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DB 112 begins with a Marxist examination of two recent events: the demonstration by anti-globalism groups at Genoa last year and the 9/11 terrorist attack. The author, Max Kolkegg, "... makes occasional comments on events and their deep structure from a Marx-informed and anarchist perspective." He posted this at <www.infoshop.org/news/print.php?story=01/10/12/8923042> Starhawk and Ervin, whose articles are mentioned below, also post their articles on the internet (see the bibliography).

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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After Genoa and New York
posted by Max Kolstegg on Friday October 12 2001 @ 08:02AM PDT

AFTER GENOA: REFORM OR REVOLUTION?

It would be hard to deny that the events in Genoa were, as Starhawk has said, a major watershed in the history of the movement to create a livable world. The repressive forces of capitalism were in full display, so that even the most pacific of pacifists received a salutary shock and have been forced to reevaluate the rationality, if not the righteousness, of their strategy for social change. The near-murderous assault on the sleeping place of the Genoa Social Forum and the Independent Media Center on the 21st of July will go down in infamy. The skulls cracked there may change more than a few minds about who and what we're dealing with, and how best to proceed.

Useful analysis of the crackdown in Genoa by Starhawk, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin and others has pointed to some of the lessons that need to be learned. The capitalist class has shown remarkable solidarity and class consciousness in developing a strategy to repress the "anti-globalization" movement, both by force and by trying to split the movement where it is weakest, the division between its revolutionary and reformist wings. Some revolutionaries are pacifists, and the events in Genoa are not likely to turn them into reformists (although they may kiss their pacifism goodbye). But the main efforts expended by the police, politicians and media have been directed to splitting the reformists away from the revolutionaries by literally creating an image of violent, out of control "anarchists" who are ruining the party for everybody and should be shunned or constrained. And their strategy is a good one, as shown by the numerous calls for "self-discipline" from self-appointed leaders of the reformist wing like Kevin Danaher of Global Exchange. The fact is that a significant part of the movement is composed of people who seek to be recognized as leaders and spokespeople of various segments of the lower orders; by threatening to "put the masses in the streets" and make business as usual impossible until their demands are met, they hope to get a place among the powerful.

But then there are the revolutionaries as well. Although at present they are fewer in number than the reformists, it's just possible that they have a better understanding of the nature of the situation we're in and what we're up against, and a better idea of the appropriate strategies to pursue: strategies to destroy capitalism, not reform it, because it cannot be reformed. For the movement to go forward, it must remain united as one solid force opposed to capital's plans. Capital wants to split it and conquer it by division, its age-old method. The solution? The reformist wing of the movement needs to recognize the futility of reform, throw off its leaders with their aspirations for power and prestige, and become revolutionary itself.

The Veils of Capitalism

Once just one mode of production among others (although from its birth marked as very different), capitalism has now become a "totality", a Global Machine of exploitation, domination and destruction. As Genoa showed so starkly, it permits no effective opposition and allows only minor reforms, and must be itself destroyed if the planners ecosystems and life forms are to have a future. For a short while yet, the hope still exists that if people wipe away the obscuring veils that capital puts up over its horrific face and body, they will see it for what it is and will collectively find the will and nerve to drive a stake through its heart.

Perhaps the most effective veil hiding the true visage of the monster is the very notion that it can be significantly reformed. The tidal wave of promotion of "fair trade" and "green capital" by reformist critics is quite successful in deluding people into devoting their energies and resources to hopeless struggles for minor palliatives. But there is no such thing as "fair trade", when the workers who produce the commodities that are "traded" are exploited in every country by virtue of their condition of wage slavery;
unfairness is ineradicable under capitalism. Without a critique of the inherent unfairness at the very root of capitalism, reformist leaders of the "antiglobalization movement" appear to be primarily concerned with getting the capitalists and ruling elites of undeveloped nations a better deal from their bosses in the industrialized countries.

A fair wage or a "living wage" won't eliminate exploitation either. In fact, many reformist heavies consider even this demand too extreme; their non-profit organizations largely depend upon underpaid workers. "Debt relief" won't solve the problem; "generic AIDS drugs" won't; "campaign finance reform" won't; nor will "Free and fair elections", or "corporate welfare reform", or "universal health insurance", or "public transit", or "the new urbanism." All of these reforms together, implemented to the degree fantasized by their most passionate advocates, would hardly slow the destruction of the world by capitalism.

And how would these reforms be implemented and enforced? Through some giant increase in the controlling powers of states, or perhaps of supra-state organizations, say a "reformed", super-powerful WTO. (It was the state we saw in action in Genoa.) A high proportion of the leaders of the reformist organizations are wannabe managers of capital (in Europe, Social Democrats, Socialists and Communists, with long track records of capital management in the past, and in the US, liberals and Greens trying to reverse the "turn to the Right" and take the reins). Their "critique" really consists in little more than complaining that the wrong clique is at the controls and that they themselves would do a much better job. They would claim to want to raise wages a bit, make them "fair" if possible... only to find that it's just not possible, sorry! Fortunately, the large numbers of people they rely on for their prominence have no such intention and may be open to a genuine critical analysis of the crisis we face.

For those concerned with genuine change, change in the core content of social life, not just a new label on an old scam, the task at hand is to leave the naked body of capital exposed to view. Even naked it will be a formidable power, but it is really rotten at the heart. It is unsustainable (think global ecocide), it is suffering from an accelerating profit crisis (the coming worldwide crash), and its mesmerizing powers are failing. In Genoa, the task of stripping the veils away got off to a good start. Let's take it a bit further.

The Illusion of Naturalness

Capital presents itself as a state of nature. The story goes that human societies have always bought and sold commodities, sought profit and wealth, and been divided into rich and poor. Evolutionary theory is invoked to claim that societies evolve like organisms, in a struggle for existence that has selected for mass, hierarchical states and empires which can survive in the natural battle of all against all. Today we simply enjoy the good fortune of living in the world historical victor in this perennial fight, Western Civilization (sometimes called Democracy). With the fall of the Soviet Union, we are told, history has come to an end. We have reached a condition of social perfection! This whole story is a tissue of lies, easily disproven. It is dinned into our ears throughout our lives, by parents, teachers, bosses and media, to make sure we adjust to our situation and to shut off questioning.

Capitalism is a unique form of society with a specific birth place and time, late medieval England. Some earlier societies in some places did exchange commodities, and some of these used money as a medium of exchange to facilitate the process, but they were not capitalist. In capitalism for the first time material production is undertaken not for the provision of the needs of the society (with frequent normal surpluses exchanged with neighboring societies), but exclusively for the continuous expansion of profit: the accumulation of value. In pre-capitalist societies, even those based on slavery, production was for the purpose of meeting people's needs. Accumulation of wealth was achieved by warfare and conquest, not by ever-expanding material production. But first in England, and from there spreading over the entire world, a cancer grew that took over the metabolism of the social body.
Some of the more sophisticated ideologists of capitalism, economists and historians, admit that capitalism is a recent form of society and claim that it got its start in Europe through the slow growth of merchant wealth in the "free cities" that resulted from "trade" between them. The point of this story is to emphasize the peaceable naturalness of the process of capital accumulation, in fact nothing could be further from the truth. Capitalism got its start when lords in rural England realized they had both the physical power and the incentive to evict the peasantry from the land they occupied as tenants and from the forest and grazing lands they held in common, and did so. On these "enclosed" lands the lords turned to maximized sheep production to make wool for the European market. The peasants were forced into the surrounding towns and cities as indigents with nothing but their ability to work to exchange for survival. The proletariat was born at the same moment as production for profit, and the two have been wedded in a death struggle ever since.

