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Notes, Announcements, and Short Reviews

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE). It serves as the financially and politically independent forum of a relatively unknown sector of political thought that places the great divide in the “left,” not between anarchists and Marxists but between capitalism’s statist leftwing of vanguardists and social democrats and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. They are organized in small groups of syndicalists, anarcho-communists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists. The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism’s wage, market, and money system as well as capitalist politics and capitalist unionism constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases.

In the DB the often antagonistic groups that make up this sector can debate and discuss the issues that divide them and gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities. Among the latter might be movement toward at least limited co-operation.

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

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Critique of De Leon's First Stage Socialism and Labour Time Vouchers

The Critique of the Gotha Programme remained an unfinished sketch which Karl Marx had not intended for publication. As a result this text remains fragmentary and inconsistent. What Marx was dealing with in the Gotha Programme was communist society not as it has developed on its own foundations but, on the contrary, just as it was emerging from capitalist society.

Karl Marx's discussion of the future socialist society remained fragmentary and experimental. He never attempted to offer a blueprint for a future socialist society. He remained convinced that the success of Socialism depended in the last analysis on the historical circumstances that by nature vary from one country to another. Karl Marx was at most times uncertain concerning the course which Socialism was to pass through. However, he remained convinced that the workers had no ideals to realise apart from setting free the elements of the new society with which the old collapsing bourgeois society is pregnant.

Trotskyism, Anarchism and Bolshevikism are heavy-handed definitions with 19th century traditions. They remain what they are: violent versions of socialism and everyone using them stands to be ridiculed. The International Union of Socialists, the Industrial Workers of the World and the Independent Socialist Party are all leftist petty-bourgeois anarchical movements embroiled in the post-WWI socialist movements. They follow the traditions of Leninism and vanguard political socialism interested by usurping political power from the state through Trade Union labour militancy.

Thus De Leon's interest in Market Socialism under labour-time vouchers. After the workers have usurped political power from the state, the bourgeois class would automatically abolish itself and become a part of the classless socialist society; the bourgeoisie cannot be conceived to remain as a distinct sect within socialist society.

To believe in first stage Socialism is to discredit the vision of Socialism as a universal realisation of a classless, moneyless and stateless society. Socialism can only be propagated through a socialist party organically composed of working class members. Socialism must not be spear-headed by a vanguard of think-tank intellectuals. After Socialism has been universally realised the need for a specialised leadership would abolish itself—the Socialist parties would be disbanded. The eradication of capitalism would denote the end of the market system and commodity exchange.

The whole edifice of De Leon's infatuation with Socialism hinges upon belief in first-stage Socialism under a market system in which the allocation of individual needs would be evaluated upon an exchange mechanism. Labour time vouchers do not differ from money; they are all units of labour exchange. The critics of Karl Marx fail to appreciate the differences between the two stages of Socialism and thus confuse the first stage of Socialism with the second stage. They fail to appreciate the fact that during the first stage the production relations still remain dependent upon the exchange values between different individuals unpacified from the class divisions inherent under the division of labour.

It is only during the second phase of Socialism that the market system finally abolishes itself, when human labour is freed from money and taxes and that we can inscribe on the banners of working class the slogan: To each according to his needs, and from each according to his capabilities. Needs and talents are freed from money and price restrictions and become mere activities taking place in a classless and non-market society. Needs are not reckoned under demand prices in a scarcity society, but as an individual claim. Thus Socialism will achieve a universal high standard of living and would solve the riddle of poverty.

Trade unions are representatives of working class organised industrial militancy against
private capital. They fight for wage increments, not for the eradication of private capital. Trade unions cannot be turned into jumping boards to Socialism unless when these unions are under the influence of socialist agitators. Yet trade unions even under the influence of socialist agitators remain what they are: labour arbitration movements.

Trade unions cannot exist under socialist society because there won't be a distinct class to defend.

Trade unions are a phenomenon of antagonistic class interests and work to organise working class industrial resistance against private capitalism. Thus a vote for a trade union is a vote for a wage increment while a vote for a socialist party is a vote for unrestrained consumption.

Under capitalism marriage, love and happiness become inhibited by income conventions. Free socialisation becomes restricted. Class barriers check and put limits upon labour mobility. The working class sanctify themselves under the protection of trade unions, the first expression of working class organised resistance against private capital.

Thus trade union movements and labour associations cannot by themselves succeed in usurping political power from the state.

K. Mulenga, Box 280 168, Chimwemwe. Kitwe, ZAMBIA

About This Issue

DB109 begins with K. Mulenga's take on what has become our longest-running debate. He makes some statements I question: Was the Critique of the Gotha Program an "unfinished text," and secondly the IWW is definitely not Leninist. His statement about De Leon's advocacy of "market socialism" demonstrates the unfortunate consequences of the De Leonist Society of Canada's introduction of this term--used to describe the Cuban and Chinese economies--into the debate. Also, unless I am misreading the article, Mulenga has adopted the basic idea of the DLSC's market socialism as necessary for the "first stage" of socialism.

Publication of Kevin Glover's letter was delayed. Joshua Freeze's letter, to which Kevin refers, was published in DB106. I agree with Glover about the IWW's Marxism and anarchism. Working class Marxists--as opposed to professional and academic Marxists--are people who agree with Marxism's two basic points: that our class are robbed at the point of production and that history tells us that this system too will come to an end, something I believe most Wobblies would agree with. The only thing that is anarchist about the IWW is that for most of the past 90 years it has been run largely by people who choose to regard themselves as anarchists and occasionally use terms like sabotage and direct action.

As usual Robert Zani adds interest to the mix, this time in respect to the Hutterites, the death penalty (including his own part in a recent book), and Chiapas. Laurens Otter's version of the history of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in DB108 raised some hackles among readers eager to protect the reputation of the SPGB from the reproach of a DeLeonist taint. Actually the plan agreed on in 1901 or 02 by the Scottish and London dissidents for leaving the reformist Social Democratic Federation suggests a more than casual connection between the SPGB and what became the British SLP. In the first of these letters Robin Cox writes to set readers straight on his contact with Otter, referred to in Otter's letter. Adam Buick attributes Otter's version of history to hallucinogenic mushrooms, and Richard Lloyd disproves Otter with detailed quotations from SPGB sources. (He also notes what may be a questionable quotation De Leon attributes to Marx. Anyone with info on this, please let me know.) The DLSC then
Dear Fellow Workers and 'rades

Howdy! Just wanted to make a couple of comments regarding F.W. Joshua Freeze's letter last D.B. issue, in part addressing his comments on Derek Devine and my exchange, and then other aspects of his letter pertaining to anarchist and Marxist ideologies and labels.

Joshua rightly points out that Derek and my conversation went beyond discussing whether or not the I.W.W. is anarchist or Marxist. My point was not to label the I.W.W., either one. My point was simply that the I.W.W. at its inception was heavily influenced by members who were adherents of both of these schools of thought, and that these influences are an integral part of our union's history. I view these influences as positive and instrumental in making the I.W.W. the interesting union it became in its heyday, before state repression took it's toll. I don't believe one can honestly divest, or get around, these influences, no matter how hard they try, but to whatever extent the ideologies of Marx and anarchism have been rendered archaic, or still remain valid in the present context, they still remain palpable in I.W.W. literature. For instance, in the June issue of the Industrial Worker, one of my favorite writers C.C. Redcloud, in his column left Side mentions the Haymarket Martyrs, who of course are anarchist, and a person may still purchase from our literary dept. not the Little Green Songbook, but the Little Red Songbook in which a person can read Joe Hill's words speaking of the Red Flag Flying over the Industrial Commonwealth. Now, with a view in mind of the "common image" of "socialism or Marxism" being "of a bureaucratic totalitarian state", I think we all know what regimes people often associate with the symbology of the color Red as well as Red flags. Kinda like one time when I handed someone an S.L.P. paper and they saw that Armand Hammer symbol and they said "That's a dang commie symbol! Them commies had a hammer, and, uh, vuts that there other dang commie too?" Be that as it may though, it would not in any way be desireable to me to try to excuse these attributes from our pages or to try and deny our history which are all too often obscured and distorted by the upper eschelon powers that be,

I agree with F.W. Freeze on his ideas about organizing by focusing on content rather than ideological labels as he speaks of in his organizing experiences with his Fellow Workers in the A.T.U. I also think that the best way to impart the ideas and objectives of the I.W.W. is to relate their content to fellow workers in immediate concrete circumstances where they make the most sense, instead of simply relying on abstract labels or ideologies to relate them. After all, its the content of the ideas and their practical application that will get us where we collectively want to go. So, in that line of thinking I totally agree that we should not refer to ourselves as anarchist or Marxist, but that doesn't imply that I think it is of much use to cover up those influences either. Often times people make the connection anyway when I'm trying to explain the concepts of a production for use society, or industrial democracy, even when I'm very careful to avoid any buzzwords and pipe up with" well that's some a that dang commie stuff!" So, inevitably, I end up having to explain the difference in Commieism and Wobblyism and other kindred schools of thought.

To say that anarchist thought or Marx's ideas "ideology of 100 years ago", have no relevance for workers today would be like saying the I.W.W. has no meaning for workers today, as the union's formation and structure is, in part, derived from those bodies of thought. While certainly, many of the ideas are dated, many are still as valid today as then, and even with the change in global capitalism that has transpired over the last 100 years, the I.W.W. and it's historic mission remains just as important, if not even more so today.

The One Big Union aside though, for a moment, I wonder if surrendering aspects of our working class heritage, such as allowing the name anarchist or it's pejorative definition to go unchallenged, or the word socialism or Marx and Engle's ideas to remain associated with Lenin's totalitarian regimes, and reform capitalist governments is really a good idea. I can't help thinking that we do a disservice to our class' history by
allowing these symbols and bodies of thought to be coopted, and misrepresented, and that we would be better off retrieving them from the mischief done to them and stand proudly by their real meaning.

It seems just as likely that any future body of ideas or descriptive identities that become associated with a threat to the status quo will end up meeting a similar fate. It’s bad enough reading of episodes of Stalinists, or pie card unionists speaking at the tomb of the Haymarket Martyrs and merely referring to them as “labor leaders” totally obscuring the fact that these men were unabashed anarchists, and that May Day, a day which both the I.W.W. and the U.S.S.R. have celebrated (another instance of retrieval of heritage) is in a large part attributable to their efforts. Do we really want to do this type of thing to ourselves, or take the extra effort to explain what we are really about. I think that the more we work to counter the negative images, that, over time the truth will get through.

