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About This Issue

DB 102 begins with two articles examining computers from a working class point of view. The first, "Shopfloor Experience in the Information Technology Industry: A Personal Account," comes to us from India via our friends at Collectivities. The author, who prefers to remain anonymous, is one of India's new generation of technical workers, some of whom the U.S. ruling class hopes to import because the domestic crop isn't large enough to meet demand. The author spent a two-year stint discovering that the glamorous reputation of working in the information industry concealed the reality of a typical wage worker's conditions in terms of exploitation, joyless labor and authoritarian working.
Shopfloor Experience in the Information Technology Industry: A Personal Account

The IT industry in India is undergoing rapid expansion. Quite the mantra of economists and technocrats, it is being seen as the key to economic prosperity. The following is a remarkable description of life on this new IT industry shopfloor in India. The author of this text wishes to remain anonymous.

I worked in a prime Information Technology Company for two years. IT companies are said to be like heaven for workers. Freedom, creativity and play are the kind of words you get to hear in any description of an IT workplace. After all, it is said, this new workforce works in a state-of-the-art environment with luxuries such as an air-conditioned shop-floor, uninterrupted Internet connectivity, e-mail, music, free coffee & tea and so on. Working hours are said to be flexibly designed to suit the workers, and the work highly creative. In the following write-up, I am trying to examine the truthfulness of these claims about the IT industry.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK PROCESS
The work process in the factory I worked in was organised in the following manner.
I. The hierarchy of the production line
Management Staff
Divisional Head: Permanent Post - Manager - responsible for all kinds of projects.
Project Leader (PL): Permanent Post - Supervisor - Projects are divided into categories, and responsibility for each project is given to an assigned Project Leader.
Group Leader (GL): Permanent Post - Junior Supervisor - Project Leaders distribute their share of projects to their subordinate Group Leaders. These people plan the schedule of the projects according to guidelines set by productivity norms.
Non-management Staff
Project Owner: Temporary responsibility - Worker - Group Leaders select a particular worker to handle each project. This person is held primarily accountable for the fate of the project. Peers: Temporary responsibility - Worker - Project Owner is provided with a few peers for the production of the project. Sometimes the Project Owner is him/herself supposed to produce the whole project, and no co-workers are provided.

II. Division of labour in the projects
Info-searchers: Group of people who do research on the subject, and then form the basic framework of the project. Instructional Designers (ID): On the basis of the framework provided by the the Info search team, these people write the scripts.
Graphics Designers (GD): Graphic designers first visualize graphics on the basis of script, and then create the graphics.
Constructors: These people assemble the text and graphics together to shape the final product.
Testers: After the product is ready, testers test the constructed project for all kinds of defects.
Testing is also done at every level. For instance, after the script is ready it is tested and scrutinized by Subject Matter Expert (SME). Similarly, after the graphics are created on the computer for the delivery to the constructor, the group leader of the particular team reviews them for graphic and aesthetic standards along with the SME.

III. Organisational mechanisms of work
a. Deadlines
Each step of production has its specific time frame according to guidelines set by productivity norms, and this is called the Deadline. For example, 45 graphics are supposed to be made within one day. If a project has 600 graphics, it means that the graphic designer is supposed to complete his/her work within 13.3 days. Everybody, from the Info-searcher to the Tester, has to follow the set productivity norms. And the whole project, of course, has a Final Deadline.

b. Bug Report & Review Changes

After each level of testing, the concerned worker is provided with a bug report that spells out mistakes that have to be fixed within the time frame of the running project. The final bug report, which is supplied after the completion of the project, eats into the time frame given for the next project. No extra time is allowed for any new changes that may be required. This continuous process of responding to the bug report for the old project/s, and the execution of the new project always run simultaneously. Therefore, an extra two to three hours of work is informally mandatory for these 'fixes'.

c. Training Sessions and Meetings

Frequent training sessions and meetings come in the way of the project schedule, and for these too, no separate time slot is assigned. These are generally (especially meetings) scheduled for the first hour of the day. Thus the quota of the day's work inevitably takes up more time than the nine-hour workday.

d. Productivity Norms

Productivity norms for a project are fixed at the Supervisor's discretion. The method of deciding new norms is usually as follows: The supervisor calls for an informal meeting, and then bargains with the workers on output quantity. The bottom line is this - Output should be at least 3/4 times more than the previous year's output, if not double. For example, if last year's output has been 25 graphics frames per day, then this year there have to be 45 graphics frames per day. When they begin to bargain, supervisors usually start with double the figure, or even more, but gradually agree to come down to the figure which higher management had probably asked for in the first place! The kind of bargaining that happens here is equal to any bazaar. Since the original quoted figure is so high, workers feel exhausted, relieved and resigned to achieve anything lower at all. Another thing that needs to be kept in mind is that the bargain for quality has already reached 'zero-defect' level. Anything below this implies inefficiency, which is penalized.

e. Data Capture

Every day the worker is supposed to maintain data of the work s/he has done. This process is computerized, and the data is stored in a common server. Time is quantified as one hour = 1 unit, and thirty minutes = 0.5 unit. Daily work output is fixed at a minimum of 6 units. During the half yearly and annual assessment reports, this data capture plays an important role.

f. Assessment

There is a half yearly as well as an annual assessment of the work done by a worker. These reports take into account Productivity, Quality, Maintenance of Data, and Report of Project Audit. If all these requirements are not adequately fulfilled, the worker is labeled an inefficient worker and s/he is penalized. At the least, yearly increments are withheld.

--AND HOW THE WORK PROCESS WORKS

"The horizontal staircase" -- The hierarchy of the production line

Although hierarchy within the work-process is distinctly defined, yet management persistently projects an image of non-hierarchical relations within the company. Only the manager enjoys the luxury of a separate room. The PLs and GLs share similar workstations as workers on the shopfloor. However, their workstations are strategically located: either ensuring that their screens are hidden from workers, or located close to the exit door or server room. This helps in a more efficient monitoring of the workforce. Management staff generally tries its best to maintain this non-hierarchical facade. Due to
the similarity of social backgrounds of the workers and the management staff, it is fairly easy for them to do so. There is an attempt at easy camaraderie through jokes, film gossip and technical discussion. Sometimes, even they tire of these pretensions. The P.L.s, especially, can't resist asserting their superiority and 'relaxing' during lunch hour. Although workers and supervisors are meant to have lunch together, they are seldom seen at the same table as the workers. Other indices of difference: Cars are a more common phenomenon amongst management staff than among workers. Most workers are relatively casual in their dress code, while management is more formally dressed. However, with their bags, baggage, lunch boxes and water bottles management personnel appear to be carrying their whole household with them! And the 'perk' of regular official visits to foreign countries is recounted through a narration of superior facilities, neatness and cooperation of the workforce everywhere else. 

"One of my relatives is a big manager in a company, his every movement and decision is hailed and celebrated in the family, even when he goes to bathroom family members become as anxious as if the prime minister is going on an international tour -- A fellow worker's comment on management lifestyle. In spite of all this, supervisors work hard to maintain the pretension that they 'care' about the worker, to the extent of trying to sort out even very personal problems. In reality, this helps them keep a close eye on the movement and behaviour of the workers. The most significant aspect of this practice is to reduce possible 'excuses' offered by workers on personal grounds. In fact, during any crisis they are relentlessly critical of their subordinates. If a project faces any problems, they instantly locate the cause to be in the attitude of the worker. Their first assumption is that the problem lies with the worker."

"Divisions within workers"

Divisions involved in the projects

The hierarchy of knowledge creates its own hierarchy even amongst workers. Info-searchers, for example, enjoy much higher management esteem than other fellow workers. Performance also plays an important role in interpersonal relation between worker and the management. So do schooling and social background. Workers from more affluent backgrounds are often found to be closer to management.

Workers are categorized in grades. Workers with more experience and better performance are promoted to higher grades. Beginners and slow workers are kept at the bottom. Obviously, the pay slip depends upon the grades. Thus, a kind of perpetual competition is generated in the work place. Workers from both grades are expected to perform similarly, whereas the wage difference between highest grade and lowest grade worker is 1:4.

"To Order & Tame"

Meetings & Trainings

Meetings are generally held in the first hour of the day. One of the prime reasons behind this, as our supervisor said, is "to make it a habit to reach office on time". Two important phrases for meetings are, "to be on time" and "to be prepared". It means "save time" and "remember whatever is said". Every one is supposed to come with a pen and notebook.

Meetings are no less than a questionnaire session held by the supervisor or manager. Every meeting is a brain storming session. Meetings are organized to discuss the performance and problems of the company or the division. Any new policy taken by the company is declared in the meeting to mandatory applause.

Meetings are also called to discuss any 'crisis' of the company and help of the workers is 'sought'. And this 'help' is articulated in the form of greater work intensity or further cuts on benefits. Meetings are the best platform to throw challenges to the workers. Unlike a playground, here challenges are imposed and have to be accepted. Opinions are always asked from the workers in the meetings but within a regimented 'openness'. The very presence of the manager or supervisor ensures
that you may talk about a few things but will not talk of certain
other things.
Training sessions are fundamentally the prime mechanisms to eliminate work force 'excuses' including
even such areas as communication skills. If somebody is unable to communicate smartly s/he is
referred to 'communication training sessions'.
Everybody in the work place has to know comprehensively about the entire production process. No
one is left with the possible excuse of "I don't know this" or even "Why should I know this?".
Technical workers are given training on non-technical subjects and non-technical workers are
acquainted with technical know how. Sometimes, these training sessions are disguised so as to
anticipate workers' behaviour. Through explanations of and discussions about the production process,
management induces the workers themselves to locate the gaps in the production process. It
encourages them to make suggestions, and then ensures that these gaps are filled up. Management
never accuses anybody for being anti-work; it is said, and it is taken for granted that every worker is
dedicated to the company. It is just that they are a little "laid back". Management skills are also
imparted to workers in order to internalize discipline and organizational rules. Even psychological
training is imparted so as to determine or construct the cause of "low level of present productivity."

