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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

DB84 begins with an article from *The Poor, the Bad, and the Angry* that has a different slant on the materialist conception of history. Did humanity have to go through the economic stages from primitive communism to capitalism before we can have the socialist revolution as we learned in socialist study classes. The study class answer was yes. The nature of a social system is governed by the will of the owners of the means of production, not by the wishes of the people who make it up. Next Sher Singh responds to Connie Furdeck’s DB82 letter by pointing out that much of the resistance to capital arises on the spot on the occasion, not as organized resistance through unions and political parties. The De Leonist Society of Canada answers Connie Furdeck’s review of David Stratman’s *We Can Change the World* in which she sets forth the standard DeLeonist view that the socialist industrial union will

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THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

NOTES TOWARD TRANSCENDING THE PROGRESS/ANTI-PROGRESS DEBATE

--from The Poor, the Bad, and the Angry, PO Box 3305, Oakland CA 94609

ONE

Marx's schema of progress can be taken as descriptive, not prescriptive. The Marxist formulation is that humanity began in primitive communism, and is going through various stages of class society (savagery, barbarism, feudalism, capitalism, etc.) that develop the productive forces of the economy before humanity can abolish class society and achieve communism at a higher level. Marx's agent for the abolition of class society, the industrial proletariat, has the capacity to do this, not only because of its position at the point of production, but also because of its aggregation and organization into a self-conscious class by the process of industrial production itself. This describes what has happened historically. It does not describe what has to happen.

TWO

The abolition of class society and the creation of communism could have occurred at any stage of class society. Clearly, if communism existed for primitive, hunter-gatherer societies, where the productive economic forces were virtually nil and scarcity practically universal, then class society could be abolished and communism created at stages of society where the productive forces are more developed and certain scarcities have been eliminated. Thus, it is not necessary to wait for the full development of the productive forces and the total elimination of scarcity. Stages of the Marxist schema can be skipped.

THREE

Furthermore, insurrectionary movements to abolish class society have emerged at every stage of class society, spearheaded by non-industrial as well as industrial laboring classes. The slave revolts of ancient Rome, the peasant uprisings of the Middle Ages, and the indigenous rebellions of New World native peoples, no less than the workers revolutions of the 18th, 19th & 20th centuries express authentic communist currents in human history.

FOUR

Finally, it is possible to conceive of conditions which would allow pre-class societies to develop into post-class societies without having to endure the miseries of class struggle; in other words, to skip the Marxist schema altogether. Had the European invasion of the Americas been delayed for a century or two, the native nations of North America (the Iroquois nation of the northeast, the Six Civilized Nations of the southeast, the Hopi Pueblos in the southwest, etc.) might have developed a continental organization and coordination of truly internationalist dimensions.

FIVE

A number of problems remain. What agency has maintained the condition of human exploitation historically, once primitive communism was subverted or destroyed? The dialectical dynamics of class society as Marx proposed have been found wanting as a sufficient explanation by many, but the current use of civilization as the scapegoat has proven equally lacking. In particular, the notion of civilization is extremely nebulous. What constitutes the basis for civilization? Hierarchy? Agriculture? Language? The whole anti-civilization debate has become a intellectual quagmire, replete with flawed assumptions, questionable methodologies and shaky conclusions.

SIX

Chief among the problems is the issue of scarcity. Scarcity exists in a number of forms, the first being natural scarcity. Certain resources may not exist in sufficient abundance to satisfy human needs and desires. Such natural scarcities are extremely few and for the most part can be dealt with by substituting other resources for the scarce ones. Artificial scarcity is more familiar, as it is the product of class society. Economic monopolies are only the most obvious sources of scarcity. For instance, diamonds would be as plentiful as grains of sand on a beach if it were not for the worldwide diamond cartel. But the very operation of class societies also produces scarcity. During the Middle Ages, when the nobility and clergy expropriated grain and labor from the peasant class, it was common for the peasantry to produce just enough to survive and no more. What little surplus was produced quickly disappeared into a smuggling economy. Similarly, when the Bolsheviks used the Red Army to confiscate grain from the Russian peasantry, all of the old feudal habits of that class reemerged. The abolition of class society would resolve this type of scarcity. Finally, there is the scarcity for want of a total liberatory social reality. One region of the world may lack water while another may have an abundance of it. One part of the global economy may not have sufficient productive capacity while another might have an over-abundance of it. If a classless, global community is not created, such scarcity will persist. This raises a final problem.

SEVEN

Is the impulse to abolish class society and create communism, as expressed historically through various social movements, a sufficient agency to
achieve totality? Totality was a concept much used by Georg Lukacs, in his work *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukacs described capitalism as a totalizing agent. Not only does capitalism seek to expand globally, to create an all-encompassing world capitalist market, but it also seeks to invade and absorb every aspect of social and personal life. Capitalist domination presently reaches from the furthest recesses of the individual psyche to the aboriginal peoples at the outermost edges of global society. Capitalism has achieved totality; in other words, it has become a total, global social system. Lukacs also postulated that, prior to the totalizing force of the capitalist mode of production, no other mode of production possessed this dynamic. Pre-capitalist societies might have commercial components existing side by side with feudal and slave ones, no one component capable of the hegemony demonstrated by capitalism. Is the impulse to abolish class society sufficient by itself to achieve a global communism? Did insurrectionary Roman slaves or revolutionary peasants during the Middle Ages or rebellious indigenous peoples in the Americas seek to create an all-encompassing classless, global community?

**EIGHT**

The necessity for such an all-encompassing classless, global community has been made clear by other people. It is not possible to have communism in just one river valley or one bioregion any more than it is possible to build socialism in one country. So long as predatory capitalism exists anywhere in the world, a threat remains to the liberatory communist society that has taken hold on a limited scale.

**NINE**

The debate over progress thus is redefined. The Marxist conception of progress is obsolete on two points. There is no historical necessity for stages of economic development to maximize society’s productive forces and eliminate scarcity. The working class capacity for self-emancipation does not depend on this, nor does it follow from industrial forms of organization that bring vast numbers of proletarians together under a single roof, subject to a unified form of economic organization. Both of these factors may be helpful, but they are not determinant. What is crucial is the consciousness of the working class as a class. However, consciousness in general and class consciousness in particular does not emerge out of a vacuum. It arises out of the material conditions of society. The question then becomes, can a movement for total liberation come out of a less than total mode of production? Is the impetus for a classless, global community dependent upon the material conditions produced by the global economic system of capitalism? The peasant revolts of the Middle Ages and the Reformation, in their millenarian fervor, shared several universal components with the Universal Church of the time. Yet they were not social movements for total liberation as witness the pogroms of Jews because of their religion that accompanied many of these revolts. Is our ability to conceive of a communism that is based in self interest and not mysticism, which is global and not regional in aspiration, and whose scope is not partial but total; is this necessarily the product of the present advanced, worldwide capitalist system in which we exist?

(from p. 2)

supersede the political state. The DLS argues that the new society will require a political component, at least on the community level.

Pat Murtagh concedes a point made by Jeff Stein in his DB82 letter regarding the role of anarcho-syndicalists in the Spanish Civil War and goes on to present us with new—at least to me—facts about this conflict. He also comments briefly on the Bookchin controversy, suggesting that the political implications of Bookchin’s libertarian municipalism need closer examination. To those of us who questioned the accuracy of David Stratman’s assertion that Marx said the workers seek only their own self interest, Adam Buick has found the source and sent a copy of the passage. Stratman seems to have gotten the words right, but in context his interpretation is wrong.

Next comes the conclusion of the E-mail exchange between David Stratman of New Democracy and Adam Buick of the World Socialist Movement. Because I was in too much of a hurry, I neglected to give it a suitable headline and introduction. The exchange continues the discussion on the merits of Marxism begun in DB83. Also concluded in this issue is Irving Silvey’s reply to the De Leonist Society of Canada’s DB81 answer to his critique of their revision of the SIU program. I might add that groups

(to p. 6)
Great Attempts and Small Refusals

Dear DB readers,

This is in response to Connie Frudeck’s reply to our “Some comments on ‘Declaration of Economic Independence for the American Working Class’ in DB No 82, March-April, 1997. We are deeply distressed and disturbed by the premise underlying Connie’s reply. This needs elaboration as it is quite pervasive amongst activists and theoreticians at large.

Hierarchical societies does not just divide the world in exploitators and exploited, rulers and ruled, but also in enlightened and ignorant, literates and illiterates, intelligent and idiots, preachers and pupils, cultured and uncultured, civilised and savage, brave and the meek, etc. All great managerial treatise and manuals be they in political theory, history, culture, surveillance, medicine or other matters of mundane affairs lends its arsenal to the perpetuation of these dichotomies, which are the basic premises of all hierarchies.

