers. Published by Harper &amp; Row, it was also for several years one of the few expositions of Marx's thoughts on high school and college curricula in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s.</p>	<p><b>#13</b> <b>THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM (1891)</b> Oscar Wilde</p>	<p>This work is unique not only for being so well written, in classic Wildean clarity and humor, but also for being a work by one of the finest playwrights in the English language advocating the necessity of a socialist society. Much of the thrust of this pamphlet is a critique of the hypocrisy of Victorian values, including that of the Church. Wilde has not entirely abandoned his Christianity, but like the early Marx, in whom we find no traces of religiosity, views socialism as the actualization of religion, whereas religion as religion does the working class a serious disservice.</p> 

**Top 20 Nonmarket Booklist (cont.)**

<p><b># 14 and # 15</b>  <b>WORLD WITHOUT WAGES (1980) • THE FUTILITY OF REFORMISM (1984)</b>  <b>Samuel Leight</b></p>	<p>These paperbacks feature the transcriptions of radio shows which were broadcast on WTUC, in Tucson, Arizona, for eight years beginning in 1976. These shows discussed topics of the day and socialist theory in simple and at times humorous ways to an American public mistrustful of anything with the words "socialist" and "communist." These talks were beacons of community, democracy, sanity, and remain in these two volumes as testimonies to how much effective propaganda could be generated by one worker dedicated to the cause of the abolition of his rule by capital.</p>	<p><b># 16</b>  <b>MONEY MUST GO (1943)</b>  <b>Philoren</b></p>	<p>This book, written in 1914 by two members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, was to my knowledge the first ever written by socialists to critique the institution of money as the cause of modern scarcity, and to call for the abundance and freedom its abolition, and its replacement with free access, would yield. A classic socialist exposition of the ideological and economic fallacies often used to justify money's existence.</p>
<p><b># 17</b>  <b>MUTUAL AID (1902)</b>  <b>Peter Kropotkin</b></p>	<p>Opposing the Social Darwinism of his day which distorted Darwin's theory of evolution to justify the rule of men by men on the basis of allegedly similar competitive and biological traits which render them fitter to adapt, Kropotkin demonstrated in his discussion of the social life of such creatures as ants and bees the cooperation essential to their species' organization and survival. In doing so, he placed mutual aid as a vital principle no less in human social life than in biology. While Kropotkin wrote many other works delineating his vision of a free communist society, this tome stands apart from others in linking the need for a society founded upon mutual aid to biological laws. (While Darwin's <i>On the Origin of Species</i> is not concerned with socialist ideas or themes, it, too, is a milestone that should be read by any socialist (or non-socialist) simply because it describes the wondrous complexity of biological life in terms requiring no metaphysical pronouncements, and its significance in the development of humanistic materialism is considerable.)</p>	<p><b># 18</b>  <b>FREE IS CHEAPER (1988)</b>  <b>Ken Smith</b></p>	<p>A brilliant critique of capitalism that made my Top 20 as one of its stronger recent socialist indictments. (Had I read Ron Cook's new book <i>Yes — Utopia</i> in time for completion of this publication, I would have had to add that too as a recent socialist must-read in this Top 20.) This book was special for its fascinating statistics and observations (such as the increase in work since the late feudal and early capitalist era). A well-written tome any socialist would be proud to recommend to others who want to "make socialists."</p>
<p><b># 19</b>  <b>WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME (1976)</b>  <b>Marge Piercy</b></p>	<p>Like <i>The Dispossessed</i> by Ursula LeGuin, this popular book written by another major novelist also described a stateless, moneyless, and classless society of free communism. But it did so only as part of a female psychiatric inpatient's visual hallucinations. The protagonist's only emotional respite from the mad world of "treatment," and of patriarchy, was her immersion into a deliciously free vision in which women were no longer oppressed by men, nor men and women by capital. The book was unique by postulating socialism as the one enduring solution to the oppression women have experienced for centuries, and also as postulating, as did Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing, madness as a means of coping with a mad world (although Laing's solution was existential, phenomenological, psychotherapy, not social revolution).</p> 	<p><b># 20</b>  <b>THE SOCIALIST STANDARD (1904 - Present)</b>  <b>Socialist Party of Great Britain</b></p>	<p>Okay, this is not a book in the traditional sense, although it has been bound for library use over the years. Nonetheless, this century-long collection of articles of the monthly publication of the Socialist Party of Great Britain stands as a testimony to the scientific and revolutionary spirit of the socialist movement through a century of wars, poverty and misery. That the concept of a moneyless and classless world of true democracy, freedom and abundance has persisted in the minds of working people for so many generations is impressive enough. But it also validates the socialist theory of ideas as representing class interests — in most cases, of the ruling class — but also of ideas as stemming inevitably (if not yet extensively) from the experience of economic exploitation, poverty and subjugation. This collection of articles by socialists down through the years stands as a powerful expression of the human desire for emancipation from class society with its pointless misery and conflict. For as long as we must toil for others, the idea of the classless world will stubbornly persist, and eventually it will yield a majority seeking to abolish capitalism's humiliating, oppressively cold conditions and step finally into the warmth of democracy, community, material abundance, and human freedom.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">— Dr. Who</p>

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# Democracy for the first time

**W**e pride ourselves on the democratic nature of our present society. Did many of us, after all, not elect the present governmental leaders to office? Is this not a radical improvement over the feudal past or over the military juntas still clutching the reigns of power today in some Third World countries?

The early socialist pioneers (such as Marx and Engels in the 19th centuries) celebrated the victory of the North in the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery, since the emancipation of society from the last vestiges of feudalism, and the abolition of the ownership of humans by other humans, were profound democratic victories for the human race without which the achievement of a truly socialist society would be impossible. The early socialists understood that evolving capitalism led to the development of the ideological, political and economic forces that would eventually bring about the demise of feudalism.

Their theory of historical materialism has been greatly misunderstood by their then and present critics. Often criticized for its alleged determinism (unfairly, since it attempted to delineate observable trends rather than to predict an inevitable future), what was most significant about historical materialism was its ability to elucidate historical developments in terms of a struggle of social classes over the control of the means of life. An example of such a struggle is that which took place in the past 250 years between the class of feudal landowners and the increasingly powerful class of industrial entrepreneurs whose economic and social organization of wage labor of course eventually won the day.

Thus when the early socialists celebrated the abolition of slavery as a victory for all humankind they were also keenly aware of what a victory this also represented for the capitalist class and the development of capitalism worldwide. Failing to appreciate this vital historical lesson, one may equally miss the class-based context in which the modern practice and even meaning of democracy is firmly nestled. For

example, many of us North Americans think of our part of the world as "democratic," frequently failing to appreciate how that political form serves the class society of employers and employees.

After all, while we enjoy our many "rights" of free expression or organization (allowing us to print this very journal without the censorship or outright persecution we would certainly face in other lands characterized by bureaucratic and highly militarist state capitalist economies), as workers we do not enjoy any of the privileges of the owning class. Our essentially propertyless status denies us the freedom conferred by capital to survive by rent, profit or interest alone, and forces us to sell our energies to the employing class most days of the year.

The daily humiliation working people often suffer in the hierarchical organization of our workplaces is a daily reminder of what little democracy actually extends into our lives. Which reader of this journal has actually enjoyed access to the city newspaper, television station, radio or corporate Internet news provider? And when we watch the television evening news, that banal and endless repetition of local murders and rapes, how powerless do we actually feel to impact at all upon our community? We passively bear witness to the devastation of our ecosystem, to bloody international conflicts, to our children's increasing acquisition of depressive, substance-abuse, and conduct disorders, as though our "democracy" were but a sham, for all the many rights accorded us in the Bill of Rights, and for all the democratic foundations painted in the Constitution.

The society that workers in the world socialist movement struggle for is above all a democratic one. Since the means of producing all things and services will be in the hands of the world's people (not private individuals or the state), "rights" will no longer need to be accorded the population by a centralized authority. Rather, we will all be owners deciding as many (or as few) aspects of our society as we individually desire. In a sense, the collective decision-making

*Continued on next page*

***TOMORROW ON THE JOHN TAYLOR "TALK TALK" SHOW  
2 P.M.***

***"Unfortunate uneducated working-class people  
with family and mental problems"***

currently practiced mainly in numerous (but not all) families, or to varying degrees in the spaces of power not fully dominated by the management of our workplace, will be fully extended into all spheres of the world's activities.

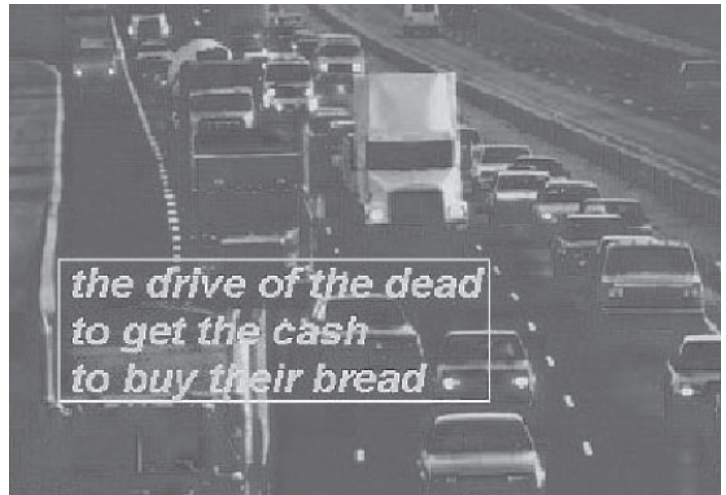
Such a revolution — both from state, individual or corporate to common ownership of the productive machinery and in the democratic nature of the society — is no pipe dream, but it will require a committed choice on behalf of working people everywhere to finally take control of both their own lives, and of the affairs of their social world. This revolution in democracy will spring from an overwhelming desire on behalf of most people not to relegate major decision-making to elected officials anymore to operate the capitalist system (the greatest benefits of which are only reaped by the class of capital and land owners), but rather to substitute such passivity with impassioned democratic fervor.

You may ask how such a democracy will operate. The World Socialist Movement's unique contribution to organizational decision-making is its practice of delegation. (By proudly underlining this contribution, I am not implying that this is the only model available or possible — the burgeoning social movement for an extended democracy and common ownership will itself develop the forms that serve it best. We remain open to all models of participatory democracy.)

The delegate model advocated and practiced by the world socialist movement requires that those elected to perform certain functions agree to carry out the wishes of the majority. Any deviation or negation of the function for which the delegate was elected will yield an immediate corrective demand from the electorate or potentially a recall of the position altogether. Thus the delegate's role is in contradistinction to that of the modern official, representative or leader, who is elected to make all the decisions on behalf of the majority. The socialist delegate, in contrast, merely carries out the wishes or instructions of the electorate.

This does not mean that the delegates never think for themselves. In the National Administrative Committee (NAC) of the World Socialist Party of the U.S., less than a dozen individuals meet monthly to conduct the party's business.

Non-NAC party members contribute agenda items and try to be present at the monthly NAC meeting during which they will be discussed and voted upon. Agenda items contributed or debated by the NAC are subject to entire party membership approval. NAC members are themselves elected by the whole party membership each year. Attempts are made for all party members, at least of those interested in the



position, to take turns on the NAC. The reduced membership of our party in recent decades has frustrated this ideal at times. But a working democracy is of such importance to true socialists that lively discussions, if not the occasional antagonistic exchange, often rage over perceived affronts to the democratic ideal to which the party is committed, not just that of the political organization, but that of the society it works to achieve.

This international movement's delegation model has provided a theoretical as well as a practical model for how the wishes of the many may be represented by the elected few, and for how voting may be utilized in a fashion which puts to shame that which passes as a presidential election in this country every four years. This working model of democracy also acts as an illustration on a less ambitious level of how even the machinery of government, at least in those countries practicing free elections, may be utilized by a socialist majority of the electorate, to establish a society which will no longer require the state, with its bureaucratic, coercive and violent features (courts, jails, armies).

What would a truly democratic society look like? While socialists have always been hesitant to paint a detailed picture of the future, mainly because they cannot as democrats presume to outline features it would fall to the generations following the revolution to decide, certain generalized features may be discussed. That outline will require a paradigm shift

*Tomorrow on Gloria Gossip  
3 P.M.*

**"People addicted to TV shows about  
unfortunate uneducated working-class people  
with family and mental problems"**

away from the idea that politicians are essential to forcefully articulate how they will attack social and economic problems (ironically, since capitalism behaves in a manner which is not subject to such desired manipulation or control).

Socialists advocate the abolition of the lawless marketplace altogether, and the institution of a nonmarket economy of production geared to meeting needs that will finally actualize a democracy that private property and the marketplace have incessantly frustrated. The artificial scarcity of the market system (often termed "poverty" as though it were caused by a human failing or a lack of resources), classes of owners and non-owners, competing and warring nation-states, the hierarchical and bureaucratic social structures of states and workplaces, the power differentials in class society between sexes and ethnic groups, have seriously undermined our culture's democratic ideals.

Once class society has been abolished, we will all, as owners of the means of supporting life, have an equal voice in decision-making with regard to them. Hence, the present distinction between the private and public sphere will also have been eradicated once property is commonly owned.

Let us dare to imagine a typical day of decision-making in free communism. Taking a walk down your street, you notice a building in disrepair. You consider

your options: you could form a local committee to rectify the problem, or take part in an existing one.

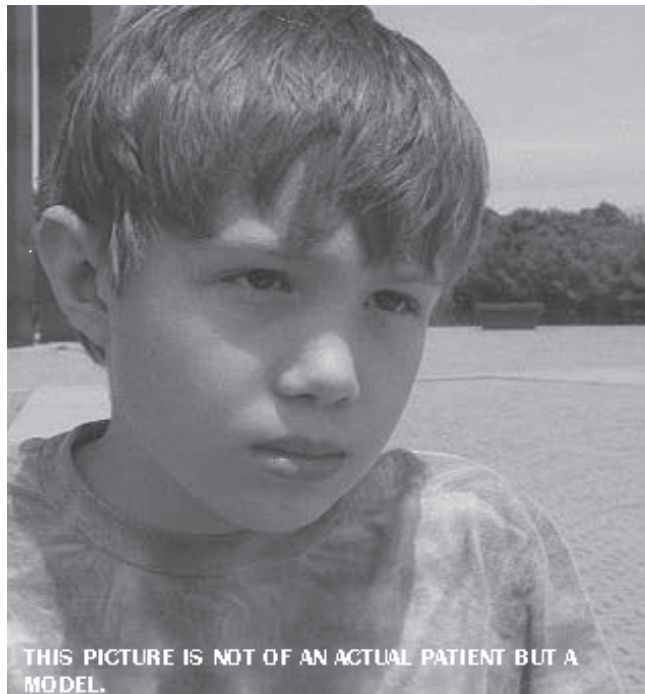
Realizing you are hungry, you enter the food market, and partake of the diverse foods your neighbors have prepared, placing in your shopping bag certain packaged items for use at home. In a moneyless world, human beings have been freed of the boredom of having to operate cash registers. Instead, perhaps citizens swipe their prepackaged foodstuffs the way cashiers do today, and the data allow computers to automatically replenish orders which are getting low.

Reflecting a little on the experience, you decide that children should acquire a better understanding of this ordering process, so you resolve to organize a class of local children to study its entire chain from production to distribution.

More generally, the division between consumer and producer of a service has been largely abolished, with citizens partaking in an extensive variety of productive activities. Some they have become particularly adept at or knowledgeable about, and to these they commit more frequently so they may better ensure the service's optimal success and train novices. Other activities they volunteer for in shifts of hours or days several times a year, while for yet others they are still obtaining requisite technical training and education.

*Continued on next page*

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\*Journal of Child Psychiatric Practice (2002, Vol 1.)

**DID YOU KNOW THAT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN ARE SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION?**

DID YOU KNOW THAT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN LIVE IN BROKEN, POOR, ABUSIVE OR NEGLECTFUL HOMES? DID YOU KNOW THAT THE RATES OF CHILD HOPELESSNESS AND SUICIDE ARE HIGHER THAN YOU MIGHT IMAGINE? DID YOU KNOW THAT SCHOOLS ARE OFTEN HUMILIATING AND AUTHORITARIAN CENTERS IN WHICH CHILDREN'S NATURALLY INQUISITIVE, CREATIVE, AND PLAYFUL QUALITIES ARE REPLACED BY THE OBEDIENCE REQUIRED OF WAGE WORKERS? DID YOU KNOW THAT MILLIONS OF CHILDREN ARE SEEKING TO MEET THEIR NEEDS TO BELONG BY ENGAGING IN DANGEROUS GANG AND DRUG PRACTICES?

**NOT SURPRISED THAT SO MANY ARE DEPRESSED? DON'T BELIEVE A WORD OF IT. DEPRESSION IS A CURABLE DISEASE OF THE BRAIN.**

LET'S GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE THERAPY THEY SO DESPERATELY REQUIRE. LET'S GIVE THEM A FIGHTING CHANCE. **DEPREXOR<sup>®</sup>**

The Internet has become a prime source of information for all local and international labor requirements. Democratic committees have been formed to decide such matters as road maintenance, electrical repair, or plumbing for local communities. These are open bodies any citizen may take part in. Citizens tend to make decisions pertinent to the communities in which they reside, but many take part in Internet-based decision-making regarding global issues, such as the ongoing planet-wide efforts to clean up the oceans and rivers seriously polluted during the precivilized era of economic classes, or to distribute certain resources and goods around the world. Organizations such as the United Nations could play a vital role, operating on the global level, but in a radically altered form, considering nation-states will have become obsolete, and power vastly decentralized.

We may make a few further projections. As all citizens will be equally eligible to take part in social decision-making and property will be owned in common in the nonmarket economy, citizens may want to travel around the world, staying in comfortable hotels, and taking part in local projects everywhere which excite them. Life will be lived the way artists attempt to today within the confines of class society, and as they advise us all to, pursuing the unbridled call of our interests, passions, and creative energies. In a sense, the distinction between art and work, or work and free time, will have been abolished.

It would be impossible today to describe faithfully the feeling that the world is truly ours, subject to our wisdom, our rationality, but also our emotional and creative desires. Democracy will at last have been realized, since for all the democratic promise of our liberal tradition, we are still barely living in its shadow, what with minority ownership of the means of life and the severe curtailment of our dreams imposed by the

financial crumbs we working people must make do with. Place the entire productive machinery into the hands of the community, and democracy will flourish as never before. The economic foundations of rule by the people, for the people, will at last have been realized not just in theory but in actuality.

— Dr. Who

## **Links for the Internet savvy**

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**<http://www.worldsocialism.org/>**

main site of the world socialist movement

### **Internet Mailing List**

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discussion forum of the world socialist movement

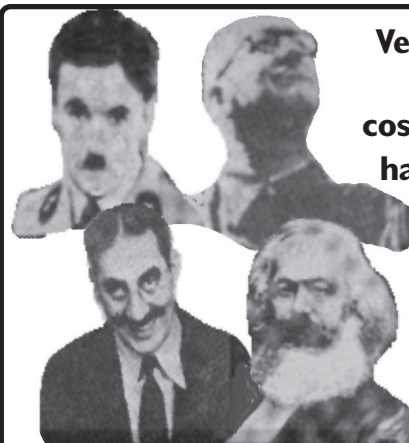
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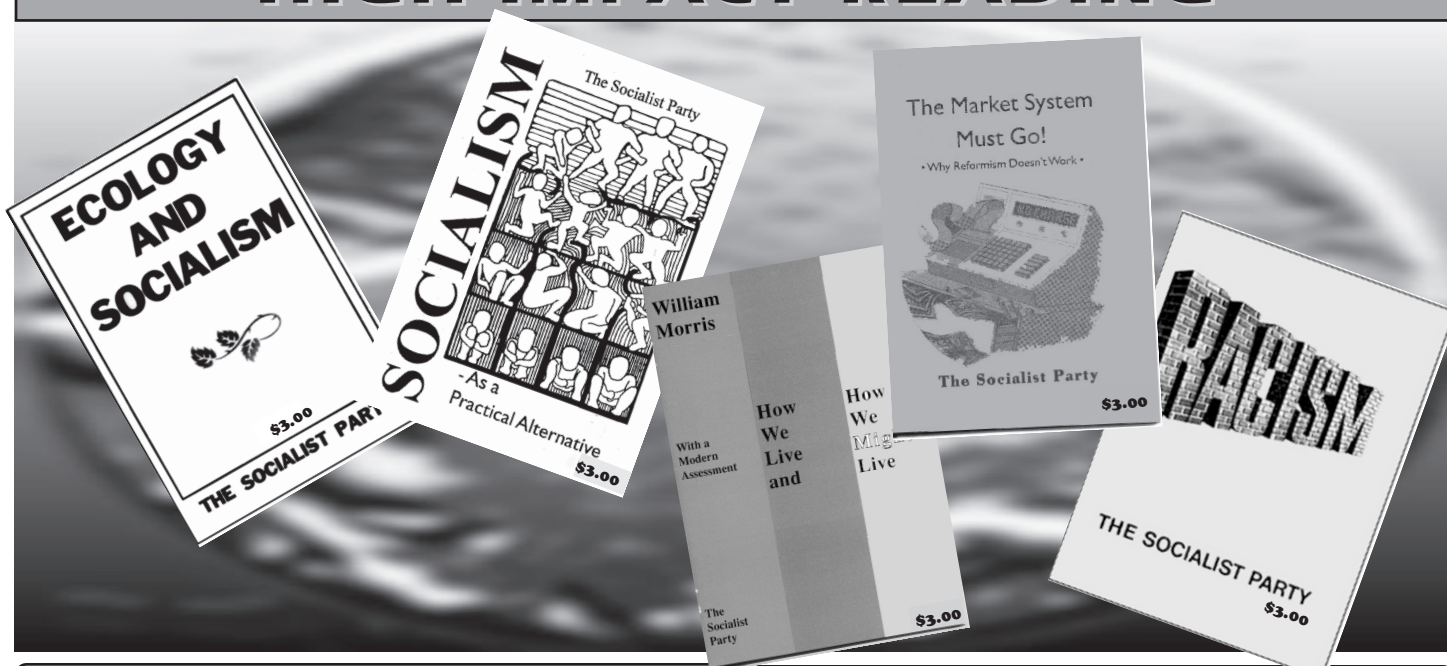
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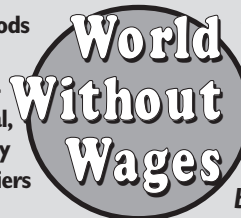
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## object

**The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.**

## declaration of principles

### *The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:*

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

**THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.**



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

## the world socialist movement

**THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**, Box 1266, N Richmond, 3121 Victoria

**BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN [AUSTRIA]**, Gussriegelstr. 50, A-1100 Vienna. JOURNAL: *Internationales Freies Wort* (\$1)

**SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA**, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: *Imagine* (\$1)

**SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN**, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: *Socialist Standard* (\$1.50). [TEL. 0171 622 3811; FAX 0171 720 3665] • spgb@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb>

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (INDIA)**, 257 Baghajatin "E" Block (East), Calcutta 700 086 • wsp.india@worldsocialism.org

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND)**, 151 Cavehill Rd., Belfast BT15 1BL

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (NEW ZEALAND)**, Box 1929, Auckland, NI • wspnz@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/nz>

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**GAMBIA** World of Free Access, c/o 21 Dobson St., Banjul •

**GHANA** Marxist Study Group, c/o Adonga Avugma, Box 305, Cape Coast •

**KENYA** Patrick Ndege, Box 56428, Nairobi •

**NAMIBIA** Anthony Amugongo, Box 1502, Oshakati •

**SIERRA LEONE** 33 Adama St., Freetown •

**SOUTH AFRICA** Alec Hart, 904 St. Anthony, 64 Wolmarans St., Johannesburg 2001 [TEL. 0 11-720-6116] •

**SWAZILAND** Mandla Ntshakala, Box 981, Manzini •

**SWEDEN** Dag Nilsson, Bergsbrunna villaväg 3B, S-752 56 Uppsala •

**UGANDA** Socialist Club, Box 217, Kabale •

**ZAMBIA** Kephass Mulenga, Box 280 168, Chimwemwe, Kitwe •

**ZIMBABWE** Velaphi Dube, 58082-1 Mputweni, PO Mpopoma, Bulawayo; Siyasha Nkomo, Box AC 1290, Ascot, Bulawayo; Kurauone Ngwenya, House No 128ME, Gwetu St., Mbizo Suburb, Kwekwe; Bigboy Musemwa, 9 Monmouth Road, Avondale, Harare.

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**ILLINOIS** World Socialist Chicago, Box 578670, Chicago, IL 60657-8670 [worldsocialismchicago@hotmail.com (Daniel)]; dgnslayer@gallatinriver.net •

**MICHIGAN** Mardon Cooper, 377 Cherry Rd., Troy, MI 48083 [Whittawon@aol.com] •

**NEW ENGLAND** Rena Orner, 18 McGee Rd., Great Barrington, MA 01230; Karla Ellenbogen & Ron Elbert, 23 Pleasant Ave., Somerville, MA 02143 [wspboston@mindspring.com]; Frank Gunning, Box 1373, North Conway, NH 03860 [603-356-3007]; wbrucher@bates.edu •

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**PENNSYLVANIA** Thomas Jackson, 521 Greystone Rd., Merion Station, PA 19066 [tjackson@igc.org].

This issue of the *World Socialist Review* was printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

**To establish socialism, the working class throughout the must gain control of the powers of government through their political organizations.** It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power means control of the main avenues of "education" and propaganda, either directly or indirectly. It also means control of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush working-class attempts at violent opposition to the effects of capitalism. Moreover, the police and the armed forces are often used to combat workers during strikes and industrial disputes with employers. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state. Once this has been accomplished, the state will be converted from a coercive government over people to an administration over things and community affairs. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. Socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

**The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.** Indeed, by its very nature, capitalism requires continual reform. But reforms cannot alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Whatever the reformers' intentions, reforms function only to make capitalism run more smoothly and to make present-day society more palatable

to the working class by holding out false hopes of a fundamental change or radical improvement. In the long run, reforms benefit the owning, capitalist, class rather than the class that produces the wealth. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

**The World Socialist Party does not support, directly or indirectly, any political party other than our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement.** We can only oppose those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The form of society once in effect in the Soviet Union, and still more or less in effect in China and Cuba now, was not and is not socialism or communism.** It was a dictatorial, bureaucratic form of state capitalism. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are produced primarily for profit and not primarily for use. Nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alters the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

**Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities, their mental and physical energies, at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.** Workers without such organizations have no reliable economic weapons with which to resist the attempts of employers to beat down their

standards. But unions necessarily work within the framework of capitalism and are useful, therefore, only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between wage-labor and capital. They can only react to capital's fiat, particularly in the case of long-term issues like automation or unemployment. Every wage or salary increase, in fact, only spurs employers and investors to accelerate the replacement of humans by machines in the workplace. If anything, instead of foolishly selling themselves short by demanding "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," workers would do far better to follow Marx's advice and simply abolish employment altogether.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history.** While some concepts of spirituality, loosely defined, are not necessarily incompatible with that conception, socialists see the problems that wrack human society as material and political, and their solutions as likewise material and political, not supernatural. Particular religious leaders may rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment or worse for their efforts. But where this means that they seek solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish, they demonstrate a lack of understanding of the development of social evolution, and socialists cannot endorse their views.

By the same token, membership in formally defined religious denominations or adherence to their beliefs can defeat people's best intentions unawares. The doctrines of organized religions traditionally locate the solution to society's problems in the individual's salvation and remain fundamentally indifferent to the fate of the human social community. At their most progressive they seek only to modify the existing institutions of a class-divided society, and at their most reactionary they openly obstruct even that desire. Such confusion over goals in an organization claiming to practice scientific socialism would sooner or later undermine its revolutionary character, for the tendency of such thinking is to confine discussion of capitalism's problems to the horizon of existing society, a blindness fatal to the socialist viewpoint. Ø

# The Middle Class is alive and well — and living in Utopia

One of those only half-thought-out and therefore very useful myths of modern capitalism that has lent itself well to a policy of divide and rule is that shape-shifting entity known as the middle class. By “middle class,” people often mean wage/salary-earners who are well paid by comparison with others of their class and can afford better living standards. According to some thought-magicians, we are even (almost) all middle-class over here.

Socialists define people’s class by how they come by their income, not by whether they drive a big car or not, or wear certain clothes. There are only two classes remaining in this last stage of class society. They are the working class and the capitalist class. There is no middle class.

Over 90 percent of us belong to the working class, whether employed or unemployed. That means that, because we do not possess the means of producing wealth and have no control over the Earth’s resources, we are therefore obliged to sell our energies, mentally and physically, to those who do own the means of life, the capitalists. They employ us (from the French word *employer*, to use) and pay us the price of our labor power, called wages (or salaries, which is nothing but a fancier word). When not employed for wages, we are obliged to beg from the state (the executive arm of the capitalist class) so as not to starve. This is cheaper for the capitalists of a modern state than would be the maintenance of workhouses. A highly-paid consulting surgeon is just as much a member of the working class as an unemployed street cleaner, although their lifestyles have little in common. They both have to sell their energies to live, in exchange for the ration-ticket called a wage or salary which permits them limited access (depending on their paycheck) to the goods produced by other workers like themselves, but owned by the capitalist class. They are obliged to sell themselves, for as high a price as they can get, to the owning, employing class.

Those who own the means of production and distribution and who control resources are the capitalist class. They are a tiny minority of the population in each country and in the world as a whole. They maintain their ownership of the means of production and distribution (railroads, factories, mines, land, etc.) through their control of the state, which is the organ of class rule. In modern states this is done through the hiring of politicians — extremely well-paid workers or members of the capitalist class themselves — to win the continued support and votes (even if only passive) of the working class. This gives the workers an illusion of “democracy” in which different parties run for office, but all ensure the continuation of capitalist class rule, regardless of name or political color. For example, the

old Republican Party of Iron Curtain Russia was called the “Communist” Party. The language it used to refer to itself was different, but in Russia as in the United States, a vast majority of people were workers and a small, privileged minority lived off the wealth produced by the majority. A capitalist lives on interest, rent and/or profit and so doesn’t need to work for a wage/salary to live, as most of us do.

These days, most capitalists don’t even have to administer their properties/workplaces. They hire workers called managers to supervise the workers they employ and to run their businesses. Of course, there is the tiny capitalist (owner of a small local supermarket, etc.) or “self-employed” worker whose lives are worlds apart from that of Bill Gates. Such small capitalists are constantly in danger of being swallowed up and booted out of the capitalist class into the ranks of the working class.

It is now the task of the immense majority, the working class, to dispossess the last remaining ruling class, the capitalists, and establish ownership of the Earth by humankind. This will be the end of class society, which has had its role to play in social history and development but is now defunct. If we do not carry out this political act, we can expect capitalism to continue to degrade and destroy our planet and human life. It would be fatal for history to stand still. If we cannot realize our potential, we are doomed as a species. Capitalism not only threatens us with nuclear/biological annihilation, it is currently destroying the very planet we walk on and the air we breathe.

Only two classes remain, in short, and both of them must go. The middle class, in pre-capitalist society, was the capitalist class. The ruling class then was the feudal nobility, which was being absorbed into the ranks of the capitalist class or — dispossessed — booted out altogether. Capitalism grew inside feudal society (just as socialist ideas and organization are growing inside capitalist society). The industrial revolution made fortunes and found expression in political Revolutions (the American of 1776, the French of 1789, the Russian of 1917), which replaced feudal with modern economic relations based on capital and wage-labor. The entire world now belongs to the capitalist class, in constant rivalry amongst its members for profits and control of mineral resources, trade routes, etc. In its wars, workers are expected to kill each other and die for the master class. Hence patriotism, taught through school and media — the most lethal means of divide and rule. Witness the continuing mass exhibition of flags, propping up our masters against those of Middle Eastern workers rather than expressing solidarity with workers of all lands to end private property and class rule forever!

— Anthony Walker

**Thanks to Dr. Who, Anthony Walker and Karla Ellenbogen for doing this issue’s articles. Dr. Who and Tony Pink canvassed door-to-door to get the corporate sponsors. Dr. Who also designed the layout (with some help from Roel, who contributed to the general editing frenzy). WSR 18 will be out later this year, probably in the Fall. Pass this copy on to a friend, tell everyone about the World Socialist Movement, and help replace this mad world with a sane one sooner rather than later. Fraternal regards, the Editorial Committee.**



# World Socialist Review

No. 18 • Special Edition • \$2.00



Journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

## SPECIAL ISSUE



FROM GLOBAL VILLAGE TO GLOBAL COMMUNITY

### INTRODUCING WORLD SOCIALISM

**INSIDE:**

how to get a world that is truly free  
introducing the WSP  
our principles  
capitalism vs. socialism  
revolution or reform?  
world without money

# How to get everything for FREE!

The time has come in the history of our species when we can get everything we want for free. Yes, you heard me right, for free!

Technology has evolved to the point where there is no reason why food, clothes, housing, medical care, education, transportation, computers, books, CDs, digital connections, cannot be freely available to all human beings on the planet. It is time for such a change. And we are urging our fellow humans to organize to bring about this new world, which is no pipe dream, but a logical outcome of our technological progress as well as our desire to live a fuller, freer life.

Many of us are used to campaigning for, or at least voting for, different politicians to run our political and economic affairs for us. We find that our lives do not change at all after each election. The leaders often do represent differences in how much money should be spent on the military, on the environment, on education, and the like, but when we get right down to the nitty gritty we find our lives are fundamentally the same no matter whom we vote for. We still have to work hard (some of us in more than one job) to raise enough money for our families and ourselves. Our lives are still ruled by the alarm clock, traffic congestion, budgeting, saving, praying for an economic miracle when we spend more than we earn, and by the stress that our working lives produce for us.

Ever wondered why our lives are so similar no matter the outcome of the elections? The reason is that the market system itself, based on buying and selling, operates by its own laws. So when politicians say they are going to reform it for the better, they are not telling the truth. There is nothing they can do to stop recessions, or to significantly improve the value of our wage or salary, or to meaningfully reduce the prices of the things we need to live. In other words, the economy controls them — just the way it controls us.

You see, the companies that produce all the things we require and that set the standard for all other non-productive kinds of work must compete to save as much in production and to make as much from the sale as they can. The market value of the things they produce reflects not only the fixed costs of materials and machinery but also the socially necessary labor used in making them, which is partly a function of technology and workplace organization and partly based on the cost of feeding and housing the employees, their educational needs plus their other living expenses. That can't be changed much. Our unions can work for small increments here and there, yes, but they can't work for, say, five times the value of our wages and what we would really like to earn to buy all the things that would



**UTOPIA: Idealen in uitvoering, May 20, 2001 (Eindhoven, Netherlands).**  
(Source: <http://www.ddb.nl/duurzaam/utopia2001/fotos1.html>)

make our lives fuller and less stressful.

It would therefore be true to say that money itself prevents us from having what we need. There is no technological reason we cannot have all the food and clothes and other important things we need to live absolutely for free — if the whole community owned the farms, food plants, clothing factories, and all other workplaces where wealth is produced. The only reason money exists is so that the owners of these places of work can generate profit to live off, the value above our wages and all other production costs from the revenue obtained from sale.

## Sorry, Prof: Just two classes

Although our culture likes to think of itself as possessing many classes (e.g., the lower-upper middle class), that is really a lot of nonsense. There is only the class of people living off profit, interest and rent, and the class (most of us) that lives by working for wages or salaries (a fancy word for wages that are paid once or twice a month instead of every week).

So the wealth accrues to the population in only those two ways, the vast majority of us only earning wages or salaries. While there are always failing businesses whose owners fall into the work class, the capital class tends to make the most money, while the work class tends to make the least. That is always how it is going to be, as long as money exists. No politician can do a thing about that.

Even in the countries our media incorrectly call “socialist” or “communist” like the old USSR, or England under the Labor government, or China or Cuba today, the laws of value still apply. Most people in those countries are work people who are

paid wages they must budget all their living expenses out of, while a small clique lives abundantly. Although, theoretically, one can become President, the Prime Minister, or some other fancy name for Head of State, even a Manager or Chief Executive Officer for some giant multinational, living off high salaries and million-dollar bonuses, we all know the chances of *that* happening!

### **Beyond the “global village”**

Real socialism or communism has never existed on a global scale. It means a society in which the means of producing wealth are owned “socially” or “in common.” Obviously if the state owns the railroad that does not mean all the people do, even if it allows them to ride it for nothing. If the government owned the Post Office, you’d still have to pay for stamps, wouldn’t you? Government ownership in countries such as ours merely means that the capital class decided there were industries they could all benefit from, or share the expenses for as a class, like the post office, most roads, state hospitals or the military. But in countries like China where the government still owns most of the industries, there is a whole class of bureaucrats who live off the fat of the land, just like here.

Our revolutionary movement — one of ideas, not violence — consists of working people from around the world who feel that the time is ripe for us as a species to finally own the means of producing wealth collectively. In such a society we would no longer need money. Everything really would be free, but that obviously doesn’t mean it would work if we were all hoarding ten times more than we needed. But we believe that hoarding behavior is more likely to occur in an economy of scarcity rather than one of abundance. For example, in today’s American economy, most of us can afford basic foodstuffs like bread, so we don’t store 600 loafs at a time in our freezer, do we? That is because we know we can always get more in the supermarket. Real socialism or communism will be like that. Knowing that we can get what we need for nothing, we will hoard much less (if anything) than we do even now in our cluttered homes, where today we keep every piece of rubbish we bought in case we need it again and would have to pay dear money for it a second time!

When wealth is held in common, we believe that without the impediment of financial cost limiting efficiency and progress, our society will be able to recycle at an almost 100 percent capacity. Greenbacks prevent us from having a truly green society. The beautiful visions of ecologists remain pure pipe dreams as long as we inhabit a world in which the economy turns nature into commodities and in which the most idealistic reforms are going to cost money. The class-based money economy remains the true obstacle to all other technological and social advances that we could have today, to the type of society of peace, abundance, ecological balance, and creativity that we find is achieved on Earth only in Star Trek: The Next Generation. Make it so!

A planet-wide society based on private or state property is also divided into nations. It causes war, terrorism, starvation, child labor, ecological devastation, racism, sexism, shoddy goods or waste through planned obsolescence that the market requires companies to produce for their economic survival — and totally useless industries that squander our planet’s resources while not producing anything, such as those industries that revolve around advertising, selling, buying, banking, ticketing, investing, brokering, insuring, militarizing, policing, governing, managing. Think of the millions of wasted buildings, or the vast supply of wasted energy, resources and human lives that are entailed in these useless occupations — useless from the point of view of producing wealth, although, of course, the market system requires them, and that is one reason it is so wasteful.

