DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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BULLETIN MATTERS

In this issue, we will forego our usual preview of the complete menu and concentrate on the specials. These begin with a fifteen-year-old contribution to the debate between anarchists and Marxists. Next Neal Keating condemns DB's limitations on access to this forum and is answered. Finally, Don Fitz, arch-critic of socialist utopias, produces a proposal for a Green economy.

Financially, we have fallen still farther behind, so far, in fact, that I have had to pay all of this printing bill out of my own pocket. Winter is always a slow season for the DB; not many subs expire, and a couple of big bills fall due; the annual bulk mailing fee that enables us to mail the DB for $.084 in the U.S. and the P.O. box rent. It is time to dig deep, comrades.

In that connection we are happy to report the following contributions: Mordon Cooper $7; Morley Coviensky $2; Laurens Otter $7.28; Sam Leight $25; Robert Blau Jr. $7; Frank Girard $25; Don Fitz $10; Ed Stamm $5; Anonymous $4; Monroe Prussack $10. Total $102.28. Thank you, comrades.

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Fraternally submitted, Frank Girard for the DB Committee

REVIEWS OF PERIODICALS

Here we review what we regard as the periodicals of our political sector in rotation as space permits. The reviews are preceded by what we intend as an exhaustive list of such journals in the English language. If you have ideas for additions to the list—or deletions, for that matter—please let us know. Those titles followed by an asterisk are regarded as being in our sector but unconsciously carrying the Leninist virus of “dictatorship of the party.”

AGAINST SLEEP AND NIGHTMARE, ALARM, ANARCHIST LABOR BULLETIN, ANARCHY, ANGRY WORKERS’ BULLETIN, ANY TIME NOW, BLACK EYE, BRICK, BULLETIN OF ANARCHIST RESEARCH, CLASS STRUGGLE BULLETIN, COLLIDE-O-SCOPE, COMMUNIST*, COMMUNIST BULLETIN*, DELEONIST BULLETIN, DEMOLITION DERBY, DISCUSSION BULLETIN, ECHANGES, FACTSHEET FIVE, FIFTH ESTATE, HERE AND NOW, IDEAS & ACTION, INDUSTRIAL WORKER, INTERNATIONALISM*, INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE*, INTERNATIONAL REVIEW*, KAMUNIST KRANTI, Cont'd on p.17
The following two articles first appeared in the now defunct libertarian-Marxist journal 'The Red Menace', published in Canada during the late 70's and early 80's. They were later printed as a pamphlet by the American group 'Root and Branch'. We are reprinting them here - to initiate debate - because as 'Root and Branch' wrote in their introduction: "In a clear and concise way they confront the main anarchist misconceptions about Marxism and demonstrate the relevance of those issues for libertarian-socialists today."

This magazine aims to contribute to the re-emergence of libertarian-socialism, and for this the anarchist-Marxist conflict provides us with a useful starting point. First of all, many of the issues over which anarchists and Marxists have clashed over the last hundred years are still on the agenda and are still central to the on-going clarification of libertarian socialism: for example, the role and organisation of revolutionaries, the relationship between socialism and the working class, the place of 'ideas' in history, the nature of post-revolutionary society and so on. And beyond this, many of those people who rejected the Marxism of the Leninist tradition as the alternative to reformism found homes within anarchism.

But if the anarchist-Marxist split provides a useful starting point we do not intend to get stuck in it.

Libertarian-socialism has often been taken as synonymous with anarchism, but as Diemer points out this isn't the case. Within Marxism there have been quite fundamental disputes over many of the same issues which have divided anarchists and Marxists. And in their tendency to condemn Marxism per se anarchists have often lost sight of these differences. Given this it would be impossible for libertarian socialists to take a position simply within the terms of the anarchist-Marxist debate. To do so would have us treat Marxism (and anarchism for that matter) as a one-dimensional caricature.

Again, we do not want to get stuck there because since Bakunin and Marx a lot more has been said and done. Feminism, for example, has enriched our understanding of what 'liberated society' should mean. Social movements like the Greens have things of great value to offer. And there are insights to be brought over from other, less immediately 'political', areas such as psychology. It is from this whole welter of stuff that a libertarian socialism now has to be made.

My main criticism of Diemer here is the fact that he discusses anarchism somewhat out of context. He criticises anarchists for misrepresenting Marx's views and for not attempting to find out what he actually meant. Yet this is not just an anarchist failing, but a problem common within revolutionary circles. Entrenchment and dogma are the stuff of revolutionary politics and anarchists give out what they receive.

Whilst anarchists might be guilty of misrepresenting Marx, their antagonism is to some extent justified. Anarchists haven't exactly faced up well during the course of this conflict. Their critique of Marx as a whole is based on the experience of the Machinors, Kronstadt and the Barcelona May Days, when Marxist guns were turned on anarchists in a non-too comradely fashion. More recently the bureaucratic and manipulative behaviour of the Marxist Militant Tendency within the Poll Tax movement has fuelled anarchist distaste for Marxism. To a large extent, then, the anarchist movement has grown in reaction to a Marxism which has meant something hierarchical, statist and often authoritarian.

Diemer would view this Marxism as a distortion of the 'real' Marx, and he says that Marxism-Leninism is a contradiction in terms. But Diemer is ignoring some of the deep ambiguities within Marx's ambiguities which can and have led to quite different political practices. Diemer's own Marxism lies within the libertarian-Marxist tradition; but this has been very much a minority tradition and in no way agenda setting. If anarchists have confused Marxism with one of its possible interpretations this is understandable. But as a consequence they have been blinded to its wider potential; from which they, as revolutionary socialists, could benefit.

So, what is to be done? - as the man said. For a start we need to challenge the revolutionary left's 'we're right, you're wrong' intransigence. This is usually justified by the claim that 'we need to win the arguments' - which is little more than an over-rationalised recipe for sectarianism.

And the task for Diemer's libertarian-Marxism is not only to tackle anarchist misconceptions but also to take on Leninism as the Marxist 'common sense'. In this way a genuine dialogue might be established between the two traditions which will help us transform the existing framework and assist revolutionary socialism out of its present cul-de-sac.

As I mentioned earlier, we are reproducing these articles to initiate - we hope - some debate. So, we'd be happy to receive any reply you care to send.

John French.
ANARCHISM VERSUS MARXISM:

a few notes on an old theme

Marxism, Anarchism, libertarian socialism - is it necessary to re-examine these old labels and the divisions they represent? Would it not be best to let sleeping polemics lie and simply concentrate on trying to work together?

The problem is that a socialist movement - or libertarian movement: what terms can we validly use? - that hopes to develop has to confront historical, strategic and theoretical questions. A socialist movement worthy of the name has to do more than get together for simple actions. It has to ask itself where it is trying to go, and how it proposes to get there: precisely the issues which sparked the fateful anarchist-Marxist split in the 1870's, and which kept the movements separated until today.

Political questions which are ignored do not vanish, they only reappear with all that much more destructive impact at a later date. They must be dealt with frankly.

The Past

But this does not mean that we are fated to barrenly re-fight old battles and re-live the splits and hostilities of the past. The world has changed a great deal since the 1870's, and the experience of the socialist movement during the past century has changed the problems we face immeasurably. Of no little importance is the revitalisation of a Marxist current which is militantly anti-Leninist, and the re-emergence of an anarchist-communist movement which accepts (although not necessarily consciously) a good deal of Marxist analysis. There is a good deal of common ground on which we can come together.

Polemics

It should be acknowledged that while the differences between Marxists and anarchists have been real, it has also been the case that too often in the past the real disputes between them have generated more heat than light.

A problem in many polemics is that each side tends to take partial tendencies of the other side and extrapolates them to be the whole, and in that sense misrepresents. A serious analysis has to go beyond the simplicities of black and white (black and red?) argumentation. At the same time, it is true that posing questions sharply generally implies a polemical tone, and we should not shrink back from polemic if this means that important questions will be glossed over or ignored.

My own position is pro-Marxist, and it is in many respects quite critical of anarchism. It is therefore imperative to note two things: one that there are many positive things about anarchism which I leave unacknowledged, because I am attempting to criticise certain specific aspects of the total doctrine which I think greatly weaken it. I am not purporting to give a balanced evaluation of anarchism as a whole. Two: I am far more critical of the 'Marxism' of most 'Marxist-Leninists' than I am of anarchism. While I regard most anarchists as comrades in the libertarian movement, I consider the very expression 'Marxism-Leninism' to be a contradiction in terms, and consider it to be an ideology that is diametrically opposed to the emancipation of the working class (1).