"The Fishy Market"
Productivity Norms – One day, in 1997, our divisional manager called the workers from all divisions
to tell us the story of China. There, he said, production is extracted at gunpoint. He then compared it to
our good fortune of not being controlled by guns. But, he added, we have to find some method of
increasing productivity without guns, since we have to match them output for output. "So", he said,
"let us dream of major leaps in productivity. Say a 1000% or 2000% increase. It is only if we dream
like this that we can manage a 500% or 750% increase." Small groups of workers were then organised
and commissioned to develop pilot projects to achieve such productivity levels using tools
technological development, process compression or any other old or new method. And this "challenge"
was taken up by the creative and energetic workers. After much research and experimentation, a great
leap forward happened at all levels. New software was developed, the production process was
redesigned, and discipline was rigorously imposed on leaves and office timings.
Pilot projects achieved 100% to 200% increase in productivity. Pretending disappointment,
management implemented this increase in productivity all over the factory. At the year-end meeting of
1998, graphic team members working on specific kinds of projects were called for a meeting in the
Conference Room. The GL for those projects and the Graphic Project Leader (GPL, Supervisor who
leads the whole graphic team in the division) delivered inspiring lectures on previous year’s successes,
along with data and charts as proof. However, at the end of the lecture the GL threw a challenge for
the next year. 'We have to be able to produce double.'
Workers this time were not very keen to take on this 'steep challenge'. They bargained for a mere 50% increase.
The GPL retorted with data about competitors of the company. Competitors in remote
sections of the globe were supposedly producing at quarter the rate of the company. If the company
didn't at least come down to half the cost, the contract might then be lost! His serious face had
tremendous power. Workers were slowly convinced, but with humane consideration productivity was
increased only by 75%.
Needless to say, wages were never discussed in this entire process. Productivity is never linked to
salary. Instead, increase in productivity is projected as a necessity to survive and to be on top.
Consciousness about company status - "To be on top!" is constantly propagated to generate consensus
for further increase in productivity. The More you Produce, the More you Rise in Status!
"and the bargain" Annual Assessment
The time for excuses and justifications. And, of course, denial. The annual assessment report is
divided into two sections. The first is the IEF (Individual Effective Feedback). In this section, team members are divided into groups and are supposed to give feedback to each other. It is done through a computer network. A list of questions is delivered to all workers, subdivided into categories such as communication, cooperation, performance, group activity etc. Each worker has to allocate points against each question for every peer. Name of the GL and PL are also included in the list. This means that workers have to give feedback on their supervisors as well. To maintain the 'truth quotient' of the feedback, management claims that the IEF is not included in its annual assessment. However, every worker knows that this is not true. So they apply themselves to the IEF fairly 'creatively'. But if everybody gave full marks to everybody else, then management would demand that the feedback form be filled out again. To prevent this, workers give higher points to those who are closer or friendlier to them. Unfortunately, workers who are not popular can suffer a great deal in this process.

The second part of the assessment is meetings between the GL and the workers. At this point, every aspect of the workers' performance is scrutinized. Achievements (productivity, quality, other responsibilities, audit etc.) are graded in three ways: >M, M-S and S-O (below standard, up to the standard and above standard). If a worker is graded as >K the supervisor then inquires the reason for being so below standard, if M-S is achieved then the worker is asked why s/he didn't achieve S-O. Even if s-o is achieved, questions arise regarding group activity, communication etc. Generally, reluctance to work and inefficiency are defended by workers through 'petty excuses'. Health, family problems, misunderstandings, miscommunication, etc. are presented as reasons. But management is always equipped with a ready answer to these problems - "lack of dedication". These meetings go a long way in making the worker believe that machine problems, physical limitations, heavy workloads are all just lame excuses. The real problem is attitude!

During these sessions, a number of personal questions are also asked to make the worker comfortable with the overwhelming aggression of the event. The worker fills out a six-page form, which includes level of performance, achievements and regrets, future plans and ambitions as well as next year's training program and redefining next year's performance standards. The most important thing is that the worker himself/herself has to grade his/her own performance. The Supervisor allegedly only guides the worker through this...

Though productivity increases by leaps and bounds every year, wages do not. They have no relation to the workers' productivity. Wage and increase in productivity act as independent functions. The intriguing juxtaposition is that during productivity defining meetings workers are valorised as "members of the family" but during assessment sessions they are suspected as "work thieves".

"The Info-searcher gave an estimation of 400 graphics while creating the graphics construction schedule, but during visualization I came out with 200 frames only. Thus according to schedule I had 10 days but actually I needed five and half days. I didn't disclose this to my GL, but during my assessment session he had all the data from the PL and grilled me on this issue. And I got >M. " - An unfortunate worker's confession. "You can never win in this game, it's the only game in the world where you always lose." - Frustrated worker at the end of the four-hour assessment session. "The death trap"

The deadline. The Deadline is divine; nobody can challenge it. It rings like a prophet's doomsday call. if the server has crashed, a virus has attacked or any technical problem has occurred, it is obvious that it is the worker whose data is affected who has to work late and recover this loss of time. Extension of the deadline is beyond imagination. If somebody takes leave, it means double responsibility for his/her peer. This results in internal conflict between workers, creating suffocating work situations. This is inevitable because one can only expect understanding from one's co-workers for a reasonable number of planned leaves. Managements also connect the deadline to the contracts with their clients. it is said
that if the deadline is missed, the company has to pay a penalty to the client. And the penalty will obviously reflect on the workers’ pay slip. This builds tremendous pressure on the workers. They try their best to finish their job within the deadline. Any delay by any individual worker puts the whole team in trouble, thus everyone pushing each other all the time. The astonishing thing in this scenario is that often enough supervisors become well replaced by the workers themselves. The supervisors have done their job only by fixing the schedule...

"Bugs"

The bug reports
"After we die bugs come to our coffin and feast on our dead bodies." Each project has at least three to four levels of testing. Some are internal and some are external. To start with, some are done by the subject matter expert (SME). Then, on the basis of guidelines provided by the client, testers scrutinize the project. After internal testers pass the initial stage, it goes to the client who checks it thoroughly. After that the next stage starts. Sometimes this next stage starts even before the report comes from the client because of time pressure. After the project is over, it is scrutinized thrice internally and only then is it sent to the client. The client goes over the final product again, and if it finds any problem at this level, the company is penalized for each mistake. It means that by now the project has to be zero-defect. From all these check points workers get thick lists of test reports i.e., bug reports. All bugs have to be rectified parallel to the already running projects. Often bug reports don’t reach the worker in a systematic way. To meet the construction deadline, testing runs parallel to scripting and graphic creation. As soon as one section is done, it goes for testing and while the next section is under construction the report for the earlier section comes up. At the first level of testing, the possibility of section, bug reports pile up to such extent that they demand another project schedule altogether. However, there are no extra days for these reports to be fixed. For the bug report and the changes no extra time is planned in the project schedule. These things have to be done within the same time frame. In truth, workers are actually working at higher levels than defined in any productivity norm. All of these things result in long working hours, late night stays and a surrender of holidays.

"Soul capture"

Data capture

The automation of supervision.

Even though the workday is fixed from 9 am to 6 pm i.e., nine hours, late night stays and sometimes skipping lunch make it ten to twelve hours long. Through a computer network, a database is maintained to monitor every worker’s productivity data on a daily basis. The software which is used for this purpose has built-in information about project code, kind of work, delivery options, etc. and the worker has to fill-in the time span she took to complete that particular job. Even tea and lunch breaks are defined in the software. Once the data is punched in, it cannot be changed. Initially most workers used to avoid this data capture. But very soon it was made mandatory. Management may claim that this data capture has nothing to do with assessment, but it uses this data as a yardstick to estimate and plan future project time-line, so that they can provide the client with a more accurate date for the deadline. But every worker knows that when assessment time comes, this will become yet another management weapon.

I have tried to describe how my body and my mind were controlled in those two years. But I haven’t even spoken of the other invisible effects. The ever-increasing speed of productivity has taken its toll on my body. The hours of constant keyboard and mouse manipulation have resulted in spondylitis and
arthritic problems. My back, my finger tips, my neck have all suffered. Obviously, management had always been aware of these repercussions. They had constantly supplied us with tips on health through emails and graffiti. Even aerobics were conducted to enhance our physical capacity! But the really sad thing is my present relationship to music. Since music increases the speed of work and lessens the monotony of repeated typing and punching, it became a repeated infliction. Now it's difficult for me to listen to music and not type on my non-existent keyboard.

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(from p. 2)

conditions, regardless of the industry or his/her education. Paddy Shannon, writing for the Socialist Party of Great Britain's Socialist Standard weighs the implications of the computer and its relationship to the market system as a whole. The fact is that the internet seems to have been devised for a moneyless economic system. As the author points out "The Internet seems to be gift oriented." Subsequent installments, from the February, March, and April issues of the SS examine other aspects of the internet: Its facility for distributing information useful for workers hoping to encourage discussion and unfortunately, as the author points out, ruling class disinformation as well. Shannon, though, believes the basic incompatibility of the internet and capitalism will make such propaganda less than credible.

The next installment of Non-Market Socialism is a portion—about a third—of Alain Bengam’s Chapter Three “Anarcho-Communism.” The text here demonstrates a major problem of the book for American readers: It concentrates on the European movement—and in this case the history of French anarchism. On top of that is the author’s conscious decision to restrict the chapter to the anarcho-communism of Kropotkin rather than to class struggle oriented anarcho-syndicalism. If all goes well the remaining pages of chapter 3 will appear in DB 103.