**We could abolish  
world hunger in months,  
poverty in weeks, and war  
immediately.**

When we own the means of producing wealth as a community, we won’t need those industries anymore because goods and services will be free. So we will require far less resources and energy than we do now to produce much, much, more. We will probably only need to work about a day or two at most per week to produce a lot more wealth and get everything we need. But since we are not a lazy species (except when forced to work or do anything else), we will nevertheless probably choose to expand our activities (though there will be no law saying we have to, since without property, even law itself will be redundant). We will probably want to spend the remaining five days of the week in athletic, creative, intellectual, social, sexual, scientific or other pursuits, depending on our talents and interests.

### **Forward to the past**

Imagine actually being happy and secure in our world. We have the technology to liberate our lives, yet we find ourselves working many more hours each day for our masters than the feudal peasants did to support theirs. Our amazing technology is rapidly developing into the future, yet our social organization based on working people and employers, buying and selling, money and nation-states is from the primitive past and is still around today, holding us back!

Capital society is only a few hundred years old. Before that, most of humanity lived in feudal societies with kings and queens, in slave-based economies, or in tribal systems (some of which did possess relatively communistic organizations, but they could not prevent the advance of capital society and the turning of their common land into a vast commodity or into production sites for other commodities).

And while capital society helped to abolish feudal privilege and slavery, and to usher in our scientific progress, it also caused destruction on an unimaginable scale. Why, in the last century alone, hundreds of millions of lives were lost to war and

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starvation, and that doesn't even count the billions who were either unemployed or employed in totally useless occupations or living in squalor.

It is now time for us to harness our technological progress and use it for the common good. You think we are going to achieve critical social, spiritual and technological advances in a society based on wage labor, or in which we do not produce important inventions or innovations just because investors think them too expensive, as in today's society of strife and want?

If we did bring about a society of common ownership, we could abolish world hunger in months, poverty in weeks, and war immediately. We could organize our society democratically to produce all the goods and services we need, producing to meet needs rather than for sale. Using our computer technology to record needs and the use of world resources, we could live in a society without poverty of any kind and with relatively less stress. (The psychologists tell us we function at our best with moderate stress, presumably not the extreme stress our lives in capitalism produce which has created the entire mental health industry in the first place!)

**How will problems be handled in socialism?**

Many of today's problems, such as poverty, will not even exist in a socialist society. Of course, no human society will ever be without problems. A socialist society will have to deal, democratically and cooperatively, with the problems as they arise. An example of a major problem: even under capitalism, natural disasters generate tremendous volunteer effort and people donate huge amounts of goods, services, and money to help those who are suffering. It is not conceivable that this human response will decrease in socialism. Without the profit constraints of capitalism, such major problems can be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily.

Hey! Why don't we abolish employment?

Cool

**FREE 15 min. AUDIOTAPE**

**"Introducing World Socialism"**

**Ask about our other tapes as well.**

With employment abolished, we could spend more time in stimulating activities that will feed rather than starve the human spirit. When the health of our ecosystem returns, and the quality of our food improves, when we live more in harmony with our planet and with ourselves, will our mental and spiritual health not also greatly blossom?

**An idea come of age**

These ideas have been around for the last 150 years or so, and they have been growing slowly but surely, largely in the industrialized areas of the world. Most recently, this understanding has been healthily spreading in areas of the former Soviet empire, in India and several African countries. More and more humans are awakening to the promise of a world that can truly be called theirs. They are awakening to their own power, and they are demanding the world for themselves. When they do, the old religious dream of a "brotherhood of man," which could never be achieved by prayer, can actually be realized by political organization.

Many scientific ideas have taken entire generations, even millennia, to be accepted, such as the idea that we are not

**IF IT QUACKS LIKE A DUCK...**

- If you work for wages, *it is not socialism.*
- If goods and services are sold in the marketplace with a view to profit, *it is not socialism.*
- If the world is divided into nations, *it is not socialism.*
- If there is any kind of government over people, *it is not socialism.*
- Unless all humans everywhere have free access to all goods and services, *it is not socialism.*

at the center of our solar system. We do not know when our ideas of liberation from the market system will begin to spread like wildfire across the lands. But we believe that the experience of our lives forges our ideas, and that the more people live in this violent and unsatisfactory social world, the more these revolutionary ideas will be accepted as common sense and be seized upon. We invite you to consider them carefully, not as followers but as fellow citizens. And when you are ready, we invite you to join us. Change occurs as quickly as an idea travels, and ideas travel faster than light.

Speed the day!

— Dr. Who

**Pass this copy on to a friend!**

# Introducing the World Socialist Party

Everyone knows about high prices, lagging wages and salaries, housing difficulties, the ever-present threat of devastating wars; it isn't news that we live lives of frustration, stress and uncertainty. How to deal with it? The much-ballyhooed Left preens itself on its "practicality." Unfortunately, very few of these pragmatists see the origins of our problems in the *basis* of society, and they tend to get fuddled when asked to treat them as the predictable effects of a bad system.

The World Socialist Party invites you to consider the possibility of making a fresh start.

## Socialism? What's that?

Our goal is world socialism: the immediate establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole; free access to what everyone needs, independently of whether or how much individuals may spend their time "working."

Socialism is possible, practical and necessary right now — in fact, the need for it has never been more urgent. The only thing standing in the way is the lack of a conscious political majority of the world community who understands it and wants it and has organized to achieve it. A majority is necessary because socialism cannot possibly be imposed on an unwilling populace by even a well-intentioned minority. Besides, only a majority of the world's population can definitively establish that socialism actually does represent the rudiments of a social organization capable of meeting the needs of all human beings. Élites separate from society, armed with nuts-and-bolts theories, can only organize production to suit their own ideas.

The majority has to be conscious of what it wants so that it can make it work. All of us together *can* make socialism work.

The majority for socialism needs to be political because at the turning point, the socialist revolution, we will need to organize politically to take over the machinery of the state and immediately convert it into a genuinely democratic administra-

tion of the affairs of the new society. We all have the basic intelligence needed to understand this: no coterie of leaders is required to guide an ignorant majority through a lengthy "transition period."

To avoid confusion, let us make one point clear: we are neither Social Democrats nor Democratic Socialists. The World Socialist Party is as unlike the Socialist Party USA, the party of Eugene V. Debs, or the Democratic Socialists of America, the party of Michael Harrington, as it is possible to be. It was formed in 1917 when a group of members repudiated the reformist aims of the Socialist Party of America. The WSP is an independent organization opposed to all other political parties in this country. It is affiliated with companion socialist organizations in parts of Africa (e.g., Gambia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, Ireland, New Zealand and the Ukraine, all observing the same Object and Declaration of Principles.

It is especially important to stress our *independence*. Our Object and our view of economic and political questions are radically opposed to those of other groups in this country who confuse socialism with a kinder, gentler capitalism. The WSP's one and only goal is to replace immediately the capitalist basis of society with a fundamentally different one, socialism.

Under the existing system, the only way we can get the things we need to live — food, clothing, housing, travel, entertainment, etc. — is by buying them. All the things we need are produced to be sold at a profit. The kind and amount of these things individuals can buy depend on how much money they have. The life of leisure and luxury enjoyed by the rich few is far removed from the laborious, insecure existence of the great majority. But this contrast of riches and poverty is the natural order of the existing system of society organized for the benefit of the few, the owners of the means of production and distribution.

The great majority, the wage and salary earners who make up the working class, regardless of how soft their job may be or how much money they pull in, have to get

their living selling their working abilities to the owning class. This is a basic fact of capitalism taken for granted even by the "reptile press": "For most Americans, the important influences on spending are a job and a salary, not their stock portfolio." [*The Economist*, July 20, 2002, p 27]

Globally, the implications of this are a dismal commentary on some 3½ million years of our evolution: "The world's 358 billionaires," write J Bissett and DG (citing *The Independent*, July 23, 1996) in "Who Owns the World?" "including the Sultan of Brunei and Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, have more assets than the combined incomes of countries representing 45 percent of the planet's population." [<http://www.worldsocialism.org>] "Incomes of the richest fifth of the world population," they add, "are now on average fifty times the incomes of the poorest fifth."

Socialism means replacing capitalism with a worldwide social system in which the means of production and distribution cease to be privately owned and pass to the whole community. As stated already, this is a goal only the majority can design and implement.

This majority must want to bring to an end the present competition between countries for markets and sources of raw materials that causes international rivalries and leads to war. It must want to cease immediately producing goods and services for sale on the market at a profit, and to begin producing them instead for the direct use of the human community. It must intend that all forms of income derived in property society (profits, wages, rents and interest) shall be replaced *now* by free access to what people need.

## Thinking for yourself

The WSP(US) makes no offer to solve the workers' problems for them. We do not cultivate a philosophy of leadership. Left to themselves, people will almost always take what initiatives they need to. We work in the confidence that people are perfectly capable of using their native intelligence to understand how capitalism works, that they

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will have no trouble recognizing how to replace it with socialism. Putting trust in leaders and their promises can never match the power of a self-reliant majority motivated to think for itself.

Given this basic understanding and desire on the part of most people, the economic problem to be tackled by a socialist society will be the organization of the able-bodied population in producing freely accessible food, clothing, houses, and whatever else is needed for the full life of human beings. This socialist principle expresses it best: *from each* according to their abilities and *to each* according to their needs.

Socialism cannot be brought about inside the capitalist system or within the frontiers of a single country. One social system can only replace another, and socialism, which is necessarily international, must begin where global capitalism left off.

In our view, the policy of dealing with social problems one by one is *not* the road to socialism. The task of socialists is to facilitate the majority's achievement of a fundamental change in the basis of society. Whatever the alleged merits of particular schemes for dealing with particular evils, they necessarily fail in their purpose, because they are not designed to bring about a change of *system*. The end result of campaigning for reforms is either that a new set of evils replaces an old set, or old problems are incorporated into new solutions. Capital meanwhile continues to trample on us all.

If you think that present-day problems like the cost of living, inadequate wages and the shortage of decent housing are new, think again. Such problems have been harassing workers from capitalism's earliest beginnings — over 300 years ago. Capitalism will never solve them. The struggle to achieve a better and more secure living goes on ... and continues to get nowhere.

The New Deal came and went in the

30s, paid for ultimately only by leading millions off to the slaughterhouse in the 40s. Workers let the postwar boom of the 50s lull them into believing that capital could be milked with the right combination of reforms, paving the way for the "Great Society's" welfare state in the 60s. And did the workers finally tame the tiger they had held so long by the tail? After all the glib assurances that welfare programs could take a bite out of poverty, the working class at the turn of the century finds itself looking forward to a humiliating future of creeping impoverishment — downsized, temped, overworked, underpaid. Politicians greet the return of wide-

spread poverty and homelessness with complacent boredom, while an inscrutable and corrupt business aristocracy celebrates the defeat of the Left and chases new wars around the globe.

Welfare legislation, now crumbling under the onslaught of this new aristocracy, was at best only ever a collection of schemes to make poverty less burdensome to the poor. The decline of the welfare state demonstrates all too clearly that the crumbs of "welfare," whether dropped by the rich out of generosity or fear, have nothing in common with the socialist aim of establishing an entire *system* of society in which the concepts of riches and poverty will draw a blank among the young.

Naturally, socialists recognize the importance of keeping up the struggle over wages and working conditions while capitalism lasts, but this is not all that must be done, for it still leaves unchallenged the right of the capitalists to own the means of production. We are here to facilitate the speedy termination of the employment system itself and the capitalism to which it belongs — nothing less. The World Socialist Party therefore does not support nationalization, which is better described as a form of state capitalism. Nationalization means only state or public ownership, not common ownership,

and it has failed miserably to live up to expectations wherever it has been tried.

The world we live in, like the one our forefathers lived in, offers little more than hard work, insufficient wages and insecurity. Keep trusting the capitalist class and it will bring you bigger deserts, hotter climates, lakes and rivers you must forbid your children to swim in, ever-increasing pollution of the environment, fishless seas — perhaps even a dead planet. Capitalists remain disturbingly nonchalant about their global thermonuclear option, even in the absence of a credible bogeyman to use it on.

Is this what we want to pass on to our children, when a world free from these and other troubles is within our grasp? It is no use leaving the job of understanding and acting to others. Being free of capitalism's insecurity and tribulations requires enough people creatively understanding and joining together to take the action that will result in our common emancipation.

### The ballot weapon

Socialism cannot come about until the majority understands and desires it and democratically takes the steps necessary to achieve it. The socialist majority, using the vote to gain control of the government through delegates having revocable mandates, will use that control to end the employment system once and for all by legalizing free access to all goods and services needed by the population. This will bring the revolution to a head and set the stage for all the required fundamental changes that follow.

And what kind of people, finally, join the WSP? Only convinced socialists can become members. As you may have surmised by now, we do not admit anyone, however sincere, who wants only to palliate capitalism's worst evils through reforms. This is because an influx of reformists would ultimately compromise both the socialist nature and the completely democratic character of our organization, leading as it must to the emergence of interests within the party tied to one or another aspect of the capitalist system. At its formation the party adopted as a statement of vision and purpose its Object and Declaration of Principles (see "World Socialism: What makes it tick"), and admission to membership has from its beginning depended upon acceptance and understanding of these. Ø

**We are here to facilitate the speedy termination of the employment system itself and the capitalism to which it belongs — nothing less.**

# World Socialism: What makes it tick

*In every copy of the World Socialist Review and on most pieces of literature published by the Companion Parties of Socialism you will find our Object and Declaration of Principles. Those who read the following analysis of these principles with care will notice some occasional repetitions. This is because the Object and Principles were designed to tie together. Thus, one cannot accept some points and reject others: they stand in their entirety, on sturdy feet and solid ground. Taken as a whole, the Object and Declaration of Principles form a single interrelated statement, no clause of which is intended to be analyzed independently of the whole. They constitute, we believe, a scientific presentation of the goal we are organized to attain, the basic reasons why such a goal is of the greatest urgency, and the way in which a socialist working class should go about reaching it.*

## OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

A system of society alludes to the sum total of human relationships and is meant to distinguish us from those who seek to organize cooperatives or communes, islands within a sea of capitalism. Socialism, as we understand it, is not a commune, not a kibbutz, but a system of society in the sense that capitalism, feudalism, and chattel slavery may all be characterized as systems of society.

The term common ownership should not be confused with such phenomena as state ownership, or “public” ownership, terms used under capitalism to designate a more direct ownership of certain industries by the capitalist class as a whole. Common ownership implies the absence of ownership and we specify that this common ownership is to apply to the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth. We do not speak here of one’s personal belongings. Democratic control should speak for itself;

### What is the World Socialist Movement (WSM)?

**The World Socialist Movement is an organization which began with the founding of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904. The Companion Parties of Socialism, which make up the World Socialist Movement, are those parties sharing an understanding of what socialism means, how to establish socialism, and a scientific analysis of past and current society.**

worth stressing, even so, is that it is difficult to conceive of control being other than democratic in a society in which the means and instruments of wealth production and distribution are commonly owned.

## PRINCIPLE #1

That society, as at present constituted, is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.

Around the world today it is self-evident that a tiny minority of the population owns the means and instruments of wealth production and distribution, either directly or through ownership of stocks and bonds. Even the sidewalks and public buildings are actually owned by those few members of the population who own the bulk of municipal and government bonds. The reason they don’t charge the general population for using their sidewalks and only restrict access to them or to “public” buildings on rare occasions, is that the working class must not be hampered in their comings and goings like the chattel slaves and serfs of former times. Nevertheless, the majority of the population today remain slaves, chained to a class rather than to an individual. Lack of ownership of the means and instruments of wealth production and distribution compels the working class to work for those who do own.

The process in those countries that not so long ago designated themselves “communist” or “socialist” was not significantly different. A minority of the population, through ownership of government

bonds or in some cases radically reforming the state and even the economy, owned and controlled the means by which all must live, compelling the majority to seek employment at wages or salaries.

Despite its subordinate status, the working class is the one class essential to production and distribution — a point we will encounter again.

## PRINCIPLE #2

That, in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

Explicit in this clause are three facts of life often hotly denied by defenders of capitalism: strikes and lockouts are nothing if not manifestations of a struggle between economic classes, the capitalist class’s manifest parasitism makes it non-essential to production, and the working class obviously fails to participate in the ownership of capital, in the face of its undeniable responsibility for all of production.

Yet the statement stands, despite the rationalizations of labor union brass, the payment of huge salaries and “perks” to corporate CEOs as “essential management,” and even the diffusion of stock ownership among sections of the working class. Unions, although essentially working-class organizations, must operate within the framework of the employment system, must cooperate and compromise with the managers of capital, and must support the lie of a common interest between employers and workers. It is useless to cry “traitor” and “sell-out” at labor leaders. It is the nature of capitalism that they operate as they do.

On the other hand, capitalists who act as managers do so by their own choice, not because they are economically necessary. Some of them, in the style of Peter the Great or Nikolai Lenin, relish the adventure of climbing the ladder themselves, of learning the ropes by “thinking different.” The institutions of higher learning long ago instituted business schools for the growing of managerial brains. But the entrepreneurs who prefer

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to go to the office, generally speaking, could hire their replacements with little difficulty. The entire capitalist class could be resettled on the moon with no noticeable impact on the way their system operates. (In fact, even at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese state capitalism worked along the lines of just such a policy, cultivating a class of businessmen in a separate nursery from its “planned economy.”)

Nor does the possession of stocks to the extent enjoyed by average working people place them in the capitalist class. This is a quaint delusion. None of them could live on such an income for more than a short period, assuming the stock market beast did not devour them anyway.

### PRINCIPLE #3

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

The majority may still quarrel with our assumption that the working class will eventually take such action, but it can hardly quarrel with the point that class antagonisms cannot exist where economic classes do not exist. As for the instrument that will enable the whole people to exercise democratic control of the common

property of society, such an instrument already exists. Intrinsically, there is nothing wrong with institutions where representatives assemble to parley (parliaments, congresses, diets, or even so-called Soviets). What is wrong about them — today — is that such congresses are used to carry out the wishes of the capitalist class. Remove class society from the picture and the assemblies will function in the interest of the whole people. We advocate transforming the state from government or rule over people by a master class into an administration of things in the interest of all mankind, through the elimination of modern class rule’s twin foundations, capital and wages.

### PRINCIPLE #4

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

Capitalism has narrowed the class struggle to the point at which there are left but two contending classes. It is obvious that once the working class has taken political control from the capitalists there remains no class beneath it to exploit. The very act of stripping the capitalists from control of the state by abolishing the need for an income, and therefore the entire system of employment capitalists depend on, brings with it the end of class society and the resultant emancipation of all man-

kind. All distinctions and discriminations existing today, such as those based on ethnicity or sex, will vanish.

### PRINCIPLE #5

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

No minority section of the population, no educated leadership, no vanguard composed of professional revolutionaries from the ranks of the intelligentsia (as Lenin and the Bolsheviks advocated almost a century ago), can lead the working class to socialism. Social revolutions are made by those whose immediate interest it is to abolish existing relationships. The concept of leadership, “correct” or otherwise, is not only unnecessary to a revolutionary working class but harmful to its interests. Leaders, in fact, can never lead masses where they do not want to go. They must advocate policies and action favorable to the followers, which makes the leaders followers themselves. When the working class understands and desires socialism it will appoint and elect delegates, not leaders, to do its bidding.

### PRINCIPLE #6

That as the machinery of governments, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.

Many a would-be revolutionary will tell you that the machinery of government is either too vast or that the iron grip of the capitalist class is too tight for an anti-capitalist opposition to “conquer the powers of government.” Perhaps they have been overawed by the propaganda put out by the mass media (in which case the investment paid off). If, however, all they have to go on is their convictions, there are sufficient cases on record of revolutions that have either weathered the effects of any reactionary sentiment in the military or that have in some cases won over the pawns in their game, the ordinary soldiers. Predictions like this serve only to numb and demoralize; they cannot claim to be factual.

### How will people who disagree be treated in socialism?

**Freedom must include allowing disagreement with the status quo and spreading unpopular ideas, but freedom does not include hurting people or destroying the common wealth of humanity. While it is impossible to predict the shape of institutions in a world where the administration of things has replaced government over people, anthropologists have uncovered enough instances of methods used by “primitive” communities to resolve disputes without resorting to force. It is merely a question of how. Whatever methods are devised, they will undoubtedly be more humane than those “civilization” has handed down to us.**

**If disaffected individuals or groups should foolishly attempt to promote a revival of capitalism or some other class-divided social form, they would face all the difficulties the first capitalists did and many more. They would above all have to demonstrate to their free contemporaries the desirability of volunteering for slavery. (Missionaries among peoples of color are familiar with this problem.) The dissenters would in effect have to miraculously revive the corpse of a dead social order. As to violent behavior, whatever the methods of control communities eventually do adopt, it will be much easier for them to isolate and neutralize aggressive tendencies than it is in a system like capitalism, which can only channel aggression by rewarding it.**





**Meeting hall of the Executive Committee of the capitalist class for the duration — pending the abolition of wages and capital.**

Anarchists, syndicalists and industrial unionists contend that the power of capital resides basically in industry rather than in control of the state. One is either to ignore the state entirely while advocating general strikes, individual acts of terror, armed insurrection, or one is to advocate the organization of “socialist” industrial unions that would “back up” a socialist majority at the polls. But if control of the state is so secondary, why does history not seem to show it? Given the opportunity, not only do capitalists almost invariably move to buttress their position of advantage militarily once in control of government, but military power itself becomes a growth industry in the developed countries. And more concretely, there have been many examples of orders from a state governor or the President of the United States to mobilize National Guards or U.S. Army units, and even of the conversion of the first into the second to thwart a recalcitrant state governor. It is an empirical and historical given in this country that the armed forces, from city police to U.S. servicemen, move only at the command of those who sit in control of political power.

How, then, should the working class organize to end capitalism? Naturally, it must be on the political front, but it must certainly be more than merely politically. And that is why in our proposition the word “consciously” comes before the term “politically.” This is the key. The working class must not not leave the thinking to

“wise” leaders, political messiahs, etc. It must know what it is doing. Once in control of the seats of power, a victorious socialist working class can immediately declare the end of class ownership and immediately convert the government over people into an administration over things. The capitalist class will cease to exist as a class category and without control of a state will be in no position to do anything important about it — except to retire and submit.

### **PRINCIPLE #7**

That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

This proposition points to the fact that political parties exist as the expression not solely of class interests but also of the interests of different sections of the capitalist class. The record of history, again, testifies how eagerly capitalists enlist the aid of workers, even radicals “of the worst sort,” when their particular interests move them. Capitalists who have their investments in retail merchandising, for example, may unite with leftists in a struggle against high rents and interest rates, as happened in October 2002 with the election of the leftwing Lula government in Brazil — there are, after all, only so many dollars of wages and salaries to go around and why should the landlords get more of them? Landlords, on the other hand, might enlist in a protest against

high prices in supermarkets, department stores, etc. And each section within the capitalist class tries to shift the burden of taxation onto the shoulders of the other sections, going all out to convince the workers this is their fight, too.

There cannot be more than one socialist party in one country because there is but one reason for the existence of a socialist party: to get rid of capitalism and right away. It follows then that the socialist party “must be hostile [i.e., opposed] to every other party.” Should another party appear on the scene with the same views as the World Socialist Party, steps would be taken for consolidation. We are not in competition with others for the establishment of a classless society.

### **PRINCIPLE #8**

The Companion Parties of Socialism, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of those countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

There are other ways of “waging war” than using bombs and guns as our masters do to protect or expand their dominion. Socialists wage war by building an arsenal of socialist information and using this arsenal to the fullest extent of their capabilities to counter the propaganda of the capitalist class. We direct this “war” not only against the avowedly capitalist political parties like the Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Libertarians, Greens or other designations expressing one theory or another of how to operate capitalism. But we also take aim at those organizations who falsely style themselves socialist or communist and who at the same time seek votes by advocating reforms within capitalism or violence by unarmed workers against those who control the arms of the state. None of these “belligerents” really believes revolution is possible anyway, and supporting any of them will just keep the system spinning round and round as if nothing were wrong with it. We ask the support of the working class only for the immediate abolition of the wages system and the immediate institution of world socialism, and nothing else. Ø

**The ideal producer of the future**  
Frans Masereel, 1919.  
Source: International  
Institute of Social  
History,  
Collection IISG,  
Amsterdam  
(<http://www.iisg.nl:80/exhibitions/art/maser05.html>)



The word capitalism is now quite commonly used to describe the social system in which we now live. It is also often assumed that it has existed, if not forever, then for most of human history. In fact, capitalism is a relatively new social system.

So what exactly does “capitalism” mean?

**Class division** Capitalism is the social system which now exists in all countries of the world. Under this system, the means for producing and distributing goods (the land, factories, technology, transport system etc) are owned by a small minority of people. We refer to this group of people as the capitalist class. The majority of people must sell their ability to work in return for a wage or salary, referred to as the working class.

The working class is paid to produce goods and services which are then sold for a profit. The profit is gained by the capitalist class because it makes more money selling what we workers have produced than it costs it to buy our working abilities on the labor market. In this sense, the working class is exploited by the capitalist class. The capitalists live off the profits they obtain from exploiting the working class while reinvesting some of their profits for the further accumulation of wealth.

This is what we mean when we say there are two classes in society. It is a claim based upon simple facts about the society we live in today. This class division is the essential feature of capitalism. It may be popular to talk (usually vaguely) about various other “classes” existing such as the “middle class,” but it is the two classes defined here that are the key to understanding capitalism.

It may not be exactly clear at times which class some relatively wealthy people are in. But there is no ambiguity about the status of the vast majority of the world’s



**The capitalist**  
Albert Hahn, 1909.  
Source: International  
Institute of Social History,  
Collection IISG, Amsterdam  
(<http://www.iisg.nl:80/exhibitions/art/indexhahn2.html>)

population. Members of the capitalist class certainly know who they are. And most members of the working class know that they need to work for a wage or salary in order to earn a living (or are dependent upon somebody who does, or depend upon state benefits.)

**The profit motive** In capitalism, the motive for producing goods and services is to sell them for a profit, not to satisfy people’s needs. The products of capitalist production have to find a buyer, of course, but this is only incidental to the main aim of making a profit, of ending up with more money than was originally invested. This is not a theory that we have thought up but a fact you can easily confirm for yourself by reading the financial press. Production is started not by what consumers are prepared to pay to satisfy their needs but by what the capitalists calculate can be sold at a profit. Those goods may satisfy human needs, but those needs will not be met if people do not have sufficient money for them.

The profit motive is not ultimately the result of greed on behalf of individual capitalists. They do not have a choice about it. The need to make a profit is imposed on capitalists as a condition for not losing their investments and their position as capitalists. Competition with other capitalists forces them to reinvest as much of their profits as they can afford, to keep their means and methods of production up to date.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, we hold that it is the class division and profit motive of capitalism that are at the root of most of the world’s problems today, from starvation and war to alienation and crime. Every aspect of our lives is subordinated to the worst excesses of the drive to make a profit. In capitalist society, our real needs will only ever come a poor second to the requirements of profit.

## CAPITALISM IN A NUTSHELL

**Must capitalism have a free market?** It is widely assumed that capitalism means a free market economy. But it is possible to have capitalism without a free market. The systems that existed in the USSR and exists in China and Cuba demonstrate this. These class-divided societies have been widely called “socialist.” A cursory glance at what in fact existed there reveals that these countries were simply state capitalist. In supposedly “socialist” Russia, for example, there still existed wage slavery, commodity production, buying, selling and exchange, with production only taking place when it was viable to do so. “Socialist” Russia continued to trade according to the dictates of international capital and like every other capitalist state was prepared to go to war to defend its economic interests. The role of the Soviet state became simply to act as the functionary of capital in the exploitation of wage labor, setting targets for production and largely controlling what could or could not be produced. We therefore feel justified in asserting that such countries had nothing to do with socialism as we define it. In fact, socialism as we define it could not exist in one country alone: like capitalism it must be a global system of society.

It is also possible (at least in theory) to have a free market economy that is not capitalist. Such a “market economy” would involve farmers, artisans and shopkeepers each producing a particular product that they would exchange via the medium of money. There would be no profit-making and no class division — just independent producers exchanging goods for their mutual benefit. But it is doubtful whether such an economy has ever existed. The nearest that may have come to it would have been in some of the early colonial settlements in North America. Some Greens wish to see a return to this kind of economy. We do not think that it is a viable alternative for modern society. Such a system would almost inevitably lead to capital accumulation and profit making — the definitive features of capitalism. Ø

# SOCIALISM IN A NUTSHELL

## **First of all socialism is not utopia**

Socialism will not be some utopian dream, although compared to our lives today it may seem like it. Socialism will allow humanity to find its full potential, unhindered by the requirements of profit. Socialism is not a magic formula that will make all of our problems disappear.

## **Socialism: a wageless, moneyless society**

Money and wages are entirely unnecessary to fulfill our needs. In fact, money prevents the fulfillment of the most basic needs of millions of people. Because they cannot afford to buy food and shelter, millions of people are denied these fundamental requirements, for life. Production for need, not profit is the only way to satisfy human needs, both physical and emotional.

## **More leisure time & no useless work**

Because so much of the work in present society is tied not to the production of wealth, but to dealing with money, many jobs that currently exist will not be necessary. The entire banking industry, the insurance industry, tax collectors, cashiers and many other industries and jobs will not be needed. The people now employed in these jobs will be available to produce goods that are useful to people and this great increase in the useful work force will reduce the number of hours of work required from each individual. Since useless jobs will be eliminated, and people will produce to satisfy needs, work may come to be regarded not as “the daily grind,” but as a personally satisfying part of life. If this happens then the distinction between work and leisure may not even exist.

**Voluntary production** Today, people go to work and cooperate to produce all the goods and services that are available. Many people enjoy their jobs and the feeling that they have accomplished something. They have built a house to satisfy someone’s need for housing. They have participated in harvesting food for people to eat. They have produced a work of art for people to enjoy. They have taught mathematics or biology or literature to help their students understand and solve the problems of society.

When a job is satisfying, when we can see the benefit to ourselves and other people, we like to work. Untold millions of hours of voluntary labour are given freely by people who want to help others live a better life. It is a myth that people are naturally lazy and only work when forced to do so.

In socialist society all work will be voluntary. Artists will produce art, carpenters will build houses, medical professionals will tend to the sick, farmers will grow food.

The most important feature of wealth production in socialist society will be that the wealth will be available to those who need it, whereas in the present system, capitalism, it is available only to those who can afford it.

## **It is satisfaction of self-defined needs**

Because there will be no money, people will be able to take the goods they need from the stock of available goods produced by society. In other words, there will be no poverty, since poverty is the denial of peoples’ needs.

**A world without war** Because current society is based upon unsatisfied need and maximizing profit, wars are inevitable. The elimination of money and profit will end war forever. We will no longer produce weapons to kill other human beings or destroy the wealth that we have slaved to produce. With the end of the war machine, the entire productive capacity in this industry of death will be available to produce wealth for living.

**No property crime** Since most crime is property crime — people seeking to acquire wealth that is denied them — and the wealth produced by society will be freely available to those who need it, this whole arena of crime will disappear.

**Reduced crimes against people** These are the real crimes in society. With free access to wealth, the worst crime against people — poverty — will vanish.

**Violence reduced significantly** Most, if not all, violence is caused by living in a society that does not meet people’s needs. With the end of property crime, the violence associated with it will also be eliminated.

Most of the remainder of violence in current society is a result of mental illness.

Much of this mental illness is aggravated, if not caused, by living in a society that promotes a “dog-eat-dog” attitude. Every one of us is brutalized by this society in one way or another. Is it any surprise that some people react violently?

In current society, where people are used as implements of wealth production, is it any wonder that people treat each other not as valuable human beings but as objects to be used by those with the power to do so? Isn’t it “normal” in a society like this, that brutalized people brutalize others?

In a socialist society, this dehumanization will cease, people will not see others as property to be abused by its owner. The laws in today’s society do not even attempt to end violence, just to keep it to acceptable levels. In socialist society, violence will no longer be acceptable, it will not be macho, it will not be ignored, it will be revolting. The sick will be treated.

**Community** Society is not something that people merely exist in, society is how people relate to each other. In socialist society people will be able to express the normal caring love of others that we currently suppress. Only in a society organized to satisfy human needs, can we really have a sense of community that is inclusive and not exclusive. The world will be our community, and everyone’s well-being will be our concern.

**A green environment** In socialism, the value of environmental care will not only be recognized, but with the elimination of the profit motive, will be a part of everyday life and every industry. The worker versus environmentalist conflict that both have been losing will end when society is organized to serve humanity as a whole, not just a rich minority. Humanity needs a healthy planet. Today’s society is organized to produce short term profit, it cannot also maintain a healthy planet.

**Real needs** Today we are constantly bombarded by advertising telling us how much we need to buy the latest and greatest produce of society. But this advertising is designed to create “needs” for the sole purpose of selling a product and producing a profit.

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*Continued on next page*

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In socialism, the manufacture of needs to create profits will not exist. No one can predict exactly how we will live our lives in socialism, or what we will consider necessities. But it should not be difficult for most of us to find several useless things in our homes that we have bought and never used. Useless junk that the advertising industry convinced us that we needed.

**Nothing but the best** Unlike the reality of capitalism, in socialism there will be no benefit to producing poor quality. And by producing high quality goods that will last, and eliminating created needs, the world's resources will last longer.

**Freedom** Most Americans are glad to live in a free and democratic country, but how free and democratic is it really?

Almost every freedom is dependent on having enough money to enjoy it. The freedom to travel is severely restricted if you cannot afford the bus fare.

The freedom to say what you wish is very effectively restricted by the amount of money available to publicize your ideas. Those with money have no problem filling the media with their ideas and lies.

The freedom to vote every few years for the least repugnant of a bunch of political parties (gangs?), none of which can make this system work, is not a lot of freedom.

**Not a better way to run capitalism** There is no good way to run capitalism. It would be difficult to imagine a way that has not been tried and failed. From no government intervention in the early days of capitalism, to near total regulation by the government as in the USSR and Cuba, every attempt to make capitalism work has failed to satisfy the needs of people.

Socialism is the only option remaining. Ø

**Socialists talk of a moneyless society. Does that mean we'll use the barter system?**

In a socialist society, there will be no money and no barter. Goods will be voluntarily produced, and services voluntarily supplied to meet people's needs. People will freely take the things they need.

# World without accountant\$

It is often claimed that market competition makes society run efficiently. It is even claimed that it ensures our resources are used in the interests of society as a whole. In reality, the destructive waste generated by the market system is so vast and complex that it is impossible to measure it precisely.

We can get an idea of the scale of present waste by looking at different kinds of jobs and asking whether they are connected with providing for real needs, or whether they are only connected with operating the market itself. For example, does a bank worker contribute to real needs? In their work, bank workers spend the day counting out money or transferring totals from one piece of paper or computer screen to another. Under capitalism it is obviously an indispensable employment. But this work arises from the lending and borrowing of money for investment, purchasing and so on. It is therefore inextricably bound up with the day-to-day operation of the market system. It is not intrinsically useful work, necessary for the production of goods and the running of services for needs.

To banking we could add insurance and finance. But the waste does not stop here. All these functions are serviced by other workers.

For example, bank workers are carried to work by transport, they work in buildings which require maintenance and use equipment such as computers. In this way the administration and servicing of the profits system involves circuits of waste which pervade the entire structure of production.

There are many other examples of employment which is necessary for the profit system but would be immediately redundant in a socialist society of common rather than private ownership and production for use instead of for market sale. The list is a long one: legal workers, certified public accountants, cost accountants, estimators, valuers, claims

assessors, underwriters, brokers, taxation workers, marketing and sales personnel, advertisers, social security workers, cashiers and check-out assistants, police, prison workers, security guards, charities, armies, navies, air forces, armament workers, defense establishments, etc.

The armed forces, in particular, waste vast resources. They use millions of people and divert the most advanced techniques of applied science. On a world scale, tens of millions of people are involved in the war machine. With the abolition of the armed forces, these vast resources of energy, skills, materials, and technology would all become available for useful production in socialism.

Moreover, wars, large or small, are always going on in capitalism and means of production are constantly being destroyed. War objectives include the destruction of industrial networks and communication systems. In the wars of this century the destruction of factories, industrial equipment, buildings, railways, roads and bridges represents a vast amount of waste. It also involves a massive waste of the labor used in their construction.

Other people who are at present wasted under capitalism are the unemployed. They represent the whole spectrum of human skills forced into idleness while human needs are denied. This in itself constitutes the self-evident proof that the capitalist system maintains an economic barrier between production and needs.

A final acute problem of wasted labor arises from world-wide poverty.

The full extent of waste under capitalism is impossible to quantify precisely. But taking account of the main features, we can estimate that, with the elimination of all of capitalism's wasted labor and materials, socialism will probably be able to at least double the number of people available for the production of useful goods and services directly for need.

— P. Lawrence

**ALL PARTY  
EVENTS ARE OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC**



Reformists all *Eduard Bernstein, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro.*

## Revolution or reform?

Given all that we have said so far about capitalism, it seems obvious that something must be done. But what? Can capitalism be made to work differently? Or must there be a social revolution to replace capitalism with some other society? This is a debate that has raged for over a century.

The route of trying to change capitalism, or “reform,” is the one that has been taken by most people who have wanted to improve society. We do not deny that certain reforms won by the working class have helped to improve our general living and working conditions. Indeed, we see little wrong with people campaigning for reforms that bring essential improvements and enhance the quality of their lives, and some reforms do indeed make a difference to the lives of millions and can be viewed as “successful.” There are examples of this in areas like education, housing, child employment, work conditions and social security. However, in this regard we also recognize that such “successes” have in reality done little more than keep workers and their families in efficient working order and, while it has taken the edge off the problem, it has rarely managed to remove the problem

completely. What we are opposed to is the whole culture of reformism, the idea that capitalism can be made palatable with the right reforms. By that we mean that we oppose those organizations that promise to deliver a program of reforms on behalf of the working class, often in order that the organization dishing out the promises can gain a position of power. Such groups, especially those of the left wing, often have real aims quite different from the reform program they peddle. In this, they are being as dishonest as any other politician, from the left or right. The ultimate result of this is disillusionment with the possibility of radical change.

### Getting something done

If you are convinced, however, that groups or parties promising reforms deserve your support, we would urge you to consider the following points.