The main point here is that capitalism is a distinctive, indeed highly unusual, product of a specific historical situation, and bears little resemblance to the many other social forms people have experimented with over time. It is the only social formation in which all human activity is devoted to the production of continuously expanding profit. In most societies down through history production was undertaken to supply basic needs, and the whole sphere of material provision was subordinate to other social objectives, which varied from society to society. Sometimes the principal objective was the concentration of power, as in Egypt under the Pharaohs or Imperial Rome, but even this social distortion did not lead to ever-expanding demands for labor and materials. On the contrary, the goal of these power-oriented systems was stasis and stability, not internal growth; expansion was through conquest.

But power-oriented societies themselves have been rather rare in history. Vast regions of the world and long spans of time never witnessed the growth of mass, centralized societies. Ancient Greece, to cite an obvious example, was a society of city-states, scaled to a human dimension and without the incentive, by and large, to aggregate into an empire. Production of material needs in the Greek city-states and the surrounding countryside was primarily for local consumption, with only a limited amount of production of luxuries for trade with neighboring areas. Instead, tremendous energies were devoted to arts and crafts, poetry and philosophy, science and technology, in ways so imaginative and creative that we still are dazzled by their achievements. In no arena is this more true than in their experiment with and development of truly democratic forms of social organization, reaching a level of popular participation in meaningful decision-making never attained again by their cultural descendants.

The history of capitalism since its beginnings in the English countryside has been bloody and sordid. The process of Enclosure of common lands eventually spread throughout the British Isles right up through the 18th Century, and similar seizures of peasant lands got underway, with a substantial delay, on the European mainland. Britain had a strong head start, which meant that its development of industrial production utilizing the labor of the newly-created proletariat was also well in advance of similar processes in France and Germany, enabling it to maintain a superior navy and control the seas. With this advantage Britain built up an Empire on which the sun never set, and into which it introduced the same land seizures and capitalist social relations as had developed in the home country. Other powers, mostly European, were not far behind, and a race was on to carve up the world into competing empires.

Auto-Paralysis

Miraculously, a small number of indigenous groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America are still resisting the penetration of their ancestral forest or mountain strongholds by the forces of capital and the state, but they are under severe threat. (In some cases NGOs singing a song of "sustainable development" are acting as the spearhead of this penetration) With these exceptions, however, capitalism is a global system; there is no country on earth which has eluded its grasp. The present "globalization debate" for most participants is an argument over details of its administration. It's a fight over crumbs, really. Should nation states be
permitted to maintain legal protections for large internal constituencies, or should such laws be finally removed to permit absolutely unrestrained movements of capital?

With the planet on the verge of ecological collapse through deforestation, ozone depletion, soil loss, chemical pollution, and global warming; with plant and animal species undergoing a catastrophic rate of extinction, orders of magnitude greater than in any natural period of "great extinction" of the past; with languages and indigenous cultures dying out rapidly; with human hunger, disease, war, racism, sexual and child slavery, and rape and other forms of violence against women all at crisis levels over much of the world, its clear we don't have a lot of time to dicker over minor palliatives. We need to kill capitalism before it kills off the entire planet. So why aren't we proceeding straight to the task at hand? Because capitalist society, in addition to its massive physical coercive powers, has perfected mind control.

People raised in modern capitalist society are subjected to forms and processes of mystification from birth to death: authoritarian or decentered parents; prison-like schools, and tyrannical workplaces, all presenting themselves as natural, unquestionable and inevitable, and all permeated by toxic mass media pollution. The great majority of people buy into it completely; they develop the "social character" of capitalism. It is a shroud worn over the body of each individual person, which has the magical property of obscuring what they see and transforming it into its opposite. Absolute dominance of market forces is "freedom". Hierarchy, patriarchy, authority, deference, private wealth, money and a life devoted to consumption, recreation and other forms of mindless infantile narcissism all feel cozy and natural. We have adapted to our social environment. We reproduce it every day. We are our own cops. We pass on the blow. We beg for favors or mercy from those above, and torture those below. Capital's got us right where they want us.

Perhaps it's necessary to respond to the point often made that many of these aspects of capitalist society are as old as the hills, and must derive from "human nature". Religious fundamentalists and reactionaries in general, for example, believe men are naturally superior to women physically and intellectually, so that patriarchy is natural and has always existed in all societies (or if not in some particular case, it should have!). But this should just tip us off to the inseparable connection between patriarchy and religion. Organized religion is above all a system of social control that is designed to render male domination "natural" in the eyes of its subjects, men and women. It has been highly successful for thousands of years, and has simply been appropriated by capitalism and maintained as a prop to its operations (remember the Protestant Work Ethic?). Even as capitalism takes over all inherited, traditional social forms, it transforms them; the father morphs from the symbol of God in the family to the representative of the Boss. But the fact is non-patriarchal societies have existed (and may indeed still thrive in some remaining tribal enclaves), disproving "natural" male superiority.

Capital has inherited as well a few thousand years of social hierarchy, authority and deference. Such a social structure seems so familiar and inevitable that anything else is almost unthinkable. In Classical Athens, however, it needed to be defended, and was not simply taken for granted; in "The Republic" Plato makes Socrates score one of his cheap points by remarking how you certainly wouldn't want to be on a boat where the course was chosen by majority vote of the farmers on board rather than by the captain who knew all the many dangers lurking in wait to sink the stupid democrats. Equality is nice in theory but it doesn't work! So just get used to having a boss, to rich people, bureaucrats or technical specialists making all the decisions, and bow down!

Marx and His Enemies

Capitalism goes one better, however, over past structures of social hierarchy and domination, by hiding its reality under false appearances. The market is promoted as the realm of free exchange of equal values. Even leftists at antiglobalization protests chant about "fair trade" and "lair wages", subscribing to the
capitalist myth that the market could be, if only the right people (e.g., themselves) were in charge, a neutral arbiter of value and mechanism of "trade" of equivalents. These illusions live because the nature of exploitation under capitalism has been successfully obscured. Capitalism's apologists, practitioners of the charlatanry of economics, have worked overtime for the last 125 years to hide the source of value, human labor, from view.

That the source of the value of a commodity is the human labor it contains was known to Aristotle, over 2300 years ago. Political economists of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, including Adam Smith and David Ricardo, who attempted to understand developing capitalism objectively and scientifically (even if their class allegiances lay with the "rising bourgeoisie") also knew that the source of value is human labor. They failed, however, to explain the source of profit, the Holy Grail of their efforts, for the discovery of which they were unworthy. But then along came Karl Marx, who carried their analysis through to its logical conclusion, discovering the source of profit in "surplus value", the portion of value created by human labor that is appropriated by the capitalist for his own enrichment.