To sum up though, I agree that we should not refer to the I.W.W. as Marxist or anarchist but do not think it is necessary or even possible to obscure it’s historical roots which in a large measure derive from those schools of thought.

Josh mentions that the I.W.W. is compatible with certain anarchist and socialist thought. Much of that thought can be found in the pages of the D.B.. As the I.W.W. stands in relation to these other groups (may I use the term Libertarian Socialist) I hope we can all find a highly ecumenical spirit of intense solidarity towards building an industrial democracy. And remember

“You aint done nothin’ if you aint been called a Red!”

SOLIDARITY
FROM THE GULF COAST
Kevin Glover

(from p. 4)

returns to the defense of labor time vouchers and what I consider a most unfortunate name for an economy using the I.T.V. system: “market socialism.” And I comment.

Henri Simon, editor of the French councilist journal Echanges, confirms the information about German working class resistance to Hitler in John Spritzler’s DB 106/107 article. He also adds information about Tim Mason’s investigations and writings on the subject as well as facts based on his own contacts with French veterans of the Nazi slave labor camps.

Next comes three short letters. Neil Fettes critiques my review of Red & Black and the Glaberman interview. And I reply, defending myself as best I can. Speaking mainly from personal experience, Michael Stec discusses the problem of raising class consciousness – and I reply. SRP’s letter in support of the proposed Manifesto for an Imagine International sees it as a less ecumenical organization than some of us might hope for. I comment on his letter and take this opportunity to wish him and the SPGB well for their 100th birthday celebration in 2004.

Next I attempt to deal with Internationalism’s further confusions about De Leonism and the Socialist Labor Party. This renewed effort was made necessary by Internationalism’s publication of another installment in which they again “come to grips” with De Leonism with all that implies in terms of confusion.

The title of Wildcat’s leaflet on “leftism” illustrates the difficulties inherent in trying to find language that will differentiate “our political sector” from the reformist territory held by social democrats and most of Lenin’s vanguardist descendants. Published in the early eighties, it does an excellent job of describing the mischief done by capitalism’s left wing.

Written last year after the “Battle of Seattle,” the Bad Press’s critique of anarchist participation is less concerned about the Black Bloc’s violence than about the implicit message being sent by anarchist
Frank:

I received DB 107 and it was excellent as usual. Lynn Olson was right on the money. I could not have said it better myself even though I am very familiar with the Hutterites, sort of home territory for me, in a way. The only flaw to/ on Olson’s point/part, and it is minor but significant, is that Olson is not up to snuff on Hutterites 2001. Each colony is its own entity, there is a vast difference between Old Order Hutterites and modern Hutterites, and a few do work outside the colony for wages, maintain their own funds, etc. However, Olson does accurately describe the norm. Additionally, there are several Hutterite colonies around the country that do not identify themselves but are Hutterite. Various variations of anabaptism. A substantial portion of Montana’s agricultural production is Hutterite. Overall Olson’s points accurate and well taken, as a matter of practical fact, not theory. And that should settle the issue— but I doubt that it will! As stalwart Anabaptists Hutterites have close to 500 years of existence; and as I wrote to you previously I do believe that Marx borrowed from Jakob Hutter who in one form or another did not believe in wages, the state, or class. And their common language was German, like Marx’s. Nowadays a modern Hutterite may or may not vote, as his conscience dictates, but I understand that most shun politics. I do know for a fact that some did vote for Nader/La Duke in 2000.

Enclosed is a flyer about a new and thoroughly provocative anti-death penalty book, Choosing Mercy. It is published by Orbis, which has long been involved in publishing liberation theology works. It is the only anti-death penalty book I know of that carries—on the back cover—the glowing endorsement/recommendation of an American Cardinal: Francis Cardinal George in Chicago. However the book is dedicated to to an innocent Texas prisoner, who is also a DB subscriber! Indeed. And here it comes—on page 88 in stark and unvarnished terms, the enemy is named in a word; “Capitalism.” I was quite surprised. I was quite surprised by the Cardinal’s enthusiastic endorsement and recommendation. And by the excellent Washington Post book review by Coleman McCarthy. Very interesting. The book has some searing parts. Also, I was glad to have a bit part in the book, de fi to describing the Catholic Worker position vis-a-vis the death penalty and the horrendous criminal “justice” system, drawing on my extensive experience and court testimony. I was sure thinking of you and the DB when I was unloading on page 88! A great book.

Superficially I agree with your incomprehension of the “anarchist fascination with the Zapatistas.” But it is a classic case of what Luard Churchill has described repeatedly. During the first 20 years of the last century the Mexican government practiced a determined genocide on Indians in Southern Mexico, particularly in Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and Chiapas. Very brutal. Thousands who could fled to British Honduras, now Belize. I spoke with the descendents of these families in 1979, in Belize. The hatred of these Indians was unbounded. And those in Mexico wanted nothing whatsoever to do with the Mexican government or Mexican people.

And much the same was true in Guatemala. It is not about a lot of theory and practice; it is about keeping the Mexican government and Mexican people OUT — or at least at long arm’s length. Put simply they just want to be left alone. (Anarchism?) Mexican people who come to the U.S. and cry about racism — which exists to be sure — need to go to such areas in Mexico and listen to how they themselves are described: “Ladrones” - thieves - is the most polite word I heard. I call it constructive anarchism. Really they want a strong democratic reservation system which they somewhat had with the Ejido system, but which that SOB President Salinas abolished. The Mexican government is unwilling to give them a protected, separate reservation system because there are so many Indians and so much has been stolen from them. Marcos, who has switched ideologies is a media hog; BUT he has brought worldwide attention to a 500 year festering sore, which no one else has been able to help them do. If I had not had an in-law in the areas I visited, I would not have stayed the night. There were parts of Quintana Roo where no Mexican would dare go — and if they did and tried to stay the night, they would
not wake up. Mexican police would not enter, and Federal troops—ejercito Federal—only went in during daylight and
an emergency. Anarchism? If you defined raw hatred of the government from your life in a gaol, then yes. And Marcos is astute. He understands most Mexicans know their government has been hopelessly
corrupt and run by thieves (like America) and that most Mexicans are mestizos. So for a Mexican to
deny Indians is to deny their own blood. Personally I would call it a Marxist influenced anarchist revolt,
led by people who will say and do whatever it takes to maintain publicity and keep the heat on. If Marcos
is a Maoist, you’re Jeb Bush, I’m Neil Bush, and our brother is President.

In January 2001 The People put out their best edition ever. Bar none. For anyone who wants to
share/proselytize, the January 2001 issue is the one. Not a weak spot. Present. On page 1 is the big
article about Chernobyl. And? Five month’s later Beelzebub Bush is desperately trying to revive nuclear
power in America! The whole issue is like that, one way or another. The Catholic Church in Rome has
been swamped over the issue of Pope Pius XII, etc. A one of a kind proselytizing tool.

Excellent Dr. Who unity article in DB.
Do the write thing. Write on.

Robert J. Zani, No 328938, Michael Unit, P.O. Box 4500, Tennessee Colony, TX 75886
(from p. 6)

Demonstrators: that along with the other marchers they are calling on government to take measures to rein
in the corporations, hardly an anarchist demand. As usual we end with some notes, announcements, and
short reviews.

Finances

The past two months have seen a significant improvement in the DB’s financial health. There may be
something to the idea that the DB’s income moves counter to the economy. The DB’s nearly five-fold
increase has come while the stock market has fallen from 11,000 last June and unemployment—here in
West Michigan at least—has risen two percent.

Contributions: Anne Boone $14; Ken Smith $5; Frank Girard $22; Joe Tupper $20 for the abolition of
capitalism; Jim Davis $2; De Leonist Society of Canada $20; Charles Batemen $5; Harriet Machado $7;

BALANCE June 21, 2001 $155.14

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(to p. 10)
Hi Frank and all

There was a section in Lauren's Otter's longish letter in DB 108 which sounded to me, at least, a little odd. I quote:

"When I quoted Eddie's gloss on the Clause, one SPGB member, professedly on the extreme libertarian wing, so much so that he claims the term anarcho-socialist for the party, with whom I mistakenly thought I could work a few years back, said "well yes, the state would be overthrown that way, but then we'd have to restore it & have elections, so as to elect a socialist government. So presuming this was all done to conform to Clause Six, he envisaged that the workers would overthrow capitalism by direct action, so that there would then be no government, but then the SPGB would restore capitalism so as to be able to have a government ("...government ...exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class") & would then have elections to produce a government which would supposedly then abolish capitalism!"

Unless I am seriously mistaken, Laurens Otter is referring to me. I was certainly in correspondence with Laurens in the early 90s when I was going through a period of disenchantment with the Party. I have also sought to promote use of the term "anarcho-socialism" because I believe it more accurately describes the nature of our objective.

Assuming it is me who Laurens Otter is referring to, I feel I ought at once to totally repudiate his version of the events; it bears no semblance whatsoever to the reality of what took place. I would never call for the restoration of a capitalist state that had been overthrown by direct action and I would never use such an expression as a "socialist government" (which to me is an oxymoron). Indeed, why would anyone who considers himself an anarcho-socialist want to use such an expression anyway?

Contrary to Otter's make-believe fantasy, the truth of the matter is that he was rather miffed when he discovered that I had not altogether rejected the parliamentary road to socialism as he had hoped. My view was made clear in the document, "The Road to Socialism", which I had co-authored with other members of Guildford Branch of the Socialist Party in the late 1980s. We envisaged that the growth of the socialist movement would have certain repercussions not only in realm of culture and politics but also - and most significantly - in the economic domain. Thus, we argued, would be represented by the invasion of "socialistic" (but not yet, properly speaking, socialist) relationships within the interstices of capitalism - much as capitalist relationships had developed within the interstices of feudalism. This scenario was not so much at odds with the traditional revolutionary scenario within the Party as complemented the latter.

When I corresponded with Laurens Otter, I was hoping that we could work out some more inclusive approach that would permit socialists and anarchists to cooperate or federate together informally for certain purposes. To me, the primary unifying factor was, and remains, our common objective; how we achieve that objective is a secondary issue although I would say it must involve mass anarcho-socialist consciousness rather than vanguardism. I was, and am, still fairly relaxed about direct actionism (there are quite a few in the SPGB who support direct action judging by the recent conference debate). However, I would hope that anarchists might reciprocally come to feel more relaxed about revolutionary political action. This sterile either-or debate has gone on for far too long. Unfortunately, Laurens Otter took umbrage when I pointed out that I still subscribed to the political approach. Which is presumably why he now feels fit to invent a ludicrous line of argument to stick onto me to lend his sectarianism an air of respectability. But it won't wash, Laurens - if you attempt to put words into other people's mouths
don’t be surprised if they spit them out!

