Published by the Discussion Bulletin Committee, I.U.C.E.

Address all correspondence to
DISCUSSION BULLETIN, P.O. Box 1564, Grand Rapids, Mi 49501

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About This Issue.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a Libertarian Socialism, Chris Faatz</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of <em>Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism</em>, Nick Melchior</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Bookchin and His Critics: a Review, Frank Girard</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Comments on the “Declaration of Independence for the American Working Class, Sher Singh</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply to Sher Singh, Connie Furdeck</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, John Spitzler</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Competition Myth: The Real Meaning of the Last Twenty-five Years, New Democracy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply to “The Competition Myth,” <em>New Unionist</em></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Dave Stratman’s <em>We Can Change the World</em>, Connie Furdek</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, Jeff Stein</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, Neil Fettes</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lines Are Being Drawn</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Groups of the Proletarian Political Milieu, Internationalism</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musings ... 10.16.1996, William Hewitson</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT THIS ISSUE

I managed to print and mail out DB81 before I learned from a friend that I had lost a year. You will find this issue dated 1997. There was also a copier problem here, and because it is hard to get repairs during the week between Christmas and New Years Day, DB81 went out a week later than usual. A couple of other matters also deserve space. One is the matter of verbal intensity. Both DB80 and 81 contained material relating to Noam Chomsky and David Stratman that came close to (or actually did) violate the stricture on page 2: "As to content, we assume that submissions will be relevant to the purpose of the

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 of vanguardists 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 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.

Subscription Information

The Discussion Bulletin is published bi-monthly. Prices below are in U.S. currency.

U.S.: Individual Subscription $3; Library $5
Non-U.S.: Surface Mail Individual sub $5; Library $10
Air Mail Individual sub $10; Library $15

Back Issues: Nos. 1-8 $2 each, Nos. 9+ $1 each plus postage.

Expiration: The last issue of your subscription is indicated by the number on your address label. When your sub expires, we highlight it to remind you.

Sample Copies: A sample copy is sent on request. We mail copies not used to fill subscriptions to people on our extended mailing list.
Once Again, Folks....
TOWARD A LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM
by Chris Faatz

"By 'socialism' I mean a classless society in which the State has disappeared, production is cooperative, and no man [sic] has political or economic power over another. The touchstone would be the extent to which each individual could develop his [or her] own talents and personality." --Dwight Macdonald, *The Root Is Man* (1946)

At one point in the not-so-distant past, a friend and I were discussing certain people--Victor Serge, Gustav Landauer, Daniel Guerin—who attempted to combine the liberatory vision of social anarchism with the rigorous analytical method of Marxism in a libertarian marxist, or libertarian socialist form. While the discussion, at that time, didn't really progress too far, it hardly died altogether, and has been festering in the back of my mind ever since.

Recently, the whole issue was brought vividly back to life in my reading of social ecologist Murray Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, a book which quite effectively—if somewhat vitriolically—dismantles the "anarcho-primitivism" and anti-rationalism of large elements of the anarchist milieu (at least in North America: see the paper *Fifth Estate*, or the works of Hakim Bey or John Zerzan as illustrations of this current). As Bookchin describes it, "lifestyle anarchism" emphasizes "personal insurrection rather than general revolution... as opposed to social anarchism, with its roots in historicism, the social matrix of individuality, and its commitment to a rational society."

Social anarchism, on the other hand, is summarized as "heir to the Enlightenment tradition, with due regard to that tradition's limits and incompleteness. Depending on how it defines reason, social anarchism celebrates the thinking human mind without in any way denying passion, ecstasy, imagination, play, and art. Yet rather than reify them into hazy categories [as lifestyle anarchists are prone to do--CFJ], it tries to incorporate them into everyday life. It is committed to rationality while opposing the rationalization of experience: to technology, while opposing the 'mega-machine,' to social institutionalization, while opposing class rule and hierarchy; to a genuine politics based on the confederal coordination of municipalities or communes by the people in face-to-face democracy, while opposing parliamentarism and the state."

This is, as I see it, and as Bookchin makes clear in the second essay in this book, "The Left that Was: A Personal Reflection," a compelling socialist vision, albeit of a very specific type, as well. Indeed, throughout this little book the argument is implicit (and, on occasion, explicit) that, in the end, there's very little difference between a coherent social anarchist and libertarian socialist vision--it's all just a matter of words.

Refreshingly enough in this age of relentless analysis and little prescription, Bookchin goes on to offer a libertarian left *program* around which such a rational, humanistic, pluralistic socialist project could—and might—cohere. Bookchin emphasizes four points as central to such a program: confederal forms (a "commune of communes" as he puts it at another point); opposition to statism, class oppression, and hierarchical forms of social organization; a belief in direct democracy; and what I can only call delightedly "the vision thing," i.e., a picture, however fuzzy, of what a libertarian society might look like. He then goes on to insist that:

The most important issue that left-libertarianism—libertarian socialism no less than anarchism—faces today is: What will it do with these four powerful tenets? How will we give them social form and content? In what ways and by what means will we render them relevant to our time and bring
them to the service of an organized popular movement for empowerment and freedom?

These are all interesting and challenging questions, and for those of us who have emerged from the hermetically-sealed worlds of those parts of the left that Bookchin has little patience with, they are perhaps the most challenging of all the issues he raises. Of course, to be fair, one must recognize that those who adhere to some form of Leninism or social democracy would find this program, and the resulting questions, noxious, petty-bourgeois nostrums at best, downright reactionary utopian misleadership at worst.

But, we live in a world where time-hallowed assertions are changing, where orthodoxies of all sorts are fraying in the face of never-before imagined realities, and where serious people are seriously examining the history and trajectory of movement(s) for social change—and for revolution. In the context of the environmental crisis, such a vision of decentralization and direct, grassroots democracy make more than a little sense. In an age of particularistic obsession on large parts of the left, whether it be with race, gender, or sexuality, the universalist message of Bookchin’s argument virtually cries out to be heard. And, in the post-Bolshevik era, the focus on the centrality of the individual and of a radical localism is, at the very least, reassuring, if not downright inspiring. At least in my heart and mind, the cogent libertarian, liberatory thrust of Bookchin’s argument cuts right to the bone.

Indeed, there’s something of the prophetic in Bookchin’s assertions. His ideal society is one that is compelling, beautiful, and starkly and eminently human and humanizing. It’s something that’s far out there on the horizon—and just beyond our grasp, as convincingly argued in such earlier work as Post-Secrecy Anarchism. And, let’s face it: prophets don’t wait for reality to catch up with them before they start bellowing from the mountaintops—at least not when the reality is as sordid as the one that has today so effectively shackled the popular mind, and is winding its poisonous course across the face of our planet.

* * *

In the book’s second essay, Bookchin relates his views of “how the left once was,” highlighting the phrases of the pre-Bolshevik experience, and emphasizing, once again, that “vision thing.” He stresses confederation, anti-militarism (as opposed to pacifism), internationalism (Lenin’s “opportunistic” kowtowing to the nationalist aspirations of his period, in Bookchin’s mind, helped lay the seeds of the crisis of particularism as opposed to an internationalist universalism that was to come), the radically-democratic spirit, and the rational secularism that molded the pre-Bolshevik left’s worldview and principled interventions.

While one can’t disagree really with the overall thrust of Bookchin’s arguments, it’s here in the details that his tendency for narrowness and dogmatism, his tendency to insist, ironically enough, on One True Path come forth. These are, perhaps, niggling points, but I feel they must be made.

For example, he disparages the “broken rifle” of contemporary pacifism as compared to a glorified radical “anti-militarism” of an earlier age, the ideal of an entire citizenry in arms against the state or the class enemy. In doing so, he seems to forget that the flame of the Left that he holds so dear was kept, at least in part, flickering by the radical conscientious objectors and absolutist pacifists of World Wars I and II, of Korea and Vietnam, with their refusal on all fronts to cooperate with the state or with the killing machine that is capital at its most feverish. He shrugs off the experience and influence of organizations such as Peacemakers, or its precursor, the Committee for Nonviolent Revolution, of periodicals such as Dwight Macdonald’s marvelous and irritating Politic, and he pays no attention whatsoever to the role that such organizations and others of their ilk, or of individuals such as A.J. Muste and Barbara Deming, played in
keeping the memory, practice, and, above all else, principles of a more humane and humanizing left alive in the face of overwhelming opposition by the status quo.

Indeed, it's arguable that, without the existence of such radical pacifists and their consistent and principled witness and actions, alongside that of the rump IWW, SLP, left communists, and the tiny, fractured anarchist groups of the period, the light of Bookchin's "left that was" would have flickered out altogether.

There's another weakness, in my mind, one shared by most of the secular left, and still capable of raising the hackles of comrades of almost any flavor. That, of course, is the question of religious radicalism. To keep it brief, one need look no further than the Catholic Worker movement, and its stance for sixty-plus years, or the reality of base-community organizing in liberation theology to realize the role that radical religious can and do play in keeping alive and advancing the vision that Bookchin describes. To ignore them is folly, to attack them is sectarian. They are, whether we like it or not, a vital and living part of our tradition. I, for one, like it very much, and anticipate that we'll be seeing much more, rather than less, organizing along left libertarian lines among persons of faith—Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and none-of-the-aboves alike—in the days and years to come.

* * *

Can such a libertarian, decentralist vision be melded with the "scientific" analysis of Marx and Engels? How can the innumerable lessons of Russia and the USSR, of the Ukraine, Germany, Italy, Spain, China, Hungary, Cuba, etc., etc. be integrated into such a vision, creatively and without mindlessly reiterating the ideological certitudes—half-truths, at best—that so many of us have, quite literally, spouted for decades to no avail? Organizationally, what is called for in such a vision of a libertarian socialist movement, playing a prophetic and principled role in the class struggle and the battles of all the oppressed for a world of true justice and harmony—for the cooperative commonwealth of all humankind? In a pluralistic movement, what means are most appropriate in advancing such a vision? How might fluidity and continuing openness to new ideas and experience be insured? Can we return to a vision of the individual and her or his fulfillment in community as key, leaving behind the fetish of five year plans, industrialization, and production for production's sake as the relic of an earlier period from which we have learned much, but have now passed by? Could such a distinct tendency operate across organizational boundaries, advancing a broad left-libertarian line, while loyally building, say, the IWW, the NUP, the IWA, Solidarity, the left of the Socialist Party, Class War, or Love and Rage? If such were the case, as unlikely as it sounds, how could work and focus and vision be coordinated?