It is naturally impossible to cover the whole anarchist/Marxist debate adequately in an article. What I propose to do here is to concentrate on the most common and basic anarchist objections to Marxism, and examine them briefly. I hope that these notes will provoke a lively discussion that will make it possible to examine that raised, and others, in much greater detail.

"If This Is Marxism..."

The impetus for seeking a debate on Marxism and anarchism comes primarily from reading a number of recently published pieces in anarchist publications, which all seem to display an astonishing misunderstanding and ignorance of Marx, of what he wrote and did. All of these - and most anarchist writings - expend a great deal of effort in attacking something called 'Marxism'. In every case, the 'Marxism' that is attacked has little or nothing to do with the theories of Marx. Reading these polemics against a 'Marxism' that exists mainly in the minds of those attacking it, one can only mutter the phrase Marx himself is said to have repeated so often in his later years, regarding the work of his 'followers': "If this is Marxism, then all I know is that I am not a Marxist."

If there is to be any dialogue between Marxists and anarchists, if the negative and the positive aspects of the anarchist and Marxist projects are to be critically analysed, then it is
incumbent upon those who oppose Marxism, as well as those who support it or seek to revise or transcend it, to at least know what they are talking about. Nothing is solved by setting up and attacking a straw-man Marxism.

And it is important to understand and know Marx not only because there are 'libertarian Marxists' but because Marx is without doubt the central figure in the development of libertarianism and socialism. It is not possible to understand the development of any left-wing political movement or system of thought in the last century without knowing Marxism. It is not possible, in fact, to understand the development of any ideology in this century, or indeed, to understand the history of the last hundred years, without knowing something about Marxism. The political history of the twentieth century is to a very great extent a history of attempts to realize, defeat, go beyond or amend, or to develop alternatives to Marxism.

Anarchism is certainly no exception. It originally defined itself in opposition to Marxism, and continues to do so today. Unfortunately, anarchists seem unaware or unwilling to realize - that Marxism is not a monolith, that there are, and always have been, enormously different currents of thought calling themselves Marxist. Anarchist critiques invariably identify Marxism with Leninism, Leninism with Stalinism, Stalinism with Maoism, and all of them with Trotskyism as well. There is usually not a hint of guile in this remarkable bit of intellectual predigestion - your average anarchist simply thinks it is universally accepted fact that all these political systems are identical. This is not to say that it cannot be argued that they are all fundamentally the same, that their differences, however violent, are secondary to certain essential features they all have in common. But the point is that it is necessary to argue the case, to marshal some evidence, to understand before condemning. One can't simply begin with the conclusion.

The Other Marxism

But the fact is that Marxism is not a monolith. For example, Rosa Luxembourg - surely one of the central figures in any history of Marxism - was condemning Lenin's theories of the vanguard party, and of centralized, hierarchical discipline three-quarters of a century ago, in 1904. In 1918 - while many anarchists were rushing to join the Bolsheviks - she was criticizing the dictatorial methods of the Bolsheviks and warning of the miscarriage of the revolution. After her death there have been other thinkers and movements that condemn Bolshevism as an authoritarian degeneration of Marxism: Anton Pannekoek, Karl Korsch, the Council Communists, the Frankfurt School, right up to the New Left of the 60's and 70's. And even within the Leninist tradition there were thinkers whose contributions challenged the hold of the dominant interpretation and helped nourish a libertarian Marxism: Lukács, Gramsci and Reich. A number of libertarian currents emerged from the Trotskyist movement in the 40's and 50's. Any libertarian movement that acknowledges only one thin anarchist strand as 'true' libertarian socialism, while cutting itself off - through dogma or ignorance - from all other contributing currents, only impoverishes itself. Yet anarchists writing on Marxism seem to deliberately shut their eyes and ears to anything except the dominant Leninist tradition, and so manage always to reconfirm their own prejudices about Marxism.

All this does not prove of course that the libertarian interpretation of Marx is the correct one. But it should be possible to agree on a basic point: if there is doubt about what Marx spoke for, then it is necessary to read Marx, not to take the word of either his enemies, or those who claim, justifyably or not, to be his followers. Only once this is accepted, is it possible to begin a anarchist/Marxist dialogue on a serious level.

My own attitude to Marx is not unequivocally favourable. There are serious questions to be raised about aspects of Marx's thought. Marxism, like everything else, must be subjected to criticism. This may lead to our transcending Marx, but not, I think, to our rejecting him. "Marxism is a point of departure for us, not our pre-determined destination". The essential point, however, is that the Marxist project must be at the heart of any libertarian politics. It may be possible, and thus necessary, to transcend Marx, but to do so it is first necessary to absorb him. Without Marx and some of the best of the 'Marxists', it is not possible to create a libertarian praxis and a libertarian world.

Finally, in judging Marx's work, it is necessary to keep in mind that his writings and actions span some 40 years as a revolutionary; that he often wrote letters and made notes that represent partial insights which he did not expand; that many of his works are polemics against particular doctrines and are one-sided because of that. It would be a mistake, therefore, to take each sentence and quotation as finished holy writ, or expect his work to be wholly consistent or that he thought the implications of
all his theories through to the end. Marx's work is incomplete and uneven, but it is an enormously fruitful and brilliant contribution that must be approached as he himself approached everything: critically.

Anti-Intellectualism

At this point it is necessary to confront one of anarchism's tragic flaws, one that has made it incapable of becoming a serious historical alternative: its strong tendency towards anti-intellectualism. With few exceptions (e.g. Kropotkin, Rocker, Bookchin), anarchism has failed to produce proponents interested in developing a rigorous analysis of capitalism, the state, bureaucracy, or authoritarianism. Consequently its opposition to these phenomena has tended to remain instinctive and emotional: whatever analyses it has produced have been eclectic, largely borrowed from Marxism, Liberalism or elsewhere, and rarely of serious intellectual quality.

This is not an accidental failing - there has been no lack of intelligent anarchists. But anarchism, perhaps repelled by the coldbloodedness of 'official' Marxist intellectuals, perhaps sensing instinctively the germ of totalitarianism in any intellectual system that seeks to explain everything, have been consciously and often militantly opposed to intellectual endeavour as such. Their opposition has been not simply to particular analysis and theories, but to analysis and theory as such. Bakunin, for example, argued - in a manner reminiscent of the medieval Pope Gregory - that teaching workers theories would undermine their inherent revolutionary qualities. What happens when a movement's leading theorist is explicitly anti-intellectual?

The results for the anarchist movement have been crippling. Anarchism as a theory remains a patchwork of often conflicting insights that remain frustrating especially to critical sympathizers because the most fruitful threads rarely seem to be pursued. Most anarchist publications avoid any discussion of strategy, or any analysis of society as it is today like the plague. Even one of the best anarchist publications The Open Road (3), remains a cheerleader for anything vaguely leftist or libertarian. People organising unions and people organising against unions receive equally uncritical coverage; pie throwing and bomb throwing are seen as equally valid activities, and no attempt is made to discuss the relative strategic merits of one or the other in a given context. Most anarchist publishing houses seem interested in nothing except:

a) refighting the Spanish Civil War,
b) refighting Kronstadt and
c) trashing Marxist-Leninists yet one more time. Even these preoccupations, which have become so routine as to make anarchism simply boring, are not pursued in such a way as to develop new insights relating to the history of capitalism, the revolutionary process, or Bolshevism, for example.

Liturgies

Rather, the same arguments are simply liturgically repeated. Rarely is there any serious political debate within the anarchist movement, while polemics against the bugbear of "Marxism" (as essential to anarchism as Satan is to the church) are generally crippled by a principled refusal to find out anything about what is being attacked. Arguments are mostly carried on in terms of the vaguest generalities; quotations are never used because the words of the supposed enemy have never been read.

As a consequence of its anti-intellectualism anarchism has never been able to develop its potential. A movement that disdains theory and uncritically worships action, anarchism remains a shaky edifice consisting essentially of various chunks of Marxist analysis (4) underpinning a few inflexible tactical concepts. It is held together mainly by libertarian impulses - the best kind of impulses to be sure - and by a fear of organisation that is so great that it is virtually impossible for anarchists to ever organise effectively on a long-term basis. This is truly a tragedy, for the libertarian movement cannot afford to have its members refusing to use their intellects in the battle to create a new world. As long as anarchism continues to promote anti-intellectualism, it is going nowhere.
Dear Frank,

Thank you very much for your review. In our opinion, in this context a few clarifications will be useful for DB readers: 

1. We are NOT Luxemburgists. We are NOT examining Marxism from a Luxemburgist perspective. In fact the part of our criticism regarding private property—capitalism applies to Rosa Luxemburg as much as it applies to Marx because her innumerable private producers were characteristic of capitalism. Rosa's analysis does NOT provide the basis for Marxist answers to the questions that we have enumerated on the back cover except for the one concerned with objective limits of capitalism. Luxemburg does NOT provide the basis for analysis of FACELESS CAPITAL/STATE CAPITALISM. And certainly our interest in Rosa's Accumulation is NOT because we are located in India where hundreds of millions are still engaged in simple commodity production (peasants and artisans).