1. The campaign, whether directed at right-wing or left-wing governments, will often only succeed if it can be reconciled with the profit-making needs of the system. In other words, the reform will often be turned to the benefit of the capitalist class at the expense of any working class gain.

2. Any reform can be reversed and eroded later if a government finds it necessary.

3. Reforms rarely, if ever, actually solve the problem they were intended to solve.

This was summed up by William Morris over a century ago: “The palliatives over which many worthy people are busying themselves now are useless because they are but unorganized partial revolts against a vast, wide-spreading, grasping organization which will, with the unconscious instinct of a plant, meet every attempt at bettering the conditions of the people with an attack on a fresh side.” For more on William Morris, see *William Morris: How We Live and How We Might Live*.

### What if people want too much?

Society already has the knowledge and technology to satisfy all of our basic needs sustainably. There is every reason to believe that socialist society will supply every human being with all the material goods they need for a comfortable, pleasant, enjoyable life. In a socialist society “too much” can only mean “more than is sustainably produced.” If people were still able to decide that they (individually and as a society) needed to over-consume, they would not have succeeded in replacing capitalism with socialism yet, because over-consumption is a behavior symptomatic of capitalism’s need to sell an ever-expanding heap of commodities.

Under capitalism, there is a very large industry devoted to creating needs. It tells us we need toilet seat warmers, nifty gadgets (that often don’t work), new this and more that, and attempts to convince us that our human worth is dependent upon our material wealth. Capitalism requires consumption, whether it improves our lives or not, and drives us to consume up to, and past, our ability even to pay for that consumption. On top of that, goods are not built to last because that would interfere with profit making. Socialism will be a very different society. Goods will be built to last. The buy-buy-buy advertising industry will no longer exist. People may decide that they have better things to do than to produce goods widely seen to be extravagances. And with the pressure turned off, people will even have a chance to discover that acquiring material goods doesn’t necessarily make them any happier.

In other words, although individual reforms may be worthy of support, the political strategy of reformism — promising to win reforms on behalf of others — is a detour that leads nowhere. Those wanting to improve society should seriously question whether capitalism offers enough scope for achieving lasting solutions to the vast range of social problems to which it gives rise. Of course, some improvements are made and some problems are alleviated. Yet new kinds of problems also arise in a society which is changing ever more rapidly, seeking new ways to make a profit. Ø

# Is socialism against human nature?

**H**ow

often do we hear it said “It’s only human nature?” And

mostly about an anti-social piece of behavior, as if

it couldn’t be avoided? Curiously, it is not often said about the best things that people can do. On hearing that someone has risked their life to save another, for some reason we are not inclined to say “Yes, it’s human nature.”

Mostly, the idea of “human nature” is a reflection of a divisive society that is incapable of creating a decent life for all its members. This failure is then rationalized as a pessimistic view that all people (mainly other people) are inherently selfish, greedy and lazy. This view has been used as an objection to socialism, in which all the bad examples of human behavior under capitalism are called upon to say that a society based on equality and voluntary cooperation is impossible.

## Not genetically programmed

This prejudice is also reinforced by arguments which assert that our behavior and our relationships result from the way we are biologically or genetically programmed. These focus on competition, leadership, possessiveness, aggression, social and sexual inequality and an alleged drive to be territorial — but again, all these are behavior patterns that reflect capitalism.

The arrival of capitalism is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history, 90 percent of which has been spent living as hunter gatherers, in small tribes moving from place to place. This ended with the rise of settled agriculture about ten thousand years ago, and a great variety of social and economic organizations have followed across different parts of the world. If our social arrangements were determined by our biology then this diversity of human behavior, relationships and culture would never have arisen.

The anthropological and psychological scientific evidence supports a view that humans are able to adapt to cope with the challenges presented by the natural and social environments within which they have had to live. Evidence from the now completed human genome project supports the view of the adaptability of human beings. Dr. Craig Venter, President and chief scientific officer of Celera Genomics (the private firm that wants to patent genes for profit and thus not someone to be suspected of anti-capitalist or pro-socialist leanings) declared in the official press



release issued by the journal *Science*, which published his firm’s results in its February 16, 2002 issue, that

There are many surprises from this first look at our genetic code that have important implications for humanity. Since the June 26, 2000 announcement our understanding of the human genome has changed in the most fundamental ways. The small number of genes — 30,000 instead of 140,000 — supported the notion that we are not hard-wired. We now know that the notion that one gene leads to one protein and perhaps one disease is false. One gene leads to many different products and those products-proteins- can change dramatically after they are produced. We know that regions of the genome that are not genes may be the key to the complexity we see in humans. We now know the environment acting on these biological steps may be key in making us what we are. Likewise the remarkably small number of genetic variations that occur in genes again suggest a significant role for environmental influences in developing each of our uniqueness.

## Toolmaking, language and thought

While human genetic nature leaves much scope for variation in behavior, there are certain features that we all share and that distinguish us from other species. These include the ability to walk upright, binocular color vision, hands with opposable thumbs, organs capable of speech and the ability to think conceptually. These physical and cognitive features have led to the versatility of the human species as embodied in their labor as well as to social behavior such as the accumulation of shared experience that can be passed down through the generations. The development of tools, from the flint-working technique during the paleolithic period to the computers and space vehicles of today, is central to understanding human history.

It may have been that this toolmaking tradition played a key part in the development of human consciousness. The tools made by early human kind objectified the existence of the tool makers, and in contemplating this they became conscious of their own existence. This reflection of their own lives in their own creations may have led to a heightened self-awareness and an ability to think in an expanded time-frame of past, present and future. Language could then develop from basic references to material objects, to higher levels of abstract thought which expressed a developing, more complex vision of their world. It was possibly then that humanity created ideas and culture, relying less on instinct and more on cerebral calculation. Through this dynamic interaction between human characteristics and the environment which was epitomized by the labor process, human beings not only altered their conditions of life; they changed themselves. What this required was not an invariable set of behavior patterns programmed by genetic coding, but adaptability.

## But why will people work if they don't have to?

This question refers implicitly to the “human nature” objection: since human nature is weak, unreliable or vicious, socialism could not possibly work. This stems from a failure to consider both sides of the question. Freed of the need to get money, people will work to serve both their own and others’ convenience. If enough people didn’t work to meet the needs of communities, society would obviously fall apart. But why would a conscious majority vote to establish socialism in the first place if they did not already understand that someone must be prepared to do the work? Work, like leisure, is part of human life. Today rich people work when they don’t have to, because they, like many of the rest of us, enjoy working. Many people work harder at their hobbies than they do at work. It is the nature of employment that makes it “work” instead of pleasure. Work needn’t be a part of the day we wish would end.

Many people who are now unemployed, working in socially unnecessary occupations, imprisoned or people whom we now refer to politely as “investors” will be available to do whatever work needs to be done. This means that “jobs” will be spread out among more people, the concept of a “workday” will probably be radically redefined, and people will identify with working as decision-making participants, not as workers. “Dirty work” will become much cleaner once there is no longer anyone at the top to command those at the bottom to do things they had no say in determining the need for to begin with; any work that is still inherently dangerous or unpleasant will be re-evaluated based on the community’s need for it. If no one chose to mine coal or to work in a restaurant, coal mines would shut down and restaurants would vanish into history.

## Predisposed to cooperation

But none of this would have been possible without cooperation. While we may not say that cooperation is programmed into our genes, it is certainly required for our social development. The view that cooperation was essential to the survival and development of human society has recently been supported by the work of the anthropologist Andrew Whiten, an evolutionary psychologist at St. Andrew’s University in the U.K. He argues that egalitarianism, sharing and lack of domination were the most prominent features in hunter-gatherer societies.

By cooperating with others through a division of labor we greatly increase what can be produced for our mutual benefit. Besides these material benefits, cooperation enables us to develop as individuals. Our individuality grows and finds its expression in relation to others, and this would be impossible in social isolation. In this process of individual growth we draw not only upon personal relationships but upon society in general and even upon the lives of those who lived in the past.

Cooperation is sometimes said to be impossible because there is an inherent conflict between self-interest and the interests of others. In fact, the reverse is true. The interests of the individual are best realized when people are working together. Ø



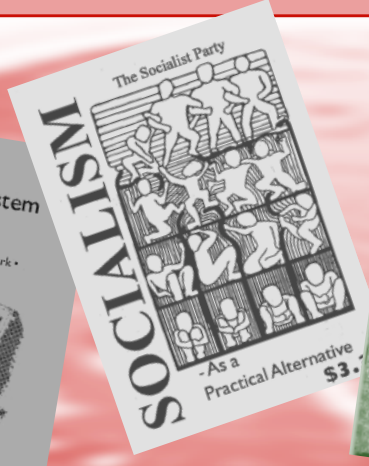
COVER ART: Refugee camp at Benako, Tanzania, 1994, by Sebastião Salgado. For samples of his work, see <http://www.masters-of-photography.com/S/salgado/salgado.html>.

## A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

This issue was put together from a variety of sources. **UNSIGNED ARTICLES:** “Capitalism in a nutshell” (originally titled “What is capitalism?”), “Revolution or Reform?” and “Is socialism against human nature?” were lifted from the WSM Web site (<http://www.worldsocialism.org>) with slight modifications, for which we take all responsibility; the same for the “Frequently Asked Questions” scattered throughout, with some extensive transformations in a few cases (and our apologies). “Socialism in a nutshell” (originally “What is socialism?”) is adapted from a leaflet authored by the Socialist Party of Canada. **SIGNED ARTICLES:** “How to get everything for free” comes from a party leaflet and can also be found in its original form on the WSM Web site. “World without accountants” lives there likewise, along with many other excellent explorations of the case for socialism. “A world fit for human beings” is published unaltered, as it appeared in *New Democracy*; it has also been recycled as a party leaflet.

— Editorial Committee

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# THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## object

**The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.**

## declaration of principles

**The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:**

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

**THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.**



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

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**SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN**, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: *Socialist Standard* (\$1.50). [TEL. 020 7622 3811; FAX 020 7622 3665] • [spgb@worldsocialism.org](mailto:spgb@worldsocialism.org); <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb>

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This issue of the *World Socialist Review* was printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

**world socialist review/17**

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

**To establish socialism, the working class throughout the must gain control of the powers of government through their political organizations.**

It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power means control of the main avenues of "education" and propaganda, either directly or indirectly. It also means control of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush working-class attempts at violent opposition to the effects of capitalism. Moreover, the police and the armed forces are often used to combat workers during strikes and industrial disputes with employers. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state. Once this has been accomplished, the state will be converted from a coercive government over people to an administration over things and community affairs. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. Socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

**The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.**

Indeed, by its very nature, capitalism requires continual reform. But reforms cannot alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Whatever the reformers' intentions, reforms function only to make capitalism run more smoothly and to make present-day society more palatable

to the working class by holding out false hopes of a fundamental change or radical improvement. In the long run, reforms benefit the owning, capitalist, class rather than the class that produces the wealth. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

**The World Socialist Party does not support, directly or indirectly, any political party other than our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement.** We can only oppose those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The form of society once in effect in the Soviet Union, and still more or less in effect in China and Cuba now, was not and is not socialism or communism.** It was a dictatorial, bureaucratic form of state capitalism. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are produced primarily for profit and not primarily for use. Nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alters the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

**Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities, their mental and physical energies, at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.** Workers without such organizations have no reliable economic weapons with which to resist the attempts of employers to beat down their standards. But unions necessarily work

within the framework of capitalism and are useful, therefore, only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between wage-labor and capital. They can only react to capital's fiat, particularly in the case of long-term issues like automation or unemployment. Every wage or salary increase, in fact, only spurs employers and investors to accelerate the replacement of humans by machines in the workplace. If anything, instead of foolishly selling themselves short by demanding "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," workers would do far better to follow Marx's advice and simply abolish employment altogether.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history.** While some concepts of spirituality, loosely defined, are not necessarily incompatible with that conception, socialists see the problems that wrack human society as material and political, and their solutions as likewise material and political, not supernatural. Particular religious leaders may rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment or worse for their efforts. But where this means that they seek solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish, they demonstrate a lack of understanding of the development of social evolution, and socialists cannot endorse their views.

By the same token, membership in formally defined religious denominations or adherence to their beliefs can defeat people's best intentions unawares. The doctrines of organized religions traditionally locate the solution to society's problems in the individual's salvation and remain fundamentally indifferent to the fate of the human social community. At their most progressive they seek only to modify the existing institutions of a class-divided society, and at their most reactionary they openly obstruct even that desire. Such confusion over goals in an organization claiming to practice scientific socialism would sooner or later undermine its revolutionary character, for the tendency of such thinking is to confine discussion of capitalism's problems to the horizon of existing society, a blindness fatal to the socialist viewpoint. ◊

Some work may be so distasteful that nobody will want to do it. If no one wants to mine coal, for example, then no coal will be mined; other ways have already been found to heat homes. But it's human nature to be happiest when engaged in goal-oriented activity. Most socially necessary work is not so inherently unpleasant that people won't be willing to take their turn.

When goods are produced and services performed with no thought of making money, the outlook will be very different from what it is today. It's not just that the people planning production will be doing it to satisfy the needs of their community, but also that the people involved in production will have chosen that involvement freely. If a worker would rather be doing something else that day, she won't be at work — she'll be elsewhere: playing with her kids, fishing, painting the living room. The only people engaged in production will be people who want to be, and who will therefore do it well.

If anyone reading this is worried about the work of the world not getting done, remember what huge numbers of people today are not "working" at all: the unemployed, the homeless, the disabled. Even of those who are "working," many of us are not working at anything socially useful. I'm thinking of people in the armed services, in insurance, in advertising, in banking and lending, the police force — the list of paid jobs that will become completely unnecessary can go on and on. And also consider how many people are "working" now, only to compete with



other people doing the same thing! It certainly doesn't make sense, for example, that so many competing auto plants are running at once. When money is "no object," maybe only Cadillacs and Rolls Royces will be produced, and with skilled workers who like to make cars organizing their own plants, it won't take as many of them as it does when you've got all those different, competing outfits. (Actually, this may be a bad example, because it's perfectly possible that once production is for use instead of for profit, automobiles will be replaced altogether with means of transportation that don't seem "practical" under capitalism — hovercraft? Moving roadways? Who knows!)

By a generation or two after the revolution, the people who have been born and raised in a classless, moneyless society will have conceived all sorts of ways of managing that we can't begin to picture.

Huge changes, however, don't usually happen overnight.

### The day after

It's my guess (only a guess, of course) that the day after the Revolution most people will go to their usual workplace just as they did the day before. Old habits die hard, and besides, for a lot of people the workplace is where they feel the strongest sense of community. The people whose jobs serve no purpose at all (bankers, insurance salesmen, and the like)

may not continue meeting their former fellow-employees very long, or maybe they'll decide to begin some venture together that would be pleasant and useful. Those of us whose work is useful will certainly recognize that and continue to perform it. Gradually, we can alter the conditions of work to suit our own needs and those of society as well. (Example: I myself am a nurse. I like what I do. Many nurses today like their work, but most probably would rather not spend as much time at it as they do now. So nurses who work in a hospital can get together, either with or without some help from the Scheduling Department, and figure

out a mutually agreeable schedule of work.)

This kind of flexibility is something that is sure to be valued.

Who wants to do the same thing day after day after day? It's hard to make a change now because work is all connected to being able to pay for things. Once that connection is broken, once you don't have to pay for things, if you get tired of doing something you can just stop. And decide what you'd rather do. And if you don't feel like doing anything at all for a while, fine! We'll have the right to be lazy.

— Karla Ellenbogen

**Do we want "jobs"? I'd rather not need a job in order to live well.**

### Does socialism mean forced equality for everyone?

**No. People are different and have different needs. Some needs will be more "expensive" than others to satisfy (in terms of resources and labor needed). On the other hand, it seems unlikely many people will find it easy, on the strength of their good looks, to interest their peers in volunteering to help them build more than one castle, construct two or three yachts or reserve Central Park for their afternoon nap.**

### Wouldn't everyone have to be altruistic for socialism to work?

**No. Socialism isn't based upon altruism. Socialism will work even if everyone suddenly decides that they dislike everyone else. Supporting socialism involves recognizing the fact that the current system just doesn't work for most people. Socialism will be a society in which satisfying an individual's self-interest is the result of satisfying everyone's needs. It is enlightened self-interest that will work for the majority.**

# A world fit for human beings

Being clear on goals is central to getting where you want to go. If the goal is not clear, it's unlikely that action will lead in the right direction. Unfortunately, most "socialist," "leftist," and "radical" groups betray their basic confusion when the subject of goals comes up. The often-heard rallying cries for "The Right to Work," or "Jobs for All, with a minimum wage high enough for everyone to have a decent standard of living" are examples of what I mean.

Do we want "jobs"? I'd rather not need a job in order to live well.

I go along with Paul LaFargue, who argued not for the "right to work" but for the "right to be lazy."

Our goal must be free access to everything we need or want.

## No profit — no laundromat!

Money is only useful when there is a need to limit access to things because of scarcity; but the reason things are scarce under capitalism is not that we working people can't produce enough — it's that if things became too abundantly available, they could no longer be sold profitably. Money is no longer socially necessary. After the revolution that ends capitalism, production won't be contingent on profits, but on the necessity of satisfying our own human wants and needs.

Another important goal must be the ability to make meaningful choices about our own lives (the prerequisite to real democracy.) Very few real choices are ours to make as long as we are forced to earn a living. If we're lucky, we may get to make a decision about how to earn a living, but not about whether we want to. For most ordinary people, earning a living takes up so much of our time and energy that there's not much left over for other things.

Only when we have free access to our needs, will the ability to make meaningful choices about our own lives become possible.

A third goal most people share is that we want to be part of a community of equals. In capitalist society, there are two classes of people: those who are exempt from the necessity of earning a living because they own the means of production (the capitalists), and the rest of us. Capitalism creates an atmosphere of scarcity that encourages selfishness and greed, and makes it inevitable that some people will have an easy life while others



are homeless and hungry. So another way of phrasing this third goal (living in a community of equals) is that we want a classless society.

Imagine, then, a classless, moneyless system of society, where everybody has a common right of access to the wealth of the world. This would be a world fit for human beings to live in. What would it be like?

Start by picturing what your own life would be like if money were no object (literally)! If money were no object, wouldn't we want to do things the best way we could?

We wouldn't settle for less! We would want to be surrounded by beauty in our homes, and our communities. We would want to breathe unpolluted air, feed our kids healthy food, be able to travel when we wanted to. (I remember when my son was in nursery school, he and his best friend Ian both got terrible colds. Ian's parents, without any hesitation, took him to a Caribbean island where he could recover in the warmth of the sun. That's something everyone should be able to do.)

## Say no! to imploding imaginations

The division between "work" and "leisure" will be blurred in a world fit for human beings, and many things that are thought of as leisure activities now will result in benefits to the community. People will no longer be prevented from doing socially useful things by the necessity to spend eight hours a day at labor that tires them out and is so boring that their imaginations atrophy.

Once we can organize our time to suit ourselves, there's no way of knowing exactly what society will get to look like. Social evolution will not end just because capitalism ends. As time goes on, gradually things will change, according to the way the community chooses. Society will certainly be democratic (in the real sense); no one will have any way to coerce anyone else into doing something they don't want to do. But there are dozens of ways people might choose to run things. Organization and management will be no less necessary than they are now — only where now the goal of management is to maximize profits for the capitalist elite, in the world which is our goal it will be to increase efficiency and pleasure in accomplishing a task.

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# World Socialist Review

No. 19 • Prisons • \$2.00



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

## PRISONERS OF CAPITAL

In every class-divided society since history began, laws have been set up in order to protect the interests of the ruling class. That is the purpose of law and government. In a socialist world, where there are no classes, customs that support the interests of the whole human community will replace laws.

### INSIDE:

capital's global stockade  
a world without prisons  
a day in the life  
the security scam  
the morality of amerika  
the thirteenth amendment  
leonard peltier & the primal needs of capital

# Prisoners of capital

Millions of human beings around the world are forcibly detained, their liberties removed by governmental authorities. Anyone who takes seriously the immediate potential for replacing capitalism with a world of real abundance and freedom knows already that the great majority of crimes are either crimes against property or involve the illegal trafficking of property — or are the likely direct result of living the restricted and stressful life of a wage-slave.

While there are those who justify the existence of laws on moral and ideological grounds, the defenders of the status quo must always argue their case referring to a swashbuckler's haven of spurious doctrines, some of them philosophical ("free will"), theological ("good and evil"), psychological ("mental illness") or political ("justice"). And yet the wasting away of countless millions of human lives remains a potent critique of a society of private property, as much as the maltreatment and exploitation of animals or children in our society. The sheer hypocrisy and failure of the law is inevitably the feature subject of this issue.

It is illegal to kill one's fellows in a fit of rage but perfectly legal to kill fellow workers from other countries to satisfy the ruling class's need to protect or assert its economic or political spheres of influence in another part of the world. One must not steal, say both the law and the Bible, and yet it is perfectly legal and morally acceptable to rob working people every day of the wealth they produce above their wages, distilling the high life for the greedy and lazy few out of the graduated deprivations visited on the majority, stymying people's efforts to provide enough for themselves and their children. The subject of prisons goes to the very heart of our so-called civil society, putting to shame the naïve suggestion that we live in a democratic society. The truth is that a society of privilege must be protected by the brute powers of the law. We are not allowed to enjoy more wealth than the crumbs we are permitted in our wages or welfare income, and anybody who attempts this in our society will be handcuffed and taken away.

Make no mistake about it, the lack of freedom inside the prison cells directly mirrors the lack of freedom for working people outside them. On the outside you will be forced to work, unless you want to live in a cardboard box and seek food in a garbage can; you will be forced to accept your wages or salary



for the work you do, forced to accept the nature of the job, forced to spend vast hours of your life even outside work just preparing for it and getting to and from it. You will be forced to put up with the other side effects of capitalism — its pollution, its stress, its shoddy goods, its wars, and the fact that billions must starve to death, including tens of millions of children each year. Your "free" time itself will be carved up into the various consumer "entertainments" and "pleasures" available for the right price. What is truly yours in capitalism is debatable.

Your fate and that of the prisoners who languish behind bars every day are in-

separably intertwined. Indeed, inside or outside prison, we will never be free until we establish a society in which humans come first and the production of wealth is oriented toward meeting our needs and those of our children — one in which we are no longer forced to work in order to be adequately fed, clothed and housed, and in which the economic priorities of the rich no longer send poor and uneducated youth to die abroad, or condemn the planet to a slow death by self-poisoning. When property is owned in common, we will find ways as a community to better meet our needs for wealth, creativity, decision-making, love, rest, productivity, and freedom.

We challenge the myth of the present era that some people are good and others evil, or that crime is an entirely moral issue. We maintain as scientific socialists that behavior must be understood in its social context: that of a society divided into two classes, one owning the vast proportion of wealth without working for it, and the other producing all the wealth while owning but a miniscule proportion of it.

Until the vast majority of us are liberated from the prison of being workers, we must denounce all the moralistic assumptions and shoddy social analyses of our public behaviors that lead so many of us to be locked away behind bars. We will on such a glorious day liberate our brothers and sisters in jail, and we urge them now to join us in the worldwide project of designing a system that promotes *for real* the enjoyment of the abundant wealth and freedom that are our birthright. Ø

# ...In capital's global stockade



Prisons are nothing if not about boundaries, and global capitalism has long utilized the boundaries of the nation state to its advantage. All nation states have their respective unique organizations of government, and each is filled with a type of head warden and plenty of guards to keep the inmates toeing the line. And, as wardens go, these heads of state are most often hubris-filled, authoritarian, power-intoxicated people who stab each other in the back vying for power, wealth, and prestige.

Warden Bush himself has risen in the last decade, astonishingly, from Head Honcho of the Lone Star State to Head Warden of the whole U.S. penal empire (proof positive no outstanding intellect is required to be a warden), and now seems to be vying for Global Executive Imperial Director of Capitalist Prisons. This is best exemplified by the recent drubbing given to Warden Hussein and his prisoners, while simultaneously sticking it to the domestic inmates of the U.S. Homeland Security Unit. And what about the prisoners of the U.S. national enclosure?

During my 14 years as a prisoner in Texas prisons, I've had ample time to reflect on the concept of prisons and imprisonment. I've come to the conclusion that it is not only those locked behind the concrete enclosures officially designated as "prisons" who are imprisoned, and that there are many types of prisons. I would define imprisonment as a state of existence in which the freedom to make choices and exercise options is extremely limited, controlled, or denied altogether by persons who have power over you, and in which misery, deprivation, dehumanization, violence, and coerced servitude are norms accompanied by the constant threat of negative sanctions.

Under this broadened rubric, I would venture to say that the world itself has become a type of prison, not literally of the walls and bars type, but one in which the inmates wear manacles forged by capitalism, and who find themselves, the world over, in various states of relative captivity and exploitation. It was noted once by the Situationists that existence under capitalism is not life at all, but mere survival. In any prison setting the name of the game is survival whether it be in San Quentin, the jungles of Colombia, or in Iraq.

One recent and extremely hot day, while slaving in the prison kitchen at the Huntsville Walls Unit, a Mexican fellow prisoner and I found ourselves in the refrigeration vault attempting to cool off. We were also discussing the novels of B. Traven. I explained to my friend that B. Traven had escaped the rising tide of reaction in post-World War I Germany, and probably a firing squad as well, and after much travel under numerous aliases, he settled in the jungles of Chiapas, Mexico. This was in the 1920s, and besides studying the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples in that region, Traven wrote novels from a working-class and somewhat materialist philosophical perspective.

To attempt a rudimentary explanation of materialism to my friend, I queried him as to why he had risked death by heat or exhaustion and/or the bullets of border guards just to come to the U.S.A. His instant reply was, "To make more money!" "Exactly!" I said. "Human beings are social beings who, just by virtue of being human, have material wants and needs that must be met. Unfortunately, we live in an anti-social, class-divided economic system based on competition and callousness in which working people are forced to sell themselves as dearly as possible in order simply to survive. Material forces compelled you to strike out against all odds to claim a better price for your labor power. Just as the same material forces in Germany 90-odd years ago resulted in war, revolution and reaction, and compelled B.Traven to flee for his life." My Mexican amigo perceived survival in the U.S. Homeland Security enclosure as sweeter than within the Mexican national enclosure. Ironically, though, my friend, once imprisoned by national boundaries and poverty, now finds himself a chattel in a Texas prison ... working for free.

## Open the doors ...

In our conversation we touched upon the economic motivations and contingencies between the recent war and the rise in Texas parole rates. Texas, along with many other states facing debt crises, has no federal funds to support its prison system, in part because of the imperialist "permanent war" on terrorism. In short, as the bomb bay doors swing open raining death and destruction over foreign lands, prison doors here swing open releasing prisoners to an already rended social fabric. It's a shame that the relative break Texas prisoners are experiencing is in part at the expense of workers' misery in the Middle East. I have no doubt that more than a few of the inmates of those national enclosures would swap their current digs for three hots and a cot here in a Texas prison.

Existence in prison, for those who give a damn, entails a constant vigilance toward maintaining hard-won rights and reforms in order just to be able to exercise a modicum of choice and improved conditions. Hard-won, because prisoners have put in painful hours of legal research, often under conditions of harassment, to litigate for these reforms. Very often, work-

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*Continued on next page*

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strikes, hunger-strikes, and other forms of resistance were initiated in the course of struggle, resulting in beatings and loss of life for prisoners. Failure to protect these reforms can mean the difference between showering once a day as opposed to once every three days, or the right not to be strip-searched in 20-degree weather or shackled to a post in 100-degree weather. These reforms constantly face the threat of retraction or modification by the prisoncrats and their legal teams, and it is much the same for wage-slaves in the U.S. and abroad. Here, the eight-hour day seems to have fallen by the wayside, and time-and-a-half after 40 hours meets the slippery slope *à la Bush*.

For the domestic inmates of the U.S. Homeland Security Enclosure, such social safety net reforms as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid and unemployment benefits, have been cut back at a time when workers are suffering high unemployment rates and the insecurities of recession. Yet these reforms, important as they are to making survival more tolerable, are never the ultimate answer, and can never provide lasting security. They are only defensive measures.

### Political servitude

Servitude is an almost universal attribute of imprisonment. The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution precludes involuntary servitude, except as punishment for criminal acts. Texas prisoners are required to slave for forty hours a week, often out in the gruelling heat, for no financial remuneration. This is all legitimized by the Constitution. The line in the Constitution would seem to imply that there is something voluntary about the practice of wage slavery, or having to choose between it and starvation.

Wage slaves the world over cannot find work, and when they do, often have to perform it under horrendous conditions for a paltry sum. Indeed, for many wage slaves in capital's global prison, working to provide food and shelter for self and family amounts to a Hobson's choice of killing one's self simply to survive. Here in the relative comfort of the so-called First World, many wage-slaves are overworked and underpaid, and the economic insecur-

ity of high unemployment compels many workers to seek employment in the armed forces or to take jobs as prison guards. None of these conditions would be freely chosen or volunteered for, or even tolerated, were the workers aware of the highly practical alternative of Socialism.

### Short-term myopia

Prisons are notorious polluters, subjecting both inmates and nearby residents to senseless toxic pollution. This has as much to do with cutting budgetary corners as it does with crass disrespect for the environment. Our global capitalist stockade is much the same, being polluted from economic corner-cutting and a myopic short-term gain outlook held by our warders. Our collective conditions of confinement have become perilously worse. No longer are we merely enslaved and oppressed. We now find ourselves subjected to cancer-causing pollutants at every level and the very real threat of extinguishing life on this planet.

From that perspective, the drag effect of millions of minds being conditioned to believe that survival under capitalism is the best we humans can achieve is probably the single greatest threat to a livable future. No prison conditions were ever improved without a significant number of prisoners becoming politically conscious and solid in a struggle. Yet simple reforms will not suffice and in the end will only bring about our ultimate demise. Capital's stockade is global, so escape is not an option. That leaves the choice between acquiescing to death in prison or collectively bringing about a socialist future with life for all humanity.

It is one of a prisoner's worst fears that he or she may die within prison walls. All prisoners long to walk the earth once more. Yet when I finally emerge from the walls of this Texas prison in a couple of years, I will still be within the confines of capitalism, manacled by economic hardship, insecurity, war, pollution, and governmental repression. I thirst with all my being to one day live in a world without prisons of any kind, and that's why I'm a socialist.

Let's get solid, Fellow Prisoners, and create a truly Free World!

— Kevin Glover

### HARMO (Harry Morrison) 1912 – 2004

*Died of a heart attack May 13, 2004.* It would be hard to overestimate his contribution to the World Socialist Movement. His death reaches beyond personal loss. Harry Morrison became convinced of the case for socialism as a young man, influenced by an older brother who had first heard it in Toronto. Like many others, Harry did his share of traveling in boxcars; he turned up in Boston c. 1937 but soon was off to California. Returning in 1939, he met and married a comrade, Sally Kligman, at one of Boston Local's socials. They moved back to Los Angeles in 1941 and contacted comrades there. Then finally back to Boston again in 1947 with their five-year-old daughter, Anita, where Harry and Sally became active Local members. He loved to play the guitar at party gatherings. Harmo served on the NAC for many years and kept party headquarters afloat as the Local went into decline in the 70s, but heart problems eventually forced his withdrawal from active party work. He used this idle time, as a political prisoner might, to do research and write more extensively on socialist topics. Then in 1987, Sally died. Two years later, McFarland & Co. published *The Socialism of Bernard Shaw*, which we still distribute, and Harry was busily sending round to publishers two other draft manuscripts, one on Jack London and the other on the Soviet Union. But though he lived alone, he did not just keep to himself. He now also had two grandchildren to enjoy. He would never turn down an invitation to a social gathering, and liked to visit and be visited by comrades in the area, including from the SPGB (Cdes. Vic Vanni and Tony McNeil the most recent).

After a second heart attack in December 2002, Harry moved into a Brookline nursing home. A socialist to the end, he would give talks on Marxism to his fellow residents, with one or two comrades and family members helping out. Harmo served on the Editorial Committee and wrote energetically and voluminously (sometimes anonymously) for the party journal, *The Western Socialist (WS)*; he later also became the party's chief contact person and correspondent, firing off letters with as much flair as his articles. He had a real gift for articulating the socialist analysis and was a fine outdoor speaker who enjoyed beating the pants off opponents in local debates. During the 40s and 50s, he spoke from the party's platform on Boston Common; and even after television, thugs, traffic and the underground parking garage pretty much destroyed Speaker's Corner down by Charles Street in the 60s, he kept the socialist presence there alive throughout the 70s, staging impromptu talks along the Tremont Street side. For a decade or so in the 60s and 70s, the WSP meanwhile kept a weekly radio spot on WCRB Boston, and Harry was among those comrades who wrote five-minute scripts for the show; he was even one of the on-air readers. When the WSP decided in 1974 to publish a pamphlet commemorating the WS's 300th issue — *The Perspective for World Socialism*, which we still distribute — 30 or so of his radio essays found their way into it. During the same period, he very ably and adroitly put across the socialist viewpoint to the late Haywood Vincent's listeners on AM radio and to Adam Burak's on FM as well. ☺



# A world without prisons



Few institutions illustrate the oppression of people in capitalism better than prisons. Millions of people, almost completely members of the working class, in the United States and around the world, are presently wasting away for violations of the laws of private property or for crimes that stem from residing in a society based on want for some and privilege for others.

There is no question that the vast majority of crimes today for which individuals are incarcerated are crimes of property. The Crime Index for 2001 makes it clear that somewhere in the region of 84 to 90 percent of crimes are entirely property-related. Surveying the statistics from several states, we find that 173,000 out of 192,000 crimes were property-related in Alabama (90 percent). In California, 1.13 million people were arrested for property crimes out of a total of 1.34 million arrests (84 percent). In Florida, there were 782,000 property crimes out of 913,000 crimes (85 percent). In Kentucky, there were 109,000 property crimes out of 119,000 crimes (91 percent). All states fell roughly in this range, with 84 percent being the lowest. Violent crimes represented the next largest group, standing at about 10-18 percent of all crimes. Murders fell into the smallest group, representing roughly 0.1 to 0.2 percent of all crimes.

Capitalism is a society of haves and have-nots. The market economy generates such poverty and artificial scarcities that it is the prime cause of thefts. Even

average wage and salary earners must seriously budget their incomes to obtain the necessities and luxuries of life. The very system is rooted in an individualistic dog-eat-dog ethic that wastes resources on a vast scale, thus pre-empting any possibility for making rational use of our technological and productive capacity. Workers are denied access to the wealth they have collectively produced as a class, and so must make do with the crumbs called wages and salaries with which to obtain what they need or want. By contrast, they produce surplus value for their employers, which entitles a small class of owners to live off a vast store of accumulated wealth.

## Another way to work the system?

To make matters worse, wealth is only produced in capitalism if it may generate a profit. Thus, there are never sufficient items of wealth to meet the needs of the human population, not even sufficient jobs in which workers may sell themselves to the employing class to receive wages. It is therefore no surprise to find that the vast majority of crimes occur in the poorest neighborhoods, where most people make ends meet for themselves or their families only with the utmost difficulty, if at all, and where even the prospect of finding a job is bleak.

Such social relations of inequality as we find in capitalism are essential to explain-

ing why so many African-Americans in the U.S. are incarcerated for crimes of property, and for crimes of selling drugs. In 1997, 33 percent of all arrests in the entire country were of blacks,<sup>1</sup> and in 1999, 49 percent of all prison inmates were black, even though African-Americans represented only about 13 percent of the overall population. Most of the arrests of this population were for low-level drug offenses. Interestingly, while over 90 percent of those tried for drug offenses in the state of California in 1995 were minorities, the drug-using population in that same state was more than 60 percent white. The 60 percent of drug users probably did not reside in the same extremely impoverished communities as the non-white 90 percent of drug offenders. One must, after all, have a considerable amount of money (at least, more than can be obtained from welfare checks) to spend on expensive drugs, money available to almost no one in the poorest, often minority, neighborhoods of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Racism likely also plays a part in the disproportionately high number of arrests and incarcerations of black youth — they are more likely to be stopped, frisked, arrested, prosecuted, sentenced and executed than whites committing the same crimes. The effects of this high rate of incarceration upon black working-class communities have been devastating. What happens when 30 percent of Afri-

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Street, "Race, Prison and Poverty," *Zmag*, [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org).

*Continued on next page*

can-American males ages 20-29 are snared in the “3 P’s” of prison, probation, or parole? It means, for starters, that the black community has been effectively denied participation in the electoral system, after winning it in the successful civil rights marches and protests of the 1950s and 1960s. Ten states deny voting rights for life to ex-felons, 32 deny them to felons on parole, and 29 states disenfranchise felony probationers. Thus, at any given time, a vast proportion of blacks are not able to exercise any political rights at all. Furthermore, parolees are often denied employment opportunities. There are counties in California in which a mere 21 percent of that state’s parolees are working full time. This official cold shoulder further fuels the cycle of poverty in black communities. Thomas K. Lowenstein, director of the Electronic Policy Network, estimates that 80 percent of prison inmates are parents. Children of prisoners are five times more likely to experience incarceration than those children who never had to suffer the misery of having their parents locked away, according to other researchers.<sup>3</sup>

After being released from prison, ex-cons are poorly equipped to sell themselves in the job market. This is because the jobs available in prison are of the types that are no longer as prevalent in the United States, but of the kind that employers pay for dirt cheap in the Third World. Unless U.S. prisoners are expected to emigrate to the sewing sweat shops of Central America where they would be lucky to make \$200 a year, the job skills they obtain in prison will be next to useless, thus encouraging them to return to the far more lucrative illegal activities they engaged in before. Besides, most black and poor communities have so few jobs available that job training alone will be irrelevant in removing the economic

conditions that led to the high crime rates in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

Poverty is simply a fact of capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system based on commodity production. It is incapable of producing wealth outside of its narrow profit motive, and incapable of hiring workers that it may not generate a profit from. Therefore, inevitably capitalism generates poverty. For as long as it has existed, millions of workers have been pressured into making money illegally, selling drugs, selling their bodies, robbing banks, breaking into homes and so on — and millions more will continue to follow them.

