With this issue, number 61, the Discussion Bulletin enters its eleventh year of publication. We have grown a bit over the years--thirty-two pages versus the twenty pages of the first issues. And although we still haven't solved our printing problem--how to get clear copies cheap--DB is now at least marginally more legible than it was ten years ago.

Ed Jahn's articles on the SLP constitution in recent issues brought
forth a set of responses on various aspects of the SLP. They begin this issue. The first in a detailed article by Ben Perry criticizing Ed Jahn’s assumptions and analyzing that venerable document, tracing its evolution over the past century. Next Ken Ellis describes his experience as a member and his conclusion about what he sees as a fraud by party leaders to advance the basic socialist industrial union program of the party. Ed Wizek’s open letter is written to Robert Bills the current national secretary of the SLP and the prime mover in the latest effort to purify it—this time by removing the editor of The People. Monroe Prussack discusses his experiences with the party. Through the kind offices of Laurens Otter we received a copy of a new Russian language anarchist journal and reprint the lead article, a general discussion by Mikhail Tsouka of the current state (Cont’d on p. 29)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It was designed to serve as the financially and politically independent forum of a little known sector of political thought. It places the great divide in the "left," not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism’s statist leftwing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. It is organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists.

The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism’s wage, market, and money system along with capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often fiercely antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation.

The pages of the DB are open to anyone in this political sector, the only limitations being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copier ready. We do no editing here. As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the DB and will avoid personal attacks.

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THE SLP CONSTITUTION, FACT AND FABLE

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6 July 1993

Whether D8 readers want to hear much more about Ed Jahn's hangups with the SLP's constitution is questionable. However, I choose to reply to his last letter for several reasons. 1. I am annoyed because he imputes to me "defensive anger" about his criticism of that party's constitution. 2. I am a self-appointed guardian of the truth regarding statements about the SLP. 3. One of my intended projects is an analysis of the SLP's constitutions and organizational problems from the beginning to the present. This may be a good place to start. (Anyone wanting the background to all the Jahn and anti-Jahn letters may read the last paragraph first.)

1. My annoyance includes the fact that Jahn ignored all the points made in my last letter. I recognize that it's none of my damn business, but I would be curious as to the genesis of his hangup. In D8 53 he says that in the 1960s he was dissuaded from joining the SLP after reading its constitution. However, what he told some of us around 1968 was that his disinclination was due to reading some of the party's national convention reports, a much more logical reason.

2. In his latest communication we find that Jahn has taken his own advice and read the (1991) SLP constitution, despite which he continues to be confused over cause and effect. He is correct in noting that the 1968 version (presumably the one he distantly recalls) had a provision for expelling members who circulate "lampoons" (supposedly scurrilous documents defaming the party—in reality, any opposition documents) and that this provision has been dropped. Regarding such expulsions, he does not note that the expulsion had to be carried out by the local section (we will ignore for simplification members at large) and could not be done by the national party as he earlier implied nor that the provision applied only to persons against whom a charge had been previously lodged. (The party once had an unenforceable advisory that anyone receiving a "lampoon" (they were not necessarily satirical as Jahn supposed) should return it or discard it unopened—something ignored by the national office itself since opposition documents can be found in the party's archives). His memory of the 1968 constitution is equally hazy in the matter of a provision "to expel people for writing to each other about Party policy..." which never existed. This reflects Jahn's tendency to idealistically assume that party practice derives from its constitutional superstructure.

He states that the present constitution "provides that SLP members do not vote on any important decision...national officers...party policy...[or] constitutional changes." This is completely false. All matters, important and otherwise, that deal with local activity are voted on by the members in local meetings in accord with Robert's Rules of Order. The highest body of the party is the national convention to which delegates
are elected proportionally according to section and at-large memberships. All constitutional changes, "resolutions and statements on policy...and/or theoretical questions," election of national officers, including the NEC, made by the convention must be submitted for a general vote "and shall not be effective until thus approved." (However, "[i]gitational and internal organizational decisions...[n]omination of national candidates...[and] decisions relating to the Party press and literature..." made by the convention are final.) Jahn simply gets around this by saying "conventions are extremely easy to manipulate..." and he guesses that "the real decisions are probably not made by the delegates, but by power brokers behind the scenes." In fact, current conventions are not so easily manipulated since they have to consider all resolutions originating from anywhere within the party including individual members, and the delegates are elected from the local sections. There is one delegate for every fifteen members. The real problem is not primarily the lack of formal democracy at all. It is the inability of the membership to take initiative based on years of relying on the continually reelected hierarchies to do all the thinking.

Jahn states that a member accused of wrong-doing cannot answer charges or provide evidence in his/her behalf, and here we have to wonder whether he has really read the new constitution either. On the contrary, the accused is present at the Grievance Committee which discusses charges and may present witnesses. There is no other evidence (except other witnesses). At the full section meeting, the accused may present his/her rebuttal for up to thirty minutes. (It is illuminating to note that charges against members on the local level have been thrown out on many occasions, but no accusation against a member by a national body has ever been rejected in modern times.)

Jahn implies that there is no right to know what is going on. Well, yes and no. On the section level, everything is pretty much right there. Even tediously so. I can recall long auditing committee meetings, poring over slips of paper recording pennies and nickels collected from newsstands. In New York, a collection taken up at a lecture would be turned over to an individual who was required to sign a receipt. The party's finances on the national level until very recent times have been audited by capitalist accounting firms and printed statements are issued to every member. What has been hidden from members is the salaries of officers. This seems to have started with Arnold Pettersen's reluctance to have his private life scrutinized and is now probably continued by the wish to keep national office staff members from comparing wages. Needless to say, the national office is not organized in a socialist industrial union but operates like any other top-down enterprise. Having said this, let me add that it is clear that all party employees seem to always have been rather poorly paid. Aside from finances, it certainly is true that much that transpires at the national level is withheld from the members or information is distorted. But it is hard to see how the constitution could be improved in this respect. It already has provisions for recalling its officers that the membership does not choose to use (and which control of the apparatus by the officers would make difficult in any case).
Jahn implies that there are constitutional impediments to free speech. There are none, but in practice the inhibition against criticizing the powers that be is most pronounced. Jahn seems to imply that some appended Bill of Rights would rectify this.

It is not true that members may not attend NEC sessions. He quotes: "All meetings of the NEC shall be held in executive session..." and then omits the concluding "...and only members in good standing may attend." NEC sessions are always open to members and I have attended several myself. Members are forbidden to tape record national conventions and NEC sessions, but this is based on ad hoc rulings having no basis in the Constitution. (I recall being looked at askance for taking detailed notes at one session.)

Under "A Multi-Stage Filter," Jahn refers to the appeal process regarding expulsions and suspensions as if it represented a series of barriers to an accused. Actually, to legally expel a member, a) someone must file a written grievance, b) the section must decide that it is non-frivolous and refer it to the grievance committee, c) the committee must examine the evidence and recommenddisciplinary action, d) the section must meet and hear the evidence, and e) if appealed, the NEC or convention must uphold the appeal. Or, if the section turns down the grievance committee, the NEC can be appealed to (only by the original accuser(s)) but, in this case, the section can appeal for acquittal directly to the national convention. In theory, this process clearly and obviously favors the accused. Actually, going beyond the section level rarely has occurred in recent times. Usually, the national secretary through a compliant NEC demands that a section expel a recalcitrant member and, not infrequently, an uncooperative section is itself expelled and "reorganized" without its majority. (Parenthetically, this Byzantine process is actually a simplification of the 19th-century procedures which involved several local and a state layers of jurisdictions. Being a political party, this emulation of the bourgeois juridical system is not accidental.)

Jahn quotes the constitutional provision mandating the NEC to meet once every two years, and from this he deduces that the NEC must be a rubber stamp. However, he suppresses the following: "The NEC can meet in special session upon motion made by any NEC member, without the need for a second...such motion or recommendation to be promptly submitted to the entire NEC for action." How often a not well funded body whose members live around the country could practically meet he does not tell us. It also does not seem to occur to him that the NEC can (and does) operate by mail and telephone. Whether or not it is a rubber stamp is purely a matter of conjecture on his part.

A little history here: In the old old days the "seat" (city) of the NEC was chosen at the national convention. The members in that city chose the NEC and it met monthly or more often and conducted business with the national secretary who generally had no vote. The relative influence of the NEC and full-time national office staffers cannot be easily generalized. The staffers
always have an advantage. However, as late as 1907 De Leon barely survived an NEC vote. Early this century, the NEC became a national body consisting of regional representatives. The NEC elected a Sub-Committee consisting of members living near the national office. The Sub-Committee had virtually all NEC authority between NEC sessions. During all except the start of Arnold Petersen’s long reign (1914–1969) the NEC was a complete rubberstamp. Little is known about the actual functioning of the S-C although abbreviated minutes were published—it clearly made a lot of decisions but was obviously dominated by Petersen.