Hierarchies have reached their geriatric crises. trillions of dollars are pumped in to keep hierarchies alive.

They spends billions to maintain armies. But 95% of the soldiers during 1939-45 did not fire a single shot during these six years of mass-murder despite the great efforts of Franc Capra, Chaplin, Grierson, Reifensthal, Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, Hitler, Tojo, Mussolini et al. Billions are spent on war mobilization. But whether be it US during the Vietnam massacres or slaughter in Serbia despite extreme measures used to enforce conscriptions, significant numbers do evade the chance to become brave patriots and heroic martyrs.

Schools, that great holy institution of mass literacy is inflicted billions of dollars of breakage-wreckage every year by the pupils.

Architects, designers, town planners and artists collaborate and create under spot-lights spectacular fortresses and in the dark millions of shaky, quivering hands paint & draw on the fortress walls to express themselves.

Despite blank cheques to invent newer and newer special effects through electronic gazetery, the great representational circuses are losing its charm and audience. Meanwhile philosophers contemplates on legitimation crisis; parties & institutions rave and rant on mass indifference and repeatedly make brave attempts to inform, to educate and to entertain.
What lies beneath these great attempts and small refusals?

Wage-workers always and everywhere resist and struggle against work, against productivity, against discipline, against sacrifice. This underlies the great anxieties of enlightened people. Being meek, weak, ignorant, inarticulate, fearful and stubborn wage workers everyday through anonymous insidious small actions and gestures individually or in small groups challenge the rationality and corrode the foundation of hierarchies. This everyday activity has the capacity to eat away the system and create an anti-hierarchical global human community. The exponential growth of the surveillance industry at work-places, markets, cinema halls, playgrounds etc bears testimony to this.

If one looks for articulate articles and speeches to gauge vast majority of workers opinions regarding patriotism, work, war then one is bound to be led on a false track by portrayals in the media. The coherence that media presents through representatives, leaders, middle persons is at logger heads with workers acts and views. So instead of being entrapped by leaders & media and trying to preach homilies to workers considering them to be children and oneself as adults, what is important is to act as colleagues and exchange experience and ideas as one has them.

Let's not reproduce the rationality of hierarchies in our fight against hierarchies.

With greetings

Sher Singh
Majdoor Library, Autopin Jhuggi, Faridabad 121001, India.

(From p. 4)

writing to the DB very often use the name of the group rather than the separate signatures of the authors, as was the case with the De Leonist Society’s DB82 letter. Silvey’s implied claim that their letter was anonymous is unfounded.

John Cabral’s excellent review of the Ken Loach film “Land and Freedom” has been lying in a file folder much too long. I too would like to recommend the film to DB readers. Our local group saw in a couple of months ago. Next is an article from New Democracy, “How Did We Lose Detroit?” As I am writing this, members of our local group have been telling me of their experiences at the labor rally in Detroit Saturday. What should have been a memorial service for a dead strike seems to have been a gigantic pep rally. The local paper quotes that great labor militant John Sweeney as saying at the rally, “This is a statement of continued solidarity and commitment by the working men and women in this country. It’s also a pledge to continue our support.” --this from the head of AFL-CIO officialdom whose inaction did much to lose the strike.

My review of Bob Black’s book on anarchism come next. Actually the book is about Murray Bookchin and, by extension, any brand of anarchism that has a revolutionary objective. As usual we end with some “Notes, Announcements, and Short Reviews.”

(to p. 11)
Dear DB:

Quoting the concluding paragraph of Connie Furdeck's REVIEW OF DAVE STRATMAN'S WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD, PART 2 (DB82, MAR-APR 1997):

"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. [Furdeck's emphasis.] 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 framework by which to elect the necessary management committees for a smooth running social and economic democracy."

*

Assuming that by "the reality of daily life" Furdeck means the reality of the State's oppressive role, does it follow that "if our future government is to express the will of the people....the political arm of labor [will have] only a temporary role to play...."? We think not. We do not agree that dissolution of the State should be followed by Labor's abandonment of the political field. For whereas the political State (the Marxist State, the class-ruled State) is but an "expression" of capitalistic economic power, this expression must perforce be annulled by dethronement of the capitalistic class. In a word, we hold that what a socialist revolution should "dissolve" are not the nation's political institutions but capitalistic control of them!

True, De Leon's plan substituted an industrial, in place of a political, framework of government. However, we became convinced that if self-government of the people is to be fully realized, De Leonism would need to be updated by the addition of political democracy to industrial democracy. This because of another reality that entered the picture, a reality that is outside the State context—the reality of demographic change!

And what a reality this has proved itself! Thus while De Leon found very few "grey heads" among his audiences, today he would find them in abundance. In short, a near century of industrialization since De Leon’s formulation of Industrial Democracy has produced a vast change in the composition of our populations, has produced a large and apparently ever-growing segment of work-force retirees!

The impact of this "sea change" upon the question of democracy now becomes clear. The vehicle of industrial democracy is the Socialist Industrial Union; voting takes place in an industrial constituency, i.e., workers vote where they work. But if the industrial constituency were to become the sole locus wherein "the will of the people" could be expressed, not the people-as-a-whole (not the body politic itself) but only that
segment of them actively engaged in social production would qualify as voters. This is the problem! Indeed, not only retirees from the Work Force but additional segments of the populace such as housewives, being outside the perimeter of the SIU, would become effectively disfranchised were Socialism to relinquish the geographic constituency.

What, then, is the remedy? Quoting from our Manifesto of 1995:

"The question of form has long been debated by Socialists. Which form of democracy--political or industrial--will be best suited to the dual purpose of conduct of socialist production and resolution of social issues? "Political Socialists" have propagated the former, "Industrial Socialists" (De Leonists) the latter. But now The De Leonist Society of Canada has broken with the past by concluding that neither the industrial form alone nor the political form alone but both the industrial and the political are requisite to complete socialist democracy!

"On the one hand the astounding complexity of today's industrial processes has more than ever convinced us that the Industrial, not the Political, in addition to being the vehicle for democracy in the workplace is the ONE possible form that can afford intelligent management of socialist production and distribution. But on the other hand we have become equally convinced that the social problems that Capitalism will undoubtedly throw onto Socialism's lap [as well as other matters requiring policy decisions] are problems that the industrial organization should not be burdened with, are problems that are not directly concerned with production therefore lie beyond its purview, and finally, are problems that democracy insists should be resolved by none but the DEMOS--none but the people-as-a-whole on the political field! Accordingly, we hold that the question a socialist ticket should ask the people to agree to should not be devolution of their political powers upon an industrial organization but delegation of industrial executive authority to an industrial organization responsible to the people through their legislative assemblies."

--The De Leonist Society of Canada
Dear Comrades,

Jeff Stein has corrected me on a very important point. Not ALL of the CNT-FAI ministers were of the "ultra". FAI faction within the CNT. This is what happens when you speak from memory of things read one or two decades previously. Since then I have looked over the English language literature at least a lot more closely. One correction I have to make to what Jeff has written is that Horacio Prieto was NOT a Trientista. The "anarchist minister maker" who Vernon Richards describes as "one of the most unpleasant political intriguers that the CNT has thrown up" was a member of the FAI (though strangely enough so was Juan Pieró at one time) through the time that the Trientistas were separate from the CNT. His later advocacy of the FAI becoming a political party was, of course, an abandonment of anarchism, just as Garcia Oliver's actions in exile (formation of a party in France and a splinter CNT in Mexico that defended governmental collaboration at a time when the CNT in exile was returning to anarchist principles) were also an abandonment of same by a man who obviously considered himself a revolutionary first and an anarchist last.

What strikes me on rereading the literature on the Spanish Revolution is what an incredibly mixed bag BOTH the Trientistas and the FAI were. There was no clear demarcation of one course or the other, and antagonisms and differing opinions (often held by the same person at different times) were widespread in both camps. When Prieto chose his ministers he did so with care not just balance the FAI/Trientista factions but also to choose people from within the factions who would be antagonistic to each other. This was a perfect recipe for continued dependence on Señor Prieto as the eminence-gris of the CNT. I cannot help but come to the conclusion that Prieto knew exactly what he was doing, and that his later political ideas were formed as early as 1936. The myth of revolution held by the "ultras" was no more a safeguard against such scheming than were the anarchist principles of men like Pieró.