Next the De Leonist Society of Canada replies to Adam Buick’s DB100 letter which quotes earlier issues of the Socialist Standard showing that the SPGB also favors—or at least does not oppose—socialist industrial unionism. Here I think the DLSC has the advantage in the discussion aside from its quotation from the SPGB Principles. Buick’s quotations do little more than indicate that the SPGB understands the SIU to have no function before the revolution other than that of a militant pure and simple trades union and that the SPGB believes that the capitalist union movement can serve the revolutionary purpose of taking over and holding the means of production. Nor does SPGB theory seem to provide for post-revolutionary organizational machinery for a socialist society other than existing state or some sort of neo-state to organize production and distribution.

Much of the remaining material in this issue continues a rather general discussion of Seattle, Washington, DC, international trade, the IMF, and the World Bank that began in DB100. I can discern four positions on the subject among DB readers, the most intensely debated being on the questions of violence and the “success” of the demonstrations. Derek Devine’s witty article examines not only the
The Internet and capitalism (1)

Just over 30 years ago in October 1969 the first email was sent, and the world took no notice. Even in 1990, in Megatrends 2000, the authors Naisbitt and Aburdene failed to mention the Internet. After ten more years, the world is still largely unprepared for the scale of the communications revolution overtaking it. According to Andy Grove of Intel: "The Internet is like a 20-foot tidal wave coming, and we are in kayaks."

The Global Internet Project (GIP) (http://www.gip.org), a collective including AT&T, Sun, Visa, Fujitsu, BT IBM and Deutsche Bank, believes that the Internet explosion will be good for capitalism, a "cause for unambiguous celebration" as they put it in a recent report. The figures they have supplied illustrate the explosive colonisation of cyberspace.

In 1980 there were just 100 Internet host computers. The World Wide Web did not exist in 1991. In 1992 there were just 100 web sites. In 1996 there were 10 million host computers. Today there are 120 million hosts, 250 million users in hundreds of countries, there are uncountable millions of web sites, and the Web is growing by 300,000 new pages every seven days. The amount of information on the Internet has reached a level almost beyond human comprehension, and it doubles every year.

Gold fever has been evident at the stock exchange, with Internet company values being grotesquely over-inflated and largely responsible for the share price bubble. Start-up companies with no assets and no profits have been valued at millions. Oddly, there exists an uncanny parallel with the overvaluation of RCA shares in The, then, new technology of radio prior to the Wall Street Crash in 1929 (Money Programme, BBC2, 24 October). As then, Internet company valuations are also likely to be wiped out, but this won't stop them in the long run. The speed of growth is breathtaking, and contributes to the speculative hysteria. The accountants just can't keep up. Mobile phone sales were not even included in GDP figures until 1998, while there is still no reliable estimate for Internet sales, although GIP puts it at about $6.6 billion for this year.

In October of last year, Tony Blair announced to a startled population that 100,000 computers would be made available to poor families, at just £5 a month. The significance of a move to put even the poorest online should not be underestimated. Meanwhile, huge pressure is being brought to bear on BT to make Internet calls free, as they are in the USA. If they don't, somebody else will. Calinet UK announced the first such, free and no strings, service in late October. A rash of similar services is expected to follow. The expense of being online is rapidly heading downwards, to almost zero, as capitalism anticipates a cyber-bonanza of sales that will make free calls, even free computers, more than worthwhile. Developing memory products.

Falling costs

Capitalism is rushing with orgiastic zeal headlong into cyberspace. The prospect of global reach for free is the Holy Grail of any business, and the "technology of the ether" can make transaction costs so small as to amount to their elimination. "What market can ignore transaction costs, when there is one that has none?" says Michael Vlahos of the Progress and Freedom Foundation. The potential savings are enormous in other areas too. The cyber-based company of the future may need far fewer staff, no premises, little capital expenditure, tiny running costs, no stock or warehousing, and have no distribution overheads. Yet they will be more efficient than any business has ever been before.
"By putting everyone on the Web accessing information in both directions internally and externally," says Barry Demas of Cadence, "we suddenly had a cohesive view of our markets, customers, and technologies--it all started coming into focus for us. And if you compare the cost and time to train the sales force, and factor in the difference in time to market the returns are awesome." (Quoted in GIP).

There is a revolution in advertising and marketing theory too, as technology makes possible the placement of tailored advertising on the screens of specific customers. XTV, the new wave smart video, not only records the TV programmes it knows you'll like, it gives you bespoke personalised commercial breaks too (Observer Business, 7 November). Every user's every movement on the Internet is a piece of valuable marketing information. Now the talk is of "infinite stratification" of demand and "micro-niches", of industrial mass-based society being remoulded by an individualistic assortment of micro-demands and micro-views, with customised low volume production replacing the conveyor belt. Already the biggest engine of growth in the US, so-called Mom and Pop stores, will proliferate in cyberspace, the one place they can really compete with the big players. Here they can use "knowledge robots" or "knowbots" to roam the Web, create customised reports and newspapers, find specific products at the best prices, and even negotiate on behalf of the trader and customer.

As the expense of being online plummets to near zero, the speed of connection is soaring. The slow modem is obsolete as fibre-optic lines no thicker than a human hair with a trillion bit per second transfer rate are being installed in the US at the rate of 4000 miles per day, while in Britain BT is promising nationwide permanent ADSL links (50 times faster than modems) within two years. Project Oxygen plans to lay ocean-floor optical cables across the Atlantic, while satellite data broadcasting offers wireless Internet connection. Bandwidth (the bottleneck of the data exchange process) doubles every year. Bill Gates in 1994 predicted "we'll have infinite bandwidth in a decade's time". Information will before long be able to travel at almost literally the speed of light.

In consequence of all this, there is an orgy of buyouts and alliances as capitalism races to reconfigure its entire business system, including everything from Hollywood to hard drives:

"The business of computing (hardware, software, and services), communications (telephony, cable, satellite), and content (publishing; entertainment advertising) are ... collapsing to create a new industry sector. This new media industry is the engine of the new economy and will be critical to leading a successful transition. The rise of this new sector and the transformation of corresponding markets is forcing every company to rethink its very existence..." (Don Tapscott, author and chair of Alliance for Converging Technologies).

One can easily envisage the telecommunications companies becoming the new giants, eclipsing all others as one box does everything and all bills are paid through one tele-account. Yet talk of "boxes" is itself an obsolescent concept, as Xerox have perfected "e-paper" (Observer, 22 August) and research continues toward wristwatch computers and even brain transplants, giving rise to talk of synthetic telepathy in the more distant future. And as science revolutionizes the internet, so the internet is revolutionizing science. With the spatial decoupling of the scientist from the task, the so-called "collaboratory" is born enabling multiple users to share a single physical resource, enhanced productivity with no travel time and participation by experimenters in multiple geographically-distributed projects. Remote science not only levels the playing field for researchers, it also offers more rigorous standards of specification, note-taking and reproducibility of results. Capitalism's R&D department is as...
excited as the Accounts department and the Board of Directors.

Yet despite all this breathless enthusiasm there may be serious problems for capitalism inherent in this revolution. That the marriage of the state and the capitalists is fraught with mutual suspicion is evident from their attempts to reach a solution to the problem of devising a code to keep details secret (see GIP report on House of Lords Encryption Summit, 1997). The capitalists want a system which is unbreakable, for customers will not expose their bank details in an unsafe medium, and corporate secrecy remains essential in a competitive market. However, the state cannot afford to allow it, citing terrorism as its pretext, and demands a master key for every code. The capitalists respond that they don't trust governments not to use these keys for their own unsavoury purposes, such as interfering in business, and back and forth it goes. At present it seems unlikely that the state will get its way. It could probably happily do without the Internet altogether, but conversely, capitalism needs the Internet, possibly as much as it needs the state, given that local lawmakers are anyway creating a global maze of parochial laws and regulations that offer nothing but obstructions and impediments to the progress of capital. The cry of “free the market” is heard everywhere from boardroom to news group to government office, and legislators do not seem to be winning.

Price-less information
There is a worse problem. Information, as a buy and sell commodity, carries a curse unknown to any other type of commodity. In the words of an old computer hacker slogan, “Information wants to be free.” When one disgruntled ex-employee of a software firm recently posted the company’s products on a free website, the site was closed down in two hours. Yet twenty minutes would have been enough to start mirror sites containing the free software, at a stroke wiping out the firm’s profits. It is worth recalling what really makes a commodity—it is restriction of access. Air is just about the only use-value in existence which is not yet a commodity. In other words it has no exchange value. If access cannot be restricted to a good, money cannot be charged for it. The unique property of information is that you can make infinite exact copies, you can “steal” it without removing the original, or leaving any trace of the “theft.” Just as the music industry had to learn to live with music piracy (which of us does not have pirate tapes on our shelves?) so the information industry must live, not only with piracy, but an extremely short shelf-life. The price of any information commodity will tend towards zero more rapidly than any other commodity. The traditional product-cycle will contract to a single, sharp peak and steep descent. Whereas capitalists now salivate over a presumed bonanza, this short-term pay-out will give way to a cut-throat and dog-eat-dog business world characterised by a falling rate of profit and a desperate race to stand still. Impossible though it seems, it gets worse for capitalism. The goose could be laying a golden bomb. Unlike any other sector of production, the knowledge producing sector which produced the Internet has always incorporated a strong ethical tendency towards free distribution the gift economy. In a far-sighted study of Internet sociology, Richard Barbrook’s essay on Cyber-communism (www.nettime.org/nettime, w3archive/1999909/msg 00046.html) argues powerfully that a knowledge-rich society will increasingly tend to share rather than sell, just as socialist common ownership is a logical adaptation to material abundance. In an ethical reversal, it is selling, not piracy, which will be seen as antisocial. All in all, capitalism would appear to be staking its future on a commodity it can never control:

*The scarcity of copyright cannot compete against the abundance of gifts. At the cutting edge of modernity, the exchange of commodities now plays a secondary role to the circulation of gifts. The enclosure of intellectual labour is challenged by a more efficient method of*
working, disclosure."