Fraternally

Robin Cox

Dear DB

I see Laurens Otter must have been at the magic mushrooms again. Something, anyway, has caused him to hallucinate. There is no other explanation for his vision of an SPGB meeting at which one member is imagined to have spoken of a transitional "socialist government" lasting for "millenia" to the general agreement of the other members present. It’s just too unbelievable to be true. In SPGB circles to talk of a "socialist government" is just as taboo as talking of a "socialist market" or "socialist wages."

He also imagines that he was once a "candidate member" of the SPGB but this can’t be as there is no such thing. He may well have applied to join at some point (though you can’t be sure of anything he claims). In fact, he did once tell me that he did apply but was turned down because he was religious (like Tony Blair, he’s an Anglo Catholic, i.e. on the "high church" wing of the Anglican church believing in hierarchy, Latin, incense and all that). He then added that the next Sunday he met three SPGB members at mass who told him he’d been a fool to say he was religious. Why didn’t he just do what they’d done: pretend not to be? If you believe that one you’ll believe anything.

If you’re going to publish stuff from him, can’t you put it in a fiction section since some of his tall stories are faintly amusing.

Adam Buick

(from p. 8)

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**BALANCE**

August 25, 2001

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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
Morris, De Leon and the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

We have read in your magazine a letter by Laurens Otter that contains an assertion that Daniel De Leon influenced the founders of the Socialist party of Great Britain. He writes: "...the SPGB was a dissident faction within the De Leonist tradition..." (Discussion Bulletin Number 108 July-August 2001 p. 8). A similar claim appears in D. Perrin's book, "The Socialist Party of Great Britain: Politics, Economics and Britain's Oldest Political Party," in which the author writes, "The views of the impossibilist American SLP undoubtedly had an influence on both the SPGB and the British SLP" (p. 31).

Perrin rests his assertion on Stephen Coleman's book; Daniel De Leon (1990) reviewed in the Socialist Standard of May 1990. No supporting primary source or textural evidence is given. With regards the SPGB the assertion that De Leon "influenced" the SPGB in the formation of the Party is factually and historically incorrect.

The Socialist Standard article in 1990, for example, referred to De Leon as "an American Marxist". It was not made clear which "Marxism" De Leon was supposed to have stood for. "The "Marxism" of the Communist Manifesto with its demand that "The first step in the evolution by the working-class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class to win the battle for democracy". Or the anti-political De Leon policy of the IWW?

Attempts have been made from time to time to get the Socialist Party of Great Britain to support industrial action as against parliamentary action, not by directly seeking to alter the Party's Declaration of Principles, but by giving it slanted interpretations, or by ignoring it.

One such attempt suggested that as the Declaration of Principles does not specifically mention Parliament and local councils it was not the intention of the founder members who drafted the D. of P. that the SPGB should aim at controlling Parliament and the local councils.

Another attempt argued that the SPGB's Declaration of Principles does not preclude "extra-parliamentary" actions for political aims, carried out by trade unions. Lately advocates of industrial action have been held up as models for Socialists, especially Daniel de Leon.

The aim and intentions of the founder members embodied in the Object and the Declaration of Principles were presented to non-members in the first issue of the Socialist Standard, September 1904, in the article "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" (approved by the Executive Committee before publication), and in the SPGB Manifesto (June 1905). Proposals arising from a series of meetings on trade unions to amend the statements on trade unions made in the Manifesto were defeated by Party Poll (see Socialist Standard, April 1907).

The statement in the Socialist Standard, September 1904, made several references to the need to gain control of Parliament and local councils.

One of these statements wrote of "the members of the working class using their political power to return to Parliament and other public bodies only those who are members of the Socialist Party".

There was no support for the strike as a means to political power or of those who advocated it, such as William Morris.

The statement emphasized the limited amount the trade unions could do in respect of raising wages. It argued therefore the necessity of political action, but the kind of political action needed by the workers was precisely defined:

"Such political action, will, however, be quite futile unless carried on by a class-conscious party with definite aims... They must adopt as their basis of action the Socialist position, for in no other way can their ills be redressed".
In 1907 the SPGB’s Executive Committee published as a pamphlet, “Art, Labour and Socialism”, an article by William Morris that had appeared in the journal To-day.

The Executive Committee’s Forward to the pamphlet explained that they were not among those “to whom William Morris stands in the relation of Moses to the Israelites”. They recognised that Morris was not always a “convincing and consistent instructor of economics” and considered that he was entitled only to “a place in the category of the Utopians”. But this article deserved to be rescued from undeserved obscurity because in it Morris had “placed Art in proper perspective” and did effective service by insisting on an active working class revolt against capitalism.

The members of the Executive Committee would have been familiar with Morris’s opposition to parliamentary action and his belief in the general strike as a means to establish Socialism, which alone would have prevented their giving Morris support for his views on socialist policies.

We now come to De Leon and the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Founder members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain were familiar with De Leon’s theories because, a year before the SPGB was formed, other ex-members of the Social Democratic Federation, mainly in Scotland, founded the SLP in this country, based on the American party of the same name, and used pamphlets and other works by De Leon in their propaganda.

Right from the start the SPGB opposed De Leon and the SLP. Our Object and Declaration of Principles owed nothing to De Leon and the SLP.

What the SPGB owed to Marx; his materialist conception of history, his Labour Theory of Value and his political concept of the class struggle, the members obtained direct. Works about Marxism (The Student’s Marx by Edward Aveling 1891) and some of Marx’s pamphlets notably, “ Wage Labour and Capital” had long been available and the first English edition of Capital, the Glaister edition, had been published in 1886. Some members had attended the economic classes run by Dr. Aveling, Marx’s son-in-law.

Among the early issues of the Socialist Standard containing criticisms of De Leon, his theories, and the SLP are the editions of August 1906, October and November 1906, and April 1907. A lengthy criticism was published in the 1911 Preface to the 5th edition of the SPGB Manifesto.

So what did De Leon stand for? It should present no problem because De Leon often told his devotees what his thoughts were. The trouble was that he contradicted himself. Here is a selection published in a critical review of his works in the Socialist Standard of November 1930.

In 1895 De Leon helped to form the Socialist Trade and Labour Alliance. The Declaration of Principles of this Alliance said:

“The economic power of the capitalist class, used by that class for the oppression of labour, rests upon institutions essentially political”.

In his pamphlet “What Means This Strike?” De Leon wrote:

“Shop organisation alone, unbacked by that political force that threatens the capitalist class with extinction, the working class being the immense majority, leaves the workers wholly unprotected”.

In “Two pages From Roman History” (1903) De Leon was still standing by political organisation. He wrote:

“Entrenched in the public powers, the capitalist class command the field. None but the political weapon can dislodge the usurpers and enshrine the working-class; that is to say, emancipate the workers and rear the Socialist Republic”.

But when De Leon backed the International Workers of the World, he reversed his position. In his address “The Preambles of the IWW”, he said:

“It does not lie in a political organisation, that is, a party, “to take hold” of the machinery of production”.

In 1907 the SPGB’s Executive Committee published as a pamphlet, “Art, Labour and Socialism”, an article by William Morris that had appeared in the journal To-day.
And:

"In the act, however, of taking and holding the Nation's plants of production the political organisation of the working-class can give no help".

In his speech at the first convention of the IWW, De Leon said:

"The situation in America... established the fact that "taking and holding" of the things that labour needs to be free can never depend upon a political party".

One of the arguments used by De Leon in support of his anti-political policy was the allegation that Karl Marx had said, "Only the Trade Union is capable of setting on foot a true political party of labour and this raises a bulwark against the power of capital".

Repeatedly challenged to say where and when Marx made this statement neither De Leon nor the SLP could give an answer (See Socialist Standard, January 1930).

That Marx ever said something so out of keeping with his insistence on the need for the working class to take political action is highly improbable. If he did say it he was plainly wrong, for the SPGB was not formed by trade unions.

In the past we have asked Mr Otter to show us the evidence he has of the SPGB being influenced by De Leon. Where are his primary sources? He has never produced any proof to support his assertion. The documents of the Party dating from 1904 when the SPGB was established show this not to be the case.

The claim by Otter, Coleman and now Perrin that De Leon influenced the SPGB founder members implies either the claim that De Leon supported political organisation - the method advocated by the SPGB in its Declaration of Principles (Clauses 6, 7 and 8). Or, alternatively, that the SPGB supported industrial unionism - which clearly is not the case and never has been. Indeed, the Party repeatedly referred to this as an "anarchistic deviation".

Yours for Socialism

Richard Lloyd on behalf of the editorial committee of Socialist Studies, Socialist Party of Great Britain.

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workers' organizations." This 22-page double issue contains articles on armed forces mutinies. One of these, "Harass the Brass" by Kevin Keating, is a leaflet distributed to service people at San Francisco's, "Fleet Week" celebration. Much of the leaflet deals with shipboard mutinies during the Viet Nam War as well as "fragging" and similar activities. Another article describes a different aspect of resistance to the war: that of adherents of the U.S. "New Africa" movement. Other articles deal with the British protest against high gasoline prices and the interrelationship of gender, race, and class. Especially useful is BDWE's practice of noting the websites of groups and publications it mentions. $2 for a single copy, $8 (overseas $12) for a four-issue sub from Merrymount Publications, PO Box 441587, Somerville, MA 02144.

Overtime is a monthly publication "Dedicated to reflecting the collective wisdom of enlightened workers." Each 16-page issue is devoted to one or more themes about which participants (subscribers and readers of the on-line edition or the hard copy) contribute their thoughts or submit selections from their reading. Although readers can obtain Overtime in the paper format, it was actually planned as an internet publication. Unfortunately its website is presently down. In its usual format each issue begins with the editor's brief introductory statement on the current topic followed by material sent in by contributors. The June 2001 topic was "human nature," but as one might expect, the articles and

(to p. 17)
Dear DB:

LABOR TIME VOUCHERS OR CHAOS

It is clear to us that the opponents of Labor Time Vouchers (LTVs) are at their wits' end in their burning desire to discredit this priceless contribution to Socialism so painstakingly developed by Marx in his treatise, Criticism of the Gotha Program. Failing to refute Marx, these naysayers have by and large fallen back on equivocation in an effort to win credibility. Just how credible are the anti-voucher crew may be judged from examples taken from recent issues of the Discussion Bulletin.