2. In our opinion a deeper and wider Marxist criticism of Marx than the one Rosa attempted is needed today for the regeneration of the Marxist communist movement. And this is one of the reasons for the publication of our abridged version of Rosa's Accumulation—an example of a Marxist criticism of Marx.

3. Since the Second International subjective aspect has submerged the Marxist communist movement. An aspect very much strengthened by the Third International whose axis was the Bolshevik axiom—Give us the party and we will... This is another reason for our abridged version of the book. Rosa's attempt to bring to the fore the question of objective limits to capitalism can help us to dig out Marxist communism from the subjectivist marsh.

4. Though Rosa does not touch the question of how capital moulds the world in its image—another Marxist axiom—in our opinion, her analysis of the accumulation process of capital provides the answer to this question. The life process of capital involves the displacement of non-capitalist commodity production by capitalist commodity production. As it was the very life process of commodity production to displace/eliminate natural economies, similarly it is the life process of capitalist commodity production to displace/eliminate simple commodity production. It is in this way that capital moulds/has to mould the world in its image. That in this way it reaches its objective limits is a happy coincidence for the revolutionary abrogation of capitalism. By the way, once the life process of capital is grasped one can grapple with the police interpretation of social events as well as the subjectivist logic that demands any and every measure to take advantage of a crisis situation—the logic that was one of the factors that prepared the ground for counter-revolutionary tools like formation of standing armies with adjective Red.

5. Capital is not reproduced by the surplus of non-capitalist societies. Rather, for capital accumulation equivalent from simple commodity production is indispensable for metamorphosis of that portion of the surplus value which is to be accumulated. By the way, accumulation of capital is not the reproduction of constant capital. It is rather the reproduction of constant capital + variable capital + metamorphosis of a portion of surplus value into new capital. 

We hope our expression is not too difficult.

We hope you will be able to find space for this letter and our text, 'A Restatement', in the pages of DB. We look forward to mutually fruitful relations with DB members and readers.

We are looking forward to your letter.

Yours faithfully,

Kamunist Kranti

Kamunist Kranti, Mazdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, Near Bata Chowk, N.I.T. Faridabad - 121001, India
Human aspirations for a society without fear-oppression-exploitation and with happiness-equality-fraternity-abundance gave rise to diverse utopias. Well into the nineteenth century, these utopias were the best expressions of human yearning. The brutality and exploitation associated with the birth and rise of capitalism gave a fillip to these utopias. And in this situation were the foundations of materialist interpretation of history laid. It showed the objective possibility and necessity for the realization of longstanding human aspirations.

Karl Marx made fundamental contributions to the materialist interpretation of history. He showed that in scarcity based social formations, material production and reproduction of social life, in the final analysis, determines the social process. The complexity of social formations throughout the world and the major social changes that had occurred in them in history could be analysed in terms of productive forces and production relations.

We would like to mention in passing that the words "in the final analysis" must be kept in mind - attempts to ridicule the materialist interpretation of history by "examples of failure to establish a one-to-one relationship between economic factors and cultural-political events" is a childish exercise. Let it also be mentioned here that material production of social life plays a determining role only in scarcity based social formations - social laws applicable in abundance based social formations are laws to be discovered/formulated by future generations. And historical materialism essentially deals only with scarcity based social formations - "universal laws" etc are foreign to it. Materialist interpretation of history stands or falls on the basis of social formations that have already existed on earth.

Broad outlines of the materialist interpretation of history were drawn in the Communist Manifesto. Analysis of established social reality, i.e., capitalism, showed its transitory nature. The objective possibility and necessity of communist society as the next social formation was established. Capitalism was shown to be a world system and communism was seen to be a much more closely-knit global system. Working class in general and industrial workers in particular were shown to be objectively revolutionary and were seen as the harbingers of communism.

In the prevailing atmosphere, it is necessary to dwell on some of these aspects in a little detail. Objective limits to capitalism and objective possibility and necessity of socialism have often been misinterpreted as the inevitability of socialism and materialist interpretation of history has often been transformed into economic determinism. Communism being, thus taken to be ordained by occ.

A Re-statement of Communist Positions with Reference to Communist Movement's Regeneration
has been helpful to an evasion of issues that cry to be taken up. Whereas, when materialist interpretation of history analyses objectively the limits to capitalism and shows the material possibility and necessity of communism, it shows that as objective limits to capitalism approach humanity is increasingly faced by an either-or situation: either communist revolution and birth of an abundance-based social formation or the self-destruction of humanity. The material possibility of socialism is the possibility of abundance of material necessities of social life that the development of the productive forces has made possible. Objective necessity of socialism is a question linked to capitalism’s epochal crisis and human future: survival of human-beings is dependent on making the communist revolution.

"Capitalism is a world system - socialism in one country!" often spoken in the same breath, even by well-meaning people, is nauseating. That capitalism is a world system and communism will have to be a qualitatively much more close-knit global system is not a question of human desire or otherwise. Before capitalism was even born, the development of simple commodity production, associated with the increasing surplus-produce, had already laid the foundations of a world market and a global system. The leap in the productive forces that took shape during the industrial revolution and established capitalism, made world market/world economy/world system a life and death question for capitalism. Unlike simple commodity production, capitalist commodity production can survive and grow only by increasingly moulding the world into its own image. We will not go into details here to show how the accumulation of capital, i.e., the very life process of capitalism, is what is at stake here and how this life process itself leads capitalism to its objective limits. Suffice it to say here that the level that the productive forces had reached with the Industrial Revolution made a global system an objective necessity and the development of the productive forces that has taken place since then has increasingly brought about a more closely-knit global society. It is because of this that the materialist interpretation of history characterizes the aspiration of the self-sufficient nation/country as reactionary. We repeat, the level that the productive forces acquired with the Industrial Revolution made it indispensable for commodity production to function on a global scale. And, the level at which the productive forces stand today has made it an elemental question for humanity to abolish commodity production and bring in its stead a humane world community. The level which the productive forces have reached is the level which henceforth can be harnessed for human welfare on a global basis alone and that too in a social formation whose axis is fulfilment of human needs, not production of commodities.

Linked to the above is the role of the working class in general and industrial workers in particular. Materialist interpretation of history shows that capitalism is also a scarcity-based social system although material requirements for an abundance-based social formation have grown in its womb. Since capitalism is a scarcity-based social system, material production and reproduction of social life determines its life process in the final analysis. And material production in capitalism is increasingly done by the working
class in general and industrial workers in particular. It is because of this that the epochal crisis of capitalism places the working class in a special position. The crises of the capitalist system— we will not deal with them here— of course give rise to turmoil in all sections of society. But the epochal crisis is in essence the crisis of production and reproduction of material life on a capitalist basis. Hence the turmoil that this crisis gives rise to in the working class are qualitatively different from those that are produced in other elements of society. While turmoil in other sections of society can at most give rise to blind rage, the position of the working class in the production process can even spontaneously at times give rise to "sparks of communist consciousness". The working class in general and industrial workers in particular are so placed in capitalism that the communist alternative to capitalism can arise and be posed amongst them. It is because the working class is objectively revolutionary that those aspiring and working for an alternative society should pay special attention to the working class. It is because of this that the materialist interpretation of capitalism for its revolutionary abrogation, i.e., marxism, is the theory of the working class for its conscious revolutionary practive. And it is because of this that communists develop a special relationship with wage-workers.

Given the prevalence of views that associate poverty—physical labour with the sublime— expressed today as "workerism"— it needs saying that if capitalism were making the working class sublime and not barbarous, we would worship capitalism. The relationship between communists and wage-workers is not one based on pity for the exploited and oppressed. In the capitalist system there are elements living in greater misery and oppression than wage-workers. The relationship between communists and wage-workers is based on the fact that wage-workers are exploited—oppressed AND that they are objectively revolutionary. It is because of this that communists become/ form a part of the working class— the part that uses the materialist interpretation of history for better revolutionary practice of the working class.