**Slavery was not completely abolished after the Civil War but maintained for the prison population. Indeed, after the Civil War, state prisons frequently rented out prison labor to private contractors.**

Prisons are among the most thriving slave communities in the United States or even the rest of the world (to be listed along with the still rampant enslavement of women and children, especially in Asia). The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution that abolished slavery on December 18, 1865, clearly states: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted*, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction” (author’s emphasis). Slavery therefore was not completely abolished after the Civil War but maintained for the prison population. Indeed, after the Civil War, state prisons frequently rented out prison labor to private contractors. This is what led the Virginia Supreme Court to remark in an 1871 case known as “Ruffin v. Commonwealth” that prisoners were “slaves of the state.” For 70 years following the Civil War most state and federal prisons were completely self-sufficient slave economies, producing their own goods and

food, and also some industrial products, without the producers being paid. Such blatantly slave or capitalist relations, where inmates were paid pitiful wages, were mostly abolished from the 1930s until the 1980s, when states began to reinstate that practice once more. In 1986, Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger urged the transformation of prisons again into “factories with fences.” Prisons were to return to being self-sufficient, profit-generating enterprises.

Such alterations in prison policy furnish an interesting parallel with the historic struggle between slavery and capitalism as modes of production. Slavery was finally abolished in this country in 1865 not only because it was an unarguably oppressive institution that understandably aroused the abolitionist sentiments of decent and just-minded men and women, but also because it was less efficient than wage slavery. Slaves and their families had to be clothed, fed and housed even when they did not or could not work. The ties of obligation that the chattel slave owner had for his human property often led slaves to attempt to destroy the owner’s machinery, burn his fields, even kill him. With the worldwide development of industrial capitalism’s far more efficient system of human exploitation, the bond of obligation between worker and employer was broken. Workers were now “free” — free to starve, free to be homeless, free to be let off the job, free to manage on meagre wages, free to pay a doctor to attend to them in their illness.

#### **You work, therefore I am ... rich**

This freedom was truly a remarkable contribution to society, allowing the new rulers, the capitalists, the freedom to more or less pay their wages without any added responsibilities. (Although the working class over the past 150 years did insist on several further responsibilities that would be paid for out of their employers’ surplus value, it never contemplated abolishing the essential relations of employer and worker [owner and non-owner] — the modern version of master and slave.) But prisons have managed to preserve a great

<sup>3</sup> See Clyde E. DeBerry, *Blacks in corrections*, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert C. Witt, *An Inside Job*, 1997, for a moving personal and sociological account written by an ex-con.

deal of the social and economic relations of chattel slavery, while similarly insisting upon a capitalist revolution in favor of transforming the previous slave prisoners into far more efficient wage workers, even though their wages are rarely more than the minimum.

### **Hard life, hard feelings**

It is often claimed that socialism is impossible because people are spontaneously lazy and avoid working whenever they can. But perversely enough, one of the most powerful arguments against this claim is based on observing how humans behave in prison. These are behaviors that exist far less commonly outside the prison walls, and so serve to illustrate how diverse are human behaviors and how much they reflect the material conditions of life. For inside the prison walls, denied freedom and dignity, humans degenerate into fearful, revengeful, murderous, and exploitative monsters in order to survive the terrible ordeals of incarceration. Every year, there are over 300,000 instances of (reported) rapes in prisons, almost all of men raping other men: 40,000 of which are of male children in juvenile detention centers and 123,000 of men in county jails, with roughly 5,000 rape victims being women. Most rapes are not reported, so it is likely the figures are actually many times greater than these available statistics. It has been estimated that unwanted sexual advances among inmates occur on the order of 80,000 a day.

The most likely victims of rape in American prisons are smaller young whites from that section of the working class frequently and incorrectly termed “middle class” for its greater propensity to secure employment; they are besides either not street-smart, or they have no gang affiliations. Sixty-nine percent of rape victims in prisons are white, while 85 percent of rapists in prison are black. The reason for such an ethnically disproportionate statistic is that the white prisoners are less likely to have established solidarity networks while in prison, since they are a minority in the prison but a majority on the outside, while the blacks are a minority outside but a majority inside.

Prisoners typically fall into three classes while in prison. There is a group of *predators*, also known as *jockers*, *studs*, *wolves* and *pitchers*. This group will seek out new victims and will always attack in groups. This group views itself as virile “men.” These men have never been penetrated or raped (or they would immediately lose their predator status). The second group is known as the *jailhouse queens*. This group actively carries on a female-like existence and is cherished by the predators.

Finally, the third group is known as the *punks* or *fuck boys*. These are the younger, weaker inmates who have been “turned out” by the stronger inmates. They are normally assaulted days after they arrive, and these attacks will continue until they either get protection, are locked up in protective custody, or turn queen themselves. AIDS/HIV is six times the national average in prisons, since rapists do not wear condoms. The 2001 Human Rights Watch report “No Escape: Male Rape in U.S. Prisons” describes a nauseating catalogue of beatings, rapes, and murders inflicted on new prisoners by other inmates. This same report describes understandably extremely high rates of clinical depression, anxiety disorders (for example, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), suicidal and homicidal tendencies found among prisoners who may not have been thus afflicted when they were first incarcerated.<sup>5</sup>

Prisons clearly fail to keep the population safe from itself. They play a considerable role in causing people who were sane before to develop antisocial personalities, and in adding to the population’s mental illness. They deprive children of their parents and communities of their members’ economic and other personal contributions, while sadistically punishing individuals on the surreal assumption that the prisoners “freely” chose their crime in a morally equal and objective universe, rather than acted within a seriously circumscribed universe of poverty, trauma, violence and alienation — one

rife in antisocial and manipulative models of behavior.

In *The Psychopathic Mind: Origins, Dynamics, and Treatment* (1995), Dr. J. Reid Meloy wrote of several of the most common environmental variables common to sociopaths (who account for some of the violent crimes and almost all of the murders). These individuals, who have lost or have never developed a sense of empathy or concern for the rights or feelings of others, often identify with an aggressive role model in their own lives, such as an abusive parent. They attack the weaker, more vulnerable self by projecting it onto others. As multiple murderer Dennis Nilsen put it, “I was killing myself only, but it was always the bystander who died.”

According to Dr. Meloy, such antisocial personalities can be explained in various ways: frequently they have lost a parent (about 60 percent), have been deprived of love or nurturing (detached, absent parents), received inconsistent discipline (where the father for example might have been stern and the mother overly permissive, causing the child to grow up manipulating the mother and hating authority); or they may have had hypocritical parents who privately belittled the child while publicly presenting an image of the “happy family.”

### **Leadership, sociopathy, success**

It has often been observed that psychopaths make successful businessmen or world leaders. What else are capitalists or leaders but individuals who must excel in the ability of requiring the submission and exploitation of other human beings? Of course, not all psychopaths are motivated to kill. But when it is easy to devalue others, and you have had a lifetime of perceived injustices and rejection, murder might seem like a natural choice. Psychiatry and prisons are in any case not designed to attack the real cause of the antisocial development of such individuals: a world that is itself antisocial, cruel, heartless, violent, stressful, controlling and competitive, and that stifles and thwarts the nature of parenting and the

<sup>5</sup> Scott L. Anderson, “Rape in Prison,” [www.loompanics.com](http://www.loompanics.com).

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optimal conditions for the development of prosocial children. Prisons reflect the class nature of society like few other institutions. Far from addressing the *nature* of class society, they exist only to segregate the worst offenders against its norms into a sort of industrial apartheid.

Capitalism fails miserably to meet our emotional needs, let alone our physical ones. How to humanize an intrinsically exploitative society in which five percent exist to exploit the other 95 percent? How to make people feel safe when millions around the world die every year of starvation and wars, when the majority is powerless and propertyless and must sell itself to the class that owns the means of producing wealth? Is it so surprising that when people live without the means to secure the comforts of life for themselves and their families, they will violate the interpersonal boundaries of others without caring?

### Crime is not a moral concept

But instead of confining our thoughts and energies to dealing with the problems of capitalism, socialists attempt to see the whole picture. We refuse to reduce much of what passes as “crime” merely to the moral stature of those arrested — we insist rather upon examining the social context those human beings inhabit and eliminating the source of the inequalities inherent in the capitalist economy. As revolutionaries we are tired of “politics as usual,” which does nothing to address society’s collective misery. We are sick of hearing about futile remedies such as prison reform, when it is the society based on exploitation that must be replaced by one in which we who are now merely the working majority own and control the means of producing wealth as the whole community.

Create a more socially responsible and caring society in which people feel involved, and they will behave more socially. Allow humans free access to their collectively produced wealth, eliminate the buying and selling factor, and not only will they cease to have a market to sell dangerous drugs in — the disappearance

of price tags will cease to make earning a living necessary to begin with. Provide conditions for parenting that emphasize collective support and nurturance, that put children first, and children will not grow up so twisted, defiant, angry, depressed, alienated or dangerous.

A world without prisons does not mean overlooking disturbances caused by violent acting out among its citizens: it does mean finding more humane ways to manage it. Some people, at times, may indeed need to be restrained, children protected or threats averted. A democratic society will be able to find ways to meet this need for safety without exploiting or degrading the perpetrators. The entire research of clinical, social and developmental psychologists into the variables that underpin antisocial acts and into ways of helping people overcome their hostile propensities is at present ignored, when so many of the crimes are systemically caused and are so prevalent. Since most crimes are crimes of property, and class society sets its rules and norms to benefit the ruling minority, it is impossible to be sure at present what a society of common ownership might deem to be affronts to people or to the whole community. The existence of class society provides not just the greatest confounding variable for psychologists studying human behavior today, but one that is at present completely intractable. How can they test their hypotheses about human behavior or measure the efficacy of their recommendations for treatment, as long as the relations of owner and non-owner persist outside (and within) laboratory conditions?

### The irresponsibility of profit

Prisoners, like workers everywhere, have a vested interest in establishing a society in which human needs come first. In a society of unfettered democratic participation, marked by the ability to freely produce and access wealth, humans can once

again feel more a part of the social fabric, and less opponents of it. The “loner against society” paradigm of the criminal will likely be a thing of the past. The very idea of locking up offenders is a powerful metaphor for the antisocial community’s lack of accountability for its own problems, its myopia, its own sociopathy, so to speak. Workers both inside and outside

prison must work to bring the administration of society into the democratic hands of the whole human community.

Only in such a socialist world will power reside with the entire community, which will think twice about how it

treats its sons and daughters, its brothers and sisters, its fathers and mothers. Socialism will be a society without locks and keys, marked by its openness and its ability to find solutions rather than brush problems under the carpet. Without a ruling class and its economic and political interests to protect, there will no longer be a need for its state, its armies, or its prisons.

Freedom will ring in the air for all human beings, and a feeling of truly being a part of a large human family will rise from the ashes of this presently divisive and competitive society. In such an emotional climate, we believe, humans will rush to participate voluntarily in increasing the pool of wealth and the freedom to enjoy it, and the ensuing social ethic will likely be one of people working together rather than being pitted against each other. Trust will replace suspicion. Freedom will replace oppression. And “penitentiaries” will remain only as potent symbols of the larger prisons in which each day we used to lock away not only our children, but our future, our ability to care and our imaginations.

— Dr. Who

### A note to our readers

*“The Thirteenth Amendment” and “A day in the life” are printed with the author’s permission.*

## **A DAY IN THE LIFE**

What are my days like?

It is now 4:30 AM. I have had breakfast: two tiny biscuits, one fried egg and something they call “grits” but that more closely resemble india rubber. I ate the biscuits and the egg, and drank another cup of coffee. When I finish this writing, I intend to stamp this letter and finagle a way to stick it through the narrow crack in my “bean chute,” which is the colloquial name for the “food slot,” a rectangular slot about 14 inches wide and five inches tall with a locking door that stays shut. This door is opened three times a day to give me my tray, then three more times to remove my plate. Before I may receive my food, I must sit on my bunk as far away as possible from the slot. They will then open the slot, place the tray on it, and scoot back. Then I may rise and claim my food. I move away from the door, and the slot is closed. Rather like you might imagine a lion being fed. This is why it takes an awfully long time to feed chow. Since I’m inevitably the last to eat, being in the very back corner of the wing, meals are always cold. If they are greasy, as is often the case, the grease will have condensed to a waxy film over everything, which isn’t especially palatable unless you’re fond of cold hog lard, and I confess I am not. That covers chow and answers the question of whether or not I am allowed to eat in a “common room.” No!

At about two o’clock in the afternoon, they come by to pass out “necessities,” at which time I strip naked, hand in my old undershorts and receive a new pair, sans elastic; ditto socks. Often the officer is a female; no matter. I receive one towel. Immediately after the showers, they retrieve that towel lest I use it to hang myself. Sheets are changed weekly if they have any (which is a 50/50 chance), and if not, then the next week. These are the rituals of “necessities.”

Three days a week — Monday, Wednesday, and Friday — we have “recreation.” The procedure works this way: at about 5:30 AM someone will sneak through and take what is called the “VR list.” VR stands for “verbal refusal,” although it’s not quite verbal in practice. The more of us the guards can “VR” the fewer they actually have to take out (which is the closest thing they do to work). Assuming, then, that you are awake, with your light on, freshly shaven, and standing in your door when they sneak through, you will be eligible for “rec” that day. In this sense, my cell is an advantage, as someone will sing out, “VR List!” “VR List!” when they spot the guard with the list. Then you go back to whatever you were doing, and sometime in the next few hours, perhaps in minutes or not until afternoon, depending on where they start, “rec” will be run.

When that time comes, the slot will be opened. To be eligible to go, you must be standing naked at the door with your clothes and shoes in your hand. You hand each article of clothing to the guard, who inspects it for weapons or contraband. He hands it back and you don your shorts and shoes. Then you kneel backwards to the door, placing your arms (behind your back) through the slot. This is tricky and takes some getting used to. Your hands are manacled. Once the handcuffs are secured, you can pull your arms in and the guard will give the signal to open the door. They escort you out to a yard that is a large concrete pad with individual barred and fenced cages with locking doors. Each cage has a pull-up bar, a basketball hoop and one basketball that may have air in it if you’re lucky. You may not touch the fence for any reason.

Once you are placed in your own individual “rec yard,” you stick your arms out through the slot (just a rectangular opening in the fence here, no locking door) and they remove the handcuffs. Your hour started when you left the cell. In about 45 minutes they are back to get you, and in front of all the other yards, you again strip naked, holding your shoes and clothes in hand. But no one else notices because they are doing the same thing, too. Again the guard inspects each article and allows you to put on shorts and shoes. You are cuffed, the door is opened, you are taken to your cell. The door is closed. The cuffs are removed, the slot is closed, and that is it. You have been recreated.

This is your only out-of-cell activity. It occupies three of the 168 hours in the week, and the rest of the time you are confined to the cell.

Of course, there is the occasional excitement when someone climbs into another’s yard and kills or injures them, or the guards slam someone and beat him up, or gas someone for slights real or imagined. It can get much worse, but this is the best case scenario.

Then there is the glory of cell searches. Every 72 hours without fail, each cell on the unit must be thoroughly searched for weapons and contraband. This entails the usual stripping and cuffing. You are then held outside while one or two guards enter your cell and throw things around willy nilly, stick their fingers in your food, shake out your sheets, clothes, etc. and generally make a mess for you to put back in order. This takes place every day sometimes if things are “tense.”

What are my days like? They “drift to dust, like dried leaves dropped from dead limbs.” An image that is very fitting to the wasted time here.

— Ken Lynch

**Pass this copy on to a friend!**

# The security scam

The following article is the supporting argument moved by an SPGB speaker, Dr. Stephen Coleman, in a 1986 debate over whether "society would be more secure without police, prisons or armies." Though now slightly dated, it remains a rousing summary of the socialist position on crime and punishment.

For most of human history people lived in a condition of what historians in our age have described, with all of the arrogance and condescension of civilized snobbery, as "primitive backwardness."

For something like 40,000 years of the earliest evolution of human society our ancestors were "primitives." And what did it mean to suffer this terrible primitive fate of not being born into civilized times such as ours? It meant that they lived cooperatively; what they had they used in common; what they gathered from nature they shared on the basis of free access; what rules for living they governed themselves by were not alien "laws" made by superior beings called legislators and enforced by feared bodies of bullies devoted to the organized judgment and repression of others.

Primitive rules and customs reflected the consciousness of the community. Where people made such rules for themselves there was no call for primitive judges to dress in bizarre costumes and pontificate in pompous tones about laws by the few in order to regulate the conduct of the many. As for violence, the only weapons

known to the earliest humans were those required for the conquest of the natural environment in the perpetual struggle for survival and comfort.

Now we are no longer primitive. With the help of large supplies of gunpowder and sustained intakes of religious opiates the mass of humanity has "been civilized." Reagan and Gorbachev, with their fingers upon buttons that could annihilate the planet at a push, are civilized. The one in five scientists throughout the modern world whose wisdom has been bought by the military establishments are civilized.

The Police Chief of Manchester, Mr. Anderton, who a few years ago instructed his officers to enter the clubs of Greater Manchester with a view to arresting people committing the crime of "licentious dancing," is civilized.

The prison officers who beat up inmates in their cells and those who have murdered prisoners while in police or prison custody are civilized. The men who stand guard, like well-trained Nazis, on the untried inmates of the British-controlled concentration camp at Long Kesh are all being very civilized. The police who have employed the most brutal force against

striking workers — not only in Poland and South Africa, but in Britain also — they will always tell you how civilized they are. We are all civilized now.

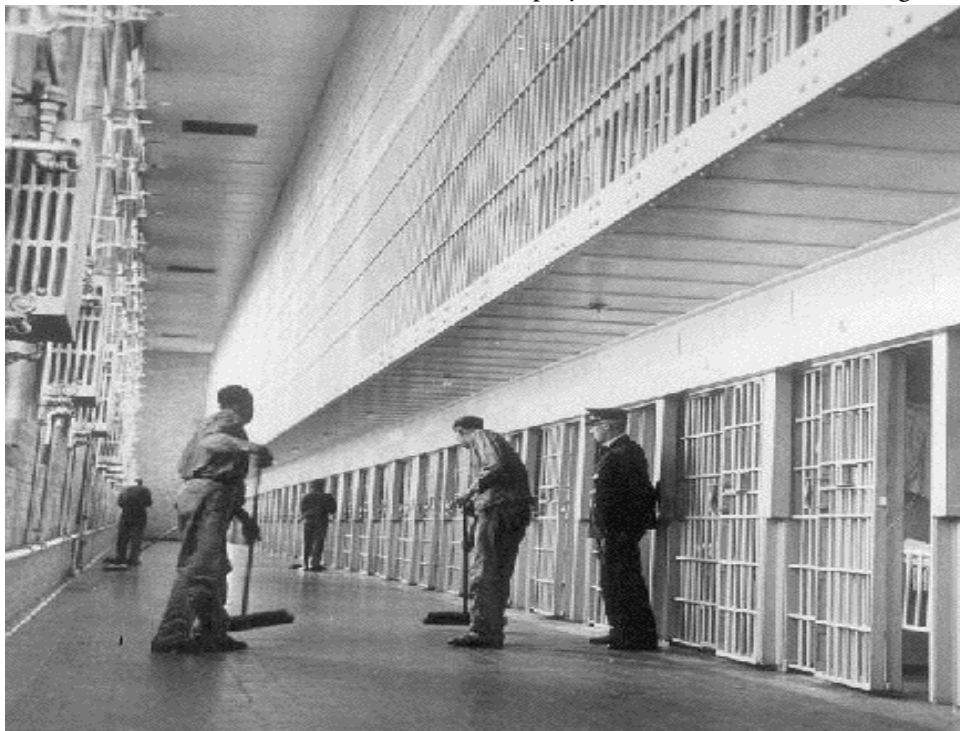
It is part of the myopic complacency of those who imagine that the way we live now is the only way we could live to assert that we must have police and prisons and armies. It is natural that they should exist. And if you question what is natural you are a utopian. And if you are utopian then you are indulging in a futile battle against immutable reality. I hope that my opponent will not commit the crass error of thinking that history is immutable and that institutions which some think are neutral will in fact last forever.

## The tyranny of property

I am an opponent of civilization. I favor an uncivilized alternative to the detestable "law and order" of the present social system. When they asked Gandhi what he thought of Western Civilization he replied that it would be a good idea if they ever tried it. Civilization is that period of history in which the tyranny of property has prevailed. To be civilized is to submit oneself to a structure of power based upon the ownership and control of property by a minority. Civilized morality is an ethic of reverence for those who possess. Civilized law and order prevail as long as property is safe.

What are property relationships? They are essentially relationships of exclusion. The pen is mine — therefore it is not yours. You take this pen and I will call the police. It is no use pleading with them that the words of a brilliant new poem have just come into your head and you feel inspired to write them down at once. You may be a second Shelley — I may be illiterate; but if I possess twenty pens and you own none the police will not decide whom to arrest on the basis of a poetry competition.

This factory is mine; therefore I own all that is produced in it. It does not matter that I may never visit my factory and



would not be able to operate the machines if I did — I take what they producers in the factory make and if they take any they are criminals who must be reported to the police and dealt with.

The same applies to dwellings; if I own a house you can only enter by paying me money or else you are a trespasser. The conflict between property and need was well illustrated in 1971 when some squatters occupied some empty houses owned by the London Borough of Southwark and the Council (which was Labour Party controlled) took the homeless people to court. Now, in addition to their misfortune of being homeless they also had the bad luck to have their case judged by Lord Denning — a man who always strikes one as the unintelligent man's idea of what it is to be wise — and in his summing up on the case Denning said,

If [being] homeless were once admitted as a defense to trespass, no one's house could be safe. Necessity would open a door that no man could shut ... The plea would be an excuse for all sorts of wrong-doing. So the courts must, for the sake of law and order, take a firm stand. They must refuse to admit the plea of necessity to the hungry and the homeless; and trust that their distress will be relieved by the charitable and the good.

So it is that, whilst according to UNESCO there are 40,000 children dying of starvation each day, armed police in India stand in defense of grain warehouses that are "private property."

Armies perform the same function. (The speaker then quoted from two military sources in order to demonstrate that militarism is but an extension of commerce). Naïve people say that armies exist to make us secure.

Do any of you present wake up each morning and think of the Cruise Missiles at Greenham Common military base? The Exocet missiles that tore the skins off young men in the South Atlantic? The plastic bullets now being used by the state terrorists in Belfast, Ireland, and soon to be used by the police here and the deranged officers being trained in the psychopathic arts at Sandhurst? And then think to yourselves, "My word, I do feel safe! What a dangerous world this would be without the skilled killers and sophisticated murder weaponry in order to make us secure!" That is what the opponent of

## The Morality of Amerika is Business: A Review of U.S. Prison Statistics<sup>1</sup>

**Almost 10 percent of all prisoners in the United States are now serving life-terms, according to a report released by the Sentencing Project, a prison research and advocacy group. This represents an 83 percent increase since 1992. Almost 20 percent of prisoners in New York and California are serving life-sentences; 23,523 inmates in U.S. prisons who are mentally ill are doing life. Prisons are in themselves breeders of crime. The recidivism rate for released lifers is 20 percent, with 67 percent re-arrested within three years. The report indicated that inmates who were once serving 25 years to life sentences now serve longer portions of all sentences, many until they die in prison. A life sentence in Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Pennsylvania and South Dakota now means life without parole.**

**These figures did not result from higher crime rates but from the "get tough on crime" philosophy rampant in the 90s — this, in spite of the fact that "crime" rates actually fell 35 percent from 1992 to 2002.**

**One of the difficulties facing released prisoners (which helps to explain their recidivism) is that many have nowhere to go upon being released, no money and no skills to help them find employment. Many prisons provide no education or opportunities for learning practical skills and no guidance for re-entering society. Compounding this, many jobs and professions are closed to them**

**because of their prison backgrounds. Delaware deliberately excludes ex-prisoners from almost every occupation that requires a state license, such as dentistry, engineering, real estate and a number of others. Indeed, former inmates are barred from more than 35 jobs and professions, leaving them little opportunity to make a living and so stay out of prison.**

**A study by the Urban Institute has determined that some counties in the U.S. now have more than 30 percent of their residents incarcerated; almost a third of all counties have at least one prison. The county with the largest number of prisoner-residents was Concho County in Texas, with a population of 4,000, of whom 33 percent were behind bars.**

**A strong reason for the growth of the prison industry is the economic boom it has produced. In 1923 there were 61 prisons in this country. The Institute study, entitled "The New Landscape of Imprisonment: Mapping America's Prison Expansion," reveals that prisons grew from 592 in 1974 to 1,023 in 2000. During that time, the number of inmates rose from 315,974 to 1.3 million. Texas built 120 prisons during the period — about six a year. Florida came in second with 84, California third with 83 and New York fourth with 65. Fueling this accumulation is the support furnished by construction workers and guards hungry for the jobs thus provided.**

— MC

<sup>1</sup> Culled from a *New York Times* article by Fox Butterfield, 12 May 2004.

this motion must argue: that without armies we would be less secure.

The case I am putting rests upon the contention that police forces and prisons and armies are essentially in existence to secure the tyranny of property. The only serious alternative to that tyranny is socialism, by which I mean a social system based upon the common ownership, as opposed to private or state ownership, of

social resources. The only way we will obtain a genuinely secure society to live in will be by transforming social relationships from those based on property and exclusion to those based upon common ownership and free access to the goods and services of the earth.

In a society of common ownership there

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*Continued on next page*

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will, by definition, be no owners and non-owners, no bosses and bossed. There will be no hereditary entitlement to parasitical idleness and affluence. There will be no babies born to suffer the miserable inheritance of deprivation.

People cannot steal what they own in common. That disposes of 90 per cent of “crimes” committed today. Home Office statistics confirm the fact that if you emptied the prisons of those convicted for crimes against property you would virtually empty the prisons.

And what would armies, dedicated to the cause of mass destruction, have to do in a community of common ownership? There will be no more murderous trade

### The Thirteenth Amendment

A coffle of state slaves shuffles  
Slowly into the radiant rays  
Of dawn's early light,  
Spartacus nowhere in sight.  
Fight scarred all, and bone  
Wearied from strife and stress,  
Destined to toil under the sun till  
Twilight's last gleaming brings rest.  
The tools are issued;  
One hoe per man, each  
Each dull of blade, each  
Splinter hafted, each  
Four pounds of sweat-stained purpose.  
Each, in proper hands,  
Four pounds of peril.  
Let there be no peril today, we pray;  
No quick and vicious fights — sweat stinging,  
Fists flying, we cull living from dying;  
No riots fought for fast forgot reasons —  
Swinging steel scintillating in sunlight,  
Blood gouting from the too-slow heads,  
Brown, black, white —  
Our blood ruby red and thick with life, no  
Respecter of race, creed or origin.  
Let there be no peril today, we pray;  
No dry crackling reports of leaden soldiers  
Speaking the old tongue of Authority,  
Chasing whisks of smoke from forge fashioned barrels;  
The guns, like totems, guardgripped fast by  
Bossfists in confederate grey cloths —  
Their fire fells friends, frees foes.  
Let there be no peril today, we pray;  
Today only — hard work, for no pay.

— Ken Lynch

wars for them to perform in. No empires. No anachronistic nationalist disputes about which gang of thieves controls which territory. How could such a system of society ever consider wasting its energies and resources upon the perverse venture of an organized institution for killing people: an army? The insane violence which civilized fools call “healthy competition” which would have no reason to occur in a society of common ownership.

### Needed: An iron fist

It will be conceded by many people that it would be very pleasant if we could all share the planet as sisters and brothers and that, indeed, most crimes and wars are property-related. But there is “something there” — something in “human nature,” that vague term which no scientist has yet seriously defined or located — and this “something” leads us to require all of these forces of coercion to protect us from ourselves.

I reject emphatically the suggestion that there is “something natural” in human beings which needs to be repressed and restrained; I reject it because I regard it as being but a watered down version of the stale old religious dogma that we're all evil sinners at heart.

To those who speak of motiveless, inexplicable anti-social behavior I respond that if we look hard enough at what society does to brutalize and desensitize and degrade human personalities you will find the motives. If you want to comprehend soccer violence, then talk to those who glorify nationalism in the classroom and urge children to take pride in imperial violence and plunder. If you want to comprehend the mind of the rapist, then talk to the editor of *The Sun* [a British tabloid with nudity]. If you want to comprehend senseless, gratuitous violence against defenseless victims, then study the bombing of Dresden when men were commanded to fly above their defenseless victims and to assault, molest and murder not just one innocent old lady or powerless little child but many thousands of them.

Before arriving at unhistorical conclusions about “human nature” one should remember that for most of human history there were no wars or muggings or banks

to be broken into by armed men because there was no cause for these things.

I predict that my opponent will tell me that even if he accepts all that I have said it is politically pragmatic for us to work to reform the system we have now.

After all, people feel that they need police and prisons and armies — they may not be justified in doing so, but that is how they have been conditioned to feel. I do not dispute that this is how most people feel.

But it is also the case that most people would feel safer if hanging was re-introduced. Most people feel that not only do they need the protection of an army, but they favor some kind of what is laughably called nuclear defense.

But if those feelings are false — if my opponent cannot with sincerity and logic support those feelings — then he has an obligation to say to people, “Well, that may be what you feel, but you are wrong. And this is why you are wrong.” If one does not challenge such feelings, they what is to stop other pragmatists from riding to power on all kinds of other irrational feelings and prejudices?

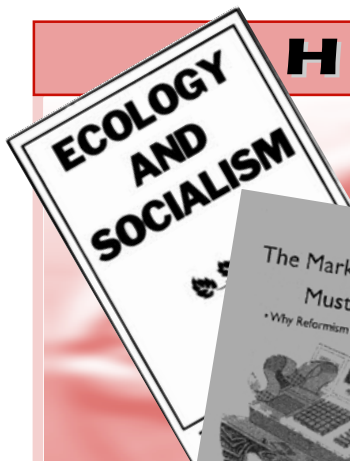
The motion in this debate concerns a fundamental matter of our political culture: What is power to be? Is it something above us, threatening us, bullying us — the Harvey Proctor conception of authority that humiliates the powerless and gives a deranged illusion of strength to the dominator? Or is power something that we shall enjoy as of right because we are conscious and creative human beings with immense capacities for development? When you perceive power in the latter sense (the socialist sense) you do not require uniformed thugs to protect humanity from its own potential.

Society will be more secure when we establish a system which does not require police, prisons, and armies — it will be more secure because once we have removed the power over us there is almost no limit to what we can do with power between us. Ø

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# THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## object

**The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.**

## declaration of principles

*The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:*

- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

**THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.**



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

## the world socialist movement

**THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**, Box 1266, N Richmond, 3121 Victoria

**SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA**, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: Imagine (\$1)

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**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (NEW ZEALAND)**, Box 1929, Auckland, N1 • wspnz@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/nz>

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This issue of the *World Socialist Review* was printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership,"

for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists

may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

**To establish socialism, the working class throughout the must gain control of the powers of government through their political organizations.** It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power means control of the main avenues of "education" and propaganda, either directly or indirectly. It also means control of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush working-class attempts at violent opposition to the effects of capitalism. Moreover, the police and the armed forces are often used to combat workers during strikes and industrial disputes with employers. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state. Once this has been accomplished, the state will be converted from a coercive government over people to an administration over things and community affairs. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism. Socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

**The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.** Indeed, by its very nature, capitalism requires continual reform. But reforms cannot alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Whatever the reformers' intentions, reforms function only to make capitalism run more smoothly and to make present-day society more palatable to the work-

ing class by holding out false hopes of a fundamental change or radical improvement. In the long run, reforms benefit the owning, capitalist, class rather than the class that produces the wealth. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

**The World Socialist Party does not support, directly or indirectly, any political party other than our companion parties in the World Socialist Movement.** We can only oppose those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

**The form of society once in effect in the Soviet Union, and still more or less in effect in China and Cuba now, was not and is not socialism or communism.** It was a dictatorial, bureaucratic form of state capitalism. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are produced primarily for profit and not primarily for use. Nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alters the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

**Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities, their mental and physical energies, at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.** Workers without such organizations have no reliable economic weapons with which to resist the attempts of employers to beat down their standards. But

unions necessarily work within the framework of capitalism and are useful, therefore, only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between wage-labor and capital. They can only react to capital's fiat, particularly in the case of long-term issues like automation or unemployment. Every wage or salary increase, in fact, only spurs employers and investors to accelerate the replacement of humans by machines in the workplace. If anything, instead of foolishly selling themselves short by demanding "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," workers would do far better to follow Marx's advice and simply abolish employment altogether.

**The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership.** Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

**The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history,** a way of looking at things that focuses on how human communities meet their actual survival needs by producing what they need to live (their economic systems, in other words). Out of this process the human brain weaves its ideas, which eventually exert their own influence on the cycle, causing it to become more and more complex as society evolves.

This approach, known as historical materialism, is a scientific method for helping us understand how and why capitalism does what it does. Armed with this understanding, socialists realize that capitalism can never deliver the goods for the vast majority of people. Other approaches, lacking this focus and overlooking the basis of capitalist society, can easily miss this point, so that their advocates get bogged down in vain efforts to make capitalism work for the majority.

**Socialists hold that materialist explanations of human society and the rest of nature supersede supernatural ones.** A religious perspective won't necessarily prevent anyone from striving to abolish capitalism and its evils, and the ethical elements of religious teachings may even be what first make many people aware of the injustices of a class-divided society. But they don't in themselves lead to an understanding of the causes of such injustices. (More often than not, religious institutions themselves justify and commit them.) The world socialist perspective is in any case essentially post-religious, because the case for socialism hinges on the scientific use of evidence. Socialists therefore look on supernatural explanations as obsolete. ☐

# Leonard Peltier and the primal needs of Capital\*

In a remote section of South Dakota just north of Nebraska lies an Indian reservation known as Pine Ridge. At one time largely agricultural, it became hugely attractive to the U.S. government when it was discovered that beneath the Indian lands lay one of the largest uranium reserves in the United States. All through the years, treaties with the Indians had been consistently violated because of the major mineral reserves beneath the Indian territories.

When Pine Ridge became the focus of the United States government, the Indian residents were strongly opposed to uranium development on their turf. Bitterness grew as problems were exacerbated with the increasing threat of U.S. intervention. Turning to the American Indian Movement (AIM) for assistance led to military conflict with the FBI, which refused to listen to the complaints of the Indians. The struggle lasted 71 days, resulting in the deaths of two Pine Ridge natives and the outlawing of all activities at Pine Ridge.

During the following three years, now referred to as the “Reign of Terror,” violent assaults continued to take place in which vast numbers of Indians were murdered or maimed. With the government intent on destroying the AIM and thereby removing a major obstacle in their plans to exploit the uranium booty, homes were burned, shootings and beatings became rampant. So many native Americans were killed that Pine Ridge had the highest annual murder rate in the U.S. Again the AIM came to their assistance, and among those who responded was Leonard Peltier. The conflict led to three murder indictments including that of Leonard Peltier, accused of shooting two FBI agents. No evidence was ever introduced to support the accusation. Subsequently, Peltier escaped to Canada, convinced that he would never receive a fair trial in the U.S. Less than a year later, he was apprehended.

Myrtle Poor Bear was an Indian woman who had never met Leonard Peltier. Terrified under interrogation by the FBI, she testified against him. This terror-induced accusation led to the extradition of Peltier to the U.S. All

of her incriminating statements were later withdrawn, and Myrtle Poor Bear confessed that her fear of the FBI had led her to make false statements. With the government determined to pin the guilt on Peltier and thus remove the bête noire from their uranium quest, her confessions were thrown aside and ignored.

Despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence, the trial was rigged against him with perjury and manufactured evidence. No witness was ever found who could identify Leonard as the man who shot and killed two FBI agents. Hundreds of thousands of pages of critical evidence pinpointing the unprovoked attack on Pine Ridge were withheld from the trial.

The events here described and the part played by Peltier were detailed in a book by Peter Matthieson, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. This revealing report was kept out of print for eight years, while the FBI sued the author and publisher for libel. Although the Supreme Court eventually denied the suit, the stunning evidence produced by the book was unavailable at the time of Leonard Peltier’s trial.

Today Pine Ridge has an 86 percent unemployment rate, the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant mortality rate in the nation. The government’s vindictiveness toward the Lakota people led to the ruin of innumerable lives. The ongoing penal servitude of Leonard Peltier at Leavenworth Prison is the direct consequence of the FBI’s unabated pressure to keep him confined.

Despite worldwide appeals from human-rights organizations, and the publicity given to the merits of his case, 500 FBI agents marched in Washington to oppose clemency for him. They continue to use their authority to thwart all efforts to obtain his freedom, now denied him for 28 years.

Leonard Peltier is not in prison for the murder of two FBI agents. Of that he is demonstrably not guilty. Leonard Peltier is in prison because he is a potential threat to governmental forces intent on exploiting the mineral resources that lie buried beneath Indian territory. The facts of Leonard’s conviction

are well known. Well known also is the bitter massacre of the Indians at Wounded Knee, which left an entire community devastated.\*\* Terror-stricken families and ruined lives draw little compassion from those whose motives are purely profit-driven. They are “collateral damage.” The drive for profit under capitalism overrides all human considerations. Like the conflict in Iraq, the huge loss of lives and the obliteration of the infrastructures are a price worth paying for the control of huge oil reserves needed for the operation of the capitalist machine.

Such reports are not unique to America. All over the world human values are subordinated to the primal needs of capital.

Indeed, they scream out for a change from this power-driven, cash-oriented social system to one that emphasizes cooperation, and in which human values are the measure of all human action. They send a message to all who will listen that the world hungers for a society that will eliminate needless suffering and replace it with opportunities for all human beings to lead fulfilling lives.

— Mardon Cooper

\* Sources: Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, Anthony Rayson (Prison Abolition), Matt Sherman (AIM) and Leonard Peltier (“Prison Writings”).

\*\* The massacre at Wounded Knee took place on December 29, 1890. See, for example, <http://www.lastoftheindependents.com/wounded.htm>. The siege at Wounded Knee, referred to above, began on February 27, 1973 and lasted 71 days.