I have to admit that looking over the history of the Spanish anarchists has disabused me of the illusion that the Trientistas had some sort of "magic key" as to how to manoeuvre in the conditions of 1936 to 1939 where compromise WAS inevitable. In this I now have to agree that Jeff was right. But I also found out that there is an incredible amount of dirt to throw at both "factions". On the side of the "ultras" Durruti comes across as relatively clean. Despite being in the same affinity group as Oliver he disagreed profoundly with the attitude that led some FAI members to style Oliver as an "anarcho-Bolshevik". In the discussions that followed the first few days of the Revolution he basically vetoed Oliver's position of "going for broke". To Durruti the advance on Saragossa, where numerous CNTistas were in enemy hands took precedence, took precedence as indeed it should have. On the side of the "gradualists" Juan Pieró had by 1939, at a time when most of the CNT/FAI was still spinning in confusion, come to the realization that an earlier refusal to enter into government would have put the CNT into a stronger position in the case of a presumed Republican victory.

I might disagree with Pieró's opinion that the CNT should have cooperated with other anti-fascist forces without accepting state positions "nobly and disinterestedly". I see no reason to play fair
with those who had no intention of playing fair with the anarchists, though I can certainly see the merit of pretending to do so. Prieto, however, probably meant exactly what he said. If Prieto was one of the most unpleasant CNTistas Prieto was definitely one of the most admirable. When he denounced and attempted to stop anarchist atrocities in the first days of the Revolution (don't fool yourself, they existed) he undoubtedly earned the bale of more violent elements. Yet he died true to his anarchist principles. When he was handed back to Franco by the Vichy government he was offered the opportunity to save his life by accepting a position in the fascist "unions". He got to tell them the Spanish equivalent of a final "fuck-off" before they murdered him.

The point to this is that it is not adherence to revolution as opposed to gradualism that distinguishes anarchism from other political currents. Neither is it a refusal to make compromises as any real situation in the past, the present or the future will demand compromise from even the most committed revolutionary. To pretend (definite emphasis) otherwise is to make anarchism an airy ideal of "ultimate revolt", something that might be psychologically satisfying to those whose idea of "politics" is to prove their personal superiority. Jeff's commitment to the "working class" (as a populist I prefer the term "ordinary people") issues of anarchism puts him in the category of "practical anarchist" by definition. He works in the real world, in his case the IWW to a large degree. As such he has to make compromises in the here and now and will have to in the future. The big question is what to compromise on when.

In this vein I find it unfortunate that the "Bookchin issue" of the DB failed to discuss "libertarian municipalism" which is social ecology brought down to Earth from the clouds of philosophy. Once upon a time I would have objected to Bookchin's advocacy of participating in local elections on principle. I am no longer of that opinion. BUT I am definitely of the opinion that it is unwise for libertarian socialists to take part in such campaigns now and in the foreseeable future. As a tiny minority, no matter how popular anarchism has become in a way diluted by leftism amongst younger people, we will be swamped by much more powerful currents of social democracy. The support enjoyed by social democracy in both its right wing and left wing aspects has a good solid economic basis for existing. It can't be "wished away" by revolutionary declarations because the present economic self interest of some ordinary people (NOT just the leaders) is opposed to that of others. Until a non-statist alternative is formulated and embodied in a viable organization or organizations people will basically "vote their paycheque". It is my opinion that such an alternative is necessarily gradualist even if itpretends to be revolutionary and that it would be more effective if it were to abandon the revolutionary verbiage.

The fundamental problem for libertarian socialism today is NOT scrapping it out with brands X, Y and Z of the Leninists as to who is the most revolutionary. Time moves on, and basically we don't have the commies to kick around any more. With apologies to Trotsky him and all his ilk had had the garbage can of history tipped over and flushed down the drain, many millions of corpses later. The problem is to offer a credible alternative to social democracy.
Libertarian municipalism glosses over real economic conflict far too glibly and thus ends up trapped in the impasse that modern social democracy finds itself in. The local assembly is NOT the alpha and omega of an anti-managerial, anti-statist alternative. It is ONLY a part. If the Libertarian Party is not anarcho-capitalist then neither are left wing social democrats who advocate limited decentralization anarchists.

I welcome Murray Bookchin's recent emphasis on the socialist nature of anarchism and his attempts to block those who would turn anarchism into one more new age religious cult. The market for such cults is rather glutted, and adherence to such a version of "anarchism" is a good prescription for wasting your life. For myself if I wanted religion I would go back to the Holy Roman Fucking Catholic Church which has considerably more intellectual grounding and emotional appeal than the crap that Murray denounces.

But, but, but, but.... Murray gives far too much attention to ideas and too little to the reasons why people are statistically likely to hold certain ideas. He's a philosopher. Libertarian municipalism would be fine if it were embedded in a thicker matrix of anti-state action by ordinary people but in the absence of such it is a compromise that shouldn't be made. Better to accomplish what little can be done in the right direction than to look grand by winning a petty election (or losing it) and go elsewhere.

In Solidarity,
Pat Mustagh
Winnipeg, Man.

(from p. 6)

BULLETIN MATTERS

Finances

With this issue the DB dipped into the red. This isn't the first time and it would have been much worse without unusually high donations. Unfortunately postage costs are higher this time, and we can also expect a copier repair bill before this issue can be printed. (One of the rollers has developed a flat spot requiring its replacement.) The DB pays half of such repairs, and I pay the other half. I'm told that this time it will cost over $100 total.

Contributions: Michael Fedorow $22, Monroe Prussack $7; Walter Petrovich $17; Joe Travascio $9; Robert Cymbala $5; Bill Friesser $2; Joseph Tupper $20; Lila Holmdahl $12. Total $94. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE

April 24, 1997 $ 11.35

RECEIPTS

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(to p. 18)
From Adam Buick--

In the May-June DB, T. F. asks where Dave Stratman gets his oft-repeated quote from Marx that "every individual seeks only his particular interest". It comes from Part One (on Feuerbach) of The German Ideology as a marginal note beside a paragraph which contains the famous passage about people in a socialist society being able to be a hunter in the morning, a fisherman in the afternoon, etc. So that DB readers can judge for themselves whether Marx is talking about human behaviour only under capitalism or about human behaviour in general, here is the marginal note in full (from pages 53-54 of the 1970 Lawrence & Wishart edition, edited by C. J. Arthur):

1 (And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the State, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration—such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests—and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others. It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc. etc. are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. Of this the German theoreticians have not the faintest inkling, although they have received a sufficient introduction to the subject in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher and Die heilige Familie. Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which immediately it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek only their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their com-

1 In the manuscript this paragraph occurs as a marginal note beside the previous paragraph. — Ed.
Thanks very much for your Second Reply of August 1.

Let me just make a few brief comments:

1. As you know, Lenin was quoting Kautsky in "What Is To Be Done" to the effect that workers of themselves are capable only of trade union consciousness. Karl Kautsky was, if anything, a main-stream Marxist. The German Marxist parties, acting on this view of workers, lost their revolutionary ideals and limited their program to reforms, and became increasingly integrated into bourgeois politics. Lenin, acting on this same understanding of workers as held by the German Marxists, organized a party of a new type to insure that the revolutionary ideals of Marxism not be lost.

My point here is that the view of workers ascribed to Lenin is really a main-stream Marxist point of view. Lenin simply acted on it differently. As I point out in my book, it is significant that Marxist-Leninists alone among Marxists have discovered how to operationalize Marxism as a theory of revolution--though with disastrous consequences.

What I find admirable about the SPGB is that you have held on to your revolutionary ideals and have avoided the Leninist path. I believe, however, that this has been in spite of your Marxism, not because of it.

3. I looked up the "Theses on Feuerbach" and could not find the quote you mention. Be that as it may, my point has always been that the problem in Marxism lies in the underlying model, rather than necessarily in all that Marx said.

Marx was attempting to create a "science of revolution" comparable to Darwin's science of evolution. To Marx this meant discovering objective laws of history and economics which operate independent of human will. The human subject is not present in this science, except as the individual, seeking his own self-interest, sets in motion forces which drive history forward with consequences often contrary to those sought by the individual. As Engels put it, "...it is precisely the wicked passions of man--greed and the lust for power--which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development." Marx thought his great accomplishment was to find the eventual destruction of capitalism and the creation of a fully human society in the operation of economic forces arising from individual acts based on self-interest.

Workers as individuals in Marx's paradigm no more have goals beyond their individual interests than do capitalists; even if they did, these would be irrelevant and unascertainable from the point of view of the science of revolution. (Remember Frank Girard's determination to strip any goals beyond self-interest from the Hormel strikers?) As I explain on pp. 166-169 of my book, Lenin was confronted by Marxism with some critical problems. If individuals, even individual workers, seek only their own interests, who will pursue the interests of humanity? And if the working class has been dehumanized by capitalism, who will act as a conscious revolutionary force? Lenin's answer to both these problems posed by Marxism was, as we know, the Party.

Though we haven't really discussed this in New Democracy, I believe that there can be a "science of revolution," and my book is a stab at establishing some principles on which such a science may be based. But the driving forces in this science cannot be outside mankind, and the human subject cannot be irrelevant within it.

