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**IN THIS ISSUE**

The first two articles in this issue deal with the developments in one of the most "conservative" segments of the revolutionary socialist movement: the DeLeonists. Within a month of each other the journals of two dissident (non-Socialist Labor Party) DeLeonist groups have come up with the same major change in what was once written in stone: De Leon's SIU (Socialist Industrial Union) program for a socialist society. Briefly the revision proposes that the Socialist Industrial Union government of the future include, besides representatives from the industries--as outlined by De Leon in Socialist Reconstruction of Society and other writings--a new factor: community representation.
The first, "A Plan for the Next Generation's Future" is from the Winter 1994 issue of People for a New System, journal of the Industrial Union Party (IUP), which traces its roots to an SLP upheaval in 1926. The second, "Democracy--Political and Industrial (A Position Paper)" is taken from Volume 1, Number 1, the January-February issue The De Leonist Review, which replaces the "lapsed" De Leonist Society Bulletin (P.O. Box 844 Station F, Toronto, Ontario. Canada M4Y 2N9). It is published by the De Leonist Society of Canada, which dates back to another SLP upheaval, this one in 1960.

Next Robin Cox continues the dialogue with Dave Perrin on reformism. What constitutes reform has always agitated those parties that broke away from social democratic reformism in the turn-of-the-century (to page 16)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as the financially and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that places the great divide in the "left," not between Anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism's statist leftwing and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. They are 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 as well as capitalist politics and unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often 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 limitation being that submissions be typewritten, single-spaced, and copy 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.

Subscription Information

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In This Issue, A Plan for the Next Generation's

FUTURE

Today most Americans are being attacked. There's no other word to describe what's been happening throughout the land — in the workplace, in the community and in the domestic and global economy. Everywhere we see ourselves losing jobs, losing on the picket lines, having no real, direct democratic voice in Washington, being totally ignored in the NAFTA-GATT deals that reveal the new world order.

For us to stand up to these realities and make a better future for ourselves and our children we need to see our society for what it really is and not as it is held up to us by the powerful media and its capitalist owners who continue to thrive and profit at the expense of our living standards and our social stability.

If we are to set ourselves on a straight and sensible path to better living and better social relations among ourselves it will be the result of new organizations with new strategies, tactics and goals that keep the best of our past traditions and eliminate those that have proved to be destructive of our economic and social needs.

A Job-Saving, Community-Building Plan for Self-Government Where it Counts
Because...today, elected officials have no binding obligation to carry out the decisions of those who voted them into office. Absolutely none! So they vote in Congress as they wish, usually for the interests of the richest groups in their districts, which excludes most of us.

Our vote is meaningless for several important reasons:

1. There is no law that requires fulfillment of campaign promises other than the little used recall or impeachment process, both time consuming, unwieldy and subject to various politician-inspired legal barriers that effectively keep the targeted office holder in office long after the initial call is made for removal.

2. Because of the massive political obstacles required to use the recall and impeachment road, citizens usually become discouraged and wait it out for the next election in hopes of voting out the undesirable office holder. The record shows that politicians almost always complete their terms regardless of their incompetence, immorality, duplicity, or other deficiencies the electorate learn after the elections.

3. By far the most obvious flaw in the way we now vote is it has little democratic impact on the singularly most critical, social institution in our lives; that is the economic system. Our political vote does not ever change the basic structure of the economic system.

Our vote does not secure our jobs, nor does it guarantee a stable future for ourselves and our children. It does not address any new and better economic arrangement that would give real, economic democratic power to us.

We need a new system in which our vote has real meaning in our community and on our jobs.

When...we have a new system whose laws say that our jobs, industries and services are used for the social good instead of for the wealth and power of a special ruling class. The new system will require a NEW CONSTITUTION.

The idea of changing the structure of the economic and political system of government may seem far fetched and impossible of attainment, but such thoughts also were in the minds of many colonials before the colonies became independent states.

The need for changing systems is grossly apparent. The system's failures are seen all around us. The only reason politicians and corporate CEO's don't want change is because they're very comfortable where they sit. We can't depend on the present make-up of political office holders to make the change. We must do it ourselves. It requires that we start communicating with one another, individually and in groups, in our homes, where we work, and at town meetings to start a principled, grass roots movement. No New-Democrat, Clinton type, nor a third party billionaire-financed playing will address a new system in which the people truly have direct management of their jobs and their product. Such a system can only be realized when the economy itself is constitutionally governed by us for us.

The new system must build upon the democratic heritage we have gained from our revolutionary forefathers.

The new system must contain all the democratic elements that make for practical, day to day participation in job and community life. It must retain all government power in the hands of the people rather than in periodically chosen representatives who, once they assume office, have no legal commitment to those who placed them there.
The Need for Social Ownership

A simple reflection on what is at the core of the social turmoil we call poverty, crime, racism, the environmental argument, and the vicious Congressional divisions in government can be narrowed to one, and only one cause; the economy. The big social question we face is how best to share in this potential bounty. It should be clear to everyone that the present system has failed to sustain a prosperous, peaceful and harmonious society. In fact, the opposite is true. We are being pauperized. We fight among ourselves and with other countries. We have little or no part in the government that has become an economic battlefield for the economic system's owners.

Right now we're in the midst of a societal holocaust. To passively witness our own destruction and deny it's happening is condemning ourselves and future generations to a drab, worry-laden, welfare-ridden, future of physical and mental impoverishment.

The Rationale for Social Ownership

To have a meaningful, participatory democracy to enable us to have input and actual control of our lives we begin the process of reconstructing our society on a sound, rational base starting at the ground floor of economic organization. The new plan conforms to the needs and wants of the community. It requires that our nation's valuable, socially-needed industries in which we work, and on which we depend for our subsistence, must be socially owned and used to serve our societal and individual needs and wants.

In the realm of ethical morality, social ownership of the industrial complex is natural and just. It is natural because the socially-operated industrial tool is the foremost instrument for societal survival in the modern industrial world, and by virtue of its critical need by the whole society it becomes imperative that it not be misused for narrow, short term private gain by any manner, however powerful, subset element of the predominant social body, which is humanity itself.

Social ownership is just because it responds to the fair and universally-accepted, rational axiom; that is, the product belongs to the producer. Since the majority of society's citizenry is of the working class, and since it is this class that has created and operates the industrial wheel of necessary production to provide the goods and services required to function as we do, it becomes a matter of elementary justice that the industrial tool be owned by those who work it.
Compare This System to What We Have Today

Here is one plan to consider as a replacement for capitalism. It is not a blueprint, rather a guideline for a new industrial organization. In this model political boundaries are replaced with industrial spheres of citizen interaction.

We vote not for political representatives from states, instead, for industrial representatives from our workplaces to coordinate our production activities with other workplaces in the same industry, and through town hall meetings, give direct input at the community level.

The new system organizes our mines, laboratories, schools, energy, communications, food, and other socially necessary industries in which we plan, produce and distribute goods and services needed for a stable and secure local and national community.

The new system forms a democratic partnership between our communities and our industries.

It works like this:

From our households and in our communities we determine our needs and wants. These are collated by elected local community councils and shared with communities that have similar local and regional needs and services.

From our places of work, we vote in our departments to elect supervisors, managers, and administrators who act primarily as coordinators between interdependent job functions. They are elected to the job because they have experience in that particular type of work. Who better to coordinate a complex function than someone who has worked in and knows the process? They are not bosses. They have no hire-fire powers. Such decisions are left to department and workplace councils.

Departments interact by the direction of an elected Workplace Council.

Each workplace in a specific region, along with other plants connected to the same product, elect reps to form a Regional Industrial Coordinating Council which serves to cooperatively interact in the production process.

The National Industrial Coordinating Council is composed of representatives elected by workers in their respective local workplaces to coordinate the work of all the regions involved in the same service or industry.

Real Democracy: Here's How the System Works

![Diagram of workplace departments and community concerns]

All of society's industries similarly organized are coordinated in the All-Society Coordinating Council, whose functions are to unify the resources and capabilities of all national production in order to meet society's requirements as formulated on the local community level.