Leonard Peltier has provided us with words that should resonate with those who share this vision:

## The Message

**Silence, they say, is the voice of complicity. But silence is impossible.**

**Silence screams.**

**Silence is a message, Just as doing nothing is an act.**

**Let who you are ring out and resonate in every word and every deed.**

**Yes, become who you are.**

**There’s no sidestepping your own being or your own responsibility.**

**What you do is who you are.**

**You are your own comeuppance.**

**You become your own message.**

**You are the message.**

# World Socialist Review



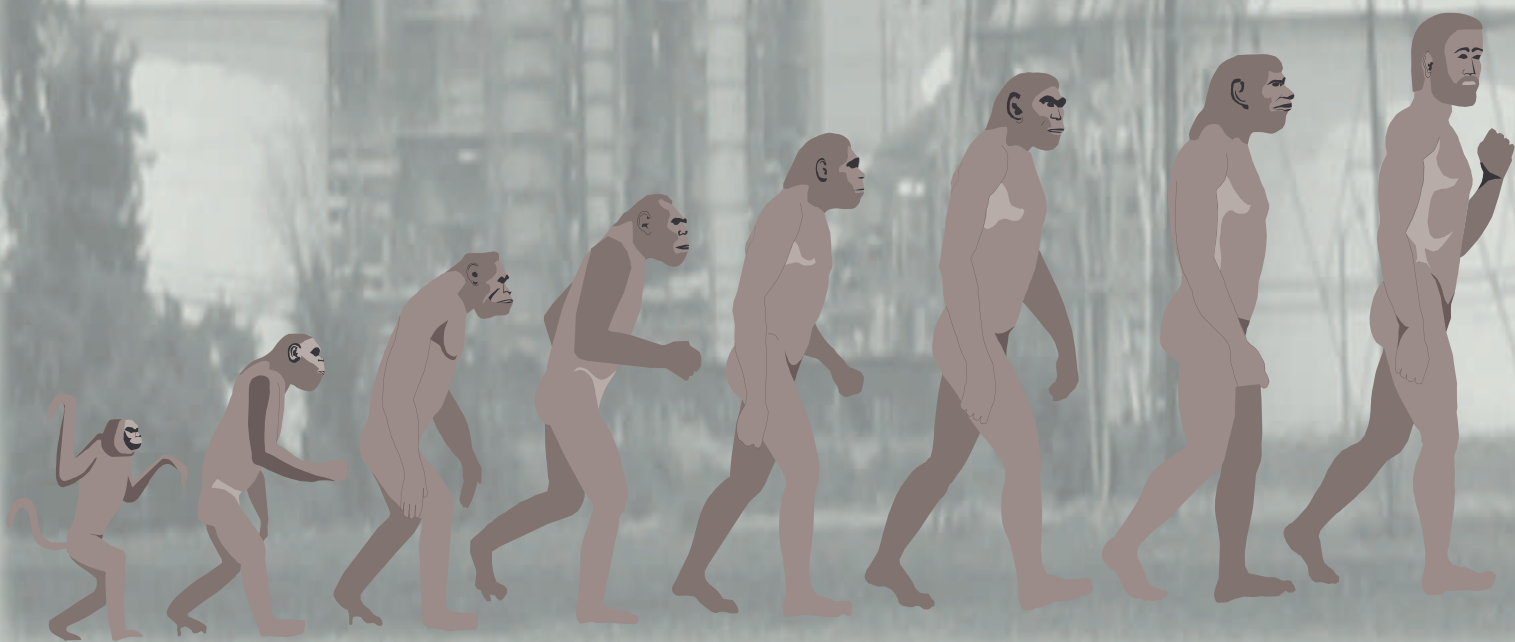
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# Common ownership: Our last chance

**A** recent episode of the PBS program *Now*, broadcast nationwide in most states on 4/22/2005, announced gravely not only that “scientists are convinced our Earth is warming, and with scary consequences,” but also and even more gravely that “meanwhile industry funds a campaign to do nothing.” The program quoted Dr. Richard Alley, professor at Penn State University, a paleoclimatologist, one who studies the Earth utilizing data from glacier ice and ice sheets. According to Dr. Alley, our planet has on numerous occasions previously experienced a phenomenon known as “abrupt climate change.” His concern, and that of scientists whom the program referred to as “the best minds on the planet,” is that human society is so altering the atmosphere and the climate that it may trigger such an abrupt, indeed possibly catastrophic, transformation of the climate.

A visit to the Web site of the environmental think-tank EcoBridge lists hefty references suggesting indisputable recent changes in our atmosphere, including increases in carbon dioxide and methane, more frequent extreme weather, disappearing glaciers, melting arctic sea ice, Greenland’s ice sheet melting, tropical diseases spreading, and oceans warming with accompanying coral bleaching and disintegration. Paralleling such dire developments are other examples of human society’s significant transformation of the planet from its condition even a century ago, including enormous deforestation rates (discussed in impressive detail in the article “Destroying the World’s Forests” on the Web site of the World Socialist Movement [WSM]) and the introduction of vast quantities of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that are contributing to ozone layer depletion (also discussed on the WSM Web site in an article entitled “Profit Enhancing Chemicals”). Vast research-based evidence thus appeared to support the hypothesis that the planet is warming and becoming increasingly less hospitable for humans and other animal life.

## Does the future have a future?

What is presumably of greatest concern to those of us who work for a living is the total lack of apparent control that we may exert at present upon the corporations, media and governments whose practices exist to serve the interests of a small percentage of the population. The great historical question is going to be: are we just going to stand around amidst alternating storms of doomsday prophecies and media coverage minimizing the magnitude of the problem, and not take matters into our own hands, even at the risk that our and our children’s future may be horrendously bleak, even non-existent?

For example, according to the abovementioned *Now* television show, in Congress the House has just approved an energy bill which promises tax breaks and subsidies to coal, oil, and gas companies — the companies most responsible for the mess in the first place! Furthermore, those most opposed to theories of global warming are those such as Senator Inhofe who represent the economic interests of the magnates of his oil-producing Oklahoma. He is ironically the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Committee’s biggest recipient of contributions from oil and gas companies. He says global warming is a hoax.

Ross Gelbspan, a former editor of the *Boston Globe*, was described in the *Now* program as having devoted many years to reporting the ways in which the energy industry has attempted

to cover up the scientific warnings about global warming. For example, in 1989 the disinformation campaign began when representatives of the petroleum, automotive and other industries formed the Global Climate Coalition, and later the Information Council on the Environment, which was funded by the Western Fuels Association, mostly representing coal interests. The strategy for that campaign, according to Mr. Gelbspan, suggested their drawing on several prominent global warming skeptics, scientists who argue that global warming is mired in unknowns. Mr. Gelbspan found that energy industry leaders had paid those scientists hefty fees and compensations amounting to more than half a million dollars between 1991 and 1995. Some of these scientists, who had engaged the media in interviews to suggest global warming was an unsupported theory rather than a strongly supported hypothesis, reemerged some years later in videos distributed by yet another group, the Greening Earth Society, a group also supported by the coal industry.

In 1997 the Global Climate Coalition appeared in a multi-million dollar campaign to persuade the public that the science behind the international Kyoto agreement to reduce greenhouse gases was shaky. One of those ads stated: “Countries responsible for almost half the world’s emissions won’t have to cut back. Check it out for yourself, it’s not global and it won’t work.”

Then President George Bush, former oil man himself, pulled the U.S. out of the Kyoto Treaty, claiming that “the targets



**“Political Will to Stop Spreading Deserts is Missing.” <<http://www.desertification.net>> Photo: Dead Vegetation. <[http://www.wateryear2003.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=5148&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://www.wateryear2003.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5148&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)>. See p 12 for a brief discussion of concept.**

themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science.” According to the *Now* program, a 2001 memo by Frank Luntz, a well-known Republican consultant, may have played its part in affecting Mr. Bush’s decision, when it advised the White House that the best way to “address the global warming” problem is to “continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate.”

The May/June 2005 edition of *Mother Jones* suggested that Exxon Mobil alone contributes to more than 40 policy groups that seek to undermine the scientific consensus on climate change.

### Welcome to Hell

According to a citation in a January 13, 2000 CNN Web site article about scientific experts discussing the overwhelmingly strong evidence for global warming, a conference of the United Nations-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) comprising over 2,500 scientists, was quoted as having reached a near-unanimous conclusion that global warming was at least partially the result of human activity — primarily the burning of fossil fuels, which release carbon dioxide, methane, and others gases into the atmosphere, forming a global “blanket” that traps heat near the Earth’s surface. The IPCC predicted an increase in global temperatures of between 2 and 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. The panel also predicted the expansion of warming oceans and calculated that the melting of land-based ice formations would combine to add between one and three feet to the existing sea level. The IPCC projected sharp increases in the frequency and intensity of storms and droughts, in the spread of tropical diseases, in coastal flooding and in accelerated waves of extinctions of plant and animal species which fail to adapt to the changing climate.

As suggested earlier in this article, large countries such as the United States may choose to put profits before people in refusing to cooperate with Kyoto Accord limits to greenhouse gas emissions, while other developing nations such as China, a coal-based economy, are likely to vastly surpass the greenhouse emissions of the United States by 2025.

Such is the anarchic nature of the capitalist system. It is comprised in part of vast corporations with vested economic interests to broadcast disinformation to the public and to influence governments to steer policy away from potential threats not to our well-being but to their profit-making. It is also made up of rival nation-states each attempting to care for the economic interests of their own internal capitalist class. Finally, it is characterized by billions of workers whose receipt of information is heavily influenced by the capitalist media over which they have no control.

In other words, even rational decisions by governments, such as those pronounced in the Kyoto Accords, may be thwarted and never realized because of the needs of the few rather than the needs of us many. While some or even many capitalists

may share the same concerns about the future of the planet as do the rest of us, there is nothing quite like economic interests to silence opinion, to brush off even their own staunch yet hypocritical morality, to freeze vital action, and to keep their heads buried in the sand — behaviors that may seem at least understandable for the poor dears but that are sure to be deadly for the rest of us.

This is a supremely criminal example of how sophisticated modern productive technology is at odds with the mode of production that still exists, with the need for profits calling the shots, even if it might cause our cities to lie flooded under three feet of water one day or lead to the deaths of millions of us irreplaceable and ultimately trivial historical players, the workers (at least thus far, until we abolish history as we know it). Even if the skeptics are correct, and the change in weather is a relatively natural but unpredictable phenomenon not caused by the negative side effects of industrial society, humans may still need to find a solution to keep themselves and future generations from destruction in droughts, floods, or plagues.

Such complex solutions are not likely to be effectively realized in an intrinsically competitive and undemocratic society, in which the resources we will desperately require are owned by the planet’s private owners or by rival nation-states. In such a preliminary social order as we presently live under, the economic costs of dollars and cents will likely play a major part of any such grandiose scheme, as there is only so much money to go around. Furthermore, in this hierarchical, class-based society, the major decisions will be made by those with power and privilege, and not by those of us who must work to live and who remain relatively powerless players in the machinations of national or global politics.

### Good Decisions Will Require Common Ownership

Or we could decide to take matters into our own hands. By democratically taking over the means of production, to be thereafter considered subject to the common ownership of the whole human species, any drastic solutions that may need to be made by and in the interest of even the entire human race could more readily be achieved, as decision-making over the use of resources will be entirely ours. Whatever we decide, such decisions will be made in harmony with the findings of the scientific community, and we will be able to act upon our decisions immediately, without the endless walls of bureaucracy, finance, politics or power murderously standing in the way of our lives as they are at pres-

**Continued on next page**

## **A tale of two futures**

**A**s the name implies, socialism is based on what is social. More particularly, it is based on democratic social interaction of people collectively creating the kind of world they envision. It is the antithesis of the anti-social economic system of capitalism based solely on the cold acquisition of profits. Social needs that are met under capitalism are either highly profitable or incidental by-products. Unfortunately, the quest for the almighty dollar knows no bounds and is seriously taxing our ecological systems. Capitalism puts the cart before the horse, making everything subservient to profit acquisition. With respect to our community green-space, from an aesthetic as well as a biological perspective, this has taken on absurdly rapacious proportions.

### **Silt, Spaniards & Mosquitoes**

The Texas Gulf Coast, where I grew up, does not rest on the continental shelf along with about half of the state itself. Rather, the land mass is the result of billions of years of oceanic inundations of silt. When the Spaniards first explored the Texas Gulf Coast, it was inhabited by the Karankawa Indians, who were known to be semi-cannibalistic and to smear their bodies down with alligator brains as a method of mosquito repellent. Anyone who has ever spent the night in Galveston during one of those rare times when there was no wind would wholly understand the Karankawa's resort to such drastic mosquito repellents.

I grew up in Houston, but spent a considerable part of my youth as a beach bum in Galveston, Freeport, and Matagorda. Texas beaches have always held a special charm for this writer. They have a special uniqueness in comparison to other beaches I've visited. As a hippie youth in the 70's, a group of us would frequently camp out all night on the coast, build bonfires at night and enjoy the wind, sun, and warm surf during the day. The few trinket shops, stores, and eating establishments were ancient Mom 'n Pop businesses or seafood restaurants with historical associations.

The beaches remained fairly free of commercialization. As well, the drive between Houston and Galveston's beautiful skyline was once a trek fairly bereft of commercial clutter or palpable habitation of any sort, save the wildlife in the region.

### **Texas Chain Store Massacre**

Sadly, this is no longer so. Most of the once pristine and free beaches are now filled with chain stores and commercial establishments, beaches that require payment for use, and the ever-present police. In short, the beaches have become commodified and regulated, no longer the free-access areas they once were. If driving between Houston and Galveston was once a trip through the country, it is now barely discernible where Houston ends and Galveston begins. Endless miles of asphalt, strip-malls, service stations and Wal-Mart's make for monotonous eyespace. In other parts of Texas, capitalist developers have ruined age-old parks and community spaces, including many of the wooded areas near Austin. Expensive condos and housing subdivisions are now commonplace. Even within cities such as Houston where old neighborhoods once had beautiful old houses at modest rent rates, and huge oak trees canopied the streets, now stand only monstrous condominiums. Obliterated are the unique old homes, the ancient live oaks and the tangible charm of the neighborhood: all sacrificed to the profit initiative.

From an aesthetic standpoint, this trend sucks blatantly. Add to this the impact on biological species other than our own. Growing up on the outskirts of Houston, there were still cow pastures, huge open fields in which we flew kites and played ball. There was a ubiquitous species of frog that was found nowhere in the world except that part of Texas. Now, due to mindless capitalist expansion, few open fields or cow-pastures exist. Even sadder, the species of frog indigenous to that region is almost extinct. I recall seeing hundreds of them hopping around after a fresh rain.

It saddens this writer to know such wonders are falling to the unfeeling blade of profiteering. To ruin a beautiful patch of land, that took billions of years of oceanic inundations to create, with the construction of a Wal-Mart or a McDonald's is symptomatic of Capitalist values. No reverence is paid to nature's wonders: the magic of a sunrise on the beach, the sound of the wind and the waves, nor the discovery of sand dollars and starfish strewn along the shores. Its vision is limited to the quest for profit.

Only the social organization of the world based on true human values can protect and preserve these ecological treasures. Capitalism can never preserve the natural state of the earth when doing so would stand in the way of profit. We must create a social system that will stem the capitalist trajectory toward ecocide. The establishment of socialism is the only solution to this critical problem.

— **KG**

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### **Common Ownership — Cont.**

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ent with regards to an issue such as global warming that could potentially alter the course of human history.

At what point do humans decide that sustaining the interests of a small gang of owners — whom working-class humans have thus far decided have every right to own the planet and enjoy the fruits and luxuries that workers provide — is not worth the imminent threat of an Earth no longer able to sustain human life? Scientists are warning us that the point of no return is close by or has already been passed. Do we pretend the problem is not really that bad? Do we passively resign ourselves to a pessimism that announces it is too late to act so why not just embrace a selfish consumerist individualism? Do we continue to trust our politicians to represent our interests even though they have always failed to do so since they are unable to alter and control the laws of the capitalist economy in the interests of us hard working folk?

The barrel of the gun is pointed right now between your eyes. What are you going to do?

— **Dr. Who**



# Shutdown world



In a discussion of overpopulation in *Capital* vol. 1, Marx cites the opinion of economists in his day who preached that a large surplus working-class population was actually a condition of flexibility required by capital to allow employers to move quickly when hiring and firing and thus keep ahead of the competition.<sup>1</sup> Malthus's explanation of the allegedly "geometrical" tendency of population to increase, as against the supposedly "arithmetical" increase of land under cultivation, Marx dismisses as "narrow." For the most part, Marx treats overpopulation as a by-product of the capitalist mode of production, not as yet another devilish horror from capitalism's catalogue of social evils.<sup>2</sup> "Population is an abstraction," he says, "if one disregards the classes of which it is composed."<sup>3</sup>

As if to challenge this idea, a recent "call for action" appearing on the Internet by activist, structural geologist, science writer, journalist and novelist Dale Allen Pfeiffer invites us to consider a special, terminal case of overpopulation. Pfeiffer, writing about population in relation to energy production, foresees as an imminent material possibility the end of civilization as we know it and a catastrophic decline in human numbers, barring immediate recognition of the unsustainability of capitalist production, the population levels that have become

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Book One, The Process of Production of Capital, pp. 908 and 910, London: ElecBook (1998). (All references to Marx's writings are from the 1998 ElecBook CD-ROM edition.)

<sup>2</sup> *Capital*, Vol 3, Book Three, The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole, pp. 289, 295, 337, inter alia.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 193.

dependent on it and the redesign of our entire civilization. He calls for input from both specialists and "people of limited means" into a projected socioeconomic and ecological redesign of present-day communities "to ease their transition into a post-technological world."<sup>4</sup>

## A Nation of Oil Junkies

Capital, he argues, has become an oil junky sucking hydrocarbons out of the earth so voraciously that within the next few years it will reach the point of diminishing returns: past the "break-evenpoint," it will require more energy to extract oil and natural gas than is available for consumption, forcing world hydrocarbon production to gradually shut down.

No form of society, capitalist or socialist, can rationally plan to use more energy than it produces, since it will eventually consume all its own energy supplies in the process. But since the experts he cites indicate that none of the alternatives to fuel production even comes close "separately or in combination" to duplicating oil's "bang for the buck," this crisis of oil will generate rapidly escalating prices and struggles over dwindling oil resources, followed by a forced and sudden drop in energy supplies on a planet that at this juncture has largely tied up most of its energy options.

<sup>4</sup> Dale Allen Pfeiffer, "Eating Fossil Fuels," 2004, retrieved May 23, 2005 from [http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/100303\\_eating\\_oil.html](http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/100303_eating_oil.html); originally published in *From The Wilderness*, 30 Oct 2003, Vol. 6 issue 7. "A Call for Action," retrieved May 23, 2005 from [http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/061504\\_call\\_action.html](http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/061504_call_action.html); originally published in *From The Wilderness*, 30 June 2004, Vol. 7 issue 3. Pfeiffer is FTW's Contributing Energy Editor.

Once oil production shuts down, what happens? Ultimately, the world we know begins to unravel. Nothing new directly or indirectly requiring the use of oil or gas in its production will be available any longer — machinery, buildings, factories, houses, food, heating and cooling technology, plastics, maintenance services dependent on oil and so on. Electricity on the scale that we know it today will be out the question. Jet travel, computer technology, global communications — all will face the axe. As a consequence of and closely following this vast contraction of markets, an unprecedented "die-off" of human beings will commence on a scale ultimately surpassing that of the Black Death, which killed 40 percent of Europe's population between 1347 and 1350.<sup>5</sup>

Pfeiffer's prediction is as laconic as it is dramatic:

Within the next five to ten years [i.e., 2009-2014], our energy base will begin to contract irreversibly ... We currently live in the opulence of the oil age. Each of us has the energy equivalent of some 50 slaves to do our work for us and to pamper us with all of the latest technological comforts ... virtually all of our industrial processes are run by the energy of hydrocarbons.<sup>6</sup>

The link making the above catastrophe possible is twofold: agriculture was humanity's original misstep, allowing human numbers to grow to the limits of agricultural technology rather than to those imposed by the physical and mental abilities of hunters and gatherers; the second, compounding error — introduced in the 19th Century — was making all sectors of agricultural and industrial production dependent on oil. Oil's limitless extractability in turn gave rise to the comforting misperception that world population can also expand without limits, whereas Pfeiffer contends that all energy sources combined, *apart from oil*, will not support more than 2.5 billion people. The world's population will approach seven billion in a few years and has yet to level off.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Scott & Christopher J. Duncan, *Return of the Black Death: The World's Greatest Serial Killer*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd. (2004). Online: "The History of the Black Death," retrieved 28 Aug 2005 from <http://www.firstscience.com/SITE/ARTICLES/history-of-the-black-death.asp>.

<sup>6</sup> Pfeiffer, "A Call for Action."

This may sound alarmist, but Pfeiffer does confer the immediate blame for the projected disaster on capitalism and its profit-driven psychosis — which implies that it can be averted with the elimination of capitalism. In the final analysis, however, even where his conclusions are arguable, his “call for action” raises disquieting questions. If he is even only partly on track, the future is not bright. The end of the Garden Path is one way or the other looming before us. Certainly, “neoconservatives” in Washington steering the U.S. toward a policy of disguised regional subjugation in the Middle East strongly suggests that Pfeiffer’s fears about rising levels of conflict ensuing from a tightening “peak oil” situation might have some grounds. Add the assumption (validated by most scientists) that we are on the brink of potentially drastic climate changes, and a putative breakdown of human civilization by the mid-point of this century could place *homo sapiens* in an unenviable and precarious position, exposed to extinction-level events whose danger we have only recently begun to grasp.<sup>7</sup>

### Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed

This sort of analysis falls into the category of “barbarism” scenarios. Pfeiffer himself acknowledges the hypothetical character of his predictions; he also grants that efforts to save capitalism from itself, while futile, might alter his timeline somewhat. But these will not be enough: “Capitalism cannot be reformed,” he says, “due to [its] basic unalterable nature.” Not only that, but it is “antithetical to democracy” and cannot yield the necessary rethinking to avert disaster. What is not hypothetical is capitalism’s obvious capacity for undermining the basis of society. But Pfeiffer’s focus on energy and technol-

<sup>7</sup> Runaway global warming, for instance, dovetails with triggers of another, not inconceivable, environmental catastrophe: it could lead to massive methane venting from beneath the Earth’s surface, speeding up our present-day mass extinction event (already the third largest in the planet’s 4.5-billion year history) to the point where most life on Earth becomes extinct. (Pfeiffer, “A Call for Action”)

ogy rather than economic class causes him to underestimate both the political nature of the problem and its solution.<sup>8</sup> Then again, if he is even remotely correct, the Left is certain to be catapulted to power as the crisis grows, becoming the new status quo at the expense of failed corporate oligarchs. (The job of the Left, generally, is to muddy the waters trying to save capitalism.)

We humans, with our rather complicated brains, have proven ourselves master survivors, even if at the expense of other life-forms. Our upbringing under capitalism has conditioned us to attribute this success to technology, but a factor that explains it much better is the centrality of the human community — up, that is, till the advent of civilization (markets and the division of society into economic classes), which historically displaced communities as the drivers of progress. Over the course of several millennia, ruling-class reliance on markets has reduced the world’s communities to marginal outposts, substituting state authority for that of the community whenever possible; and in this sense, the capitalist revolution has finally devoured its parents. The more doctrinaire economists would now like to flatten out the state entirely, so that capitalist entities might govern directly.

The survival of the human species, however, will not be guaranteed by limiting population or prescribing technological cures, but by allowing our natural sense of community to work out its own solutions. One of the dubious trade-offs of intellectual progress has unfortunately

<sup>8</sup> Reading *World Hunger: Twelve Myths* by Francis Moore Lappé, Joseph Collins and Peter Rosset (with Luis Esparza), to take one instance, you come away with the sense that conventional estimates of the carrying capacity of the world’s farmlands are heavily padded with congratulatory homage lavished on agribusiness investors and other large landowners. The authors persuasively document, among other things, numerous cases of agricultural land being kept idle by large landowners — even, in some cases, during famines. (New York: Grove Press, 1998; 2nd ed.)

been a millennial-long transfer of storytelling as a vehicle of community survival to experts in numerous fields and the institutions they serve. This point was made rather poignantly, if unintentionally, by a *60 Minutes* segment on the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami: it detailed how a seafaring culture, the Moken, split between Thailand and Burma, in one of the region’s hardest hit areas, escaped the tsunami’s wrath down to the last child. While the Moken lost all their standing structures along the coast and have to rebuild everything, they owe their lives to an old man who reminded them of stories passed down through the generations as dance narratives, told around the fire, of a mythical “wave that eats people” called “the Laboon.” At length the old man galvanized the people, and they all evacuated in short order. In contrast, Burmese locals out fishing the same waters as the nearby Moken did not know enough to follow the Moken fishermen farther out to sea and were caught up in the tsunami. Only the storytelling “sea gypsies,” who remembered the past, survived.<sup>9</sup>

### Science — Our Social Memory

This same contrast extends all the way up the ladder of modern-day scientific expertise to the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in the Hawaiian Islands.<sup>10</sup> With all their training and preparation for combating tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean, they, along with the poorly educated Burmese fishermen, lacked the simple continuity of community memory that the even less educated Moken had kept intact. Had civilized society retained its stock of ancient collective memories to that same degree, most of the 250,000 lives lost in the disaster could have been saved.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *60 Minutes*, “Sea Gypsies See Signs in the Waves,” air date 20 March 2005. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/18/60minutes/main681558.shtml>.

<sup>10</sup> NOVA, “Wave that Shook the World,” air date 29 March 2005. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/transcripts/3208\\_tsunami.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/transcripts/3208_tsunami.html).

<sup>11</sup> NOVA, “Inquiry: Wave of the Future,” Peter Tyson. Retrieved 23 May 2005 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/tsunami/wave.html>.

Perhaps the most debilitating drawback of civilization, as the division of communities into arenas of class conflict, is its asphyxiating effect on the transmission of social memory. Class-divided societies inhibit or even actively discourage the transmission of community-based survival knowledge by steeping the majority at the bottom of the socioeconomic pyramid in ignorance and confining access to heightened levels of intellectual exploration to the small élites known as ruling classes. Naturally, these tiny minorities cannot handle the monumental task imposed on them, but then civilization itself began as the work of self-assured élites anchored in the privileged convergence of inter-community trade and private property in agriculture. Civilizations start to lose their memories at birth: the invention of writing, which accompanied the emergence of class conflict, paradoxically sealed the majority's denial of access to community memories of the distant past.

On the other hand, we cannot rationally propose to go back to a vanished world of isolated, technologically primitive communities, even though capitalism could be setting us up for the implosion of civilization. What to do, then? The answer is both elegant and simple: we must now (*re*)think our way out of our economic-class mentality. Communities that can control the wealth they produce for the benefit of their members will by the same token be able to enhance their own ability to retain the lessons of the past — but with the forward-looking edge conferred by science.

### Capital Undermines Community

Agriculture, which may have unhinged human society from its narrow subjection to the limits of nature, also served, ultimately, as humanity's bridge to global community. Capitalism is merely the last phase of community self-destruction — a demolition that has been thousands of years in the making. We do not even have to *want* world community anymore, because it is all we have left. Clinging to capitalism is about to lead us down a slippery slope of decline, and if the process should go as far as Pfeiffer believes, the

very best we could hope for would be a regression of *homo sapiens* to the level of the barbarian kingdoms predating the slave empires of antiquity — no future to wish on our descendants, and possibly even a kind of atherosclerotic portent.

Abolishing agriculture and technology would in the final analysis amount to giving up on the possibility of laying the foundations of a worldwide community of communities. Socialism — common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole — *is* that worldwide community, and only it can save the planet from capitalism. Capital, however kind and gentle, remains an unmanageable beast indifferent to human needs and human survival. Its own supporters appeal to the arbitration of the marketplace, binding human intelligence itself to the consequences of its own creation: perhaps the ultimate failure of human instincts.

By one of history's quaint ironies, just when one might pardonably have been persuaded that those ringing phrases of Karl Marx's in the *Communist Manifesto* and elsewhere really were just rhetorical trumpets, we find that the possibility of "the integument bursting asunder" is now a very material one indeed.<sup>12</sup> Socialists, who put their trust in a robust conception of humanity's social nature and the ability of all human beings to exercise their native intelligence, sincerely hope it will not take some kind of population disaster to serve as a wake-up call.

— ROEL

<sup>12</sup> Another that comes to mind is the celebrated last paragraph of the Introduction to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in which Marx poetically envisions the working class rising to ever greater challenges, finally facing the leap out of capitalism it can no longer avoid. "Hic Rhodus, hic salta!" ("Here is Rhodes: leap here!") — a skeptical challenge issued to a traveler in one of Aesop's fables to make good on his boasts.

## SURVIVING CAPITALISM

**If you and your family, friends and neighbors were the last people left on Earth, would you be able to survive, assuming access to fresh water, plants and animal life? As humans we have come a long way, but if we are to go much further we must reassess the direction we are taking in terms of survival and the quality of our lives. Few of us are unaware of the AIDS crisis in Africa, famines and wars worldwide, melting ice caps and ozone holes, yet we continue to follow the same well-trodden path which brought us these disasters.**

**Millennia ago, our ancestors lived crude and superstitious lives, but they were cooperative and self-sufficient. Over time a few learned to make implements out of metal rather than wood or bone and became highly respected for their skills. Indeed, they were sometimes regarded as magicians and treated like demigods. When some took their show on the road and traded with distant communities, they became the prototypes for the international capitalist. For the first time, farmers became dependent for their livelihood on implements made from materials from faraway places not accessible to them and by techniques of which they were totally ignorant.**

**Nowadays, we are all expected to hang by our individual own tails and have**

**become entirely dependent on the finite resource which lies beneath the sands of Iraq. The farmers rely on it to grow and harvest our food; the shippers to transport it great distances; we use it to power our heat, light and entertainment sources and to provide the energy for the manufacture of our consumer goods; it illuminates our supermarkets, takes us to and from work and keeps us on-line. Now that it is about to be depleted, we are threatened with the increased use of nuclear power and even coal! Meanwhile, we are all subjected to the degradation of our air, the privatization of urban water supplies and the genetic modification of food without our permission.**

**Why do we continue to worship the pantheon of thieves and profiteers which is responsible for this mess when we can all share the Earth's considerable resources without creating waste and pollution in the process? After all these eons, isn't it about time we chose a more equitable and practical alternative — socialism? Clean energy is a realistic possibility and conspicuous consumption a worthless exercise in a society of free access for all. Such a society will not come without cooperation and encouragement, but if we work together and avoid exploitation, we may yet survive capitalism.**

— Betty Pagnani



**Very likely only one of these rootless cosmopolitans would have advised you to vote "World Socialism"!**

## Capitalism's Weak Link

The Left is too busy being "practical" to have any time for ditching capitalism; but no matter whom you listen to, they will one and all have you chasing endlessly round and round on a nightmarish treadmill of short-term issues. Get the Socialist perspective on today's problems, and see for yourself why eliminating the employment system *FIRST* remains the only option that makes any real sense.

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# THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## OBJECT:

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

*The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:*

1. Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
2. In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

## the world socialist movement

**THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME  
OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**, Box 1266, N Richmond, 3121 Victoria • commonownership@yahoo.com

**SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA**, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: *Imagine* (\$1)

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**All party meetings are open to the public.**



This issue printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://www.worldsocialism.org/usa>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of "leadership," for example, would be to subvert the Party's reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the Party's statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

wage-labor and capital. Better that workers strive to abolish employment altogether.

## • Leadership

*The World Socialist Party rejects the political theory of leadership.* Neither "great" individuals nor self-appointed "vanguards" can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or "vanguards," never!

## • Historical Materialism

*The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history,* a way of looking at things that focuses on how human communities meet their actual survival needs by producing what they need to live (their economic systems, in other words). Out of this process the human brain weaves its ideas, which eventually exert their own influence on the cycle, causing it to become more and more complex as society evolves.

This approach, known as historical materialism, is a scientific method for helping us understand how and why capitalism does what it does. Armed with this understanding, socialists realize that capitalism can never deliver the goods for the vast majority of people. Other approaches, lacking this focus and overlooking the basis of capitalist society, can easily miss this point, so that their advocates get bogged down in vain efforts to make capitalism work for the majority.

## • Supernatural Explanations

*Socialists hold that materialist explanations of human society and the rest of nature supersede supernatural ones.* A religious perspective won't necessarily prevent anyone from striving to abolish capitalism and its evils, and the ethical elements of religious teachings may even be what first make many people aware of the injustices of a class-divided society. But they don't in themselves lead to an understanding of the causes of such injustices. (More often than not, religious institutions themselves justify and commit them.) The world socialist perspective is in any case essentially post-religious, because the case for socialism hinges on the scientific use of evidence. Socialists therefore look on supernatural explanations as obsolete. ∅

## • Control of State Power

*To establish socialism, the working class throughout the world must gain control of the powers of government through political organization.* It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society, the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state, as a precondition for converting it from a coercive power to an administrative arm of the community. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism, since socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

## • Reforms and Reformism

*The present, capitalist, society, even with "repair" and reform, by its very nature cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.* Reforms can never alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Capitalism could never get by without them. Whatever the intentions of reformers, socialists recognize the futility of their attempts and direct their efforts only to the complete abolishment of capitalism. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

## • The Parties of Reform

*The World Socialist Party opposes all parties or organizations that do not desire the*

*achievement of World Socialism.* We can only stand against those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

## • State Capitalism

*The various forms of so-called "communist" government (such as the old Soviet Union, China, Cuba, etc.) were not and are not socialism or communism.* "Socialist government" is an oxymoron of the first order. All states past and present calling themselves socialist are nothing more than systems in which the state holds varying degrees of control over the means of production. They justify their existence with the misguided notion that the state is somehow an extension of working-class power. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are not primarily produced for use. In addition, nationalization and government "ownership" of industry in no way alter the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

## • Organized Labor

*Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.* It is not a satisfactory tool to end class conflict. Unions must work within the framework of capitalism and therefore are useful only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between

## WHAT'S GOOD FOR GENERAL MOTORS IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

General Motors Corporation, long one of the working class's biggest rooters, has discovered to its chagrin that it has somehow — inadvertently — become a Deviationist Wrecker:

...Burdened by high healthcare costs, perceptions of poor quality and bland design in its vehicles, and a confusing array of brands, [General Motors Corp.] said yesterday it will cut 25,000 manufacturing jobs over the next three years. [*Boston Globe*, 8 June 2005]

In its displeasure over such deplorable lapses as allowing healthcare costs to remain “high,” the Wall Street Politburo has inflicted the penalty of loss of market share: “health costs need to be trimmed.” While trimming off 25,000 “excess” jobs may seem like an excellent way to reduce “health costs,” the Politburo already judges this too little too late:

The company, which has the capacity to build far more cars than it can sell, said it will close an undisclosed number [sic] of assembly and parts plants in a bid to save \$2.5 billion a year ... the range of cars from brands such as Buick and Pontiac would be cut back.

We will skip over the little hitch that although most economists are trained to wrinkle their noses at such quaint, unfashionable notions as “crises of overproduction,” General Motors seems (ahem) to have incurred in one.

Generally speaking, capitalists have always bet (on our behalf) that numbers will save us in the end. Note that in the above items, no one is talking about people, just various kinds of numbers: markets, jobs, customers, costs. Capital has no use for people because it can only extract value from such parts of them as it can fit, squeeze, or punch into marketplace roles. Human beings don't populate capital's landscape, and that is exactly why businessmen usually forget to figure in the “social costs” of their investments. As if to bang the point into our skulls, *Metro* (“the world's largest global newspaper”) 1-4 July announces in its Business section, “Bank of America to buy MBNA: \$35 billion deal will make bank one of world's largest; 6,000 jobs to be lost.”

The world's working class could go on its merry way as it has for a very long time

# YOU SAID IT!



condoning this blindness, and this would suffice to keep the system afloat for some time longer. The only catch, unfortunately, is that in trusting all our brains to the obsessive delusions of a small élite of capitalist wreckers, we risk betraying the planet's “human experiment” altogether.

### THE SPECTER OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is not a new concept, but it is not an old one, either. Although the tyrants of antiquity practiced it along with their many other atrocities, the Jacobins truly invented the notion, launching the Reign of Terror during the Great French Revolution. Many savvy dictators, democrats, republicans and now “freedom fighters” have been among its adepts. It has been enlisted since the fall of the Soviet Union in a vast campaign to prevent the military-industrial complex from running aground, once the disappearance of the International Communist Conspiracy made it clear that people might start wondering if the military piece of the complex was needed anymore.

Gone are the days of refreshingly brutal candor, when spokesmen for the interests of capital made no bones about which side their bread was buttered on. Noah André Trudeau, in *Like Men of War*, cites “a writer for *DeBow's Review* of 1849” quoted in Kenneth Stamp's seminal work on slavery, *The Peculiar Institution*:

We have to rely more and more on the power of fear ... We are determined to continue [as] masters, and to do so we have to draw the rein tighter and tighter day by day to be assured that we hold them in complete check.

“Terror,” observes Trudeau, “was the glue that bound together the Southern slave system.”<sup>1</sup> The *DeBow's Review* writer

<sup>1</sup> *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865*, Noah Andre Trudeau, Little Brown & Co.: Lebanon, IN (1998), p 60.

was referring as much to plantation slaves as to the “free whites” who kept breaking down and helping slaves escape to freedom. The governments of the antebellum slave states, much like modern states, saw terrorism as a means of political control. Yet it suits today's media, a club of bloated capitalist giants, to reverse-engineer the term, styling as terrorist any organization that opposes capital's global sway — provided it can be suitably construed as advocating or practicing violent methods, of course. Thus, given the chameleon-like versatility of the concept, there is no clear distinction between war and terrorism.

The reason “terror” was invented to begin with was to put opponents in their place, and it remains an affair of the capitalist class. Whichever side uses it, its purpose can never transcend the logic of class struggle, which socialists are committed to ending along with the whole bloody reign of capital. The problem now is to put the capitalist class in its place: and a simple walk to the ballot box by a conscious, political majority who understand and want socialism will fix *that*.

### CAPITALISM WORKS! (UNLESS YOU DO!)

“The ... increase of competition,” Adam Smith told us once upon a time in *Wealth of Nations*, “would reduce the profits of the masters, as well as the wages of workmen. The trades, the crafts, the mysteries, would all be losers. But the public would be a gainer, the work of all artificers coming in this way much cheaper to market.”<sup>2</sup>

But Smith's cheery theoretical balancing act, applied dogmatically for over two centuries by the economic theologians, has become a sinister exercise. Robert Went, writing in *Science and Society*, observes that present-day “reality contrasts sharply with the beliefs and expectations of many economists, policymakers and opinion leaders about the effects of globalization. According to mainstream economic theory, more economic integration is supposed to ‘lift

<sup>2</sup> Chapter X. Of Wages and Profit in the Different Employments of Labour and Stock: Part II, Inequalities Occasioned by the Policy of Europe.