Ideological hairsplitting is not the monopoly of any one tendency on the far left. Nor is sectarianism, and the inability to see the values of another's experience and practice. But, it seems to me, the kinds of principles and vision that Bookchin elucidates are the kind that can draw many of the fragments of the far left together again, however loosely, in a kind of phoenix rising of the "left that was."

In short, is there a possibility for the construction and advancement of a liberatory vision of the left freed from shackles of all kinds, and wedded to the drive to move forward to a confrontation with history, organically rooted in a culture of struggle and an understanding of the real world, and armed with a vision of the immense potentials inherent in a society dedicated to the sacred nature of human personality?

Bookchin writes that "present society is totally irrational and must be replaced by one that is guided by reason, an ecological ethics, and a genuine concern for human welfare." He adds, though, that "Any attempt to adapt the rational 'should' to the irrational 'is' vacates that space on the political spectrum that
should be occupied by a Left premised on reason, freedom, and ecological humanism."

There's no halfway. The prophets are bellowing from their mountaintops, and the world cries as never before for liberty and justice. What, then, are we waiting for?

Chris Faatz, 1701 Broadway #211, Vancouver, WA 98663 cfaatz@teleport.com

Book Review
Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: an Unbridgeable Chasm
by Murray Bookchin, AK Press, 1995 reviewed by Nick Melchior

INTERNATIONALLY, there is a crisis facing the anarchist movement. More and more people are choosing to view anarchism not as a revolutionary movement toward a better world, but as a lifestyle. Anarchism to these people means back to nature primitivism, or the right to party. Organization of any kind is viewed as "un-anarchistic." There is no aim for a better world for all people, just for a relaxed life away from "the man."

The two essays in this book contain Bookchin's analysis of what he believes is happening to the only movement that offers true hope for the complete liberation of humanity and the earth on which we live. Essentially, Bookchin is afraid that the power of anarchism as a force of social change will be co-opted by lifestyle anarchism. He believes that lifestyle anarchism places far too much importance on individualism and fulfillment of the desires of individuals, ignoring the wider social picture.

The second essay in this book is "The Left that Was." In this, Bookchin compares the present situation of the Left at large to the Left of the early twentieth century. It looks at today's Left in terms of its pacifism, nationalist tendencies, and its lack of democratic process. In Bookchin's eyes, this contrasts starkly with the old Left's antimilitarism and internationalism. Bookchin makes a forceful case for exactly why the Left has changed like it has, and what hope (or lack of hope) there is for the future.

Murray Bookchin, now in his seventies, is generally regarded in both environmental and anarchist circles as one of the most important political writers alive today. Bookchin's long history of involvement in political activism has given him an insight into political movements that only a sense of history and experience can achieve.

Bookchin is very much an academic, and his style of writing reflects this. He is also greatly concerned with anarchism as a "revolutionary tradition," and bases his analysis on this concept. As a result there are many references to historic anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, and Max Stirner, whether or not he considers them as part of this tradition. However, the ideas of these people are well explained throughout the text.

Similarly, when Bookchin discusses and critiques more contemporary thinkers, such as the American Hakim Bey, or journals such as Anarchy or Fifth Estate, he explains the ideas thoroughly. As a result, though a reader would feel more comfortable if they had at least a basic knowledge of the people and magazines that Bookchin discusses, it is still easy to understand the points he is trying to make. Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism presents us with a choice. Anarchists here in Aotearoa should take note.

[Reprinted from The State Adversary, Autumn 1996, PO Box 9263, Te Aro, Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand.]
Murray Bookchin and His Critics

_Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm_ by Murray Bookchin. 86 pages paperback, $7.95/L5.95 from AK Press, PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140

*Fifth Estate*, “Excerpts from _Beyond Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology_” by George Watson, and “‘Life-Style’ vs. ‘Social’ Anarchism: An Historical Note on the Correct Thoughts of Chairman Bookchin” by Peter Sabatini, Fall 1996 Fifth Estate, $2 from 4632 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48201. (Watson’s book is published by Black and Red/Automedia; 256 pages, $8 ($+1.24) from Fifth Estate.

_Murray Bookchin: Nature’s Prophet—“Negating Bookchin”_ by Joel Kovel and “Ecology and Anthropology in the Works of Murray Bookchin” by Alan Rudy. 68 pages $3.00 from CNS/CPE, PO Box 8467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

A longtime—perhaps the longest—observer and valuble critic of the American anarchist scene, Murray Bookchin sees what he regards as a rapid deterioration in American anarchism. Historically anarchism has always had two contending strains: the individualist/personal/autonomous anarchism of Proudhon, Godwin, Tucker, and even Emma Goldman and the social anarchism of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, and Berkman. But even in the early days among the ideological ancestors of contemporary “lifestyle” anarchism, one could find a social component. Certainly Proudhon, Goldman and others did not divorce their concern for their own individual freedom from the society in which they lived. Indeed the individualist strain declined in the latter years of the last century with the rise of the working class movements and the growth of the communist anarchism of Kropotkin and Maximoff and the anarcho-syndicalism (in the U.S.) of the Haymarket martyrs and (in Europe) of the International Workers Association (IWA).

The concentration on self and neglect of societal concerns typical of the current generation of anarchists has prompted this latest of Bookchin’s comments on the subject. He sees the beginning of the trend as early as the youth rebellion of the sixties when the individual rejection of the capitalist state and capitalist values dissipated itself in the drugs and music scene while the Marxist-Leninist sects took over the anti-war/anti-racism movements. In a footnote he mentions the devotion of Bob Dylan from the social involvement implicit in “Blowing in the Wind” to the personal of “Sad-eyed Lady of the Lowlands.” Perhaps the most threatening of the developments is the emergence through individualist anarchism of the libertarian movement, which he speaks of as “capitalist anarchism” as opposed to the “communist anarchism.” What seems to have accelerated the current devolution in the anarchist movement is the collapse of state capitalism in the former USSR and in Eastern Europe.

The meat of the book, however, is Bookchin’s examination of the major threads of lifestyle anarchism through the writings of their major prophets. Beginning with L. Susan Browne, he tests their views of anarchism against what he sees as the great distinction in the movement: that between _freedom_, which he sees as social, and _autonomy_, which he identifies with the personal or individual. He sees the intellectual movement away from the social aspect of anarchism to an egoistic concentration on one’s own autonomy as the root of the lifestyle anarchism of Browne’s existential anarchism. Hakim Bey’s exaltation of the self in the TAZ (Temporary Autonomous
Zone) describes the actions of the individual in the transient world of group celebrations--like
the week long anarchism of the Rainbow Children--or the individual's personal dreamworld.
For Bookchin these and similar perversions of anarchism with their reliance on mysticism
sidestep completely the major bulwark of the social reality of our time, capitalism and its
political and economic control of the humanity.

In the process of examining the various species of deviant anarchy Bookchin considers
neo-primitivism--a step away from lifestyle anarchism but certainly worthy of discussion. Here
he takes on George Bradford and Fifth Estate, John Zerzan and Anarchy, as well as a large
element in the anarchist movement who see the solution to social problems and especially the
ecological, to which they give primacy, in the return to a pre-industrial society. Bookchin
marshals the evidence to show that, contrary to the neo-primitivists our ancestors 1) did not live
in an environment of play and plenty, 2) did not succeed universally in escaping hierarchy, even
in pre-agricultural society, and 3) were anything but non-exploitative of their environment.

Appended to the pamphlet is his 1991 essay of 20 pages, "The Left That Was: A Personal
Reflection." To this generation of revolutionaries, the term "left" is a reproach. It refers to
capitalism's leftwing of Leninists and social democrats who stand ready to take over capitalism
and its state and provide the leadership to run it for the working class. From the vantage point of
a few years more seniority than I have, Bookchin experienced the Thirties and remembers a
period in the history of the movement when it was not encumbered with third world nationalism,
Leninist reformism, and academic Marxism.

Within a few days of my getting Bookchin's pamphlet, the Fifth Estate of Fall 1996 with
excerpts from Watson's new anti-Bookchin book and Sabatini's essay arrived as well as the
pamphlets by John Kovel and Alan Rudy. The essence of Peter Sabatini's essay is contained in
this sidebar: "Bookchin is beating a dead horse trying to breathe life into an old controversy
within the anarchist movement that dates back a century." He then proceeds to review the same
historical territory Bookchin covers and from much the same perspective except that he shows
the social implications of such individualist anarchists a Proudhon and Stirner and the American
Benjamin Tucker. Without engaging Bookchin's critique of Browne, Hakim Bey, and
Zerzan--"they can defend themselves"--Sabatini decries Bookchin's divisive use of the prefixes
"lifestyle" and "social" to denote a "chasm" that he fails to recognize (or prefers to ignore).
Instead he advances a concept of "anarchism without adjectives," a call for a broad anarchist
movement that can contain all its elements.

In his introduction to Fifth Estate's five tabloid pages of excerpts from the new book, Beyond
Bookchin: Preface for a Future Social Ecology by George Watson (aka George Bradford), Steve
Melzer describes the fifteen-year evolution in the thinking of the FE staff that brought them from
a general agreement with Bookchin's social ecology to new concept of social ecology whose
debt to their one-time mentor is little more than that to a springboard that launched them on a
quest beyond Bookchin to a new social ecology.

As nearly as I can see from the excerpts, Watson roots his need to go beyond Bookchin in the
latter's rejection of such neo-primitivist articles of faith as the idea that pre-agricultural societies
luxuriated in abundance and that industrial society cannot be harnessed to serve the society rather than capital. Watson's perception that Bookchin has become an increasingly cranky and authoritarian theoretician seems also to have contributed to the critique. Other factors seem to be the Marxism he finds in Bookchin's ideas, differences in their interpretations of Lewis Mumford's writings, and Bookchin's recent opus on lifestyle anarchism, which Watson sees as unfairly lumping him with John Zerzan and others with whom he has profound differences.

Joel Kovel and Alan Rudy analyze Bookchin from an entirely different viewpoint: that of academic Marxism and--one suspects--market socialist leftist. Like Watson, Kovel seeks to examine the whole body of Bookchin's work, in which--as a former disciple of Bookchin--he finds much to agree with. To accommodate this dichotomy in his thinking, he proposes a fictional "good" Bookchin B1 and a bad, B2. B1, according to Kovel, is the Bookchin and social ecology of public record; B2 reflects the subtext of ideas that Kovel infers from Bookchin's writings. These include what he regards as evidence of Bookchin's contradictory ideas about hierarchy, Marx, and ecology and other aspects of his work. As the title implies, Rudy's essay examines the anthropological basis on which Bookchin has constructed his social ecology. These include the extent of nature's bounty, the origin of domination--and thus hierarchy and class divisions. Bookchin's misreading of these has produced, so we are told, a host of unresolved contradictions that require an entirely new analysis if we are to have a useful social ecology.