Thus socialist/communist movement today is the long—standing aspiration of humanity for a fearless and happy society placed on a materialist basis. It has nothing in common with the military—bureaucratic formations, state—capitalism and state—capitalist tendencies that call/used to call themselves socialist/communist. And although in society at large, socialism/communism today are generally associated with a military—bureaucratic apparatus, the silver—lining in the prevailing gloom is the bankruptcy of state—capitalist formations and tendencies that recent events in state—capitalist bastions have forcefully brought to the fore. The CRISIS that is being talked about today is actually the crisis of state—capitalism and state—capitalist tendencies.

Having said the above, we will very briefly touch the main issue that concerns the communist movement today. While the objective situation for its rapid growth is increasingly being provided by the allround and deepening crises of the capitalist—
system, what is it that has led to the present-day extreme weakness of the communist movement? Our answer to this question will, hopefully, also answer the question: what is it that has led to equating communism with state-capitalism? And, what is it that needs to be done to regenerate the communist movement?

Communist movement is the expression of conscious intervention in the ongoing events for the overthrow of capitalism and establishment of communism. We are not discussing here the "sparks of communist consciousness" that spontaneous movement at times gives rise to in the working class. So, with the expanding and deepening crises of capitalism and their corollary, the growing discontent in society, the extreme weakness of the communist movement today is an expression of the extreme weakness of communists' conscious intervention. This is because of an inability to understand the existing social reality and its dynamics for a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. This calls for serious analyses to overcome the difficulties present. For this it is necessary to begin with the marxist classics - Manifesto, Capital, Origin of Family etc. Drawing lessons from the Paris Commune, Workers' Soviets/Councils is essential. And what is more, in our opinion, it is also necessary to critically examine the past formulations as well as to develop the marxist theory.

Capitalist reality of mid-nineteenth century and its dynamics was brilliantly analysed by Karl Marx. It was shown that the level that the productive forces had reached by mid-nineteenth century was posing objective limits to the existence of capitalists. The capitalists had then become superfluous. The tendency of the rate of profit to fall was shown to be THE axis around which the demise of the capitalists was taking place. Capitalists had reached objective limits and the formations of joint-stock companies, cooperative factories were seen as expressions of the objective need for a new social formation. The crisis that the capitalist system was experiencing, despite joint-stock companies etc., were seen as an expression of the objective necessity for a new social system whose relations of production would be in harmony with the existing productive forces. Capitalists were objectively doomed by the level of the productive forces in mid-nineteenth century Europe and this was taken by communists then to be the objective limits of capitalism as such - this was the basis of mid-nineteenth century communists' battle-cry for the communist revolution, which was understood as an abolition of private property.

That Marx's analyses are deeply coloured by individual ownership-private property, capitalists - the social reality of mid-nineteenth century capitalism - it should no longer be necessary to debate. That the social reality unfolding then, and one that became dominant even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century - joint-stock companies etc. - is also beyond debate. But what this means has seldom been adequately dealt with in the communist movement. The unfolding social reality towards the close of the nineteenth century essentially showed: the brilliance AND inadequacy of Marx's analyses, especially of those in Capital III. Marxists failed to analyse the problems that had been posed by the social reality unfolding towards the end
of the nineteenth century. The problems posed by the side-lining of "concretely" personified capital - the capitalists, and personifications of "faceless" capital - directors-managers, occupying the centre stage, were not even formulated by communists. Twenty to two hundred families were all that mattered for them. Communists' fixation with private property, capitalists and the analyses of Marx led to their interventions becoming increasingly weaker with the continuous strengthening of "faceless" capital. Communist Manifesto's equating of abolition of capitalism with the abolition of private property and the role of capitalist development itself in the "withering away" of private property created conditions that helped in mixing up communism/socialism with state-capitalism. That self-proclaimed communists' interventions in the ongoing events often became, despite all the well-meaning desires of some of them, propellers of state-capitalism has been a sad byproduct of this situation. The degeneration, NOT defeat, of the Second and Third Internationals should be enough to be mentioned in this context. And even when state-capitalism was recognised for what it was, it was still taken to be a step towards socialism because "it abolished private property, expropriated capitalists, laid the basis of socialism whence appropriate superstructural changes would follow naturally". Standing armies with the adjective "Red" were formed to defend state-capitalism, "an evil stage on the road to socialism".

In the situation that has developed in the above mentioned conditions, ideological defeat of state-capitalism, which is an antithesis of communism, is an essential task to be performed by communists. This task has been greatly simplified by recent practice of the working class in state-capitalist bastions. A re-statement of communist positions is also of great help in this fight although it is not sufficient to win the battle. But more than the ideological defeat of state-capitalist tendencies, positive communist practice is what is needed to give the communist alternative a fighting chance. And positive communist practice today, in our opinion, needs systematic work for -

1) A development of marxist theory to understand the existing social reality and its dynamics adequately for better revolutionary practice of the working class; 2) Organisation of communist work on a global scale since world communist society alone is the alternative to capitalist world-system; 3) Organized communist activity on country-wide basis since THE STATE to be smashed is a conglomeration of STATES organized on the basis of countries/nations; 4) Organisation of work by communists in specific industrial areas as an initial step to re-establish communists and wage-workers links to develop conscious revolutionary practice of the working class.

Materialist interpretation of existing social reality and its dynamics predicts that humanity is fast approaching an either-or situation: EITHER communist revolution and an abundance based lively social formation OR the self-destruction of humanity. Each one of us
is determined by the social reality of our times but one can choose between the EITHER-OR sides. Choose your side/have your choice.

- A KANUNIST KRANTI PRESENTATION AT ROURKELA STUDY CIRCLE'S 6TH MAY 1999 DISCUSSION.

CONTACT ADDRESS: MAJDOOR LIBRARY
AUTOPIN JHUGGI (NEAR BATA CHOWK)
H.I.T. FARIDABAD-121001 (INDIA).

Dear Comrades

I wish to begin by thanking Comrade Amit for his comments on my review of Kanunist Kranti's edition of The Accumulation of Capital. They correct my misconceptions, and they provide him with an opportunity to begin the "deeper and wider Marxist criticism of Marx."

(Note: The DB still has a few copies left of KK's 220-page edition of Rosa Luxemburg's The Accumulation of Capital at $7 post paid.)

I have a couple of brief comments on Kanunist Kranti's document on regenerating the communist/socialist movement. Most of my criticisms result, I suspect, from its purpose as a discussion paper for an audience (the Rourkela Study Circle) rather different in its background and thinking from readers of the DB. I am criticizing it, not for what it says but for what it doesn't say. Although it does a good job of saying what would seem to be the obvious: that capitalism is a transitory system, that in some respects Marx's analysis is dated by the evolution of capitalism, and that the collapse of capitalism's statist eastern branch changes the equation, it says nothing about the how and the what of socialism. In other words it does not discuss the tactics our class must use to destroy capitalism nor the nature of the society we socialists are calling on our fellow workers to create in the place of capitalism.

It strikes me that one of the real problems in reaching our class lies in eliminating the misconceptions created by seventy years of communism and god knows how many years of social democratic political reform done in the name of socialism. It isn’t enough, it seems to me, just to reject state capitalism; we must also present a picture of the alternative society we propose. A failure to do this is a major flaw in the document.

And along with this, any statement on regenerating this movement must speak to the question of organization. KK's call for "organisation of communist work on a global scale" says nothing about the nature of that organization. Is it to be another centralized "international"? And there is one more thing: KK's references to the role of revolutionaries and the working class are posed in such a way as to create the impression that they are two distinct groups—a typically vanguardist/Leninist view, at odds with that of libertarian socialism.

Fraternally,

Frank Girard
Dear D.B.,

I was interested to see Frank's exchange with the ICC. I was intrigued by the article about 12 years ago, before I read Marx, Hegel, Proudhon etc., or before I started to think for myself and didn't need a dogma to cling to. Programatically, they hold some essential positions (opposition to statism, the wage system) but get bogged down in a rigid dogma. Their Luxemburgist economics and the resulting attempts to periodize capitalist development (theory of decadence) makes them force reality into the mold of their ideology. Imagine still defending the view that no reforms were possible after 1914! One time at a meeting, I stated that not only did most reforms come after WWI, but many of them came after WWII. In reply, they stated that these reforms were granted at the cost of millions of lives - true - but this does not support their position on the impossibility of reforms.