Shortly after Nathan Karp became national secretary, the bankruptcy of the NEC was so evident that most of the old members were encouraged to quit, and it began to show some independent initiative. By 1980, in Girard’s and my opinion, it had showed so much independence that it was replaced by a local NEC whose members lived in the national office area and, despite the reservations of some, many of whose members worked in the national office. In 1981, why I do not know, the party returned to the old national NEC scheme. Despite Jahn’s confident assumptions based on no knowledge whatever, this NEC did not consist of 100% rubberstampers. The national secretary’s recent successful effort to railroad the editor out his job was upheld by only a single NEC vote. (The national convention supported this unconstitutional action by a wider margin, and the national referendum did so overwhelmingly—in other words, the closer you got to the SLP rank and file, the greater the support for the autocratic action taken.)

3. This is not the place to make a full scale analysis of what makes the SLP work the way it does. However, permit me to make some observations which unlike Jahn’s are based on considerable knowledge and observation of the SLP. In my opinion, no centralized institution which has perks (like full-time employment), can prevent the development of an undemocratic hierarchy. Its goal of a democratic society will invariably be insufficient to counteract the rise of individuals whose thinking is dominated by prevalent class concepts of how to get things done. The rank and file will continually be divided into three groups: those who think that the organization is as democratic as the hierarch suggests, those who suspect it isn’t but pragmatically concentrate on party work, and a disaffected minority who will soon quit or get thrown out. In the process of time, many pass from the first category to the second and maybe to the third. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to dislodge the hierarchs because the great majority of the would-be dislodgers are gone and dispersed.

Jahn was surprised to see how many revisions of the SLP constitution there have been in twenty-three years. Actually, every convention (I don’t know about the 1993) since the 1904, when the modern constitution was adopted, has revised the party constitution. Indeed, I believe, although I have not yet checked, that every SLP convention since the first in 1876 has done so. There is a reason for this and it reminds me of Castoriadis’s observation that the ruling class is always faced with the contradictory tasks of trying to completely dominate the workers and simultaneously having to encourage their initiative in order to maintain acceptable production. The SLP hierarchs (and maybe even some of the rank and file) find it necessary to continually tinker with
the formal mechanism to prevent what are seen as hindrances to smooth operation but at the same time maintain the needed participation. The general tendency is to put in more and more restrictions, but then the time comes when it is realized that the old system isn't working and various reforms are introduced. We are currently in a reform cycle (e.g., unnoticed by Jahn, the modern constitution mandates a secret ballot.)

The SLP constitution is not especially good or bad; it reflects years of compromise by legalistically inclined persons trying to make functional a centralized revolutionary organization. The problem, of course, is the dichotomy between SLP practice and formal organizational procedures. Within constitutional guidelines, the national secretaries (and others) have molded opinion by controlling the internal means of communication, by reporting controversies in a slanted manner, by relying on traditional extra-constitutional practices (such as defining "unorganization-al" behavior), and, in recent years, by pointing to the delicate condition of the party and the lack of alternative leaders and courses of action. Outside the constitution, the national secretary and confidants simply ignore the letter of the law or reinterptet it in their own interest. For example, Frank Girard was illegally expelled by a national convention rather than by his section. Richard Whitney, national editor, was recently suspend-ed by the NEC on the grounds that his disclosure of intention not to accept renomination and his statement that the party is in serious, probably irreparable, decline constituted proof that he was "incompetent or disloyal." (He also was not permitted to meet with the NEC in defiance of a constitutional provision.) No constitutional deficiencies in these cases.

An interesting "check and balance" of the nineteenth century SLP constitution was the board of supervisors. This board, sited in a city other than the NEC and national office, had only judicial powers. But it could overrule NEC decisions, and its actions were reviewable only by the national convention. Predictably (in hindsight, at least), the result was contention between two major forces with the greater power lying with the NEC which had the advantage of control of the party press and other means of communication with party members. The board was abolished at the turn of the century.

Jahn's comparison of the SLP constitution with that of the Soviet Union is apt but not in the way that he intends. The Soviet constitution was considered by experts (I'm not one of them) as among the most democratic in the world. For example, all of the constituent republics were guaranteed individual sovereignty "limited only in certain spheres." They could legally have their own foreign and defense ministers and "the right freely to secede from the U.S.S.R...." A Stalinist once told me that the constitution guaranteed opposition groups access to printing presses and I can well believe that was true. However, most of the world, Jahn evidently excepted, recognizes that the undemocratic actions of such organizations does not imply faulty organizational structures but rather the ignoring of these democratic facades. It is a liberal fallacy that freedom and progress can be the result of the formalization of representative structures rather than through de facto control by a conscious rank and file which
eschews centralization.

By chance I happened to notice a copy of the IWW constitution dated 1968 lying around. I found it quite instructive for its strong resemblance to the SLP constitution. This is unlikely to be coincidental. For one thing, the present SLP constitution despite continuous revision still surprisingly resembles the original 1904 version. The IWW constitution with revisions dates back to 1905 when the IWW was organized with the considerable help of SLP members. It is unlikely that one was copied from the other. Rather, they probably are both based on earlier concepts by labor organizations of how democratic groups should be set up, and these in turn were copied from similar efforts by various radical and reform societies strongly influenced by bourgeois parliamentary procedure.

The first impression one gains from the 1968 IWW constitution is various quaint anachronisms such as its provisions for Industrial Departments with more than 20,000 members, the General Secretary being the "custodian of the seal" and the anti-intoxication and bootlegging provisions. (The anti-dynamite provision that I thought was there wasn't.) On the plus side is the availability of the referendum for many actions. As in the SLP, national officers are recallable this way, but the IWW permits (I assume the current version is similar) resolutions to be introduced by the rank and file between conventions. Very creditable also is the IWW's attempt to limit the number of terms that national officers may serve.

Like the SLP's NEC, the General Executive Board of the IWW meets whenever it wishes. The difference seems to be that the GEB implicitly must be drawn from the area where the GHQ sits—at least there is no provision for GEB member travel expenses. Delegates to either national convention have their expenses paid, but the SLP makes the national organization pay while the IWW specifically provides for payment of lost wages (perhaps the IWW provision limiting the length of conventions to ten days is an attempt to reduce financial burdens on local branches and delegates). SLP conventions are held every two years at a time and place determined by the preceding convention. IWW conventions are held whenever the membership determines but must begin on the second Monday in September and must meet where the GHQ sits (which could make toppling a bureaucracy more difficult). SLP conventions now must consider resolutions coming from anywhere within the party including individual members. The IWW specifically forbids consideration of resolutions from individuals.

Both organizations call for national observation of the local groups to some extent. SLP sections must notify the national office of changes in membership, election of officers, etc. IWW branch secretaries are required to furnish meeting minutes and financial information to the general secretary every month.

Any fifteen IWW members may initiate a referendum which seems to permit, at least unofficially, caucuses and tendencies. The IWW
constitution has elaborate provisions for ballot committees to inhibit hanky-panky. The SLP has always (as I recall) published the results of balloting by giving section by section breakdowns, but there is no requirement that this be done and an ever-increasing percentage of the membership belongs to no section.

The manner in which malevolent members are handled is remarkably similar in both organizations as to trial and appeal procedures. SLP branches have a standing grievance committee while the IWW branches elect ad hoc charges committees. Before the SLP abolished state executive committees, these SBCs were similar to the IWW's Industrial Unions, an intermediate layer of organization ("bureaucracy"?) between the local and national structures. SLP appeals of disciplinary actions may now go right to the top whereas in the IWW constitution they go through the IU first. At least one type of lampoon seems to be impermissible in the IWW: The circulation of charges by one member against another which are not "substantiated by charges filed according to these provisions...shall be grounds for expulsion..."

The IWW constitution does not specify Robert's Rules of Order but there are two pages of concentrated text on parliamentary procedure. The SLP mandates that the local section meetings take up certain items of business but no longer dictates the order. The IWW publishes an "Order of Business," but not under an article number and it is unclear if this order is discretionary.

Perhaps I may be pardoned if I doubt that there are any important differences in the amount of democracy in the SLP and IWW constitutions. My guess is that if the IWW is run more democratically it is because of anarchist concepts of autonomy and a willingness to ignore constitutional niceties. Since it is my impression that Jahn belonged to the IWW around 1968, it would be interesting to know what he thought about its constitution. (It would be interesting in any case. DeLeonist and IWW ideologues are also invited to comment.

Background

DB 51 (Jan-Feb 1992) reprinted a letter of mine to Socialist Standard pointing out that they inaccurately implied that the SLP national secretary and National Executive Committee have the right to expel individual members who belong to sections. In DB 53 Jahn, who had not seen an SLP constitution in over twenty years, stated that the "SLP has the most thoroughly, consistently, completely anti-democratic constitution..." he had ever read, and that I evidently don't know what democracy is because I prefer that expulsion be by one's local group rather than by national hierarchies. DB 54 and 55 had rather naive letters from former member Ken Kelly defending the constitution and the SLP. Also in DB 55 is a) a reply by Jahn to Kelly, b) a missive by me complaining about Jahn's attack against me and correcting a few errors of his, and c) a letter from Frank Girard who pointed in the right direction for an explanation of the SLP's behavior. Jahn's latest contribution brings us up to date.
Dear DB,

I would like to express general agreement with the insights into matters of democracy and their absence in the S.L.P. and its Constitution, as Ed Jahn has expressed in a number of past issues.