Even though it will reveal my own intellectual limitations, I can't end this without commenting on the difficult level of academese in Rudy's essay (a characteristic not missing from the those of Bookchin, Watson, and Kovel, for that matter). I'm tempted to quote Rudy's final sentence as an illustration of the "inaccessibility," of parts of his and the other material reviewed here, but I regard DB readers as friends. The essays by Rudy and Kovel are part of a collection, Anarchism, Nature, and Society: Critical Perspectives on Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology, edited by Andrew Light and forthcoming from Guildford Publications, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012.

--Frank Girard

(From p. 2)

DB and will avoid personal attacks. The second matter has to do with the process used in producing the DB. We take your submissions as we receive them and cut and tape them to 8 1/2 by 11 pages. Then we tape two pages together and shrink them by 17 percent so that they fit onto 8 1/2 by 14 inch sheets. The size of the pages as readers find them in the DB they receive is then 7 by 8 1/2. The problem we have is that writers for the DB, in an effort to help us out, are formatting their pages to fit the 7 by 8 1/2 page size. Writers who assume instead that we prefer a typed line of seven inches so that the left and right margins are 3/4 of an inch and the top and bottom margins are one inch will be helping out the DB's production department.

Now to this issue. The reaction to Murray Bookchin's most recent book, Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: The Unbridgeable Chasm has resulted in DB82 taking on the characteristics of a Bookchin issue, just as DBs 80 and 81 were Chomsky issues. Chris Faatz sees Bookchin as the prophet whose voice and ideas could bring to life those elements of "the left that was" which have managed to survive 75 years of Leninist and social democratic hegemony over what passes for capitalism's opposition. At one time (pre-WWI) "the left that was" embraced the whole spectrum of a movement that, theoretically

(To p. 13)
Some Comments on “Declaration of Economic Independence for the American Working Class”

Dear DB readers,

In DB 77 (May-June 96) the write-up of Constance Furdech reflects views that seem to us to be quite widespread amongst DB readers. Hence these brief comments.

1. Once terms like “the American Working Class” / “the Indian Society” are accepted uncritically, declarations of economic independence for it/them follow as corollaries. The fact that for over five hundred years now a social process has been unfolding that has engendered a society that as one entity spans the earth today is simply overlooked. The paraphernalia notwithstanding, produce has become GLOBAL PRODUCE and it is its parceling-out that lies at stake. It is in this parceling-out that exchange rates, taxation policies, “sovereignties” act as camouflage for outmoded structures all over the world.

The author and her New Unionist friends, probably together with a some wage-workers in America, “have come to the conclusion that we have no choice but to break away from the capitalist system” (author’s emphasis). But dear friends, whatsoever be your desires and efforts, you cannot “breakaway from” but have to “overthrow” the existing reality and this requires global efforts-global linking of wage-workers. See if instead of “the American Working Class”, the term “Wage-workers in America” would help.

2. We do not understand anything when the author says that it is a self-evident truth that humans “are endowed by Nature with certain unalienable Economic and Social rights” (emphasis by the author).

As far as we can see, “Economic and Social” rights and wrongs are human creations and dear poor Nature has hardly had a say regarding them. But this is by the way.

More disturbing is when the author says that “among these rights are fulfilling work, full compensation for labor, democracy on the job and in society”. Fulfilling work? What efforts have been made over generations to overcome this torture called work! Accumulated in knowledge, skill and material forms has the capacity to increase labor productivity making it a means to minimize/overcome work. The process of overcoming hardships through accumulating labor in knowledge, skill and material forms at certain stages in different parts (tiny parts) of the globe concretized a possibility (NOT a necessity) that carried hierarchy within it – a tragedy that has today acquired global dimensions. We will not talk about the author’s “fulfilling work for labor” and “democracy on the job” here. We want to abolish not only wage-work but also abolish/minimize work as such.

3. “Thomas Jefferson believed that democracy could prosper only if founded on widespread ownership of the economic means of life” (emphasis by the author) - let us look at this statement. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) played an important role in the ruling circles in
America and in Europe to some extent from around 1776 to 1810. This is the period when personal and family labor based agriculture/farming was very widespread in America. Call it the heyday of peasant farming or simple commodity production in America if you like. It was with the beginning of grain exports to Europe in the 1860s that the basis for undermining this personal and family labor based farming took shape. If the portrayal in the novel “The Grapes of Wrath” is socially significant, then the last major blow to peasant farming in the USA was dealt during the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 30s. So, quoting Thomas Jefferson to wage-workers is like quoting Plato to slaves for whom slaves were not citizens.

4. More significant is what follows Jefferson when the author says, “Today, a tiny minority of capitalists own and control most of the economy. This needs a little elaboration, so please bear with us. The basis of capitalists was undermined by the unfolding scenario that made the formation of joint stock companies essential for production enterprises. This gained momentum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and with it began the sidelong of the capitalists. A corollary of this has been the growth of statist forces - the “marxist” and the welfare-state labels have been mere camouflage. As the twentieth century has unfolded, the small number of stockholders first gave way to large numbers of share holders.

But even very large numbers of shareholders could not meet the money needs of rapidly expanding production enterprises. Loans became the major sources of company finances. For example, when we look at the 1994-1995 balance sheet of a “private” company called escorts Limited, a big manufacturer in India, we find that 86 percent of its finance comes from loans and only 14 percent from shares. Most of the banks and financial institutions in India are owned by the state, and even majority of the shares in “private” companies are owned by the state institutions - this is by the way to prickle the bubble of “privatization” that the left is presenting as THE demon. With satellites and computers linking the financial centers throughout the world, changes in exchange rates of currencies and taxation policies of governments give rise to hectic activities which lead to changes in “ownership” of companies almost as one flicks a coin.

One very good by-product of this is that it is tearing apart the label of nationality that for long hid a social relation. Wage-labor base production (in material, skill and knowledge forms) for the market, THE WORLD MARKET stands naked in front of us.

Let us elaborate and discuss the implications of the existing reality and its dynamics so as to better join hands to overthrow it.

With greetings.

 Sher Singh
MAUDOOR LIBRARY, AUTOPIN JHUGGI,
FARIDABAD - 121001 INDIA
REPLY TO SHER SINGH
Connie Furdeck

The Declaration of Economic Independence for the American Working Class is just what is professes to be, a declaration for the working citizens of this country. It was written for the great mass and majority of American workers who have been brought up with the original Declaration, and are suffering from the effects of capitalism but have, as yet, not realized the need to overthrow the system. Using words like overthrow, before they have read the extent of the basic rights that we as a people should have, as well as the long list of specific grievances that workers suffer from, would defeat our purpose of awakening them. Many would dismiss it as calling for violence and never read it.

In no way are we as De Leonists acting in an ethno-centric manner. As a political movement based in the U.S., we are simply dealing with the capitalists and the political situation in our own country. This does not proclude alliances with political movements in other countries or writing documents such as the a Declaration of Economic Independence for the World Working Class. But, this document made no pretence to be that.

In that regard, let me include a section of a discussion that appeared in the New Unionist on this very subject of the role of a political party versus the role of a union movement in effecting social change.

De Leonists have never said that socialism can succeed in a single nation while the rest of the world remains capitalist. However, we must not confuse the goal of global socialism, with the means of achieving that goal. We refer to what Marx and Engels said on the subject in the Communist Manifesto:

"Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."

Merely announcing that we’re for global socialism is a meaningless abstraction because the capitalist world is divided into different nations with different political and cultural institutions. These national differences will mold the national working-class movements into different forms of struggle, in keeping with their respective political and legal systems.

We talk about establishing socialism in the United States because that’s where we are, and because the working class of the U.S. "must first settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."

In the course of the political and industrial organization of the working class of each country, the many national movements will obviously begin communicating with each other and coordinating their activities. While the political-party wing of each movement is bound to the political system and culture of each distinctive national state, the economic-union wing necessarily becomes transnational in its struggle against the corporations operating increasingly as transnational entities. For example, organizing all the workers of IBM requires a (truly) international union encompassing all workers employed at IBM in all the many countries it operates in.

While a workers’ party is nation-bound, it is still necessary for establishing global socialism because the political power of the economic ruling class consists of nation-states, a state power that must be captured before a new economic system can be established.
But as the political nation-state is structured on territorial divisions, with its laws limited to the territory it controls, and functions to enforce the will of a ruling class against the interests of the working class, the state cannot administer the global classless society of socialism. It is captured, only to be dismantled and destroyed.

A revolution brings to power new governing institutions which arise on the basis of economic development already having occurred within the old governing system.

Parliaments arose within the feudal system, elected bodies defending the common interests of the merchant-banking-manufacturing bourgeois class against the aristocratic ruling class of feudalism. The development of commercial economic relationships within the feudal system undermined the economic basis and outgrew the political institution of agriculturist-aristocratic rule: the autocratic monarchical state. Revolutions subsequently occurred in which the monarchies were overthrown and bourgeois parliaments became governing institutions of society, thereby bringing government and law in line with the new economic relationships of society.

Today, it is capitalism itself which is creating the new economic reality of a supra-national, worldwide industrial system. In order to protect their economic interests in this new world order, the working class will be compelled to organize internationally on an industrial basis into global industrial unions. As the contradiction between a unified global economy and nation-limited political government intensifies, the effectiveness and authority of the old governments will collapse. It is then that revolutions (peaceful or otherwise) will become possible, revolutions that will overthrow the nation-states and allow the non-territorial organization of the working class - the global industrial unions - to become the governing institutions of a united world society.

With the administrative demarcations of the new governing system being by industry, regardless where located in the world, rather than national territories - the end product of this process of national/international development - the goal of global socialism will be achieved in practice.

(From p. 9)

at least, opposed capitalism and included everyone from anarchists to the British Labor Party. The departure of most Leninists and all social democrats for the fleshpots of market capitalism leaves a near vacuum at the anti-capitalism end of the spectrum. Nick Melchior's review also comes from an approving direction. He too sees the book as a much needed remedy for a deteriorating anarchism. My review reflects the receipt of the anti-Bookchin pamphlet featuring Joel Kovel followed a week later by the *Fifth Estate* in the same mail that brought me Bookchin's pamphlet. All these are included in the article. I have since obtained Bradford's *Beyond Bookchin*, a review of which will appear in DB83.

Next Sher Singh comments on Connie Furdeck's "Declaration of Economic Independence for the American Working Class," and she replies to Singh's criticism of the implicit nationalism of the declaration.