5. We see our main purpose to be to spread ideas also, and our activities are largely limited--at
this point, with our small forces—to publishing our newsletter and flyers. Our distribution network consists of individuals—autoworkers, machinists, teachers, retirees, and others—who copy our leaflets and pass them on.

Our emphasis on strikes has arisen in part from our concern to interpret—or reinterpret—the meaning of class struggle, showing that what is being contested is not simply a division of the wealth but a whole view of human life and relationships. We show that class struggle is implicitly revolutionary, and that the way forward is to make the implicit underlying revolutionary goals of struggles explicit. We hope in this way both to give new impetus to working class struggles and to legitimize and spread the idea of revolution. We want to make the idea of revolution seem common sense, and the only possible fulfillment of the struggles in which people are already engaged and goals they already seek.

An interesting difference in our approaches seems to lie in this: we in ND assume that most people already want what you call socialism and we call revolutionary democracy, and that the real struggle with people is to make it clear that revolution is possible. (Your emphasis, if I understand you correctly, is on persuading people that socialism would be a good solution to our problems.)

In our view, revolutionary consciousness lies in the awareness of working people of themselves collectively as the creators of all that is of value in society and therefore as capable of recreating society on a new basis. Revolutionary consciousness for us does not lie in knowledge of the "laws of history" or of economics.

I’m not saying that this is what it means for you or the SPGB, but this is what it typically means for Marxists (which is why Kautsky and Lenin did not feel that workers of themselves are capable of it).

I’m sorry that this reply has been delayed. I’d like to develop #3, but I don’t want to delay my reply further. I’ll send you our latest mailing today (it too is about a strike, as it happens).

All the best,

Dave Stratman

Date: 96-08-28

Dear Dave:

Thanks for your second reply. Here’s my third defence of Marx (rather than Marxism). Basically, as I said in the first message, in the end it doesn’t really matter what one person—in the event Marx—had to say; his views are not more authoritative than yours or mine or anyone else’s. But there was a historical individual called Marx and I think that you have misunderstood the views he held. I think the evidence is that Marx held humanistic and libertarian views.

1. I know that Lenin called in Kautsky to lend authority to his views on the intellectual capabilities of the working class that he expressed in What Is To Be Done, but my recollection is (I haven’t got the books to hand) that Kautsky himself did not argue that workers were capable only of trade union consciousness. He accepted that workers were capable of socialist consciousness but argued (a) that this would not be the spontaneous outcome of the economic struggle over wages and working conditions and (b) that, as a matter of history, socialist theory had first arisen not amongst workers but amongst those Lenin called “the educated representatives of the bourgeoisie”. (I think Kautsky was factually wrong on this last point: of the “big names” of socialism in the first half of the 19th century only Marx himself fits this
description—neither Engels nor Robert Owen nor Fourier nor Saint Simon do—and he got the basic idea of socialism from French and German artisans in Paris.) Lenin's argument is rather different to Kautsky's: it is he who draws the conclusion that workers are only capable of trade union consciousness and that socialist ideas have to be brought to them from outside by another social group (Lenin turned a statement of Kautsky's about what had—supposedly—happened historically, into a general statement of what had to happen always). In any event, Kautsky was committed to the view that workers could acquire a socialist consciousness under capitalism; this was why he was so committed to political democracy (as the best framework in which this could happen) and why he later vigorously disagreed with Lenin about this—only to be labelled a "renegade", by which title he is known to this day to most who call themselves Marxists, i.e., Leninists. I don't hold any particular brief for Kautsky (he was a reformist essentially) but I accept that after Engels he was the person who did the most to create "Marxism".

2. I have looked up the "Theses on Feuerbach" and the one I was referring to was Thesis No 3, which if you re-read it expresses the same criticism as you of the view that makes humans the mere passive products of their environment.

3. Marx did indeed set out to discover objective laws of history and economics, but in reducing his ideas here to a crude and simplistic economic determinism I think you fundamentally misinterpret him. Coming out of German philosophy, Marx was committed to the idea of "alienation" by which he understood, among other things, the separation of humans from their own acts, but not only the separation but also their domination by them.

In other words, although the laws of history and economics operated as if they were laws of nature they weren't in fact laws of nature; they only appeared to be so and ultimately were products of human activity. This is the meaning of the sub-title of "Das Kapital": "A Critique of Political Economy". Marx's critique of the Political Economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo was, precisely, that they assumed that the laws of economics were laws of nature whereas in fact, argued Marx, they were only the consequences of a particular form of social organisation. Under capitalism humans were dominated not by laws of nature but by the products of their own activities. The same applied to history. Marx accepted the definition of history as the free creation of humans, but this was why he once called what is generally called "history" "prehistory", precisely because it wasn't the free creation of humans; real history would only begin with socialism since only on the basis of common ownership would humans be freed from the operation of historical and economic forces, the result of their own actions but which acted on them as if they were (but without actually being) natural laws.

I know this is rather philosophical Marx but I think it is a more accurate interpretation of Marx than the crude economic determinist interpretation you attribute to him. Having said this, I accept that Marx was in a sense an economic determinist, though not a crude one. After all, his argument was that until socialism humans were, and would be, dominated by historical and economic forces which acted as if they were natural laws; in other words, they had the same coercive force as natural laws and humans could no more subtract themselves from their operation or change their operation than they could natural laws. I would go along with this and agree that the most important (though by no means the only) factor in history has been the economic one. This doesn't mean (neither for me nor for Marx!) that in history humans are always consciously motivated by economic self-interest or economic class interest; on the conscious level they are often motivated by other ideas even ideals but the point is that these other political, religious and moral ideas are ultimately related to economic class (or class economic) interests. I don't expect you to agree with this since you don't claim to be a Marxist!

Perhaps this is the point to make it clear that my purpose in this exchange of message is not to convince you to agree with Marx or to become a "Marxist"; it is simply to get you to realise that you are not necessarily correct in your attacks on Marx and perhaps to get you to tone
them down. I can add that, in my view, your attacks on him are probably counter-productive since the people you are trying to win over hold his views in high regard.

The only people you are likely to find your views are those in the anarchist tradition who have been expressing similar criticisms for ages (not that I've anything against attracting anarchists, I hasten to add).

4. History is history, but what about the present and the future? The thing about the socialist revolution (or, if you prefer, the revolution to get rid of capitalism) is that, on the interpretation of Marx given above, it will be humanity's first free act of historical creation, their (our) first act freed from the coercive influence of historical and economic laws, the end of "pre-history" and the beginning of "history". Certainly, it will be an act not unconnected with the economic interests of the working class under capitalism -- it will, after all, be the act by which they (we) bring their (our) economic exploitation to an end, but it won't be limited to that as it will also be (as the SPGB says in its declaration of principles) "the emancipation of all mankind". And it will be, will have to be, a conscious act in the sense that those carrying it out know exactly what they are doing. Will they regard themselves as merely consciously pursuing their own class or even selfish economic interests? Or will they regard themselves as carrying out a great act of human liberation, establishing a society fit for humans in which they (we) will no longer be alienated by being dominated by historical and economic laws ultimately of our own creation? I can't see how the latter is in any way incompatible with Marx's ideas. Indeed, I think it follows from them!

Adam

To: Adam Buick
From: Dave Strain
Re: Response to your "Third Defence of Marx" of Aug. 28, 1996
Date: 12/27/96

Dear Adam:

Here is my response to your third defence of Marx. If this arrangement is acceptable to you, I will send the whole exchange to Frank Girard for publication in Discussion Bulletin.

1. The very lengthy quote which Lenin takes from Kautsky declares in part, "But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other... it was in the minds of some members of the [bourgeois intelligentsia] that modern socialism originated... Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without (von Aussen Hineingetragenes), and not something that arose within it spontaneously (urwürzig)...."

Kautsky was not simply describing the historical evolution of scientific socialism; he was also prescribing what he saw as the appropriate role of Social Democracy. Kautsky argues that "the task of Social Democracy is to imbue the proletariat with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its tasks. There would be no need for this if consciousness emerged of itself from the class struggle." (quoted in "What Is To Be Done?" Essential Works of Lenin, pp. 81-82)

Kautsky and Lenin's position on the issue of socialist consciousness is identical. They do not believe that workers are only capable of trade union consciousness—that would render the whole idea of building a working class movement absurd—but that workers of themselves are capable only of trade union consciousness. Both Kautsky and Lenin argue that "scientific socialism" is
a product of the bourgeois intelligentsia, that socialist consciousness does not arise out of the class struggle, and that modern socialist consciousness can only be brought to workers from outside.

Again, my point here is that the view of workers ascribed to Lenin is really a main-stream Marxist point of view, rooted in the Marxist paradigm. (As you point out, Kautsky was, after Marx and Engels, the third founder of Marxism.) Lenin simply acted on this generally-accepted position of Marxists differently, with the results of which we are aware. Leninism is a logical development of Marxism made operational as a theory of revolution.