On the surface the "exchange" between the capitalist and the worker seems to be a 'fair' one. The worker agrees to work for the capitalist for a certain wage, and is paid what his or her "labor power" (i.e., ability to perform the particular kind of work involved) is worth on the "labor market". In general this wage is more or less equivalent to the value of the commodities the worker needs to "reproduce" his or her labor power (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) so that the work can continue day after day. But as Marx carefully shows, there is a hidden component to the transaction, an additional value which is appropriated entirely by the capitalist. This "surplus value" derives from the quality possessed uniquely by the commodity "labor power": its living, creative, human force, which has been channeled into the commodities it produces by the relations of domination and subervience that are maintained by capitalists as a class over working people. Simply put, workers create more value in a unit of time spent working than they receive as a wage for that time, even if that wage is "fair" or "a living wage". The difference goes entirely to the capitalist and enriches him or her, while the worker, like a rat on a treadmill, never gets anywhere.

Capitalism, then, as explicated with precision and clarity by Marx, is most fundamentally a system of "social relations of production" which maintains the social domination of the capitalist class over the rest of humanity by the imposition of wage labor (or, for some categories of workers, salaried labor). The surplus value appropriated by the capitalists is converted, by sale in the market of the commodities in which it is embodied, into its money form, the source of profit. The key process of social control under capitalism is continual "value accumulation", in which profits are reinvested in new cycles of production to expand the system on an ever larger scale.

Unfortunately for the capitalists, however, the system is fraught with ineradicable tendencies to break down, the most acute of which is the tendency of the profit rate to fall as the mass of accumulated value grows. The rate of profit falls over time as more and more value is embodied in machinery and materials while the relative proportion of value devoted to wages and salaries falls. Because of the competition between capitalists they are forced to reduce their production costs to a minimum, and the primary means to do so is to reduce living labor power with machinery and automation. But since the only source of new value is that human labor input, the result is the inevitable reduction in the proportion of new surplus value to the mass of value already accumulated.

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall over time leads to repeated economic crises, which appear as "overproduction" problems at first, then as recessions and depressions. Productive capital takes flight into stock speculation, finance, and other forms of fictitious capital (as well as new sectors of production, where possible), which does nothing to restore profitability for capitalism as a whole but merely redistributes the agony among sectors. (The world has been in a continuous and worsening profit crisis since the 1970s; the barrage of media hype about "prosperity" over the last few years has been a campaign to obscure the ever-
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...deeper ill in living standards of the vast mass of humanity and the destruction of the natural environment, while capitalists have abandoned productive activity for speculative stock and financial investments.)

When Marx broadcast his discovery to the workers of the world in "Capital" and other writings, the whole field of political economy was abandoned by the ideologists of capital and a new truly dismal "science" was born, economics. Since Marx the main effort of economics has been expended in the attempt to hide the source of value and profit. Marx's Labor Theory of Value and concept of surplus value are sharp weapons in the hands of the proletariat, enabling them to see how exactly they are ripped off by capitalism and where the system's weaknesses lie. Marx's achievements were bad news for the masters, and their lives have never been the same since. They don't sleep well.

Marx is not easy to read quickly; he takes application, so today with attention deficit disorder so widespread he doesn't get much attention. His name has also been associated with his enemies with totalitarian state capitalist regimes like the Soviet Union, Communist China and Cuba, sullying the reputation of the man who has contributed more than any other to the understanding of capitalism and of post-capitalist society as well. Nowadays it is required for people to show their post-Marxist credentials. Anarchists especially believe that Marx was a bad guy, because of arguments he had with Bakunin (a 19th Century Russian anarchist) and because his name has been glued to the monstrosities of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao and Fidel to put over the lie that the regimes were "workers' states". But put anarchist polemics and vulgar Marxism aside, and actually read Marx himself, and a very different man comes through: not only a brilliant analyst of capital and a great literary artist ("Capital", volume 1, [the only volume he saw through to the press] is a great work of art), but even perhaps the greatest theoretician of anarchist thought as well.

Marx, like numerous socialists before him, had a vision of post-capitalist society that today stands condemned by Right and Left as "utopian". He considered the term "socialism" to designate a condition of freely-associated people in a society without social classes based on differences in private possession of wealth and control over the means of production of material needs. Decisions about what to produce, how much to produce, and how to carry on the productive process are made by everybody able to participate and interested in participating, democratically. Bureaucrats, technocrats and bosses no longer exist; they've been "consigned to the dustbin of history". People are equals again, as they used to be. Money and markets are also non-existent; there is no attempt to exchange equivalents, but simply to provide for everyone's needs. Everything is free for the taking. Abundance rules, not scarcity as in capitalism. Marx's vision, it must be admitted, has little in common with the states associated with his name.

The Left Bastion of Capitalism

The rump of "actually existing socialism", still hanging by a thread in Cuba and perhaps elsewhere (North Korea?), and still promoted by nostalgic, aging leftists remembering the good old days of the Soviet Union and the Second World, is a fossilized remnant of the previously widespread but now defunct form of capitalism properly designated as state capitalism. The difference between private (or corporate, or monopoly) capitalism and state capitalism is merely one of the degree to which the state controls the process of production and distribution of commodities. Commodities, that is, products of human labor containing value and surplus value, that are produced by wage workers who do not receive the full value of the products of their labor in exchange (because this value is greater than the value of their wages) but are forced to surrender a portion of it uncompensated to the controlling elite, are the basis of state capitalist society as much as they are of private capitalism.

Although these state capitalist regimes were promoted as "Socialist", in fact they were (and are, where they still survive) forms of capitalism which were forced on essentially peasant-based societies, in a far more rapid and brutal manner than occurred in Western Europe in preceding centuries. The assaults on the
Russian and Chinese peasantry by the dictatorial regimes of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Mao resulted in millions of deaths by starvation, execution and labor camp incarceration, on a scale fully equivalent to the Nazi Holocaust. (This well-attested fact is denied by a few remaining apologists for these regimes, such as the unrepentant Stalinoid Michael Parenti.) Both eastern Communism and western Nazism/Fascism show the extremes to which capitalism will go to maintain control of refractory workers. The really impressive aspect of these bloody regimes was the scale of their operations. But with their eclipse the underlying processes of expropriation, domination and exploitation haven't really changed. Ask peasants under assault today by armies and paramilitary death squads in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. These mopping up operations of capital proceed at full pace, funded and organized by the power centers of global capital, in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin and Tokyo.

Those Anarchists!

Although the New World Order is presented as a harmonious cross of Democracy and the Market, its underlying reality is quite the reverse. An accurate characterization would be something along the lines of State-imposed Corporate Oligarchy (SICKO), that is, tyrannical rule of a tiny elite maintained by the brutal physical force of states and the total penetration of psychological control mechanisms. Genoa and its aftermath provide a clear and succinct snapshot of its operations: ruthless crackdown on dissent, pathological application of torture, and a continuous blitz of defamation and denunciation, while behind the scenes the state planners develop new levels of integration and surveillance to suppress future resistance. Now let's ask ourselves again, what exactly do we hope to achieve by pleading with the sickos to let up on us a bit? One image says it all: helpless people at the Díaz school raid, raising their empty hands in signal of total submission, yelling "pacifist, pacifist" as their skulls were mercilessly cracked open by the Fascist foot-soldiers of capitalism.