The David Stratman section of this issue begins with John Spitzler's letter correcting some statements in DB81 by Laurens Otter. The New Democracy flyer that follows is a revision of Stratman's letter to the *New Unionist* published in the current issue (February 1997) of that journal. We also publish the New Unionist's reply by Jeff Miller. Next is Connie Furdeck's review of *We Can Change the World*, in which she--like other DeLeonists and World Socialists--takes Stratman to task for his anti-Marxism.

Jeff Stein's letter continues a dispute with Pat Murtagh on the role of the CNY in the Spanish Republican government and, with Murtagh and Larry Gambone, on the Spanish revolution as a whole. Neil Fettes writes on the level of union militancy--"leaders" and rank and file--in western Canada. Next
Dear Frank,

By way of introduction, I am one of the editors of New Democracy. I am glad you are making DB a forum for discussion of our point of view and in particular of David Stratman's book "We Can Change The World". This discussion should of course include the views of those who strongly disagree. But I would suggest that, as an editorial policy, submissions to BD that say so and so said such and such should be held to the standard of accuracy, and in some cases required to use direct quotes only. What prompts this letter is the letter in DB #81 by Laurens Otter to Mr. Stratman. Otter puts words in Stratman's mouth (or book) that simply are not there. Two examples:

Referring to the section of the book on the British coal miners' strike, Otter says "But the idea that no one tried to spread the strike just won't wash." Stratman never said anything even remotely similar to that. What he did say was that "The NUM is not to be faulted for not having a strategy calling for revolutionary change. What union does, after all? The NUM carried out with courage and unprecedented determination a traditional trade union strategy of industrial action limited to the picket line. But that, in a way, is the point. It would only have been in going beyond trade unionism to adopt revolutionary goals, that the importance of reaching out to other unions and the public, or of explaining the relationships among the issues which confront the working class, or of posing the alternative futures which lie open to Britain, or of articulating the vision of a new society implicit in the actions of its members and supporters, would have been clear."

Referring to the section of the book which criticizes the U.S. New Left, and in particular the anti-working class ideas of Marcuse which were influential in the New Left, Otter says "You talk of the marginalization of the libertarian left, in a sense your argument harks back to your view of Marcuse, when you say that the New Left by referring to him were making it too difficult for ordinary workers to comprehend, are you arguing that the capitalist system, (because it succeeds in marginalizing libertarian leftist critiques,) should be allowed to dictate what its opponents are going to say? That anti-capitalists must confine themselves to quoting those people of whom the capitalists have allowed the workers to hear?" Otter must have gotten Stratman's book confused with some other -- nothing even close to this appears in its pages. Stratman wrote that Marcuse was wrong, not that he was "too difficult for ordinary workers to comprehend."

In Solidarity,

John Spritzler
THE COMPETITION MYTH:  
THE REAL MEANING OF THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS  
A New Democracy Flyer

Working people in the U.S. and around the world have been under unprecedented attack in the past 25 years, with falling wages, rising hours of work, high unemployment, millions of jobs reduced to "temp" work, and social programs such as food stamps and welfare slashed.

The question is, why is all this happening? Two different answers have been given to this question. Politicians, corporate leaders, union officials—and Marxists—have one answer. New Democracy has another.

THE CORPORATE VIEW:  
INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Corporate leaders, politicians, and union officials agree: the current problems of working people stem from America's supposed economic decline and the emergence of Japan and Germany and other powerful rivals. The decline of American power has also affected the public sector, they claim, where a dramatic decrease in tax revenues and huge federal deficits have made social programs unaffordable.

These leaders also agree on the solution: workers should join the Company Team and the American Team to beat the competition. How do we become more "competitive"? Work faster. Take a pay cut. Surrender medical benefits. Give back Cost Of Living Allowances. Join a "Quality Circle." Promote Labor-Management Cooperation. Stop fighting.

THE MARXIST VIEW:  
CAPITALISM IN ECONOMIC CRISIS

Marxists, like apologists for capitalism, see the problems working people have suffered in these years as the unintended effects of competition among rival business economies. They see capitalism as driven by its own laws, beyond human control. Marxists believe capitalism is in an "economic crisis": unemployment, the federal deficit, slow economic growth are problems that capitalism is trying to solve but cannot.

The September issue of the Marxist New Unionist ("Dole's Voodoo Tax Cut No Solution for Falling Wages"), for example, makes two basic points: 1) the history of the last decades is a history of capitalist economic crisis beyond government control; 2) this crisis is leading to the inevitable collapse of capitalism.

The New Unionist explains the "supply-side" tax cuts to the wealthy in the 1980s as an attempt to revive a flagging economy; this attempt backfired when lower federal revenues led to a gigantic national debt. The national debt continues to grow, the New Unionist argues, because "deficit spending has been needed to avoid a new depression." The "real reason" for the huge military build-up of the Reagan years, "was to spend our way out of the early-80s recession," a recession which supposedly was the unforeseen result of falling wages. The economy is suffering from "a long-term decline in rates of economic growth....Slower growth means fewer new jobs,... a higher threshold of unemployment, and lower wages."

According to the New Unionist, capitalism is caught in a trap. An expanding global labor supply causes workers' wages to decline. The result of this decline, however, is that workers as consumers have less purchasing power, so that economic growth itself declines toward the inevitable collapse of the system. Declining wages "may keep the capitalists jumping for joy today, but as the system methodically undermines its mass consumer market, it plods blindly yet inexorably to ultimate collapse."

THE NEW DEMOCRACY VIEW:  
CORPORATE COUNTERREVOLUTION

The facts show the corporate and Marxist views to be dead wrong. The last twenty-five years in fact result from a counterrevolution carried out by the world elite against the global revolutionary upsurge of the 1960s and '70s.

Those years witnessed a "revolution of
rising expectations" on many fronts. In the U.S., millions of people mobilized for racial equality and to oppose the Vietnam War. Workers struck in historic numbers, and challenged companies and union leaders with wildcat strikes. In France 10 million workers occupied their factories and offices. All around the world, East and West, people were rising up.

In response to the revolutionary upsurge, capitalist and Communist rulers planned a counterattack. Elite strategy for assuring relative social peace since World War II had been social reform, rising wages, and relative prosperity for working people. In the early 1970s, the Business Roundtable, the Trilateral Commission, and other elite bodies determined that this strategy had to be abandoned. Their answer to the revolution of rising expectations was to lower people's expectations and to go back to a rawer, more brutal form of capitalism.

The problems which working people have suffered in the last twenty-five years are not problems which the ruling elite are trying to solve but weapons they have devised to attack working people in a class war:

* Unemployment is intentionally promoted by the government to make people frightened and controllable. The government encourages the shipping of jobs overseas through NAFTA and GATT. It gives tax rebates to companies to relocate abroad. It encourages corporate takeovers by giving tax deductions for the massive debt which companies take on through buyouts.

* Federal deficits created by the sweeping tax cuts and huge defense budget of the Reagan years were, as Budget Director David Stockman explained, created as a rationale to destroy New Deal and Great Society programs which gave workers some defense against the corporate assault.

* "Slow growth" is elite policy. In 1994, for example, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates six times to slow economic growth. The point of slow growth is to keep unemployment high.

* Corporate "downsizing" is not due to competition. Many companies with record profits have laid off thousands of workers.

WHAT ABOUT "FOREIGN COMPETITION?" Capital has no loyalty to any country or corporation. It flows from Tokyo to London to Wall Street in search of profit. The "new global economy" is really the global elite cooperating more than ever, using competing corporations as a tool to pit workers against each other. Where there is no competition, they create it, as when they deregulated the airlines—to squeeze workers.

* Much of the "foreign competition" is actually jointly owned by U.S. companies. GM and Ford, for example, own large parts of Toyota, Nissan, and other "foreign" auto makers.

* The trade deficit—a record $48 billion as of 12/10/96—is a sign of U.S. strength: 1) more than a third of "foreign" trade is actually from U.S. corporate operations overseas; 2) the U.S. economy, the strongest in the world, is "the world's richest ...market...where everyone wants to sell."

Investors have reaped the rewards of these policies. Ten of the last 15 years have been the most profitable in U.S. history. In 1995 the Dow Jones stock average hit record highs over 60 times, even while workers' wages continued to fall to levels not seen since 1958. The stock market has gained over 68% in the last two years.

At the same time, these policies have resulted in an unprecedented transfer of wealth upward from working Americans to the rich. 55% of all the wealth created in the US from 1983 to 1989 went to the richest 1/2 of 1% of US families. The bottom 40% lost $256 billion. (Boston Globe, 10/30/92) There are now 358 billionaires in the world and they own as much wealth as the bottom 45% of the world's population. (The Nation, 12/19/94)

There is no need to go on here. It's preposterous to think that the government is honestly trying to "solve the problem" of unemployment or slow growth or the other problems the New Unionist mentions.

What about Marxist claims that capitalism "plods blindly yet inexorably to
ultimate collapse?" While I don't have space here to answer this point in full, let me say this: Marxism misunderstands capitalism and is forever predicting its imminent collapse because it incorrectly sees capitalism as a machine running out of control, rather than as a system of human relations which one class uses to control another.

**WHY IS THE QUESTION IMPORTANT?**

How we analyze a situation affects our ability to change it. If history is driven by blind economic forces, as Marxists maintain, there really is very little we can do.

But the history of the past 25 years was not driven by economic forces beyond human control, but by a struggle between the majority of the world's people and a powerful world elite acting in concert. The future of human society depends on the outcome.

The drastic response of the world elite to the revolutionary upsurge of the 1960s and 70s shows that the elite has enormous tactical strength. It also, however, exposes their strategic weakness.

The basis of social stability since the close of WWII has been people's belief that life would be better for their children than it was for them. In their drive to reduce people's expectations and force them to accept a diminished future, the ruling class have had to attack the political basis of their power: people's confidence in the future under elite leadership.

The "crisis" in capitalism is not an economic crisis, and the problem of the capitalists is not each other. Their problem is their inability to win the class war. Capitalism is in crisis because it cannot satisfy people's longing for a fully human society.

We can succeed at revolution. The first condition of our success, however, is to realize that history is driven not by blind economic forces, but by the struggle of human beings for a fully human existence.

**Please copy this flyer and pass it on**

**New Democracy** works for democratic revolution. Send for copies for $4/100 to New Democracy, P.O. Box 427, Boston, MA 02130 Call Doug Fuda at (617) 323-7213 or write for free literature.