2. I’ll pass on here to the question of whether I present the Marxist paradigm accurately or reduce Marx to a "crude economic determinist interpretation."

I have argued that Marx’s view of history rests on a paradigm which sees the mass of humanity as mere victims of a process beyond human control, and that it is impossible to build a democratic revolutionary movement on this paradigm.

Rather than continue to try and find passages in Marx’s writings which support my view or yours, it might be more helpful to look at how modern Marxists view the world.

In the September issue of Socialist Standard, for example, Robin Cox sets forth what I take to be the accepted SPGB view:

Capitalism, we argue, operates according to inherent economic laws which are not amenable to political manipulation. What we perceive as very real problems through our human eyes—like unemployment, poverty, homelessness and hunger—are quite invisible from the perspective of the system itself. "The system" is analogous to a machine that has been designed to function according to a built-in programme. The only command it can recognise is the need to realise profit. Without profit, it grinds to a halt. Thus capitalism...continually reproduces the very problems we have to suffer in order to realize that goal. (Vol. 92, No. 1105, p. 5)

The striking thing about this remarkably machine-like view is the absence of human actors. The working class is present in this view only as "quite invisible" victims. It is difficult to imagine how these invisible victims are to organize a revolutionary movement. (It is also difficult to imagine how to top this image for "crude economic determinism.")

It seems to me that Robin Cox’s view is not exceptional, and that it fairly represents the Marxist view of the world.

I think that there are two possibilities. Either Marx invented a "science" of which he was the sole practitioner and which was not mechanical, but no one else has got it right; or modern Marxists have more or less faithfully replicated Marx’s methods and his paradigm.

I believe that the latter is true. The Marxist paradigm as Robin Cox presents it is machine-like and dehumanized because that is the paradigm which Marx developed.

Cox argues that the working class is invisible to capitalism. This is demonstrably untrue. Capitalism, in the person of capitalists, are well aware that they are in a war with the working class, and they devote enormous resources to planning and executing this war, attempting always to control and suppress the power of workers. Workers are invisible only to Marxists, whose machine-like paradigm of human society blinds them to the human drama unfolding before their eyes.
To the extent that it blinds them to the motives and meaning of human struggles, Marxism has pernicious effects on revolutionaries and on revolutions. With its worship of economic forces and its ignorance of human meanings, Marxism is largely responsible for the evil outcome of Communist revolutions, and for the futility and reformism of once-revolutionary movements in the West.

I continue to attack Marxism because I believe it is a prop of elite rule. If you and I and the millions like us are to succeed at the revolutionary goals which we share, Marxism must be overcome and replaced by an understanding of history in which conscious human subjects rather than blind economic forces drive history.

3. When we and other working people succeed in making a revolution to destroy capitalism and create a new society, will it be "a great act of human liberation....to achieve the emancipation of all mankind?" Absolutely! Will it be also a fulfillment of Marx's vision of a liberated society? Yes, I think so.

As you remark early on in your "Third Defence," Marx held humanistic and libertarian views. I agree. But as I maintain in my book, the problem with Marx is that there is a contradiction between his vision—the socialist society he wanted to achieve—and his paradigm of history driven by blind economic forces. It is the paradigm, not the vision, which we reject.

I hope that I have not let my passion about these matters obscure my meaning. I believe that we in New Democracy and you in the SPGB share the same goals. We believe, however, that the only basis on which we can achieve these goals is a view of the world that allows us fully to appreciate the role of human beings in creating it.

(from p. 11)

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB
AN SIU REVISTA'D by Irving Silvey (Continued from DB83)

Part Two.
Fart One ended without laying the ghost Einstein raised of the
programatical effect of centralized planning on individual integrity and
social justice. As far as it went, Stephen Emery's reply ably identified
and dismantled Einstein's assumption that the 'State' would persist under
Socialism. On the other hand, in dealing with the fears he expressed about
centralized planning Emery was crippled by the SLP's refusal to tangibly
expose on the substance of SIU administration. This weakness allowed
Anonospook a few openings for his attack on DeLeon's program of SIU
government.

Now sadly we read, in DB 81, of Mr. DeLeon's announcement of departure
from the dialogue, though perhaps it will be for only a brief time.
Hopefully, he will reconsider. Refuting his proposal for a 'politicized'
Socialist society has given me the opportunity to focus on significant
aspects of the SIU which are rarely discussed. Although he says on page 10
of DB 81, "Here, at last, is an obvious parting of the ways!"—Silvey to
explore natural lore, we to continue our espousal of political and
industrial democracy.", Anonospook may find, to his chapin, on once more
consulting his dictionary that 'natural lore' simply means 'wisdom'. But,
who knows? Maybe a distaste for wisdom is, after all, as good a reason as
any for making oneself a stranger.

My first entry in the dialogue (see DB 72) reported on an attempt by
Section Los Angeles of the SLP (Socialist Labor Party) to bring before its
Party's 1993 Convention a resolution "To Upgrade The Socialist Industrial
Union Concept". This resolution was the result of Section Los Angeles'
frustration with the SLP's 90 year long failure to 'get off the dime' and
get on with substantively developing DeLeon's basic plan for a non-
political, Socialist Industrial Union government. In its resolution,
Section Los Angeles offered three supplementary principles that threw light
into the darkness surrounding SIUism, -dark, in the sense that all appeals
to the SLP to illumine it are ritually ignored. The supplemental
principles were of a piece with SIUism and violated no part of its
revolutionary thrust. On the contrary, they are collaterals of a Socialist
industrial government operating in a 'non-political' environment, as
stipulated by DeLeon.

The three principles are: 1. Basic Job Mix; 2. Cyclic Rotation; 3.
Caucus. They are the result of the same process of social fermentation
that brewed the SIU concept, embracing, as they do, fundamental principles
observed by primitive people through time immemorial. Just as the assembly
of Iriquos tribal councils provided DeLeon with the idea of SIU
government, so, too, did Section L. A.'s resolution invoke the lore of
tribal society for its three principles. The ease with which they fit
within DeLeon's plan was no surprise. Also not surprising was that, in
keeping with their stated policy of providing nothing that could be
construed as a "blueprint", the SLP Convention failed to adopt the
resolution.

The principle of 'basic shop mix' corresponds to the principle of
consanguinity by which primitive society creates a complex, tightly woven
web of mutual obligations extending throughout wide strata networks of
tribal communities. Within the tribe, familial lines of ascent and descent
extend both horizontally and vertically, presaging the social obligations
that knot them together. For kinship ties based on blood, the 'basic shop
mix' substitutes industrial relations incident to divisions of labor.
spawned by social production. The interwoven fabric of clan affiliations demonstrated in tribal society exemplifies the potential for social empowerment a member of Socialist society will gain from the 'basic shop mix' principle. The multiplicity of criss-crossing societal obligations it imparts are a response to a need which absorbs the energies of primitives everywhere. This is the need to rationalize the infinitely complex experience that, for Socialism, will manifest itself when integrating industries. This imperative makes it difficult for any person in Socialist society to disqualify themselves for membership in the SIU.

Within the Capitalist reality of workaday life, there is a constant need to compensate for overlapping functions performed by its participants. Anyone with experience of the factory environment has some idea of how this plays out on the shop floor. Under Capitalist conditions, there is often a fierce struggle by workers defensive of their livelihood to erect economic walls around their jobs. In a Socialist environment, skills will necessarily be freed of this compulsion, along with other obstructions to socially productive affiliation.

Let us consider the effect of the three principles on DeLeon's concept of the SIU as portrayed by the SLP's chart. Mindful of the Party's proviso that the chart is "not a blueprint", its value lies in its allusion to a system of working class councils for the administration of Socialist industrial society.

A major defect of the chart needs to be noted. This is its illustration of a voting procedure based on geographic areas (cities), which is at odds with the Party's postulate that elections must reflect industrial and not geographical constituencies. Previous charts have either alluded to the cities or not, which is indicative of the lack of thought given the subject by SLP officers. In our presentation the defect is corrected without difficulty by simply redefining the expressions 'local' and 'national' in terms of production. Where, in its example of the autocar industry, the chart refers to the Local Council as representing the autocar plants within a city area, we restructure it to include all autocar plants regardless of location. This permits the 'National' Council to be responsive to a wider field of production encompassing all motorized land operated devices, vehicular or otherwise. Autocar manufacture may be viewed as kin to the farming and construction industries by virtue of the supply to them of tractors of every description, and if we but spent the time to flesh them out, a host of other industries corresponding to
relatives several times removed.