Anarchists have been warning us about the state for a long time, and trying, rather ineffectively, to keep it at bay. In the past they tended to focus on it almost exclusively, as the hypertonified form of social hierarchy and institutional coercion. But nowadays many anarchists are savvy to the context in which states operate, and recognize with Marx that the states modern role includes more than simple suppression of rebellion. Under the conditions of modern capitalism the state is the principal organ for planning capitalism's predations, both against people and the planet, where all capitalists have common interest and the goal is maximal exploitation, as well as the ever-present tendency of the different private concentrations of capital to devour one another wherever possible, a process that requires some overarching control if the "anarchy of capital" (Marx's term) is not to result in imbalances and undermine the profitability of capital as a whole and the security of its rule.

The nation-state is the dominant form historically, but we may be witnessing the growth of new supranational states at present, such as, potentially, the World Trade Organization. It looks like the obvious candidate for this distinctive role, the United Nations, can't serve this function on behalf of capital, as it no doubt would be willing to do, because its structure permits too much sunlight. The new supranational state(s) will be highly secretive. Their task is not an easy one. Global coordination of capital will have to find a way to control the excessive ambitions of individual capitalists and regional blocs which are in a condition of perpetual competition. The largest multinational corporations, despite their far-flung operations, still, for historical reasons, maintain strong ties to their nations of origin and have supported regional planning efforts (NAFTA, the FTAA, the European Union, etc.) to increase the physical territory over which they can maintain uncontested control. Unfortunately this raises the competition to the regional level as well, with the development of contending blocs, mainly the Americas (under the domination of the United States), Europe (with Germany in the drivers seat), and East Asia (where Japan seems to have an edge over China). This breakup of the globe into regional factions was accurately foreseen by George Orwell in "Nineteen Eighty-Four".
The reformists in the "anti-globalization" movement are, whether they admit it or recognize it or not, statist. The solutions they propose and the reforms they seek all presuppose an increase in the interventions of states into social life. They operate with a false analysis of the state as essentially distinct from and potentially opposed to corporations and capital. But in fact the state, in all its modern forms, is a "function" of capitalism. This is perfectly obvious with sickos like George W. Bush or Silvio Berlusconi, but is no less true of Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin, Fidel Castro, Lionel Jospin or Hugo Chavez. Right or Left, the heads of state are dedicated to capital heart and soul. It's not like these individuals have a choice; they merely supervise the inherent functions of the state, above all the maximizing of profit. All over the world, wherever a leftist party is in power, it is assiduously enforcing the "structural adjustments" (what an Orwellian term) of the IMF or World Bank. In this regard the historical Left has been a racket every bit as criminal as the Right. Only the anarchists and a few genuinely revolutionary currents of Marxians have held out against the state as the only possible form of social power. The revolution we need, which will actually solve the problems we face rather than intensify them, must be one in which capitalism in all its forms, including states of all types, is destroyed.

Revolutionary anarchists and Marxians envision social power exercised through a wide variety of local social forms (such as general assemblies of people living together in a neighborhood, or workplace assemblies or councils of people working together on a specific project of social production), organized horizontally rather than hierarchically into larger citywide, regional (even bioregional), or larger groupings. They propose forms of direct democracy to replace the bogus representational "democracy" so beloved of statist. To protect themselves from domination and exploitation people need to keep power in their own hands. Men evenly distributed in this way power loses its power of coercion, while retaining its power of constructive application to all the many tasks and problems of our planetary life.

The Movement Didn't Start in Seattle

Because of the narrow range of political discourse permitted by capitalism these radical, genuine solutions just don't get a hearing. The whole subject is taboo. The corporate control of the mass media exercises an overwhelming suppressive influence on the free expression of ideas. Schools and universities train students to conform, not to think critically. Perhaps most crucially, we are conditioned from the cradle to accept capitalism as it presents itself, the pinnacle of human freedom. So, for most people who, for whatever reason, remain unable to buy into the big lie completely, it is extremely difficult to break out of the mystifications maintained by Left and Right alike. They can't see past the screen of what is deemed "possible" to what is actually "necessary". And the special irony is that what is necessary is indeed "possible".

Repeatedly in human history people have organized themselves to throw off the yoke of domination by exploitative classes or states. The history of our struggles for lives of equality and fellowship simply isn't taught in schools or shown in Hollywood movies. But numerous examples exist of successful resistance to predation and plunder from above or abroad. Some of the more notable and recent periods and places of real freedom were the Paris Commune of 1871; the early years of the Russian Revolution before the Bolsheviks eliminated all internal opposition (especially in the Ukraine where Makhno's anarchist army fought off the Reds, the Germans, and the Whites simultaneously, in Kronstadt, and among the Greens of the Tarnov forests); revolutionary Morelos liberated by Emiliano Zapata's indigenous irregulars; and Catalonia and Aragon in 1936-37 where workers organized to defend themselves against the Spanish colonial army led by the fascist Franco, and proceeded to run factories and farms without bosses, priests and in many places, money. In all these cases people took the opportunities presented to them by an unpredictable, sudden decrease in the repressive forces maintained by the state, due to conditions of a wider war. Paris proclaimed its liberty as the Germans under Bismark were conquering the rest of France. The Russian Revolution broke out as the Tsar's armies bogged down on the eastern front in World War 1. Zapata's successful years-long liberation of Morelos and surrounding areas south of Mexico City was
possible because the Mexican army had its hands full elsewhere. And the Spanish Civil War provided the opening for an anarchist-inspired society to flower into existence for a considerable length of time. Why was this so, and do we have to wait and hope for war to present us our chance?

States have always had to rely on their armies, police, prisons and work camps to keep revolution at bay. Until the 20th Century, they didn’t have much other than religion as a form of psychological control. Most countries through the 19th Century had largely peasant (or “family farm”) populations engaged in the straightforward process of producing their own sustenance and other material needs without engaging in the mystifications of wages work. Peasants or small farmers, or city workers recently displaced from their lands, have a very clear understanding of the role of capitalism and the state in seeking to rob them of what independence they possess, and have had an ineradicable predilection to resist. They have generally existed as intransigent, unpersuadable populations. When, unexpectedly, the power of states to keep them down has declined (usually because of the outbreak of war), people have frequently organized themselves rapidly into genuinely liberated areas. The states then have had to crush them when they could return to business as usual; the salient feature of these “reactions” has been their extraordinary savagery, followed by silence. But with the recent development, especially since World War II, of sophisticated mind-control techniques such as radio, television, and other forms of the mass media, and the steady penetration worldwide of enclosures and the stripping of peasants and farmers from their lands, the dynamic of resistance has changed.

We’re Mad As Hell and We’re Not Going to Take It Anymore

The events of May and June, 1968 in France show that war is not a necessary precondition for the power and authority of the state and capital to crumble and dissolve. There wasn’t even a recession. People, led first by students, then factory workers, and finally as a mass, just woke up to the empty misery of their lives and said all together, “We’ve had enough!” For two months the country was paralyzed; DeGaulle and his racket were laughed at and ignored, and even the Communist Party was exposed as the prop of property. People set up barricades in cities all over France; held massive general assemblies to decide how to proceed; and began to talk to one another in ways previously unthinkable. It all happened as the taboo against analysis and discussion of the capitalist nightmare fell away. The sleepers awoke in the light of a new day and saw the hideous true face of their master, who, like the Wizard of Oz, was desperately pulling levers and belching smoke, intoning over and over “Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.” And, eventually, it worked; the smoke and fog, the mirrors and mystifications gathered around so thickly that people lost their way and returned to docile obedience and mutterings under the breath.