**REPLY: TO DAVE STRATMAN BY THE NEW UNIONIST**

Dave Stratman fairly summarizes some of the main points of the September, 1996 New Unionist article, but he doesn't tell us how and why each of the points is incorrect. He says merely that we "ignore the facts," and then presents what he asserts the facts to be, assertions which we will attempt to answer:

1) Unemployment may be a consequence of certain tax policies of the federal government. But if these policies are intended to deliberately create unemployment "to make people frightened and controllable," why do local and state governments offer tax breaks to companies to invest and create jobs? If the government wants to create unemployment, it could simply stop hiring and start laying off its own employees. Yet, between 1980 and 1993, federal, state and city employment grew by more than two million.

2) Government policy is, in fact, intended to increase business opportunities and profits. The effect of such policies may in some cases be increase unemployment, or in other cases added jobs.

3) In the first year and a half of Reagan's presidency, the U.S. economy experienced its most severe contraction since the Great Depression. This was due to a tight credit policy by the Federal Reserve, intended to curb the hyper-inflation of the preceding Carter years, and a collapse of consumer demand, exacerbated by rapidly rising unemployment.

The effect of the ballooning federal budget deficits was to create consumer demand (the government spending borrowed money individual consumers could not). Business responded to the demand with new investment, facilitated by a reversal in Federal Reserve policy to lower interest rates, lifting the economy out of a high-unemployment recession into a long expansion with falling rates of unemployment.

These are the demonstrable, proven effects of the policies enacted by the government and the Federal Reserve at that time, regardless what David Stockman or anyone else says were the reasons for the policies. While
the deficits could of course be used po-
letically as a rationale for cutting social
programs, the programs could just as
easily be cut without a rationale,
especially one with such a drastic
economic ramification as tripling the
national debt in eight years.

3) The purpose of Federal
Reserve interest-rate hikes is to pre-
vent inflation (which harms creditor
capitalists like banks), inflation it be-
lieves will result if the economy ex-
pects too quickly and unemployment
calls too low. Stratman is confusing the
Fed’s concern with wage and employ-
ment levels, which it uses to signal
possible future inflation, as themselves
being the reason for its interest-rate
policy. Once the economy shows signs
of slipping into recession the Fed will
lower rates, as it has indeed already
done since the 1994 hikes Stratman
mentions.

4) Because companies have
record profits today doesn’t mean they
have no competition, nor does it mean
they’ll be profitable tomorrow. In fact,
if they fail to continue to contain and
lower costs they face the prospect of
quickly losing their markets and prof-
its to their competitors. If a corporate
management forgets this, it is quickly
reminded by the stock market, where
investors punish the shares of any com-
pany showing signs of laxity toward
costs.

Competition is the law of
the marketplace. If Stratman doesn’t
believe this he should go to the store
tomorrow and try to buy an American-
made VCR or any of countless other
products no longer manufactured by
U.S. companies, because they’ve been
swept from the field by foreign com-
petitors. Did these companies and
corporate divisions cheerfully agree to
go under in the 1980s so that workers’
rising expectations” could be lowered?
Or was it because they had no
choice, because they in fact could not
control the economic forces that sunk
them?

Stratman claims it wasn’t an
economic crisis that motivated the
ruling-class attack on the working class,
planned by the Business Roundtable
and Trilateral Commission, but rather
their need to defeat a revolution brought
on by rising expectations. He presents
no proof for this, and the picture of
capitalists trembling in fear at the sight
of workers running wild is wistful at
the least.

A review of business publi-
cations from the time, however, does
show their overwhelming concern with
decline. American competitiveness
in world markets, and with other eco-
nomic developments of crisis propor-
tions, such as the skyrocketing crude
oil prices of the early 1970s, and the
ensuing hyper-inflation of the late 70s.

In order to meet the chal-
lenge, embattled U.S. industries such
as auto manufacturing had to under-
take massive new investment to mod-
ernize production with advanced tech-
nologies. It was concluded that that
needed capital could only be raised by
giving capitalists significant tax cuts,
monies that would come out of govern-
ment social programs. The cut in pro-
grams was the result of the tax-cut
policy, not the reason for it.

In addition, payrolls and
wages would need to be lowered in
order to restore U.S. competitiveness,
which required breaking the power of
unions to resist layoffs and pay cuts.

In 1980, it was Reagan and
the Republicans who adopted this
program and received the overwhelm-
ing support of the owning class. Cor-
porate America wasn’t disappointed.
With the assist of government policy,
U.S. business was able to become lean
and mean, top competitors in world
markets once again, leading to today’s
record profits.

In sum, Stratman confuses
cause and effect. It is nonsensical to
oppose economic motivation and so-
cial control. To get the economic re-
results they seek, the capitalists of course
have to be able to control the working
class.

Stratman says history “is not
driven by economic forces beyond
human control,” and that “the ‘crisis’
in capitalism is not an economic cri-
sis.” But if the Business
Roundtable and Trilateral Commiss-
ion could control the economic forces
of capitalism, there would always be
profits and never losses, the stock
market would always go up and never
down, businesses would never go bank-
rupt, banks would never fail and the
economy would never suffer recessions
or depressions. Since these phe-
nomena all do occur, against the will of
the capitalists, we must conclude that
it is economic forces beyond their
control that determine social develop-
ments under capitalism. Business and
government leaders then respond with
policies designed to save profits from
developments that were unexpected
and undesired.

It is Stratman’s boogeyman
Marx who provides the analytical tools
that enable workers to understand how
the economic forces work, and why
they must work to their inevitable det-
riment. The key to revolution is this
very, mass understanding, or “class con-
sciousness.” Once we understand how
capitalism must necessarily frustrate
“people’s longing for a fully human
society,” despite whatever the ruling
class desires or does, we see the need to
establish a new system of economic and
social relationships, and we can
envision how that new system must
differ from the present one.

Stratman, in contrast, seems
oblivious to the practical implications
of his analysis. If the ruling class can
push a few buttons and slow the econ-
omy every time the workers start to
rebel, making them fearful and con-
trollable once again—like, one might
say, pigeons in a laboratory exper-
iment—on what basis does he conclude
a revolution can ever happen?

Marxists have confidence a
revolution is possible because they
understand that people’s conscious-
ness can be revolutionized by changed
social conditions. Workers who today
may scorn the very idea of changing
society can tomorrow be demanding
the overthrow of capitalism, if their
conditions of life have changed as to be
seen as no longer tolerable. Because capitalism is governed by economic laws that can't be legislated or willed away, its development must continually upset social conditions and thereby provoke new ways of thinking by the working class.

Stratman denies that capitalism is necessarily self-destructive. Marxism mistakenly "is forever predicting its imminent collapse," he says. But condemning Marxism because the prediction has yet to come true is like condemning the science of geology because the great earthquake it predicts for California hasn't happened. Such a superficial conclusion is easy to make if you have no understanding of the scientific reasoning behind the prediction of an earthquake, or of an economic quake. But it is stubborn foolishness to insist that such knowledge is not possible, as well as being a disservice and a danger to those you wish to influence.

—Jeff Miller

(From p. 13)

we have two announcements: The first, unsigned, displays a high level of sympathy for the Unabomber despite his IRA tactics, unusual even among anarchists since the days of the attentat. In the second Internationalism expresses its take on the organization of the new Labor Party and on participation in elections. As usual we end with some notes, announcements, and short reviews. We end with William Hewitson's musings on the meaning of the word socialism and, as usual, with some notes, announcements, and short reviews.

BULLETIN MATTERS

Finances

Once again we have had a successful two months financially and for the same reasons cited in DB81: high contributions from readers and sales of back issues, the latter amounting this time to $52. Unfortunately the anticipated copier breakdown occurred just as I was about half through producing DB81. Our half share of the repair cost was only $25 because the technician is a good guy. Then early in February the machine began making bad copies indicating a need for a heat roller and wiper blade transplant. This was major surgery, and the DB's half of the $176.20 bill was $88.10.

Contributions: Irving Silvey $4; Alan Bradshaw $S; Scott McLemee $15; Sam Leight $17; Tom Ronse $7; Bob Worth $7; Connie Furdeck $20; Will Guest $4; Ken Smith $12; Neil Fettes $6. Total $97.

Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE December 22, 1996 $55.49

RECEIPTS

Contributions $ 97.00
Subs and sales 190.94
total $ 287.94

DISBURSEMENTS

Postage $ 95.00
copier repair (1/2) 113.50
Printing 54.35
Bank charges 4.00
Postage due 5.50
P.O. Box rent 40.00

total $302.35

(To p. 25)
The NUP and the New Democracy Movement, founded on Stratman's book, have some common ideas and goals. Both believe that the capitalist system worldwide is at the root of our problems and both, want to replace it with a new society based on the positive human values of equality and solidarity, - a society in which we, the so-called common people, have control over our lives. Both organizations believe that working people need to regain respect for ourselves as a class - that each, in our own way contribute to the great ingenuity of the human race - and that leadership must be developed from our ranks.

However, our two organizations have some very important major differences. The NUP is based on the fundamentals of Marxism. The NDM has rejected Marxism on the basis of its belief that Marxism must always lead to dictatorship and that Marx's analysis of history was faulty. Because we, New Unionists, believe the NDM is sincerely searching for solutions, we have written the following critique of We Can Change the World in a non-confrontational manner in the hope of opening up further discussion.

Stratman's book is a must reading for a number of reasons. It contains a powerful and inspiring message that is very needed today. We need to hear and see what people are capable of. We need to realize and combat the capitalist propaganda that we are all as Chomsky puts it "tools of production and atoms of consumption." In addition, Dave's critique of capitalism and its value system, is excellent, particularly when he exposes the real role of some its institutions - such as education. It makes one more aware of the distorted value system into which we have been born and have grown up accepting as natural. Also he is right on the money in his analysis of present day bureaucratic unions and the role they play in providing a well-disciplined workforce for the capitalists. Most importantly, he understands that a rank and file run union movement could become a revolutionary tool in workers' hands.

Hooray for saying it, Dave, in your chapter, "Hope and Revolution": "Revolution, in my view, does not mean simply a new economic structure, and it doesn't mean control by a new elite. It means transforming all the relationships in society to accord with the values, goals and idea of human life of ordinary working people." We couldn't agree more. This puts a human face on revolution, so we will never again shrink from the word. It does not mean blood and violence. It means a change in the internal structure of society and with a change in all of its social relations. But, to bring this about, we workers, first must become classconscious and return to the class solidarity of the past - pooling together our energies across racial, ethnic, sexual and other lines.