This cooperative industrial plan has no need for politicians because there are no political separations, no artificial boundaries which divide us into counties and states. In this interactive, democratic, industrial union, The Regional Council replaces County government, the National Council replaces State government, and the All-Society Coordinating Council supplants the U.S. Congress.

Priorities and policies agreed upon by the local communities will be Constitutionally-mandated to each council representative on each level of industrial organization.

All record keeping and council meetings are electronically available to all individuals and councils so every level of council deliberations is subject to constitu-
Where the constraints of wages, commodities for sale and profit no longer apply and where production is socially owned and based on our needs & desires ... we already have the human skills, knowledge & technology ...

**the NEW SYSTEM Could Work**

**Issues:**
- WHERE we make it
- HOW we make it
- WHAT we make
  - YOU DECIDE!

- All people are represented
- All voices are included
- Council memberships are rotating elected & subjected to immediate recall!

In this new electronic interactive democracy we not only make all decisions, we formulate all the questions, too!

![Diagram](image)

- Rather than give it away to disconnected political representatives and corporate CEO's.
- In the new system of social ownership WE can sensibly address problems and set priorities to clean up the air and waters, produce clean and healthful foods, manufacture safe, attractive and durable housing and transportation, and other important products and services such as health care and retirement facilities without the profit market standing in our way, and use the technology we have created to minimize the work week to a few days and the work day to a few hours, and allow for flexible career changes.

Sounds incredible? No! The only thing holding us back is our own lack of knowledge and initiative to make it happen. WE have all the tools available for our immediate use. Our class has built a modern industrial network capable of producing an abundance of products and services that can eliminate most of our present social ills in an amazingly short time.
The Legal Question

Our Constitution, the law of our land, makes it possible to have such a system. Article V, the amendment clause, enables us to change the system through legislation.

How can it happen? First, WE organize ourselves in our respective industries and communities along lines we have described. As we organize in our communities and industries we simultaneously prepare to change the system through the present political ballot process by electing our reps to the halls of Congress with instructions to use the legislative process to vote in the new system.

The legal and moral basis for fundamental change is found in our early traditions. We are not alone in understanding the way our present Constitution works.

Thomas Jefferson, who authored the Declaration of Independence, knew full well that his writings were for people of that time, and that conditions change as to the way future generations would order and govern themselves. He said WE must look upon what his generation did as being written in stone never to be changed, which is why the amendment clause, Article V, was included. On the folly of keeping the Constitution exactly as he wrote it, Jefferson said:

"We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him as a boy, as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their ... ancestors."

George Washington added:

"The basis of our political system is the right of the people to alter their constitutions of government."

Abraham Lincoln agreed:

"Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right — a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world."

Lincoln went a step further:

"This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their Constitutional right of amending it (Article V), or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

Perhaps James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, came closest to understanding how our present form of government established over 200 years ago, would not be desirable for future generations when he declared that the time would come when "wealth will be concentrated in the hands of the few," and that it would be necessary "to readjust the laws of the nation to the changed conditions." The time is now.

The Constitution and Our Right to Change Systems

"To those who are unacquainted with the unique character of our basic charter it may seem contradictory that a political party of revolution can plant itself squarely upon the Constitution. It is not contradictory; it is logical. The American Constitution is, itself, a revolutionary document. It is the first ever adopted which provided ways and means for its own amendment. Its authors, being men of vision and foresight, believed that, as conditions changed, the Constitution would have to be altered to fit the changed conditions."

"In inserting the amendment clause (Article V), the authors of the Constitution foresaw that the means whereby to make any alteration in our society and government which we deemed essential to our welfare and happiness."

"Article V, in effect, LEGALIZES revolutions."

The celebrated American Humorist, Artemus Ward, tells an amusing story of a man who was in prison fifteen years. Then one day the thought struck him. He recalled that the door was not locked, opened it and walked out a free man. Article V of the American Constitution is the open door to liberty for the American workers. It gives them the Constitutional right to unite their majority and demand that private ownership, with its evil brood of war and poverty, give way to collective property and progress."

Eric Hass
Editor's Appeal

What about you? Whether in or out of work, you're in the working class. You know what we're talking about when it comes to job conditions. Your input for change is important. The dynamics of democracy are here waiting for you to get involved.

People for a New System needs YOU as a supporter of the ideas contained in this paper. Your money contributions help reach growing numbers of citizens who feel basic systemic change is the only way we'll ever become a society of free and equal citizens living in harmony with ourselves, our neighbors, and our environment.

Join us in this drive to make as many people as possible aware of this new concept of self-government. Pass this issue along to those with whom you work. Compare this idea to what we now have. Your voice support is absolutely necessary, as is your $5 help, which is tax deductible.

We're looking forward to hearing from you about these ideas and proposals.

NS readers in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales may obtain more information about the program of the IUP from the following:

Tom Holman, 8 Wades Way, Trunch, North Walsham, Norfolk, England NR 28 0 PW
Alan Tompkins, 101 Alumhurst Rd., Westbourne, Bournemouth, Dorset, England BH4 8HS
Tom McGregor, 84 Mull, St. Leonards, East Kilbride, Scotland

PURPOSE

We are a nation of workers. Our class is the majority class. We live and work under a system that has failed to reward our labors with a stable and safe society.

Working class labor power is the primary force that makes our industries and services work. Ordinary common sense as well as universal tenets of equality and justice affirms that WE, as a class, have control of priorities in the planning, production and distribution of all goods and services needed and wanted by our society.

We live under the rules of capitalism. The system does not respect society's needs. Today our necessary industries are owned and controlled by a minority class of private corporate owners who use our labor power in industries not for the good of society but for their corporate power and personal wealth. The nation's laws make this undemocratic arrangement legal. But we can change the laws! We can vote in a new and better way to manage our lives.

Because the capitalist system is responsible for unemployment, poverty, ethnic and racial confrontations, and many other forms of our discontent, the system's replacement is both necessary and desirable. Because the profit system has brought about the needless impairment of our life-sustaining environment, its replacement becomes urgent.

History shows us that social deterioration of the kind we witness today has ended in severe social upheavals. The story of the dictatorial Nazis and Soviets warn us that unless the majority of citizens take control out of the hands of politicians and lead the way with its own social and economic program, change itself is unpredictable and not always for the better. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves now for a positive, democratic future in which there will be no repetition of the social problems we now endure. The IUP has a plan.

The IUP's goal is to bring together our nation's working class into one unified political and industrial union movement to change the present economic and governmental system. The new system will be based on industrial, rather than political constituencies, owned and democratically governed through the industries in which we work. The new Industrial Government will empower democratic decision-making to ourselves in all matters essential to building, and maintaining a free and prosperous society.

To accomplish our goal the IUP calls upon all workers to learn of the proposed new democratic industrial system and join together in the workplace and the community to unite into one nation-wide union. Once we are industrially and politically organized we will use our ballot and vote out the old system and begin building our new, free, safe and prosperous national community in harmony and peace with our world's neighbors. The time to realize our second American revolution is now. We need it. Our future generations deserve it. Join us!

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There is a basic question concerning the shape and substance of socialist democracy that ever since the demise of the bona fide Socialist Labor Party has been gradually growing in importance in our minds until now we feel compelled to bring it to your attention.

The issue may or may not have been discussed years ago in the columns of the Daily People or Weekly People, may or may not have surfaced over the years at public meetings or elsewhere. However, to the best of our knowledge it does not appear in SLP literature, the closest approach merely begging the question as for example in the New York Labor News (1964) pamphlet "SOCIALISM: Questions most frequently asked and their Answers." Quoting from Question and Answer No. 21 as follows:

"Will there be free speech under Socialism?...."

"...there will be no material incentive whatever to suppress anyone's exercise of the basic liberties and freedoms. On the contrary, there will be every incentive for the people, who at last have a democratic mastery of their lives, to preserve for themselves, individually and collectively, the full and unfettered freedom to question, to criticize and to suggest, thereby keeping the road to continued progress open." (Our emphasis.)