For instance take a look at the performance of Dr. Who in DB107. Having presented his "doctoral" thesis that opposing views can eventually coalesce, he further displays his scientific acumen in his "objective" approach to the LTV issue, to wit:

"I find this lifting of Marx to Biblical dimensions... highly alienating. When reading these endless interpretations as we have read in prior issues of what was meant here in the Gotha Program or there in some other text, I can't help but feel like shouting 'so what!' If it turns out that Marx really did feel that labor vouchers were to play a part in socialism...this merely reflects Marx's thinking with the data available to him at the time he analyzed them."

In short, Dr. Who, who by his own admission has not read the Gotha Program, presumes to pass judgement on its current relevance!

* *

No less reprehensible in our opinion is Frank Girard's anti-LTV comment in DB 107's blurb wherein he poses the question: "Wouldn't you [the reader] think that far more dangerous to socialism than a few ex-capitalists getting more than their share of the vast bounty of this planet would be the possibility of the rise of a new and powerful bureaucracy with the special skills needed to work out deductions and pay rates and prices in the socialist market economy."

Here, surely, Girard is completely off base on two counts, arguing in essence: (1)--That altho LTVs are intended to facilitate a transition from Capitalism to Socialism, they should nevertheless not be employed due to a danger that their bureaucratic administrators might conspire to undermine social control, and (2)--That in any case LTVs will not be needed to help quell a possible capitalist-inspired reaction because ex-capitalists, being relatively few in number, can be expected to pose no serious threat to the triumph of Socialism.

As to (1): We readily admit the possibility that bureaucratic elites may be smitten with a desire to rule the roost! The possibility is implicit, also, in The Gotha Program wherein Marx states: "What we are dealing with here is a Communist [i.e., a Socialist] society...as it is just issuing out of capitalist society; hence, a society that still retains, in every respect, economic, moral and intellectual, the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it
is issuing." Apropos, we repeat here what we said on a previous occasion:

"We must...conclude with an admission and an admonition. The point is, that while we have advanced social control of both the political and industrial government forms as the best protection against corruption of socialist democracy, what guarantee is there that such control, once won by society, might not one day slip out of society's grasp? Obviously there can be no such guarantee, only the counsel that survival of a Socialist Republic must ultimately hinge upon vigilance, eternal social vigilance!" (See the July-August, 1996 issue of the then DE LEONIST REVIEW featuring material captioned Einstein, The Socialist Labor Party, and Socialism.)

The bearing of the foregoing upon the question of LTVs should now be obvious. If danger of a powerful bureaucracy lurks in a transition from Capitalism to Socialism (and it does), how much greater must be this danger were a transition to be launched without a classwide LTV structure in place, integrated as it would be into an encompassing Socialist Industrial Union!

As to (2): There are times for jesting but we think this is not one of them. We think Girard's cavalier suggestion that Socialism shouldn't bother its head over "a few ex-capitalists" is just that--a cavalier suggestion! Skipping far too lightly over the tangible depths of the class struggle, it ignores both the vulnerability of a newborn socialist society and the social chaos demon which these same "few ex-capitalists" might possibly invoke in a criminal attempt to destroy it. Labor Time Vouchers are obviously needed in order to help society protect itself against lingering capitalist depravity!

Having proceeded thus far it remains for us to wind down our thoughts on the matter.

First let us say how greatly encouraged we were to learn that there has been at least one voice in addition to ours that has been speaking out in favor of the Marxist Labor Time Voucher (LTV) idea. We look forward eagerly to SLP Carl Miller's promised critique of "free access."

For the rest, it seems that we are for the most part being bombarded with a fantastic litany of anti-Voucher arguments that cannot pass muster as sensible and that in some cases appear downright devious. For example:

* Much indignation has been expressed by LTV opponents at the no-nonsense stance which their adoption would project on the matter of erstwhile Capitalists and work. Apparently horrified that Socialism will no doubt consider these former exploiters of Labor as potential additions to the Work Force, be it noted that the objectors have raised howls of protest to the effect that the idea smacks of slavery! Thus in DB106 Ronald Young alleges that by promoting the LTV concept, "Marx has merely substituted one form of worker slavery for another..." (Incidentally, the DLSC did NOT, repeat NOT, as
claimed by Young, "attempt to make the case that there is not a two-
phase transition enunciated by Marx in The Gotha Program.")

* As to the technical difficulties which are widely seized upon
by LTV opponents as arguments against their adoption: While we our-
selves are not technicians, we nevertheless hazard a guess that,
given a desire to resolve these problems, Socialism will do so.

* As regards Charmian Skelton's DB107 letter, there are several
points that we should take up at this time--
(1) Although Skelton is correct in gathering that the DLSC
stands by the principle of "he who does not work, neither shall he
eat," she is wrong in believing that the principle must therefore re-
ject the needs of those who will be unable to work. The DLSC is a
Marxist organization. Among the various deductions which Marx in-
dicates will have to be made from the total social product are "funds
for those unable to work, etc." (See The Gotha Program.)

(2) We think Skelton is wrong to claim that "The DLSC assume
that none[sic!] of the former capitalists would be willing to work
at all."

(3) Skelton says that these labor vouchers would function as a
medium of exchange. Quite so! But the similarity to money ends
there because the voucher, unlike money, will not be convertible into
Capital!

(4) What the DLSC finds "purely Utopian" is not the exchange
that will motivate what Marx terms the "first phase" of a socialist
economy. On the contrary, what we find Utopian is the belief, ap-
parently held by LTV opponents, that the "higher phase," the non-mar-
ket phase, the "free access" phase, can be reached by simply pole
vaulting over a first phase!

* Adam Buick's catalog of objections to the Labor Time Voucher
idea is impressive by its length and would challenge our ability to
take them up seriatim were we tempted to do so. Nevertheless, while
admitting that we do not have an answer for every question he poses,
we think that by separating the wheat from the chaff of his essay we
can at least win enough elbowroom to suggest that by virtue of its
pricing mechanism, built as it is on the statistics of socially
necessary labor, Capitalism has already shown Socialism how it can
price consumer goods in non-monetary terms to the satisfaction of
the said "Human Nature Objector."

Be this as it may, however, there can be no room for doubt
that, contrary to Buick's tortuous effort to equate "labour-money"
(labor time vouchers) with "conventional money as today" (wages),
there is a world of difference between these two methods of payment
for labor! Accordingly, we have to instruct Buick in what today
should be common knowledge among Socialists, to wit: (1)-The Wages
System fleeces workers at the point of production out of the bulk of
the value of their product. Profit represents unpaid labor! (2)--
Far otherwise with Socialism! Here, the Labor Time Voucher (after
deduction of labor that is due to the common fund for collective
services like hospitals, etc.) will permit its bearer to "draw from
the common store as much of the means of consumption as cost an equal
amount of labor." (Marx. Our emphasis.)
With strong hopes that workers will soon unite on both the political and industrial fields for ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM!

The De Leonist Society of Canada
P.O. Box 944, Station F
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2H9

Sincerely,

THE DE LEONIST SOCIETY OF CANADA

Comment:
It strikes me that unless we regard Marx’s writings as Holy Writ, Dr. Who is right. The idea of Labor Time Vouchers must be tested by the evidence available today; 125 years after Marx wrote the Gotha Program. In 1875 the material incapacity of society to satisfy human needs—in other words scarcity—was the fact that made LTVs a logical part of a program for a socialist society. Clearly the socialist revolution alone wouldn’t solve the problem of scarcity immediately. A system of rationing or allotting goods or services would have to be developed for use until society had succeeded in raising production to the point where goods and services could be produced in excess of needs. We know how capitalism solves its problem of scarcity: Those with money to buy what they need and want can do so; the rest go without in proportion to their lack of money.

LTVs were an idea for an equitable system of rationing. It made sense in 1875, but it makes no sense in 2001. Not only do we have the material resources for producing plenty today, we have the human labor. In fact, the supply of labor available to a socialist society in the year 2001 seems almost boundless. Five years ago we were being told that the global unemployment figure was one billion! 1,000,000,000!
And this doesn’t take into consideration the millions who today are counted as employed but whose labor is unproductive so far as social usefulness is concerned: bankers, stockbrokers, politicians, drug peddlers, insurance company employees, military personnel, lawyers and all their secretaries and others who assist the unproductive. And we still haven’t gotten into the hordes whose “work” is counter-productive: people in advertising, the police, economics, much of education, and on and on.

In my opinion the danger is not that the administrators of an LTV system would conspire to undermine working class control of the system but rather that it would so evolve naturally as time passed. The question then becomes why—if it is not needed—create the beast that might grow to destroy the socialist society?

—from p. 13

comments weren’t limited to this subject. Writers tended to branch out into areas as varied as ecology, President Reagan, and cancer. The August 2001 number was reserved for “feminist issues” and included articles on Marx’s daughter Eleanor, Queen Esther, Lady Godiva, and “Women and Poverty.” Subscriptions are free from Linda Featheringill, 2208 Denison Ave. #6, Cleveland, OH 44109.

Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed carries on its masthead the following motto: “Towards a Society based on Mutual Aid, Voluntary Cooperation & the Liberation of Desire.” Regardless of the mutuality and cooperation called for in the masthead, Anarchy reflects on its side of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. the same fragmented condition we find in what passes for Marxism. Aside from the hate-Boockchin element, one of the most interesting divisions can be found among ecology-minded anarchists: the issue being “primitivism”— pro and con. This issue contains nearly 20 pages of debate on the subject: “Why I am a Primitivist” by Michael William, “A Dialog on Primitivism: Lawrence Jarach interviews John Zerzan,” “Why I am not a Primitivist” by Jason McQuinn, the editor of Anarchy, and “Civilization and its Latest Discontents” a reprint from Aufheben. Michael William, editor of the former (to p. 19)
Dear Frank Girard,

The following text is about workers resistance to Nazism. You can of course use it if you want in the Discussion Bulletin.
Yours fraternaly,
Henri Simon from Echanges

In Discussion Bulletin, March/April 2001, in the presentation "About this issue" and as a complement of the second article of New Democracy (July/August) "Facing History: How working class Germans fought the Nazis" you mentioned a short text by Tim Mason available online. Tim Mason, an historian from Oxford, made extensive and thorough research in the Nazis archives and wrote several books and articles on this question of workers resistance in the Third Reich. The most important one is in German: "Sozial Politik im Dritten Reich. Arbeit Klasse und Volksgemeinschaft" (Opladen Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977). Most parts of this book were translated into English only in 1993 "Social Policy in the Third Reich. The working Class and the 'National Community' " (Berg. Providence. Oxford). Another book in English "Nazism, Fascism and the working class" (Cambridge University Press contains various essays by Tim Mason and was published later in 1995. These two last books appeared only after the death of Tim Mason who committed suicide in 1990. The discovery of his research and the publishing of their results were so explosive - even more than thirty years after the end of the war- that even fifteen years elapsed after the German publication before a publication in English could be available.