The ICC claims to be following the Manifesto in their position on the party, even quoting it to Frank - trouble is, that document clearly states; "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties... They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletariat." In Marx's view the ICC (along with all the other parties like the SPGB) would be nothing but sects.

I don't think WILDCAT's statement is that much of an improvement on the ICC. Do they really expect the workers in "developed" countries to rise up in a bloody civil war against the bosses?

What is the evidence for this? I think Steve Coleman's critique of violent revolution has a lot of validity, in spite of the SPGB's "missionary position" on the achievement of socialism. Ernest Mann has the best statement on "the rev.," saying he doesn't know how a commodityless society will come about. I really think it is time that we tossed out the idea of a sudden, violent overthrow of capitalism and adopted Mann's view as being more scientific. Socialism loses nothing by such an action, by discarding a utopianism which makes us look foolish in the eyes of working people, the vast majority of whom (in the developed world that is) have too damn much to lose in a violent upheaval. The sudden violent overturning is not a scientific position, but a religious one, reflecting how deeply rooted the Christian archetype of the Apocalypse is in our culture. And since there is no evidence for the coming of the "rev." other than 150 years of failed revolts by minorities, one can only conclude that such a belief is ultimately founded upon faith - like all religious viewpoints.

In Solidarity,

L. Gambone
Dear Discussion Bulletin:

I'd like to respond to the several letters in DB 44 which pointed out the problems with my point of view. First, I want to say that if people are sufficiently motivated, they can make almost any type of social system function. I didn't mean to argue that a system based on free access to goods and volunteer labor could not possibly work, I just meant it was unlikely to work on a large scale anytime in the near future. Our current competitive capitalist system has the advantage of pandering to people's material desires (the carrot) while depriving them of basic necessities if they fail to perform at a certain level (the stick). This is a very crude way to get things accomplished. In a system that allowed free access to goods, you would have to rely on the good will of individuals to put in the necessary volunteer labor. I know that I personally would be much more likely to sleep late, travel, play soccer, read, go hiking, and write letters like this one than show up for work to pave roads, treat sewage, roof houses, answer telephones, or clean up after hospital patients if it was purely up to me to determine how to spend my time. If there was even an informal agreement that 32 hours of non-recreational work was expected of each member of the economic unit, then I would show up to get the work done. If you leave the amount of necessary labor up to the individual, some people will overwork and some will underwork, and that's just not fair. And being a pessimist, I suspect most people will underwork.

Another problem with free goods and services is that it encourages waste. Under the current system poor people have to conserve resources very carefully while the rich can waste them, but even the rich know that wasting resources costs them money. Why turn the thermostat down to 68 or 70 in the winter when everything is free? Why carpool if gas is free? Why turn the lights off when you're not in the room?

The argument that people lived for a million years freely giving away the fruits of their labor is not convincing. If this was the case, how can pillaging raids be explained? Some anti-social elements discovered that it was easier to rob and/or enslave people than to produce things for themselves. At least that's my interpretation of early human history. No one gives away their last crust of bread and then nobly starves to death. Only when there is excess production can people afford to give goods away. Perhaps when there were very few people in the world and they all lived in tropical areas on foraging and hunting, people could afford to be generous. But if the fruit is just dropping off the trees, giving it away can hardly be considered giving away the product of your labor.

Likewise the opinion that 90% of all labor currently being done produces no goods seems to be an exaggeration. Maybe 50%, but that's the maximum. Capitalists would not pay people to sit in offices shuffling papers if that didn't make their operations more efficient in the long run. Even in a libertarian socialist society there would be a need for people to organize the procurement of raw materials and the shipping of finished products, to take orders for goods or services, and to collect feedback from consumers.

Finally, I want to say that organizing a voluntary libertarian socialist community within the current system would be a lot of work, but it wouldn't be nearly as hard as using force to convert an unsympathetic society.

Ed Stamm, Lawrence, Kansas
To The Discussion Bulletin,

This is to register my disgust at your imposing limitations on the
parameters of this APA. Too bad. I was just getting interested. Yes,
I am referring to your suppression of Bob Black's letter. How many
others have experienced the same? Is it required of all participants
in the "libertarian socialist" sector to use a simpering and pedantic
style of locution that never names names, or is that just the editor's
preference? Is such policy expected to continue en masse once the
capitalist order of the day has been overthrown? Can't you at least
wait until the revolution is a little closer before you start imitating
your enemies?

Perhaps I'm mistaken as to the nature of the DB. Perhaps it is
a forum for discussing certain ideas in a certain way for certain
people that have accepted a certain world view. If so, then I am
certainly in the wrong place. I've never liked little doll houses.

On the other hand, if the DB is a forum in which all aspects of
the liberatory project can be freely discussed, debated, even ranted
and raged about; a forum in which ideas and theories, ideologies
and yes, ideologues, are open targets for the minds of its participants---
then you'll find me an eager playpal. Apparently this is not the case.

There's good reason for all the ugly sectarian cat-fights that have
been going on ever since the first International. All of the objects
of these fights: socialism, communism, anarchism et al are objects that
to this day only exist in the imagination. The hacienda has yet to be
built. These fights are over the blueprints. They are not physical
fights, and when allowed to run their course, they tend to enhance
and clarify the design of liberation. You do a disservice to this
project when you cut people off.

Fortuna Fortes Adivat,
Neal Keating

(Note: Certainly Comrade Keating makes his point--rather painfully
but nonetheless on target. Implicitly he raises these questions: 1. Should every document submitted for publication in the DB be
published? 2. If not, on what basis should they be rejected and who
should accept responsibility for rejecting them? Up to now I have
made these judgments on the subjective grounds that in my opinion
certain articles and letters weren't appropriate. Unfortunately, as
regular readers of the DB know, not every writer is convinced that I
am completely wise and that my heart is pure in these matters.

In the case of Comrade Black's letter, I felt that it was basically
a personal letter to his adversary of the moment and shouldn't be
published. Interested readers might write to Bob Black, P.O. Box
2159, Albany, NY 12220 and ask him for a copy of his letter as well as
mine rejecting it and returning the financial contribution he made.
It also asked him to call me collect if he wanted to discuss the
matter.

For the present, perhaps the closest thing to a workable solution
is for me to list any rejected document, describe it briefly, and
provide the address of the author, as I did above, so interested
persons could obtain a copy. Doing so would avoid the complete refusal of this forum to these writers. Finally, if anyone can suggest a better way of handling this problem, I would appreciate hearing about it. -- fg)

About that De Leonist Society Bulletin
In DB#40 cmd P. Girard lists The De Leonist Society Bulletin. According to the October '89 issue subscription requests should be addressed to The De Leonist Society, U.S.
P.O. Box 22055,
San Francisco, CA 94122.
The address Girard gave is for "editorial matters". There is a Canadian address: De Leonist Society of Canada
P.O. Box 944,
Station F, Toronto,
Ontario, Canada M4Y 2N9

The De Leonist Society has two very interesting critiques of De Leon's "Burning Question of Trades Unionism" and "Socialist Reconstruction of Society". Both are by Alan Sanderson of Toronto -- a very gifted writer for a total sectarian! He appears to be a regular in their Bulletin. Both have previously been reviewed by Girard.

A warning:
The Bulletin appears to be FREE for those who ask. But do not be surprised if you neither receive the Bulletin or ever hear from the Society. They do not mail to anyone on their enemies' list and it is very easy to get on their enemies' list. Those automatically on the list are SLP, ex-SLP members, and anyone associated with other DeLeonist groups. And they will not reply to letters from their perceived enemies. Nor will they accept subscriptions from those they do not approve though they will accept their money.
The Ohioan

Cont'd from p.2

REBEL VOICES; c/o IWW, P.O. Box 103, New York, NY 10028; biannual, 8 1/2 by 11, 32pp., subs $4 for two issues. Published by the New York branch of the IWW, RV is written in a livelier style and covers a much wider range of topics than the usual IWW/syndicalist periodical. Series two, issue two (second half of 1989) the most recent we have, included articles on school reforms, homosexuality, Joe Hill, "The Dodge Daytonas vs. the Bombardier R-62: Two Classic Cars," and a tongue-in-cheek labor history article that finds the roots of syndicalism in the Old Testament. RV also offers for sale What Every Professor Should Know about the IWW--Myths Debunked. $0.25.

Cont'd on p.21
TO THE EDITORS, SOCIALIST STANDARD

Dear Editors,

I am writing to add a few points to the letter my comrade, MB, has already sent you in response to the article in the December Socialist Standard criticising the Wildcat pamphlet *Capitalism and Its Revolutionary Destruction*.