Barbrook foresees the collapse of production and market relations in the same way as other business observers have been worrying for years about the "technology paradox" of "zero cost production" in industry (Business Week, 6 March 1995). As the computer world gapes at the meteoric rise of a new operating system called Linux, designed by a student as an antidote to the "bloatware" of Microsoft and, more to the point, given away free as "Open Source", there does indeed seem to be some basis for the optimism of the gift economists. The implications for the future of capitalist market relations are huge and contentious. There are no guarantees that capitalism will drown in its own Third Wave, but equally there are no guarantees that it won't. But if this wasn't enough, there arises a new problem which has no precedent and for which no avoidance strategies have yet been devised. In the knowledge explosion, what happens when we know too much?

PADDY SHANNON

(in Part Two of this three-part series, Paddy Shannon explores the consequences of the information revolution for the ideological foundations of capitalism.)

[From January 2000 Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN UK]

(From p. 9)

"We Won!" reaction of many participants but raises doubts about the future of a movement that limits itself to protest demonstrations. Earl Gilman sees the most positive result of Seattle in the global publicity given to the fact that a significant number of us are willing to resist the powers that be. Like Derek D., however, he questions the future of a movement that limits itself to protests.

Ed Stamm's "Response to Ronald Young" strikes me as being more than a condemnation of violence in Seattle. Among the questionable ideas Stamm advances is his accusation that the action of Black Clad Block constituted persecution—presumably of the authorities, who were then forced to repress the demonstrators. Also surprising is his affirmation of what is known around Grand Rapids in Amway circles as "compassionate capitalism"—the idea that we owe our living to the boss's kindness, as in "Before Nike or their subcontractors set up shop, there was one less employer to work for."!!!

Adam Buick has the same trouble I have with the Seattle violence. Neither of us believes that whatever good can result from violence can outweigh the possible harmful effects. Anyone who has read about the 1905 march on the Winter Palace knows who will win a confrontation, even a peaceful one between us and our masters. On the other hand, since "governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed" to quote the U.S. Declaration of Independence, how does our class demonstrate, not just its dissatisfaction with a particular policy as at Seattle, but the withdrawal of its consent. Somewhere along the line we are going to have to do more than carry clever signs and block building entrances. If we can schedule the revolution for Election Day, that might be ideal. Another possibility could be for all of us to walk into our work places and start producing to satisfy human needs, but there are problems with that too. I suspect we are going to have to do something like throw rocks at City Hall to get the idea across to our masters. The Mr Block cartoon was drawn by a wobbly cartoonist has resurrected Mr. Block from old issues of the IWW's Industrial Worker and put him to

(to p. 20)
3 Anarcho-Communism
Alain Pêngam

INTRODUCTION

Anarcho-communism has been regarded by other anarchist currents as a poor and despised relation, an ideological trophy to be exhibited according to the needs of hagiography or polemic before moving on to 'serious things' (the collectivisations in Spain, anarcho-syndicalism, federalism or self-management), and as an 'infantile utopia' more concerned with dogmatic abstractions than with 'economic realities'. Yet anarcho-communism has been the only current within the anarchist movement which has explicitly aimed not only at ending exchange value but, among its most coherent partisans, at making this the immediate content of the revolutionary process. We are speaking here, of course, only of the current which explicitly described itself as 'anarcho-communist', whereas in fact the tendency in the nineteenth century to draw up a stateless communist (but is this not a pleonasm?) 'utopia' extended beyond anarchism properly so-called.

Anarcho-communism must be distinguished from collectivism, which was both a diffuse movement (see, for example, the different components of the International Working Men's Association, the Guesdists and so on) and a specific anarchist current. As far as the latter was concerned, it was Proudhon who supplied its theoretical features: an open opponent of communism (which, for him, was Etienne Cabet's 'communism'), he favoured instead a society in which exchange value would flourish – a society in which workers would be directly and mutually linked to each other by money and the market. The Proudhonist collectivists of the 1860s and 1870s (of whom Bakunin was one), who were resolute partisans of the collective ownership of the instruments of work and, unlike Proudhon, of land, maintained the essence of this commercial structure in the form of groups of producers, organised either on a territorial basis (communes) or on an
enterprise basis (cooperatives, craft groupings) and linked to each other by the circulation of value. Collectivism was thus defined — and still is — as an exchange economy where the legal ownership of the instruments of production is held by a network of 'collectivities' which are sorts of workers' joint-stock companies. Most contemporary anarchists (standing, as they do, for a self-managed exchange economy) are collectivists in this nineteenth-century sense of the term, even though the term has now come to have a somewhat different meaning (state ownership, i.e. 'state capitalism', rather than ownership by any collectivity).

In the 1870s and 1880s the anarcho-communists, who wanted to abolish exchange value in all its forms, broke with the collectivists, and in so doing revived the tradition of radical communism which had existed in France in the 1840s.

1840-64

In 1843, under the Rabelaisian motto 'Do what you will!', and in opposition to Etienne Cabet, Théodore Dézamy's *Code de la Communauté* laid the basis for the principles developed later in the nineteenth century by communist and anarcho-communist theoreticians such as Joseph Déjacque, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, William Morris and Peter Kropotkin. These principles involved the abolition of money and commercial exchange; the subordination of the economy to the satisfaction of the needs of the whole population; the abolition of the division of labour (including the division between town and country and between the capital and the provinces); the progressive introduction of attractive work; and the progressive abolition of the state and of the functions of government, as a separate domain of society, following the communisation of social relations, which was to be brought about by a revolutionary government. It should be noted that Dézamy advocated the 'community of goods' and resolutely opposed the specifically collectivist slogan of 'socialisation of property'. In doing so, he anticipated the critical analysis of property which Amadeo Bordiga made more than a century later (see Chapter 6).
Anarcha-Communism

Besides rejecting Cabot's utopia, because it maintained the division of labour—in particular that between town and country—and sought to organise it rigidly in the name of economic 'efficiency', Dézamy also refused to insert between the capitalist mode of production and communist society a transitional period of democracy which would have pushed communism into the background. By seeking to establish a direct link between the revolutionary process and the content of communism, so that the dominant class within capitalism would be economically and socially expropriated through the immediate abolition of monetary circulation, Dézamy anticipated what was to be the source of the basic originality of anarchocommunism, in particular in its Kropotkinist form. This feature was the rejection of any 'transition period' that did not encompass the essence of communism: the end of the basic act of buying and selling.

At about the same time, the communists around the journal _L'Humanitaire_, organ de la science sociale (of which two issues appeared in Paris in 1841) advocated a programme of action very close to that of Dézamy, proposing, among other things, the abolition of marriage. In addition, they made travel one of the principal characteristics of communist society, because it would bring about mixing of the races and interchange between industrial and agricultural activities. This group also identified itself with the Babouvist Sylvain Maréchal for having proclaimed 'anti-political and anarchist ideas'. However, it was above all the house-painter Joseph Déjacque (1822–64) who, up until the foundation of anarchocommunism properly so-called, expressed in a coherent way the radical communism which emerged in France from the 1840s as a critical appropriation of Fourierism, Owenism and neo-Babouvism.

Déjacque's work was an examination of the limits of the 1848 revolution and the reasons for its failure. It was developed around a rejection of two things: the state, even if 'revolutionary', and collectivism of the Proudhonist type. Déjacque reformulated communism in a way that sought to be resolutely free from the dogmatism, sectarianism and statism exhibited by those such as Cabot and _La Fraternité de 1845_. Déjacque spoke of: 'Liberty! Which has been so misused against the community and which it is true to say that certain communist schools have held cheap.'

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Déjacque was a fierce opponent of all the political gangs of the period. He rejected Blanquism, which was based on a division between the 'disciples of the great people's Architect' and 'the people, or vulgar herd', and was equally opposed to all the variants of social republicanism, to the dictatorship of one man and to 'the dictatorship of the little prodigies of the proletariat'. With regard to the last of these, he wrote that: 'A dictatorial committee composed of workers is certainly the most conceited and incompetent, and hence the most anti-revolutionary, thing that can be found... (It is better to have doubtful enemies in power than dubious friends)'. He saw 'anarchic initiative', 'reasoned will' and 'the autonomy of each' as the conditions for the social revolution of the proletariat, the first expression of which had been the barricades of June 1848. In Déjacque's view, a government resulting from an insurrection remains a reactionary fetter on the free initiative of the proletariat. Or rather, such free initiative can only arise and develop by the masses ridding themselves of the 'authoritarian prejudices' by means of which the state reproduces itself in its primary function of representation and delegation. Déjacque wrote that: 'By government I understand all delegation, all power outside the people'; for which must be substituted, in a process whereby politics is transcended, the 'people in direct possession of their sovereignty', or the 'organised commune'. For Déjacque, the communist anarchist utopia would fulfil the function of inciting each proletarian to explore his or her own human potentialities, in addition to correcting the ignorance of the proletarians concerning 'social science'.

However, these views on the function of the state, both in the insurrectionary period and as a mode of domination of man by man, can only be fully understood when inserted into Déjacque's global criticism of all aspects of civilisation (in the Fourierist sense of the term). For him, 'government, religion, property, family, all are linked, all coincide'. The content of the social revolution was thus to be the abolition of all governments, of all religions, and of the family based on marriage, the authority of the parents and the husband, and inheritance. Also to be abolished were 'personal property, property in land, buildings, workshops, shops, property in anything that is an instrument of work, production or con-
Déjacque's proposed abolition of property has to be understood as an attack on what is at the heart of civilisation: politics and exchange value, whose cell (in both senses) is the contract. The abolition of the state, that is to say of the political contract guaranteed by the government (legality), for which anarchy is substituted, is linked indissolubly with the abolition of commerce, that is to say of the commercial contract, which is replaced by the community of goods: 'Commerce, . . . this scourge of the 19th century, has disappeared amongst humanity. There are no longer either sellers or sold.'