The question we can ask is why? It is easy to understand in Europe but I don't know if this explanation is true for the USA or other parts of the world. Who could guess the ideological weight, social pressure imposed, sometimes with the utmost violence by this "unique thought" about the culpability of the whole German people developed by all political parties, the stalinist communists and the Israeli world organisations being on the front line?

Because Tim Mason's research were accurately and strongly advocating against such an ideological domination (which could explain many things as the war political orientation supporting the war strategy), he was at the centre of fierce, sometimes tricky and treacherous polemics and the focus of some pretended infamous accusations, all things which perhaps partly led him to kill himself.

Even fifty years after the end of the last war - half a century - fierce polemics are still persisting between pro - Semitics and anti - Semitics around what is called "negationism" but, curiously, not by chance, these polemics completely ignore the rank and file resistance of German workers to Nazism.

I want to bring in this debate and in support of Tim Mason's books the evidence given by an old militant (who died years ago) who was deported for two years in the concentration camp of Oranienburg (near Berlin) and was affected with quite a lot of other prisoners in a working commando in a Heinkel factory (aircraft factory). He wrote after the war some articles about this question of the "responsibility of the German people". I want to quote only a part of one of these writings relating the events in 1944/1945:

"...And the workers who struggled daily against the Nazi dictatorship. In our Halle 2, in the Heinkel factory, they were a score of organised workers amongst around 200 German civilian workers and more than double of this figure of unorganised German workers, perhaps less courageous, but among whose nevertheless we have found good friends when after a long period of working together they had learned to know us better. Could these workers be considered as "responsible" for the Nazis crimes?

"The comrade prisoners of the Kolonne 8 in our workshop at Heinkel certainly will remember for a long time of the German comrade Paul W. (I call him comrade because it would be impossible for me to give him another name), who from the first day of work in this "commando" tried to look for political left militants. And if he did everything to help us as his comrades in other Kolonnen in the hall did it with
other prisoners, it was not for pity’s sake, as some Nazi supporters, but for solidarity. The loaf he brought once a week for all the prisoners French, Polish or Russian working with him, the share of his daily sandwich he left deliberately for us, the German or French daily papers he put in our pockets or in our drawer, all that with the constant risk to join us in the camp, can we forget it? And he knew (he did not hide this fact from us militants) that most of the prisoners working with him would have hanged him once the war were over only because he was a German. One day he had a row with some patriotic petty bourgeois telling them he did not like at all patriotism from any country.

Could we forget this good old riveter in our Kolonne 8 later moved to the Kolonne 2 who brought every time the first fruits from his garden, and many other things? He was yet rather a fearful man but he managed anyway to bring us daily papers. And again in this Kolonne 8, this old German craftsman mobilised in this factory, who took the side of the prisoners several times when they were treated badly by the “vorarbeiter”, he also left part of his poor sandwich and dared to tell us his hate for the Nazis though not a member of the anti-nazi organisation in the factory.

And at the other end of the Kolonne this brave but a bit crazy worker who was so nice with us and with whom I could talk very openly in total brotherhood; and this young worker of the Kolonne 6 who was arrested when he tried to post a letter for a prisoner and got 6 months in jail and all the night workers from other parts of the factory who at midnight brought full pans of soup to the prisoners working with them.

And F., who when he had become confident enough to explain that Hitler had come to power with the help of workers divided, and recall this communist vote with the Nazis to pull down the socialist government in Berlin. Most of these German workers had a financial interest in our work but they pushed us to work more. Only the middle management, most of them Nazis hidden in the factory, party members and some sympathisers tried to push us to work harder. All other German workers were constantly lectured by the Nazi leaders of the factory, by the leaders of the Labour Front, by the foremen, all party members. Very often, the civilian German workers told us to beware of some worker who was more or less an informer.

And yet they always had to be very careful not to become too confident because they knew that amongst the prisoners there was some criminals, members of the lumpen proletariat and some young aristocrats for whom any worker even of their own nationality was scum. Even so, they helped us..."

(from p. 17)

primitivist journal Demolition Derby doesn’t really address the “Why?” except to name it as his reaction to the role of civilization in degrading planet Earth. As to just what he means by primitivism, I gather that it could be either a universal return to sustainable agriculture or to a hunter/gatherer economy. He doesn’t even raise the question of how a global society could go about changing the technology-oriented direction of its development: putting it into reverse so to speak. Zerzan’s response to the suggestion that primitivism would result in an immense die-off of the human species is to raise the possibility of William’s agricultural solution: We’ll all raise our own food. Zerzan is much more forthcoming in other matters, though. Like William he uses the term “anti-civilization” but he places this strand of anarchism in its ideological context as a part of the whole range of anarchist thought with special attention to “anarcho-leftists” who defend the “old anarchism, the failed superficial, workerist, productivist model,” and is satisfied to exclude the traditional strands of anarchism and, I would guess, such new strands as Bookchin’s social ecology. Jason Quinn’s essay recounts the history of primitivism as a current in anarchism—also Marxism via Fredy Perlman—and ends by rejecting the idea that society can move backward to a primitive state. The Aufheben essay (from issue #4 1995) rejects what it calls “leftism,” the idea that a socialist revolution can tame technology and destroy its exploitive and ecologically

(to p. 25)
Dear Frank,

Thank you for reviewing the latest issue of Red & Black Notes as well as the latest pamphlet Revolutionary Optimist: An interview with Martin Glaberman. I feel however, that I must correct the impression left by your comments.

In reviewing Red & Black Notes you write “it seems to be the only English language councilist journal still in existence now that Collective Action Notes is in remission. I think this statement is inaccurate since to the best of my knowledge CAN is not in remission, although a new issue would be appreciated. Moreover, the Boston-based newsletter The Bad Days Will End can also be described as “councilist.”

Regarding the pamphlet, your comment that both Glaberman and his interviewers, of which I was one, seem to consider the working class to consist only of factory workers is somewhat surprising, since you have been a long time reader of Red & Black Notes and have seen the class analysis presented there. Martin Glaberman did work in factories in Detroit and other parts of Michigan for two decades and therefore it is not surprising that many of the anecdotes he retells are drawn from that experience.

It would be inaccurate and “workerist” to restrict membership in the working class to industrial workers, but it would hardly be more accurate to reverse the equation and consider everyone to be working class in the same way. I’m not arguing that certain groups are “more” working class or fetishizing industrial workers, but simply noting the realities of working class existence are different for office workers, for assembly line workers and for education workers. And Glaberman does not draw a narrow class analysis. I have in front of me a pamphlet by Glaberman from 1974 which features an essay entitled “Marxist views of the working class” where Glaberman does indeed discuss the various strata in the working class (this essay is available on request from the address below). This theme is returned to in Glaberman’s book Working for Wages, reviewed by me in DB #108.

Lastly your comment that Glaberman “never found a group or program that he can support wholeheartedly” struck me as very odd. While Glaberman was a member of a number of political organizations he was associated with the tendency and ideas associated with CLR James since the early 1940’s. Although the organizations changed, the political outlook was consistent throughout its evolution.

With comradely greetings,

Neil Fettes /Red & Black Notes,

POB 47643, Don Mills, ON, M3C 3S7, Canada

Comment:

As to CAN, if not remission, then how about “a state of suspended animation”? But I should point out that CAN has a website that is very much alive

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Tobby/2379/>

The Bad Days Will End may indeed be councilist, but how do we know unless the journal so describes itself? In fact, identifying councilists and councilism is a major problem in non-market socialist taxonomy. So far as I know there are no councilist articles of faith, and so we can’t use the Biblical injunction, “By their works shall ye know them.”

This is part of the problem I had with the Martin Glaberman interview. With all due respect to Glaberman, unlike councilists—as I understand them—he was certainly an organization man as his political progression testifies: from social democratic Socialist Party (U.S.) to the Trotskyist U.S. Socialist Workers Party and on through Trot organizational splits described in the brief 1/3 page review
in DB108. Nor was the Johnson-Forest Tendency anything but Trotskyist when I was picking up its journal *Correspondence* occasionally in Detroit in the mid-fifties. One of the group's objectives, as I recall, was a "workers' state." I think that where my review falls short is its failure to emphasize sufficiently Glaberman's continued confidence in our class and its revolutionary potential. In part I may have been put off by what appears to be his continued support for the UAW version of capitalism.

---Frank Girard

To the Discussion Bulletin:

Readers of DB, of course want to get rid of wage slavery. I think the biggest obstacle to the end of wage slavery is class consciousness. Lenin in "What is to be done" thought that workers would only develop trade union consciousness and needed the vanguard party to develop class consciousness. I would assume that DB readers are rightly against the idea of a vanguard party. A Vanguard party does not necessarily give workers class consciousness but it does give them someone ruling over them. I think the problem now is that workers don't even develop trade union consciousness.

Marx thought that class consciousness would develop naturally from workers working together in factories. Marx mentioned class consciousness in only a couple of letters. At the start of the 21st century the idea of class consciousness is very important. It is much harder today for workers to develop class consciousness. The ruling ideas are those of the ruling classes and now the majority of workers are only exposed to the ideas of ruling classes. Now with the concentration of corporate media it is more like the ONLY ideas are those of the ruling classes.

Where I'm working now, workers take wage slavery as so natural that when you complain to co-workers about what you are doing on the job, the reaction is if you don't like what you are doing, why are you working here? In a lot of work environments when you complain about the stupid work you are doing co-workers agree with you. Workers that agree that some of the stuff you do on the job is stupid and that there are better ways of doing things may at some later date develop class consciousness. But how are workers that think that everything the boss tells you to do no matter how stupid, you do and don't complain about it because that is the way the world is, going to develop class consciousness?

I would like DB readers to discuss ways to develop class consciousness among workers when the ruling classes have such power and control over our society.