Steve Coleman alleges that Wildcat "seems to think" that "revolutionaries will be in a minority at the time of the revolution". Had he read our pamphlet a little more carefully, however, he would have noticed that the sentences he quotes to supposedly support this allegation refer, not to the situation at the time of the revolution, but to the class struggle at its present-day stage. Later on we state quite clearly that the "primary aim" of revolutionaries "must be to get more and more people actively involved in the struggle", and also that "if revolution is to succeed, the great mass of the working class must become conscious communists".

To say that "No Leninist would disagree" with Wildcat's views on this issue is as foolish as stating that no Christian would disagree with the SPGB's attitude towards religion.

The question remains, however, how are the mass of the working class to become conscious communists?

One of the basic arguments of our pamphlet is that the seeds of the future struggle for communism are contained within the working class's struggle of today. Riots and strikes are part of this struggle. Steve Coleman scorns these as mere street fights and reformist sectional disputes. This dismissive concentration solely on the negative aspects of the class struggle throws the baby out with the bathwater.

 Strikes, riots and other aspects of the class struggle are also an interruption in the everyday routine of capitalist 'normality'. In the course of these actions numerous practical problems crop up. In overcoming them, those working class people actively involved find themselves having to develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation. The development of these powers - all stifled by capitalism - is essential for the working class if it is to have any hope of transforming society.

Furthermore, by changing people's immediate material circumstances, collective struggle also contains the potential to alter people's perceptions of the society around them, and place in a new perspective the limited goals they originally set themselves. All of these things can be observed, to varying degrees, whenever working class people take action together to fight back against the miseries heaped on them by capitalism. The wider the struggle, the greater the potential for the development of new forms of organisation directly controlled by those involved in the struggle, and the greater the potential for the development of radical ideas not confined merely to tinkering with society as it is but with the ambition of completely transforming it.

This, then, is the revolutionary strategy proposed by Wildcat: a materialist strategy, based on the working class's pursuit of its material interests, and recognising that the source of ideas - in this case, revolutionary ideas - is material conditions - the working class's active engagement in the class struggle.

By contrast, the SPGB's strategy is materialist only in the most abstract, general sense, and tends more towards idealist philosophy, seeing no connection whatsoever between the class struggle of today and the future struggle for communism, and thus
abandoning the Marxist view of the class struggle as the historical motive force behind social change.

As a final point, I would like to take issue with Steve Coleman's case in favour of participation in parliamentary elections, which is that the working class must gain control of the state so that the ruling class cannot use the armed power of the state to crush the revolutionary working class. If Steve Coleman really believes that control of the armed forces is automatically guaranteed by control of state power, how does he explain desertions, mutinies and military coups? What use was control of state power to the Kerenky regime in 1917 when its cavalry refused to cut down the insurrectionary workers of Moscow and Petrograd? What use was control of state power to the "democratically elected" Popular Front government of Spain in July 1936 when half of its troops sided with Franco's attempted coup?

Examples abound throughout history to prove that, to use an appropriate metaphor, the armed forces are not like a gun controlled by whoever has their finger on the trigger of state power. The SPGB believes that socialist ideas will spread throughout the working class, disregarding all 'barriers' of nation, race, sex, occupation etc. Why then should it expect these same ideas to halt at the barracks-room door? Which is the more realistic revolutionary strategy: to appeal, as Wildcat does, to our fellow workers in uniform to fraternise with the rest of our class and turn their guns against our common enemy? Or to expect, as the SPGB seems to do, that workers in uniform will forever blindly obey the orders of the ruling class and shoot down their class brothers and sisters who are holding out the prospect of a world free for ever from war and oppression?

The SPGB should apply Steve Coleman's litmus test of what constitutes a revolutionary organisation to itself, and ponder just how "serious" its strategy for the revolutionary transformation of society really is.

Yours for socialism,
Mark Shipway (a member of the Wildcat group)
(published in the Socialist Standard, April 1988)

REPLY TO MARK SHIPWAY (OF WILDCAT)

We have received this and another letter from a member of Wildcat complaining about our criticism of their pamphlet. We are pleased to read that Wildcat accepts that there can be no revolution without a majority of workers becoming conscious; why then are they so frightened of workers' support for socialism being tested electorally? Wildcat insists that "revolutionaries do not, under any circumstances, participate in...elections". If they accept that there can be no socialism without a socialist majority why do they state that "the revolution itself will inevitably be a bloody affair". It is not "inevitable" that a conscious, overwhelming majority of socialists will be resisted by force. And if such a majority is so threatened, the force required to deal with a recalcitrant minority would hardly constitute "a bloody affair". Opposition to all elections and the assumption that revolutionary violence is inevitable are both classical Leninist positions.

Wildcat's support for riots and other futile struggles can be criticised on two levels. Firstly, it is improper for people calling themselves revolutionaries to urge workers to offer themselves as sacrifices to the truncheons of the police - especially as we strongly suspect that Wildcat members, on a day-to-day level, are not so foolish as to engage in riots. How has rioting ever helped workers to "develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation"? How have they improved "people's immediate material conditions"? Secondly, by
associating the struggle for socialism with acts of frustrated violence, Wildcat adds to the general confusion about the meaning of socialist revolution. It is wrong to suggest that our review opposed workers taking strike action. The Socialist Party supports strikes in working class interests which are conducted on sound lines but, unlike Wildcat, denies that strikes are a means to revolution.

The Socialist Party cannot be accused of ignoring the class struggle as the motive force in history. Our attitude is stated in our Declaration of Principles, written in 1904 and still valid today. Of course we are aware that some workers may learn to change history by materially engaging in class struggle. That is a different matter from riots, which are perversions of the class struggle; frequently they involve no more than one section of the working class attacking another.

We agree that workers in the armed forces will not be impervious to socialist ideas at the time of the revolution. That is all the more reason why the revolution will not "inevitably be a bloody affair". We notice that in Issue 10 of Wildcat, under a report about 16,000 attacks on policemen in the last year, there is a caption saying "KILL THE BILL". Does Wildcat regard this also as a useful means of struggle in preparation for the socialist transformation of society? Is killing cops - or just injuring them - a way of showing them that they are fellow workers in uniform? Or is this not sloganising, dangerous if taken seriously?

SC
(published in the Socialist Standard, April 1988)

TO THE EDITORS, SOCIALIST STANDARD

Dear Editors,

I would be grateful if you would allow me to pursue some of the points raised in Steve Coleman's reply to my letter in the April Socialist Standard, concerning his review of the Wildcat pamphlet Capitalism and its Revolutionary Destruction in your December issue.

The original review suggested that Wildcat shared the Leninist view that "revolutionaries will be in a minority at the time of the revolution". In my letter I refuted this accusation. But Steve Coleman still tries to make the charge of Leninism stick, citing as 'evidence' this time Wildcat's "opposition to all elections". I suggest Steve Coleman reads Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder (1920), a pamphlet devoted to attacking the anti-parliamentarians of the day, in which Lenin repeatedly argued that "The Communists in Great Britain should constantly, unremittingly and undeviatingly utilize parliamentary elections" (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1975, p.103). Then perhaps we might be treated to no more nonsense about "opposition to all elections" being a "classical Leninist position".

Steve Coleman also returns to the question of revolutionary violence. If his original review of the Wildcat pamphlet had been a little more honest he would not need to be making such a fetish of this issue. The phrase he is so fond of quoting ("the revolution itself will inevitably be a bloody affair") is substantially qualified in the following paragraph which concludes: "The stronger, the better organised we [the working class] are, the less actual violence will be necessary". Is this not rather closer to the SPGB's own position than Steve Coleman makes out?

Steve Coleman calls riots "perversions of the class struggle". I wonder what justification he could offer for this peculiar statement? One would have to be very ignorant of working class history, and very unaware of what is happening in the
present-day class struggle around the world, not to recognise that riots have been part-and-parcel of the dispossessed class's protests against the effects of the capitalist system for as long as capitalism has existed.

Whether riots have "improved" people's immediate material conditions (which, incidentally, was not the claim I made) has depended solely on whether or not the working class people involved have been momentarily powerful enough to force their rulers to concede their demands. And one only has to listen to rioters' own accounts of their activities to realise that "collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation" are among the first things to develop in riots, whatever else they may or may not achieve in terms of more tangible results.

In my letter I argued that the probable spread of socialist ideas among workers in uniform undermines the SPGB's argument that the working class must gain control of the state so that the ruling class cannot use the armed power of the state to crush the revolutionary working class. Steve Coleman agrees with my premise; why then does he evade the conclusion?