Also begging the question is the following quote from page 64 of the same pamphlet:

"Socialism is that form of society in which...the land, implements, and plants of production are owned collectively by the useful producers of the land, the productive means, in short the industries, being administered through the Socialist industrial organization of these producers, who today are the wage workers. This precludes the existence of political government, and implies substitution therefor of an industrial government, a government having its basis of representation in the various industries, each worker with a voice and vote, in contradistinction to the present political government with its basis of representation in purely political (geographical) and arbitrary divisions." (Our emphasis.)

A third quote that helps bring the matter to the fore is De Leon's definition of Socialism as published in the 1958 edition of the New York Labor News pamphlet "What Is SOCIALISM?":

"Socialism is that social system under which the necessaries of production [factories, tools, land, etc.] are owned, controlled and administered by the people, for the people, and under which, accordingly, the cause of political and economic despotism having been abolished, class rule is at an end. That is

* The issue did in fact surface in at least one SLP public meeting we attended, and more recently appeared in the minutes of the SLP of America's 1978 NEC Session.
Socialism, nothing short of that." ("by the people"=our emphasis.)

Does the difficulty not now become apparent? "The people" will enjoy free speech under Socialism; "the people" will have "a democratic mastery of their lives"; "the people" will enjoy unfettered freedom "to question, to criticize and to suggest"--in short, while "the people" will have all this, will they also have a vote? No, not according to the above delineation! While "the people" will at last have "a democratic mastery of their lives," the said mastery does not accord them the right to vote! Not the people as a whole but only that segment of them actively engaged in production will have both voice and vote!

For years, when we at all thought of the distinction, we had no problem with it. After all, we reasoned, it would be a case of society delegating authority to the Work Force to run industry in society's interest, and since the Work Force together with their families would to all intents and purposes equate with society, the industrial vote (rather than the political vote) would afford the fullest possible exercise of democracy yet devised. In short, we had no misgivings with the proposition that the industrial vote would replace the political vote!

Now, however, there is a question--a large question:

\* The distinction between the people actively engaged in production at any given time, and the people as a whole, will not go away; on the contrary, as time goes by, advancing technology appears to be widening the gap.

\* The distinction reveals a disturbing contradiction between the two definitions of Socialism above cited. In De Leon's definition it is "the people" who will "own, control and administer"; in "SOCIALISM: Questions and Answers" it is "the useful producers" (i.e., the Work Force) who will "own collectively" and "administer." One would assume that if the people (the people as a whole) are to own and control they must needs be able to do more than merely "question, criticize and suggest"--that is, they would also need to vote! But there is the rub; as the socialist program now stands, a landslide vote for Socialism would be the last vote exercised by the people (the people as a whole); in voting for Socialism the people would not only delegate ultimate authority to the Work Force but in so doing would disfranchise themselves! We see, therefore, that standing in the way of a clip and clear presentation of the De Leonist program is this troublesome question of WHO is to be sovereign in a socialist society--the people at work at any given time, or the people as a whole?

\* The context of the administrative aspect of Socialist Industrial Unionism in 1904 was brilliantly described by De Leon in "The Burning Question of Trades Unionism" as follows:

"The parliament of civilization in America will consist... of representatives of trades throughout the land, and their legislative work will not be the complicated one which a society of conflicting interests, such as capitalism, requires but the easy one which can be summed up in the statistics of the wealth needed, the wealth producible, and the work required --and that any average set of workingmen's representatives are
fully able to ascertain, infinitely better than our modern rhetoricians in Congress."

That was in 1904!

But the identical context (the identical "legislative work") reappears as late as 1960 in Eric Hass's "Socialist Industrial Unionism--The Workers' Power," as follows:

"The national industrial unions' duties are manifold, yet simple. Manifold because it must direct a vast industry with hundreds of units; simple because its problems are purely production problems." (Our emphasis.)

Today, however, the "legislative work" that would confront a Socialist Industrial Union Congress is "easy" and "simple" no longer; on the contrary, it has become infinitely complex! At the beginning of the 20th Century there could well have been but one outstanding task for socialist legislation--the problem of production and distribution--a purely economic problem. But now as we near the end of the century it is obvious that Socialism must inherit a host of grave social problems generated and/or exacerbated by moribund Capitalism; now a Socialist Administration would have to deal not only with questions directly related to production but also with questions indirectly related to it, many of which require value judgements not amenable production per se. For example:

1. Industrial policy--Questions of production priorities, degree and pace of technological innovation such as automation, etc., alternative energy sources, energy conservation, design choices, etc. (2) Natural Environment--Questions re protection of same, establishing additional national parks, determination of balance between the environment and industrial development, etc. (3) Scientific Research--Questions of priorities in medical research, aims and pace of genetic research, space exploration, etc. (4) Human Rights--Codification and protection of same, the settling of aboriginal claims. (5) Abortion--Resolution of the debate, "Freedom of Choice vs. The Right to Life." (6) Justice--Revision of civil and criminal codes, prison reform (as long as prisons remain necessary). (7) Education--Determination of curricula, etc., also the extent to which classroom should be amalgamated with field work. (8) External Affairs--Policy re other Socialist Republics, re underdeveloped countries, re warring countries, re disarmament, etc.

The crucial question that confronts us, therefore, is not whether there are social issues demanding resolution but the question of WHO in a Socialist Republic should make the final decisions in the resolution of such issues--WHO should determine social policy?

Inevitably the political domain enters the picture and it does so in a number of ways. The matter becomes clearer the closer we look at the meaning of that word political. According to Webster, "political" is among other things: "of, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of government policy." (Our emphasis.) The definition is pivotal, casting light on what appears to be a shortcoming in our present concept of socialist government!

Consider the following quote from the Hass pamphlet previously cited:
"The qualifications of those who will serve in the Socialist Industrial Union Congress...will be (aside from a devotion to duty) a knowledge and understanding of the processes of production and distribution and an ability to coordinate and direct these processes."

And that is how it should be. However, the moment a Socialist Industrial Congress addresses a social issue it ceases to be a purely industrial body, it becomes both political and industrial in nature; as our concept now stands, it will be required to both legislate and administer social policy! Unquestionably the Industrial Congress will be the best qualified organ to conduct the processes of production and distribution, however it surely does not follow that such congress is better qualified than society as a whole to resolve the many social issues that are not directly related to these processes. On the other hand it surely does follow that if society delegates authority to the Industrial Congress to determine social policy it thereby severs the very taproot of political democracy! In short, we appear to have reached an impasse—i.e., can we continue to uphold our claim that Socialist Industrial Union government will afford the greatest possible enjoyment of democracy in our industrial age?

As a sounding board to help promote discussion and resolution of this troubling question, we here reproduce in full the QUESTION PERIOD published in the Weekly People of October 26, 1963:

**Question Period**

Don’t you think that with the establishment of a Socialist Industrial Union Administration a political party should be retained at all levels of government to function as an educational and advisory body?

Absolutely not! The "advice" of a political party would be gratuitous, presumptuous and certainly not needed by an administration that, through democratic means, enlists the intelligence of all the people. One of the great virtues of a Socialist Industrial Union government is that it opens all the avenues of information and creates meaningful forums for the discussion of social as well as economic problems. Thus in every school, factory, mine, ship, distribution facility, etc., questions of public interest, particularly questions relating to the specific industry or service, may be discussed by the rank and file in shop councils — and advice communicated to the various industrial union administrative councils, or even to the All-Industrial Union Congress.

Certainly the workers in the "education industry," for example could fulfill the advisory function with far more understanding and intelligence than a political party which would necessarily be unattached to any industry or service.

Moreover, a political party in a non-political society would be an incongruity, a presumption that a certain set of men, uncontrolled by a democratic process, possess a superior wisdom, and hence are entitled to a special role. The incongruity is the worse when it is recalled that political parties are reflexes of material interests. Presumably the questioner is thinking in terms of retaining the political party of Socialism for the advisory role he proposes. Today, under capitalism, such a party represents working class interests. But under Socialism, where the very basis for classes — competing economic interests — will be wiped out, and where, moreover, there will be no political State, the virtue that today attaches itself to the party of Socialism would vanish.