**Continued on next page**

## YSI – Cont. from previous page

all boats' and to lead to convergence of growth, productivity and income levels." More concretely: "the assets of the top three billionaires in the world are more than the combined GDP [gross domestic product] of all least developed countries and their 600 million people."<sup>3</sup>

By no stretch can we describe "the public" as a gainer in this scenario, or the top three billionaires as subject to "reduced profits." Has something gone wrong with the way businessmen do business? As socialists have long pointed out, it is futile to expect capitalism to deal justly with its underdogs, even when these only happen to be the vast majority of people. Repeated reality checks have confirmed that economics truly is the "dismal science." Capitalism is designed to favor its top dogs (the capitalist class) at the expense of their victims and if the need arises, even of its own internal logic.



**A GIFT TO US FROM OUR GOD  
AND EMPEROR, CAPITAL**

**NOW BACK TO WORK,  
SLAVES!!!**

Capitalism is a story with no happy ending. The following rather bloodless summary, for instance, conceals a grisly tale of social, economic and political horrors:

World Bank economist Milanovic calculated, in a study covering 85 percent of the world's population from 91 countries, that the richest 50 million people in the world earn as much as the poorest 2.7 billion (Elliott and Denny, 2002). And to give another example, Weller, Scott and Hersh ... conclude that the "distribution of world income between countries grew unambiguously in the 1980s and 1990s," with the effect that the rich countries have gotten richer and the poor countries have gotten poorer: "The median per-capita income of the world's richest ten percent of countries was 76.8 times greater than that of the poorest ten percent of countries in 1980, 119.6 times greater in 1990, and 121.8 times greater in 1999. The ratio of the average per capita income shows a similar, yet more dramatic, increase."<sup>4</sup>

Let those dry statistics sink in for a minute. Was there ever a time when the rich weren't getting richer and the poor getting poorer? How much more slack do we have to cut it before we concede that capitalism is indeed broken, so broken we can never hope to fix it — only replace it?

— Ron Elbert

<sup>3</sup> "Globalization: Waiting — In Vain — for the New Long Boom," Robert Went, *Science and Society*, Vol. 69, No. 3, July 2005, p 367.

<sup>4</sup> Went, p 371.

**Photo, p 2: "Desertification is often defined in dynamic terms such as: 'the expansion of desert-like conditions and landscapes to areas where they should not occur climatically,' e.g. the 'desertization' concept of Le Houerou and Gillet (1986). While the word desertification implies a process, this term has largely been used to describe the endpoint, i.e. the desertified or degraded landscape.**

**"A simpler and more useful definition is that of Dregne (1983): 'desertification is the impoverishment of terrestrial ecosystems under the impact of man! Thus desertification is just one form of land degradation that is associated with semi-arid or arid landscapes. Implicit in the above definition is a continuum of ecosystem modification, from slight to severe as the result of the degradation process, and that is the direct result of human activity."**

**SOURCE: <<http://www.icsu-scope.org/downloadpubs/scope45/ch04-4.1.3.html>>**



## On Second Thought

From the *Western Socialist*

The outstanding and most powerful section of Goldwater support is among the oil interests...

The establishment of National Parks covered by various Wilderness Bills has attracted many others to the Goldwater camp. Livestock grazers, mineral prospectors, miners and loggers seek this valuable land for their exploitation. They have no compunction in destroying the lovely redwood forests and the thousand-year-old sequoias. Such entrepreneurs look with scorn upon what they consider are fuzzy dogooder liberals who seek to retain for present and future generations areas of pristine wilderness unspoiled by roads, buildings and autos. Present laws empower the Secretary of Agriculture to remove all or part of these parks from what protection they now enjoy.

More Goldwater supporters are found among the farmers and ranchers of the west and southwest. They seek the abolition of present laws which have set 90 cents per hour as a minimum wage for the Braceros. They favor unlimited entry of these Mexican farm workers so that competition will regulate the "munificent" wages downward...

The change in military technology creating new weapons, nuclear disarmament legislation, a let-up on the Cold War, talk of China's entry into the U.N., have all cut heavily into the defense business of Lockheed, Douglas, Boeing, Northrup, Hunt, Kaiser and the Giannini banking interests. A President who will talk tough, end the "nonsense" of nuclear disarmament propaganda and curb the U.N. with its starry-eyed view of peace among nations would stimulate the business of the whole armaments industry. The new financial and industrial tycoons of the west and southwest generally seek the security of a government controlled by them instead of by the older concerns of the northeast, Wall Street, the Boston financial groups and the Pennsylvania industrial complex.

...Furthermore, the master class can only rule when it rules with the consent of the vast majority, and as long as the important capitalists control the means of communication, the schools, the press, radio, TV and the churches, they have little to fear. These head-fixing institutions can generally be relied upon, in highly developed nations, to mold an acquiescent electorate not only willing to vote for capitalism but even to fight and die for their exploiters.

"Forces Behind Goldwater," S.O. [Sam Orner], No. 5, 1964.



# Better living through chemistry?

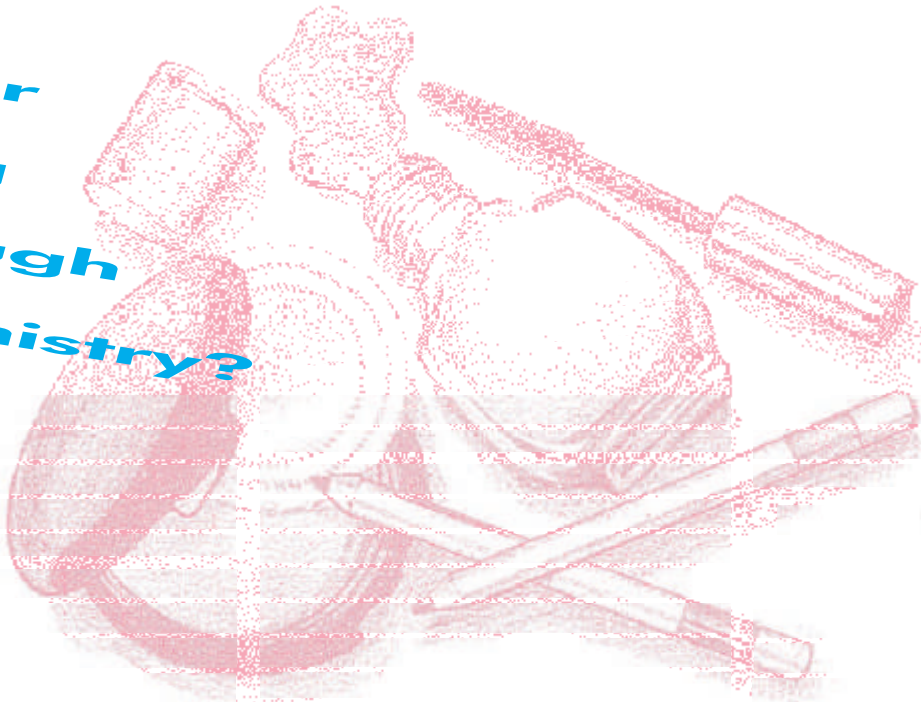
All chemicals introduced into the environment from there to aquatic environments. When those components of personal care products such as suntan lotions, makeup, or human and veterinary medicines they represent a part of our lives now being investigated by the Environmental Protection Agency, water and sewage treatment services and academia. These chemicals are given the acronym PPCP to facilitate communication and research on what can be a mind-boggling array of substances.<sup>1</sup>

At present no research has determined the effects of constant exposure to current levels, which are known not to be at hazardous levels at any given time (in fact those measured are found in the single digit parts per trillion, or one-millionth of a gram per liter of water). However, scientists are anticipating a future problem due to the presence of a constant low background level that is constantly replenished, the possible but unknown effects of long term exposure and the unknown reactions with substances in the environment.

This issue is getting a lot of attention because most of the development in detection techniques has taken place in the last five to ten years. As an example of some of the work going on in this area, one recent researcher has detected the presence of antibiotics, particularly fluoroquinolones, sulfonamides, and tetracyclines in several water bodies in North Carolina.<sup>2</sup> The con-

<sup>1</sup> PPCPs as environmental pollutants and Origins and Fate of PPCPs in the Environment. <http://epa.gov/nerlesd1/chemistry/pharma>.

<sup>2</sup> Occurrence of Antibiotics in Drinking Water. Ye, Zhengqi and Weinberg, Howard. University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.



# chemicals are everywhere

that there are tens or thousands of such chemicals, many of which have been used for decades. Fifty of these have already been identified in most places they were looked for, up to 1999, but most classes of PPCP have yet to even be searched out.

## PPCPs Are Everywhere

PPCP entry into the environment occurs from many sources. Individuals use these products externally or ingest them, later excreting them in their original or derivative forms. Hospitals, pharmacies, and physicians are also significant sources. The factories that manufacture these products are also responsible for their introduction. Also of note is the use of some PPCPs as pest control, particularly

warfarin, caffeine, and acetaminophen. PPCPs not released into sewage streams can also be disposed of in landfills, where the danger of leaching into the soil is present. Lastly, the use of sewage biosolids as fertilizer is yet another way these substances can find their way into the environment. Once there, they primarily impact the organisms living there:

plants, mollusks and fish are especially vulnerable to PPCPs in their habitat.

No single treatment can be used; presently no treatment system is designed to address these chemicals.<sup>3</sup> Sewage treatment processes (such as activated sludge treatment) are designed to remove a specific set of contaminants as defined by the EPA despite the fact that waste streams and some drinking water sources are known to contain numerous other chemicals. It would be virtually impossible for any regulatory body to study the effects of, monitor the environmental levels of, and design and implement treatment techniques for the ever-expanding menu of artificial substances introduced into the aquatic environment, anywhere near as fast as they are being produced. Not only the active chemicals contained in PPCPs but also the inert or non-functional chemicals a source of concern. These include propellants, solvents, stabilizers,

<sup>3</sup> On Point: PPCPs. [http://www.awwa.org/Advocacy/YourWater/Issues/OnPoint\\_PPCPs.cfm](http://www.awwa.org/Advocacy/YourWater/Issues/OnPoint_PPCPs.cfm)

## INTRODUCING:



excipients in prescription drugs, and preservatives. Some of these pose an additional danger as air pollution as well.

Present concerns about the presence of PPCPs in aquatic environments center around the disruption of hormones in fish by estrogens and the overuse of antibiotics causing the release of resistant pathogens which can then be naturally selected for. The effects of the continual presence of all PPCPs on life (both aquatic and human) are also an area of concern and study. Of the myriad substances possibly present, the effects of serotonin reuptake inhibitors (antidepressants), calcium channel blockers (blood pressure), and proton pump inhibitors (acid reflux) seem to have the greatest potential for undesired effects. In addition, the known presence of antiepileptics and chemotherapy agents, which have known human toxicities, can also be worrisome. In 2000, the top drug markets included cardiovascular, digestive, antidepressant, anti-infective and respiratory medicines, with

total sales of \$92 billion, which is almost half of worldwide sales. Considering the quantity of drugs this represents, one has to wonder how much actual chemical product is reaching the environment!

So how are PPCPs relevant to the achievement of socialism? A second look at the top-selling drugs mentioned makes one wonder how much the existence and prevalence of these drugs are a result of the unhealthy lifestyles we are trapped in as a result of capitalist consumer society. Just why is there such a demand for these drugs, or rather, why are people so sick? Or are they? How much prescribing is done nowadays to avoid future responsibility or culpability if a patient dies, or as the result of favors and kickbacks from the pharmaceutical industry? Perhaps these problems are symptoms of a society that always looks for a quick fix, without regards to the consequences. People generally consider the existence of modern pharmaceuticals and personal care prod-

ucts as one of the benefits of progress and technological advancement.

### Quick Fixes Are \$\$\$uper!

But rarely the do true believers in capitalist and consumerist culture ever stop to consider the costs borne in producing the modern marvels they just can't do without. Once it goes down the drain it becomes someone else's problem or simply disappears. This kind of mindset cannot exist in socialism — the emphasis on sustainability and the principle of production for use and not profit will cause society to carefully consider how to provide a standard of living that produces the best quality of life for everyone while using the least possible labor and producing the least amount of waste. Hopefully, instead of makeup, sunscreen, Vasotec and Viagra being washed down the pipes, we can instead watch greed, vanity, and toxic lifestyles follow the same swirly path into oblivion.

— Tony Pink

### I'M A NURSE...

...and one of the things I do for a living is facilitate groups for mothers of babies from two to twelve weeks old. The goal is to empower the mothers to trust their own judgment, as well as to teach them about infant development and the needs of new babies.

When I'm working with this group, I wear a somewhat different hat than the one I wear doing my socialist work.

The other day, one of the new moms wondered if it was safe to put baby sunblock on her two-month-old, because the tube was marked "Warning: not for infants under six months." Another mom responded that her pediatrician had told her it was OK, as long as you didn't put any on the face or hands. Someone else said *her* doctor insisted it was absolutely contraindicated to put sunblock on a baby under six months of age.

It became clear that there was no consensus among the different providers these women were using, although all the tubes and jars of

sunblock stated clearly not to use them on very young babies. One of the mothers (who is a doctor herself, though not a pediatrician) offered that when there is so much difference of opinion among health professionals, it generally means there isn't enough science to make a definite judgment.

I listened to all of this, and then I said, "Two generations ago, children played at the beach all day and no one worried much if they got sunburn. One generation ago, parents were urged to put sunblock on children, but not on young babies. Now in this present generation, we see the beginning of a tendency for even parents of very young babies to be advised to apply sunblock.

"Two things are happening here: they're trying to make sunblock less toxic, and exposure to UV rays is getting riskier because our current system of society has been making holes in the ozone layer. In other words, the risk of exposure to our own sun is becoming (or maybe has already become) greater than the

risk of exposure to the chemicals in sunblock.

"The reality is that the UV rays are more dangerous now than they were 50 years ago, because of lack of concern about protecting our environment."

Later, I was chastised by my boss for "not maintaining an upbeat atmosphere." Some of the mothers had been disturbed by what I said. But I couldn't help it — my RN hat had fallen off and been replaced by my Socialist hat!

I wish it was possible to connect the desire of mothers to protect their babies to the desire to protect humanity itself. What good does it do to maintain an upbeat attitude, feeling good as we apply the toxic sunblock, ignoring the relationship between skin cancer risk and capitalist disregard for the environment? I wish I could help these new moms recognize that the best way to protect their babies is by working for socialism.

— RN

# You can have your veggies and eat them too!

The practice of vegetarianism — or non-practice of animarianism\* — is not new to humanity. However, one could argue that it has never been more important. World hunger, inhumane and filthy methods of meat production, and the spread of livestock diseases both new and old are forcing many who would never consider abandoning sinking their teeth into a steaming hunk of flesh to give the idea a second thought. There are many kinds of vegetarians, ranging from impos- tors to the almost monastic avoiders of any food product of animal origin. This lifestyle is admittedly difficult; from meat-lover's restaurant menus to relatives who have to cook me something extra (and have my eternal gratitude), to the usually absurdly high-priced products offered in the supermarkets.

I will try to show how vegetarianism in socialism makes sense and pass along some of the general benefits of the lifestyle, without attempting to convert you. There are people and organizations out there that can help you if you have questions or want more details on the nutritional aspects of meat-free lifestyles.

One of the concerns about meatless diets is protein. Actually, a balanced Western diet includes four times the recommended amount of protein for an average healthy adult, so leaving out the meat isn't going to kill you. In fact, I don't track where my protein comes from, and I sort of don't care, because I know that there are sufficient quantities in many plant-based foods, the chief being the soybean. This is exactly where the herbivores get it and they do just fine.

Incidentally, this introduces an area where I think vegetarianism and socialism cross — at the cessation of the waste of matter and energy involved in transforming plants into meat. A good rule of thumb to estimate this waste is the “ten percent pyramid,” with humans on the top and the little greenies on the bottom. Only ten percent of each pound of “eaten” is

successfully converted into “eater.” The rest is waste in the form of uneatable or indigestible matter and heat energy lost during chemical conversion. Therefore, it takes about ten pounds of plants to produce one pound of animal, and ten pounds of animal to produce one pound of human or other carnivore.

## A Happy and Livable Planet

A little math tells me that if I was a carnivore, it would take  $250 \times 10 \times 10 = 25,000$  pounds of vegetable matter to produce a meat-eating version of me, but only 2,500 pounds to produce me as an herbivore. Abandoning meat as a food source can optimally increase the nutritive capacity of agriculture ten times, thus reducing our dependence on it! When socialism rolls around, the elimination of waste and hunger will surely be both primary goals for the creation of a happy and livable planet.

A socialist future like the one I dream about will also have a lot less pain and suffering than the current offering. I've done my homework, and without getting into details, I can say that there is a lot of that going on in the meat industries. Plants, in contrast, don't feel pain. They cannot for the obvious reason that they do not have brains, or any nervous systems at all. And no, the cows and pigs are not going to reproduce out of control if we stop using them for food.

There are environmental impacts as well, the most serious of which is the pollution caused by the wastes of animals grown for food. This has to go somewhere — and usually, untreated livestock waste is dumped into the nearest body of water, unlike human waste, which is in most cases required by law to be treated before release into the environment. The impacts of farm animal waste are significant — I'm not going to quote statistics, so you can research this if you want.

The impact of fertilizer is even greater; however, this problem

does not completely go away if meaty diets eventually disappear. Fertilizer will still be necessary to grow crops, but mindful socialists will not be forced by the pressure of the market to produce the most, the biggest, and the best — only that which is needed. They can take care that the effects of the fertilizer they do use are reduced and monitored by careful farming practices, efforts made easier by a cooperative agricultural model and not a competitive one. Meat processing facilities have environmental impacts as well. Since it seems impossible for capitalism to maintain clean and efficient slaughterhouses, those places remain vectors for disease and contamination. Shockumentaries still pop on the tube every once in awhile, reminding us, however ineffectively, how filthy meat processing actually is.

In sum, the benefits of a vegetarian society can go hand in hand with the desires of a socialist society. A widespread vegetarian lifestyle can play a significant role in reducing energy demands, pain and suffering, and the negative effects of agriculture on the environment. The environmental and medical impacts of a meat-centered culture are well documented even if they are generally ignored; and even though the psychological impacts may be harder to measure, they still contribute, in my opinion, to making the world a little more violent than it needs to be.

— TP



\* This is not an actual scientific term, but then neither am I.



## **OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE**

Over the years we have discovered that the earth is not flat after all, and the sun no longer circles the earth. Since we're not perfect, it should not be surprising that our senses fail us from time to time. Magicians and con-artists can fool us too, if we're not careful. I can think of many more. How about our "leaders" in government, our schooling, all the media, radio and TV — all designed to make a model slave of you. We "wage-slaves" are all taught to regard all "leaders" and "great men" in awe and admiration. Evidently they are supposed to have superior reasoning powers and we are expected to follow their advice.

When people started to till the soil and domesticate animals, they were able to produce far in excess of their own requirements. Since that time humans have made possible a parasite class who have contrived to let someone else do all the work. The modern "wage-slave," with the aid of modern equipment, has outstripped the former slaves in their ability to produce. We have filled the world with commodities, but alas, only those folks with money can partake. Many must starve in a world bursting at its seams.

Much of the world's production is not consumed except in time of war or preparation for war. The consumption of these items means death and destruction, misery and despair. Where there are "leaders" there are led, where there are led there are bled. Obviously, there would be no leaders without "gullible followers."

All forms of life propagate their species and human beings are no exception. Methinks we humans have forgotten the purpose of life: we now live to eat, rather than eat to live. In support of the mad quest for profits, we have let the earth be turned into a battleground. The slaves do the fighting, and the parasites direct the action. Under their direction we pollute the air and water, ruin the ozone, use the lakes and oceans for dump sites and strip the forests. We produce germs and viruses (perhaps Aids), clones and robots, computers and hackers, dangerous combinations of unruly and unconscionable behaviors.

There is a way out, however. The Socialist suggests that we eliminate the cause of this mad rush to oblivion. Let us establish a new lifestyle. In a word: Socialism. "From each according to our abilities, to each according to our needs." No buying or selling, no wages, no countries or borders. Just free access to all we produce, worldwide.

## **ALAS, POOR CARL!**

Carl Sagan was a Pulitzer prize winner. He was also the author of the book, *Cosmos*, and largely responsible for the TV program of the same name. I urge you to drop by your favorite book store and check out his video, *Cosmos* #13.

Cosmology, for me, is a fascinating subject, perhaps because I know very little about it. When told that mankind has existed for just a few seconds on the Cosmic calendar and Dinosaurs preceded us by millions of years, I feel rather insignificant. I feel that our demise would be of no importance in the Cosmic scheme of things.

The astronomer speaks of billions of light-years and a billion trillion stars and that our world is a speck of dust in a vast ocean of space. What happens on this minuscule mote of matter is of no importance. Good grief, what am I saying? I live on this globe. My life span may be a blink of an eye in Cosmic time, but to me it's three score and ten.

There has been some concern about the possibility of a nuclear exchange in the not too distant future. Sagan spoke of the necessity for us to come to grips with the problem. I second the motion. The Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) warned us years ago by inscribing on their monthly paper, the choice we have in the matter, to wit: "Socialism or Social Extinction."

We, like the SPGB, advocate the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of Socialism, a society without wars or poverty, no governments, nations or boundaries, no money, profits or wages. Just free access to all our needs. It can be achieved through the ballot-box only — by a majority of socialists.

The two-megaton bomb is not the largest nuclear bomb, but it is equivalent to all the bombs dropped in World War II. It took six or seven years to drop two million blockbusters. Just think, with our missiles

today we could have a hundred World War II's in a few hours. We could follow the dinosaurs into oblivion. The planet Earth would continue its orbit around the Sun for many more millions of years, unaffected by the antics of puny earthlings.

Ergo, if you were cast into a raging river, you would fight till you could fight no more. You would start grasping at straws, as they say. Let us not wait for the bombs to fall around us before we take action. This fight requires intelligence to forestall this event. I repeat the alternative: "Socialism or Social Extinction."

## **THE CLAY'S THE THING**

For me, Astronomy is likewise a very fascinating subject, perhaps because I know very little about it. When one is told that the Earth is traveling at 18 miles per second in its orbit around the sun and that the temperature of Mars is  $-67^{\circ}$  F, Venus is a hot one at  $850^{\circ}$  F and our Earth is a balmy  $59^{\circ}$  F (if it was any different we would not be here), it makes one feel, as I said, very insignificant. All this trivia may be interesting, but what does it have to do with the price of tomatoes? I don't know, but my philosopher tells me that for every cause there are a million effects and for every effect, a million causes.

Humankind has evolved, in a few seconds on the Cosmic calendar, into a so-called intelligent creature, by our own standards, of course. We must not forget that we are also gifted with a dash of ignorance. Everything is relative to every other thing. Nothing is perfect, except the Cosmos.

I ask you what is large? What is small? What is hot, and what is cold? Who is intelligent, and who is ignorant? Let us face it, everything is relative.

The Earth is a speck of dust in a vast ocean of space. The dinosaurs have come and gone, millions of years ago. We are the late-comers. Our demise would matter little in the Cosmic scheme of things.

During our tenure on this Earth we have been subjected to many types of societies. Each one brought about by the constant changes in the methods of producing and distributing our needs. The present system of economics is called Capitalism, and it too must change because it can no longer be tolerated. It is responsible for poverty, wars and exploitation. The next war may very well be nuclear, in which case we are well equipped. There isn't a government in the world that doesn't play with bombs.

We socialists are convinced that the only choice we have for a safe and productive future is the introduction of Socialism. "Socialism or Social Extinction": repeat that one thousand times. When the atmosphere is filled with radioactive dust from 100 WW2s, that will be a mite late to take action.

The socialist objective is the establishment of a system based on the common ownership of the means for producing and distributing our needs in a true democracy. A classless, moneyless society devoid of wars, poverty and exploitation. "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs."

Free access to our needs, and that includes tomatoes.

— **W. Hewitson**

## Song Sung Twice

the prince of clowns from his towering height  
comes plummeting downward with diminishing fright  
I found out the truth and did not bring it to light  
I knew what was wrong and did not do what was right  
I found out the truth and did not know what to say  
I started a panic and ran the wrong way  
GOOD BYE Oh No Hello its LBJ  
Who needs a great society to hell with LBJ  
we are taking all his helicopters and flying them away

RICHARD NIXON out of bounds  
IKE went to Korea like a thousand other clowns  
I will go over ho chi minh's head and then back down  
winning hearts and minds while burying our dead  
try and be a little bit more yellow and more red  
I like Ike call it more wrong than reich  
a dog with a bark that is worse than its bite  
after the fall of the great China wall  
oh Henry K to Dr. Dick  
detente kills children quick  
I am no quitter I quit

THE CHORUS ALAS it can't happen here  
make no mistake about thats perfectly clear  
they hate it when I sing this song  
they get annoyed  
they were jumping for joy in Hanoi

and where was your local congressman  
I started a panic and ran  
short little eyes open wide in disbelief,  
I have prepared a legal brief  
I call you all assistant chiefs  
Superman and the Atomic bomb  
I survived without a scratch  
No declaration of war powers do not attach

THE CHORUS BEGINS WOE IS TO ME EYES NOT SEE  
— Edward M. Giannattasio

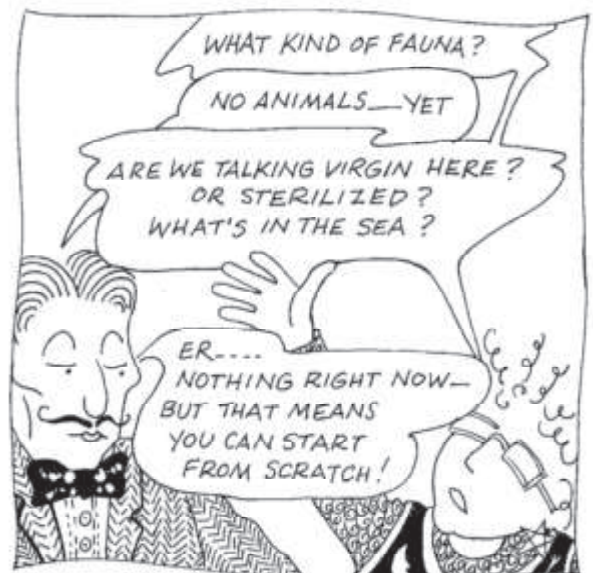
## Impossible Maybe

A gift I lift,  
to raise in praise  
Socialism now  
the question is how?  
Think People Skills

—Edward M. Giannattasio



Pass this copy  
on to a friend!



# ¿Lost in the translation?

The President is always the last to know... U.S. strongman G.W. Bush appears to be the only person in the country who believes no one anticipated the strength of Katrina's uppercut to a city long known to be at risk. "New Orleans," wrote Mark Fischetti in the October 2001 *Scientific American*, "is a disaster waiting to happen" ("Drowning New Orleans"). The Nature we have been taught religiously it is our human destiny to conquer appears to have other ideas. Below are two additional contrasting views — from *U.S. News & World Report* (9/1/05) and *Left Turn* #17 (updated 9/4/05) — of what may yet prove to be only an introduction to a century of "natural" catastrophes.

Note the sharper sense of the *problem* the *Scientific American* brings and the clearer sense of its *context* provided by *Left Turn*, while the *U.S. News* writers stick ploddingly to coverage of the *details*. This "challenged" sense of the big picture, in the last case, is no accident. The capitalist media, a group of corporate employers forming both the propaganda wing of the profiteer class and the One True Apostolic Church imbued with a mission of keeping working-class eyes focused on salvation in a cup of tea, already work from a single inviolable premise: no profit, no production. Only one larger picture can actually fit into this premise — the rights and concerns of the profit-makers. Both of these aspects are sacrosanct and therefore merely implicit. Ø



## Scientific American 2001

A year from now another 25 to 30 square miles of delta marsh — an area the size of Manhattan — will have vanished. An acre disappears every 24 minutes.

To bring in the goods, the fossil fuel companies have dredged hundreds of miles of navigation channels and pipeline canals throughout the coastal and interior marshes. Each cut removes land, and boat traffic and tides steadily erode the banks. The average U.S. beach erodes about two feet a year, Penland says, but Port Fourchon loses 40 to 50 feet a year — the fastest rate in the country. The network of canals also gives saltwater easy access to interior marshes, raising their salinity and killing the grasses and bottomwood forests from the roots up. No vegetation is left to prevent wind and water from wearing the marshes away. In a study funded by the oil and gas industry, [geologist Sean] Penland documented that the industry has caused one third of the delta's land loss.

No group is bound by [Coast 2050, a blueprint for restoring coastal Louisiana], however, and if all the projects were pursued, the price tag would be \$14 billion. ("Drowning New Orleans," Mark Fischetti, a Contributing Editor.)

## U.S. News & World Report 2005

In the mid 1990s, a few years after Florida launched its campaign to rescue the Everglades, Louisiana's congressional delegation began fighting for the region's wetlands. But the lawmakers failed to persuade Congress to authorize money — other than a small annual appropriation called the Breaux Amendment, named for recently

retired Sen. John Breaux — until this year, when Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu marked the opening of hurricane season by standing in the French Quarter with a giant blue tarp strung up 18 feet high, where she predicted water would rise in the event a hurricane hit, partly because of wetlands elimination. While the House of Representatives' version of the recent energy bill would have provided long-term help — \$350 million over the next 10 years and \$1 billion yearly starting in 2016 — the Senate balked after Democrats and the White House resisted transferring some of the royalties from oil drilling off Louisiana's coast back to the state. What finally emerged from Congress provided Louisiana with \$540 million for coastal restoration over the next four years.

But partly because New Orleans is home to a large poor population — more than 20 percent of its 480,000 residents live below the poverty line, according to a 2003 U.S. Census report — 100,000 households report having no car. And though free busing was provided to the city's famed Superdome, itself evacuated late last week, there appears to have been no attempt to provide public transportation out of town for the poor. In an interview before Katrina struck, New Orleans Director of Emergency Preparedness Joseph Matthews told U.S. News that plans to use buses or Amtrak trains to get people out of town were in their infancy. "Our official policy is that everybody should take it upon themselves to find their own means of evacuation," he said. "As far as evacuating 50,000 or 100,000 people [is concerned], we don't have the resources."

"We really don't have a lot of planning experience

with dealing with this many displaced people for a really extended amount of time," says GWU's Harrald. "Where are you going to build temporary housing? What do you do with a city that's uninhabitable?" ("Understanding Katrina," Dan Gilgoff.)

Florida utility companies, which rely heavily on Gulf of Mexico natural gas, have warned that they might resort to targeted brownouts. ("The [Big] Ripple Effect," Marianne Lavelle.)

## Left Turn 2005

While the rich escaped New Orleans, those with nowhere to go and no way to get there were left behind. Adding salt to the wound, the local and national media have spent the last week demonizing those left behind.

No sane person should classify someone who takes food from indefinitely closed stores in a desperate, starving city as a "looter," but that's just what the media did over and over again. Sheriffs and politicians talked of having troops protect stores instead of perform rescue operations.

Images of New Orleans' hurricane-ravaged population were transformed into black, out-of-control criminals. As if taking a stereo from a store that will clearly be insured against loss is a greater crime than the governmental neglect and incompetence that did billions of dollars of damage and destroyed a city. This media focus is a tactic; just as the eighties focus on "welfare queens" and "super-predators" obscured the simultaneous and much larger crimes of the Savings and Loan scams and mass layoffs, the hyper-exploited people of New Orleans are being used as a scapegoat to cover up much larger crimes. ("Notes from Inside New Orleans," Jordan Flaherty, a *Left Turn* editor and a union organizer.)

**Katrina – Cont. from back cover**  
weather will no longer be avoidable, even if pollution were stopped after such a date.

While it is difficult to be certain if the damage to the planet caused by capitalist production has been responsible for recent changes for the worse in weather, one thing is clear, judging by responses from presidents and politicians and the almost absent coverage of such topics in the major media — such dire warnings from the scientific community are not going to be taken seriously.

### Critical Decision-Making

This leaves us rightly concerned whether we are heading into an era in which such similarly devastating phenomena as Hurricane Katrina will not be the exceptions, but the rule. The big question is, what are we all going to do about it? Until enough people appreciate the hopeless, even the grim, existence that the future of capital-

ism represents for the human species and stop leaving critical decision-making to blind leaders of all parties (led by the supremacy of corporate interests), all of us will be increasingly at risk — purely from business as usual. Global awareness begins at home: What are you personally going to do to render this planet a joy to share, to create a society for yourself and your children that meets our needs? Employment isn't just our badge of slavery; it's a millstone hung around the whole world's neck. Human survival demands we now put it behind us, like our childhood toys.

The World Socialist Party of the United States is a companion party of the world socialist movement. It aims to bring about a nonviolent revolution in the ownership of the means of production from private or

state to common. In such a society, money will no longer be necessary, as the things and services we require to live fully (food, clothes, medical services, homes, transportation, and other modern human needs) will be freely available to all. This is because the means of production will be owned in common by the entire community and democratically controlled by it, with today's leaders and elites replaced by truly democratic decision-making on the part of all members of the community.

In a society of interdependent communities based on common ownership, war in a nationless world will be immediately abolished for lack of interest or need, while all degrees of starvation and poverty will quickly follow suit. Without the barrier of economic cost holding back human progress, sustainable ways to provide energy and production for ourselves will be immediately planned and created on a global basis. Our world will become for the first time in its history a truly human family looking after itself.

— Dr. Who

## New Orleans ain't gone yet ... yet

Opinions will differ over whether global warming bears direct responsibility for the Big Easy's brush with oblivion. But quite apart from the horror stories Katrina has generated, worse probably *is* coming down the pike. A *New Scientist* article (6/25/2005) tells us that, yes, "the natural decadal swings in the number of storms and hurricanes are so large that climate change cannot be blamed for the increases, according to Kevin Trenberth of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado (*Science*, vol 308, p 1753)." However:

hurricane intensity and rainfall have been increasing consistently ... This is because the sea-surface temperature and atmospheric moisture content have been increasing as the world warms, and both provide the energy to fuel hurricanes...

So although the Weather Channel's often obsessive coverage gave the impression we were about to witness live the Last Days of New Orleans, still, we just might. "Global warming is pumping up the destructive power of hurricanes and typhoons," suggests a new MIT study ("Global warming will bring fiercer hurricanes," *Insurance Journal* 8/1/2005). ☉



# Katrina: an act of Kapital?

The recent sickening ravages of property and life wrought by Hurricane Katrina have been extensively covered in the media, except for two rather glaring omissions.

The first was that a society based upon the rights of property over human life had a great deal to do with exacerbating an already traumatic situation. What we witnessed on television the most were stark and pathetic scenes of poor people huddled in a sports stadium, homes lost forever, awaiting supplies and aid that took endless days to arrive, during which time more people died, the ill were uncared for, and conditions of existence plummeted to unsanitary levels often associated with the shanty towns of South America or Turkish prisons, but not with the United States of America.

While these already traumatized souls had to endure an additional trauma of abandonment and lack of the basic wherewithal to survive, millions of homes and offices unused and awaiting buyers sat empty around this country, but were not available to the million homeless of New Orleans whose life savings had been lost in homes rendered rubble, or who simply never had the savings to invest in their own house.

## Needs of the dire and desperate kind

Nobody on television asked the most salient question of all: Should people struck by terrible tragedy be victims of charity at all, or should they instead be automatically entitled to society's wealth simply by demonstrating clear-cut needs for homes, hygiene, food, clothes, and comfort? Since our society as presently constituted is not geared toward the satisfaction of our needs, but rather toward the sale of goods and services to yield profits, it has proved itself demonstrably incapable of meeting needs of the dire and desperate kind, needs that materialized hard on the heels of Katrina. But hey, there are already millions of homeless and poor people in the United States who are not entitled to those vast numbers of empty homes awaiting purchase, so why are these victims of extreme weather any more fortunate?

Had you or I decided to by-pass the sleeping government and simply pick up a couple of homeless individuals and drop them off in another town, we would have had to do so only by taking time off work. Most of us, as workers, have commit-



ments to our employers that may not be so casually by-passed. And in capitalism, even relief efforts are subject to the welfare agencies' budgetary constraints. Ever heard of the tens of millions of starving and ill children who die each and every year around the world for whom there is simply not enough money to go around?

While relief for those left in New Orleans was certainly offered by the Red Cross and eventually by the state, nobody on television asked the pertinent question of whether it is sane or even effective to meet critical human needs depending upon

how much money or how many volunteers may be assembled. What if those of you donating a few dollars at supermarkets for Katrina victims simply don't raise enough? Does that mean that the plight of those struck by disaster is entirely the result of your personal failures, or of a society in which wealth is produced only to be sold, and not to meet our needs? Socialists think the latter.

Nobody on television asked whether by rights the wealth of society should not be automatically due to all individuals. Thus, the million New Orleaners with homes tragically destroyed suddenly enter into that category of "homeless," those without the monetary means to buy or rent housing. Nobody on the idiot box asked the most obvious question of all: Why shouldn't homes be available to anybody who needs them?

## Was Katrina a "Catastrophic Alteration"?

A second glaring omission concerns the severity of the storm itself. Many scientists around the world are now convinced that the ecological devastation wrought by modern society has played its part in altering global weather patterns, even while conservative politicians and owners of polluting industry deny such hypotheses and try hard to keep them from being discussed in the media (another good reason for a democratic society with the means of information in the hands of the people).

Tropical forests are vanishing at the rate of city sizes per day, ice is melting at the polar caps, storms are increasing and worsening, temperatures are rising, ozone levels are diminishing. Quite a few scientists have made calculations that if present levels of ecological destruction continue unabated for the next ten, twenty or thirty years, then catastrophic alterations in

**Continued on p 19**



# **World Socialist Review**

No. 21 • LATIN AMERICA ISSUE • \$2<sup>00</sup>



**Journal of the World Socialist Movement in the United States**



## **Latin America: Muddy Road Ahead**

### **INSIDE**

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**¡viva la revolución!**

**looking for socialism  
(in all the wrong places)**

**brazil repeats history**

**is cuba socialist?**

**changing geopolitics**

**review of *build it now***

# Latin America's pre-socialist Left

**T**he hot issues in Latin America today are the self-determination of nations and anti-imperialism. Both concepts are false, because they drag the working class into the trap of nationalism. Class struggle is not mentioned by any of the political leaders, and the Left is not mentioning it either, despite the fact that there is not any kind of homogeneity of interests within any nation; every nation has antagonistic interests between the rulers and the working class.

On a practical level, there is a lot confusion going around in Latin America regarding leaders like Chávez, Castro and Morales. The so-called socialism of the 21st century is a new state-capitalist variation invented by the Venezuelan leaders and probably suggested by the Cuban leadership: just another way for the national bourgeoisies of some Latin American countries to get mass support for their interests. They are anti-Yanqui for now, but in reality, like Saddam Hussein, Hitler, or Stalin, they are not against capitalism — only against the privatization of the means of production.