While an employee at the National Office of the Party in the mid-1970s, I became aware of what turned out to be gross fraud perpetrated by Arnold Petersen on the Party and the working class in a number of his writings, but was prevented from bringing these examples of said fraud to the consciousness of the Party as a whole, precisely because the S.L.P., as Ed Jahn described, does not recognize inalienable individual rights, but rather recognizes the bourgeois right of the majority to prevent an individual from bringing up important matters to the attention of the Party, just as my analysis of A.P.'s Preface to Engels' "Socialism: From Utopia to Science" was prevented from being presented to my Section. Shortly thereafter, I left the N.O. and the Party in April of 1977.

In A.P.'s preface, he alleged that Engels did not know the difference between socialism and state capitalism(!), in spite of proof within the very text of Engels' pamphlet that he was critical of state capitalism; A.P. substituted the Social-Democratic theory of the state for the Marxist theory, and then proceeded to criticize the Social-Democratic theory, all the while casting aspersion on the 'Marxist' theory; A.P. denied the possibility of working class state power, all the while pretending that Marx and Engels intended that the working class would use the capitalist state for the tasks of socialist reconstruction (due to alleged deficiencies within the Marxist theory of the state); A.P. took quotes from Marx, Engels and Lenin completely out of context, butchered them, and failed to attribute quotes to their real sources; A.P. alleged that the anarchists would abolish the state with nothing to take its place, while it is easily documented that Bakunin would have replaced the state with associations of workers' organizations, the trades unions, or the International; A.P. everywhere denied the two stage theory of communism, opposing the theories laid down by Marx in his "Critique of the Gotha Program"; A.P. claimed instead that society in the advanced capitalist countries could proceed directly to classless, stateless communism, bypassing the dictatorship of the proletariat. A.P. denied everywhere the Marxist theory that it was the existence of a democratic republic in the advanced capitalist countries that enabled a peaceful revolution, A.P. claiming instead that it was the advances in the means of production that enabled a form to be envisioned in which the working class could organize so as to bring about the classless, stateless S.I.U.

As for the dictatorship of the proletariat, A.P. denied the worker-peasant alliance by alleging that the d.o.t.p. was a
dictatorship over the peasantry, and then observing that since the peasantry in the U.S.A. was a small and shrinking class, the d.o.t.p. (over the peasantry) would not be necessary here. Similarly, A.P. alleged that the purpose of the d.o.t.p. transition period was to 'increase the productive forces', and since the productive forces were supposedly super-developed in the U.S.A., as compared to 'conditions' in the last century or in Russia, then no d.o.t.p. transition period would be necessary here, in spite of the fact that Marx had written that it was precisely because of the under-development of the means of production in the 1800's, crises of over-production were occurring in his own time, and for that reason, socialism was possible at that very time.

All of these crimes and many more were committed by A.P., and the way he was able to perpetrate those crimes was by expelling one rebellious Section after another, and then reorganizing those members who wished to remain within the Party. Being insulated in the top position in the bureaucracy, he was able to perpetuate the purity of the S.I.U. program with little fear of being pulled down by the truth. My experience with other 'progressives' since my S.L.P. experience has revealed that the same indispensable elements to perpetrating crimes of fraud against the poor and oppressed are concealed anarchist ideology, bureaucratic forms of organization, and censorship.

The anarchist take-over of the S.L.P. in 1889, how my ideas on revolution were formed for the first time and how they evolved during my experience with the S.L.P. in the 70's, and lots more have been documented in the 400-page book I have been writing for the past year and a half, hopefully to be available within a year.

Ken Ellis / P.O. Box 5632 / Berkeley, Ca. 94705-0832
OPEN LETTER TO:
ROBERT BILLS
NATIONAL SECRETARY
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

FROM: EDWARD WIZEK
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LA PUENTE, CA 91744
AUGUST 4, 1993

The SLP is one of several organizations claiming to represent the interests of the working class. The real question is: are you as a party, willing to subject your conduct to scrutiny of that class; are you accountable to that class whose interests you claim to favor. Accordingly, how you treat your own working class members is a fair subject for examination by that class.

You recently fired the elected editor of the People after he had devoted 15 years of service to the party. You charged him with "incompetence" (just 2 months before his term was up) without any proof and after he notified he would not seek another term.

When you initiated action against him, you cited no evidence of any incompetence in his editing the People. After all, the competence of an editor is judged, in print. You fired him, without notice, without concern that he is a worker with a family, and you fired him without just cause.

At that point, you made yourself and the SLP liable for claims before the California State Labor Board. You did violate the rights of an employee who was under contract. This is a glaring violation even by normally lax Capitalist standards. Fortunately, the former editor had more character in dropping the matter than you had in pursuing it.

Your action was calloused as any Capitalist manager who claims a firing was for the good of the corporation, or in this instance, the good of the party. After you fired him, you continued to lambaste his character in writing, slandering by stockpiling mountains of irrelevant "evidence" to prove that he was even "disloyal" to the party.

Under the circumstances and to the fired editor's credit, there is a limit to which a principled and dedicated person will submit—even in service to a party whose program he supported. When he resigned from the party you even claimed this as a victory to prove your contention that he was "disloyal" and "unworthy". What this actually proved is that your capacity to denigrate members and depopulate the party has not diminished over the years.

You claimed a constitutional duty to "protect the party". by firing the editor without just cause. With protectors such as you, the working class doesn't 't need enemies, especially the SLP working class members who elected you to office.
As National Secretary, you head the body of executive power within the Socialist Labor Party and must accept responsibility for use of that power. That power is an anti-working class force within the SLP. You have used that power to get rid of any and all opposition from your working class members. To do this you need support from the "loyal" members and you get it by making it appear that an attack upon your power (or exercise of that power) is an attack on the party and its principles. Labor Leaders use similar tactics to get rid of opposition and secure their control.

A case in point is the recent SLP National Convention. When I learned of your assault on the elected editor of the People, I issued a statement defending his rights as member and fellow worker. In it I appealed for the convention delegates to take charge of this matter.

Problem is, the SLP has a closed convention—only "executive approved" documents may go to the delegates. So I had the hotel desk clerk distribute my statement to some of the delegates at their rooms. You and the convention resolution called this a "sneak attack" on the SLP. If your closed convention is not sneaky, then the tactics required to breach it are on a par.

My statement was not an attack on the SLP—but upon the anti-working class power structure which dominates and which you head. The gist of the statement is contained in its preface.

* * * * *

"It is my contention that unless the membership takes democratic control of the SLP, it will have no credibility asking the workers to take over the industries or their unions. I have read the 4/12/93 NEC Statement to suspend the Editor and do make it my business to oppose and expose rampant use of executive power which supplants membership control and will continue to destroy the party." Ed. Wizek 4/30/93

* * * * *

In your May 19, 1993 letter to: "the Sections and Members of the SLP" you lied about my statement in your two sentence reference. You took two of my quoted sentences out of context to make them seem to contradict one another. Anyone reading my statement can see the intentional falsehood.

Worse than this is your deception by innuendo. There was another unsigned statement distributed to delegates by someone else. By innuendo, you implied I had something to do with this other statement from which you quoted extensively and which you classified a lampoon. Anyone reading my statement could see your deception, but you don't plan for members to read it. My statement was not a
lampoon—it was a reasoned appeal for the delegates to accept responsibility for handling their elected editor.

Your letter failed to address the logic of my statement so you resorted to demeaning reference (name calling)—an attempt to destroy my credibility and to deter anyone from seeking and reading my statement. Samples from your letter:

"wizened veteran of sneak attacks on the SLP, Edward Wizek"
"an enemy who made a vicious attack on our Party"

Most revealing is the convention resolution against me which originated with NEC member Sid Fink and was amply supported by those in executive power. Nowhere does it refer to or contest the content of my statement which it calls "a tissue of lies, distortions and malicious misrepresentations". Nothing in my statement fits these false assertions.

The concluding paragraph warns and binds the entire membership of the party to treat me as an enemy.

"I therefore move that the convention adopt this brief statement as an expression of anger and resentment at Wizek's despicable conduct and his renewed attempt to damage the SLP; and as an expression of contempt for the cowardly and sneaky manner in which those lampoons were circulated; and finally, that a copy of this statement be sent to the sections and members of the SLP for their information and future guidance."  SID FINK

"The delegates greeted this statement with a round of enthusiastic applause, then adopted it by an overwhelming show of hands."

Quoted from National Secretary 5/19/93 Report

How sad. They applauded away their own rights. A once proud workingman's party warns its members to give up their American rights to speak, write or associate with whom they please.