When De Leon discussed the need for "might"—the industrial union—to back up the Socialist ballot in "Socialist Reconstruction of Society" he emphasized that this industrial union might be needed "as much, I would almost say, against the political movements its own breath heats into being as against the capitalist tyrant himself." Why? "It needs that might against the capitalist tyrant to put the question upon him; it also needs that might to prevent the evil consequences to which, in this corrupt atmosphere of bourgeois society, the political movement is inevitably exposed."

The fact is that for a political party to prolong its existence after the conditions that created it have disappeared, (that is, after the industrial union was established as the central directing authority) would be a manifestation of corruption, an assertion of special privilege. The Socialist Labor Party understands this and is prepared to disband with a shout of joy the moment the Socialist Industrial Union assumes the reins of government.
Is this sound in its entirety? Heretofore we would not have questioned its basic argument. Today, however, we offer the following criticism:

* A Socialist Industrial Union Administration "through democratic means enlists the intelligence of all the people."

Comment: All the people? Precisely how does it do this?

* "A Socialist Industrial Union government...opens all the avenues of information and creates meaningful forums for the discussion of social as well as economic problems." (Our emphasis.)

Comment: Where are the forums on social problems to be opened up? and Who will be involved in their discussion? Answer--"In every school, factory, mine, ship, distribution facility, etc., questions of public interest...may be discussed by the rank and file in shop councils"--that is, political forums restricted to the confines of the workplace and thereby restricted at any given time to the fraction of the populace who are at work. Such are the "democratic means" of enlisting the intelligence of "all the people"! Such at any rate is what the context implies.

* Rank and file advice on questions of public interest (including social problems) may be "communicated to the various industrial union administrative councils, or even to the All-Industrial Union Congress."

Comment: "Advice" on industrial matters would doubtless be welcomed but how could such councils or congress, whose purview is essentially industrial, be reasonably expected to welcome, much less sift through and evaluate for possible social legislation and administration an expected flood of recommendations from "all the people" on urgent social matters? In fact, the more we think of the idea of workers, either at the shop level or in any of the higher branches of the SIU, taking time out from their jobs of producing or directing production to discuss and supposedly solve all the aforementioned grave social problems, the less sense it makes. The SIU's job will be to conduct production to the end that an abundance is produced with a minimum of labor--to not only ascertain, in De Leon's words, "the wealth needed, the wealth producible and the work required," but also to perform that work. How can workers reasonably be expected to do this while simultaneously spending the great amount of time that will be required to review, discuss, debate, formulate and implement solutions for the many social problems not directly related to production? Just ask yourselves if, when at work, you have, or would have had, the time or even the inclination to attempt this manifold task. No comrades, it is in their leisure hours, after workers have performed their industrial chores, that they will have the time and be in the necessary relaxed frame of mind to do justice to the aforementioned social questions.

* "Certainly the workers in the 'education industry' for example could fulfill the advisory function with far more understanding and intelligence than a political party which would necessarily be unattached to any industry or service."

Comment: Let us give credit where credit is due! Suppose for the sake of argument that a socialist society had individuals or political parties to convey society's "advice" on social issues "at all levels of govern-
ment." Returning to the example at hand it is our opinion that the Weekly People reflected an unwarranted, elitist attitude. Naturally we would expect teachers to be knowledgeable, but by what token is the Education Industry or the All-Industry Congress itself better fitted than society as a whole to both advise and decide social policy?

* "A political party in a non-political society would be an incongruity."

Comment: A non-political society?? Once again we turn to Webster: political--1(a): "of or relating to government, a government, or the conduct of government b: of, relating to, or concerned with the making as distinguished from the administration of government policy."

* "Political parties are reflexes of material interests."

Comment: The statement is lamentably narrow, needing qualification in more than one way. For instance we could say (1) Political parties in an economically class divided society are reflexes of class material interests, or (2) Political parties, if founded in a socialist society, may reflect both material and immaterial interests.

* "The fact is that for a political party to prolong its existence after the conditions that created it have disappeared, (that is, after the industrial union was established as the central directing authority) would be a manifestation of corruption, an assertion of special privilege."

Comment: The context here is obviously political parties as we know them today--parties that reflect economic class interests--and we certainly agree that their existence in a socialist society would manifest corruption. Nevertheless we are strongly of the opinion that this logic should in no way be employed to inhibit political activity on what we presume will be a broad political field outside the perimeter of the industrial union.

* We now come to the main thrust to which all of the foregoing is a prelude. It is a bold conclusion, also the one possible conclusion through which we could finally resolve the worrisome inconsistencies in our program.

The central problem was how to reconcile the introduction of the industrial vote with annulment of the political vote; how to harmonize De Leon's definition of Socialism in which control will be exercised by the people (the people as a whole!) with the existing concept of industrial democracy wherein control is not exercised by the people as a whole; that is, how to equate self-government of the producers with self-government of the people!

We could not do so.

The question that then propelled itself forward was the question of sovereignty; WHO in a true socialist democracy must needs be sovereign, (must decide and control economic and social policy)--the people as a whole or merely those actively engaged in the work force?
The answer to the question was of course immediately self-evident—the people must be sovereign.

Not immediately evident, however, were the means by which the people could become truly self-governing! The answer was there, awaiting recognition, but certain erroneous habits of thought blocked our perception—namely (1) Political democracy is synonymous with the political State, therefore (2) The Central Directing Authority of a Socialist Republic must needs be the All-Industry Congress of the projected industrial democracy.

Finally, after reflection, the way opened up. Political democracy is not synonymous with the political State; on the contrary, it will attain its fullest expression through abolition of the State. Socialist democracy is not industrial democracy instead of political democracy but a harmonious combination of both.

It but remained to look for the organ of socialist political democracy, the organ of self-government of a classless, industrial nation, the organ through which all the people could govern themselves.

We did not need to look long. Somewhere De Leon referred to political democracy as a "jewel" of civilization, albeit an encrusted one. Freed from the baneful effects of class rule, political democracy will afford more than freedom of voice and vote; it will institute political representation safeguarded (as will be industrial representation) by immediate recall! The form of socialist industrial representation and administration, based on industrial constituencies, is our heritage from the genius of De Leon; the form of political democracy, based on geographic constituencies, is another priceless bequest that from a more distant past. Now totally unsuited for the conduct of the processes of production and distribution, nevertheless would not such political form, revolutionized and reformed, be the one form yet conceived that would be well suited in our industrial age for the task of resolution by a Socialist Republic of the many social problems it would need to address? We are convinced that it would. In short, the political form as well as the industrial form being at hand, it now seems clear to us that the revolutionary act that will lock out the capitalist from the workplace and shatter his control of Congress and Parliament must not thereby merely clear the industrial field for inauguration of industrial democracy, but also the political field for inauguration of political democracy.

--from The De Leonist Review, P.O. Box 944 Station F, Toronto, Canada M4Y 2N9

(from page 2)

spits that produced both the SLP and the SP(GB).

Alan Kerr's letter continues his discussion of the use of force, not to accomplish the revolution, but to compel the capitalist state to have the ultimate (and final) election which the Socialist Party of Great Britain sees as the instrument by which our class will end wage slavery. Here, I think we see the theoretical inferiority of both branches of the Socialist Party of Great Britain to the DeLeonist (SLP) socialist industrial union program. Under the latter, regardless of how the capitalist state decides to handle the "revolutionary" election, our class will not wait for a vote on the
Dear Comrades,

I shall try to respond as briefly as I can to Dave Perrin's letter on the subject of reformism (DB69).

Dave contends, in opposition to my claim that "only economic reforms are reformist", that "there is no clear cut distinction to be made between supporting working class efforts to achieve economic and political reforms. Some reforms of both types can be welcomed and supported, most cannot." He continues to miss the point.