Déjacque's general definition of the 'anarchic community' was:

the state of affairs where each would be free to produce and consume at will and according to their fantasy, without having to exercise or submit to any control whatsoever over anything whatever; where the balance between production and consumption would establish itself, no longer by preventive and arbitrary detention at the hands of some group or other, but by the free circulation of the faculties and needs of each.

Such a definition implies a criticism of Proudhonism, that is to say of the Proudhonist version of Ricardian socialism, centred on the reward of labour power and the problem of exchange value. In his polemic with Proudhon on women's emancipation, Déjacque urged Proudhon to push on 'as far as the abolition of the contract, the abolition not only of the sword and of capital, but of property and authority in all their forms,' and refuted the commercial and wages logic of the demand for a 'fair reward' for 'labour' (labour power). Déjacque asked: 'Am I thus . . . right to want, as with the system of contracts, to measure out to each — according to his accidental capacity to produce — what he is entitled to?'

The answer given by Déjacque to this question is unambiguous: 'it is not the product of his labour that the worker has a right to, but to the satisfaction of his needs, whatever may be their nature.'

The 'direct exchange' theorised by Proudhon corresponded to a supposed 'abolition' of the wages system which in fact would have turned groups of producers or individual produc-
ers into the legal agents of capital accumulation. For Déjacque, on the other hand, the communal state of affairs—the phalanstère 'without any hierarchy, without any authority' except that of the 'statistics book'—corresponded to 'natural exchange', i.e. to the 'unlimited freedom of all production and consumption; the abolition of any sign of agricultural, individual, artistic or scientific property; the destruction of any individual holding of the products of work; the demonarchisation and the demonetarisation of manual and intellectual capital as well as capital in instruments, commerce and buildings.'

The abolition of exchange value depends on the answer given to the central question of 'the organisation of work' or, in other words, on the way in which those who produce are related to their activity and to the products of that activity. We have already seen that the answer Déjacque gave to the question of the distribution of products was the community of goods. But the community had first of all to be established in the sphere of productive activities themselves. Although the disappearance of all intermediaries (parasites) would allow an increase in production, and by this means would guarantee the satisfaction of needs, the essential requirement was the emancipation of the individual producer from 'enslavement, subordination to the division of labour' (Marx) and, primarily, from forced labour. This is why the transformation of work into 'attractive work' was seen by Déjacque as the condition for the existence of the community: 'The organisation of attractive work by series would have replaced Malthusian competition and repulsive work.'

This organisation was not to be something exterior to productive activity. Déjacque's communist anthropology was based on the liberation of needs, including the need to act on the world and nature, and made no distinction between natural–technical necessities and human ends. Although its vocabulary was borrowed from Fourier (harmony, passions, series and so on), it aimed at the community of activities more than the organised deployment of labour power: 'The different series of workers are recruited on a voluntary basis like the men on a barricade, and are completely free to stay there as long as they want or to move on to another series or barricade.' Déjacque's 'Humanisphere' was to have no hours of work nor obligatory groupings. Work could be done in isolation or otherwise.
As to the division of labour, Déjacque proposed its abolition in a very original way. What he advocated was a reciprocal process of the integration of the aristocracy (or rather of the aristocratic intelligentsia) and the proletariat, each going beyond its own unilateral intellectual or manual development. Although he recognised the futility of palliatives, Déjacque was perhaps exasperated by the gulf between the results of his utopian research and the content of the class struggle in the 1850s, and tried to bridge this gulf with a theory of transition. This theory aimed to facilitate the achievement of the state of community, while taking into account the existing situation. Its three bases were, first, 'direct legislation by the people' (the most democratic form of government, while awaiting its complete abolition); second, a range of economic measures which included 'direct exchange' (even though Déjacque admitted that this democratized property without abolishing exploitation), the establishment of Owenite-type 'labour bazaars', 'circulation vouchers' (labour vouchers) and a gradual attack on property; and third, a democratization of administrative functions (revocability of public officials, who would be paid on the basis of the average price of a day's work) and the abolition of the police and the army.

It is an undeniable fact that this programme anticipated that of the Paris Commune of 1871, at least on certain points. But this is the weak side of Déjacque where he accepts the 'limits' of the 1848 revolution, against which he had exercised his critical imagination. The 'right to work' appeared along with the rest, and with it the logic of commerce. It should be noted that, on the question of the transition, Déjacque singularly lacked 'realism' since, even if the insoluble problems posed by the perspective of workers managing the process of value-capital are ignored, he proposed giving not only women but 'prisoners' and the 'insane' the right to vote, without any age limit. But the transition was only a second best for Déjacque and he explicitly recognised it as such. There was no abandoning of utopian exploration in favour of the transition, but a tension between the two, the opposite to what was to be the case with Errico Malatesta, with whom he could be superficially compared.

The tenor of Déjacque's utopia, its move towards breaking with all commercial and political constraints, its desire to
revive the insurrectionary energy of the proletariat, and its imaginative depth (comparable to that of William Morris) enable one to see that it made a fundamental contribution to the critical element in anarcho-communism. Déjacque provided anarcho-communism during the first cycle of its history with an iconoclastic dimension, the glimmers of which are not found again until the Kropotkin of the 1880s or until Luigi Galleani in the twentieth century.

[If all goes well the concluding part of Alain Pengam’s chapter on Anarcho-Communism will be published in DB103. It takes the history of the movement in Europe up to about the point where a self-conscious anarchist movement begins to emerge in the U.S. with the arrival of Johan Most on these shores and the split in the largely reformist and Lassallean dominated Socialist Labor Party of the late 1870s and early eighties. Although readers will find nothing about North America in this section, nonetheless this is an important period in the development of non-market socialism. It is the period when the social democratic parties were developing their reformist approach to socialism under the aegis of Kautsky, Bebel, and other theoreticians. Pengam traces the concurrent development of communist anarchism under the leadership of Kropotkin and others. —FG]
Dear DB:

In our continuing debate with the Socialist Party of Great Britain, we claimed in DB100 that "there remains no doubt whatever that the SPGB and Companion Parties restrict their program of working-class revolutionary organization to the political field." To which claim Adam Buick took issue as follows:

"The De Leonist Society of Canada have got it wrong. The difference between the SLP tradition and the SPGB tradition is not that the SLP advocates working-class political and economic action to end capitalism while the SPGB advocates only political action....The difference has been one of emphasis."

Now, evidently wishing to cinch his argument, Buick offers three archival extracts from the Socialist Standard, "official journal" of the SPGB--extracts which begin thus:

(1) "The workers must prepare themselves for their emancipation by class-conscious organisation on both the political and the economic fields....(Socialist Standard, July 1915)."

(2) "The Socialist Party, therefore, whilst holding that the working class must be organised, both politically and economically, for the establishment of Socialism....(Socialist Standard, November 1937)."

(3) "In rejecting the fallacies of the Industrial Unionists the Socialist Party never asserted that Socialist society would result from the actions of parliamentary delegates alone....(Socialist Standard, May 1966)."

Well then, does the foregoing stand our claim on its head? We think not, for we based this on a document whose authority unquestionably outranks the authority of the Socialist Standard. And here we remind Buick of his Party’s Declaration of Principles, which declaration is appearing monthly in the Standard over the following footnote:

"This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the Party in 1904, its original language has been retained."

Armed thus with the assurance that the Declaration has remained unchanged over the years, we had no difficulty in determining where the SPGB stood and continues to stand on the question of working-class organization for Socialism. The answer came clip and clear in the Declaration’s Principle #6, to wit: "The working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery...may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation." That is, the SPGB's call upon workers is a call which has working-class political organization, not political AND economic organization, as its aim!

We see, then, that the organizational position affirmed by the
Party's Declaration of Principles (the Party's most authoritative document) not only contradicts therefore overrides the Standard's 1915 and 1937 versions of organization, but explodes its 1966 claim that "the Socialist Party never asserted that Socialist society would result from the actions of parliamentary delegates alone..."

Finally, as to Buick's above remarks anent "traditional" differences of emphasis, we note in addition his declaration that the SPGB "has always recognized that workers should/will organise economically, to take over and administer production, as well as politically, to take over political power." But how strong has been this British "tradition"? Strong enough to be elevated as a principle of organization? Strong enough to be included in the Party's Declaration of Principles? Evidently not!

* * *

So much for Buick's attempt to disprove our claim that the SPGB's program bypasses revolutionary working-class economic organization. But so much yet to be noted!

For example, the more we explored the 1937 and 1966 extracts, the more apparent it became that the revolutionary spirit in which the SPGB was founded had fallen victim of revisionist reaction. Thus in 1937 the Standard "urges" workers to continue their struggle for the best wages they can get, adding the ridiculous promise that "The trade unions must inevitably[sic!] accept the Socialist theory ..." Obviously, in the first place, the claim of inevitability has not stood up to historical test. What is more, we can well ask: Why would the trade unions be inclined to "accept the Socialist theory" when organizations such as the SPGB are urging them to "obtain the best conditions they can get from the master class in the sale of their labour-power."? Thus again, in 1966, it would appear that the Standard employs its own reading of working-class history as well as its own "logic" in order to put a good face on what would otherwise be seen as the Party's dereliction of its working-class educational duty. As we see it, instead of hanging back until a (possible) day when "many workers want Socialism," it is incumbent upon a political organization flying socialist colors to help that possibility become a reality by itself propagating plans for socialist reconstruction!

At the same time, let us also try to tie up some of the loose ends that remain. Consider the following:

* We wholly agree with the Socialist Standard's November 1937 observation to the effect that "The essential conditions for obtaining Socialism must never be underestimated." We find, however, that the SPGB has repeatedly underestimated the economic power that the control of industry puts at the disposal of the capitalist class. This shortcoming has revealed itself in a great many ways, not least in its seeming overconfidence in the ability of political power alone to bring capitalist rule to an end; not least, that is, in the Party's failure to include working-class economic organization in its Declaration of Principles.
* Concluding his DB100 letter, Buick writes: "Interestingly, the De Leonist Society of Canada’s revision of the SLP tradition, in not trying to form socialist unions now..." The statement is ambiguous. If it conveys that we think organization of Socialist Industrial Unions is no longer urgently needed, then it is false! As for his suggestion that we should "abandon labour-time vouchers and the flawed idea that socialism could be established in North America alone," it but remains for him to explain (a) why labor vouchers would not be needed in what Marx termed Socialism’s "first phase" and (b) why Socialism could not be established in North America independently of the rest of the industrialized world.