One thing the Latin American Left is not able to see (probably because they do not have the proper principles to understand it) is that some of those so-called socialist leaders, such as the President of Chile and the President of Brazil, are ambiguous. One moment they are against domination by the U.S.'s rulers and the next they send troops to Haiti in order to collaborate with the invasions of that country; and at the same time as the Brazilian capitalist class is placing pressure on the President of Bolivia against the nationalization of natural resources, he is compromising with U.S. interests in Bolivia. The President of Paraguay, formerly a member of the Tupac Amaru guerrilleros, promised a lot of changes and benefits for the working class, and now he is collaborating with the USA, doing the opposite of everything he said and moving more toward the right than the left.

Fidel Castro, for his part, has been lauded as an immortal leader, together with Che Guevara, since his last visit to Argentina to promote the Mercosur [a trade agreement between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay]. Even the Catholic Church is praying for him, now that he went through an emergency surgery! He is becoming the Messiah of Latin America, and if for any reason he dies, probably Hugo Chávez will continue his ideological work through the region.

On a more theoretical level, while some leftist groups may look like they are against capitalism, they too are not against state capitalism or the capitalist system as a whole, which can only be replaced by a new society. When they talk about glo-

balization, they do not understand that concept either, because globalization is only the wide spread of the capitalist mode of production, which is creating the proper conditions for a new society. They think that the spread of poverty, hunger and unemployment is caused by globalization only, but they do not say that it is a by-product of the capitalist system itself, and that all those consequences are very normal for capitalism. As for [neo]liberalism, that concept is totally incorrect, because liberalism does not exist anymore; today the state is participating more in the economy than in prior years.

## Meet the new boss...

The struggles (leftists say) are now being concentrated between imperialist countries and anti-imperialist countries, but the class struggle they place on a secondary level. Given, again, that there is not an equality of interests between the rulers and the workers of any nation, this is a false argument.

**I t has been said that, in places like Latin America, the ideas of Marx never actually were spread; what most leftists know now is Leninism, Stalinism and Trotskyism, which are all in essence the same ideas.**

The workers continue being exploited by the same ruling class that is trying to promote itself as their liberator. That is one of the big dangers of Lenin's concept of anti-imperialism: if the enemy is the United States, not only does this mean they do not differentiate between U.S. workers and the U.S. ruling class, but they also make alliances with the rulers of other countries such as China and Russia, or with the likes of Hamas and the Lebanese religious leaders.

A third issue, finally, is another idea we have inherited from the Bolsheviks and the Leninists — the concept of leadership. It has been said that, in places like Latin America, the ideas of Marx never actually were spread; what most leftists know now is Leninism, Stalinism and Trotskyism, which are in essence all the same ideas. Marxist-Leninists, former and current, have in general done great damage to the ideas of socialism and the Marxian vision of a new society without class, money or state. They have been a great help to the ruling class.

If Latin America's leftists placed all their emphasis on the class struggle and were able to recognize that capitalism is the root of all the problems in the world, they would be forced to see that Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Chile are all capitalist countries and that there are not common interests between the rulers of those countries and the working class. They would be forced to negate themselves and their past, and to reject whatever they are supporting now. Like Leon Trotsky in his struggles with Stalin, Latin America's Left stands behind the ruling class: Trotsky never wanted to accept that the Soviet Union was a state-capitalist economy, either.

— Marcos Colomé

# ¡Viva la revolución!

Open your eyes and you won't believe the beauty of the world. Witness the world's smallest deer, the endangered pudu, hopping gracefully across the Valdivia. Listen to the rhythmic and loud tapings of the magellanic woodpecker. Watch the blue whales, the world's largest mammals, emerge just a stone's throw from the beach. Elsewhere, observe the giant river otters at play in the Amazon, or the stealthy leap of a jaguar chasing its prey. The Amazon itself courses seemingly forever through the planet's largest and most luxurious rainforest. Birds of the richest colors weave a tapestry above, their sounds descending below like a perpetual orchestra of melody and cacophony.

The waters of the Gulf of California maintain an impossible turquoise. The scurrying of the marine iguana on the Galápagos Islands, and so many other sights, sounds and smells, remind us of our place in the extraordinarily rich weaving of life, which for timeless eons provided for our material needs rather abundantly, as long as humans were able to cooperate together in sharing the fruits of this abundance with each other, and with the other creatures that adorned the planet.<sup>1</sup> Many humans came for sure to this breathtakingly stunning land southward from the Bering Land Bridge and possibly directly from Africa (if C.S. Gladwin's facts are correct in *The Gladwin Thesis*).<sup>2</sup>

Welcome home, we city dwellers might think as we first cast our eyes upon its beauty. One would think that it would go on providing for us for another few million years, and that it would always feel like home. With our eyes and ears we have been able to witness what appears a heavenly place. And yet, sadly, sights are deceiving. For the Amazon's rainforest is being destroyed at the rate of 9,000 square miles a year, and the Gulf of California, home of seriously depleted schools of sardines and anchovies, is being poisoned by industrial pollution, rendering bare the eelgrass beds that grew profusely only forty years ago, and killing off practically the entire population of shellfish that fed

1 *Vanishing Wildlife of Latin America*, Robert McClung, New York: William Morrow, 1981.

2 New York: McGraw-Hill Books, 1947.

humans and other creatures along the shore there only a decade ago (according to [worldwildlife.org](http://worldwildlife.org)).

As for humans themselves, they too have been torn from their natural realm, from a life of abundant gathering and hunting to a life of stupendous enslavement and immiseration.

Painful as it is to do, tear your eyes away from this old home, and set them upon the way of life of humans here in Latin America today. The Commission of Economics for Latin America informed the world in 1999 and again in 2002 that of the 420 million people living in this continent, 40 percent are poor, and 16 percent extremely poor. In rural areas, 55 percent are poor and 33 percent extremely poor.<sup>3</sup>

Such figures made lies of the Inter-American Convention on Indian Life's claims in the 1940s that economic development would reduce poverty, falsities upon which developmental theory and policy of the last sixty years were based.

## Causes of child labor and poverty

Most traditional capitalist analyses of these conditions decried the absence of any earning power of a majority of rural dwellers and so recommended rural development programs.<sup>4</sup> And yet the rural poor are the direct result of the commodification of production, an historical process that has turned peasants and tribal people into workers around the globe since the 1700s, effectively robbing them of land and of the means to secure a livelihood without employment, itself scarce in these parts compared with population size. "No profit, no production" is the golden rule of the era of employment and capital accumulation, and clearly this rule disproportionately affects the Southern Hemisphere's poor.

Despite Latin America's stunning ecological richness, people

3 "Biennial Report of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Official Records of the Economic And Social Council, 11 May 2002–6 June 2004," New York: United Nations Publications, 2006

4 See, for example, the paper by Carlos Benito, "The Causes of Poverty in Latin America," Sonoma State University, 2000, retrieved from <[www.sonoma.edu](http://www.sonoma.edu)>.

in the age of capitalism without sufficient money simply go hungry and starve. *The National Catholic Reporter* (according to NCRonline.org) reported a statistic compiled by the International Labor Organization (ILO), that 27.4 million children under the age of 14 in Latin America are working. In Venezuela, 32 percent of the population lives on less than two dollars a day; 41 percent in Peru; 44 percent in Honduras; 45 percent in El Salvador; 52.3 percent in Ecuador. Between 20 percent and 50 percent of the region's children have mothers who have not completed primary school.

The ILO coordinator for South America is quoted as saying that millions of children are working in agriculture, construction, fireworks manufacturing, mining, brick making, processing coca leaves, harvesting coffee, collecting garbage, domestic labor and the sex trade. Children may be seen in all Latin American cities selling candy, washing car windows and at times attempting to pick up clients to turn tricks. A poignant psychological question is, why do humans continue to support a global social system that has so failed their children? Poverty not only sends children to work, but also seriously lowers their chances of thriving. In Latin America, 28 out of 1,000 children die before the age of one; 34 out of 1,000 before they turn five. These rates are nine times those found in Sweden, and four times those of the United States.<sup>5</sup>

### Landlords in charge

The role of colonialism in the rise of Latin American capitalism was greatly responsible for the degree of abject poverty found there. It left landlords in charge of large amounts of land and raw materials. They gained enormous political and economic power and were not concerned with the hugely disparate distribution of income and property between their class and that of the peasants, workers and dispossessed indigenous people. In contradistinction, the bourgeoisie in the northern countries that were the first to industrialize wisely (in their long-term interest) promoted waves

5 *Who Gains From Free Trade: Export-Led Growth, Inequality and Poverty in Latin America*, Vos and Ganuza, Oxford: Routledge Studies in Development Economics, 2006.

of welfare reform in response to protests about working and living conditions and calls for revolution among the working class there.<sup>6</sup>

These are the conditions that underlie the desperate popular support for left-wing governments in Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela (and almost in Mexico, Peru and Costa Rica), as well as for left-wing guerrilla movements fighting right-wing paramilitary states backed by the U.S., such as Colombia. Certainly, such populist governments have made headway in, for example, reducing abject poverty for eight million (out of 36) in Argentina or improving health care, education and subsidized food for the poor in Venezuela.

How - ever, the lessons for the worker in Latin America are those that still have not been learned in North America — capitalist reforms are limited in scope because of the basic law of capitalism: no profit, no production.

Beyond the historical traumatic influence of colonialism, beyond the political shade of government in power, the problems in Latin America derive from the same global economic system that affects workers in Asia, Africa and yes, even North America and Europe.

This system requires the private (and at times state) ownership of the means of producing wealth and the buying of the labor-power (employment) of members of the non-owning masses. Production is only carried out if it will be profitable to do so, that is, if values in excess of the costs of production (thus, in excess of the values being paid to workers) may be extracted from the productive process. It is a fundamentally cold economic system, one without regard for meeting the needs

6 *After Spanish Rule: Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas*, Mark Thurner and Andres Guerrero, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003.

of its population. In such a system, people are pitted against each other to make a living. Either they own property or capital with which to hire the dispossessed to generate a profit from agriculture or manufacture or a service, or they do not, in which case they may have to find a job, beg, or send their children out into the streets to hustle.

Most citizens of the United States suffer from a noxious short-sightedness, failing to understand their social and economic system as a global order that evolved at a different pace in different parts of the

The mass of workers in Latin America, like their counterparts in the United States, take the illogic of capitalism for granted. They do not sufficiently query the existence of employment.

world, wreaking havoc everywhere, but in even greater proportions in the Southern Hemisphere. They fail to comprehend how the evolution of the modern economic system was paved over the bodies of millions of indigenous peoples who died of a dozen western

diseases when East met West, over the bodies of slaves, and over the bodies of exploited men, women and children in places so remote that they may feign ignorance about them. Yet the reality and the truth are that every time American workers (and European workers and workers from all lands) vote for another few years of capitalism at election time, they are personally promoting the continued existence of a society that condemns fellow workers in the Third World to untold misery.

### Opposing capitalism

Behind the existence of our social system lies the political support of its people, often including that of its most oppressed. The mass of workers in Latin America, like the mass of their counterparts in the United States, take the illogic of capitalism for granted. They do not sufficiently query the existence of employment, of buying and selling, of food being produced for sale, of land being appropriated by landowners. At

least, any such querying has not yet been expressed in a mass movement to oppose it. Capitalism is by nature undemocratic. It relies on minority ownership, and on states to protect the legal rights (backed by force) of property owners.

Many of the indigenous peoples of Latin America are quite aware of this tide of bourgeois culture encroaching into every corner of the globe, including their homelands. It is not new to them, and many bravely fought against it in the past. For example, the Brazilian Diaguaita resisted the advances of Incas and refused to adhere to the latter's caste system. Similarly the Argentinian Calchaqui successfully thwarted the invasion of Spanish colonists from Chile into their immediate homelands. Today, that struggle continues.

The indigenous movement in Latin America has had no choice but to demand rights from a position of weakness rather than of strength. According to the "Indigenous People's Letter to the Presidents of Latin America and the Caribbean" submitted in 2005, the Chilean indigenous peoples, such as the Aymara, Quechuas and Likanantay, have urged governments to adhere more seriously to their declared commitment to overcome poverty. The letter further urged them to improve the "acknowledgment and enjoyment of our rights to superficial and subterranean water sources, the acknowledgment of our rights over mining fields existing in our ancestral land and the right to have a share in profits resulting from their exploitation. And also the right and safety to move from one place to another within our ancestral territory, without the fear of death and injury to our physical integrity, which implies the demilitarization of the border and the deactivation of mines currently seeded on our ancestral territory."

### **Indigenous class struggle**

Latin American indigenous peoples' struggles for rights to land and its subterranean resources have thus faced the same problems as those of Native Americans in the Northern Hemisphere. Such problems suggest that they too have entered into the same class struggle with the ruling class as have workers, albeit with the

difference that they are hoping to be accorded ancestral rights that the capitalist class is unwilling to acknowledge, at least not without a legal and at times armed fight. The class struggle is fought on both sides.

The United States has frequently reneged on promises made to the American Indians or to a paradigm of world justice that indigenous rights activists and anti-globalists have insisted upon. For example, the U.S. has refused to sign up for the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto protocol, the Anti-Biological Weapons Convention, the international ban on land mines, and countless other UN initiatives aimed at fostering global peace and harmony.

Protecting the interests of U.S. capital investment and development abroad has always come first. This historical reality has again and again come brutally face to face with native and human rights activism that continues to advocate that such rights be accorded by major capitalist governmental players.

Socialists, however, take from this historical lesson that what must be achieved first is a global order of common ownership of the means of production, which will by definition accord all humans the democratic control of their land. Continuing to support rights in a society based supremely upon private property and minority ownership of the means of production will do nothing to remove from the ruling class its power to play god with humans and nature. However, supporting a worldwide socialist revolution to immediately end the rule of nation-states and commodity production will put all humans, including indigenous peoples, in a position of power, no longer having to urge those who presently hold the reins of power to accord them "rights."

In a larger, more global sense, Latin America presently faces a most serious ecological disaster with possibly planetary implications. The permanent loss of dozens of plant species a day (most found in the Latin American rainforests) is a crime of inexpressible proportions — not only from the perspective of the loss of life that took ages to evolve, not only from the perspective of the slow dismantling

of a delicate ecosystem that operates effectively and self-sufficiently as a holistic entity, but even from the perspective of a loss to human science — what medicines may have been lost every day?

Beyond such a development that the loss of plants and animal species represents, tens of millions of humans in Latin America live in sickening squalor. For how long must an economic system persist that fails to provide children with shoes and food, that sends them sometimes to prostitute for money to feed themselves and their families? For how long must humans support a mode of production based on the drive for profits that sends humans off their land, depriving them of livelihood even when they do become wage workers?

### **The future is community**

What is required in Latin America is a permanent solution to these terrible problems, a grassroots movement organized without leaders, having a single goal in mind — the institution of a society in which the means of producing wealth — the land, the factories, the offices, the infrastructure, and so on — are owned by the entire community (not the state) and democratically controlled by that community.

Those reading this journal in the Northern Hemisphere are not off the hook, either. We all live in a global capitalist economy. Those voting for the continuation of a system based on employment of the many by the few and on producing only what is profitable to sell are personally providing their political consent during each election for the continuation of a global system that drastically fails to meet our needs, with Latin America a prime example of how dire that failure may get in the Third World. But helping to build a movement for common ownership and democratic control in the more advanced industrial countries will ensure that political consent for the continuation of that system is removed, and that effective and permanent solutions to the problems of world poverty, wherever it may raise its ugly head, are implemented once and for all.

*¡Viva la Revolución!*

— Dr. Who



Source: <[http://www.geocities.com/flatbush\\_skp/marxlist.html](http://www.geocities.com/flatbush_skp/marxlist.html)>.

## Looking for socialism in all the wrong places

Whatever happened to those military dudes with flashy sunglasses who, when it came to economics, seemed to have hat sizes that were far too big for their brains? The general effect of the military dictatorships installed during the 70s and 80s was to deflect the economies of Latin America from their efforts to industrialize by exiting from the trap of being “natural” exporters of agricultural commodities (a strategy known as Import Substitution Industrialization). The generals, on the advice of Washington, reverted to a “free trade” régime and in the process became profligate borrowers. Their good friends in the international banking “community” used “often aggressive tactics in pressuring Latin American governments to borrow,” so that the region’s “total foreign debt increased from 1970 to 1980 by more than 1,000 per cent.” The fall in commodity prices that resulted from a world recession in the 1980s meant that the democratically elected governments that replaced the military dictatorships found themselves in the position of having less money with which to pay back swollen debt loads<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> “Latin America, history of,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2007 Deluxe Edition. Chicago: *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2007. (All references to the *EB* are to this edition.)

The same bankers who had opened the spigots so freely for two decades then had the gall to turn around and lecture Latin American capitalists on the virtues of abstemiousness and belt-tightening. The resulting “Washington Consensus” was a virtual festival of economic Puritanism. It is hardly any wonder that popular opinion in Latin America should have turned so vehemently against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and now there is even a “leftward drift” to pay for it. Although a UN Development Program survey reported in 2002 that support for democracy had fallen four points from 61 per cent in 1996, this cannot reflect any predilection on the part of either workers or capitalists, since neither class has had any trouble identifying military madness as a principal source of its headaches.<sup>2</sup>

Latin America’s left turn thus does not appear to be temporary, for in setting up the generals, the U.S. itself killed the Monroe Doctrine. When the régime of U.S. Supreme Court-appointed strongman George W. Bush sought to oust the Chávez government in 2002, it was surprised to discover that the attempted “kissingerization” procedure which had worked so well in Chile 29 years before caused barely a

<sup>2</sup> “Year in Review 2005 A Leftist Surge in Latin America,” *EB*.

ripple this time in Venezuela.

All of which makes this left turn a little different. *The Economist* seems to have pulled down the Iron Lady from her pedestal and traded her in for an Old Maid: its writers fan themselves furiously at the mention of Hugo Chávez; their ideas on populism, their politely venomous words to the wise in Bolivia and their heavy-handed lampooning of Lula in Brazil all smack of catty remarks rather than cagey analysis. Perhaps they miss their reliable old generals and their neoliberal economics (reduction of trade barriers, privatization of state companies, encouragement of foreign as well as domestic private investment and lessening of regulation generally).<sup>3</sup> *The Economist* thinks we are witnessing another “populist experiment” at the end of which real wages will again be “lower than they were at the beginning.” But the magazine’s little box, in which “countries develop through a mixture of the right policies and the right institutions,” affords readers no glimpse of the social movements that want to turn capitalism to good account and eliminate the extreme “income inequality” and poverty historically suffered by Latin American workers and peasants.<sup>4</sup>

From *The Economist’s* standpoint, the real action will happen when “high-profile” investors (usually multinationals) see the truant states in court — notably, the ICSID (International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes), “the arbitral arm of the World Bank”: “Thanks in part to a wave of left-leaning government policies in South America, Latin American arbitration is experiencing a boom-let ... Of the 105 pending cases in ICSID, 57 involve Latin American nations, and the majority of those involve Argentina, whose economy collapsed in 2001.”<sup>5</sup>

### Argentine makeover

From the standpoint of almost anyone else, however, quite a different reality is

<sup>3</sup> “Latin America, history of,” *EB*.

<sup>4</sup> “The return of populism; Latin America. (Peering behind Latin America’s leftward drift),” *The Economist* (US) 379.8473 (April 15, 2006): 40US.

<sup>5</sup> Carlyn Kolker, “Arbitration boom: the rise of left-leaning governments in Latin America has corporate clients heading to ADR forums,” *American Lawyer* 28.10 (Oct 2006): 111(2).

unfolding. The upshot of it all is that “most of South America now has left or center-left governments,” according to *Weekly News Update on the Americas*.<sup>6</sup> The most hopeful interpreters of this trend are naturally to be found on the Left, which congenitally wants history to finally become a morality play and end happily. One of the most hopeful — an article about “people’s power” in Argentina, in *Green Left Weekly*, 2/2/02 — is worth excerpting for the broad conclusions it draws from sparse data:

The political crisis in Argentina has meant that people have formed their own organs of democracy and have created, potentially, a new type of rule for Argentina — the rule of the exploited instead of the IMF stooges.

Popular assemblies have been formed in all major cities, more than 50 in the Greater Buenos Aires area alone, and accounts indicate that they have been growing.

The assemblies have begun adopting anti-government demands. An example is the Assembly for San Cristol and Boedo, whose demands include: punish the police murderers who killed demonstrators last month; the release of political prisoners; abolition of VAT on basic goods; taxation of the rich; and benefits for the unemployed. It also demands: work for all, with sharing of work between the employed and the unemployed without any reduction in wages; dissolution of the supreme court; nationalisation of the banks and the privatised firms, to be controlled by the workers; no payment of foreign debt; and a popular constituent assembly.

The broadness of the participants in the assemblies — workers, unemployed people, professionals, shopkeepers — and the anti-government, anti-capitalist demands many are adopting indicates that they have a potentially revolutionary implication, as an alternative form of power based on the working class and its allies.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> “South America: Summit Process Stalls,” *Weekly News Update on the Americas*, 1 January 2007; retrieved 27 April 2007 from <<http://ww4report.com/node/2981>>.

<sup>7</sup> “Argentina: People’s Power v. the IMF,” Rohan Pearce; retrieved 27 April 2007 from <<http://www.greenleft.org.au/2002/481/28791>>.

But perhaps more interesting is the direction events have taken in Argentina since the meltdown of 2001: the rise of what one writer calls “the new resistance,” the “recovered factory” movement, which only a couple of years ago included more than 200 businesses whose employees had successfully taken control of workplaces abandoned by their owners (who were only obeying the logic of the axiom, “No profit, no production”). The Empire (capitalism) is now striking back, with “threats of eviction, kidnappings, police violence, terror by hired gangs, direct opposition from local politicians and apathy on the part of Argentina’s current president, Nestor Kirchner.”

The author, Yeidy Rosa, applauds the way in which the working class of Argentina has risen to what it might have fatalistically regarded as an insurmountable challenge: As workers struggle to gain legal status for their cooperatives and full expropriation of the factories within a court system designed to protect private property, a network of solidarity has formed strong links despite the state’s repressive apparatus. A laboratory of democracy within the factories and their surrounding communities has emerged, where a concrete alternative to corporate capitalism has redefined success as the creation of work and social inclusion, rather than a measurement of profits.<sup>8</sup>

She regards these recovered factories as a challenge to “norms of legitimate ownership and private property” made possible through the workers’ “refusal to allow their workplace to be taken from them.” As of 2005, about 15,000 Argentine workers were running 185 recovered factories;<sup>9</sup> six other countries — Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, plus the Caribbean — added another 100 factories to this number, with a solid core of 100 recovered firms operating in the province of Buenos Aires

<sup>8</sup> “The New Resistance in Argentina,” Yeidy Rosa, *Nonviolent Activist* (magazine of the War Resisters League), June 2005; retrieved 27 April 2007 from <<http://ww4report.com/node/756>>.

<sup>9</sup> “Workers’ self-management,” retrieved 20 April 2007 from <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers%27\\_self-management](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers%27_self-management)>.

under the control of 5,000 workers and 60 more in the process of being “recovered.” Workers representing more than 263 self-managing firms in eight countries met in Caracas in October 2005 to cement a working alliance, and the government of Venezuela has promised to grant credits to recovered Argentine factories.<sup>10</sup>

If the point of “recovering” enterprises, however, is to prove that capitalism could work if only investors and entrepreneurs would put people ahead of profits (which of course self-managing workers presumably would), it will only be a matter of time before the logic of the marketplace reasserts itself. The Left has never grasped that the institutions of capitalism are impervious to morally-based thinking: it is not possible to moralize capitalism. The needs of profit necessarily come before the needs of human beings (capitalists included); everyone simply has to learn how to cope with that, and if they cannot, they will be scrapped.

While recovered enterprises thus present a fascinating historical study, their very closeness to the guts of capitalist production gives them an unstable and probably not very hopeful prognosis. In three other cases — Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela — the working class has for the most part not followed the Argentinian example and challenged any of capitalism’s structural assumptions. In a fourth case, that of the Zapatistas in Mexico, a movement does not exist whose actual institutions can mount such a challenge — but they have managed nonetheless to construct a working model of revolution grounded in a flawless explanation of capitalism and what makes it a bad system.

Let us consider each of these four cases, in reverse order of their importance to the media.

## Mexico in search of the Left

If the Zapatistas prove nothing else, they show that Marxism is eminently translatable into the (Mexican) vernacular, as we find it in their “Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacondona.”<sup>11</sup> Nor is it the

<sup>10</sup> “Venezuela otorgará créditos a fábricas recuperadas argentinas,” *Diario Hoy*, 21 April 2007; retrieved 21 April 2007 from <[http://www.diariohoy.net/vx/verNoticia\\_2007/html/200568/](http://www.diariohoy.net/vx/verNoticia_2007/html/200568/)>.

<sup>11</sup> Originally published in Spanish by the Zapatista

sort of corrupted Leninist sophistry we typically find in statements by liberation movements. The problem is rather that their Declaration is the good old-fashioned social-democratic kind. Having established that the nature and causes of the underlying social and economic problems faced by the “autonomous rebel zapatista municipalities” can be found in the system of production for profit that pervades human social life at all levels, the Declaration goes on to lay down minimum demands:

We are also going to go about raising a struggle in order to demand that we make a new Constitution, new laws which take into account the demands of the Mexican people, which are: housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace. The EZLN [Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional] will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left...

The way to actualizing their model will thus lead them into the smothering embrace of the Left, where they will end up like every other effort to put a human face on a system that doesn't even have a place where a face ought to be. And while they do lay down some fairly strict criteria for making these alliances, one must also remember Robert Michels's dictum that organization breeds oligarchy, and good intentions do not last. The EZLN promises:

Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organize outrage. Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, but to build from below and for below an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico.

To their credit, they have already drawn the conclusion that the Left in power is a bunch of square tires: they invite only the “unregistered political and social organiza-

Army of National Liberation, June 2005, trans. “irlan-  
desa”; retrieved 30 April 2007 from <<http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/sexta1.en.htm>>, <<http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/sexta2.en.htm>> and <<http://www.ezln.org/documentos/2005/sexta3.en.htm>>.

tions of the left, and those persons who lay claim to the left and who do not belong to registered political parties” to join forces with them.

### People's power in Bolivia

In the end, ironically, it is probably the very success of the Mexican establishment in containing it that has allowed Zapatismo the space to define its principles so clearly; elsewhere in Latin America, class conflict has stirred up huge clouds of theoretical mud. For example, a “keyleader” of one of Bolivia's social movements, Oscar Olivera, explained to Uruguayan political scientist Raúl Zibechi that “we are creating a movement, a nonpartisan social-political front that addresses the most vital needs of the people through a profound change in power relations, social relations, and the management of water, electricity, and garbage.”<sup>12</sup>

“Addressing the most vital needs of the people” is not a way of independently defining people's needs but only of redressing their grievances. These vital needs are a hostage to the one trump card held by the MAS, or “Movement Toward Socialism,” on behalf of Bolivia's social movements: physical control of highly marketable natural gas reserves. Unlike the Chavistas of Venezuela, who inherited a fully integrated oil industry, the Bolivian state lacks control over the industry that extracts the gas reserves; nor are they strong enough to force the hand of their neoliberal opponents. So although Evo Morales has his mandate, he can only deliver on it outmaneuvering the capitalist globetrotters who supply the money and above all expertise to get the natural gas out of the ground. This, unfortunately, limits the social movements to a goal of redistributing profits more equitably — achieving which would bring tears of moral joy to every leftist's face, it is true. But “revolutions” that stop with

12 “The Progressive Mandate in Latin America: Bolivia, Evo Morales and a Continent's Left Turn,” Benjamin Dangl and Mark Engler, *Z Magazine* March 2006; retrieved 27 April 2007 from <<http://www4report.com/node/1902>>.

redistributing wealth are merely paying into the pot of class struggle, which is why they can never be socialist: they serve only to perpetuate the struggle.

Anselmo Martínez Tola, an organizer of indigenous groups in Potosí, speaking for the social movements, put the case for nationalizing natural gas and redistributing land in the following terms: “We are a majority and through the [upcoming constituent] assembly we hope to rescue what belongs to us.”<sup>13</sup> Resources produced and sold in the marketplace for a profit are inevitably the property of an élite, and an élite that accumulates capital

— whether it adopts the fiction that those resources belong to the people or not — is a capitalist class. Nationalizing natural gas would only bring the Bolivian working class up against the real question: the urgent need to abolish capital and wages through transfer of all productive assets to the community.

transfer of all productive assets to the community — communalization of the means of life, rather than their mere “socialization,” so popular on the Left. The same may be said for the proposed constituent assembly Morales was elected to convoke (and which his neoliberal opponents in Santa Cruz have attempted to stave off), which will serve only to sharpen class antagonisms, no matter whom the new constitution assigns to dispense the profits.

### Brazil: Wave of the past

The future appears at once less exciting and more dismal for the social movements of Brazil (including organized labor), who while they have achieved a high degree of organization since the generals were booted out, have demonstrated a propensity for repeating the mistakes made by others. Since the Workers' Party formed a minority government in 2002 with Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (“Lula”) as President, it has compiled a record that is eerily similar to that of the first two Labor governments in Britain (1924 and 1929,

13 Ibid.



both times likewise in the minority); then, too, and for very similar reasons, Ramsay MacDonald's Labor Party had left office choking on its own promises.

The problem is that, despite a sharp antagonism toward the neoliberal model, neither Brazil's social movements nor organized labor and its political parties have shed their naïve belief that the working class can collaborate with the capitalist class to achieve mutually beneficial goals. While neoliberals around the globe chuckle all the way to the bank, delighted that Lula has turned out to be such a good boy, the workers, the unemployed, the landless, the indigenous peasants console themselves that having Lula's administration in office at least allows them some scope for organizing, even though many of them have already written off Lula as politically incompetent.<sup>14</sup> Brazil's working class shares with Venezuela's a history of rural depopulation and rampant growth of shanty towns,<sup>15</sup> though it was historically better organized. But until it begins to cultivate the habit of thinking originally, it will be condemned to repeat coping strategies that have notoriously failed elsewhere. Going on the offensive against the interests of capital does not mean winning the class war but ending it, and that can only happen as a result of abolishing capital and wages — and with them, the working class itself.

## Venezuela

This brings us to the strange case of Venezuela. Understanding Chávez's "socialism for the 21st century" requires a little background. From a working-class standpoint, the launching of the oil-export economy in the 1950s was an unfolding horror story in a country where agriculture, fishing and forestry accounted for more than half the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Over the next three decades, job and farming opportunities in the countryside shrank by 50 per cent, while jobs in the

14 "The State and Economy in Brazil: An Introduction," Rosa Maria Marques and Paulo Nakatani, *Brazil Under Lula: An MR Survey — Politics and Economy*; *Monthly Review*, Vol. 58, No. 9, February 2007.

15 "The WTO ... will meet somewhere, sometime. And we will be there!" Annette Aurélie Desmarais, VOICES: The Rise of Nongovernmental Voices in Multilateral Organizations, a project of The North-South Institute, Ottawa, Canada, 2003.

rapidly expanding petrochemical industry amount at present to no more than one per cent of all employment in Venezuela. Huge numbers of displaced rural workers and farmers just had to pull up stakes and look for "other work."<sup>16</sup> Idle real estate tied up in large properties (latifundios) could not provide it. Capitalists saw no profit in acting on the textbook mantra of ultimately providing viable substitute forms of employment, and so they left their hapless victims to fend for themselves.

By 1998 over half of all Venezuelans were classified below the poverty line, many living in sprawling *ranchos* (shantytowns) orbiting the relatively small number of large cities, with prices rising at more than 30 per cent annually. Rural areas lost population through migration to urban areas, which had neither the vision nor the budget to accommodate the imbalance. The politicians, visibly in bed with their capitalist benefactors, were perceived as having utterly mismanaged the economy. With the stage set for a populist hero, a charismatic demagogue, or even a virtuous democrat, Hugo Chávez Frías was elected President on a promise to set things right. According to Greg Palast, "to most of the 80 per cent of Venezuelans who are brown, Hugo Chávez is their Nelson Mandela, the man who will smash the economic and social apartheid that has kept the dark-skinned millions stacked in cardboard houses in the hills above Caracas while the whites live in high-rise splendor in the city center."<sup>17</sup>

Despite all the hubbub, however, even a cursory glance shows that common ownership of the means of production in Venezuela is not imminent — which does not make it easy to predict where the radical Bolivarian reforms are taking capitalism:

While [Chávez] may not have figured out exactly what the socialism of the 21st century is yet, he has some ideas under way, such as endogenous development, participatory democracy, land reform and co-management. A nationwide poll carried out ... in late May and early June 2005 showed that about 48 per cent of respondents preferred a socialist over a capitalist system, with

16 "Venezuela," *EB*.

17 "Hugo Chávez is Crazy!" Greg Palast, AlterNet, 25 June 2003; retrieved 15 April 2007 from <<http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/16255>>.

less than 26 per cent preferring the latter. These results, Chávez's rhetoric and the above-mentioned initiatives notwithstanding, Venezuela's constitution still protects private property rights, the government still courts international investors, and capitalism is alive and well throughout Venezuela.<sup>18</sup>

What is more, as Dangl and Engler in *Z Magazine* point out, "Several observers have noted that the redistributionist programs that are the hallmark of [Chávez's] social policy owe more to the New Deal than to Cuban state socialism ... Chávez's decidedly un-neoliberal economic policy has created the most robust growth in the hemisphere, with the country's GDP surging 18 per cent in 2004 and approximately 9 per cent in 2005."<sup>19</sup> These things, taken together, suggest that Chávez does indeed view "socialism for the 21st century" through a social-democratic lens, cannily aiming to have the capitalist class pay for the Bolivarian revolution yet keeping the meddling neoliberals at arm's length.<sup>20</sup>

Marta Harnecker, the Chilean Marxist who has worked closely with the Venezuelan government to launch the "communal council" system, remarked in a recent interview with *Green Left Weekly*:

In Venezuela, up to now, we don't have unity of the workers within the [revolution]. The union movement is not strong enough at this stage ... We should think of the communal councils as a central community of workers [as well as of neighbours]. To me, it is very important to ... bring in economic organisations so that they can be democratised, in the direction of solidarity and not of corporatism. There should be a close link between the organisation of work and the community.<sup>21</sup>

There are now upwards of 16,000 communal councils, with many more on the way, and no one really knows yet how they will work out as an institution, or

## "Neocapitalism" concluded on p 13

18 *The Venezuelan Revolution: 100 Questions — 100 Answers*, Chesa Boudin, Gabriel González and Wilmer Rumbos (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 10.

19 "Progressive Mandate in Latin America."

20 "Hugo Chávez's Social Democratic Agenda" Stephen Lendman, 22 February 2007; retrieved from <<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print.pht?artno=1965>>.

21 "Venezuela's Experiment in Popular Power," Interview with Marta Harnecker by Coral Wynter and Jim McIlroy (*Green Left Weekly*), 9 December 2006; retrieved 18 April 2007 from <<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print.pht?artno=1909>>.

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# THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## OBJECT:

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

*The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:*

1. Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
2. In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE COMPANION PARTIES OF SOCIALISM, THEREFORE, enter the field of political action determined to stand against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

## the world socialist movement

THE FOLLOWING COMPANION PARTIES ADHERE TO THE SAME  
OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

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**SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA/PARTI SOCIALISTE DU CANADA**, Box 4280, Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SPC@iname.com; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spc>. JOURNAL: *Imagine* (\$1)

**SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN**, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: *Socialist Standard* (\$1.50). [TEL. 020 7622 3811; FAX 020 7622 3665] • spgb@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb>

**WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (NEW ZEALAND)**, Box 1929, Auckland, NI • wspnz@worldsocialism.org; <http://www.worldsocialism.org/nz>

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All party meetings are open to the public.



This issue printed at Boston, MA by the World Socialist Party of the United States. Send correspondence to WSP(US), Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 (email: [wspus@mindspring.com](mailto:wspus@mindspring.com)) or to one of the regional addresses listed above. Address submissions to the Editorial Committee. You can also visit us on the Web at <http://wspus.org>.

We are committed to one overriding goal: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a truly democratic, socialist form of society. Accordingly, membership in the World Socialist Party requires a general understanding of the basic principles of scientific socialism and agreement with the Declaration of Principles. It is our view that a worldwide system of production for the satisfaction of human needs, individual and social, rather than for private profit requires a majority that is socialist in attitude and commitment. Events since the beginning of the World Socialist Movement have demonstrated the validity of this judgment.



Since our fundamental goal is quite firmly defined as the attainment of socialism it is important that members understand and accept our principles. To dilute the principles with reformist tendencies or advocacy of the undemocratic idea of “leadership,” for example, would be to subvert the Party’s reason for being.

That said, we recognize there is room for differences of opinion in a socialist party. In contrast to principles, relatively few in number, there are a multiplicity of matters upon which socialists may have all kinds of conflicting views. If you agree with the following statements, you are a socialist and you belong with us.

### • Control of State Power

*To establish socialism, the working class throughout the world must gain control of the powers of government through political organization.* It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. In a modern, highly developed capitalist society, the only way to oust the capitalist class from ownership and control of the means of production is to first strip it of its control over the state, as a precondition for converting it from a coercive power to an administrative arm of the community. The World Socialist Party, therefore, advocates the ballot as the means of abolishing capitalism and establishing socialism, since socialism can only be established democratically; means cannot be separated from ends.

### • Reforms and Reformism

*The present, capitalist, society, even with “repair” and reform, by its very nature cannot function in the interests of the working class, who make up the majority of the population in most of the world today.* Reforms can never alter the basic exploitative relationship of wage-labor and capital, or production for profit. Capitalism could never get by without them. Whatever the intentions of reformers, socialists recognize the futility of their attempts and direct their efforts only to the complete abolishment of capitalism. The World Socialist Party does not advocate reforms of capitalism — only socialism.

### • The Parties of Reform

*The World Socialist Party opposes all parties or organizations that do not desire the*

*achievement of World Socialism.* We can only stand against those parties that one way or another support the present system. Our main purpose is to make socialists, not to advocate the use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

### • State Capitalism

*The various forms of so-called “communist” government (such as the old Soviet Union, China, Cuba, etc.) were not and are not socialism or communism.* “Socialist government” is an oxymoron of the first order. All states past and present calling themselves socialist are nothing more than systems in which the state holds varying degrees of control over the means of production. They justify their existence with the misguided notion that the state is somehow an extension of working-class power. In those countries, as in the United States, goods and services were and are not primarily produced for use. In addition, nationalization and government “ownership” of industry in no way alter the basic relationship of wage labor and capital. The bureaucratic class that controls this form of the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value-eating class.