My argument was about the essential nature of economic reforms vis-a-vis political reforms, not their incidental consequences. What is that "reformists" seek to reform? Dave himself supplies the answer. Reforms are, he says, "specific proposals to alter the operation of the capitalist system on which support is then sought". Since the "capitalist system" is an essentially economic construction, the focus of such reforms must necessarily be economic.

Political reforms have a different focus. They are not concerned with "altering the operation of the capitalist system". Rather they are concerned with altering the political superstructure under which capitalism is administered. This is a crucial distinction. The problem with advocating economic reforms, or reformism strictly speaking, is that they come up against and are severely constrained by the impersonal laws of the market. Political reforms, on the other hand, are limited only by the political culture and outlook of the population - the "will of the people". The former, by definition, is not amenable to conscious control, the latter is.

I take it as read that, on the eve of capitalism, political democracy will be far more thoroughgoing and deep-seated than that passes for democracy today. This will be the inevitable consequence of the growth of the democratic movement for socialism. This is certainly the view of the Socialist Party and I take it that Dave similarly subscribes to this view. But what of the "operation of the capitalism system" to which he refers. Will an equivalent change be brought to the economic basis of present-day society by the growth of the socialist movement?

For those in the Socialist Party who think like Dave, this presents them with an intractable dilemma, there is no way around it except by reconceptualising the whole notion of "reformism". If the answer to the above question is no, then you have logically to accede to the essential distinction between economic and political reform. You would have to admit reform of the political structure can make considerable headway where economic reforms are bound, for the most part, to fail irrespective of size of the democratic movement for socialism.
If, on the other hand, the answer to the above question is yes then this renders problematic the entire critique of reformism. It would imply that the "immutable laws of capitalism" are anything but, and that they would be increasingly relaxed in proportion to the size of the movement against capitalism — presumably as a means of accommodating and containing the further growth of that movement.

I don't believe personally that this will happen to any great extent. What will happen instead, I believe, is the significant growth of non-market relations of production within the interstices of capitalist society which, by definition, could not be subject to the economic laws of capitalism and would reflect the desire of a growing socialist movement to transcend market-based relations of production. In other words the scope and extent of capitalist relations of production will contract in relation to the non-capitalist sector of production.

Critics of this scenario who doubt its plausibility should consider what is happening in Sub-Saharan Africa today. Here, against the global trend towards the marketisation of production, subsistence production has actually grown in comparison to the market economy over the last twenty years or so. More and more people are tending to produce more and more of their own food rather rely upon the market — a highly significant development in a largely agricultural society. Admittedly, this development has not been prompted by the growth of a socialist movement in this part of the world but by the parlious state into which so many African countries have sunk. But it does hint at the kind of mechanisms of structural change we can anticipate accompanying the worldwide growth of the socialist movement. For example, what is going to happen to the armaments industry when capitalist regimes are bound to find it increasingly difficult to persuade workers to kill each other for the sake of their profits? What is going to happen to the markets for consumerist status symbols when the consumerist ethos of the market is increasingly spurned? However you look at it, capitalism is going to be in a pretty sorry by the time we are a well established and substantial movement.

So what are workers going to about their own means of livelihood under these circumstances? I would suggest it is quite reasonable to assume that we will be doing, to an increasing extent, the equivalent of what African peasants are doing today. An example of one particular form in which this might happen is skill-swapping — "you dig my garden and I'll paint your house" — epitomised by the mushrooming LETS schemes in this country and elsewhere. Having said that I wish to respond Frank's characterisation of my (and Larry Gambone's) position that I believe that "by building alternative institutions within capitalism our class can gain self confidence and the conviction that cooperation is a viable alternative to competition".
Yes, I do believe this but I want to qualify that with the following caveats:

1. I do not believe that such institutions will in themselves lead to socialism. The establishment of socialism depends critically upon the growth of a political movement dedicated to that aim. It is this which will transform the nature of these institutions and that in turn will provide the vital feedback that will assist the further the growth of that movement.

2. I do not believe it is the business of a socialist political party to become practically involved in the advancement of such alternative institutions. This should be left to individuals. However, it is important that as a political party, we should avoid sounding derisive about such schemes. This is totally counter-productive. Our approach should rather be one of positive encouragement, at the same time pointing out the need to go further - the necessity of political action.

3. I do believe that political action is required because the advancement of such alternative institutions even when fuelled by the growth of socialist consciousness will not suffice to eliminate capitalism. In particular, they will still leave intact the "commanding heights of industry" as one comrade put it. These will need to be brought into common ownership and democratic control. But at the same time we must not underestimate the potential for encroachment by a non-market sector upon other less heavily-capitalised areas of production currently dominated by the market. After all, the growth of capitalist relations of production within the womb of feudal society was the necessary precursor of the famous capitalist revolutions of the past. Is there any reason to suspect that the socialist revolution of the future will be any different?

This brings me to my penultimate point. Dave contends that abolition of slavery is kind of economic reform which socialists could support. This is intended as a counter-example to my claim that while socialists could support political reforms establishing basic political rights, "there was no equivalent sense in which the [SPGB] advocates a set of economic reforms as an essential precondition for socialism".

Actually, the example is a bogus one. The abolition of slavery was not an economic reform of capitalism - anymore than is the growth of a non-market sector within capitalism. It is rather the expunging of a pre-capitalist feature existing alongside capitalism, an adjunct to it.

The distinction between political and economic reforms thus remains intact. In asserting that political reforms do not fall within the strict definition of reformism, I want finally
to point out that this in itself does not commit one to advocating such reforms. Dave contends that the advocacy of political reforms (over and above those to establish elementary political rights) is an "unnecessary diversion away from the struggle for socialism". Possibly he may right, though I have my doubts. But if you are going to reject advocacy of political reforms then reject this on these grounds, and not because this is reformist.

Not everything we reject, we reject because it is "reformist". We oppose religion, but religion is not reformism. We oppose leadership, but supporting leaders is not in itself reformist. We need to keep it absolutely clear in our mind what we mean by reformism and this is, in Dave's words, any attempt "to alter the operation of the capitalist system". To introduce any other extraneous element into this basic economic definition of reformism is to seriously impair the clarity and force of our critique of reformism.

Fraternally,

Robin Cox, 486 Caledonian Rd., London N7 9RP, England

(from page 16)

matter before they effectively occupy the industries, organize the SIUs, and carry on production for use. The idea that workers will wait until election day to have a revolution strikes me as absurd.

Pat Eytchison's "Invitation to Larry Gambone" defuses their previously less-than-friendly discussion on Marxist theory and carries it to a new level--the role of those engaged in theoretical work. Larry wrote his response after I sent him a copy of Pat's article. The major question they wrestle with, like Alan Kerr and most of us who see a social revolution in the offing, is what will cause our class to move, what will be the nature of that movement, and what can we do to hasten the process. Both Pat and Larry see the work of theoreticians as crucial at this stage of history.

Over the years the DB has exchanged publications with the Dutch councilist monthly Daad en Gedachte [Deed and Thought] in the hope that in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a center of Dutch immigration in the U.S., we would find someone capable of translating articles and willing to do so. We hadn't had much luck until we met Maana, a Dutch immigrant with the political savvy necessary for the job. She translated "Pearle Before Swine," which describes the reactions of a Dutch ex-stalinist to the writings of Herman Gorter, the councilist critic of Lenin and the Bolshevik revolution.

This is followed by Ron Albert's response to Robert Keller's--actually Murray Bookchin's--article in DB88. We close with some notes, announcements, and short reviews.
My criticism of Larry Gambone in DB 68 was harsh and so I can in no way complain about his harsh tone towards me in DB 69. I do feel, however, that his response to my criticism mostly failed to take note of substantial issues in Marxist thought and practice I was attempting to open for discussion (one does not deal with an adversaries' ideas simply by labeling them "ideology"). And I was particularly disappointed by Larry's failure to take note of what was (or at least what I thought was) the main point of my letter: the responsibility of intellectuals to take an explicitly revolutionary stance in society. But I'll let that drop.