* As regards Buick’s final comment following his extracts from the Standard: "(anyone who knows anything about the SPGB knows it stands for a classless, STATELESS, moneyless, wageless society)." We are puzzled why Stateless appears here in bold caps because we, too, stand for a classless, Stateless, moneyless, wageless society. Does the SPGB perhaps hold that political democracy (based upon geographic constituencies) cannot exist independently of the (Marxian) State—that is, cannot be rid of the blight of class rule? That is not our position! We hold that by abolishing the State (i.e. by ending economic class division) Socialism would be able to afford society the greatest possible measure of both political and industrial democracy.

Our debate with the SPGB now appears to have come full circle with little or no agreement in sight. Our criticism of their program continues to bear on the all-important question of working-class organization for Abolition of the Wages System! To conclude in a Buickian mode: "Anyone who knows anything" about the DLSC knows that we cannot condone a "socialist" program that urges workers to "continue their efforts" to better themselves on the wages-system treadmill, knows also that we can only deplore a program that in the name of Socialism rejects Socialist Industrial Unionism—De Leon’s mastermind contribution to the socialist cause!

Sincerely,
THE DE LEONIST SOCIETY OF CANADA
P.O. Box 944, Station F
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2N9

(from p. 13)
work doing the bosses’ bidding in the new millennium. When will he ever learn?

The review of Paul Buhle’s book Taking Care of Business enlarges on my criticism of the book made in a paragraph in the “Notes, Announcements and Short Reviews” department of DB99. As usual we end with a few “Notes, Announcements and Short Reviews.”

(to p. 28)
Shaking A Fist At The IMF

Just the other day, police clubbed demonstrators and dispersed them using pepper spray and tear gas. Around 15,000 anti-poverty campaigners failed to shut down the two days of meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They succeeded in causing considerable disruption to large areas of Washington, USA. More than 500 people were arrested. Robert Weissman, co-director of Essential Action described the demonstration and the arrests as a "total success", proclaiming that "We have shined the light on these institutions as never before in this country".

In the earnest, emotive tradition of contemporary "direct action" many of those arrested apparently wanted to be arrested. In an atmosphere where a moral duty to testify prevailed, many came to protest and damn the injustices of this cruel and heartless world. To the assembled, the IMF was the personification of evil in this world. They gathered at the entrance of the rectum of the beast in a battle of enlightenment versus evil. The suits in the meetings were allegedly the cause of world debt, starvation and environmental devastation. Destruction of farmers' livelihoods, union-rights and welfarism also appeared on the suits' tab.

Speaking for the forces of darkness, World Bank spokeswoman Caroline Anelsy said that officials in the meetings felt "bewilderment and surprise at the degree of anger" outside. They, after all, were meeting to try to iron out anomalies in the trading game. Trying to alleviate poverty was their mission. There certainly was anger and, singing, playfulness' and some dancing. The event encapsulated a Carnival of emotions rounded off by actress Susan Sarandon's address to the throng.

Following on from the protests at the World Trade Organisation's meeting in Seattle last December ("Our unbelievable victory") there is an indisputable momentum afoot which views this kind of action as the means of halting the worst excesses of the Business System.

Sure, the IMF, World Bank and WTO are significant bodies who endeavour to manage the developments of commodity production at the global level, but their attempts to plan the market are at best attempts to influence the direction of movements of commodities over which they have no control. Sure, the IMF and World Bank stipulates conditions on governments applying for loans or continuing with debt- repayments. Sure, these bodies are mouthpieces for the dominant, contemporary ideas of how best to develop Capitalism, but they are not the cause of poverty. In reality, they are strong voices of the neo-liberal, or allegedly "free market", economic and political outlook. From the UK to Eastern Europe, from the USA to Africa and beyond, the ideas of planning business via government ownership and control have largely been discredited. The policies of "privatisation" cut-backs in government spending and legislation to weaken perceived union power are presently the favoured means of attempting to encourage efficient developments in the global market.

It is, undoubtedly, very encouraging if the demonstrators raise public awareness of global power-relationships and get people thinking. However, if they seriously believe that scaring a few government workers, or preventing the IMF from meeting, is going to alter global poverty one little bit, then they are deluding themselves. The Business System is a big system and it
would be a great shame if those who feel aggrieved by the workings of that system were not to think bigger and seek to transform the world we live in.

There is a danger of the protests against "globalisation" becoming almost fashionable events where the emotive and the indignant merely shake a fist in fury at the status quo. We have to help to convince them that the system of universal commodity production needs to be replaced by a world without commodities.

--Derek Devine

(From Daily Planet #4, 115 Henderson Row, Edinburgh, Scotland EH3 5BB)

Dear comrades,

I am sympathetic to the declaration "From Seattle To Where?" which appeared in the Discussion Bulletin Number 101. It is, of course, true that "the demonstrators ran blindly...unaware of the social system they live in and the necessity of replacing it with socialism."

However, there was a positive aspect to the Seattle demonstration: all over the world our comrades -- our brothers and sisters -- saw that they had allies in the USA. Ordinarily, outside of the USA there is no mention of strikes or struggles in the local press or television. All they get to see our dubbed T.V. shows about Texas millionaires and typical middle class American families with two cars and a swimming pool.

It is positive when we in the USA can show that we are not asleep to these comrades. Even though those who went to Seattle may have been confused because of the lack of socialist content, the real movement doesn’t always begin where we’d like them. If genuine revolutionary socialists don’t intervene, however, then we are handing over leadership to the social-democrats and NGOs who want to reform the I.M.F. and World Bank and add possibly some labor friendly amendments to the W.T.O.

But I am concerned about another issue: that Left politics is being reduced to a series of protests. When one protest is finished, another one is being planned. Having been tear gassed myself, I have enormous respect for people who go back and get tear gassed again and again, though I’m afraid many of them will be burnt out when they realize they are just cannon-fodder so that the social-democrats can get a minute of TV time.

Politics is not about getting free publicity on TV. Or breaking windows at a Starbucks or Nike store. We need to fight against Imperialism where we live and work. The demonstrators who do travel need to reorient towards organizing on the job, which is not always as dramatic as confronting the police. Being a professional revolutionary requires a lot more patience and knowledge than being a professional demonstrator.

Certainly, demonstrations have their place but cannot substitute for the studying we have to do, the small meetings in workers homes, the clandestine leaflets distributed on the job, the development of a rank and file movement and workers councils, preparing for a General Strike instead of futile protests.

EARL GILMAN
El Nuevo Topo magazine
Socorro Obrera Sindical
Dear DB Readers and Comrades,

In response to the press release, “Anarchists Condemn Anti-WTO Riots,” I would like to say a few words. As I write, similar protests are going on in Washington, DC, and we will likely hear more on this subject of tactics. At the W.T.O. there were many good examples of organizing and in all it was a momentous event we should build on in order to work towards a socialist revolution. I have to take issue with a good bit of the endorsed statement though. The author seems to be very worried about the image the capitalist press will convey to the public about anarchists – confusing the good anarchists with those evil, masked up, black-clad buggers. As sworn enemies of the state and capital, I wonder if there is much possibility of getting a lot of favorable press in any case, from those tools of capital. No matter what methods we use, be they ballot, bullet, strike, etc., you can bet that anything we do that becomes an effective threat to capital will result in bad press and government repression. As well, one might ask if this over concern with securing media palatability reinforces a passive conception of anarchism in the minds of anarchists.

The author asserts that the so-called black cladders are only an extremist group,” (pardon me, but I think in the eyes of most people, anyone proposing the to smash the capitalist state would be considered extremist) and further, “whose understanding of anarchism is apparently weak or inconsistent.” Not so! This statement assumes that everyone who is anarchist subscribes to some unified concept of anarchism, a revolutionary form of thought quite variegated in aspects of theory and praxis. The so-called “black cladders” to my understanding, are influenced by many strains of thought, both past and present. In their literature may be found individualist Stirneresque strains of thought tempered with primitivism as well as some of the spontainist, autonomist, anti-organizational thought which harks back to such notable anarchists as Louis Ling and George Engels of Haymarket fame to name a few.

Aside from the fact that the Black Bloc only carried out violence against the property of corporate purveyors of immiseration, and this after the state terrorists a.k.a. Seattle Police had already initiated violence against peaceful protesters, I believe it is highly debatable whose understanding of anarchism is “weak and inconsistent.”

The author also asserts that what they “do not” propose is the imposition of their point of view on society,” yet what they are really doing is foisting their concept of anarchism on people who may have a more fightback outlook, and this point of view also legitimates society’s right to impose all manner of wrongs on all of us. Social change must be voluntary and consensual. Might anarchists not argue about having conditions foisted upon us by society, the state, and capitalism? For example, if society doesn’t necessarily condone my rights as a prisoner, does it make me any more wrong to protest, in whatever manner, my maltreatment as such. Must I await the O.K. of “the popular masses” in order to do what my conscience tells is right? To rail against injustice becomes not one whit more correct by being endorsed by the majority.

Anarchists have always endorsed self defense, but there is something to be said for the adage about “the best defense being a good offense.” Many anarchists as well as other libertarian socialists seem not to have realized that we’ve been under attack since before we were born and
are being consistently attacked on every front, exploited, controlled more and more by a high tech Orwellian police state and forced to live on a planet with multitudinous carcinogens, wars, and misery. In the face of all that, do we really want to establish a P.R. image of anarchism as defanged, or should we honor all as aspects of this diverse philosophy and back up our black clad comrades in solidarity as befits anarchist revolutionaries.