Within the Autocar plant are workers organized in shops affording the variety of basic skills required to manufacture cars or parts thereof. For brevity’s sake, the following four shops suffice to demonstrate the notion of a 'basic shop mix'. They are the paint shop, machine shop, electrical shop and assembly shop. The 'basic shop mix' here would, therefore, consist of a painter, machinist, electrician and an assembler.

This cluster of skills will suffice, for our demonstration, to define the constituency of the Autocar plant council. It is also one of the building blocks of their 'Local', 'National' and All-Industry Congress councils.

The 'Local' Industry Council is an amalgam of the 'basic shop mixes' of every Autocar plant.

The 'National' Industry Council is an amalgam of the 'basic shop mixes' of auto, bus, truck, motorcycle, tractor, railcar - you name it, plants devoted to manufacture of motorized units with land based uses.
At the All-Industry Congress the 'basic shop mixes' of the Auto Industry are joined with those of vehicular air, sea and space in concert with those industries such as transport, agriculture and construction in particular, as well as all others. The All-Industry Congress is inclusive of all industrial skills feeding into it from the previous levels. Through the principle of 'basic shop mix' the SIU countenances a widening river of skills that flows into progressively representative councils.

Each council member is selected by his shop for a specified term, but can be removed at any time by that shop. In concert with this provision, Section L.A.'s resolution states that each shop has the exclusive right of supervision, recall and replacement over its own delegates.

All the above is in keeping with the outline given us by the SLP. The addition of 'basic shop mix' provides a democratic element that dilutes none of the SLP presentation but, in fact, enforces it.

The principle of Cyclic Rotation, also, does no more than make explicit a simple a-political mechanism for enhancing democratic administration. It provides only that a cyclic schedule be established that rotates from one shop to another the right to seat its members on councils. To conform with the 'basic shop mix' provision for the makeup of the council, the schedule also coordinates turns to assure that the shops among which the council seats are to be rotated will continue to combine in accordance with it.

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Here, so far, are two a-political principles that fully concur with and enlarge upon Deleon's concept.
Accompanying 'basic shop mix' and Cyclic Rotation, the third principle, 'Caucus', is meant to facilitate the coming together of workers from diverse areas of industry who share a common skill. 'Skill' is used in the widest possible sense to include intellectual as well as manual abilities. It enables members of shops established on the basis of job description to translate these descriptions into industrial coalitions.

A 'seminar' is a good example of the principle of Caucus in action. Being skills oriented, it is, like 'basic shop mix' and Cyclic Rotation, also a-political. Through it, the delegates can compare notes with other industries at a level on which they can relate and spur the transfer of information and ideas on which an industrial society relies.

Using, for instance, the example of the auto plant, a basic caucus can arise whenever some members of the paint shop, for whatever reason, hold a meeting to share information.

A broader caucus is one which is open to members of all the auto paint shops from each auto plant.

This pattern repeats at the 'National' and the All-Industry Congress levels.

It is appropriate that caucuses be open to facilitate a cross-fertilization of ideas and skills. The overlap between various disciplines requires sufficient flexibility to allow caucusing both for highly specialized and for widely based concerns. A painter wants to know about chemical properties of his medium, just as a biologist wants to know what's going on in chemistry, physics, and numerous aspects of medical practice, depending on his/her specialization. In the Health Industry Physicians...
need to listen to nurses, radiologists and biologists, as well as other specialists whose work impacts theirs.

In sum, 'Caucus', 'basic shop mix' and 'Cyclic Rotation', implement, sustain and preserve Delecon's plan. It is probably too much to expect that miniscule alterations of the SIU chart from time to time are signs of a commitment by the SLP to address the lack of substance in their format of the SIU. That doesn't mean that improvement is forever to be ruled out. The National Secretary of the SLP may be a slow learner, but as long as his interests coincide with the survival of the Party, we can assume that he will eventually pay more than lip service to the most valuable asset left to the SLP by Delecon — his plan for SIU government.

It's my contention here, as in my past letters to the DB, that future Socialist society would adopt societal forms expressive of primitive experience, both historic and prehistoric. In dealing with the existence of justice and the individual in a Socialist society it is useful to identify principles of justice and individualism in a tribal environment. Several come to the fore immediately. First is the principle of unanimity, exemplified in our jury system. The second is the principle of responsibility of the tribe for the actions of its members. The guilt of the individual is the guilt of the tribe and vice versa. In a Socialist society it follows that guilt must attach to social cause rather than to individual perpetrator. Practices of genealogical splitting and division that generate tribal attributes of complementarity and reciprocity in terms of a "cosmic economy of sharing" (see The Giving Environment: Another Perspective on the Economic System of Gatherer-Hunters by Nurit Bird-David, Copyright 1990 by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research) enable us, through our model of the SIU, to factor those qualities of primitive communism into the equation of industrial Socialism. Maintaining status quo is another tribal goal not unrelated to principles of universal Justice.

As a result of the multiplicity of material aspects involved in the study of tribal life, Anthropologists have divided the field up into programs that utilize models specific to culture, ecology, evolution, economics, biology, ethnoarchaeology and behavioural ecology, to list a few. The models are compared against each other and constantly updated and revised as the addition of new data throws more light on the subject.

If Marx has become pas-Ses in the popular press, his work has not ceased to interest a widely versed crowd of anthropologists who range the world over in pursuit of the raw datum of their profession. For many there burns a passion to discover who and what we are, and have been, in order to learn what we may become. In the way of illustration, the following concluding remarks gives a hint of these motivations. They are by Richard B. Lee, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, from an article titled, "Art, Science, or Politics? The Crisis in Hunter-Gatherer Studies", published in the University of Chicago-based magazine, 'Current Anthropology'.
presents a concept of human culture totally at odds with our own. 25

"Almost all of humanity lives today in highly organized bureaucratized societies of enormous scale and systematic inequalities. Hunter-gatherers, in spite of the inducements (or threats?) to become incorporated, choose for whatever reasons to resist and live lives very different from that of the majority. The pace is slower, technology simpler, numbers smaller, inequality less, and the relationship to land and resources — the sense of place — is on a radically different basis. Following Clastres, I have argued that what sets hunter-gatherers apart is their ability to reproduce themselves, WHILE SEVERELY LIMITING [Lee's emphasis] the accumulation and concentration of wealth and power. This feature they share with a number of simple horticultural and pastoral societies. Since the accumulation of wealth and power (and resistance to it) is the driving force of much of human history, it follows that societies that don't have this dynamic must have a dynamic of a different sort; what Tim Ingold has called a "different kind of sociality" (1990:130-131).

"If indigenous peoples want to adopt a Western (or Soviet) way of life, the door is open; in fact, the pressures to conform are immense. The fact that this has not happened, the some foragers still pursue alternative lifeways not in isolation but in full awareness of alternatives, is a persuasive argument against the two propositions that framed the present essay. THERE IS SOMETHING OUT THERE BEYOND THE REACH OF THE WORLD SYSTEM (CAPITALIST OR OTHERWISE). THE "SYSTEM" IS POWERFUL BUT NOT OMNIPOTENT [Lee's emphasis]. Pockets of resistance persist and show us that even in this hard-bitten postmodern age other ways of being are possible.

"Since so many of the world's intractable problems derive from the gigantic maldistribution of wealth and power, it stands to reason that societies that can reproduce themselves without exploitation have a great deal to teach us. As the world's people struggle to redefine alternative visions in the aftermath of the Cold War, I am convinced that hunter-gatherer studies, far from being the fantasy projection of uncritical romantics, have a role to play in the movement for justice for indigenous peoples, and a part of a larger movement to recapture wholeness from an increasingly fragmented and alienating modernity."

If nothing else, these words should leave Delemonists gratified by the knowledge that they are not alone in attempts to persuade others of a socially viable alternative to Capitalism. Maybe some will be inspired, in imitation of Deleuze, to examine the anthropological material piling up all over the world, sift out the wheat from the chaff and make a substantive contribution to the SIU model for Socialist government.
Most people have heard about the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). But very few people know that what happened in Spain is the most far-reaching and profound social revolution of our times.

"Land and Freedom" is a recent film about David (Ian Hart), a working class young man from Liverpool, who joins the first stream of international volunteers who came to fight fascism in Spain. Though David has joined the Communist Party in Britain, he is recruited by a group of militia fighters headed for the Aragon front who are affiliated with the POU, a small but influential party of anti-Stalinist Marxists based in Barcelona. Soon he finds that the struggle is not just between the Republic and the Fascist forces of General Franco, but also between different factions in the anti-fascist camp. A good deal of the drama of "Land and Freedom" is the result of David's gradual discovery of the counter-revolutionary role played in Spain by the Soviet-controlled Communist Party. This discovery is hastened by David's romantic involvement with an idealistic militia fighter (played by Rosana Pastor).