Michael Stec

Comment:

Michael Stec's suggestion that we discuss ways to develop class consciousness is well worth supporting, in my opinion. As a 35-year veteran of leaflet distribution in the Socialist Labor Party plus 20 more years as a defrocked DeLeonist who possesses the records of the Leaflet Committee of Section Wayne County, SLP, from January 1943 to December 1960 compiled by Charley Schwartz, the leaflet committee chairman for many years—may his name be blessed, I can testify to the distribution of something like 4 million leaflets in the Detroit area alone. These were all designed to arouse class consciousness. We were well aware that the printed word was having little impact, but we comforted ourselves with the idea that we were planting seeds that would sprout when the rains came in the next depression. Well, rains with the intensity necessary to grow class consciousness haven't arrived yet.

What can we do in the meantime? In my opinion, little more than 1) Keep the faith—much as I hate to use the term; 2) Continue to point out and explain in our literature and other agitation the
underlying cause of social problems; 3) Describe how a socialist society could be organized to solve these problems; and 4) Avoid any actions or words that suggest that our class can improve its condition in a meaningful way without abolishing the capitalist system.

In the meantime, I’d like very much to see a discussion of more optimistic and detailed ideas than I have presented.

---Frank Girard

To the Discussion Bulletin:

Responding to Dr Who’s invitation, I like some of the ideas behind his proposed Manifesto for the Imagine International (MII), with a few reservations. I write as a socialist, that is, an opponent of all forms of capitalism (some of which, like a socialist market economy or socialist exchange, go under the false colours of socialism) and a proponent of revolutionary world post-capitalist society, the principle features of which are common ownership, democratic control, production for use and free access.

One good thing about MII is the prominent place it gives to John Lennon’s "Imagine" as an attempt to describe a socialist future. Excellent critic of capitalism though he was, Marx was a poor advocate for socialism, restricted by his self-imposed refusal to write recipes for future cookshops. Morris did rather better with his News from Nowhere, although his "How the change came" is today completely unbelievable.

I can't see why groups like Leninists, Trotskyists, Maoists, Stalinists, etc. should want a "piece of the action" of MII. After all, they are essentially short-term reformists, who offer revolutionary socialists only the poisoned chalice of "work with us today for x (reform) and tomorrow we start the revolution". And of course tomorrow and the revolution never come.

There’s no point in diluting the proposals of revolutionary socialists in order to artificially inflate our numbers. I'm wary of those who "merely reflect differences in means but not in ends". Choice of means is important, as is clear in Dr Who’s three levels. I don't want to be in coalition with Level 2 people - MARKET socialists - though I want to exchange ideas with them as potential recruits to Level 1 - non-market socialists. Far less would I want to be in coalition with Level 3 people - capitalist and reformist groups.

So for me the "coalition" boils down to a few hundred members of the World Socialist Movement plus some others who think similarly but await being "collected" into the WSM. The year 2004 will see the centenary of the formation of the SPGB. Socialism didn't have a very good 20th century, so let's see if we can develop a viable WSM. Helpful though electronic communication is, I can't see it taking the place of face-to-face communication. So I'd like us to plan for an international WSM conference in 2004.

SRP

Comment:

Dr. Who’s invitation was aimed, I’m sure, at what the DB’s pitch on page 2 refers to as “the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists.” Like SRP I don’t see why reformists and vanguardists would want to be in a coalition with the above, nor would I want to be associated with them in such a way.

But I suspect that a coalition is an unlikely outcome of a conference now or as far into the future as the eye can see. Supporters of the antagonistic groups that make up the DB’s readership have spent too much time working out the minor differences that justify our groups’ separate existence. If a coalition were organized, I’m sure that every group or tendency among us would regard it as SRP does: as a sort of
holding pond where we could go fishing for people worthy of membership in our own group.

Another angle: The multiplicity of journals and revolutionary literature may be a good thing. Our class can do some shopping around before they commit themselves to a group that promulgates the "true faith."

I'd like to see conferences organized that would enable us to get together, present our ideas in forums, check out each other's literature, and talk informally.

[What I understood to be Internationalism's four-part series on "The Legacy of DeLeonism," reviewed in DB108, turned out to have five parts. Number 118, the Summer 2001 issue, contains "Confusions on the Russian Revolution and American Exceptionalism." Titled "Part VI," it actually appears to be the fifth part of the series. Like other issues containing the series, Number 118 can be obtained for $1 from PO Box 288, New York, NY 10018. -FG]

DeLeonism, the Russian Revolution, and American Exceptionalism:
A Review of Internationalism's Confusions

A confusion in Internationalism's lexicon refers to something it opposes. The "confusions" named in their article are the actions and positions taken by the Socialist Labor Party after the successful Bolshevik-instigated and -led insurrection in St Petersburg in 1917.

The SLP's first reaction to news of the Russian Revolution appeared in the November 24, 1917 issue of the Weekly People. The article by Arnold Petersen, the party's National Secretary, supported what the SLP understood to be the action of the Soviets but made the point that Russia was far from the level of industrialization that would make it possible to organize a socialist society.

Internationalism's treatment of the subsequent history of the SLP's position on the Soviet Union is utterly fictitious. The author sets it forth as follows: "The SLP quickly soured on the Russian Revolution because it failed to establish a government of Socialist Industrial Unions, and sought to create a centralized revolutionary movement dedicated to the violent overthrow of capitalism in the formation of the Third International in 1919." Actually the SLP remained a supporter—albeit critical—of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union until 1939 on the grounds that it was building the industrial base that would make possible real socialism as the SLP understood it.

The SLP's response to the organization of the Third International is another, more complicated matter. From the beginning Lenin and the Bolsheviks were aware that the successful culmination of the revolution required revolutions in the industrialized nations. It was important then to foster support for the revolution among workers in the West, and what would be more helpful than to influence the groups in the world socialist movement that had not supported their respective capitalist class in the recent war? In the U.S. these were the IWW with perhaps 10,000 members, the rather splintered left wing of the Socialist Party—perhaps another 10,000, and the SLP with 5000 members.

To gather this support from revolutionary workers, Lenin and the Bolsheviks organized a Third International in 1919, one that was designed to fit the needs of the new revolutionary government of Russia. Absent from the founding Congress were delegates representing the revolutionary movements of industrialized Western Europe and North America. Getting support from Western revolutionaries became a major project of the new international. They courted leaders of anti-reformist factions in the old social democratic parties and subsidized the groups and publications that followed their policy lead.

In the U.S. they concentrated their efforts on the IWW membership but with very little success.
They did succeed in the leftwing of the Socialist Party, which furnished the bulk of the members and the leadership of what became the Workers' (later the Communist) Party. Although Lenin was critical of the SLP, it was clearly one of the revolutionary groups he hoped to attract.

Nonetheless the SLP did not receive a formal invitation to join the new international and thus was not a part of the debate over the "21 Points" for affiliation presented by Lenin at the Second Congress in 1920. It was this set of conditions for membership in the international that prevented SLP affiliation, for they were clearly designed for a revolutionary movement in industrially and politically backward countries.

The idea that the working class majority must reach a sufficient level of understanding to make a consciousness decision to abolish capitalism and the wages system was foreign to Lenin and the Bolsheviks as was the idea that the revolutionary party could openly carry on a program of socialist education. As a result the 21 Points demanded that any party seeking affiliation must organize an underground section of the party to carry on illegal work, agitate among the armed forces, call for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and work within the capitalist union movement. All of these points were anathema to the SLP. Having quoted the SLP's summary of these points along with its comments: that the points were "irrational," "anti-Marxist," and "idiotic," the article in Internationalism goes on to attribute the SLP reaction to the 21 Points to "...their naive faith in bourgeois democracy and a peaceful overturn of capitalism..."

For the SLP the news was beyond belief. Convinced that at the very least the new international had been misinformed about conditions in the U.S., the party had Petersen write a long personal letter to Lenin to set him straight. It then decided to send two observers to the Third Congress in 1921 to lay the SLP's case before the International. They made their way to Moscow and arrived in time to see the Bolshevik-dominated Congress ridicule and reject the arguments of the two delegates from the German left wing communist group, the KAPD Communist Labor Party. This was a sizable group whose objections to the 21 Points resembled those of the SLP in many respects. It had split from the International-approved Communist Party of Germany a year earlier. The SLP observers' report noted the authoritarian use being made of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR, and compared the role of the new international in the revolutionary socialist movement to that of the Vatican in the Catholic Church. At its 1924 National Convention the SLP passed a resolution condemning the Third International for its harmful interference in the revolutionary socialist movement in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Titled "American Exceptionalism and DeLeonism's Self-Proclaimed Superiority to European Socialism," the concluding section of Internationalism's article deals with an aspect of SLP thinking that one might think any Marxist would agree with: that the tactics of revolutionaries in a given country will reflect the economic and political conditions that obtain there. In fact, De Leon rather charitably attributed the pre-WWI reformism of European socialism to the need for socialist parties to clear away the pre-capitalist institutions that still existed there.

Unfortunately an accident of history placed the Bolsheviks—probably the most authoritarian revolutionary movement in the world in one of the most economically backward countries—in a position to command the forces of revolutionary socialism worldwide. And command they did! Having organized the Third International with little or no input from the revolutionaries in industrially advanced nations, they—actually Lenin himself—promulgated a set of 21 conditions for affiliation to the new International that effectively committed any party wishing to join it to the conspiratorial, insurrectionary tactics that had succeeded in St. Petersburg and Russia in 1917.

With universal suffrage and a political tradition that offered at least the possibility of the peaceful abolition of capitalism and an economy developed to the point where it could produce goods and services in excess of needs, the U.S. was ready for revolution whenever the working class chose to move. The 21
Conditions flew in the face of the SLP’s commitment to a peaceful and legal revolution, to the rejection of boring into the capitalist union movement, to reform-oriented parliamentary politics, and (implicitly) to the outdated idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The announced purpose of this five-part series was “to come to grips” with DeLeonism. Standing in the way was the fact that in many respects the positions held by the SLP and DeLeonists in general resemble those held by Internationalism. Consider these:

Like Internationalism—

1. the SLP is anti-reformist
2. the SLP opposes the capitalist union movement
3. the SLP does not regard the former USSR as socialist
4. the SLP regards the revolution as nothing less than the abolition of the state and the wages system
5. the SLP does not support national liberation movements as socialist

Trying to “come to grips with”—actually, to discredit—a group whose history and present positions are as revolutionary as your own or more so, creates real problems. So it was for Internationalism. Their solution was to accentuate the negative. Thus De Leon’s anti-reformism was wrong because it became SLP policy before 1914. The SLP position on capitalist unions also preceded 1914 and was also wrong. True, the SLP opposed WWI, but its opposition wasn’t strong enough to satisfy Internationalism. The SLP’s rejection of the Second International didn’t come soon enough. The SLP didn’t join the Third International—despite the International’s rejection of basic features in the SLP’s program and principles. Apparently, like Internationalism’s Italian left communist ancestors, it should have knuckled under to the dictates of the Bolshevik politicians running the International regardless of the effect on the revolutionary movement in its home country.