Having achieved class solidarity, we need a viable plan and a set of goals. Our strategies must be based on a correct understanding of the past. This is why we are very concerned about Stratman's negative attitude towards Marxism. We believe he is wrong in most assertions and could very likely influence and divert uninformed working people in their search for solutions to today's problems.

For example, Stratman takes Marx to task for stating that workers are motivated by self interest. To prove his point, he relates stories of striking workers caught in no-win situations who held out way beyond their own material interests, losing homes and cars for principles and issues that, in their minds, were more important than their personal situations. Stratman's problem is he reads Marx too literally without taking into consideration the tremendous change in society since Marx's day. When Marx referred to worker self-interest it was in a period when workers identified their interests with the interests of their class. The idea of individualism as we know it today is a new concept. We refer to it as the cult of the individual - and it has been one of the most successful promotions of the capitalist class particularly since WW2.
Secondly Marx did not write about working people as though they were automatons only responding to economic necessity, nor did he deny that ideas and aspirations, a sense of their own humanity, solidarity and other motives drive human beings. (see his economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844) Capitalists are human beings too - and share these same natural human attributes. But, different classes have different needs and desires - aside from human nature. Put people into opposing economic situations and other aspects of human nature arise, such as the need to survive. So what we are concerned with here is not human nature, but human behavior which has been influenced by psychological, social and cultural conditioning.

Marx's great thesis the Materialist Conception of History says, in part, that economic changes are at the bottom of developing conflicts because these changes impinge on the established social structure and effect the material and social conditions of people.

Capitalism was operating for centuries before it had impact on the day by day living conditions of the majority. As it developed, it affected ever widening circles of people, regardless of whether they were directly involved in capitalist enterprises - eventually driving out small farmers, petty producers and people who worked for themselves. Today, in the "developed" countries, there are basically only two classes left, workers and capitalists, and these two classes have opposing material interests.

All previous human societies have gone through successive stages of birth, maturity, old age and death. Without making any value judgment as to the purpose they serve, eventually they no longer are a positive force, and begin create more harm than good. Capitalism is an old system which has run its course. The working class, the vast majority of the world's people, are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in a world of cut-throat competition.

The system never could provide jobs, food, clothing, shelter, education, etc., even in the best of times - which is generally during war. Today, it is estimated that one-half of the working class throughout the world is unemployed. Capitalism can't be saved or reclaimed in its present form. The choice is outright fascism or social and economic democracy. Because capitalism has eliminated all other economic classes except two, if worker's take charge and set up an economic democracy, everyone including former capitalists will participate in the work of society and share in its benefits - and social divisions will disappear.

This is why Marxism is so important for workers because, as a body of social science, it enables us to understand the fundamentals of human societies past and present - how they came into being, why they disappeared, etc. - in order to be able to plan and work toward replacing the present one with a new and truly democratic social system.

Socialism is not the invention of Marx or any one individual, but a body of material that has been contributed to by many, each, on the shoulders of those who proceeded him/her. There are three components, Historical Materialism, the Law of Value and Surplus Value and the Class Struggle. Time and again in his writings, Marx acknowledged the contributions of earlier thinkers. He credited Adam Smith, Adam Smith and David Ricardo for their prior studies of capitalist economics when he wrote the Law of Value. An analysis of economics from a worker's perspective, it deals with how the system operates, how social wealth is created and who creates it and how it is divided. The class struggle was a common theme in Marx's time and many acknowledged it in their writings. Historical materialism was discovered independently by the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. Marx and Engels praised his book, Ancient Society for its brilliant analysis of the evolution of early human societies.
throughout the world.

Marx never wrote down any formula or plan for what would constitute a Marxist society. nor did any appear in his lifetime. The only manifestation of anything remotely resembling socialism in his time was the famous Paris Commune, which Marx clearly designated as a worker's government, not yet socialist. Why? Because the economy was not as yet fully developed so as to have social production, which is the basis of socialism. Where Stratman gets the idea that workers have to wait for a fully developed economy to institute self-management, I can't fathom. The Commune was a positive example which Marx praised for its democratic structure. Marxism no more leads to dictatorship than the teachings of Christ and early Christian communism led to the top-down dictatorship of the Roman Church during the Middle Ages.

I believe part of Stratman's problem is that he equates Leninism with Marxism. However fine a theoretical Marxist Lenin might have been, he was a product of his own time and the customs of his particular country. He was educated in an undeveloped country completely apart from the tiny working class of about 3 million and a vast peasantry of 160 million. Whatever theories the Bolsheviks held, when it came to practical democracy, Russia had just moved out from under Tsarist feudalism and had no concept of democratic forms. Marx had referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat by which he meant majority rule, in a country where workers make up the majority. In contrast, Lenin established a dictatorship over the working class and over the peasants.

The Russian Revolution was a nationalist revolution which, while clothed in the ideas of Marxism, at its material base, was fundamentally bourgeois. One hundred sixty million peasants reclaiming land for farming and marketing is not socialist regardless of what it calls itself. As a vast nation in 1917, Russia faced the choice of developing social production, or falling further backwards economically against the rest of the world. In view of the powerful national and international forces arrayed against it, only some sort of centralized dictatorship could have held the regime together allowing it to close off its borders while developing its economy. Otherwise, it would have become a client state of powerful capitalist interests such as are counties like those in South America and Africa.

The Soviet Union developed into a form of State Capitalism centralized and controlled in such a way as to provide cradle to grave social programs that guaranteed everyone work and the necessities of life. Unfortunately because of this, today's workers worldwide think socialism is some kind of top-down welfare system rather than an advanced egalitarian society which promises peace and plenty for all.

Another reason for Stratman's rejection of Marxism was his experiences working with other "Marxists" in the student movement during the 1960's. The section on the "New Left" and various dominant student organizations and why they were unsuccessful in spreading out and organizing the working masses is informative and excellent, but he is describing the inevitable direction of Leninism, not Marxism. Here again Leninist vanguardism and its attitude of workers as only playing a passive role is starkly contrasted to Marx's dictum that "the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself," as well as De Leonism which admonishes, "educate first and organize later." All the "Marxist" political parties playing a dominate role in the sixties were splits from the original Leninist Communist Party which had wealth and influence partly because it represented a series of "successful" revolutions in Europe and Asia, and largely because it was, for a long time, the paid-tool of the Soviet Union. These numerous splinter organizations originated as a result of power struggles between leaders (Trotsky and Stalin) and countries, (China and The Soviet Union) etc., but not because of differences in basic principles - such as rejecting the top-down anti-Marxist vanguard approach.
Aside from the fact that the elitists of the 60's were followers of Lenin from Herbert Marcuse onwards, there is another reason for their elitism. Stratman should see this himself. In his book, he does an excellent job of explaining how people are stratified into various levels in American society - how from kindergarten onward, one is programmed to be a "winner" or a "loser." The "winners" are isolated from "losers," internalize the values of capitalism and are groomed for college and high-level professional employment. The losers are programmed to be the drones, to accept menial low-paying dead-end jobs. Having understood this, is it not possible that the elitist were reflecting their experiences in capitalist society, not their understanding of Marxism?

One final note to Stratman. The ruling class is delighted when worker's reject Marxism. This has been their aim all along. This is why they did everything they could to promote the idea that the Soviet Union was Socialist. A real understanding of Marxism helps us to understand why attempts at socialism have failed in the past. A real understanding of Marxism helps us realize that there is not some impediment in human nature preventing us from building a world of economic and social equality and peace. As long as working people reject Marxism, they are rejecting the only valid analysis and critique of capitalism which can enable them to organize a viable movement to replace it.

PART 2
UNDERSTANDING AND USING HISTORY TO WORK FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

The most glaring argument of contention in Dave's book is part four - an alternate view of history which says in essence that "capitalism is not primarily an economic system but a system of human relations and class control" and "the superiority of the young capitalist class to the feudal landowners did not lay in its economic powers". On top of this, Stratman includes landowners in the class who became known as the bourgeoisie. Sorry Dave but bourgeoisie means townsmen, capitalists carrying on trade and simple manufacturing in the burgeoning towns - not landowners. They were part of the old feudal ruling class.

Following this is the further assertion that capitalism need not have supplanted feudalism at all, instead, peasant movements such as the Levellers could have developed communal cultivation of the waste lands and the common people throughout England could have set up a communal society getting rid of private property and developing society for the benefit of all. Stratman correctly points out that Marx and Engels called such movements utopian.

So the question is, was it inevitable that capitalism overthrow feudalism or could socialism, as envisioned by some of the commoners, (Levelers) have been established instead? And why is it extremely important that we read history correctly? What does it have to do with our future?

Did the old feudal lords simply capitulate and hand the reins of government over to the capitalists? Obviously not. So what was the power of the aborning capitalist class?
In the first place capitalism was infinitely economically superior to the old feudal system. Feudalism was a sterile, land-based economy that used the labors of millions of peasants and serfs living and working the land in family groups, growing the necessities of life to support an increasingly parasitic feudal nobility whose entire existence was involved in war making and self aggrandizement.

Capitalism in its simplest level began when former peasants fled the land and began to establish towns under the castle walls and commenced simple hand production for sale, gradually supplanting the guild system by hiring wage workers. This was augmented by traders following the crusades and bringing back
silk and spices from the Near East. As the towns grew and prospered in the 13th and 14th centuries, the townspeople waged a struggle for political autonomy. Since their activities led to the accumulation of wealth, which the feudal nobility was in constant need of to carry on its wars, this ascending bourgeoisie class had a powerful weapon over the nobility. However the nobility did not simply step aside. Time and again a merchant lender would find himself imprisoned or put to death over a loan. Gradually loans to the nobility were tied to agreements that the merchants receive seats in the House of Commons and it gradually was established that only the Commons could originate money bills. In addition to the financial power of the nascent capitalist class, two developments, in the latter part of the 15th Century, gave it tremendous help in overcoming feudal resistance. The revolution in military technology through the use of gunpowder, and the development of typographical printing. The bourgeoisie could now hire mass armies of foot soldiers with firearms which the armored knights had no chance against.

Printing broke the monopoly on knowledge of the Catholic church. The great knowledge of antiquity was now available to everyone and was the key factor in an immense renaissance - advances in the arts of navigation, the discovery of new lands and trade routes - all expanded Europe's intellectual horizon - exciting a rebellious spirit that kept up a relentless pressure on the citadels of feudal power.

This is why capitalism replaced feudalism. In the power struggle, the bourgeoisie gradually gained strength and overthrew the old societies - not alone by themselves - but with the aid of the various underclasses, peasants, serfs, working people. And in many cases as soon as it consolidated its power, it allied itself with the old ruling elements and suppressed the classes below.