The film is above all a view of the politics of the Spanish Revolution, so a little bit of history helps. After several years of strikes, land takeovers by armed peasants, failed military coups, and military repression in Spain, a coalition of left and trade union politicians and middle class professionals called the Popular Front narrowly won the national elections. Strikes and land takeovers multiplied as working people despair of real change from the reformist government.

A home-grown fascist movement, backed by large landowners and industrialists and the Catholic Church, grew very quickly, as Army generals plotted a coup to put an end to the "anarchy." The uprising began on July 17, 1936.

The military revolt sparked a revolution. The coup succeeded initially in capturing the more agrarian, conservative regions of the north and center of Spain. In the large cities in the industrial heartland and in towns and villages, however, workers fought the garrisons with whatever arms they could find and defeated the insurrection. Organized and coordinated through the Anarchist and Socialist labor unions and other working class organizations, workers stormed the armories and distributed weapons. They took over the mansions of the wealthy, public buildings, hotels and restaurants, and set up their own street patrols, arresting and searching suspected fascists. Revolutionary tribunals and antifascist militia committees sprang up everywhere. Most army officers, police, and authorities of all branches of the state apparatus deserted their posts, escaping into the zones controlled by the insurrectionary generals. Though the liberal government of the Republic was still formally in place, real power had passed to the armed workers.

Director Ken Loach declared in an interview for The Irish Times, "The Spanish revolution was about ordinary people taking power, taking control of their lives."

In The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution, Burnett Bolloten writes that the workers spontaneously took over practically all of the country’s economy. In the cities, “railways, streetcars and buses, taxicabs and shipping, electrical light and power companies, gasworks and waterworks, engineering and automobile assembly plants, mines and cement works, textile mills and paper factories, electrical and chemical concerns, glass bottle factories and perfumeries, food-processing plants and breweries, as well as a host of other enterprises, were confiscated or controlled by workmen’s committees....”

In the countryside the changes were even
more radical. Spain was then a predominantly rural country, with two-thirds of its 25 million people still living on the land. One out of two Spaniards was illiterate. Two-thirds of all land was owned by only two percent of proprietors. In response to the military insurrection, peasants in vast areas of the country seized the land. Instead of dividing the land, the peasants created collectives. In hundreds of towns and villages, the collectives showed what ordinary working people can do when the State collapses, the landowners and their hired guns disappear, and they have a chance to reconstruct the economy in accordance with their values of cooperation and solidarity.

Through their collective the peasants created a regime of total equality, eliminating all differences in wages, in many villages abolishing money and creating local coupons and vouchers, all the while developing new educational and social services, and vastly improving the techniques of agricultural and livestock production. The peasants ran the communities through open meetings in which all participants in the commune had a voice.

The Spanish workers spontaneously created militias to meet the challenge of the fascists’ armed insurrection. Militia structure reflected the basic characteristics of the Revolution: totally democratic, egalitarian, and anti-hierarchical. As "Land and Freedom" accurately portrays, there were no salutes, no titles, no uniforms, and women participated on equal footing as combatants. "The basic unit was the group," writes Bolloten, "composed generally of ten men; each group elected a delegate, whose functions were somewhat akin to those of a noncommissioned officer of the lowest rank, but without the equivalent authority. The groups formed a century that elected its own delegate, and any number of centuries made up a columna, or column, at whose head stood a committee of war. This committee was likewise elective and was divided into various sections in accordance with the needs of the column. The gradation into group and century delegates and a committee of war did not imply the existence of any permanent staff with special privileges since all delegates could be removed as soon as they failed to reflect the wishes of the men who had elected them."

Since the only arms being supplied to the militias and the forces of the Republic were from the Soviet Union, the tiny Communist Party of Spain soon became a predominant force in the government. The Communists allied themselves with the middle-class parties to attempt to roll back the revolution and contain and then crush the power of the armed working people. For a variety of reasons, the leaders of the Socialist and Anarchist organizations joined the government and cooperated in reversing the revolution. As were the collectives, the Spanish militias were relentlessly maligned and finally destroyed by the Communists and their government allies. The film's most anguishing scene shows the POUU militia fighters being disarmed by professional soldiers.

Loach says his film is the story of how the Spanish Revolution was betrayed. The masses took over the land, the factories and the shops and simultaneously formed militias which defeated a professional army in two-thirds of the country. Their success in the war depended on spreading the Revolution. The military struggle against Franco was lost because the revolution was curbed, sabotaged, and then crushed. Instead of promoting the revolutionary re-organization of Spanish society, the government leaders—Communist, Socialist and Anarchist alike—tried to demobilize the people, crying "First we must win the war, then the revolution." The government then turned its police and military power on the workers themselves.

The Spanish Revolution is an inspiring and complex and finally tragic period of history. It calls out for much discussion and analysis. One lesson that it seems to suggest is this: that we cannot effectively fight attacks on working people in this country without fighting for an entirely new society in which working people are in total control.

"Land and Freedom" has caused a great stir in Europe, where it has been widely shown. It has received much less play here in the U.S. If you have the chance, I strongly recommend that you see this informative and inspiring film.
HOW DID WE LOSE DETROIT?
by Dave Stratman

Working people everywhere took a kick in the teeth on February 14, when AFL-CIO leaders offered unconditional surrender to the Knight-Ridder and Gannett newspaper chains, thus appearing to bring 19 months of struggle and sacrifice by 2500 striking Detroit newspaper workers to defeat.

Prospects for the return of strikers to their jobs is slim. The newspapers announced that they have eliminated many positions through automation and have no intention of firing the 1400 scabs hired during the strike. It seems to be the worst possible outcome for the strike.

It didn’t have to be this way. This strike, like so many others, was defeated by the treachery of the AFL-CIO leadership. What could have been a great victory, that might have turned the tide of struggle against capital, was undermined by labor officials.

WE COULD HAVE WON

At the beginning the Detroit strike had tremendous momentum. Strikers organized a boycott of the struck papers supported by hundreds of thousands of Detroit-area residents. Thousands of strikers and supporters set up militant picket lines, to try and stop distribution of the Sunday papers. The companies had to use helicopters and private police to get the papers out.

The strike threatened to spark a new era of labor struggle. Ten union locals, including the largest UAW locals in the area, called for a Detroit general strike in solidarity. Strikers and their supporters began to call for a national labor march on Detroit. The potential for working people to take the offensive in the class war was enormous.

WAITING FOR SWEENEY

Instead of themselves calling the hundreds of thousands of workers in the Detroit area and the millions who supported them nationwide to a march on Detroit, the strikers asked AFL-CIO president John Sweeney to.

Sweeney refused to call a march because he was afraid it would succeed. Sweeney knows that his role is not to lead workers but to undermine their struggle on behalf of his corporate masters. So he let the strikers wear themselves out waiting and appealing for the great leader to lead.

WE NEED TO SPEAK THE TRUTH

PATCO, Hormel, Swivel, Caterpillar: the AFL-CIO list of shame goes on. The defeats suffered by workers in these years would never have occurred without the complicity of the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO is an arm of management. We cannot reverse the tide of defeat as long as we are under its control.

Many labor activists feel the same way, but seem unable to break with Sweeney and the AFL-CIO leadership because they think most workers still have illusions about them and would not act without official leadership.

The rank-and-file understand a lot more about union officials than many labor activists give them credit for. But even if people do have illusions, the way to dispel illusions is to speak the truth.

We cannot build a democratic movement if we disguise what we know to be true about the AFL-CIO or the capitalist system because we think people “aren’t ready for it.” If we lead people into the arms of their enemies, we aren’t building a movement but simply manipulating people into a demoralizing trap.

What follows is a letter dated 1/3/97 from New Democracy to the strikers in support of their call for a march, but against the appeal to Sweeney.

(We would like to hear your feelings on this issue. Please write us with your reactions.)

Murray Bookchin’s Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism (reviewed in DB82) stepped on a lot of “lifestyle anarchist” toes including the very sensitive ones of Bob Black. (For a review of other denunciations of Bookchin see DB83) A new anarchist publisher, Columbia Alternative Library, set Black to the job of refuting—or more accurately, demolishing—Bookchin This red-hot response by self-described “unenthusiastic anarchist” Bob Black combines a nasty personal attack on Bookchin with an interesting, sometimes insightful view of anarchism as seen through the eyes of Bob Black and—I gather—most lifestylists. It is worth noting that the publisher’s preface makes much of Bookchin’s failure to include Black among the lifestyle anarchists, asserting that Bookchin feared Black’s reputation for literary retaliation. But it is possible that Bookchin just didn’t realize that Black is an anarchist, lifestyle or otherwise, except perhaps an anarcho-contrarian. In fact the preface by Jason Quinn of the publishing collective supports this idea: “Bob’s defense of anarchy in Anarchy After Leftism isn’t meant to express solidarity with those targeted in the latest attacks framed by Bookchin’s dialectics. Nor is Bob really interested in rescuing anarchist ideology from itself.” Rather, he says, it is to set the record straight, refute Bookchin, and “develop the grounds for a more general attack on the remaining vestiges of leftist.”