A very similar process of awakening is now underway, only instead of France the entire world is in ferment. Capitalism and the state are undergoing the anguish of delegitimation across the planet. As the profit crisis of capitalism has deepened since the seventies, the rate of exploitation has been raised cruelly worldwide. The misery of the late sixties pales in comparison to the situation we face today. Our backs are to the wall everywhere, and were fighting back, or starting to, everywhere as well. And the illusions the Capital-State requires, the fetishes of authority, hierarchy, patriarchy, money, market, and servility are collapsing all over the globe. A revolutionary current is gathering and growing stronger despite the obstacles and barriers repeatedly erected to stem it.

This is not the time to put our energies into microscopic piecemeal reforms. The capitalist class and its servants running the repressive apparatus have wagered everything on one last desperate attempt to construct an indestructible fortress of domination, and they’re losing their gamble. Our chance is now. We have little time to prevent global ecological devastation and preserve a world worth living in. It’s time to raise the cry again, “We’ve had enough!” Neither slave nor master!
ADDENDUM

After 9/11: On War and Revolution

After the catastrophic loss of life in New York City and Washington DC on September 11, we are told, "nothing will ever be the same". The media say this over and over, ostensibly to suggest that once and for all the naive innocence of America has been shattered by an evil previously beyond its imagining. Now unhappily the country must detour for a long while from the happy, normal paths of life its treasures, and "rid the world of evil doers". The subtext here, and the real news, is the assault now to be unleashed on privacy and political expression. Nothing will ever be the same in the new police state being erected before our eyes.

The overwhelming carnage and the instantaneous assault of the US government and the corporate media on the social psyche have disoriented many people. In a time of intense crisis, however, it is more important than ever to think clearly. We can compound the damage and greatly aid our enemies if we lose our nerve or our ability to adapt to changing circumstances. We have to be realistic, we have to understand our situation and the forces we are up against. A good first question to ask is who are the beneficiaries and who the victims of the attacks in New York City and Washington DC?

The beneficiaries seem very few and the victims potentially numberless. The Bush administration and the US state obviously benefit tremendously, as does Sharon's regime in Israel and Palestine. Both of these states are now freer than before to attack, kill, arrest, imprison and torture anyone they want to, without let or hindrance, or even criticism. (An obvious and plausible inference is that the attack on September 11 was a Mossad operation, employing "holy warriors" of the Islamic Jihad or related groups as they have in numerous such operations in the past, and enabled by some secret arm of the Bush apparatus. Many unexplained facts fit into such a hypothesis.)

Among the losers, beyond the Palestinians, the Afghans and Muslims in the US, are the "anti-globalization" and anticapitalist activists, so recently setting a global agenda, having survived the fascists of Genoa and emerged stronger than ever, ready to press forward in DC at the end of September. Already movement activists are being branded "terrorists" by government officials and media mouthpieces, in preparation for a no-holds-barred war to "rid the world of the evil" of political dissent and action. As Starhawk so accurately said shortly after Genoa, they will be coming for us individually in the night. Starhawk, in her very real wisdom, for which we must be thankful, saw further and sooner than most. But now the truth she expressed is plain for all to see. Behind their barricades the Sickos in Genoa put the final touches on their battle plan. War is our future.

But now remember something else. As indicated above, war has been the opportunity for genuine social revolution repeatedly down through history. When states wage war, unexpected things happen: all bets are off. As the violent state crackdown in Genoa showed, and the massive preparations for "global war" against an unstated enemy now prove, our masters are desperate and ready to risk all. We simply need to prove to them what poor gamblers they are. Don't lose your nerve, and keep your wits about you.

Further Reading

On the events in Genoa: articles by Starhawk and Lorenzo Komboa Ervin are posted at <genoaresistance.org>

On reformism vs revolution: Paul Mattick, "Reform and Revolution", chapter in "Marxism: Last Refuge of the Bourgeoisie?"
On the historical beginnings of capitalism: Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Origin of Capitalism"; "History or Technological Determinism?", chapter in "Democracy Against Capitalism"


On Marx's critique of capitalism and utopian vision: "Capital", vol. 1; "The Grundrisse"; Maximilian Rubel, "Rubel on Karl Marx"


On Zapata and Morelos: John Womack, "Zapata and the Mexican Revolution"; Samuel Brunk, "Emiliano Zapata"


On France, May-June 1968: R. Greigore and F. Periman, "Worker-Student Action Committees, France May'68"; Murray Bookchin, "The May-June Events in France" In "Post-Scarcity Anarchism", Vladimir Fisera, "Writing on the Wall"; Andrew Feenberg and Jim Freedman, "When Poetry Ruined the Streets"

On war and capitalism: Paul Mattick, "The United States and Indochina", in Root & Branch, ed., "Root & Branch: the Rise of the Workers' Movements"

www.teartbalancedown.com

< The So-Called Evidence Is a Farce By Stan Goff! Employers 'using attack to shed unwanted staff'>

(From p. 31)

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BALANCE February 23, 2002 $ 215.13

Fraternally submitted,
Frank Girard
[Note: Last May when DB reader James Plant wrote to the "Ashbourne Court" Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) requesting information about its program, he was sent several issues of its journal, *Socialist Studies*. Number 3, contained an article written some twelve or thirteen years ago as part of its ongoing polemic with the "Clapham" (SPGB) from which it had recently parted as a splinter group. Titled "The Socialist Party's Anti-Marxist Friends in the Socialist Labour Party," it concentrates on what the AC-SPGB sees as efforts by the "Clapham" SPGB to minimize its differences with the SLP. Noting inaccuracies in the article, Plant wrote to the Secretary, Cyril B. May pointing them out. He received a letter in reply written by a party member. Then a few months later this letter was published in *Socialist Studies* (number 42, Winter 2001) as an article, "The SLP: A Reply." Unfortunately Plant's letter to May was not published, preventing the SS's readers from learning just what the AC-SPGB was replying to.

In the following pages the *Discussion Bulletin* is publishing the entire exchange including the unpublished reply to Cyril May as well as Plant's concluding letter.  

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**THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S ANTI-MARXIST FRIENDS IN THE SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY**

The August issue of the *Socialist Standard,* "Official Journal of the Socialist Party," referred to the Socialist Labour Party of America as "our political cousins in the U.S.A." It is additional evidence of how far the Clapham-based organisation has departed from the principles and policies of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which, at its foundation in 1904 and for many years afterward, was in total opposition to the American S.L.P. and its main spokesman, Daniel De Leon. The article, "What Next in Yugoslavia?", dealt with the communications problem the Yugoslavian government faced because of the existence of different groups of the population speaking different languages and described how the Tito dictatorship handled the problem. The article had this to say:

"Interestingly enough, our political cousins in the U.S.A., the S.L.P. grappled with this problem in trying to spread the Socialist message amongst Balkan immigrants .... so, perhaps forty odd years before Tito's similar efforts .... a parallel development was brought about by the voluntary efforts of mostly self-educated working men and women".