More generally however, I feel that the quite different positions on Marx (and on socialist revolution generally) represented by Gambone and myself may offer a productive area for discussion. In this spirit, I want to state as clearly as I can just what my position is on several fundamental points, and I invite Larry Gambone to do the same. After that, I promise to keep quiet, on this particular controversy at least.

First, let me state a couple of areas where I find myself in substantial agreement with comrade Gambone: (1) I also feel there is something seriously wrong with Marxist theory as it stands and believe that real intellectual work needs to be done to advance it, and (2) I agree that "passivity, theoretical stagnation and isolation" are serious problems that must be overcome. So, where do we disagree?

Although I don't think this has been stated explicitly in our exchange, I think that probably the real - underlying - difference between Larry and I is that I believe socialism (communism) can only be achieved in the real world by protracted class warfare (something more or less like Gramsci's notion of positional class war). I think Larry does not feel this way; a lot of "quibbling over nuances" can follow from this kind of disagreement. More specifically, and more theoretically, I would hold that history is a system that inherently creates greater and greater exploitation, and that it necessarily will continue to do so until the system as system is discontinously transformed (necessarily through violence).

A second basic area of disagreement between Larry and I, I think, is over the issue of what has traditionally come to be called dialectical materialism. What I believe Marx really had in his mind as a fundamental philosophy (although he was not always unambiguous about this in his pronouncements) was a materialist version of Hegel's system: that is, the notion that material nature itself (not just "society") is moving dialectically to produce communism. This is a philosophic/scientific vision that has simply never been adequately dealt with in post-Marx and Engels Marxist thought, in my opinion; but this in no way proves it is not "real Marxism". My unpublished manuscript, History and Ecology, devotes 900 pages to such an
effort but it is obviously only a tentative foray.

I assume Gambone disagrees with all this but I would like to see him say so explicitly, and give his reasons.

Thirdly, I believe that Marx, although he saw nature as moving towards communism "on its own", also believed that this "on its own" included, and necessarily, the conscious work of revolutionary intellectuals and proletariat (work such as that carried out over a lifetime by he and Engels). I know Marx doesn't explicitly say these things, but his behavior as a revolutionary intellectual to my mind makes the message pretty clear. Marx, in other words, wrote himself into his own theory only by implication. One has to read between the lines -- which is essentially what Lenin did.

And finally - having uttered the shamed name - let me go on and say that I am sure Larry and I disagree on the issue of Leninism. If I didn't value the libertarian left tradition (and DeLeon), I obviously wouldn't be reading the Discussion Bulletin, but I think the issue of Leninism (and of vanguardism generally) is a lot more complicated than a lot of BB readers seem to think. Just because vanguard revolutions thus far have produced only state capitalist systems (to use the label loosely) doesn't mean that they necessarily must, or, more importantly, that socialism (communism) can be brought into being in the real world in any other way. As a person committed to proletariat liberation, I don't believe in throwing out the baby with the bath water -- however bloody it may unfortunately be.

I have my own ideas on why vanguardism has generally gone wrong, including some ways in which I think a "proper" vanguard cadre should operate: basically I think there should be a much greater emphasis on ("gentle") psycho-social nurturing, and on long-term community building. I even think that perhaps Larry Gambone may have more in common with me than he suspects when it comes to notions about organizing. But I can't know this unless he is a little more explicit about just what his ideas and positions as a socialist are. Rather than on and on statements of what he's not.

PAT EYTCHISON

(from page 20)

Bulletin Matters

Under this heading DB89 spoke of the economic health of the Discussion Bulletin in terms of just how to invest our surplus. Today that isn't a problem. Lacking copier health insurance and faced with the need for a roller transplant, we spent $301.36. These machines are incredibly expensive to maintain in good working condition. The technician tells me I can get what amounts to copier health insurance. For a half cent ($.05) per copy he will make house calls when the copier falls ill, make repairs, and provide parts. It would have been a good buy a bit earlier, had I known the roller was going out. The trouble is that the cost of this insurance can mount up when you realize that each issue of the DB requires around 5000 copies plus

(to page 27)
Dear DB,

This letter is largely in response to Pat Eytchison. You mention the notion of protracted class warfare. This is one way of putting it. I don't have much disagreement with this, though for most of the time class warfare would seem a bit hyperbolic. The vast majority of strikes, for example, are peaceful! Class struggle is, of course, the basis of my views on the transformation of society. Not much difference there, Pat.

As for society bringing about greater and greater exploitation and the necessity of overthrowing it through violence, I think these points are debatable. Note well, I said debatable, I did not say wrong. These are very complex problems in the modern setting and cannot be dealt with in a dogmatic fashion, one way or the other. (For in a short letter) Violence, of course, always accompanies social change, even if the movement is totally non-violent, the police often aren't. If by violence you mean a bloody civil war, that's another matter, this is unlikely in a developed society, unless it totally collapsed.

Sorry to see you still believe the old myth of "Hegel the idealist". Nor would I want to use the word "dialectical materialism" since it is indicative of the ideology developed by the II International epigones and their bastard Leninist offspring, having little to do with genuine dialectics. Surely you realize there is a small library of works attacking and demolishing dialectics from a marxist perspective? (And of the Hegel myth, as well) But I do like your "Dialectics of Nature" idea and am in 80% agreement. Evolution, both physiological and social has tended toward greater and greater complexity. Complexity means a need for increasing integration, hence society must become ever more social. But it is a big leap from that to saying Marx's communism will be the result. Other socialisms might be possible. Would like to read "History And Ecology".

While I obviously believe that socialism comes about "on its own" as an organic development, this does not mean that the conscious work of intellectuals and workers is unnecessary. There is something to the notion of the vanguard - all new developments start out with a minority. There is always an exemplary minority group, but they do not set themselves up as a boss - it is an organic, natural and often unconscious development. If their example or idea fits the workers needs, these are adopted and the "vanguard" melts back into the population. The problem is the self-styled vanguards, who are really just bureaucrats and an embryonic ruling class. If you speak of gentle-nurturing and community building you are hardly talking about Leninism. I do draw the line at Lenin. (And the less I say on that subject the better)

Nor can you make Marx out as a proto-Leninist. He certainly did not discount himself or other intellectuals from the movement, but this did not mean they were a vanguard. His position was outlined in the Manifesto quite clearly and has nothing in common with Leninism. It was not, and is not, an either-or situation. (either being outside the movement or forming a vanguard.)

As for my emphasis on ideology and the task of intellectuals, I see the chief task of intellectuals as that of criticizing ideology and dogma. Never in modern history (or at least since the
Populist Movement of the 1890's) has such a broad mass of people been discontented. Yet never has what passes for socialism been weaker. Are the workers stupid? I think not. One reason why we are so weak is because what we are putting out has no relevance to their lives what ever. What we have are gaslight-era dogmas on the one hand and crack pot "theories" on the other which go off the deep end and reject everything of the classical movement. (And even civilization itself)

Both positions are also largely useless in understanding society and developing theory as a means towards social change. What we must do is examine ideologies in light of empirical evidence and logic. (Let's put the science back in socialism) This was not the situation with Bernstein who drew conclusions about the petty bourgeoisie from only 20 years of data. (a shallow empiricism) we have 150, 180 years of working class and capitalist development to go on.

Everything I critique is something I once believed in, for the dialectic cannot be stopped - this is a matter of personal integrity - once the light of criticism is shined upon these beliefs you discover their weaknesses. To build a foundation one must have a very sound structure and ideology does not provide this. It is necessary to think critically, most especially those areas that you might accept without thinking. And anyone can criticize something he doesn't believe in, that's not real critical thinking. The genuine item is to engage in a perpetual auto-critique.

I can understand the resistance that some might have to what I have written. Dogmas, like old shoes, are comfortable. They do provide a certain stability in an apparently unstable world. However we are not here to provide psychological props for people, but to try to change things.