No ruling class has ever willingly given up its power. Marx and Engels called plans such as the Levellers utopian because they were unattainable. It was not because such ideas were not good - fair - equitable - etc., but, because the commoners had no economic or military power from which to negotiate. The Levellers were the poor. Where could they acquire firearms? Their beautiful dreams of setting up communities, occupying unused wastelands and farming for the common good, were a threat to the ruling class. It was not going to allow masses of people to get out from under and set up their own society.

We are faced with a similar situation, today, in regards to the great dream of a fair and equitable society. We know that the capitalist class is not going to allow the working class to get out from under it without a fight. Since we are not wealthy, we certainly could not buy out the capitalists.

Our plan, therefore, must be to set up a working class political party with one demand in its platform, social ownership and democratic control of the entire privately owned economy. However, even a 100 percent vote for socialism will not bring it about. When our rulers realize they are losing the election, they will marshal all the force possible against us including closing down industry and firing workers! Therefore we will need a greater force to counter them - and that, for obvious reasons, cannot be military. As a class, we workers do all the necessary work of society. It is at the point of production - at our place of work - where our potential power resides. This is why De Leon's plan of a massive, unified, rank-and-file controlled union movement is so necessary. Without an organized social body ready to back up our just demands by seizing control of the workplaces, electing our own management and carrying on the work of providing the necessities of life to all, the capitalists will try to bring in the troops and institute a complete fascist dictatorship over all of society.

One additional point about De Leon's plan: we live in an economy based on social production - carried on across all state and territorial lines. It is private ownership of the means of production and distribution that gives the capitalist class its power and the political state is the expression of that power. Marx held that the "existence of the state is inseparable from the existence of slavery." Therefore if our future government is to express the will of the people, it must conform to the reality of daily life. The political arm of labor has only a temporary role to play - capturing the state in order to dissolve it. Our union
movement will be the permanent body. It will furnish the frame work by which to elect the necessary management committees for a smooth running social and economic democracy.

Connie Furdek  Nupcz@aol.com

(From p. 19)
BALANCE February 20, 1997 $31.08

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard

(From p. 31)
Socialist Movement. Published by members of the World Socialist Party (New Zealand), it contains material from their monthly radio program, “Free Access” and also borrows some of its contents from the British Socialist Standard. A featured story in the May/June 1996 issue dealt with the New Zealand WSP’s first ever entry into the New Zealand parliamentary election. Common Ownership is a professional looking package. Fourteen pages, $12 (NZ) from 4 Vivian Street, Masterson, New Zealand.

Not in America is Gus Hall’s keynote speech to the CP USA’s national convention last March. In this 48-page pamphlet he articulates the CP’s “revolutionary” line of supporting capitalism’s Democratic Party in order to defeat capitalism’s Republican rightwing. The section, “Labor’s New Militancy” continues the CP’s history of supporting capitalist unionism and its leaders. Consider these examples: “Sweeney told reporters in Bal Harbour that the country’s unions must take responsibility for closing the wage and wealth gap” and “Another item on the leadership’s agenda is organizing the unorganized.” Hall still has a confidence in lay-down-and-play dead unionism that passeth all understanding. The section “Socialism, USA” includes a subheading “Bill of Rights Socialism” that promises to be even more righteous for workers than “Bill of Rights Capitalism.” 48 pages, $1 from the Communist Party, 235 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10011.

The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, Vol. I, Jose Peirats may be a companion to a book Peirats published in 19xx, Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution. The six chapters of volume one carry it from “Chapter 1: From the Bellas Artes Congress to the Primo Rivera Dictatorship” to “Chapter 6: The end of the Black Biennium and the Popular Front Triumphant.” “Volume 2 (chapters 7-15) will be published in November 1996” and presumably are available now. I have only an advertising circular from its publisher, who informs us that it is published in an A4 spiral bound form, that it does not exist in hardback or paperbound form, and that it is available for L12.50 (p.p.) U.S. price $26 if paid by plastic card. We the Anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927-1937 by Stuart Christie is also available in the same format and at the same price from the publisher, The Meltzer Press, Po Box 35, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 2UX, England

AK Press Distribution 1997 Catalog is now available and bigger and better than ever. The 143 pages include, besides the listings of AK Press books, 59 pages of non-fiction with around 27

(To p. 32)
Dear Discussion Bulletin,

In DB #81, Pat Murtagh disputes my claim that the decision of the CNT to join the Spanish Republican government was inspired by the Treintistas, the reformist wing of the CNT. He turns my argument 180 degrees and says that it was not the Treintistas who held blameless, but the "violent ultra-revolutionaries". I have every respect for comrade Murtagh, but I find his historical interpretation to be flawed and unsupported by the facts. Only two of the four "anarchist ministers" could be considered "ultras", Federica Montseny and Garcia Oliver, both members of the FAI. The other two ministers, Juan Lopez and Juan Peiro, were Treintistas. The idea that the CNT nominate ministers to the government was promoted by Horacio Prieto, the Treintista secretary-general of the CNT. The plan of the "ultras" had been to form a "General Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias" as an alternative to coordination of the war by the Spanish Republic. The "ultra" plan had been rejected by the Socialist Party and the UGT. This left the revolutionaries no clear alternative (or so they thought) but to go along with Treintista urging to accept government posts. Since the reformists in the CNT were afraid that if Treintistas were to accept all four minister posts, the FAI or "ultras", would be left free to attack reformist dealings within the government, the Treintistas insisted that two of the four posts be held by prominent members of the FAI. Thus the FAI would find itself equally compromised. Perhaps both reformists and revolutionaries in the CNT share responsibility for the outcome: the reformists for promoting such a stupid strategy, and the revolutionaries for going along with it.

I do not share Pat's misguided respect for the Treintistas, or for their modern reformist counterparts, the CGT. The "tactical" dispute which brought about the Treintista split in the CNT was to what extent the CNT should collaborate with Republic and the political parties in order to build the CNT unions. The CNT had suffered heavily under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship of the 1920's when the Socialist Party and the UGT collaborated with the government and the CNT was illegal. The UGT had an enormous spurt in membership to the detriment of the CNT. The Treintistas were basically a group of CNT union leaders who did not wish a repeat of the experience of the 1920's when the CNT was at a disadvantage compared to the UGT, and thus urged a policy of collaboration instead of revolution. This led to the 1931 Treintista manifesto, and the split in the CNT when the Treintistas could not win a majority of the CNT to their views. At the time of the Congress of Saragossa, it was clear that the military was about to stage a coup, so the CNT offered to reunite with the Treintista-led unions in preparation for the struggle to come. Unfortunately, the reintroduction of the Treintistas into CNT ranks, was to lead to the victory of Treintista collaboration policies, which eventually led the CNT into the government.

To the extent that the CGT represents a revival of Treintista reformism in Spain, I think the CGT should be dealt with the same way anarcho-syndicalists would deal with any other reformist union, sympathy for the worker ranks, but suspicion towards the leaders.

I disagree with both Pat Murtagh and Larry Gambone over the Spanish Revolution. I do not believe that the situation was hopeless and the anarchists doomed to defeat. The defeat of the CNT was partly its own fault, because it followed a reformist strategy at the urging of its own right-wing. Other strategies could have been adopted, which might have salvaged the situation. I think it better serves the anarchist cause to consider what these may have been, so that when similar situations arise in the future, we anarchists might be more successful at defending the revolutionary gains of the workers.

Jeff Stein, Champaign, IL
Dear Frank,

I recently moved from the Canadian heartland of Ontario (until recently considered to be a liberal province) to the Western province of Alberta (allegedly the most right wing province in the country), and I wanted to share some thoughts on the state of the workers’ movement in Canada. I hope this will encourage other readers to report on their own situations.

A few nights ago I attended the annual general meeting of the Calgary District Labour Council (CDLC). Among the guests and speakers were the President of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), Audrey Cormack and a staffer from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), whose name escapes me. During her comments the CLC staffer remarked that she felt “demo-ed out” and at times felt like she was a member of the “demo of the week” club. By way of contrast she mentioned that the membership of the unions supporting the demonstrations (particularly in Ontario) were largely passive. Moreover in Ontario the rotating one day general strikes (of which there have now been five) were draining the membership. Especially those activists who were closer to the poverty line and were not really in the position to give up a day’s pay. Besides the government wasn’t listening to their demands. At the moment the CLC is organizing a picnic, or some other festive event for May 1. (For those who aren’t familiar with Canadian weather, May is not the best time to organize a picnic in Calgary!)

At the same meeting however, it was reported that Roy Romanow, the social democratic premier of neighbouring Saskatchewan was asking Alberta New Democrats to pay for a chartered plane so that he might attend a fund raiser for them in Edmonton. Perhaps Roy was passive toward the idea of paying his own way!

Listening to these remarks and re-thinking them later it struck me how wrong headed they were. These comments come a few months after the largest political demonstration in Canadian history.

250,000 flocked to Toronto for a day of protest against the policies of Mike Harris’ Progressive Conservative government. Was the membership simply not passive that day? Was the weather in Toronto particularly nice? Did the organizers do an especially good job in bringing people out? Or perhaps was it that working people collectively made the decision that this day was the occasion to demonstrate against the government?

Likewise in Calgary. Last Spring, the most conservative city in the most conservative province, laundry workers at a downtown hospital launched a 12 day wildcat strike after the government decided to award their contract to a non-union firm in Edmonton. What is unusual is not that Premier Ralph Klein blinked, but that the strikers received support from other city unions, the media, the city council, working people and even the Police!

What is interesting in these cases is that in struggle working people quickly went beyond the original expectations of the organizers. In the case of the Calgary wildcat, it was the workers themselves who set the agenda. In Ontario there have repeated calls for a general strike but the “leaders” of the anti-Harris movement have resisted. At a rally in Peterborough last summer Ontario federation of Labour leader Gord Wilson told the crowd, if necessary they would organize a general strike. Which meant they would do everything in their power to prevent one. One day rallies release tension, so that anger might be directed into parliamentary channels. A provincial election is expected in Alberta soon and the cry appears to be “let’s go and elect some New Democrats.” Those in Ontario who have experienced an NDP government, are perhaps a little more cynical.

It might be interesting to hear from other DB readers regarding their experiences with the apparent militancy of leadership and the passivity of the base (in reality the reverse is true).

CGs

Neil Fettes
Calgary, AB
The Lines are Being Drawn

"Why are we so angry? You would do better to ask why there is so much anger and frustration in modern society generally."—Unabomber, 1995

Surely the most shocking event of this century was the systematic murder of millions of Jews under German National Socialism. Fifty years on, we are witnessing a steadily accelerating extinction onslaught against most species of life on this planet. Barring some kind of overthrow of the present global system of techno-capital, the elimination of the last traces of free nature is inevitable.