To denounce people who you perceive as having more violent tactics than yourselves simply because they destroyed the property of misery mongers like Nike and McDonalds is to denounce people expressing well merited, healthy acts of rage in self defense against these plunderers who subject us to their system. It is also to come down on the side of the peaceniks who at protests invariably come down on the side of the pigs and property. The pigs and property owners really need all the help they can get, folks! If the peaceniks and cops want to protect property, why don't they protect that part of a worker's product for which he or she is not paid, i.e. surplus value that allows these corporations to rule the earth?

If one takes a good look at anarchist history, they will see that many anarchist initiatives did not enjoy, unfortunately, the "popular mass support touted as a necessity by our authors. Bakunin's failed insurrectionary attempts in Italy are a case in point, yet one anarchist tenet, and one I believe that Bakunin held, was that revolutionary acts would inspire the masses to spontaneous revolutionary activity. Could it be that these "extremist" anarchists might be trying to inspire some of the more lukewarm anarchists toward more intense activity?

The author also condemns the act of "riot" flat out, yet riots are used sometimes effectively in places like Spain, Italy, and Greece by our comrades. Thousands turn out for them. For my part, having been a prisoner at the infamous Tx. Walls Unit, where some 150 executions have been carried out during my stay and a commensurate number of peaceful candle light vigils as a form of protest, I can only think how much more heartening it would be to see a massive black block of anarchists converge on this city with the attitudes of human termites ready to dismantle the whole friggin set up on execution day.

Why condemn those who riot when we as anarchists should be backing up all spirited efforts in a movement of general leveling, whether it be by syndicalism, ballot initiatives, community organizing, or just being a general pain in the boss class neck.

The real purveyors of chaos and disorder are the capitalists and their state stooges, perhaps a little chaos and disorder of our own is due them in turn. The capitalists, politicians, and cops visit all manner of misery on us including death. They are not our friends. Fuck 'em!

-Gulf Coast Red
Response to Ronald Young

The question is, “Do anarchists respect the rights of people they disagree with, or do we attempt to prevent or destroy any form of expression that we disagree with?” Obviously Young’s position is that anyone he disagrees with has no rights. This leads inevitably to dictatorship, where certain organizations are banned, publications are censored, public gatherings are prohibited unless they are sponsored by the regime, photocopiers must be licensed, dissidents are persecuted, declared insane, imprisoned, tortured or killed, and so on. When anarchists decide to “shut down” someone else’s meeting, it means they take the Leninist position that their opponents have no rights. If history is any guide, the category “enemies of the revolution” begins narrowly enough, but soon expands to include everyone who disagrees with the ruling party. Another way to look at it; the category of “comrades” (people who have rights) starts out very broad, and becomes narrower and narrower as the power struggle sharpens.

Was the police violence in Seattle political repression, or was it heavy-handed law and order? The cops did not, in an organized manner, go after those who were not blocking the streets until the state of emergency was declared. I wasn’t there, but this is my understanding. To argue that groups have a right to block the streets for political reasons is to take the same position as anti-abortion protesters, who feel “politically repressed” when the police break up their clinic blockades. It also means that while you want to ban a group from gathering peacefully, on the other hand your group has the right to shut down the city by blocking traffic! No society is going to tolerate that, and if an anarchist gathering was blockaded by reactionary protesters, we would not tolerate it either.

Besides these ethical and historical reasons for opposing political repression, there is the issue of public relations. Does the public find our movement and our ideas more appealing after watching some of us smash windows, block the streets, spray graffiti on buildings, and fight with the cops? Or do they consider us dangerous and criminal? If you don’t care what people think about anarchism, how do you propose to win their support, or to prevail without it? As in Weimar Germany, public disorder will likely lead not to proletarian revolution, but to fascist dictatorship, as public opinion veers to the right. Short of that, civil liberties could be revoked. For example, the amount of gun violence has us perilously close to losing our right to legally bear arms. The Oklahoma City bombing gave the government carte blanche to investigate and infiltrate opposition groups. Look what the aggressive strategy of the left in Guatemala and El Salvador led to - a right-wing reign of terror.

If one is going to oppose the policies of the WTO in an effective and politically popular manner, one has to organize opposition to concrete acts of oppression, such as the breaking of strikes, logging ancient forests, killing dolphins, or whatever. Protesting McDonald’s is a bit too avant garde though. Going after a bunch of bureaucrats at their meeting makes the opposition look like the heavies. The idea is to make THEM look like the bad guys. If the cops shut down one of our meetings, THEY are the jack-booted thugs. In the absence of real political repression though, the protestors had to block the streets to provoke a repressive response, and the public, which is not stupid, recognized this and tolerated the police brutality. In contrast, the Million Mom March got lots of GOOD publicity, and they didn’t have to block any streets, smash any windows or spray any graffiti (I have to admit that I side with the Second Amendment Sisters though, since I favor an armed proletariat).

I’m a press operator, and work in a non-union shop. At work I have few, if any, rights, but I get paid for my time, and choose to make this bargain. It’s a rotten deal, but it’s much more money than I can make on my own, cutting grass or painting houses. Those Nike workers have struck a similar deal. Before Nike or their subcontractor set up shop, there was one less employer to work for. Ideally we’d all be working in self-managed, worker owned cooperatives, but that’s not the case yet. If Young thinks declaring class war is the answer, I think he should look at past attempts, and tally up the immense suffering that such attempts have imposed on the working class, and what precious little there is to show for it. Ed Stamm (responding only for himself), PO Box 1402, Lawrence KS 66044-8402 USA
Dear DB

I agree with Frank's sceptical attitude towards the call put out by the "Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc" in relation to the current wave of "anti-capitalist" demonstrations. Not, obviously, to their point that, to merit the name, any anti-capitalist demonstration would have to be directed, not in favour of "fair trade" or "reform the WTO" but against all states and against capital as such rather than just particular international capitalist organisations.

What is open to criticism is their assertion that any group or indeed individual on such demonstrations has an absolute right to act as they choose:

"We are not advocating any particular tactic; we are simply defending the individual's right to act autonomously however they see fit against our real enemies. If aggressive self-defense or property destruction is unacceptable to some, then they shouldn't engage in it" (emphasis added).

This won't do. Suppose some group decided to participate in an anti-capitalist demonstration armed not just with baseball bats to smash windows but with guns to shoot the "real enemies"—presumably they mean the IMF/WTO, etc delegates and the cops who protect them (a dubious proposition in itself, since the real enemy is the capitalist system as a system). Would the "Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Bloc" (and their council communist friends) really support such a group's "right to act autonomously"?

If so, then they are dangerous fools prepared to countenance the killing of innocent demonstrators (the police would obviously shoot back, perhaps indiscriminately). If not, then they admit that there is a line that can be drawn as to what behaviour on a particular demonstration is acceptable and what is not. Where this line should be drawn then becomes a question of debate, discussion—and decision.

The "anti-capitalist" movement is not a structured movement but I suspect that, if it was and there was to be a democratic vote amongst those participating in these demonstrations, such a vote would go in favour of a ban not just on guns but on baseball bats too. A demonstration is just that: a demonstration of people's feelings on a particular issue. And it is not necessarily reformist to want to keep a demonstration peaceful. What makes a demonstration reformist is its aims. A demonstration in favour of "The Abolition of the Wages System" would be no less revolutionary if those organising it took a democratic vote that it should be peaceful and told the baseball bat carriers (and the gun-toters) to stay away.

I realise that accepting majority decisions is anathema to some anarchists as it infringes what they regard as "the individuals right to act autonomously however they see fit", i.e. to ignore majority decisions if they don't agree with them. But I must say I'm surprised to find Council Communists going along with this. I thought that they did accept the legitimacy of majority decisions. After all, surely the councils they advocate are going to make some binding decisions and going to be run on the principle of "the majority gets its way; the minority gets its say".

Adam Buick,
Brussels, Belgium

The "brief review" of this book in DB99 ended with a promise to give it more detailed attention in a future issue. Taking Care of Business, like so many "radical" critiques of capital--or rather of the effects of capital--does an excellent job of exposing the sins of capitalism's labor movement over the past 120 years or so. Beginning with Gompers in the 1880s and on up to Sweeney in 1999 we are treated to a chronological catalog of betrayals, sell-outs, deception, greed, treachery that beggars description. Buhle also provides us with the details of AFL and CIO's racism, cooperation with the political repression of leftwing union leaders, and intervention in support of rightwing regimes worldwide. Not only that, he names names and places.

In my estimation he falls short in two respects, both dealing with the leadership. Beginning with Gompers and Powderly and on through to Sweeney, we are left to assume that their villainy is the is the result of a genetic flaw of some kind that made them greedy and treacherous. It follows then that Buhle's solution is for workers to find new and better labor leaders. In fact, he suggests that we already have made progress in that direction with the election of Sweeney and the creation of union reform movements like New Directions in the UAW and Teamsters for a Democratic Union. Missing, though, is a consideration of the position of even the most well meaning labor leader. His job is negotiate for better wages and conditions with managers who hold all the cards under capitalism.