Under this resolution, members are not to talk with, write to or in any way associate with Edward Wizek because the convention, (prodded by those in executive power), passed a resolution labeling him an enemy of the party. Under the SLP Constitution, this convention resolution has the force of law and any member in violation of it will be expelled from the party.

The SLP executive structure got its way at the Convention. Still you are not satisfied. Your are now chastising or demanding "explanations" of those who.
greeted me, or sat at the banquet table with me and that includes my wife and some of my best friends—all members of the SLP. You have created an enemy list and now are listing associates! This executive power which you represent is anti-working class.

You want to intimidate into silence all opposition so you have a free hand to decide "the best interests of the party" which means "the best interests for yourself to be free of opposition". Over the years you have been successful in silencing all opposition—through expulsions, forced resignations, charges of "conspiracy" and "disruption" to get rid of all who would criticize or challenge your power. And you got me out of the party 10 years ago through a minority report and not even allowing me to attend my own trial.

**MY BACKGROUND AND INTEREST IN THIS MATTER**

My father joined the Socialist Labor Party 80 years ago and I joined it 50 years ago. Our family dedicated our lives to furthering the interests of the working class through the party. We worked hard to educate workers and did build the party membership—but those with executive power destroyed the party faster than we could build.

Once I saw the nature of executive power and how it is used against the members, I opposed it. Those with executive power do not tolerate opposition. Now, from outside the party, I continue to oppose that executive power.

By its actions and record of membership abuse, this executive power structure is an anti-working class force which dominates the SLP. The way you treat your worker members is an indication of how you would treat the working class at large. Until this power is dismantled by the membership, support of the SLP is not in the interests of the working class. The life work of my father, myself and our family has been betrayed.

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Dear readers,

When Ed Jahn compares the present and past constitutions of the Socialist Labor Party with the American constitution and the constitution of the Soviet Union it is like comparing oranges and apples. It should be considered that the SLP is a political party while the United States and the Soviet Union are sovereign countries. The capitalist nature of the United States provides for competition including competition among political parties and political ideas. Consistent with its belief that it had socialism the Russian constitution emphasized cooperation rather than competition. In the United States political parties are accepted to determine what is best. The Soviet Union recognized one party because the best already existed and administration was the only requirement. The purpose of the SLP was to educate for the Socialist revolution with a unified party. When I was a member I was.
satisfied that the SLP fulfilled its purpose and that critics most often were drags on the organization.

I became a critic of the SLP because its educational message was not reaching the masses. It was not handling the clarification of the USSR decisively so as to conclude that it had industrial feudalism. All along the SLP tried to be acceptable to people who approved or disapproved of the USSR. Books that took strong issue with USSR were judged to be reactionary and ignored while books that were more lenient to that inhuman monstrosity were reviewed. Enemies of the SLP attacked it most effectively as being of the nature of the USSR and the SLP was not strong enough in defense of its identity.

Now my opinion is that the SLP usurps its role as a political party. Marx and DeLeon wrote that a socialist party requires an existing large militant labor movement that makes the potential power of organized labor apparent. In 1849 the Communist Manifesto stated that the revolution is pending because of the capitalist crisis in Europe. It did not provide for a peaceful revolution because social progress was limited. Now we have political parties and more freedom as well as a world capitalist crisis but revolution is not even mentioned. It is time for Marxists to rethink their tactics of political activity. Karl Marx did not belong to any political party but he was an active socialist consistently. Without the burning desire of labor to organize to resist the encroachments of the capitalist class, a party of labor is a sure loser. When Marxists are actively active they become enemies of those who differ politically. Our vital educational message is resisted and misrepresented and socialist parties can show no gains.

For us freedom in this country gives us the right to make fools of ourselves. When DeLeon was active in labor politics it was his intention to win along with a revolutionary labor movement. Since his time the SLP regarded education as justification for political action with no gain for the ego to be a repeated loser.

Of course we Marxists work for the good of all. We regard Socialism as being for the good of ourselves as well as others. For us to establish Socialism symbolizes the victory of the working class against class rule. The business slump makes the capitalist class uneasy. For Marxists to achieve confidence in final victory we must not again enter a political contest again as socialists till we are sure of victory. For labor to rebel at the work place is positive for the revolution but when a party of labor loses it enables our enemies to say that the people do not want socialism.

Naturally yours,
Morris Mischak
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FURTHER DESACRALIZATION OF RUSSIAN ANARCHISTS
By Mikhail Tsivin

The beginning of 1993 didn't bring any significant changes in the anarchist movement of the former USSR. The majority of anarchist groups seem to stay at the margins of social and political life, unable to propose any significant alternatives. The groups that were created by dozens last year have tended to disintegrate, the number of the participants in anarchist groups stabilized approximately at the level of 1989 when the first country-wide anarchist federation (KAS) was created. Today the movement is still split in spite of all the talks of cooperation between different tendencies. In major cities like Moscow, anarchists can enjoy the luxury to create 5 groups out of four people, but in the "provinces" the number of activists is usually not more than ten people.

As in 1992 this year has seen the feverish activity of the federation of Revolutionary Anarchists (FRAN) - its pickets, leftist meetings and organizational attempts. Created in 1992 as a federation of libertarian communist groups FRAN now has activists in half a dozen towns in Russia, Byelorussia and Ukraine. The usual practice of its local groups is cooperation with various Trotskyist and Communist sects (usually the most "revolutionary" ones). On November 7 last year they even organized a demonstration to commemorate the anniversary of the Bolshevik coup d'etat (which they consider to have been an anti-capitalist revolution). The poster which advertised the demo was signed by IREAN (Moscow group of FRAN) and two Trotskyist groups (each one consisting of one-to-two members only). During the demo the flags of the Fourth International and CNT-AIT and wildcat symbols were put together. After their own march through the streets of Moscow they went to the Stalinist demonstration - an odd place to try to recruit members for an anarchist group, huh?

Another organizational activity of FRAN is the attempt to create a union which will be the Russian section of the International Workers Association. During last year's East-West syndicalist conference in Berlin, IREAN was made the publisher of the East European bulletin "Friends of IWA". Two issues have been published already (in Russian) and the tendency is quite clear - Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (KAS) is in fact cut off from this bulletin.

It is characteristic that the decision to become an IWA section preceded the creation of the union - very few of the FRAN activists previously made syndicalist propaganda or tried to organize independent unions. Obviously, the attempt to become the Russian section of the International is a great motivation in itself as it gives those people seeking high esteem the requisite status.

At the same time the eldest and still the biggest anarcho-syndicalist federation in Russia - KAS - declared (in May 1991) that it does not yet seek affiliation to any specific international tendency, though it is open to cooperation with various anarchist and syndicalist groups. To this point the results are not so great, but still they are much more real than the claims of FRAN. (See attached information: "Trade unions and workers movement" and "Privatization" in this issue.)

Another field of activity which attracts activists from different anarchist groups is ecology. Every summer this or that source of pollution (nuclear power plant, chemical or other heavy industry enterprise) becomes the target of anarchists and radical ecologists. This year two campaigns will be organized - one against the storage of nuclear wastes in Siberia and the other against a metallurgical plant in Cherepovets. (See "Environment/Nuclear"). Thus there's a lot left to be desired in the efficiency and organization of these actions, they at least have the potential to unite the libertarian viewpoint and popular protest movements.

Recently some groups revived their publications. Thus at the end of 1992 Moscow anarcho-syndicalists relaunched the "Obshchina" magazine, and anarchists of Irkuk and Kemerovo also think about launching new anarchist papers. Small publications oriented mainly to other anarchists also seem to develop a little. This is a good sign as for
quite a long time the anarchist press was constantly collapsing. Still we have to see whether these publications will become regular. There is reason for hope.

It is necessary to mention also that quite a number of groups declaring themselves "anarchists" do a good job of discrediting the anarchist movement in general. Thus at the end of last year at the Congress of the Association of Anarchist Movements (ADA) a group was created which is called the "Association of Anarchist Movements (Marxist-Leninist)", No comments about this group, but it's worth mentioning that a lot of people tend to equate anarchism with various foreign Marxist-Leninist guerrillas. Anarchist news bulletins constantly inform that this or that "anarchist" group made a protest to support the RAF, Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), the IRA, Basque terrorists or Red Brigades (Moscow IREAN is particularly notorious for this kind of action, and its activist from Murmansk even joined the Turkish Communist party when on a shopping tour in that country).

The liberal wing of the anarchist movement also seems to be quite confused about anarchist theory. Thus at the end of last year the Saint-Petersburg Anarchico-Democratic Union (!) declared its support for the governmental course of reforms, stating that anarchists shouldn't be so critical about Gaidar's monetary policy. Two other Moscow based libertarian capitalist "anarchist" groups - the Moscow Union of Anarchists and the Union of Anarcho-Universalists - merely degenerated into commercial distribution enterprises. The leader of the Moscow Union of Anarchists, Alexander Chervyakov, even started to publish an advertising paper which is full of ads featuring "pretty girls for wealthy businessmen".