Why not work together to discover the flaws in marxist (and anarchist) thought? Why not in each issue, take a certain aspect of received leftist ideology and critically examine it to find its weak points? We would then discover what was still valid and out of these discoveries be able to construct a solid theoretical base from which to work. (If there is anybody out there interested in this sort of thing it would be nice if they could make it known through the pages of DB.)

Larry Gambone
In Discussion Bulletin for Jan/Feb 1995 Frank Girard says: "...Alan Kerr discusses what I consider a serious flaw in the programs of both the SP(GB) and the SPCB; the idea that socialists must take over the political state via elections in order to establish socialism. We find the same idea in the SLP's program. I think this... has been responsible for much of the mischief done under the name of socialism." Thankyou to Frank Girard for that response to my letter in that issue.

Capitalists, or those representing them, have control of the political state including the Police and Armed Forces. Forces which our own class need to use to organise and change society in our own interests.

Elections are the way to that political power. I could not deny that some rulers have been known to abdicate without holding elections first.

That would not matter. So long as political power is secured by the working class.

Our class must use political power. And do need to organise for political power through election. That is all.

But all this presupposes understanding our interests. The "mischief done under the name of socialism." is due to our class not being aware of our interests.

The SP(GB), SPCB and SLP are at loggerheads. Why? Because they each take different views affecting the political question. Frank Girard takes yet another and different view. This calls for discussion.

I've been trying to learn from the socialists who were expelled from the SP(GB) to form themselves into the newly reconstituted SPCB. A letter was sent to me by their North West London Branch. Here is what they write:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain
31st January 1994

Dear Alan,

Regarding your application for membership to Camden Branch, we have now heard from some of their members and the matter was discussed at our last Branch Meeting. I was instructed to send you the following resolution that was carried 7-nil.

"That Alan Kerr be written to. We understand that Camden Branch turned down his application for membership for the following reasons. a) 'his statement that socialists would have to use force to compel the capitalists to hold an election'. ...but he would not tell us what force it would be. b) his statement that... 'the MCH. continuing to operate after the establishment of Socialism.'"

Yours sincerely, C. May. General Secretary.
Letter from North West London Branch.

Unfortunately, Camden Branch's reasons "a" and "b", above, show signs of having been given late. For my application was turned down at a Camden Branch Meeting on 22nd June 1993.

"Force" was not mentioned. No statement on "force" was made. And since no question on "force" was asked, there was no refusal to tell us what "force" it would be.

I do not complain. The "a" and "b", above, are the best information we have, so far, of why Camden Branch are turning down my application. I thank them by co-operating with them to resolve those "reasons".

We can look back at some 1932 editorial from the original Socialist Party of Great Britain. The same editorial appeared on page 29 of the recent Discussion Bulletin, which was for Jan/Feb 1993. Please bear with me. This ought to resolve the reason "a", above, about "force" and what "force" it would be. The editorial says:
"Given a majority of the population determined to achieve socialism and politically organised for that purpose, they could obtain control of the political machinery by the vote unless the capitalists then in power decided to suspend democratic elections. ...steps would have to be taken to make the position of the usurping minority impossible... ...the organised majority would be hostile to the Government and able to interfere with the smooth running of industry... ...and the state machine would be unable to function on account of the conflicting views among civil and military employees... ...Even the capitalists themselves would be forced to see the necessity of choosing socialism in preference to chaos."

From editorial; page 156 of June 1932 Socialist Standard.

Camden Branch will please take notice that, it is not claimed that socialists would have to use "force" to compel the capitalists to hold an election. Obviously. It is recognised that, the whole question must depend on the situation existing at the time.

Neither is there any refusal to tell us what "force" it would be. The editorial tells us "force" would include; interference: "...with the smooth running of industry... ...conflicting views among civil and military employees..." (and) "...chaos." The editorial tells us that: "...Even the capitalists themselves would be forced to see the necessity of choosing socialism in preference to chaos."

With that 1932 editorial, and given that details cannot be known before they take place, the reason "a", above, is resolved. Or seems to be. If the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain feel that membership requires a better look at this question, then, please say so. With your help, I'll try my best.

I say only that this "seems to be" resolved. As concerning the real question of principle the same editorial could well seem to sit on the fence without committing itself, definitely, one way or the other. It says we; "...could obtain control of the political machinery by the vote unless..." What does this mean?

Is the "force", which is the subject of the editorial; is the interference "...with the smooth running of industry..." are the "...conflicting views among civil and military employees..." and is the "...chaos." In one word: Is this "force" meant to lead up to obtaining control of the political machinery by the voters? Or. Is this "force" meant to replace that machinery of political power?

I myself take the view that our class do need political power. That is why I want to support a political party. A political party for the working class. As was the original Socialist Party of Great Britain. Constituted in 1904.

I do not see how any situations or interference with industry or other "forces", can replace the political weapon. That would be anarchy.

Is the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain a political party? As a matter of Principle? Independently of whether some "capitalists" may or may not "decide" to suspend elections?

I close with this question to them:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain
Socialist Studies
Dear Socialists

My question is about anarchism and socialism.

I understand that you identify with the early editions of the Party journal, the Socialist Standard.
My question, about anarchism and socialism, relates to some early editorial.
It includes the following:

"Given a majority of the population determined to achieve socialism and politically organised for that purpose, they could obtain control of the political machinery by the vote unless the capitalists then in power decided to suspend democratic elections."

From editorial; page 156 of June 1932 Socialist Standard.

I do not question that socialists could obtain control of the political machinery by the vote. As the editorial says:

"Given a majority of the population determined to achieve socialism and politically organised for that purpose, they could obtain control of the political machinery by the vote..."

But the sentence continues, with the word "unless". It says:

"...unless the capitalists then in power decided to suspend democratic elections."

The editorial goes on to explain that:

"...steps would have to be taken..."

I do not question the form of your steps which must depend on the situation at the time. I do ask their purpose.

I claim that your "steps" must lead up to the transfer of political power to the majority. And this brings us to the question about anarchism and socialism.

Do you remain a true political Party? Or do you entertain the "step" of trying to take society over without Political Power as, for example, some "anarchists" have thought possible?

Yours for Socialism, Alan Kerr, 13 Hunting Farm, Green Lane, Ilford IG1 1YE England

(from page 22)

probably again as many for local projects and the pamphlets we are beginning to make by copier. DB recently printed 300 more copies of Chomsky’s pamphlet, and we expect to print a new title soon. The cost of publishing the pamphlets is included in the DB’s financial report as is the income from sales.

Finances

CONTRIBUTIONS: J.E. & C. $2; Illinois $1; Earl S. Gilman $4; Samuel Leight $17; Dave Zink $2; John Craven $7; Texas $20; Glen Johnson $7. Total $60. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE December 20, 1984 $314.92

RECEIPTS

Contributions $ 00.00
Subs and sales $147.45
Total $207.45

(to page 28)
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

When Erich Honecker, the former party leader of the also former DDR (East Germany), passed away in Chile recently, one of the Dutch media interviewed a former admirer, Joop Wolff, a major figure in the, again, former CPN (Communist Party of the Netherlands). We will not go into great detail, but Wolff did make two strange declarations. He said, "By chance I have just been reading Herman Gorter. Gorter wrote about 'golden communism.' Now you see what has become of that communism."

"That communism" of which Wolff spoke was actually an economic system called by Gorter state capitalism, a system that has nothing in common with the [Russian] communism that Wolff defended for decades through thick and thin as real communism.

Wolff's words prove not only that he has "eaten little cheese" [does not know much about] communism; they also prove that his reading of Gorter has not been very fruitful, and that he misunderstands what Gorter really said and meant. For Joop Wolff, Gorter's writings are 'pearls before swine.' Mr. Wolff seems to wear the same blinders as before.

Another pronouncement by Wolff was not less strange: "We have," he said, "learned in the meantime that a two-party system is better than one party. And in a way three parties are even better." Wolff could have learned from one of Gorter's co-workers [Pannekoek?] that parties are institutions of the capitalistic society and that therefore a one-party system belongs to a special sort of capitalism. Wolff could have learned that, were it not that he has proved once again that it is extremely hard for him to comprehend things.