What brought the S.P.G.B. into active conflict with the American S.L.P. at the beginning of the century was that two years before members of the Social Democratic Federation left it to form the S.P.G.B., other members had left to form, in Scotland, the British S.L.P. modeled on the American party. Two issues prominent in the opposition of the S.P.G.B. to the American S.L.P. were their support for reforms and their eventual opposition to political action after having at first supported it. In 1905 the American S.L.P. supported the formation of The Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W) and later broke away to form another industrial organisation. At the I.W.W's first convention Daniel De Leon, editor of the S.L.P. journal *The People,* and author of several pamphlets sold by the two S.L.P.'s, stated the party's position:

"It does not lie in a political organisation, that is a party, to take and hold 'the machinery of production',"

and further: "The situation in America...establishes the fact that 'taking and holding' of the things that labor needs to be free can never depend upon a political party."

(For further information on the S.L.P.'s opposition to political action see - the Socialist Standard,
November 1930). The policy of the S.L.P. in the U.S.A. and Great Britain was dealt with in the S.P.G.B.'s Manifesto (second edition. 1911. page 6), from which the following is an extract:

In trade union matters the S.L.P. have blindly followed the lead of the American S.L.P. Contradicting their original teaching that political action was all-sufficing for the emancipation of the workers, they now try to found a British branch of an American industrial union. They hold that Socialism will be achieved by 'direct action' on the part of such a union. This is an Anarchist deviation. They do not accept the Socialist position of Marx and Engels that 'the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy.' - The position of the S.L.P. is, in their own words, that 'the Socialists' will not first 'come into power, and then win possession of the means of production; they will gain possession of the means of production through the Industrial Union and their 'power' will result from that possession'.

Then there is the question of programs of reforms or 'immediate demands.' When the British S.L.P. was formed it had such a programme. Following criticism by the S.P.G.B. it was dropped, but the American party continued theirs. It had a list of 15 'Social Demands' and a further list of 6 Political Demands. The first list included the demand for the Federal Government to nationalise 'railroads, canals, Telegraphs, telephones and all other means, of public transportation and communication'. It also included a demand for 'the United States to have the exclusive right to issue money.' The second list demanded among other things, 'municipal self-government' and proportional representation. The aim of these 21 demands was 'with a view to immediate improvement in the condition of labour'.

The platform of the American S.L.P. opened with the following high-falutin waffle:

"The Socialist Labor Party of the United States, in convention assembled, re-asserts the inalienable rights of all men to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With the founders of the American Republic we hold that the purpose of government is to secure every citizen in the enjoyment of this right; but in the light of social conditions, we hold, further that no such right can be exercised under a system of inequality, essentially destructive of life, of liberty, and of happiness.

(A Handbook of Socialism W.D.P. Bliss, 1907, pages 141-2)

For the Socialist Party of Great Britain formed in 1904 there was no doubt or ambiguity about its total opposition to the S.L.P.'s anti-political policy and reformism, as shown in the S.P.G.B. Declaration of Principles. It contains no list of 'immediate demands' and it states in Clause 6 the need for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local.

The people who now control the Clapham based Socialist Party have changed all that. It was spelled out in the Socialist Standard (May 1990) in an article headed 'An American Marxist', which reviewed a book on Daniel De Leon by Stephen Coleman. The author of the article says of De Leon that he stood for the principle 'of Socialism and nothing but', forgetting to mention the long list of immediate demands that De Leon campaigned for on the S.L.P platform.

It says too that De Leon's "distinct brand of Marxism and party organisation is still extant today." His and the S.L.P.'s brand of "Marxism" was certainly "distinct" since it repudiated Marx's insistence on the need for political action for the conquest of power, as set out in the Communist Manifesto.
"The first step in the revolution of the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy."

Note also the contrast between Marx's statement in the New York Tribune 25 August 1852 about the carrying of universal suffrage in Great Britain that it would inevitably be "the political supremacy of the working class" (see Socialist Standard March 1930) and De Leon's statement in 1905 at the inauguration of the I.W.W.:

"If any individual is elected to office upon a revolutionary ballot that individual is a suspicious character. Whoever is returned elected upon a programme of labour emancipation; whoever is allowed to be filtered through the political inspection of the capitalist class; that man is a carefully selected tool, a traitor to the working class, selected by the capitalist class." (Socialist Standard November 1930).

De Leon and the S.L.P. backed up their anti-political attitudes by claiming that Marx said: "Only the Trade Union is capable of setting on foot a true political party of labour and thus raise a bulwark against the power of Capital." They were challenged repeatedly to say where Marx is supposed to have made this statement so out of keeping with his published attitude, but failed to answer the challenge. (See Socialist Standard January 1930). It should also be observed that the S.P.G.B. was not "set on foot" by a trade union.

The article in the Socialist Standard May 1990 said that the contribution to socialist thought of Daniel De Leon has been neglected over the years "and that he influenced the founders of the S.P.G.B." What contribution did De Leon make to socialist thought unless his to-ing and fro-ing over political action and his repudiation of Marx on political action can be regarded as a contribution. The article makes no mention of the numerous articles in the Socialist Standard analysing and criticising De Leon and the S.L.P. The notion that a man and a party, which were content to campaign on the S.L.P.'s wooly, muddled, contradictory and reformist "platform", could have influenced those who drew up the lucid, compact, informative and logical S.P.G.B. Declaration of Principles is laughable.

The article in the Socialist Standard May 1990 then lets the cat out of the bag by disclosing what the Socialist Party is now putting in place of the Marxist Socialist policy of the S.P.G.B.'s founders. It is "Socialist industrial unions," the policy of the two S.L.Ps. De Leon is quoted:

"He asserted the need for an economic wing of the socialist movement and put forward a three-stage theory of revolution: socialists winning the battle of ideas; victory at the ballot box, and socialist industrial unions supplying the economic might to enforce electoral victory and worker's power."

It will be observed that this is like the policy of the British S.L.P outlined earlier in this article, in the quotation from the S.P.G.B Manifesto; but with a difference. In the British S.L.P. version victory at the ballot box will not come first. What will come first will be that socialists will first "gain possession, of the means of production through the industrial union."

These views were discussed at length by the founders of the S.P.G.B who realised the impracticality and dangers of the idea of industrial organisations attempting to seize control in the face of the agents of 'law and order' including the armed forces. Industrial unionism is now presented in the Socialist Standard as if it was something not considered and rejected by the founder members.
It presents a problem for the Clapham-based Socialist Party. Logically they would need to adopt a new Declaration of Principles, particularly Clause 6. What about adopting the American SLP platform quoted earlier, with its nonsense about 'The Founding Fathers'? But they do have the alternative of carrying on as they have been doing for several years, that is keeping the old Declaration of Principles unchanged but in practice behaving as if it did not exist.

-Socialist Studies No. 3

Mr Cyril E. May
General Secretary, SPGB
71 Ashbourne Court
Woodside Park Road
London N12 8SB

Dear Cyril:

Thank you for all the literature that you have sent me following my request of 17 May. I have not yet had a chance to read everything in Socialist Studies, but I have read a selection of articles. My provisional judgement is, that like the curate's egg, it is "good in parts". However, it is rather bad in parts also. Very bad in parts.