Yes, the conclusion is obvious. The Russian anarchist movement is in a terrible state and a lot needs to be done before the anarchists can present a real alternative to the present destructive developments in Russia and the other former Soviet republics. One of the tasks will be a more clear definition of what anarchist ideas are and how they can be implemented in the here and now. Surely this process won't lead to the creation of the "united anarchism" that some people dream about, but it will help the activists of different groups to try out their ideas. At this point the anarchist press both here and abroad is filled with short sloganistic manifestoes which stand in for serious analysis and careful programme. Today the programme of KAS, which was adopted in 1989 and is devoted mainly to the analysis of the Soviet regime, remains the only such consistent attempt to put forward a libertarian socialist program.

The realities of a "free market" Third World capitalism are still waiting
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July 12, 1993

Dear DISCUSSION BULLETIN:

This is a report on the first year of my involvement in the computer networks.

In June of 1992 I established a paperless "magazine" which is distributed by electronic mail (e-mail), and through computer bulletin board services (BBBS). I called the new journal ORGANIZED THOUGHTS. I focused on the sort of movement which the DISCUSSION BULLETIN has termed "libertarian socialist", that is, those who reject the reformist and statist concepts of socialism, and strive for a classless society, economic democracy, through the conscious organization of the working class.

I am personally partial to the De Leonist interpretation of Marxism. While other concepts of socialism are welcome in O.T., I usually highlight their differences with De Leon's dual political/industrial program. For example, I have promoted dialogue and debate between syndicalists, who believe that an industrial union is essential and a political movement secondary, and the World Socialists, who believe that a political strategy is essential and unionism secondary. Even though we have big disagreements, I think we're beginning to understand each other better, which can't hurt.

In the first year O.T. distribution has grown to a couple hundred subscribers. This number refers to the direct distribution. There are also an unknown number of additional readers who retrieve O.T. by themselves from BBBS, or from the electronic archive of political documents at the University of Michigan, which now stores all the back issues. The Michigan site has been provided because of the efforts of the archivist, Paul Southworth, to make this service available to many social causes and movements which would otherwise have no such opportunity.

The project has grown in yet another dimension. It began as merely a subscription-based magazine, but is now an actual network with the ability to function daily as a world-wide discussion group. I named the newer forum 1-UNION, indicating my expectation that the "One Big Union" idea would be a major item to be debated. ORGANIZED THOUGHTS now continues as an irregularly-provided magazine, while 1-UNION operates as a more instantaneous discussion forum.

1-UNION is functional because Edward Elhaue, who is with the International Workers Association (IWA), happens to own a host computer on the Internet. The Internet is the interconnection of all e-mail networks, which enables the approximately 16 million e-mail users throughout the world to write to one another. For a while, the University of Vermont was providing our Internet connection, but the university required this to end when our student sponsor departed for a summer vacation. At that point, Edward stepped in and made the transition a smooth one.

Several working class organizations have shown support for this electronic project. The Industrial Union Party (IUP) has expended considerable energy and expense in using its own mailing list to advertise my activities. The newspapers of the New Union Party (NUP) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) have published my articles appealing for participation. The NUP gave me a financial contribution, which I used for e-mail and postage stamps. When the De Leonist Society saw O.T. issue #1, they judged that my description of the political/industrial strategy question was presented fairly, and they sent me a large collection of their literature, that I might make free use of it.

Mike Ballard of the IWW has been a consistent contributor of articles and valuable suggestions from the very first week. (The IWW appears to be the most computerized of all the industrial democracy organizations, with a number of their members and branches now operating through e-mail.)
In recent months, the most prolific writer in 1-UNION has been Tom Metzal, of the Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA), who never ceases to give me a stimulating debate in matters of revolutionary strategy.

Some of the 1-UNION participants call themselves anarchists, a term which Marxists don't apply to themselves. But when we deconstruct the debate into its components, the anarchists and Marxists agree in a couple areas: the proposal of a stateless society, recognition of the oppressive nature of the wage-labor system, and other matters. There's enough of an overlap to make the dialogue valuable, so I'm glad we're talking.

I have written to the Socialist Labor Party national office five times, inviting the SLP's involvement, and requesting permission that I might electronically reprint some of their copyrighted literature, to give it free publicity. None of my letters have been answered. I hope that the national office will eventually take an interest in the project, or at least reply to my letters. Nevertheless, several SLP members have been very supportive and helpful.

That's enough to make my point, although I don't mean to neglect all the other participants whom I'm not mentioning. But I can't change the subject without mentioning one more contributor: I personally have been greatly influenced by the direction and content of the DISCUSSION BULLETIN.

I'm not claiming to be the one to have politicized the computer networks. When I started out on the networks, I found many political uses already being made of this medium. Among them I could cite the following examples:

- Usenet newsgroups: Out of the thousands of newsgroups on the Usenet network, a few are dedicated to progressive social issues. The largest of these is probably "misc.activism.progressive", which has an estimated 10,000 readers. (Available only to those with Usenet connection; not generally available via e-mail.)

- E-mail news services focusing on working class issues:
  - ACTIV-I (a smaller based version of "misc.activism.progressive" for those who can't connect to Usenet.)
  - Workers' World (free delivery of news articles)
  - New York Transfer News Collective (another free news service)
  - P-news (both articles and discussion, limited to "left wing" participants)

- A few of the many electronic periodicals I have received:
  - Practical Anarchy Online, [the editors of this journal are also members of our discussion group]
  - Arme the Spirit (ATS)
  - Press releases issued by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR)
  - the FCL Legislative Update, published by the Friends Committee on National Legislation
  - Commentaries by the Jewish Committee on the Middle East (JCME)
  - the Sane/Freeze Alert
  - The El Rescate report (reporting on the events in El Salvador)
  - The Guatemala Human Rights Update
  - The National Coordinating Office for the Refugees and Displaced of Guatemala (NCOORD)
  - Barricada Internacional (news from Nicaragua)
  - The East Timor Action Network
  - bulletins from the Haiti Information Bureau (HIB)
  - Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR)
• South Africa Political Update, published by the Southern Africa Partnership Project (SAPP)
• The Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America (CODEHUMA)
• FRONTLINE - quarterly journal of Nonviolence International

From these examples, you can see that I wasn't one of the pioneers in the political use of computer networks. All I did was try to get the libertarian socialist viewpoint more frequently represented in this medium.

I believe that the next frontier is the "scanning" of books. The new optical character recognition (OCR) technology permits regular paper books to be read into computer files, and then distributed by e-mail. Project Gutenberg, a non-profit effort based at Illinois Benedictine College, has usually concentrated on scanning novels, and famous political documents like the Federalist Papers. I consider it a breakthrough that Gutenberg has recently made the Communist Manifesto available for electronic download. As my own pet project, I have been able to make several De Leon pamphlets available in electronic form.

I have suggested the scanning of working class literature as a possible area for inter-organizational cooperation, an area in which we can all benefit by sharing the work and expense. This seems obvious to me, since books are studied not only by those who agree with them, but also by critical parties.

And wouldn't it be a marvelous achievement if we could get working class organizations to include, among their literature offerings, books with which they disagree! As Wendell Phillips said, "He does not really believe his opinions, who dares not give free scope to his opponents." (Address at Harvard University, 1861)

Any DB reader with e-mail access is urged to contact me, that we may collaborate in this exciting new field.

To: Internationalist Perspective
   551 Valley Road #131
   Montclair
   NJ 07043
   U.S.A.

From: E. C. Edge
   64 Laverton Road,
   Lytham St. Annes,
   Lancs FY8 1EN,
   United Kingdom.

Dear Comrades,

I was interested to read in DB#55 that you saw many of the "synchronous" working class as lacking the faith in corporatism and the trade union mentality which have been such a barrier to revolutionary action. I would like to expand my own views in order to explore what common ground we may have. I think, however, that the revolutionary potential you see in the "non-synchronous" workers is largely illusory and has been proved to be so over a long period. What we see from them are aggressive gut reactions to degrading conditions, but no more.

Logically one would expect a worker who has a reasonable understanding of the class structure of capitalism would also have a good understanding of how the system works from the workers' angle. However in practice we find in Britain Labour supporters and unionists believing that the next Labour government will achieve full employment at a stroke, but often "talking class" in a reasonable way. On the other hand we have high-tech workers, such as my colleagues in the aircraft industry, with a good understanding of why the "baddies" are able to undercut the "goodies" all over the world and why "welfare" policies are in many places (such as Michigan) approaching total abandonment, yet unable to relate this to the class structure of society. These latter vote in the main for openly capitalist parties and are often reluctant to unionise themselves.
Personally I think the high-techies are in the better position because to twig what they have does require some sensible thinking. To think that the Labour Party can restore the boom conditions of 1950-60 in the face of all we have seen in the last 15 or so years is a qualification for a psychiatric unit, if you can afford to pay!