### • Organized Labor

*Trade unionism is the institution by which wage and salary workers attempt by various means to sell their working abilities at the best possible price and to improve their working conditions.* It is not a satisfactory tool to end class conflict. Unions must work within the framework of capitalism and therefore are useful only to a limited extent. They cannot alter the fundamental relationship between

wage-labor and capital. Better that workers strive to abolish employment altogether.

### • Leadership

*The World Socialist Party rejects the political theory of leadership.* Neither “great” individuals nor self-appointed “vanguards” can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administration to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or “vanguards,” never!

### • Historical Materialism

*The socialist point of view rests solidly on the materialist conception of history,* a way of looking at things that focuses on how human communities meet their actual survival needs by producing what they need to live (their economic systems, in other words). Out of this process the human brain weaves its ideas, which eventually exert their own influence on the cycle, causing it to become more and more complex as society evolves.

This approach, known as historical materialism, is a scientific method for helping us understand how and why capitalism does what it does. Armed with this understanding, socialists realize that capitalism can never deliver the goods for the vast majority of people. Other approaches, lacking this focus and overlooking the basis of capitalist society, can easily miss this point, so that their advocates get bogged down in vain efforts to make capitalism work for the majority.

### • Supernatural Explanations

*Socialists hold that materialist explanations of human society and the rest of nature supersede supernatural ones.* A religious perspective won’t necessarily prevent anyone from striving to abolish capitalism and its evils, and the ethical elements of religious teachings may even be what first make many people aware of the injustices of a class-divided society. But they don’t in themselves lead to an understanding of the causes of such injustices. (More often than not, religious institutions themselves justify and commit them.) The world socialist perspective is in any case essentially post-religious, because the case for socialism hinges on the scientific use of evidence. Socialists therefore look on supernatural explanations as obsolete. ☺

# YOU SAID IT!



## WE DON'T WANT THAT!

Found on page 54 of the February 2007 *Monthly Review*: a little secret of success shared with the unemployed by capitalist guru and former CEO of Chrysler Corporation Lee Iacocca at a 1993 press conference in Buenos Aires. Sir Lee's solution is, shall we say, tough love:

The problem of unemployment is a tough one. Today we can make twice as many cars with the same number of people. When they talk about improving people's educational levels as a solution to the problem of unemployment, I'm always bothered by the memory of what happened in Germany. Education was put forward as the solution to unemployment, and the result was hundreds of thousands of frustrated professionals who then turned to socialism and rebellion. It's not easy for me to admit, but I wonder if it wouldn't be better for the unemployed to smarten up and go straight to McDonald's to find a job. (Quoted in Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down* [New York: Henry Holt, 1998], 169).

Oh, to return to that imperfect (so perfect) world where the capitalist class granted itself limitless freedom and where unions and socialists dared not tread! Or was it the reverse? Or ... uhm ... so what actually did happen, then?

Iacocca's psychotically bad history apart (on a par, it would seem, with Ronald Reagan's), one wonders how anybody could see his advice as smart. It

sounds more like His Majesty talking down to the little folk, not too concerned with whether they will even get it as he smirks on his way to the counting house: now that it's the 1990s, you see, we don't ever want to

see that damned socialist stuff again.

When the ice caps have melted, maybe we will all go up and ask The Royals for some Whoppers.

## WE DO WANT THAT!

It has probably not occurred to anyone that the following innocuous-sounding scientific summation, taken from a brochure published by the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, 2004, titled "Answering Your Questions About Brain Research: Can our experiences change our brain?" should be considered dangerous radical thinking:

Scientists now know that the brain is remarkably "plastic": it continues to change throughout life in accordance with our experiences. It is also clear that our surroundings influence our experiences, to a large degree driving our behavior and thinking, as we adapt to our environment. Our brain, in turn, reflects our behavior, since behaviors are the sum total of patterns of neural activation. In essence, then, brain, behavior and environment are all intricately linked in an interactive loop: changes in the environment lead to changes in behavior, which lead to changes in the brain.

...New nerve cells are even born in certain brain areas, and with the right environmental influences, the new cells migrate, differentiate and form synapses with other cells, a process known as "neurogenesis." Scientists have linked neurogenesis to learning and have shown that stimulating environments increase the rate of neurogenesis.

The scientists whose investigations this refers to have been showering an excited public with such revelations in recent years. How could such information be dangerous? Well, just think what would happen if some socialist nutcases succeeded in reprogramming enough of their fellow human beings' brains using the procedure described above. A large enough socialist majority would actually be a step forward in human evolution, a biologically new thing.

So if the world we humans have programmed into our own skulls thus far in the course of civilization is as perfect as many people tell us it is, changing ourselves so recklessly would be a great evil. It must be stopped. We have had it relentlessly dunned into our heads that we are the "most successful species." From a capitalist perspective, this is truly the best of all possible worlds. And why mess with Mr. In Between? Global warming (if it exists) is nothing if not a fine opportunity to turn a profit! ☺



Pass this copy on to a friend!

## Neocapitalism - Cont. from pg 9

even if they will ultimately succeed.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, no massive redistribution of oil wealth has yet occurred, land reform has progressed slowly, and only a minority of workers have stable employment in the legal economy. Complementing this, organized labor is submerged in factional conflicts and is largely unresponsive to the government's efforts to expand workers' control.<sup>23</sup>

On a final note, while it would be a mistake to take Chávez or Morales literally when they use the word "socialism" in their speeches, Morales did tell two *Spiegel* interviewers not long ago that "there was no private property in the past. Everything was communal property. In the Indian community where I was born, everything belonged to the community. This way of life is more equitable."<sup>24</sup> This is more than just a variation on the leftist cop-out that socialism is a goal for the distant future; it is, on some level, an acceptance of it as a real alternative to capitalism. This fleeting glimpse into indigenous thought processes also hints at a deep, strong and irreducible human urge to community. It is this need for community that will kick in when the working class of the world drops the scales from its eyes and finally "gets" the obsolescence of the arrogant tyrants who now employ us. There are actually plenty of socialists around: they just keep betting on the wrong horse.

— Ron Elbert

22 "Communal Councils in Venezuela: Can 200 Families Revolutionize Democracy?" Josh Lerner (*Z Magazine*), 6 March 2007; retrieved from <<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/print.pht?artno=1975>>.

23 "Venezuela: Chávez Calls for United Socialist Party: Rank-and-File Committees to be Building Blocks for New Organization," John Riddell, *Socialist Voice*, issue #108, 11 January 2007; retrieved 3 May 2007 from <<http://www.socialistvoice.ca>>.

24 "Capitalism Has Only Hurt Latin America," *Spiegel* Interview with Bolivia's Evo Morales (Jens Glüsing and Hans Hoyng, tr. Christopher Sultan), retrieved 16 April 2007 from <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,434272,00.html>>



BBC News 3/31/04 "More Money for Brazil's Landless: Landless Brazilians are impatient with the rate of change." Source: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3586943.stm>>.

BBC News 6/7/06 "Landless Storm Brazilian Congress: The protesters say land reform is too slow." Source: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/5054338.stm>>.



## Romancing the working class

**B**razil is only slightly smaller than the United States (3.3 v. the U.S.'s 3.6 million square miles, counting Alaska and overseas), with a population density that is almost a third less: 21.86 persons per sq. mi. for an estimated population of 186 million v. the U.S.'s 30.71 persons for a population of 292 million. Thus, while Brazil's population is almost two-thirds that of the U.S., its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is only a fifth (8k:40k). Brazil also has a much younger and faster growing population. After four centuries of one-product export boom-and-bust cycles, Brazil attempted in the mid-20th century to stabilize its economic development by cultivating home-grown industries based on a policy of import substitution, only to be stymied in 1964 by the regressive policies of a military dictatorship that squandered precious growth opportunities and pitched Brazilian capitalism into a debilitating spiral of long-term indebtedness and currency inflation. This has produced a certain anxiety among Brazil's capitalist class to square itself in the eyes of the world.

Although the Lula Administration provides a long-overdue acknowledgment that Brazil really does have a working class — one with political muscle — the government's abject submission to the diktat of neoliberal capitalism does not speak well for the working class's political instincts. Lula's Workers' Party (WP) learned in the course of fielding his candidacy in the 90s that it could not expect to run the government unless it talked the neoliberals' talk and walked their walk. So Lula promised

before taking office in 2002 to honor the debt repayment commitments of outgoing President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. (Cardoso himself, interestingly enough, rejects the label of "neoliberal.")<sup>1</sup>

The outcome only serves to demonstrate yet once again that those who would reform a bad system are stuck with bad options:

The prospect of Lula's election had frightened the people, in Brazil and abroad, who lend the government the money it needs to pay its bills. So the outgoing government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso got Lula da Silva and the other candidates in the Presidential election to sign a commitment approved by the International Monetary Fund. Reassured by this agreement, the Fund supplied a \$30 billion cushion to prevent panic. Thanks to this agreement, Brazil avoided the kind of crash Argentina had just gone through.<sup>2</sup>

So it happened that a chastened Workers' Party, desperate to put the stamp of organized labor on Brazilian politics, found it had to dump its very principles just to get in office. The WP now sees it as its mission to validate openly anti-working-class economic policies while trumpeting a string of marginalized social reforms that it touts as cost-effective (i.e., harmless to profits). It has to live with the verdict of capitalists that, although "the poverty rate ... fell from 28 per cent of the population

in 2003 to 23 per cent last year, which was comparable to the improvement brought about by the end of hyperinflation in the early 1990s ... Lula has done too little to spark higher growth."<sup>3</sup> It is safe to say that the WP's good intentions proved good only for getting results that were practically indistinguishable from the autonomous workings of the marketplace anyway.

The disdain Lula's government elicits from capitalism's global hierarchy is somewhat akin to what an ex-con getting elected President in this country might confront. It is easy to understand the panic that gripped investors on hearing that such a firebrand labor leader as Lula during the dictatorship should have led a rapidly growing opposition labor party into office in 2002. Once they realized their nemesis was actually a cowering giant, however, the kid gloves came off and a catty, patronizing tolerance began to replace them.

The backwardness of organized labor in Brazil can be measured by the WP's infatuation with the same quaint old Fabianism that now demurely lives out its days in a British nursing home managed by Gordon Brown's Labour Party Inc. Its belief that socialism is really just a properly — and fairly — run capitalism can lead only to painful bouts of humiliating submission and endless, grinding poverty. To be fair, however, seeing through this power broker's shell game is a lesson that the working class majority in most places seems still not to have learned.

All the more reason, then, for socialists in Brazil to take their cue from the landless workers' movement: to look upon the present sour fortunes of the Brazilian working class as an opportunity to take advantage of a relatively wide political opening and launch a movement for the immediate abolition of capital and wages, through the establishment of common ownership and democratic control of wealth production. This will be the working class's last historical act on the stage of history; everything else pales in urgency beside it.

Let us rise!

— ROEL

<sup>3</sup> "Love Lula if you're poor, worry if you're not — Brazil. (Lula's record in Brazil)." *The Economist* (US) 380.8497 (Sept 30, 2006).

<sup>1</sup> "Globalization and Democracy: An Interview with Fernando Henrique Cardoso," Heinz R. Sonntag, held at Brown University, Providence, RI, October 19, 2003 Retrieved on 16 April 2007 from <http://crab.rutgers.edu/%7Eegoertzel/FHCHRSInterview.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> "Betrayal of a Flawed Vision: Corruption in Brazil's PT Government..." Ted Goertzel, week of July 16–22, 2005, retrieved 16 April 2007 from <[http://www.info-brazil.com/Conteudo/Front\\_Page/Opinion/Conteudo.asp?ID\\_Noticias=967&ID\\_Area=2&ID\\_Grupo=9](http://www.info-brazil.com/Conteudo/Front_Page/Opinion/Conteudo.asp?ID_Noticias=967&ID_Area=2&ID_Grupo=9)>.

# Is Cuba socialist?

In October 2004 I spent a week wandering the streets of Havana, against the advice of my country and friends, my family and colleagues, and yet what I learned was more than anything I could have gleaned from the political analyses that have attempted to forecast the final downfall of the “socialist” empire. I was in Cuba to discuss the educational system of Cuba with the World Congress of Comparative and International Education; however, given the events shortly before we arrived, Castro falling on stage and breaking his leg, what was on everyone’s mind was how long Fidel would last and what would happen in Cuba upon his death. If that wasn’t enough, it was the week that the world would vote on the U.S. embargo of Cuba; my visit taught me much about the nature of Cuba, its pretensions to socialism, and the future of the island that has plagued neoliberal capitalism for half a century.

I had no illusions that Cuba was the socialist nation that it or other nations still claim it to be. It was clear to me that Cuba was a totalitarian state. I had read many histories of the nation and the revolution before I arrived and knew about its social programs that put the United States social infrastructure to shame, but while I had heard about the impoverished state of the people before I took my flight from Miami (yes, the United States has regular flights for those having business on the island), I did not understand what life was like there before I arrived. Walking through Havana, shopping in local grocery stores, and eating dinner with new Cuban friends over conversations about their “socialism,” I began to understand the extent of poverty Cubans faced. On the first and last night of my visit, I had run-ins with *jineterismos* (prostitutes), both male and female, and heard them glorify Fidel in the same breath they offered their body for money. I supported the black-market trade



**Cuba: Harvest time.**

in cigars, and while smoking them with new comrades along the Malecón, I was the object of crime. Every time I thought a monolithic Cuba was emerging, that same moment would reveal the paradoxical and the plurality of life on the island.

So what is Cuba? Since the revolution, Cuba’s social infrastructure has shown the world what is possible in the market economy when a state dedicates itself to the care of its citizens. Maintaining one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world, free education, and a foreign policy that has sent doctors and money around the world to assist needy countries (an offer was even made to the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina but was refused by President Bush), Cuba has repeatedly provided for the poor within and outside its borders. At the same time however, it is clear that the level of inhumane treatment of those who differ ideologically with the state has been swift and severe, dating as far back as the trials of Batista loyalists. That was just the beginning of the incarcerations, torture and executions.

## **The embargo and its $\omega\lambda\theta\eta$**

The economic state of Cuba is just as complex and paradoxical. One might claim the embargo is to blame for the poverty of the Cuban people and wouldn’t be completely misguided. The embargo limits the ability of anyone connected to the United States, both companies and individuals, to have an economic relationship with anyone within Cuba, causing, according to the Cuban government, a loss of more than 70 billion dollars in trade

revenue each year; however, the economic deprivations of the Cuban state have not created a serious internal threat to Fidel. Some conservative theorists claim this has unwittingly allowed Fidel to continue his régime, placing the United States as the enemy. Noam Chomsky takes a different stance, claiming the embargo is yet another example of the United States resisting world opinion to interfere with leftist leaning governments throughout Central and South America.

The embargo, however, has done something more. By limiting the wealth that may enter the country, the embargo has limited the ability of the Cuban state to develop the wealth needed to form state capitalism, like the system China constructed, and instead, has fostered the development of a social state infrastructure to counterbalance the eradication of individual concerns. Outside the food rations, the exchange economy within Cuba is just as prominent as in the United States and other capitalist nations. The income of all Cubans is limited, and employment is regulated. Economic leveling within Cuba helps support the capitalist critique of socialism: universal economic deprivation. Access to goods and services is limited to those who can afford it, not those who need it, and with the reintroduction of the tourist industry, many millions of dollars have been reintroduced into the Cuban economy; however, the economic well-being of its citizens has increased little.

What then can we learn from an examination of Cuba, even a superficial one such as this? I believe two lessons are clear. First,

**Concluded next page**

and most encouraging, we see that even in the absence of real socialism, huge strides in social care and infrastructure can be made in a short period of time due to the merits and ethical superiority of a state-managed system when compared to neoliberal capitalism. (Cuba's increase in literacy in two years after the initiation of the revolution is the largest ever recorded.) The "communist" government reveals the power of a system that, even in the most pessimistic interpretation, uses social programs to create a hegemonic control of its populace that in turn legitimizes the notion of mutual aid within Cuban society. In other words, even in its most prosaic interpretations, Cuba's Marxist rhetoric has produced results that are the envy of most nations around the world.

The second lesson we can learn about Cuba is that while it has mobilized "socialism" rhetorically, it has yet to be true to its socialist claims. It relies on an exchange economy structured around the Cuban dollar and peso, where profit is centrally located within the state. This

has allowed the social infrastructure to crumble, forcing on the Cuban people the need to struggle, even the most educated, and ironically, a reliance on the "creation" of wealth through international trade. This differs greatly from the concept of socialism as a system of free access and purely voluntary labor, both in its reliance on systems of monetary exchange (which reconstitute poverty) and its arbitrary limitation of people's access to goods and services. Most importantly, the Cuban state has relied on a totalitarian régime to maintain centralized power through violence and poverty.

### Democratic ethics

Socialism, at its core, centers on democratic ethics, where the social, political, and economic conditions of everyone are liberated from the constraints and oppressions generated by class ownership of the means of production. Humans are political animals, and without democracy, socialism is inconceivable. So what

will happen when Fidel dies? There are probable outcomes. First the Cuban state will continue as it has, relying on those in power to continue a system of state capitalism, either impoverished or wealthy (whether or not the U.S. lifts the embargo), or second, it opens up completely and the flood of U.S. capital invades the island, the monuments of the revolution falling like the statues of Saddam. Either way the Cuban people will continue to feel the effects of poverty. The only hope of Cuba, and those around the world, is to stand up and demand socialism in its true form, a system that provides for all individuals through universal access dependent upon universal responsibility. In Cuba as everywhere else in the world, we must stand and demand a system of equality, a system that the World Socialist Party advocates, for, as Marx stated, all we have to lose are the chains that bind us and the illusions that blind us to the world that is possible.

— Tommy Williford

**L**ast October 26th, the World Socialist Party lost one of its most energetic and committed spokesmen — a "stalwart" in the old sense — Comrade Len Fenton. Surviving the death of his wife Ann Rab by four years, he retired gradually from party functions till his last remaining activity was keeping a monthly log of postal mail received.

Fenton's first contact with the organization was in 1936, during a lunch break on Boston Common, where the party speakers frequently and forcefully argued the case for socialism. He was soon deeply impressed; he joined the party in December 1936 and became an official speaker himself in 1938, joining Comrades Rab and Gloss on the stand at outdoor meetings.

Developing his talent for public speaking of all kinds, Fenton was Boston Local's most effective speaker over a long span of years. From 1947 through the 1970s, he frequently represented the WSP at debates with other organizations and at various colleges and universities in the Boston/Cambridge area.

He recruited several other members of his family into the movement. He served on the Editorial Committee of *The Western Socialist* (the predecessor of the *World Socialist Review*)

## Len Fenton (1917-2006)

from 1939 until its last issue in 1980.<sup>1</sup>

Although Fenton's forté was as a speaker and debater rather than as a writer, he was very active on the Circulation Committee of the *WS*, and in 1955 he initiated a campaign to get the journal into libraries, which succeeded in boosting its circulation significantly over the next few years (a period in which many radical journals were losing readership). He was also active on the National Administrative Committee, occasionally serving as National Secretary or Treasurer.

Len combined a lucky gene with financial acumen to rise to the status of "cockroach capitalist," a term applied to members who went into business and did well. This phenomenon has sometimes caused critics to wonder how a party of the working class, committed

<sup>1</sup> In 1939 the Socialist Party of Canada, dodging the wartime censors, asked the WSP to take over its publication for the time being as a joint venture — a relationship that ended after 1968, when the SPC launched an independent journal.

to abolishing capital and wages, can harbor members of the capitalist class in its ranks. But just a little reflection will show that a socialist revolution aims to abolish the *function* of capital and the necessity of working for a living; the capitalists themselves only personify their capital.

His business allowed him the opportunity to travel abroad, and from 1965 on he and Ann made several trips to England, where they were hosted by comrades in the SPGB. Often they reciprocated the hospitality when some of these comrades would cross the Atlantic and stop in Boston. They formed lifelong friendships with SPGBers like Gilbert McClatchie (Gilmac), Cyril May, Jim D'Arcy and many others. In that bigger, less connected world, mutual contacts among socialists scattered widely across the globe had an intensity borne of a common sense of purpose.

Len Fenton never lost sight of the big picture. All through his long involvement in the world socialist movement, he maintained a contagious upbeat philosophy. Any success the party has in organizing for socialism will rest partly on the foundations he laid. In that sense, he is with us still. ☉



For close on 200 years the main geopolitical fact about Latin America has been the overwhelming economic and political domination of the United States — or, more precisely, of its ruling capitalist class. The wide range of instruments used to enforce this domination has included frequent direct and indirect military interventions. One source lists 55 such interventions since 1890.<sup>1</sup> Another important instrument has been the foreign policy known as the Monroe Doctrine, first proclaimed by the U.S. president of that name in 1823.

The gist of the Monroe Doctrine is that the U.S. regards Latin America as its own exclusive sphere of influence and will not tolerate the interference of “outside” powers in its affairs. The doctrine was initially directed against the colonial claims of Spain and France. For most of the 20th Century it was directed first against Germany and then against Russia (the USSR). But does it still have any relevance now that Russia’s ambitions are confined to regions nearer home?

In fact, as the Russian threat to U.S. hegemony in the Americas receded the doctrine was directed (albeit not publicly) against another challenger — Japan. On December 20, 1989, the U.S. bombed and invaded Panama, ostensibly in order to arrest the country’s president, Manuel Noriega, on drug trafficking charges. The real reason was that Noriega, who had earlier been willing to serve as an agent of the CIA, had begun to act in ways that the U.S. considered contrary to its interests.<sup>2</sup>

### The Japanese connection

One example concerns the School of the Americas, where the U.S. army trains military officers from all over Latin America as torturers and assassins. The school had been based in Panama from 1946 to 1984, when it was withdrawn from the country

1 <http://www2.truman.edu/~marc/resources/interventions.html>. The most recent instances were the sponsorship of a (failed) military coup to overthrow President Chávez in Venezuela in 2002 and an occupation of Haiti to remove President Aristide in 2004. Both presidents had been democratically elected.

2 On the background to the U.S. invasion, see Manuel Noriega and Peter Eisner, *The Memoirs of Manuel Noriega, America’s Prisoner* (New York: Random House, 1997).

at the demand of Noriega’s predecessor, Omar Torrijos.<sup>3</sup> Noriega refused to accede to a request from the Reagan administration to allow the school to return.

Noriega committed an even graver offense in U.S. eyes by entering into negotiations with a Japanese consortium that the businessman Shigeo Nagano had put together (with his government’s approval) for the purpose of financing the construction of a new and better sea-level canal between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.<sup>4</sup> The old Panama Canal, opened in 1914, has inadequate capacity for the current volume of traffic and cannot accommodate the largest of today’s seagoing vessels. It was, above all, the Japanese threat to its control of a strategic transportation route in its “backyard” that prompted the United States to intervene.

China’s economic penetration of Latin America has been even more striking than that of Japan. As recently as 1995, for instance, China’s trade with Brazil was a mere six per cent of U.S. trade with Brazil; by 2005–6 it had reached 39 per cent. In the case of Argentina the corresponding rise was from 15 per cent to 70 per cent.<sup>5</sup> China is still some way behind but catching up fast. Chinese firms are also investing on a large scale in some countries. Their Brazilian investments include metals, consumer electronics, telecommunications equipment, and space technology. China and Brazil are jointly developing two satellites.

Judging by the whole history of capitalist great power rivalry, we can expect that sooner or later the shifting pattern of economic relationships will change the military power equation, with a progressive dilution of U.S. domination over Latin America. Suppose that at some point in the future Japanese capitalists and a new Panamanian government revive the scheme for a new canal. But this time

3 In 2001 the school now at Fort Benning, Georgia, was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. Torrijos died in a plane crash under suspicious circumstances.

4 Or, alternatively, a new land-based inter-oceanic transportation system. See Noriega’s remarks to the Japan-Panama Friendship Association (a front for the consortium) in Tokyo on December 12, 1986 (Noriega and Eisner, pp. 271-5).

5 Comparing total value of imports and exports in 1995 and in 2005 and the first nine months (Brazil) or eight months (Argentina) of 2006.

## The changing geopolitical context

round, learning from experience, they press the Japanese government — no longer, perhaps, shackled by the “peace constitution” — to extend Panama military aid and a security guarantee.

Of course, no other state is likely to replace the U.S. as the clear hegemon in the region. Like Africa and Central Asia today, Latin America will be an arena in which a number of outside powers compete for influence. As a declining global power, the U.S. will have to reconcile itself to the new situation and finally bury the Monroe Doctrine.

### Workers cannot benefit

For Latin American governments the new geopolitical context will have certain advantages. They will have more room for maneuver and be able to play off one outside power against another. Latin American workers, however, will discover that their basic position remains unchanged despite the new mix of nationalities among their employers.

Workers in some African countries have already learnt this lesson. In Zambia, copper mines bought up by Chinese companies provided even lower pay and even more hazardous working conditions than mines owned by other foreign companies. Following an explosion in which 49 miners died, five protestors were shot dead by police. The government temporarily closed down one mine after men were forced to work underground without boots or safety gear.<sup>6</sup>

Social protest in Latin America has traditionally targeted “Yanqui imperialism,” just as social protest in Eastern Europe used to be aimed against “Soviet imperialism.” Both are understandable responses to real oppression — but also parochial and superficial responses. The source of the oppression is capitalism itself, not the various national flags under which it operates.

— Stefan

6 *Guardian Weekly*, February 9–15, 2007, p. 9.

All of these characteristics and relations coexist simultaneously and support one another in the world we want to build. Democratic decision making within the workplace (instead of capitalist direction and supervision). Democratic direction by the community of the goals of activity (in place of direction by capitalists), production for the purpose of satisfying needs (rather than for the purpose of exchange), common ownership of the means of production (rather than private or group ownership), a democratic, participatory, and antagonistic form of governance (rather than a state over and above society)... (p. 66-67)

So, how can we build this world?

He suggests (in Chapter 2 and elsewhere) that this world can be built in Venezuela with the support of Chávez's government. Lebowitz asserts (pp. 98 –99) that if the Venezuelan government under Hugo Chávez encourages "radical endogenous development," e.g., "preparing people for new productive relations through courses in cooperation and self-management," (which would be possible only for a government "prepared to break ideologically and politically with capital"), that can be seen as a step towards socialism.

Socialists have sometimes called government "the executive committee of the capitalist class." For that reason, the World Socialist Movement does not envision any role in socialist society for government per se, but anticipates that the men and women living in socialism will devise some method of managing affairs, with the necessary administrative authority but no coercive power.

One must ask, can a government "prepared to break ideologically and politically with capital" exist in the present world? Can a socialist nation exist, surrounded by capitalist nations on all sides?

Certainly, it must be pointed out, contemporary Venezuela is not an example of socialist society. Although Lebowitz may have asserted, "We see that... our unity and the common ownership of the means of production make us all the beneficiaries of our common efforts," there is really not, at this moment, common ownership of the means of production anywhere. (If there were, there would also be common ownership of the goods and services produced, which would imply free right of access to these things — but, as of this writing in 2007, Venezuelan citizens do not enjoy free access. It remains a goal to be achieved.)

On the other hand, this is not to say that they have not taken a step in that direction. "Radical endogenous development" could include building a socialist majority. Chávez has stated that as his intention. If that should happen, then a global Socialist Revolution would have a real chance of beginning in Venezuela.

**"Socialism" with a qualifier**

I want to take a moment here to talk about words. When Lebowitz speaks of "Socialism for the Twenty-first Century," does he mean the same thing by "socialism" that Hugo Chávez does? Does either of them mean the same thing that we do?

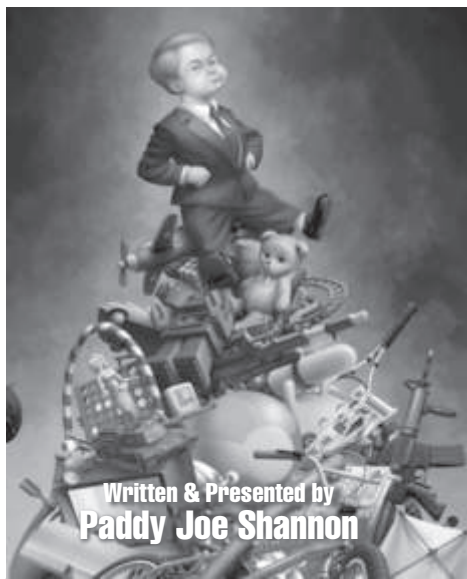
Over time, words change their meanings. When I was a child, for example, all wristwatches had faces, and when you said "watch" the concept called up was a circle of numbers with 12 at the top and 6 at the bottom. Since the advent of digital technology, "watch" no longer has that meaning. Now, if you want to refer to that kind of watch, you have to add a qualifier: "analog watch."

**One must ask, can a government "prepared to break ideologically and politically with capital" exist in the present world? Can a socialist nation exist, surrounded by capitalist nations on all sides?**

In order to call up the concept of "socialism" as Marx used it in the 19th Century, it is also now necessary to add a qualifier. The qualifier is "non-market." Without that qualifier, the word "socialism" means many different things to different speakers. Because I want to be crystal clear about what I mean by "socialism" in this writing, I will make a distinction between "non-market socialism" and "market socialism" (although I am aware that most people do not add "market" any more than people who wear a digital wristwatch add "digital").

**Socialism is not a market economy.** It is (as developed in Engels's *Socialism, Utopian & Scientific*) a society where money has become superfluous because the means of production are completely under social control. All labor is voluntary, everyone has free access to whatever goods and services are available.

Without importing goods from other nations, the people of Venezuela could never maintain an acceptable standard of living. No country in the world has all the raw materials necessary to do that, within its



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own national boundaries. Therefore, even if a socialist majority were to be created in Venezuela under Chávez, as long as there is a global capitalist economy, it could not establish non-market socialism. It could not become either moneyless or classless.

Perhaps Lebowitz has lost sight of this — or perhaps he believes that this aspect of Marxian socialism is not to be present in the Twenty-first Century version. He emphasizes, “I am convinced that worker management is the only real ultimate alternative to capitalism,” (p. 74), which implies he has forgotten that when the means of production are under social control, there is no more class of workers, and no more class of capitalists either. There are just people, all equal members of society.

Venezuela needs a money economy now to trade even with neighboring Latin American countries, let alone with giant imperialist states like the US; so, when one refers to “socialism” in Venezuela under Chávez — or in Cuba under Castro — what is really meant is “market socialism,” in which money is still used to regulate the exchange of goods and there is no common right of access. Moreover, the government of a “market socialist” economy (think: Cuba) is forced to exert coercive authority over people from time to time.

Will a conscious, political socialist majority in Venezuela put up with this?

Or, freed from the logic of capital, will they take the next step and demand free access to what they produce?

### Hope for a real alternative

I think there is reason for optimism, and I applaud Lebowitz for his careful and insightful development of the situation in Venezuela. Certainly, there is hope for a real alternative to global capitalism resulting from the circumstances described in *Build It Now*.

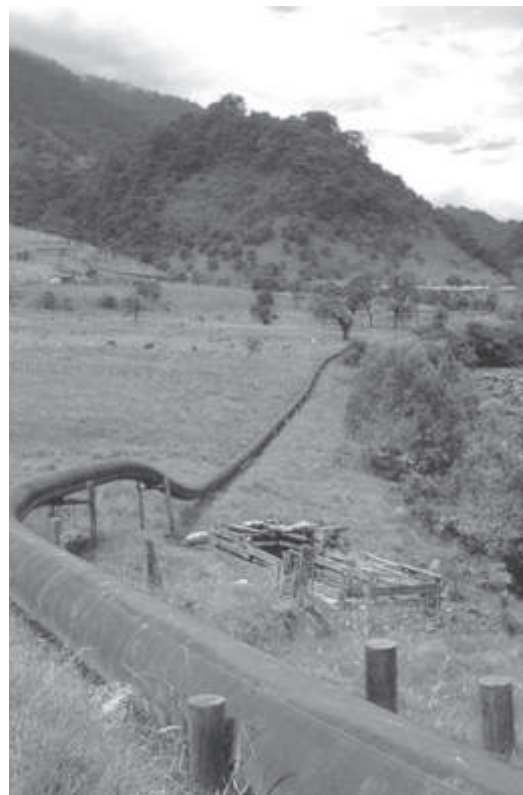
Hugo Chávez himself, shortly after his election last year, called on his followers to dissolve their existing parties and to form a new “United Socialist Party of Venezuela,” which would provide a forum for discussing how to “construct socialism from below.”<sup>3</sup>

The material conditions in the world are ripe today for a global Socialist Revolution, except for the lack of a majority of people who understand that non-market socialism represents a viable alternative to capitalism and are willing to commit themselves to making it work. Capitalism has wrought so much havoc on the ecology of Earth that the welfare of all human beings — capitalists

as well as workers — is threatened. Not just the working class, but all of humanity, need to stop the engine of capital, if we are to survive.

The revolution has to start somewhere, and the indigenous Venezuelans who elected Chávez may yet set an example for the rest of the planet.

— Karla Rab



Venezuela: Oil pipeline.

<sup>3</sup> “Chavez Calls for United Socialist Party of Venezuela,” by Gregory Wilpert; retrieved from <<http://www.venezuelanalysis.com>> Dec 18, 2006.

## Harriett Machado (1931-2007)

**C**omrade H (the name she liked to use on line) was born Harriett Bradlin in Detroit, Michigan, and died Harriett Machado, on September 20, 2007. All of us who knew her mourn her passing, and have felt her loss to this organization during the past few years as her final illness overtook her.

At the age of 16, Harriett became one of the comrades in the revitalized Detroit Local that resulted from I. Rab's organizing visit there in 1947. There, she worked side by side with Irving Canter, Mardon Coffin, George Lynch, Gordon Coffin and “Chubi” Rebo Kligman, as well as other members of the Local. During the period (1949 - 1954) when the National Office of the WSP(US) was located in Detroit, Harriett served briefly as Foreign Secretary of the organization.

Although she drifted away from the socialist movement during the 1960s and 70s, she returned to become one of the most influential members of the WSP in the years following Rab's death, when the organization was most in need of comrades who could inspire socialist fervor. She served on the National Administrative Committee from 1999 - 2003, and hosted the annual WSP Conference at her home in Pasadena in 2001.

When Harriett spoke, she had a way of combining rigorous Marxian scholarship with



an emotional appeal to the heart of anyone who listened to her.

Over the course of a long and productive life in the World Socialist Movement, she developed and articulated a perspective on how human nature may finally be given full expression in socialism, and how the capitalist system warps family relationships. She was interested in the plight of women, especially bemoaning how modern life keeps parents from the physical proximity with infants and young children which she saw as essential to successful attachment. She loved to discuss tribal relationships in primitive communities.

Harriett also had an ongoing interest in the arts, especially the theater. In the words of our comrade Dr. Who, “Whatever we discussed, she exuded a wonderful curiosity and a powerful hope for human freedom.” ☪

## BOOK REVIEW

**M**arx wrote: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.”<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances encountered by those of us striving to build a socialist majority in the North today include a population made up almost entirely of people who have never known any form of society except for capitalism. Arguably, this is the greatest obstacle to building a socialist majority here in the United States, and has been so for many generations.

But in Venezuela, this obstacle does not loom quite so large. In a speech made on Dec. 15, 2006, Hugo Chávez claimed that the indigenous peoples in Venezuela had “lived in socialism for centuries,” and called them “the bearers of socialist seed in our land.”<sup>2</sup> (According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, about two-thirds of Venezuelans have some Indian ancestry.) In other words, the constituency who voted overwhelmingly for Hugo Chávez in 2006 is made up, in part, of people who can still remember another way of life.

A case can certainly be made that the “circumstances directly encountered” by people striving to build a socialist majority in Venezuela are more propitious than what we Americans are used to.

*Build It Now: Socialism for the Twenty-First Century* gives us a fascinating look at contemporary Venezuela. Its author paints a picture of “a country which at the time of this writing embodies the hopes of many for a real alternative to capitalism.” (Introduction, p 10).

Since most readers of this journal understand that the only two possible “real alternatives” to capitalism are socialism or barbarism, in this review I would like to address the question: “Is Venezuela under Hugo Chávez actually on the road to socialism?”

1 *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, I.

2 “Chávez Calls for United Socialist Party of Venezuela” by John Riddle, *Socialist Voice*, December 2006.



Venezuela: Rural settlement.

## BUILD IT NOW: SOCIALISM FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Michael A. Lebowitz

**Lebowitz is a Marxist writer** based in Caracas, and in *Build It Now* he makes many worthwhile points. One is that, once you understand the nature of capitalism, “you can no longer look at capital as this wondrous god providing us with sustenance in return for our periodic sacrifices. Rather, you understand capital as the product of working people, our own power turned against us.” He makes the case that we must “go beyond capitalism” if we want to end the exploitation of the working class; and states (p. 30):

The society to which Marx looked as an alternative to capitalism was one in which the relation of production would be that of an association of free producers. Freely associated individuals would treat ‘their communal, social productivity as their social wealth,’ producing for the needs of all.

The chapter entitled “The Knowledge of a Better World” contains some of the key points in the book. Lebowitz tells us:

Knowing where we want to go is a necessity if we want to build an alternative. But, it is not the same as being there. We live in a world dominated by global capital, a world in which capital divides us, setting the people of each country against each other to see who can produce more cheaply by driving wages, working conditions, and environmental standards down to the lowest level in order to survive in the war of all

against all. We know, too, that any country that would challenge neoliberalism faces the assorted weapons of international capital — foremost among them the IMF, the World Bank, and imperialist power...

We need to recognize the possibility of a world in which the products of the social brain and the social hand are common property... For this reason, the battle of ideas is essential.

**It is easy to find inspiration** in the following words, that Lebowitz addressed, in 2005, to a National Conference of Revolutionary Students for the Construction of Socialism in the Twenty-first Century, in Mérida, Venezuela:

We need to remember the goal. If you don’t know where you want to go, then no road will take you there. The world that socialists have always wanted to build is one in which people relate to each other as members of a human family, a society in which we recognize that the welfare of others concerns us; it is a world of human solidarity and love where, in place of classes and class antagonisms, we have “an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” (pp. 64-65)

... We see that our productivity is the result of combining our different capabilities and that our unity and the common ownership of the means of production make us all the beneficiaries of our common efforts... (p. 66)

**Continued on p 18**