By the time I finished the book, I concluded that Buhle missed at least one session of the study class during his brief stint in the SLP, the one on De Leon's 1904 speech "The Burning Question of Trades Unionism." Consider this from the speech (pages 159/60 Socialist Landmarks):

There is no difference between what is called the corruption in the unions and what is noticed in shipwrecks when men become cannibals. I cannot now think of any of the numerous corrupt labor leaders, whom we all know of, who did not start honest enough. But coupled to his honesty was ignorance. He knew not the kind of a weapon that labor instinctively raises its arm to ward off when it shapes itself into unions. He failed, of course. He then imputed the failure to inevitability. The capitalist helped him along. He lost all hope in the working class. He then decided to feather his own nest. Friendly relations between him and capitalist thought followed inevitably, and he became what Mark Hanna so well called him the labor lieutenant of the capitalist class. In that capacity we have seen him engineer strikes in favor of one competing capitalist against another. In that capacity we have seen him act as an agent of the stock exchange, starting strikes to lower stock or keeping up strikes to favor competing concerns. Of course, he could not do this if the rank and file of the union were enlightened. For this reason it was in his interest and in the interest of the class whose lieutenant he is, to keep enlightenment from the masses. Frequently, also, his position enables him to compel the workingmen of his trade to accept his yoke before they can get work. He who says remedy this evil by any one means holds silly language. The evil must be attacked by as many means as seem available. Shall we then "join
unions? The Socialist Labor Party has answered the question by endorsing the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, and by waging unflagging war against the Gompers pack; and the answer that the party gave is justified by the light of the analysis that I have submitted to you. That analysis shows you that trades organizations are essential; they are essential to break the force of the onslaught of the capitalist, but this advantage is fruitful of good only in the measure that the organization prepares itself for the day of final victory. Accordingly, it must be every Socialist's endeavor to organize his trade.

The problem then is ignorance. Union leaders who have no confidence in the working class's ability to emancipate itself adopt the morality of capitalism: enrich thyself. Our class, with no hope of emancipation accept whatever pay raises the leaders negotiate as the best they can hope for and allow themselves to be "led." Paul Buhle has done a great job of presenting the evidence for an indictment of capitalist unions and capitalism itself. The next step is to convince the jury--the U.S. working class. I hope we can look forward to a book on the subject.  

--Frank Girard

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(from p. 20)

**Finances**

At the moment it looks as though we must live largely on our fat for this issue. Fortunately the DB has accumulated quite a bit of it thanks to generous readers.

**Contributions:** Glenn Morrison $4; Louis Prisco $6; C. Dahlgreen $11; Joe Tupper $40; Frank Irwin $25. Total $86. Thank you, comrades.

**BALANCE**  
April 26, 2000  
$431.21

**RECEIPTS**  
Contributions $86.00  
Subs and Sales 43.00  
Total $129.00

**DISBURSEMENTS**  
Postage $127.50  
Bank Charges 14.00  
Printing 36.29  
Postage Due 5.00  
Total $182.79

**BALANCE**  
June 22, 2000  
$377.42

Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

"incite WORLD insight" (iWi) is a publishing cooperative designed to set humanity in motion toward a new, kinder, gentler, more environmentally friendly, more peaceful and in every way more humane society. The backbone of this project consists of a vast assortment of leaflets, letters, poems, stickers, quotations, essays, designed for the purpose of convincing readers that they can help reshape the world closer to the iWi ideal and will be better off for having done so. The literature is printed on unbleached, recycled paper, the sentiments are presented in an earnest manner that reminds me of the Quakerish goodness of the people in the Grand Rapids, Michigan peace and justice group. For samples of their literature write to iWi Cooperative, Trottier Mills, Quebec, Canada, North America, Planet Earth G0P 1H0

Kick It Over: a social anarchist/anti-authoritarian quarterly has resumed publication after a long slumber. Number 92, Spring 2000, 48 pages contains a notable “open letter,” one of the few serious attempts to show the tactical error inherent in the decision of some demonstrators to trash some downtown Seattle businesses. The article, which might be said to constitute the first shot in the second generation of responses to events last November, considers the practical consequences of the trashing. Did this activity harm the free traders, did it advance the revolutionary cause, did it raise consciousness, did it create publicity, did the trashers demonstrate bravery? The authors of the open letter see very little in the way of positive results. They conclude that in the case of Seattle, trashing was wrong because the tactic led nowhere. Other interesting articles in this issue include an interview with Noam Chomsky on student activism, one that suggests some lacunae in Chomsky’s understanding of recent history: 1. The money managers haven’t yet taken over social security and 2. The 1950s were not bereft of social programs. In fact ever since the 1930s capital has been willing to spend some money in the interest of promoting social peace. Also in this issue is a concise and clear presentation on council communism by Neil Fettes, one that clarifies and emphasizes its major principle: that the revolution will not be a response to the agitation and urgings of today’s revolutionaries but the natural response of our class to events as they develop. $3.75 (single copy) four-issue subs $14.50 Canada, US, and overseas (US funds)

Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed, “Towards a Society based on Mutual Aid, Voluntary Cooperation & the Liberation of Desire,” #49/Spring-Summer 2000 Volume 18, No. 1. This issue like— I would guess– every magazine in the world claiming the label “anarchist” is celebrating what they see as the Seattle victory over the WTO, IMF, and the other institutional villains of turn-of-the-millennium capitalism. One of Anarchy’s contributions to the topic is a critique of two major fighters in the pro- and anti-trashing dispute: the Acme Collective and Michael Albert of Z Magazine. In “Dueling Dictators—Acme and Albert” Lawrence Jarach, defends Black Bloc against its anti-trashing critics, among whom are Michael Albert whose article lists. The drawbacks to the trashing strategy.

Also in this issue, “The Age of Nihilism” in which John Zerzan takes the pulse of the generation and, after witnessing two decades of numbing post modernism, discovers that “an era of unchecked cynicism, engendered by this rampant advance of techno capital, is finally being challenged. The challengers, moreover, are quickly deepening their understanding of how fundamental the challenge must be if it is to succeed.” Zerzan may have seen signs that escaped
me. True, they named the enemy—capital, but beyond that they just threw rocks at it. This issue also contains a selection of short articles from the Indian publication, the *Faridabad Samachar Majdoor*. The publisher, Collectivities, also sent the DB a copy, which will appear in an upcoming issue, and in keeping with our policy of highjacking other journals' work, we'll probably use *Anarchy*’s more condensed typeface for our printing.

*Advocates of Industrial Democracy*, (Volume 1, Issue 2, June 2000,) is the second issue of a new publication designed as a rank-and-file discussion journal for socialists. It differs from the DB in that it proposes to point out to readers and other writers the advantages of a non-market social system. Part one of "Looking Forward to Industrial Democracy" considers, among other advantages of an industrial democracy, the abolition of money and how a moneyless society will operate—an explanation about which I have some reservations—as well as many other problems that society is unable to solve under the profit system. Writers in this issue emphasized especially education and the changes that a rational society would make in the schools. *Advocates of Industrial Democracy* welcomes letters for publication. No price given. Eight pages from P.O. Box 737, Duluth, MN 55807.

*OVERTIME* Volume 1, number 1 describes itself as “Dedicated to reflecting the collective wisdom of enlightened workers.” It is a non-sectarian journal in which socialists can express their ideas on various aspects of socialism. Writers are presented with a list of topics on which they can present their thinking. Among the topics in this issue are Elian Gonzalez, sports, the IMF and World Bank and “consumerist socialism”. Suggested for the next issue are the WTO, U.S. domination of the world the ecology and others. 12 pages, no price given, from Linda Featheringill, 2208 Denison Ave. #6, Cleveland OH 44108.

*Alternative Press Review, Your Guide Beyond the Mainstream*. Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2000. Besides the 16 pages of reviews, typical of APR, a major attraction of this 84-page issue is an interview with John Zerzan, the prophet of primitivism and the Pied Piper of the black-clad trasher contingent at Seattle. I’ve always had some trouble believing that Zerzan seriously advocates a return to hunting and food gathering as a universal economic system. While it may very well be true that our primitive ancestors lived off the animal and vegetable bounty of Mother Earth with a minimum of sweat, does he really believe that our species could, even if Zerzan convinced us that we should, return to a pre-agricultural, pre-technological level of civilization? One trouble is what I consider a sort of disconnect between Zerzan’s declared objective of the destruction of civilization and the rather matter of fact social revolution he seems to see as the spark that will ignite it. Remember, this isn’t a revolutionary change that just abolishes capitalism and the state; this is more nearly a planetary social earthquake that will tear five billion people loose from whatever economic moorings they have and turn them lose to dig dandelion greens for supper.

Other articles in this issue discuss “India, the WTO and Capitalist Globalization,” “Reagan & Guatemalan’s Death Files,” “Black Block Interview,” “Chapters of Eleven” and many others. $16 per year, $22 Canada, A.A.L. Press, POB 4710, Arlington, VA 22204

Formation of De Leonist Ideology" begins, "There is no way to understand the history of the revolutionary working class movement in the U.S. without coming to grips with Daniel De Leon and De Leonism, the political tendency that continues to adhere to his programmatic outlook." Most of this first installment consists of an overview of the history of De Leon's party, the Socialist Labor Party and a sketch of De Leon's personal history. Internationalism has published other critiques of De Leonism through the years and these have usually been answered in the pages of the DB. We expect to read these four issues carefully and look forward to setting the authors straight on De Leon and De Leonism, a subject that never fails to mystify and confuse them. This issue also contains articles on unionism, the U.S. presidential elections, Chechnya, and a particular vile example of oil pollution in East Africa involving Total Oil Corporation and a French tanker. Also in this issue is Internationalism's take on New Democracy, whose rejection of Marxism is viewed with a level of suspicion that approaches paranoia.

Subscriptions six issues $18.50 from PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018.

Stop the Clock! Critiques of the New Social Workhouse is a collection of articles opposing economic reform movements in western Europe. Published by Aufheben, the seven articles come from ultra-left journals in England, Italy, France, and Germany—countries where working class resistance is at its lowest. In part the central idea of the articles is the old SLP maxim, "Reforms are concealed measures of reaction," although they don't seem to oppose reform in principle. [More in DB103] 73 pages, L2 ($3?) From Aufheben, Brighton and Hove Unemployed Centre, 4 Creasway Parade, Hollingdean Brighton BN1 7BL UK.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain: Politics, Economics, and Britain's Oldest Political Party, by David A. Perrin. This is the first history of the SPGB I've seen since The Monument, which was published twenty-five years ago and was stronger on amusing anecdotes than serious history. More in DB103. 215 pages. L13.95 postpaid from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN UK. In the U.S. $20.00 postpaid from the World Socialist Party, PO Box 440247, Boston MA 02147.

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