Yours fraternally,

Jud Edge

(Pt.) E. C. Edge

ON "DISPOSSESSING THE CAPITALIST CLASS"  --BY ALAN SANDERSON

Long on "Marxian Theories of Economic Crises," the Socialist Party of Great Britain (hereinafter referred to as the SP) is short on how society can achieve a socialist, therefore crises-free, economy. Both the long and short of it appear in the Jan.-Feb., 1993 Discussion Bulletin.

Quoting from the conclusion of "Marxian Theories" as follows:

"As Karl Marx himself realized, the only lasting solution to crises and depressions, and for that matter the other problems that beset the capitalist system, is socialism....We all know through experience that capitalism can't be planned and cannot ensure the well-being of all members of society. Only socialism can do that by removing the capitalist ownership and control of the means of living [the industries and services] and by ensuring that the anarchy of production is removed by the abolition of profits and wages, prices and money...."

This is well said, identifying as it does the essential economic pillars of the wages system of exploitation of Labor, hence of capitalist survival. Moreover, advocating as it does the abolition of these essentials, the SP stands clearly opposed to the social democracy or "bourgeois socialism" charade satirized by Marx and Engels in the phrase: "The bourgeois is a bourgeois--for the benefit of the working class."

All of which brings us face-to-face with a most vital question: How can the Socialist Reconstruction of Society be accomplished? Does the SP deserve plaudits here too? Far otherwise and to the contrary!

The SP "plan" is provided in a quote reproduced by Dave Ferrin in his letter to the editor of DB—which quote, according to Ferrin, "sums up what is, and always has been, the SPGB position." Namely:

"It is necessary for a socialist working class to gain political control, but only for the purpose of dispossessing the capitalist class and opening the way for the community as a whole to take over the means of production and distribution and democratically use them for the good of all. The State, with its coercive machinery will be dismantled as its function—the custodian of private property—will have disappeared. New social institutions of administration based on the new social conditions will be democratically formed."

Mariners piloting the protected coast waters of Washington State may yet list among their navigation aids a land fix curiously named Point-no-Point. Doubtless it was a case of mistaken identity by the.
early navigators—a promontory which lost its "point" as they came abreast of it. And so here; at first sight the SP might appear to have a plan, or method, for achieving the socialist goal but upon a closer look its plan becomes planless, becomes a plan-no-plan. For instance:

(1) The SP states that a "socialist working class" must gain "political control." The statement is doubly vacuous in that it either (a) implies that a socialist victory at the polls means the gaining of socialist political control (a misconception of tragic consequence) or (b) does not imply it, in which case we are left guessing as to what steps must be taken between a socialist political vote and socialist political control.

(2) The SP has it that political control can dispossess the capitalist class but stops short of demonstrating how it can do this. Can the SP possibly believe the capitalist class will surrender its possession of the nation's industrial means upon a mere legislative order of Parliament or Congress? De Leonists are not so naive! They understand that profit-making (the fleecing of Labor) is the be-all and end-all of the capitalist's existence as a capitalist, hence that the capitalist will stop at nothing to preserve his parasite social status. What heinous crime has the lust for profit not generated? Where does the capitalist class have not circumvented or trampled on?

(3) In the SP scenario, the SP will gain political control "but only for the purpose of dispossessing the capitalist class and opening the way for the community as a whole to take over the means of production and distribution and use them for the good of all." Here is a general statement that begs many questions! Will the SP disband when its stated purpose is achieved or will it retain control to keep the "way" open? Again, assuming that it will not be the community as a whole but the producers (the work force) acting for the community who will "take over" and "use" (i.e., presumably administer) the industrial means—assuming this, where then are the nuts and bolts of the exercise? Where is the form of organization, local and national, that being organized can serve the socialist revolutionary purpose? One looks in vain to the SP for light on the matter.

It is here that De Leon's grand breakthrough in socialist thought comes to the rescue! Recognizing that the right of a socialist political victory would be merest moonshine without the might to enforce it, De Leon conceived the Socialist Industrial Union—worker-organized, integrally-organized—as the economic instrument whereby upon a political mandate the working class could lock out the capitalist class from the nation's industries and services. But that is not all. Recognizing the gross ineptitude of the political organ as an industrial administrator, De Leon also conceived the integrally-organized Socialist Industrial Union as the economic structure that could afford viable and democratic management of the nation's industries and services by the workers themselves.

It is not enough that a "socialist working class" win at the ballot box, it must also win at the workplace—must upon a political victory immediately institute socialist administration of the nation's industrial complex. Preparation for this is a task that workers should today put at the top of their agenda!

-- from The De Leonist Society Bulletin (May–June 1993) P.O. Box 944, Station F, Toronto Ontario Canada M4Y 2H9
To The Discussion Bulletin:

I'm writing in response to the attacks on London Wildcat by Will Guest and Jack Straw.

Guest claims "Only a majority can create a communist society" and that "only a majority can (suppress the state)." Does his majority include former members of the exploiting class? Does it include today's corporate heads and politicians and members of the National Security establishment? Will this majority include former police and military officers, members of racist or Stalinist or rightist organizations and others whom we can expect will have engaged in an brutal armed struggle against a revolutionary movement?

Or will these enemies of the revolutionary movement of the future be, at the very least, utterly suppressed and excluded, and in many cases physically destroyed by the revolutionary movement? Morality impresses moralists, but in contemporary society all that matters in social questions is the question of force, the question of power, who has it, how they got it, how they keep it, how they might lose it, and who might take it from them. One may wish it were otherwise, but that won't change the world. The sophisticated political elements in the ruling class know this. This is a key part of their class consciousness, a conscious reality in spades. The needs of the poor and the needs of the rich are mutually exclusive to an absolute and despotic degree.

Any form of aggressive violence on the part of the exploited and dispossessed against exploitation and exploiters, particularly the wholesale violence of a civil war, implies antidemocratic and terrorist measures by the poor against capital. There is nothing more "authoritarian" than murder, and revolution involves doing this on a vast scale. In saying this, I'm not trying to reduce the social content of the struggle for a classless and stateless world to a single question of murder, much less to revel in this sad fact. I'm trying to be blunt and avoid semantic game playing and duplicitous moral bullshit. People who deny the necessary despotism and frank injustice of the class war are fooling themselves, or they are being dishonest, or in many cases they are unconditional opponents of violence. This means they oppose the violence of the poor against capital, and either consciously or by passivity and default they are in favor of capitalist violence, in the hypocritical and highly moral manner of Gandhi and Albert Camus. Is Guest opposed to the use of violence in the class war?

Should any and all attacks against capital and the state wait until a majority approve? This can be extended into an argument for not taking any action until you are sure that it is safe to do so. Such a stance has almost never been present in the class war and will never be present in a revolutionary situation. This would be a logically impossible and ludicrous proposition in the first hours of an armed revolt or insurrection, or a response to a military coup, where immediate armed actions will make the difference between life and death for a revolutionary movement and thousands of its combatants. Would Guest prefer that, during a time of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary turmoil, revolutionaries passively allow themselves to be massacred rather than take decisive action, and risk doing some evil?

Guest critiques the Bolsheviks simplistically. To him, they were audacious, undemocratic and did what was possible. The result was counterrevolution. The Bolsheviks were audacious, we don't want to do what the Bolsheviks did, therefore let's not be audacious! This line of argument is akin to saying, an apple is a fruit, a banana is a fruit, therefore an apple is a banana. A gun in the hands of a cop and a gun in the hands of an insurgent prolé is a gun regardless of who holds it, but the social content of the violence that the gun promises is not the same at all.

What was wrong with the Bolshevik terror wasn't the use of terror in and of itself, but that the Bolshevik terror was a counterrevolutionary terror, a statist and capitalist terror used against revolutionary proletarians. Authentic revolutionaries have frequently used terror and antidemocratic methods as their weapons in the class war. For a fine example, read the History of the Makhnovist Movement by Peter Arshinov. Makhno didn't wait for the consent of others to begin waging a campaign of revolutionary terror against wealthy landowners, capitalists and cops. He simply went out and did what was necessary. Makhno's punitive measures against the property-owning class enemies of the revolution weren't elitist or substitutional. Makhno and his comrades didn't wait to see if a majority approved of their actions prior to acting. The aggressiveness of the Makhnovists and their unyielding war against counterrevolutionaries of the right, left and center is one of the most outstanding examples of the tendency of proletarians in
struggle to assert their own despotism, the dictatorship of their needs against the dictatorship of capital. The actions of anarchist bombthrowers and terrorists were a valid expression of revolutionary proletarians against the class enemy. We can predict with absolute certainty that violent actions by a minority in the context of a social crisis will detonate an explosive extension of a social movement. But a comparison of the Makhnovist movement to the movement in Spain in the 1930's, where a proletarian revolt of great potential was hamstrung by the kind of majoritarian and democratic hang-ups articulated by Guest, speaks well for action by aggressive minorities in the class struggle.