(from page 27)

DISBURSEMENTS

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard -- for the DB
I read the reprint of Robert Keller's article in *Discussion Bulletin-68* ("When Socialists Discovered They Were Liberals") and thought it was very well taken. As a world socialist myself, I found a certain resonance in Keller's argument; a little too bombastic, maybe, but a pretty good assessment of the Left in general. I thought I might entertain you with a few of my own (personal and hypothetical) ideas on triumphant capitalism's immediate economic and political future:

1. Capitalism no longer has an "environmental problem." It has a looming infrastructural problem that incorporates its own success at vitiating the earth's biosphere. Grappling with the environmental crisis will tear into the projected viability of markets. Costs of reversing and preventing the ecological ravages of a capitalism organized on the "machine paradigm" will become too massive to continue sweeping under the carpet as the "hidden costs" of progress. The result will be an unpleasant surprise in the form of a sudden vertical rise in the replacement costs of fixed capital and an across-the-board increase in the costs of doing business generally. (Uncle Gorb did merely oiling the squeakiest of the wheels with his little "perestroika.") The consequent shock wave this implies for the cost of living will tighten everyone's Adam's apple as each of the market system's billions of competing egocentric individualists—all that is left of our common humanity—hunkers down to fine-tuning a variety of throat-cutting techniques.

2. Out of the current scramble for competitive positions in the new global marketplace (or "world order," as Uncle Gorb put it) will come a parallel scramble for political advantage centered around a Green rationale. The parties of today will melt away (although they might not change their names) as new groupings emerge in pursuit of regrouped investor interests seeking to profit from the tougher conditions of a harsher marketplace. These born-again investors will all pray to the altar of "saving the planet" and will send out the multinational troops to ensure that everyone gets a fair share, starting with the first in line. A new opposition sector will gradually coalesce as small capital finds its way through the expanding maze of complications; "socialism" in its previously accepted slang variations will find itself absent from the trendy new opposition vocabulary. In fact, virtually all of the old debates, positions and arguments will disappear into oblivion as far as this emerging opposition is concerned.

3. The first two considerations will combine with a renewed interest in labor organizing, but this time with an international emphasis, to generate yet another—expanded—version of the same old class struggle. The old
social structures and economic arrangements liquidated over the past half-century by the capitalist world system in its imperialist phase have finally collapsed, and the vast majority of a much larger world population have been incorporated into that system. What used to be “the world” is now little more than a gargantuan employment agency slipping into ever more degraded forms of daily survival. Unions may or may not survive in their present form, but the sheer momentum of capitalist mobility will force some kind of attempted organizing reaction from the exploited workers (belated, of course, and chronically lagging behind the reality, as usual). Working-class politics will have yet another go at warming to the chase of an employer-elite that continues outwitting it at every turn. The old reformism that used to put on socialist airs will no longer be in fashion: like the new reformism of the employers, it will be tamer, grayer and more boring—even as the media’s expertise in propaganda stunts shifts into high gear on the “information superhighway.” People will be hating each other more, but the language of political discourse will itself become hatefully uninteresting in the process.

4. The long-term decline in the average rate of profit—which capitalists think of as a “crisis of profitability”—will combine with all of the above tendencies to produce an overall outcome embodying most of what the Left has hitherto brandished as one set or another of “immediate demands.” Accumulating capital will become more of a “burden of conscience” with all of the problems besetting the rate of profit (first of which, as noted, will be its unmerited, ungrateful smallness). The Left will find itself knighted by the scepter of an aging Capital and charged with rejuvenating the emperor’s gouty old body. The status quo will become dominated by what used to be the “progressives,” forming an historically new type of nest of reactionaries, as the capitalist class itself sinks into a self-pitying defeatism, and the required working-class heroes step forth to rise to the challenges of a “new agenda.” This reconstituted class struggle will be fought—often viciously—by workers against workers, in a language everyone finds too faintly interesting to learn very well to speak, and buried under reasons too arcane to matter very much. Businesses will be wholly staffed and managed by workers, with investors merely issuing orders from the security of their globally-warmed resorts (practicing safe sun), and perhaps even entrepreneurs—chafing at the prospect of an overload of stressful responsibilities—delegating more high-level drudgery to the dirty workers.

I’ve presented this (rather pessimistic-sounding) scenario in a language of future prediction, but of course nothing is so tenuous as predicting the
future. The obvious grey area is the question: what will people who sell their working abilities to stay alive be thinking—what will they be doing socially and economically—in terms of wealth production—all the while this gutting of any sense of human community, in or out of the workplace, keeps the world going to the dogs? The Left has traditionally disparaged the working class's ability to launch revolutionary projects (like replacing outright capitalism's painful order of privilege with one of equality and enjoyment). This is not too surprising, considering that most people take a rather proceduralistic view of organizing: they never fail to let you know how hard it is to get any agreement for achieving even limited objectives—to say nothing of finishing off an entire system; they will generally settle for whatever results they can get now. But anyone who is interested in abolishing the tyranny of employment-slavery should be pondering what lies in the unexplored darkness of the working-class mind, learning to anticipate the moment when the majority of the world's workers finally discover what an incredible mess capitalism has made of human society. The more interesting question is, how do people assess revolutionary organizing when they view it in terms of their class interest?

Incidentally, I just can't let pass Frank Girard's comment in DB-69 (“...the idea that socialists must take over the political state via elections in order to establish socialism” as being “responsible for much of the mischief done under the name of socialism”). In the first place, any mischief done under the name of socialism has ultimately owed itself to a mistaken identification of reforms of capitalism with its abolition, not to an excess of ideological fervor by socialists who supposedly knew what they were talking about; and secondly, DeLeonists have proven time and again they don’t understand the emphasis placed by world socialists on temporarily controlling the machinery of government. Where “socialists” in both the 19th and 20th centuries have gone wrong—and will probably be mimicked by others, more accomplished in denying and blocking, in the 21st—is to confuse governing capitalism with presiding over its termination. World socialism still requires the immediate worldwide abolition of the wages system, and that implies a country-by-country act of political coordination by the working class at the point of revolution. What workers think is part of that “geography.” Humans are political animals: establishing socialism has its political as well as its social and economic sides. (Of course, hip workers might someday be making similar remarks about somebody else’s “remnant of 20th-century thinking,” for all that.)

Ron Elbert
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

BULLETIN OF THE SOCIAL LABOR MOVEMENT, Number 2, the Summer 1984 issue, will delight socialist history buffs. Perhaps the most valuable item in this "unbiased journal regarding SLP history" is Ben Perry's annotated transcription of De Leon's 1888 Datebook/Diary. It is especially interesting because 1888 was the year of the split that resulted in the organization of the Socialist Party a year later. The Datebook contains De Leon's personal and private comments on some of the people and issues involved. This and the 1896 Datebook, published in BSLM 1 are the only two that have survived the years. In his introduction Perry tells us that De Leon's handwriting didn't improve between 1896 and 1899; a facsimile page or two attests to the truth of his statement. Much of this issue deals with SLP publications of the 1880s. There are articles on the Socialist Tract Association, the Labor Review and the original Bulletin of the Social Labor Movement as well as articles on De Leon and anarchism, the 1920 SLP Presidential campaign and the history of a British DeLeonist group, the British Section, International Socialist Labour Party (BSILP), which expired after WWII. The future of the BSLM is unsure. Perry's column, "By the Editor" tells us that "He" was diagnosed as having a brain tumor, basically inoperable." He has begun work on BSLM 3, but "The future of the BSLM is clearly uncertain." $5 per issue from Livra Books, 422 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia, PA 19118

CORRECTION. I have been asked to retract my assertion on page 23 of DB68 that the SLP, like the SPGB, accepts "...the idea that socialists must take over the state via elections in order to establish socialism." I do so with some reservations: for example, in DeLeonist parlance, does "establishing socialism" include the legal act of disestablishing capitalism?

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