Leftism as Black uses the term differs significantly from its meaning as I have come to understand it. Among revolutionary socialists leftism is a term of reproach, used as a synonym for reformism. Leftists advocate step-at-a-time changes in capitalism in an effort to make capitalism people-friendly. And ordinarily their ideas involve the use of capitalism’s political system to accomplish their purpose. Some leftists will argue that the cumulative effect of reforms can be revolutionary, that is that we can reform capitalism until it becomes what they see as socialism, by which they mean state ownership and control of the means of production. Such leftists in the U.S. include Leninists, social democrats, and radicals associated with that range of periodicals that begins with Z Magazine and ends with The Nation—as well as the Green Party, New Party, Labor Party, and the like.

But to Bob Black and the Columbia Alternative Library, leftism equals Marxism as in the following: “Cleansed of its leftist residues, anarchism—anarchism minus Marxism—will be free to get better at being what it is.” This still leaves us without a clear Bob Black definition of either Marxism or leftism. But from his use of the terms I gathered that he has bought the social democratic and Leninist line that they and their statist reformism represent Marxism. (This in spite of Marx’s dictum that the existence of the state is inseparable from the existence of slavery.) At any rate it is clear that Black associates Marxism and leftism with revolutionary anarchism. That is, any anarchist tendency whose goal is a new social system.

Black goes on to name the anarcho-leftist tendencies. Besides Bookchin’s social ecology they include anarcho-syndicalism, and anarcho-feminism. For some reason he fails to include
anarcho-communists like Love and Rage Federation and the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland as well as Class War and others. All of these see as their task what Black regards as leftist: agitation designed to convince people of the need to abolish capitalism and the state and to build a new society based on social ownership of the means of production, cooperation, and democratic management.

Black argues that cleansed of these “ leftist” tendencies, anarchism “ will be free to get better at being what it is.” The closest he comes to explaining exactly what anarchism “ is” or “ will be” without a revolutionary goal is his assertion that “ Post-leftist anarchism is positioned to articulate—not a program—but a number of revolutionary themes with contemporary relevance and resonance.” I think that a translation of this sentence yields something to the effect that post-leftist anarchism will continue in the role of lifestyle anarchism as a critic of late capitalism rather like the social democratic/Leninist political left. Articulating for no purpose and to no end.

---Frank Girard

NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

A Ballad Against Work was published for free distribution (“Not because we are stacked with money, but because free availability of things confronts the relations maintained through markets.”) by Collectivities, a part of Kamunist Kranti. Reviewed in this department in DB82, it is a 62-page potpourri of news items, short comments, and quotations on the workings of global capitalism. Collectivities sent the DB twenty copies, which are available free to readers. Drop us a card and we’ll send you a copy postpaid -- first come, first served.

In an effort to make the Australian book Good Work at Westy: The Socialist Labor Party on the Northern Coalfields 1901-1922 available to U.S. SLP history buffs, I have bought a few copies for sale here. In the review published under “Notes...” in DB80, I pointed out that author Tony Laffian had provided an excellent example of SLP work on a local level as well as the closest thing to my knowledge of a history of the SLP in Australia. Unfortunately this is not for free distribution. The price, $8 postpaid, barely covers the cost. Order from the DB at PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501, but make out your checks to Frank Girard.

New Democracy has evolved from a bi-monthly mailing of loose flyers and short articles to a more traditional periodical format. The 16-page May-June 1997 issue notes that “New Democracy is dedicated to building a movement for democratic revolution.” Contents include correspondence; an article “Can This Organization Be Saved?” about New Directions, the reform movement in the UAW; “Why Are Families Under Attack?” by John Spritzler; and two articles discussing the nature of a post-revolutionary society, both of which will appear in a future issue of the DB. New Democracy is free for the asking. To be put on their list, write to them at PO Box 427, Boston, MA 02130.

Red Orange Vol 1 No. 1, May 1996. Subtitled “A Marxist Journal of Theory, Politics, and the Everyday,” Red Orange—all 324 perfect-bound pages of it—proclaims its academic mission to enlighten other academics. It seems to have originated in a dispute with the editors of a similar
journal at Syracuse University. Among articles with titles like "The Lost Revolutionary Knowledges in Post-al Feminism: Postmodernism, Capitalism, and Red Feminism" and "Dematerializing the Material: (Post)modern Cultural Studies and the Politics of Experience," non-academics will find it difficult to "access," as recent usage has it. But I gather that the journal's heart is in the right place: a revolutionary critique of the Marxist--and usually reformist--academic establishment. Subscription (2 issues) $15 from Red Orange, PO Box 1055, Tempe, AZ 85280.


Red & Black Notes (No. 1 May 1997) is an unpretentious four-page publication, which grew out of a May Day leaflet. Neil Petit wrote for a Calgary May Day event. Contents also include excerpts from "As We Don't See It," the 1967 statement of the British group Solidarity and an article on the origin of May Day. "Red & Black Notes aims to produce and circulate material that rejects capitalism in favour of a libertarian society." Copies are free. Readers can reach them at npetes@freenet.calgary.ab.ca or by phone (403) 263-2963 or at Collective Action Notes, POB 2296, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA.

Anarchy (the magazine) has appeared again after a two-year hiatus and a period of exile in New York City. Under the editorship of Jason McGlynn, Number 43, Spring/Summer 1997, comes to us from Columbia, Missouri, its original home. CAL Press is hoping to get together the people to take care of the business side of the undertaking. The publishers don't mention Alternative Press Review, the portion of the magazine that remained in Columbia when Anarchy moved to New York. As befits a major organ of "Lifestyle" anarchists, this issue is carries a full complement of anti-Bookchin material including an article by Paul V. Simon, a review by Lawrence Jaroch of Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism, and the first chapter of Bob Black's Anarchy After Leftism. Readers will also find five pages of "Alternative Press Reviews," the obligatory chapter (Number 22) from Vaneigem's The Revolution of Everyday Life, articles on "The Search for the Unabomber" and "The Spartacists' School of Falsification," as well as a letters column which includes Ward Churchill's two-page response in kind to an attack by Bob Black. Single copies $6. Make checks payable to CAL Press, POB 1446, Columbia, MO 65205.

Red & Black Revolution. "A Magazine of Libertarian Communism" is the third issue of the journal of the Irish group, Workers Solidarity Movement. which also publishes a newspaper Workers' Solidarity. Besides a review of a book on "The Organizational Platform of Libertarian Communists," which is well worth reading for anarchists of all stripes, the magazine contains major articles on anarchism in South Africa after apartheid, anarchists and trade unions, Italian anarchism, "The Emergence of Modern Irish Socialism 1885-7," "Organizing Against Capitalism," and others. 36 pages. $4.50 from AK Distribution, PO Box 40882, San Francisco,
CA 94140 or from Workers Solidarity, P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland.

_Ethel MacDonald: Glasgow Woman Anarchist_ is the latest pamphlet from the Kate Sharpley Library. The author, Rhona M. Hodgart, celebrates the life of a close companion and supporter of Guy Aldred, whose career as a libertarian socialist in the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation and its organizational descendant provided much of the opposition to the British CP. MacDonald was asked to go to Spain to set up a publicity agency for the Spanish anarchists and syndicalists. She went to Barcelona, and much of the 23-page pamphlet details her efforts to combat the CP's propaganda accusing the anarchists of selling out the Loyalists. Her work eventually got her jailed. She was soon released and went on to continue her life working in Glasgow with Aldred and his libertarian socialist newspaper and publishing house. $3.00 postpaid from AK Distribution, PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140 or from the Kate Sharpley Library, B.M. Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

_Echanges_ is the “Bulletin of the Network ‘Echanges et Mouvement.’” Like some other journals in our political sector it appears irregularly in the English translation, in part because of the difficulty in getting translators. The French edition appears much more often. This issue (80/81) is dated 1/96 but contains more recent material. Until recently Echanges was one of two council communist journals in existence—the other was the Dutch monthly _Daad en Gedachte_. A couple of years ago _Collective Action_ began publication in Baltimore and more recently (see above) _Red and Black Notes_ published its first issue. This issue of Echanges contains material on nuclear disarmament from Norwegian councilists, an article titled “Some Thoughts about on-going Discussions in Ultra-Left Milieus,” another from _The Nation_ on unionism by one-time councilist Peter Rachleff as well as articles on a strike in Faridabad, India and the Detroit newspaper strike. 75 pages, a four issue sub including pamphlets published during the period, L7 (about $11) from Echanges, BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18, France.