Guest is apparently mystified as to why it was necessary for proletarians in the 1991 uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan to massacre imprisoned Baathist cops, rather than simply imprison them. Perhaps this was an expression of the revolutionary communist opposition to the existence of prisons. I think it was more likely that in an insurrection, where there can be no guarantee of victory (and the revolt in Iraq was crushed), to allow a large number of highly motivated pigs a chance to survive capture by revolutionary forces would guarantee the deaths of the rebel prolles who disarmed these cops if the prison fell to counterrevolutionary forces. Unless, of course, Guest or others like him could convert all of the secret policemen to "democratic communism" and the niceness and nobility of Guest's intentions. Clearly, it was better that they killed all the cops.

Neither Guest or Straw offer any arguments in favor of democracy, or the supposed relevance of this mode of decision making to the poor in their fight against capital. He chants the all too familiar middle class mantra to the bourgeois mode of decision making par excellence, he can't offer any examples of democracy used to the benefit of proletarians in the class war because there are none. Spain in the 1930's, Germany after World War One, Austria in 1934, all are examples of proletarian movements limited by the fetish of this market driven and inherently conservative decision making process.

Similarly, Jack Straw fails to grasp that a study of military tactics in a distant event like the Russian Revolution isn't intended by people other than himself to be a direct blueprint for military action by communist forces in a contemporary uprising or civil war. Some of us read Machiavelli or Clausewitz, not because we have hopes of riding into battle with Cesare Borgia, but because intelligent and supply thinkers feel the need to think strategically.

A similar point which Straw has trouble grasping concerns the beating of the truck driver Reginald Denny in the L.A. riots. The issue here isn't one of validating the assault on Denny. The issue is one of not siding with the State and capital's attempt to use the video of Denny's beating to tar the riots with a image of racist sociopathic mayhem. Does Straw side with the State and its repressive forces on this? In his fealty to democracy, and the capitalist media's interpretation of the most important proletarian revolt in the United States since 1968, Straw doesn't extend the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven to the men facing trial in Denny's beating. On this question, Straw is qualitatively to the right of the nominal values of the bourgeois state.

Straw no doubt objects to Max Anger's Song, and it is a song whether he likes it or not, not only because he tends to be stuffy and humorless but because my class war anthem makes sport of the death of the prominent Bay Area rock music capitalist Bill Graham. Graham was a close associate of Straw's favorite multimillionaire rock stars, the Grateful Dead. Straw is such a subtle and sophisticated thinker that he is not capable of distinguishing between his subjective enjoyment of the music of the Grateful Dead, which I don't begrudge him, and feeling a political obligation to excise the class position and politics of the Grateful Dead and their place in the commodity-spectacle.

Straw makes reference to a class he "participated" in at the University of California at Berkeley, forgetting to mention that the nature of his participation was teaching the class, offering a few easy units of undergrad credit for passive contemplation of radical notions by tomorrow's engineers, social workers and business majors. For several decades, Straw's primary form of revolutionary activity has been to engage in libertarian socialist missionary work among the world's most privileged bourgeois bastard college students at U.C. Berkeley. He has pursued this activity doggedly with a remarkable lack of success.

Berkeley is not a prole school like a state university or a junior college. The value of limiting your efforts to spread anti-capitalist ideas to highly motivated and privileged students of
one of the bourgeois world's leading institutions of higher education should be obvious to anyone
but it is not obvious to Straw. Judging from their recent letters to the Discussion Bulletin, Guest
and Straw appear to "psychologically" mirror the bourgeois liberal university milieu in which they
both move and its progressive democratic ideology. These apes of timidity want the most for-
going social revolution of all time, against the most murderous social order and ruling class of all
time, to transpire without anybody having to get their hands dirty. They want a world revolution
where nothing ugly or unfair is done by revolutionaries. Understandably, open discussion of the
necessarily cruel and brutal aspects of the class war doesn't win them any brownie points at U.C.
Berkeley.

There is also a difference between being minoritarian and being substitutionist, and
between being anti-democratic and being always for the minority on principle.

The actual conditions of revolution are so distant from our predicament today that we can
imagine almost anything, even the highly unlikely possibility that a large majority of proletarians
will be consciously fighting for what we call communism. This movement would still be anti-
democratic in that this communist majority would suppress other classes and deny individuals of
those classes any ability to inhibit the social revolution.

A large majority fighting for the abolition of the market and the nation-state is not likely.
The very best we will probably be able to hope for will be a slim majority, and more likely than
that we will find that only a large minority of the proletariat fight for total social revolution. In
any case, minority or majority, the revolutionary movement of the future must impose communist
measures on the entire planet and against any and all sections of the population that oppose the
revolution. There can be no voting or waiting for the formal approval of a majority as to whether
or not market relations are allowed to survive and throttle the possibility of a new way of life.
Hopefully the abolition of the market and the communization of the world will have an irresistible
quality in the later phases of the struggle, so that even those who are less than enthusiastic will
find themselves swept into a new condition of life predicated on the irreversible extinction of the
market and all nation-states. A revolution that becomes a permanent armed standoff between the
partisans of stateless communism and capital will probably fail. If a revolution is limited to one
country or one geographic region, if the state and the market are not permanently eradicated, if a
fully communist consciousness is lacking in the combatants of the movement, the revolution dies.
Either a sufficient number of proletarians will permanently suppress market relations and take
aggressive action against any and all who would save the market, including other proletarians and
counterrevolutionary working class formations, social democrat or Bolshevik, C.N.T. or
Solidarnosc, or the market will survive, and capital will win.

My comrades and I are for whatever pushes the struggle as far as it can go. If a majority
of the exploited and dispossessed fight for their power and for death to capital and the state, then
all's the better. But regardless of unfavorable conditions, the maxim of Danton advised by
Kropotkin to Makhno is always the best one: "Audacity, audacity, and still more audacity!"

Max Anger

The Poor, The Bad, and The Angry
Dear DB readers,

We appreciate DB's need for describing groups with appropriate designations, but we feel that such attempts can at times prove to be an impediment in a critical understanding of the position of the groups involved. By this we are not attempting to evade this issue nor do we have any desire to lapse into a position of an essential impossibility of categorisation. What we are facing is a specific problem within a specific historical context.

All the terms that are used at present to describe groups [by themselves or by others] are 'words' which carry with themselves a range of meanings, at times clashing with each other, derived from history. In the case of the diverse trends that constitute the International Working Class Movement, these 'words' and the traditions that have grown around them are redolent with the ethos, realities and praxis of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century.

For us, no tradition is sacrosanct or invariant, and none can be ridiculed or ignored. Nor do we feel it necessary to restrict our practise to the 'arenas of politics' alone. We feel that today's realities demand not an assertion of political 'lineages' and the reproduction of the conceptual apparatuses of the nineteenth century, but rather that they demand a relationship of critical examination to the gamut of trends within the working class/libertarian spectrum and an active conceptual and practical response to present realities.

If at all we wish to be 'identified', we would offer a set of questions as our calling card. For us it is these questions that help situate the groups and individuals we encounter. Thus it is only fair if they, [the questions] help to situate us, and place where we are today on a rough but handy map.

1. How can today's reality of Global faceless Capital be confronted by the wage-workers? How can we i.e. wage-workers organise ourselves and develop new modes of resistance that take into account the penetration and diffusion of state power and alienated social relations into every aspect of contemporary life?

2. How can we develop organisational forms and practices at the level of workplace, home, neighbourhood and globally without replicating the coercive organisational practices and forms of today's and yesterday's social reality, inclusive of politburos, people's police, nation states, patriarchal domestic units, red or any other coloured army, peace keeping forces, security councils, control commissions, cultural identities etc.? Are we incapable of evolving modes outside the terrain of localised despots or gigantic totalitarian monsters?
3. How can we critique the political culture of the resistance of wage workers from the fetishism of personified battles against this or that faction of capital, and instead confront wage labour based commodity production in its global, rapidly transforming and impersonal reality?

4. How can we replace the apocalyptic vision of the world with a new, critical, hopeful vision, which has its basis in the existence of a profusion of revolutionary possibilities in present day society?

With Greetings,

Kumar Kranti,
a not so theoretical "marxist" group comprising of wage-workers making the following commodities - machine parts, iron plates, scientific research, shoes, television programmes, textiles etc and a few students and unemployed workers.

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Friends,

Thanks for sending DB. This is the first issue I’ve seen (#58) and I’m gratified to know that I’m not alone in not succumbing to the rightward drift (plunge) of the rest of the country, including the "left." Perhaps Profane Existence (anarchist collective in Minneapolis) described it best when they characterized Bush and Clinton as "same shit, different pile."

I really liked "EMUs in the Class War;" however, I believe that the global market takes precedence over the "national fracturing of capital." The boards of directors of the corporate monarchy have no allegiance to any national state. In the global marketplace, I claim that it can violate the laws of any nation if those laws conflict with its (NAFTA’s) aims. Overall, I believe that banks have more power and states have less power than implied by this article.