As I read Internationalism’s effort “to come to grips with” DeLeonism I wondered if the author had considered the possibility of writing a convincing argument for some of their positions. They could, for example, have sought to convince readers of the need for a blood-in-the-streets violent revolution. They could have written a convincing argument for a dictatorship of the proletariat under a more benevolent revolutionary party than the Bolsheviks. Another possibility would have been to argue the superiority of workers’ councils to socialist industrial unions. Instead they presented a rehash of the lies, exaggerations, half truths, and distortions served up by three generations of professional “labor historians,” Stalinist apologists, and socialist politicians.

—from p. 19—

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—Frank Girard

destructive aspects. Moreover Auheben remains Marxist enough to question primitivism’s reduction of Marxism to a “productionist” philosophy. This 83-page issue also contains a major article on Quebec nationalism and a host of reviews and letters.

The Working People’s Revolutionary Socialist Network [USA] “Draft Program 3.0” is now available. Last May the DB received “Draft Program 1.0” along with a request for a review and a personal critique. Quite a bit of radical reform material arrives here at Box 1564, and I usually ignore it, assuming that the sender hasn’t read the page 2 notice “About the DB,” which explains the DB’s purpose, which does not include promoting social democratic, Trotskyist, Maoist, and other branches of radical reformism. Chirevet, the source of the Draft Program was a bit more insistent than the norm, and I finally jotted down some comments and sent them in. Soon I received the basically unchanged version #2, complete with its calls for a $100,000 money distribution, workers’ militias, government payoffs of

(to p. 28)
THE LEFT - ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS!

What is the Left? The Left consists of those parties or organisations, usually calling themselves "socialist" or "communist", which claim to represent the interests of the working class, but are in fact simply the left wing of capitalism. This leaflet aims to show why this is so.

In capitalist society there are two principal classes - the capitalist class (or bourgeoisie) and the working class (or proletariat) whose interests are diametrically opposed. The capitalist class is the ruling class everywhere. The working class is dominated and exploited - it is the class of wage slaves, the class of producers who own nothing but their labour power, which they sell to the capitalists for a wage. The value which the capitalist market gives to this labour power is less than the value actually created by the workers - upon this difference in value is based the extraction of surplus value by the capitalists from the workers. This is the cornerstone of capitalism. This exploitation leads the working class to wage class struggle against the capitalists.

All those phenomena in society which come under the heading "political" are expressions of the struggle between these two classes and, secondarily, of the struggle between rival factions of the capitalist class. All political movements represent either one class or the other. But knowing which is not always straightforward. Why is this?

The capitalists keep us enslaved partly by physical chains (e.g. police, armed forces) but also by mental chains. This means that the ideas that we are brought up with, the ideas that dominate society, are those that represent the ruling class's interests. The working class is the victim of the biggest con in history, accepting for the most part the system that oppresses us in the name of "democracy, freedom, equal rights" etc. But it gets trickier. Even when we see through these lies and begin to look to our own class interests, alternative capitalist schemes of a more radical appearance wait to snare us, so that we think we are supporting our own class interests but are in fact supporting a different brand of capitalism. This is why it is not enough to see whether a movement or organisation calls itself socialist or working class - we have to examine whether their aims and practice actually represent working class interests.

How, then, does the Left support capitalism?

In previous centuries, when capitalism was expanding, communist revolution was not yet possible, but the growth of capitalism (including the growth of the working class) at the expense of earlier forms of society was gradually creating the basis for such a revolution. It was in this context that revolutionaries of the time, such as Marx and Engels, supported the growth of capitalism, and hence supported certain capitalist movements such as some, but not all, movements of national self-determination, because they led to this growth.

Also, the working class was able to win meaningful concessions from capitalism at that time by means of forms of organisation which in no way challenged capitalism such as trade unions.

However, in modern capitalism things are quite different.

The capitalist transformation of the world has been accomplished and the level of productive forces necessary for communism has been reached. Capitalism is now in its period of decadence, its downward slide when it can no longer grant meaningful reforms to the workers, and can only overcome its crises through ever more destructive world wars. The communist revolution is now possible, and also necessary - the alternative is the most destructive world war of all.

Because of this historic change, revolutionaries can no longer support bourgeois movements such as
national liberation, reformism, trade unionism: etc. These movements today simply represent weapons of capitalism against the working class. Together with the newer capitalist lies such as state-capitalism pretending to be “socialism”, these things make up the politics of Leftism. The Leftist parties today all support some or all of the above movements, thereby helping to dragoon workers into supporting one bourgeois faction against another.

Let us examine some of these things that the Left would have us support.

**THE LABOUR PARTY and ELECTIONS** The Labour Party (and this is true of similar parties abroad) is the main party of state-capitalism and is one of the principal pillars of the state. Nothing could be more ludicrous than the lie that it is some kind of “workers’ party. It comes as no surprise, however, that the same Leftists who claim that the state capitalist societies of Eastern Europe etc. are “socialist” or “workers’ states” or otherwise non-capitalist should advance similar claims about the state-capitalist parties in the West.

Some Leftists who might not support the Labour Party nonetheless stand candidates in bourgeois elections. Elections under capitalism are a total sham choosing which capitalists oppress us, and pretending this is an actual exercise of power. Standing candidates in capitalist elections, for whatever reason, simply helps to perpetuate the myth that voting can actually mean something for workers.

**TRADE UNIONISM** Trade unions exist in order to negotiate the terms of the sale of labour power under capitalism - to negotiate reasonable wages for the workers without in any way challenging the system of wage slavery. In fact, if capitalism were threatened, the union bureaucracies, who have a comfortable niche within capitalism, would also be threatened. Under modern capitalism the working class can no longer use trade unionism as an organisational method to advance its interests. The truth is that unions today simply act as instruments to police the working class and to sabotage its struggles on behalf of capitalism.

**UNITED FRONTS** As revolutionaries we engage in class struggle alongside workers who still have many capitalist illusions, while making no compromise with these illusions and constantly trying to win workers away from them. This, however, is not what the Left means by “United Front”. In Leftist parlance, “United Fronts” and “Popular Fronts” are varieties of alliances between supposedly “revolutionary” organisations and other organisations for particular aims (e.g. defence of “Democracy”) in which there are allegedly “common interests”. The working class, however, has NO common interests with the capitalist class. Today, all factions of capitalism are equally reactionary. Hence, to call on workers to support one faction against another, such as Labour against Conservative, Democratic capitalism against Fascism, “Anti-Imperialism” against Imperialism, is simply to con us into fighting for the interests of capitalism, and against our own interests.

**NATIONALISM** The concept of the Nation is a useful device for the capitalists. It leads the workers of a particular geographical area to think they have a common interest with the capitalists of that same area, and that they have a conflict with workers in other areas. “National Liberation Movements” are simply a version of this same lie in radical form. When the working class is deceived into supporting such a movement, it means they are fighting to replace one lot of bosses with another lot. That is the only change; there is no change for the workers. (Furthermore, all such movements, if they are to succeed in gaining independence from one imperialist power, can only do so by switching to another, as for example Cuba did in changing from U.S. client state to Russian client state).

**STATE CAPITALISM** Every country in the world today is capitalist. State-capitalism is a form of capitalism in which the state, rather than independent companies, owns capital and exploits the workers. A tendency towards state capitalism on a world scale has been noticeable since World War One. It now exists everywhere but to different degrees - alongside private capitalism in the mixed economies of the
West, or almost completely replacing it in countries like Russia. But everywhere the working class exists as the class of producers separated from ownership of the means of production, owning nothing but its labour power which it must sell for a wage. In Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc., despite the lies of Stalinists, Maoists or Trotskyists, all the essential features of capitalism (commodity production and exchange, money, and of course production of surplus value from the working class) exist just as in any other country. When the Left tells us: to support or "defend" such states, they are telling us to support capitalism.

**THE LEFT - LAST RESORT OF CAPITALISM**
The Left's objective function for capitalism is as a kind of safety net to catch those of us who have seen through the usual bourgeois cons, and thus lead us into supporting capitalism in a more radical form when we think we are supporting our own class interest. The Left, from the Labour Party (including all its Trot factions) or the "Communist" Party to the SWP, RCP, RCG etc ad nauseam, whether Stalinist, Maoist, Trotskyist or Anarchist, is totally COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY and is the mortal enemy of the working class.

**THE COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE**
To all militants who honestly wish to fight for proletarian class interests, but who have illusions in Leftism, we say: Abandon these ideas - Communism is the movement of the working class for its own historic interests, against all varieties of capitalist oppression, including the bourgeois-democratic false radicalism of the Left. Communism is the revolutionary movement of the workers themselves against all alternative rulers that the Left want us to follow like sheep, against all leaders such as the Left want to be.

Communism is also the society produced by that movement, a society without classes, in which we all collectively control our own existence, in which we run the world for our own needs and desires, in which Humanity can fulfil itself as the conscious agent of its own History, and no longer be an enslaved mass toiling for the benefit of a parasitic ruling class. The Left is the last barrier in the way of the acceptance of a revolutionary view of society, and a revolutionary struggle leading to the establishment of the communist society.

This leaflet was produced by WILDCAT (Manchester U.K.) about 20 years ago. I believe Wildcat’s present address is BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX, UK.

*(from p. 25)*

mortgages up to $500,000, improvements in Social Security and a host of other reforms. This time Chirevnet requested that I send in another critique and also mail copies at their expense to the DB mailing list. I didn’t respond. And soon version #3 arrived. This one had an addendum accusing the DB of being sectarian because it had not become involved in what appear to be their efforts to re-invent the U.S. Socialist Workers Party of the 1950s and 60s. The prime mover of Chirevnet has a level of persistence worthy of a better cause. His latest ploy was to send a letter for publication to the DB repeating his accusations of sectarianism and calling for a debate on the subject of: “what constitutes initial socialism as the on-going, revolutionary, international transition to communism.” I’m not at all interested in opening the DB to a debate about something irrelevant to the DB’s purpose. Interested readers can obtain all this material by writing to Boxholder, PO Box 578042, Chicago, IL 60657. In the meantime I would suggest Chirevnet seek the cooperation of journals that share its “revolutionary” perspective: People’s Weekly World, Z Magazine, The Militant, Revolutionary Worker, etc. etc.