Finally, as a point of information, I would like to enquire whether the SPGB, which regards members of the police and armed forces as fellow workers, can accept such individuals as fellow socialists? Is membership of the police or armed forces in itself an obstacle to joining the SPGB? And can a member of the SPGB voluntarily join the police or armed forces and still remain a party member?

Yours for socialism,
Mark Shipway

(This letter was not published by the SPGB, nor was any reply received. However, the following item did appear in a subsequent issue of the Socialist Standard.)

LENIN AND ELECTIONS

We did not mean to suggest in our reply to a letter in the April Socialist Standard that Lenin took up an anti-parliamentarianist position and was opposed to participation in elections. On the contrary, he was in favour of this as a way of trying to obtain reforms and urged workers in Britain to vote Labour, though he also argued that the minority vanguard party he advocated could never get to power by electoral means but only through violence.

The Editors
(Socialist Standard, June 1988)

Cont'd from p.17

REBEL WORKER; P.O. Box 92, Broadway 2007, Sydney, Australia; monthly paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, the Australian branch of the IWA; A-4, 16pp., subs--both Australian and overseas--$6 per year. The issues we have on hand are rather dated, April and May 1987, but that is our fault. RW is still being published, and in our next review we hope to have recent issues at hand. RW focuses directly on the labor movement with articles in these issues on the Australian labor movement, IWA/CNT news from abroad, the Australian Labor Party, and local news.

THE RED MENACE; BH Wild, London WC1 3XX, England; irregular, A-4, 4-8pp., free. Number 2, March 1989, and number 4, Sept./Oct 1989, contain articles on the Rushdie affair, public ed. in Britain, and a long review entitled "Debord's New Book," which discusses not only the book but also Debord himself and the Situationist movement in its past and present manifestations.

Cont'd on p.27
Dear Comrades,

In the first part of the reply from the now defunct "Wildcat" group to Steve Coleman's review of their pamphlet Capitalism and Its Revolutionary Destruction (DB 44), they touch on the precise meaning of their statement that "revolutionaries do not, under any circumstances, participate in parliament or elections".

Steve Coleman asked if this applied to participating in elections to workers' councils and other such bodies, only to be told that this was to be dishonest. This is unfair, since anyone aware of the arguments that have gone on amongst revolutionaries over participation or non-participation in parliamentary elections will know that some of the arguments used by some of the opponents of participation are directed at democratic elections as such: for instance that this is merely a counting of noses that takes no account of the intensity of the feelings recorded and so is a means of using the passive majority to hold back the active minority, or that what is going on is a choice of leaders who will inevitably betray the interests of the workers when they get elected.

If valid, these objections would apply to all elections, whether parliamentary or not, so it is a perfectly valid question to ask of opponents of participation in parliamentary elections whether they are opposed to participation in any elections. If they reply no (as the Wildcat reply does), then they are admitting that, under some circumstances, elections can work as/guiding opinion, selecting delegates and making decisions. But if this is the case, why could this not apply also, under given circumstances, to parliamentary elections? Which was precisely the point Steve Coleman was trying to make.

In laying down that "revolutionaries do not participate, under any circumstances, in parliament or (parliamentary) elections" the old Wildcat group was just being dogmatic since they couldn't produce any valid reason for never doing so under any circumstances.

Actually, in private they are not so dogmatic. I once had a conversation with a member of Wildcat who conceded that he could conceive of a circumstance in which revolutionaries might participate in a parliamentary election: if a majority within the workers councils decided that this should be done at some point during the last days of capitalism. And their hero, Guy Aldred, the self-styled "anti-parliamentary communist", not only believed in contesting parliamentary elections but actually did so on a number of occasion. (He interpreted "anti-parliamentary" as meaning opposition only to participating in parliament: revolutionaries should contest parliamentary elections but should not take their seats in parliament if elected --which is a point of view worth considering).

This issue of elections and democratic procedures in general in fact led to the demise of Wildcat as a group. When they split one group took up a frankly anti-democratic position on the same grounds that all anti-democrats (including the fascists) always have done: that this holds back active minorities, that it is not the best way of choosing people to fill posts, etc. To their credit, the others opposed this, insisting that both the socialist revolution and socialist society had to be democratic in the sense of enjoying majority support and of involving majority participation in decision-making.

Adam Buick, 40 Granville Gardens, London W5 3PA, GB.
Dear Frank,

Thanks for the SPGB pamphlet. Can't disagree with any of its contents. (Ecology and Socialism)

The material serves well as an overview of the aims and rationale of the SPGB, and, for the uninformed newcomer to the concept of class-consciousness it does have some merit. But I think it tries to cover too many areas of worker misunderstanding of this social system, and, coupled with its generalized description of a future socialist society, it loses its desired impact. To me, its greatest shortcoming is that its future society lacks structure. An amorphous suggestion for democratic organization contains only weak clues as to how this new system will be initially orchestrated.

I am not totally committed to the industrial union idea embedded in the DeLeon's works. However a new system is conceptualized by a growing number of class conscious workers, I tend to believe that it must emanate from a given set of circumstances, and these have already been described. The SIU proposal is the only idea around that deals with a democratic alternative to capitalism, and, to my knowledge, no one has come up with a better one. I don't know why the SPGB skirts around it.

Workers introduced to the possibility of socialism have every right to wonder, "How will this new system work?" According to the SPGB, the reply must be "Wait and see!" That's hardly the kind of promise that would commit one to the hard grind of social and political agitation. The SIU program is out there to be discussed, amended, revised, or even rejected and replaced with a new and better arrangement, should new conditions dictate.

To me, the greatest asset we carry in our class conscious baggage is the SIU program, particularly in the light of events in Eastern Europe which serve wonderfully the capitalist media in its "Failure of Socialism" headlines. It's not enough for us to discount the most recent "Failure of Socialism" barrages with the rejoinder, "Well, those countries were never socialist societies to begin with."

If we let it go at that we have failed to preserve the integrity of our pursuit, and we, by default, join all of the lefties who have nothing better to propose to our class than what precipitated the fold-up of Eastern Europe's "socialism." I think the most intelligent path we can take to refute those failed European systems is to contrast their political and economic structures with that of the SIU idea. It contains all of the arguments as to why "communism" failed and why "socialism" has every reason to succeed.

I understand the reluctance of many who don't want to be stuck to a program conceived in the early 1900's, but since
we are still straight-jacketed by the same social
relationships that sprung the SIU concept, it is not
sensible to deny its validity, if only as a point of
reference upon which to build a new and better program,
which, I'll repeat, I don't see happening.

Despite all of the above, I find the SPGB's criticisms
of capitalist society lively, and presented in a sharply
worded style that is uniquely English. Refreshing.

Thus Spake Petrovich, who always admired Zarathustra's
guts.

Fraternity, Walter Petrovich

De Leon And The Politics Of
American 'Impossibilism'

Daniel De Leon by Stephen
Colemen. Manchester
University Press. £25.00.

Daniel De Leon, the
American socialist, was a
victim of much of the
rancour that arises from
robust political argument.
De Leon was a man of
principle and stout charac-
ter, a man with the
knowledge and the courage
to defend himself against
his political foes. Sadly,
according to Coleman,
much of the anger he
aroused in his opponents
was reciprocated with
personal vilification against
De Leon, the man.

The book bestrides that
part of American history
from 1890 until 1914. The
author offers us an incisive
look at the Socialist Labour
Party and De Leon's
influence on that party. But it
is not only the political
parties, the labour unions,
including the 'Wobblies' and
the events of the period that
Coleman deals with. There
are the characters, made
shadowy to students on this
side of the Atlantic by time
and distance; Eugene
Debbs, Samuel Gompers
and many more, besides De
Leon himself, who were then
writing part of the history of
the American working class.

The author deals expertly
with the issue of 'possibilism'
and 'impossibilism' - the
latter a term of abuse from
the former that, like the word
'extremist' today, is aimed to
imply that there is no room
for rational debate. Today, in
both the west and the east,
as Labour and Social
Democratic Parties abandon
any pretext they ever offered
for abolishing capitalism
and introducing socialism
and 'communism' is revealed
to be a vicious concoction of
state capitalism and political
dictatorship, history, at least
in part, vindicates the
arguments of the 'impossib-
ilists'. In doing so, it might
not have proved that De Leon, and those who shared his vision of socialism were right, but it does prove conclusively that his enemies, those who argued that socialism could be introduced imperceptibly by reforms and state control of industry, were wrong.