And how much evidence is left, even now, of a healthy human species? Mass depression, widespread belief in bizarre occult notions, an ever-rising suicide rate among the young, almost universal drug use of one kind or another, increasingly common homicidal rampages. The symptoms of a malignant social order multiply and deepen, to a chorus of pain and desolation.

Consider how debased the fabric of life has become in just the past couple of decades: from Jonestown to the Tokyo subways, not forgetting Bhopal, Chernobyl, the Exxon Valdez, Waco, Oklahoma City, schoolyard massacres...such horrors seem to be multiplying, the convulsions of a terminally diseased landscape.

But the struggle for health and freedom goes on. Scobert Park and Warner Creek were vigorously defended, and a strong blow was struck with the torching of the Oakridge Ranger Station. The blacks of St. Petersburg repaid another murder by police with automatic weapons fire.

Meanwhile, the '96 electoral farce received its lowest turnout since 1924, as if our masters could have believed that the nothingness and denial of that long-running con game could go on fooling most people indefinitely.

How far is it justified to go when we know that voting and recycling change nothing? When we contemplate the vista of high-tech barrenness, the boom in prisons and homelessness, the fact that a growing economy means an even faster rate of destruction of the natural world....

Joan of Arc and the 19th century abolitionist John Brown employed violence and gave their lives in struggle. These visionaries were considered demented by their contemporaries but are now revered. It may by that the Unabomber will be looked upon similarly, as a kind of warrior-prophet who, as Arleen Davila wrote, "tried to save us."

To un-learn our illusions is to begin to save ourselves.
To the groups of the proletarian political milieu:

The recent formation of the Labor Party by trade unions and their leftist cheerleaders constitutes an important new ingredient in the ruling class's political strategy against the working class. For decades, Trotskyists, and other leftists, who stand not as defenders of the working class, but as the far left of the capitalist political apparatus, with the purpose of confusing, derailing, disorienting and confining working class discontent within the framework of capitalist politics and legalism, have advocated the formation of a labor party based upon the trade unions. Today such an organization is in its beginning stages.

In the years to come, as the austerity attacks engineered and implemented by the ruling class escalate, the capitalist class will use the Labor Party as a means for capturing and rendering powerless the inevitable militancy and defensive response from the working class. The Labor Party has been founded not as a positive response to class struggle, nor as a product of class struggle, but rather as a preemptive measure against future class struggle.

Proletarian political groups, those who reflect not the politics of the ruling class, but who emanate from the very difficult process of coming to class consciousness currently are few in number and exercise little influence within the class as a whole at the present moment. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility as class conscious militants and organizations and groups to oppose and expose this latest political maneuver against our class.

Whether your group traces its political traditions to DeLeonism, libertarianism, anarcho-syndicalism, as we do, it has been historically clear to these political currents that the capitalist trade unions do not defend the interests of the working class, but rather sabotage those interests, that they lead workers struggles into deadends, that they regulate the sale of labor power for the bourgeoisie, that they tie the working class to the politics of the bourgeoisie, and maintain labor peace.

Workers must not be hoodwinked by the radical rhetoric used by the Labor Party. A party founded and controlled by the trade unions, and their leftist apologists, will continue the tradition of sabotaging the class struggle and setting workers up for defeat.

Even if your organization does not share the ICC's position that revolutionary organizations and parties should not participate in capitalist elections in this epoch of capitalist development, surely we can agree that the Labor Party is a capitalist party, organized by part of the capitalist apparatus (the trade unions and leftists) as a weapon against our class and should be denounced as such by all proletarian political groups.

We fraternally request that you publish this letter in your publication and take a clear position on the Labor Party, so that, whether you agree with us or not, this question can be openly discussed and debated within the workers movement and the class at large.

Communist greetings,
Internationalism, POB 288, New York, NY 10018
Nov. 1996
I think that most folks have heard of Socialism but I doubt very much that their definition coincides with mine... One could say that I represent the various branches around the world that are in complete agreement with the S.P.G.B. (the socialist party of Great Britain)... I mention the S.P.G.B. because I believe that they were the first on the scene in 1904... Briefly, their Object is the establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of the whole community... In other words, a world-wide community composed of all humanity... about 5½ billion of us humans.

We socialists are quite satisfied that the only way to achieve this goal is by political action... Simply use your vote to bring about an end to the present system, Capitalism, which deprives about 90% of us of the wealth that we produce.

The solution to most of the ills of the world is a simple one, establish socialism... However, it cannot be done without a majority of socialists... Our socialist candidates will flat-out tell you they don't want your vote unless you want socialism... Reforming capitalism is not on the agenda... Our political opponents have been doing that for over 200 years.

The socialist can point the way but he will not adopt the role of 'leader'... Have you heard this before?... "Where there are leaders there are led, where there are led there are bled"... We must first cast off the role of being a 'follower'.

You may think you cannot be hood-winked... you have too much intelligence... you are too wise in the ways of the world... The facts prove otherwise... You have been content to put your trust in leaders'... You have voted for the 'Whigs and Tories', the 'Democrats and Republicans'... the 'Liberals and Conservatives' for the past 200 years... these are the facts!!!!!!... Let's face it... You have been misled year after year... Your 'leaders' with their smooth talk and promises have proven that 'followers' are made to be bled... Learn how this system operates... learn why it cannot function in your interests.

Yours for Socialism.

W.H.

S.P.G.B.
52 Clapham High Street,
London, SW4 7UN.
U.K.

W.S.P.(US)
POBox 440247
Boston, MA. 02144
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

New Democracy will sponsor a presentation by Dave Stratman and round-table discussion of “Fight to Win: A Strategy for Labor” at the Labor Notes conference in Detroit. Stratman proposes a revolutionary labor movement aimed at winning the class war. The discussion will take place in the Huron Room, Westin Hotel, lower level, on Saturday, April 19 from 2 to 4 p.m.

A Ballad Against Work is the title of the first publication of Collectivities. The title page confirms the information in the letter from India published in DB81: “We are trying to distribute our publications free. Not because we are stacked with money, but because free availability of things confronts the relations maintained through markets. Use this publication as you like. This publication wants to be read, enjoyed, changed, spread, whipped, enlarged (A4 to B4 . . . ?), faulted and aufhebened. We can also provide the text electronically. Write to us for copies”. Collectivities, Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, N.I.T., Faridabad 121001, India. Tentatively titled “The Bitter Wages of Work,” this 62-page, A4 book reflects the tone implicit in the original title. The first of the nine sections, “Ingenuities of Our Times” 1.1 Our Times ... Money can buy everything, it is said. What is not said is what it takes to buy money.” “Eighteen years old ... Bhupender ... dropped post-graduation mid-way ... started a job...” The section continues with short narratives of people who must sell their lives to buy the money to live: Ranjan, Karen ... Jean in Paris; Rajbal, who owns a hectare in Northern India; Ramva, a typist; etc. The other eight sections include: 2. Eradication Drives; 3. Speed Chains; 4. Implanting Habits of Work Intensification; 5. The Keys to Managerial Ingenuity; 6. Extraction Networks; 7. Our Working Day; 8. Planners’ Plight; and 9. Resistances vs. Managers of Discontent.” Besides a wealth of useful information, often illustrated with workers’ narratives, the “Ballad” possesses that wry, ironic tone I associate with situationists and with publications touched by John Zerzan or Ken Smith. Announced for February publication is Collectivities’ second book, Reflections on Marx’s Critique of Political Economy.

The Bomb by Frank Harris may not ring a bell with very many readers. Harris, whose autobiography, My Life and Loves, served people of my generation as our principal item of literary pornography—superior to both Henry Miller and James Joyce—had other claims to fame. He was a first rate editor and a lecturer of some fame in a day when lectures were important entertainment. He also wrote a biography—unwelcomed by the victim, G.B. Shaw. I first learned of the existence of The Bomb in a Detroit hole-in-the-wall used book store back in the days (the early fifties) when the $5 I spent for it was big money. It was self-published by Harris in 1920, I think (I can’t seem to locate it now). At any rate the book, described in the flyer that came my way as “The Classic Novel of Anarchist Violence,” has been republished after many years with the introduction by John Dos Passos from the 1963 University of Chicago Press edition and an afterword by John Zerzan. Harris, who came to the U.S. as a teenager in the early 1870s writes familiarly of Chicago and the radical movement there. Like some other authorities he fixes on Rudolph Schnaebelt, the only person indicted who escaped the police dragnet, as the bomb thrower. The novel is Schnaebelt’s story in first person told on his deathbed in Bavaria. 213 pages, $12.95 from Feral House, P.O. Box 3466, Portland, OR 97208.

Common Ownership is a “Journal of Scientific Socialism in Cooperation with The World

(To p. 25)
(From p. 25)

listings to the page, plus separate listings of such publishers as Automedia, City Lights,
Re/search, and Black Swan. Among the authors and titles listed are these: John P. Altgeld’s
Reasons for Pardoning the Haymarket Anarchists, $5; Oscar Ameringer’s Life and Deeds of
Uncle Sam, $6. In keeping with its function as a distributor of anarchist literature, eight titles by
Bakunin and twenty by Kropotkin but only The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels.
Authors who regard themselves as Marxists are there: Anton Pannekoek, Nelson Peery, Martin
Glaberman, CLR James and many others. Fiction listings amount to 14 pages and AK has
political tapes, videos, poetry and songs, stickers, postcards, comics, etc etc. Write to AK
Distribution at PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140.

A Little Working Class Sense: Essays by Gilbert Mers reflects the thinking of an
unreconstructed Wobbly with a Ph D in longshoremanology. Mers has been a longtime
contributor to Bayou La Rose, the independent Wobbly journal published by Arthur J. Miller.
Among the essays are “On the Question of Workplace Violence,” “Answer to the Review of
Working The Waterfront,” and my favorite “An Open Letter to Some of Our Liberal/Left
Periodicals.” I think the straightforward, two-by-four English of “The Single Issue” will
resonate with many readers:

“We’ve spoken of costs. That equates to money in most minds. But money (in
essence, figures on paper) stands in the way of everything. Try this for size:
There can be no freedom until goods are free.

But that means confiscation! Of course it does...”

And the concluding sentence: “The Single Issue: abolish capitalism.”

A 38-page pamphlet, 5 1/2 by 8 1/2, no price given. Write to the Industrial
Transportation Project of the IWW, P.O. Box 5464, Tacoma, WA 98415.

--fg