*(to p. 30)*
Where Are the Anarchists?
Bad Press Broadside #4

An editorial in the December 4, 1999, issue of The Economist, referring to the events in Seattle in November, asked the question, "Why were there no anarchists among all those 'anarchists', by the way?" The question is a reasonable one for an observer to ask. While many of those who protested (and sometimes more) in Seattle were genuine, thoughtful anarchists, who felt that their actions there advanced the cause of human freedom, they failed to put forth a specifically anarchist point of view or adequately distinguish themselves from other protestors, most of whom advocated government action as the way to improve the lives of working people and protect our natural environment.

Unlike other advocates of social change, anarchists have historically opposed the existence of government and coercion. They have argued that free people are capable of organizing their lives as they see fit without the supervision of government with its laws, police, and military, which favor those who have economic or political power at the expense of the vast majority of working people. However, in their press and their public statements, this message is often absent. Anarchist activists in Seattle, London, Washington and elsewhere have criticized "globalization" and international capitalism in terms hardly different from those of other protestors. They condemn "free trade," the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF, but fail to present an anarchist alternative. The anarchists, by not presenting an explicit anti-government message, end up sounding like the nationalists and protectionists who lament the alleged decline of national sovereignty and advocate continued government intervention in people's economic arrangements.

In some cases, however, this is not just the result of a failure to make one's views explicit. Many people who call themselves anarchists are not opposed to using government as a means to promote the things they favor and see it as an acceptable and effective means of improving the lives of regular people. Noam Chomsky, perhaps the best known and most widely read writer associated with the anarchist movement, frankly advocates a strengthening of federal power and the political involvement of working people. He believes that criticizing the welfare state shows contempt for poor people and that it is the height of "arrogance and foolishness" for anarchists to criticize involvement in and support for statist politics. It is interesting that Chomsky's views have had such influence among anarchists, since the idea that supporting the United States government can somehow lead to a libertarian society resembles nothing so much as the argument of Marxists that the authoritarian socialist state they advocate will one day produce an anarchist world.

In the absence of any anti-government message, the image of anarchists that most people seem to have come away with since the events in Eugene, Seattle, Washington, and London over the last year, is simply that of protestors who trash stuff and aren't afraid to fight cops. While property destruction and fighting cops are sometimes appropriate activities, they are not what makes an anarchist and do not promote an understanding of the anarchist critique of society among non-anarchists. It has been said that recent tactics on the part of anarchists have been worthwhile because they have brought attention to anarchists and have attracted new people to anarchist events and websites. But what are these people attracted to? Street-fighting with cops and trashing the gap or macdonalds, in all likelihood, not the idea of ridding the world of government and freeing up working people to choose for themselves where to shop, who to trade with, what kinds of food to grow and sell, and in general how to live their lives unencumbered by both corporate predators and politicians.
It is not the conventional news media that are to blame for the new image of anarchists. On the internet one can read anarchists happily recounting the actions of the black blocs as they confronted cops, "liberated" intersections, and smashed store fronts. The protestors in Washington chose to call themselves revolutionary anticapitalists, a label they share with marxists of various sorts. In the lead-up to the April actions, there was no critique of government at all, just anti-corporate rhetoric that would appeal to any leftist. And in their press and internet discussions some anarchists even promote an anarchist politics of "municipalism" with taxes, referenda, and all decision-making by various unions and committees which sound very much like local governments. It is hard to find any mention of government's role in creating and maintaining this horrid economic arrangement we all live under.

While corporate capitalism is an enemy of working people, it could not wreak its havoc without the governments of the world to protect its privileges and promote its interests. The WTO is an organ of the various governments that participate in it, not a private organization. The cops so many anarchists enjoy fighting with are employees of the state, not the IMF, and are paid with money extorted from working people. Prison laborors in the united states and china are locked up and forced to work by government agents. Government policy disempowers and robs working people, enabling business owners, bankers, and landlords to dispossess them of the wealth they produce with their labor. Government preserves inequality and privilege and can never be the means of liberating people. This is the anarchist perspective, but it has been sorely lacking among anarchists of late.

Many anarchists, apparently, prefer to promote an image of themselves as anti-corporate activists who enjoy fighting with cops and smashing up businesses of which they disapprove, instead of putting forth a clear anti-statist position which would help others understand what makes anarchists and anarchy unique. It should come as no surprise, then, if people believe we advocate anarchy in its sense of disorder, instead of its alternative meaning of a libertarian world of free individuals and groups leading their lives in peace, without the burden of government on their backs.

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world.std.com/~bbrigade bbrigade@world.std.com
May, 2000

(from p. 28)

On the Web

Discussion Bulletin  www.libertariansocialism.4t.com/
Processed World  www.processedworld.com
Primitivism  www.primitivism.com
Industrial Worker (IWW)  http://parsons.iww.org/~iww
Democracy and Nature; The Greek journal Inclusive Democracy, and the Archive  www.inclusivedemocracy.org
Socialist Party of Great Britain (Reconstituted)  www.spgb.org.uk
The Bad Days Will End  http://www.geocities.com/jkellstadt/index.htm

-fg
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

More about the Discussion Bulletin: 1) We now have a website thanks to the skill and generosity of longtime subscriber Mike Lepore. To access DB 108 and future issues use www.libertariansocialism4.com/.

2) Readers who are imprisoned and have received a sample copy should read the last sentence in "About the Discussion Bulletin" on page 2. It is an attempt to regularize prisoner subscriptions. 3) The DB has copies available of several publications. They will be mailed free of charge upon request. This a personal project and doesn't use DB funds. Among these items are current issues of the following journals: New Unionist, Socialist Standard, The People, and the Industrial Worker; and the winter 1998 issue of the World Socialist Review featuring Ron Elbert's "New Paradigms for Old." a critique of New Democracy. Also, available are a few of each of the following pamphlets: A Ballad Against Work, Reflections on Marx's Critique of Political Economy, and Self-Activity of Wage Workers: Toward a Critique of Representation & Delegation (All three published by Collectivites in Faridabad, India); and a pamphlet edition of chapters 3 and 4, "Anarchist-Communism" and "Impossibilism," from Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. And finally 4) Subscribers will be getting this issue at least a week later than usual because of "technical problems" involving my computer.

Trade Unions and Employment: Partnership or Confrontation is the newest pamphlet of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (Reconstituted). It takes on both the capitalist unions' "partnership of capital and labor" fraud as well as the basic idea of unionism: that our class can solve its problems by organizing and negotiating with our exploiters. Globalization has apparently had the same effect on labor union policy in Britain that it has in the U.S. The union urges workers to put aside their natural hostility toward their rulers. Here is the comment of the Labour Minster in the present Labour Party government:

"The Days of "Them" and "Us" need to be put behind us. Business will only succeed when there is both a common endeavour and a common purpose. The central point is that partnership at work is a far more productive and profitable relationship than adversarial workplace relations... In that way business is strengthened and so too is the whole economy." (Stakeholder Capitalism, 1998 p. 19)

I think that most readers will find little new in it, but it might be helpful to friends who see unionism as the savior of the working class. 80 P (about 1.50) postpaid from The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, London N12 8SB, U.K.

AK Press Distribution – New Titles, Summer 2001. This news comes to DB readers a bit late, although it is still summer as this is being written. AK Distribution remains the largest and least restrictive of the distributors of radical literature as well as T-shirts, CDs, posters and other goods with a possible relationship to radicalism. This 31 page catalog supplements the monster-size catalog published last fall with new items added since then. AK describes its goal "...to make available radical books and other materials, titles that are published by independent publishers, not the corporate giants, titles with which you can make a positive change in the world." Just checking the non-fiction pages, I found a new printing of the Cohn-Bendits' Obsolete Communism: The Left-Wing Alternative, Michael Albert's version of a reconstructed capitalism - Moving Forward: Program for a Participatory Capitalism, two by James Connolly; James Connolly: Selected Writings and a new one - The Last Writings of James Connolly. And those were in just the first few pages. From AK Press Distribution, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612; and AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh, EH8 9YE, Scotland.
What Ever Happened to the Eight-Hour Day? A Working People's Library Publication by Arthur J. Miller. The author once had a shipyard job where he was required to work a 14-hour day, seven days a week for two and a half months, the sort of thing that focuses a worker's mind on the eight-hour day. His 23-page pamphlet takes us through one of these days from get-up to the end of the fourteenth hour including his thoughts from hour to hour. The section on getting up provides some background on the connection between the May 1, 1886 general strike for an eight-hour day in Chicago and the Haymarket Affair. Miller's hourly musings during this long day provide an excellent analysis of a worker's condition under capitalism. $2 from Industrial Workers of the World, PO Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Arguments for a Four-Hour Day by Jon Bekken. This 16-page pamphlet begins by pointing out that today, despite the 40-hour week enacted in 1938, the average worker puts in a 49-hour week. Thus it seems to me that the author has cut the ground out from under his "argument" in the first pages of his essay. It is certainly true, as the author argues, that a four-hour day would decrease unemployment, make for a healthier, happier work force, improve family life, and even benefit our masters by raising productivity. What's to prevent Congress from enacting a four-hour day? And what's to prevent the bosses from working us 49 hours a week despite the law as they do on average now or 14 hours a day as Arthur Miller reports in his pamphlet? In a section headed "The Futility of Legislation" the author makes the point that winning and enforcing the four-hour day depends on workers organized at the point of production. It struck me that a working class able to win the four-hour day by action at the point of production could as easily win the abolition of the wages system. And indeed Bekken goes on to point out that shorter hours will not solve the problems that face workers: "The IWW argues that we should fight not merely to put people to work, but rather that we should organize workers as a class to reorganize society and production in our own interests." No price given. ($2?) From the Boston General Membership Branch, IWW, PO Box 391724, Cambridge, MA 02139.

The Bad Days Will End (Numbers 4-5, Winter-Spring 2001) is "a bulletin advocating communism—the overthrow of capitalism by the international working class, and the creation of a stateless and truly egalitarian society from below by means of autonomous, radically-democratic and voluntarily federated...

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