Biographers often find a personal empathy with their subjects, only to the extent of 'explaining' their subject's more public foibles. Coleman's is a clinical examination and he has the benefit of history as hindsight. He concerns himself with De Leon the political animal. He offers the evidence of De Leon's enemies as to his weaknesses of character and, in most instances, he finds that evidence wanting. The man that does emerge is one who, had he served a more popular cause, would have had a much more prominent niche in history.

More convincing than the arguments of De Leon's enemies is Coleman's own submission that De Leon's substitution of 'labour time vouchers' for money would not achieve the abolition of the wages system. De Leon quite rightly saw the wages system as the kernel of working class exploitation; undoubtedly, like Marx, he looked forward to a society of totally free access but, again like Marx, he saw the regulation of consumption by a more equitable form of receipt for work done as a necessary prelude to free access. However, such a view may have been justified by the period of its currency it has now been inexorably invalidated by the staggering productive potential of modern capitalism.

The wageless, classless, society of common ownership and production for use, the pursuit of which earned De Leon, and, of course, the World Socialist Movement, the appellation 'impossibilist', has not yet been achieved. Unlike the reformists and the statist, however, it has not been tried. The 'impossibilists' did achieve political power but, cruelly, it was only to learn that they were the 'impossibilists'!

Daniel De Leon is an absorbing book and one that socialists and students of American history will want to read. The hardback, at £25, is expensive but we understand that a paperback version will soon be available at about £8.

--from Socialist View, 41 Donegall St., Belfast, N. Ireland

Proposal for a Green Transformation of the U.S. Economy (Don Fitz, April, 1990)

The economy is the social system for producing and consuming those things people need for survival and want for enrichment of their lives. Greens wish to create an economic system which is a source of fulfilling relationships between people and is in harmony with the environment.

Plans for improving the environment emphasize two strategies which reflect the two parts of an economy:

1. production; and,
2. consumption.

The overwhelming majority of environmental destruction occurs during the process of production, not consumption. Corporations use a focus on consumption (i.e., "recycle your beer cans") as a way to divert us from the real problem of production. Pollution is not fundamentally an INDIVIDUAL act which can be resolved individually. Occurring during production, the most serious environmental catastrophes are COLLECTIVE acts which require collection correction.

It is impossible to separate domination of the environment by people from the
Domination of people by people. Greens see transforming the social process of production as part of resolving environmental damage from production. We do not accept the idea that creating goods and services must be boring, authoritarian and destructive. Greens wish to create an economic system where:

1. the process of production
   a. involves labor which is intrinsically interesting.
   b. creates goods and services which are safe and socially useful, and
   c. encourages the growth of relationships between people working together.
2. the process of consumption
   a. provides what we need to improve the quality of our lives...
   b. to all people on the planet...
   c. without abusing the earth.

Immediate Changes in the Economy

A central goal of obtaining a Green congressional majority is to halt the destruction of the earth. In the economic realm, this means an immediate and thorough transformation of economic institutions by everyone who is a part of those institutions. The most meaningful change in structures comes from self-transformation. Forced change from outside government bodies should be a last resort. But Greens are not utopians -- we realize that elites which have been corrupted by a lifework of dominating others almost never surrender their power. The essential element of sexual and ethnic liberation is direct action by women and people of color to empower themselves. Empowering our own economic lives is similar: it should focus on direct action by all of us who labor to transform our worklives and create safe and useful goods and services.

The Permanent Workplace Forum

A Green electoral victory will begin of an unending process of reassessment of the way people create the material objects they need. Immediately upon becoming a political majority, Greens will ask every group of workers to participate in discussions of the reorganization of their branch of production. Roughly 10% of working hours should be set aside for these discussions, which means that those currently unemployed should be hired to fill the time spent on self-evaluation. There are five major tasks the Permanent Workplace Forum should undertake.

1. Each workforce should describe how production at their workplace is safe and unsafe, both to themselves and our entire society. They should develop their own plan to cope with problems they identify. This could vary from minor changes in techniques of production to elimination of their branch of industry. If they feel that the number of those employed in their branch of industry should be reduced, they should outline a plan which would cause the least disruption to those affected.

2. Each workforce should describe dominating relationships which exist at their workplace and develop a plan for empowering themselves. This would include asking questions such as the following:
   a. Does the workforce want a system of supervisors appointed by a power elite or should each workgroup select its own coordinator?
   b. Should management be chosen from an outside body such as a Board of Directors or should those who perform the labor select the group which
will coordinate it?

c. Should positions of power/authority such as coordinators/supervisors and managers be permanent or rotated after fixed periods of time?

d. Should people currently at the bottom of the hierarchy immediately receive different positions, or should they receive opportunities for training/education for more skilled tasks, or should there be redefinition of some or all jobs?

e. Since those at the top of power hierarchies have been denied opportunities to experience many aspects of human labor, workgroups should invite managers to share all activities which their workplace offers, including activities such as cleaning bathrooms, typing letters, working on assembly lines, or mining coal.

f. Is the pay differential fair, or should there be a more equitable distribution of material goods? (It would also be worthwhile for each workforce to ask if they should divide the wealth that their economic unit creates amongst themselves, or, if they feel that there are unfair world market relationships and that a portion of the wealth they enjoy should be redistributed to the third world.)

g. How can these transformations occur without lowering productivity?

3. Industrial Councils. Each workforce should select representatives to participate in industrial conferences of reorganization. The representatives will be responsible for (a) sharing experiences concerning their efforts at reorganization, and (b) bringing information about other attempts at reorganization to their own workplace.

4. Bioregional Councils. Each workplace should select representatives to participate in bioregional gatherings of economic reorganization. These gatherings will have the power to alter or end production which threatens the health and safety of inhabitants of the bioregion. They will have the responsibility to ensure that reorganization is for the good of the entire community and that no one is left without work or the necessities of life. Bioregional Councils will continuously examine the work done by each production unit to confirm that it is fairly divided according to the quantity of work. If inhabitants of the bioregion decide they wish to enjoy the results of dangerous or unhealthy labor, the Council will be responsible for ensuring that such labor is equitably rotated through members of the Bioregion.

5. Planetary Councils. When Greens become the Congressional majority in the U.S., members of the Green movement will invite their coworkers to implement Parts 1 - 4 (above). At the same time, Greens in Congress will ratify their actions and invite all other countries to participate in the creation of a Planetary Council which will have responsibilities and duties on a global level that the Bioregional Councils will have locally.

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SINews; 131 Spencer Place, Chapeltown, Leeds, England LS7 4DV; irregular (two or three times per year), A-4, 4pp., no price given. "SINews" is the publication of the Spanish Information Network. Number 14 contains a long letter from an English observer at the Eleventh Congress of the CNT (CNT) in December 1988. This letter and most of the rest of this issue deal with the confusing subject of Spanish syndicalism--or perhaps more accurately--Spanish syndicalist organizations. One gathers that the modest successes of syndicalism in...
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Spain run into the same problems of union leadership and betrayal that one finds in any capitalist union.

SOCIALISM FROM BELOW; Discussion Forum of the Anarchist Workers' Group, frequency unclear, 32 A-4 pages, no price given. SFB is the theoretical journal of the Anarchist Workers' Group (AWG) which "was formed in June 1988 following a split within the Direct Action Movement over the issue of building syndicalist unions in Britain."

"SFB seeks to combat the perception of anarchism as a 'counter cultural' rebellion at society's margins rather than a dynamic force within our class." Among the articles in Volume 1, Number 1, July 1989 (the only issue we have) is "Anarchism in the Thatcher Years," a six-page article which chronicles British anarchism during the Eighties from a point of view similar to that of Chas Bufe's. Other articles examine the poll tax, Northern Ireland, and rank-and-file unions in the social services.

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC; P.O. Box 80, New York, NY 10158; quarterly, 8 1/2 by 11, 26 pp., $3 for a 4-issue sub. Published by the Industrial Union Party. Articles in Number 34, Summer 1990, discuss the upsurge of racism and sexism in the U.S., the physical and psychological effects of capitalism's culture on children, and the effects of capitalist economics--as regards health care--on the employment of older people. Two well-written articles attempt to popularize Marxist economics: one on the process by which workers are exploited and the other on exchange value.

NOTICE

Discussion Bulletin readers interested in taking part in--or getting more information about--the Third Conference on Workers' Self-Organization to take place in the Midwest toward the end of June 1991 should write to Frank Girard, 4588 Richmond, iNW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504. The general topic is "Labor and the Environment."