One of the first things that I noticed was the description, in more than one issue of your journal, of the Discussion Bulletin of Grand Rapids, Michigan, as an anarchist publication. In fact, started by expelled SLP members, it is a socialist discussion publication. In its pages you will find contributions from De Leonists and anti-De Leonists, from "Petersenists"; De Leonists like the De Leonist Society of Canada, from council communists, from situationists, from the occasional avowedly anti-socialist, like ex-SLP member and ex-employee of the American SLP National Office, Ken Ellis; indeed also from various anarchists and "libertarian socialists," but also from the Clapham based Socialist Party and also from your organisation! In other words, a very broad based discussion forum. Maybe you would not class it as a socialist discussion forum, but it is definitely not anarchist.

Next I was dismayed to see the untruths told about the Socialist Labor Party of America in issue No.3 of Socialist Studies. On page 11 of issue No.3 it states: "...the American party continued [with reforms or 'immediate demands']. It had a list of 15 'Social Demands' and a further list of 6 'Political Demands.'" You then list some of these demands. The fact is that you are quoting from the 1896 National Platform of the American SLP! In 1896 Daniel De Leon, Henry Kuhm, Lucien Sanial and others started a campaign to eradicate such demands from the SLP programme and for the adoption of a completely new, revolutionary socialist Platform. A turning point was De Leon's 1896 address Reform or Revolution. Let me quote a few passages from that address:

Reform means a change of externals; revolution - peaceful or bloody, the peacefulness or bloodiness of it has no figure whatever in the essence of the question - means a change from within....Whenever a change leaves the internal mechanism untouched, we have reform; whenever the internal mechanism is changed, we have revolution....
We socialists are not reformers; we are revolutionists. We socialists do not propose to change forms. We care nothing for forms. We want a change of the inside of the mechanism of society; let the form take care of itself. We see in England a crowned monarch, we see in Germany a sceptered emperor, we see in this country an uncrowned president, and we fail to see any essential difference between Germany, England or America. That being the case we are sceptics as to forms. We are like grown children, in the sense that we like to look at the inside of things and find out what is there....

The struggles that mark the movement of man have ever proceeded from the material interests, not of individuals, but of classes. The class interests on top, when rotten ripe for overthrow, succumbed, when they did succumb, to nothing short of the class interests below.... Revolutions triumphed, whenever they did triumph, by asserting themselves and marching straight upon their goal. On the other hand, the fate of Wat Tyler ever is the fate of reform. The rebels, in this instance, were weak enough to be wheedled into placing their movement in the hands of Richard II, who promised "relief" - and brought it by marching the men to the gallows.

You will perceive the danger run by movements that - instead of accepting no leadership except such as stands squarely upon their own demands - rest content with and entrust themselves to "promises of relief." Revolution, accordingly, stands on its own bottom, hence it cannot be overthrown; reform leans upon others, hence its downfall is certain. Of all revolutionary epochs the present draws sharpest the line between the conflicting class interests. Hence, the organisation of the revolution of our generation must be the most uncompromising of all that have appeared on the stage of history. The programme of this revolution consists not in any one detail. It demands the unconditional surrender of the capitalist system and its system of wage slavery; the total extinction of class rule is its object. Nothing short of that - whether as a first, a temporary, or any other sort of step - can at this late date receive recognition in the camp of the modern revolution....

The resulting struggle within the SLP culminated with the 10th National Convention in 1900, which removed all the immediate demands or reform planks from the SLP Programme! Ever since the American SLP has had but one demand: the unconditional surrender of the capitalist class and the establishment of socialism.

As an indication of the consistency of De Leon's and the SLP's position on reforms let me quote a passage from pages 191-192 of De Leon's Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress:

With guile, or innocent purpose, the effort is often made to blur "revolution" Into "reform," and reform" into "revolution"; and, with innocent purpose, or with guile, the attempt is not infrequently made to stampede the argument into an acceptance of the blur by holding up "cataclysm" as the only alternative. Dismissing the "argument" of cataclysm as unbecoming, and the "cataclysmic threat" for mere phraseology that it is, the point of contact between "reform" and "revolution" - meaning by the latter the Socialist Revolution - lies too far back here to merit attention. They are "horses of different colour," or, dropping slang, children of different parents. The line that separates them is sharp. "Reform" infers a common ground between contestants; "revolution" the absence of such ground. The two terms are mutually repellant in social science. Socialism is nothing if not revolution. There is no common ground between contestants. With Socialism, on the one hand, and the system of private ownership in natural and social
opportunities, or class rule, on the other, each stands on ground mutually abhorrent. The two cannot deal, barter or log-roll. They can meet only to clash, and for extermination.

I enclose for your information material from the SLP organ The People dated June 2000, which gives details and background on the removal of reforms by the SLP from its programme in 1900. In this material you will also find details of the departure of the reformist elements from the SLP who merged with Eugene V. Debs' Social Democratic Party to form the opportunist "Socialist" Party of America. Also enclosed is an Editorial by De Leon from the Daily People dated Aug 27, 1912, confirming the SLP's anti-reform stand. Also in the photocopies that I am sending you is the text of the 1896 Platform that was replaced in 1900, and which you falsely imply in your journal has always been, and still is, the SLP stance.

For the text of the introductory words of the SLP Platform you quote a book published in 1907. The impression is given, even if not explicitly stated, that this kind of cobblers is still in the SLP Platform. I believe that this wording was still in the 1900 platform, I do not have a copy to check. In the 1904 and 1908 Platforms the words "With the founders of the American Republic" have been removed. In the 1902 and subsequent Platforms the entire passage has been removed. If your article was not a deliberate attempt to deceive (I am fully prepared to accept that it was not) then it indicates very shoddy scholarship on the part of the author, a cavalier disregard for accuracy and the verification of facts.

As additional evidence of your misrepresentation of the SLP position on immediate demands and reforms I enclose three additional Editorials by De Leon (August 1910, June 1911 and September 1912) that I have downloaded from the SLP's Web Site.

I also enclose material from the December 2000 issue of The People giving details of the struggle waged by the SLP against revisionism and opportunism within the Second International, as this is germane to the attitude of the Party to reformism and compromise. Also enclosed is a copy of Daniel De Leon's Ten Canons of the Proletarian Revolution, which you can keep (it is the concluding part of De Leon's Two Pages From Roman History, first published on 1903. Maybe you will disagree with some things in this pamphlet, but I hope that you will agree that it does not reflect a reformist or "immediate demand" position on the part of the SLP. Moreover, the lessons and philosophy of the Ten Canons has been among the central guiding principles of the Socialist Labor Party of America to this day.

You also imply that the American SLP eschews political action and use of the ballot. This is simply not true. The SLP has always held the position that the class-conscious, socialist, working class should use the ballot and the might of its industrial organisations in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society. You, of course, can take issue with this position and hold that the political ballot alone is sufficient to effectuate the transition from capitalism to socialism. Taking note of one of the lessons that Karl Marx drew from the experience of the Paris Commune, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes," the SLP takes a contrary view to yours. While you are entitled to hold a different perspective to Marx and the SLP on this question, you cannot be justified in distorting or misrepresenting the SLP stand by implying that the SLP does not attach much importance or significance to political action and the ballot.