I’m also in agreement with the points raised in Will Guest’s letter. I view Lenin’s actions as a coup d’etat against the legitimate provisional revolutionary socialist government. As this is my first issue of DB, I’m not familiar with the "Wildcat" controversy, but from comments in this issue it seems to that "Wildcat" is into Leninist (Stalinist?) vanguardism. However, all is not bread and roses. Laurens Otter’s letter made little sense to me. Multi-syllable words are no substitute for intelligent meaning. And "Wages: The Badge of Average Naive. To say ... the capture of political power from...capitalism thru ballots..." is to say that everything will be just fine if we just vote for the Democrats, or whoever. Further evidence of the Rightward plunge I mentioned above. Remember, if voting worked they’d make it illegal."

Fraternally, Farrell Winter
(Cont'd from p. 2) of the Russian anarchist movement. I don't have access right now to an unabridged dictionary, but I have a hunch that "desacralization" exists only in Russian-English dictionaries.

Mike Lepore's letter reports the amazing expansion of his electronic publication Organized Thoughts. As readers of the lead article in DB60 can testify, Mike is providing electronically the sort of arena for discussion by revolutionaries that the DB has been working on in the print media for the past ten years.

Next we have a copy of the letter E. C. Edge wrote to Internationalist Perspective responding to an article we had reprinted from that journal. After that an article by Alan Sanderson from The Delekonist Society Bulletin takes issue with the Socialist Party (of Great Britain's) views on revolution.

Max Anger's letter responds to letters in DB60 criticizing London Wildcat's assertion that in a revolutionary situation "democracy," as we have been taught to understand it, is beside the point. Next Komunist Krauti quite justly--as we can see from the letter--protests DB's characterization of it as "Theoretical Marxist." Farrell Winter comments on letters and articles in DB60. As usual we end with some short reviews.

FINANCES: Readers of this report in DB60 will recall that after mentioning that DB was in the black again after a long "red" period I said, "Actually, though, we may be better off than the figures below suggest." Well, we were, by about $75 according to the bank, but your innumerate bookkeeper still doesn't have the urge to track it down. When he does, he'll let you know. In the meantime let us rejoice and hope that the same bank that bestowed it on us doesn't take it away.


BALANCE June 22, 1993 (per bank statement) $76.60

RECEIPTS
Contribution $119.00
Subs and sales 58.40
Total $169.40

DISBURSEMENTS
Postage $ 87.00
Printing 38.95
Postage due 2.00
Copies 1.19
Total $130.94

BALANCE August 23, 1993 $106.06

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the Discussion Bulletin
THE NEW MOVEMENT, by Henri Simon. 8 pages plus introduction and 4-page "Presentation Pamphlet" 11 by 8 1/2 inches. Originally published in 1976 by London Solidarity, TNM is an attempt by Simon to clarify for radicals the current thinking of "a network of mostly European individuals and groups---sharing roughly similar perspectives" which evolved from into Echanges et Mouvement, publishers of the periodical Echanges. They are descendants of the earliest of western dissenters to rebel against the Russian Bolshevik hegemony over the Third International.

The pamphlet consists of 33 statements or theses, which spell out the differences between this network, "the new movement" and what Simon characterizes as "the old movement," the myriad of radical, leftist, and revolutionary parties, unions, action groups, and various other organizations which try to influence the working class through their publications, actions, and other agitation. The essence of New Movement thinking seems to be that all such activity is either useless or counterproductive. As revolutionaries our task is to wait for spontaneous action by workers as events make them more class conscious. My problem with the whole thing is that it seems to relegate us revolutionaries to the role of spectators.

THE MARYLAND FREEDOM MOVEMENT by Mike Flug. 8 pages 11 by 8 1/2. In 1968 News and Letters first published this article, which seems to demonstrate the sort of spontaneity that the New Movement sees as the wave of the future as the class struggle accelerates. It relates the efforts of nursing home workers in Baltimore to resist the low wages and heavy work demands of their bosses. They organized and then went to CORE for help rather than the AFL-CIO. The organization spread and eventually won some economic victories. Under the headings "The Meaning of the MFU" and "Self-Activity Makes a New Kind of Union," the author analyses the MFU and its promise for the future.

The New Movement - $1.25 and The Maryland Freedom Union - $0.75 from Collective Action, PO Box 22062, Baltimore, MD 21233.

Collective Action tells us that they have two other titles "in the pipeline": Drugs, the Labor Market, and Class Conflict, and Marx's Workers' Inquiry (with new materials).

OUTSIDE AND AGAINST THE UNIONS (A COMMUNIST RESPONSE TO DAVE DOUGLASS' TEXT "REFRACTED PERSPECTIVE") by Wildcat. 12 pages plus wraps. Dave Douglass, an official of the British National Miners Union (NMU) seems to have been given--according to the pamphlet--the special mission of stifling criticism of the capitalist union movement among revolutionaries. This is the second time he has come to our attention; the first was in the Echanges pamphlet, Goodbye to the Unions: A Controversy about Autonomous Class Struggle, reviewed in DB57. Douglass's speech at a conference of Class War elicited this pamphlet by Wildcat. It begins with a criticism of Douglass and his speech but expands it into a detailed indictment of capitalist unionism. Under the headings "What Are Unions?" "Corporateism," "Degenerates," "Bureaucracy," Wildcat develops an analysis of the unionism of the late twentieth century not much different from that of most libertarian socialist revolutionaries. The role of unions in defusing the class struggle, of developing worker solidarity and
loyalty to their masters, and as mediators and negotiators between workers and corporations. Under 'But What's the Alternative...?' Wildcat says we should build up "groups and networks of activists who want to escalate the class war by whatever means are necessary. The links we develop between class struggle militants now will be useful when mass struggles do break out...."

WORLDWIDE INTIFADA by the group Worldwide Intifada. 17 pages. The authors present a class struggle analysis as the alternative to the conventional leftist view that the moving force in the ongoing warfare between Israelis and Palestinians is Israeli nationalism versus Palestinian nationalism. WI sees the struggle of Palestinian workers against their capitalist masters—both Palestinian and Israeli—as the source of the intifada and urges workers worldwide to join the struggle against their masters. In WI's view the PLO represents the interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie. It tries to contain the intifada and direct it against the Israeli state as an additional weapon in its struggle to create a Palestinian state, something WI sees as opposed to the interests of Palestinian workers. The pamphlet provides information on this struggle that I haven't read elsewhere, and I strongly recommend it.

As the covering letter we received from Wildcat—printed below—indicates, readers can obtain both pamphlets from them. Unfortunately no price is given except that Worldwide Intifada has a cover price of 50 pence. We recommend that U.S. readers send $3 for the two pamphlets.

Dear Discussion Bulletiners,

Thanks for reprinting our articles. The one on the Russian Revolution certainly seems to have sparked off some controversy. Good. We will be writing a detailed reply to some of the responses fairly soon. In the meantime, here's some other things you might be interested in reproducing stuff from. The first is our pamphlet Outside and Against the Unions which deals with a subject dear to the hearts of many of your readers—the references to the British anarchist scene and to one anarcha-feminist union back which particular might make it a bit less accessible than it could be but these references are in no way central to any of the arguments put forward. The other is Worldwide Intifada which deals with the question of nationalism in a pretty hard-hitting way. It was not produced by us but by people we would certainly regard as comrades. The WI group no longer exists as such but some of the comrades involved can be contacted at the address in the back of the pamphlet. Further copies of either are available from us.

Yours for Communism,

BM CAT
London WC1N 3XX
U.K.

Alan

for Wildcat

COMMUNISM (Central Review in English of the International Communist Group) Issue number 8, July 1993. 40 A4 pages. The featured article (10 pages) in this issue, "Against the Myth of Democratic Rights and Liberties," relates to the controversy between Max Anger/Wildcat and Will Guest/Jack Straw published elsewhere in this issue and in BBS. Communist takes a hardline approach arguing, as many of
us do, that capitalism in its western “democratic” version is simply an alternative mode of control used where our rulers don’t yet feel the need to get tough with us. The authors argue that for our class to use capitalism’s majoritarian fetish in our own efforts to emancipate ourselves is to strangle any action before it gets started. Another article, “AIDS, Pure Product of Science!” begins by asserting “...the AIDS retrovirus is a direct product of the new commercial possibilities opened up by molecular Biology!” They defend this with documented evidence (30 footnotes in the 14-page article) which, although it may all be true, is largely circumstantial. Nonetheless, I find it more convincing than other similar efforts to lay the origin of AIDS on capitalist science. Under the heading “Our Class Memory” Communism reprints Johan Most’s essay, “The Beast of Property,” published originally in 1883. More interesting to me than the essay, though, is the 8-page introduction, much of which focuses on the Most’s activity in the U.S. and the anarchist movement in the U.S., which moved into high gear about this time. The Socialist Labor Party lost hundreds of members to the anarchists, including Parsons, Spies, Fielden, Schwab who were later victims in the Haymarket Affair. Most was instrumental in organizing the International Working People’s Association (IWPA). The Intro’s major point is that the exodus from the SLP was an early revolt of militants against the social-democracy that characterized that organization in its early years.

$2 (L1) from BP 54, 1060 Brussels 31, Belgium.