Indeed, the break from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was over this very question of the importance of political action. The IWW was captured by anarchists and syndicalists who threw out the
political action clauses of the IWW programme. After the break from the IWW some in the SLP, and many supporters who were not party members, argued against De Leon’s insistence that political action and the ballot was of vital importance in the struggle for emancipation. A collection of letters to The People and De Leon’s answers to them was reprinted as a pamphlet entitled *As To Politics*. Therein he argues trenchantly and with insistence that the use of the ballot is fundamental to the program and tactics of a revolutionary socialist party. I enclose a copy of *As To Politics* (which you can keep) so that you can judge the SLP position first hand. I would also like to quote a few words from De Leon’s address given in Minneapolis just two days after the Founding Convention of the IWW, and subsequently published under the title *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*:

De Leon insisted that the political movement was vital because it renders the working class accessible to Socialist education and agitation. “It affords the labour movement the opportunity to ventilate its purposes, its aspirations and its methods, free, over and above board, in the moonday light of the sun, whereas otherwise, its agitation would be consigned to the circumscribed sphere of the rat-hole.” By presenting the issue of Socialism on the political field “it places the movement in line with the spirit of the age, which...demises the power of [conspiracy] in matters that not only affect the masses, but which the masses must themselves be intelligent actors...” “In short and in fine,” said De Leon, “the political movement bows to the methods of civilised discussion: it gives a chance to the peaceful solution of the great question at issue.”

Incidentally, in the Socialist Studies article, Issue No.3, page 11, you draw attention to an article on the SLP in the Socialist Standard of November 1930. Could you please supply me with a photocopy of this article?

Of course you are entitled to disagree with the programme, policy and tactics of the Socialist Labor Party of America. I have done so very sharply myself in the past when I have been of the view that they have made mistakes or taken up an erroneous stand, and maybe I shall again in the future, but my criticisms would relate to the here and now, or the recent past, not to long since discontinued programmes and practices which bear no relationship whatsoever to the SLP of the last 100 years or so!

Since the positive turning point of the year 1900, when all reform demands were removed from the Party Programme, the SLP has nonetheless over time made a number of mistakes and misjudgements (none of them relating to any tendency towards reformism or a reluctance to take part in electoral campaigns, etc.), all of which should be analysed and criticised. Starting around about the mid 1970’s the SLP got to grips with most of its mistakes and shortcomings of the proceeding years, openly admitting errors and setting in motion steps to overcome shortcomings. Although considerable progress has been made it must be said that, in my view, it has not been completely successful in all its endeavours in this regard. However, I am of the opinion that it has made sufficient positive steps in distancing itself from, and correcting, major errors to warrant support, provided that support is combined with constructive criticism, and also encouragement to those in the Party who are striving to ensure that remaining shortcomings are recognised, openly discussed and rectified.

There are real and genuine differences between your Party and the SLP. You are entitled to highlight and get to grips with these differences. Analyse, criticise, and combat things that you judge to be in error if you see fit. But base any criticisms of, or opposition to the SLP’s programme and practice on its actual positions, tactics and conduct. Do not manufacture a straw man, that is then easy to knock down, made up of data that is 100 years out of date.
I did say that I found some good things in your journal. It was good to see you bringing attention to three neglected classics: The Origin Of The Family, Private Property And The State, Anti-Dühring (a marvelous book which is unfortunately out of print at the moment in English, but it is available on CD-Rom and can also be downloaded from the internet), and also to Morgan's Ancient Society. (You state that it is hard to get, but it can be ordered in a paperback edition from the American SLP). You may be interested in the two articles that I have photocopied from The People on Morgan's work that I enclose with this letter. On the question of admiration for Lewis Henry Morgan and his work your organisation and the SLP have much in common as you will see.

I look forward to your response to the above.

Yours for Socialism

Jim Plant

THE SLP: A REPLY

Dear Mr Plant,

Cyril May, General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, has given your letter to the Editorial Committee for a reply. Obviously your letter is too long for publication in Socialist Studies but we hope our reply covers the issues you raise.

In your letter you raise two points: first, the description of the US magazine, Discussion Bulletin, as an anarchist publication and, second, the impression given by an article in Socialist Studies No 3 that the Socialist Labour Party of America continued with reforms or immediate demands when, in fact, the 10th National Convention in 1900 removed them from the SLP's programme.

1. Discussion Bulletin

We are aware of the De Leonist background of Discussion Bulletin and of the various groups who appear on its pages. However, the legitimate question we ask of these organisations is what are they there for to discuss? As you rightly say, it is not the Socialism advocated by the Socialist Party of Great Britain with its stress on conscious political action by a Socialist majority through parliament to capture the machinery of government.

The majority of the groups either cited in Discussion Bulletin or who take part in discussion on its pages are supporters of various forms of direct action, including the Clapham Socialist Party with its new idea of "imaginative non-violent direct action", whatever that means.

We also draw your attention to the statement on the inside front cover of Discussion Bulletin which officially declares that: "the DB is affiliated with the Industrial Union Caucus in Education" and that it is a forum for "the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, non-statist, libertarian socialists". Anarcho-statist is an anarchist/Bakuninist slur on Marxism, and libertarian is simply a modern term for anarchist.

The SLPB has long commented and criticised various forms of direct action. In an article, Marx, Lenin and Direct Action, we said that:

"The SLP position led logically to Anarchism, for if politics was a shadow and a reflex only, as they
claimed, and if the real power lay in the industrial field, why bother with shadows, and why not go in for the substance of economic action. And that is just what happened." (The Socialist Standard, November 1930.)

Three months later another article, "Industrial Unionism", appeared in the Socialist Standard. The article reviewed a 19-page letter from a Mr Clausen, an ex-Socialist Labour Party member criticising the SLP's political "gymnastics". The article in the SS (January 1931), among other things, commented on:
"De Leon's anarchistic utterance that the emancipation of the workers must be achieved by workers "Through an economic organisation of the working class without affiliation with any political party". (The quotation is from Mr Clausen's letter.)

The writers in Socialist Studies who referred to Discussion Bulletin as an anarchist journal, therefore, were writing in the tradition of the Party that saw the logic of the De Leonist/SLP position as that of being indistinguishable from anarchist programmes of direct action. Both articles are enclosed for your information.

2. The Socialist Labour Party

With regard, to the article in Socialist Studies No 3, you misunderstand the background in which it was written. The Clapham-based Socialist Party published an article in their party publication (August 1991) that referred to the SLP as "political cousins" of the SPGB. "Cousins" refers to the respective offspring of brothers and sisters of common parentage. As a metaphor this is used to try to establish the point that the SLP and the SPGB, from the start, had much in common - implying that an alliance could be established now. This we dispute. As a historical fact, when the SLP was established in Britain in 1903, it adopted a list of "immediate demands" (The Socialist, July 1903). The following year, when the SPGB was founded, the SPGB rejected that reformist line (see SPGB Manifesto, preface to fifth edition, 1911, p 5).

The issue has been resurrected by the Clapham-based Socialist Party, as they seek to legitimise their rejection of the SPGB's position and move towards alliances with libertarian and direct action groups (see Non Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed M Rubel and J Crump, pp 48-53). To achieve this, they are having to re-write the Party's history, and deny the fact that, from the start, the SPGB opposed the SLP for its reformism and later, for its industrial unionism. The key point at issue is (and was) the De Leonist and SLP insistence on industrial unionism rather than class-conscious, democratic political action as advocated by the SPGB from 1904 onwards.

De Leon's legacy has been conveniently summed up by, Frank Girard (DB 108). He writes:
'The revolution will be carried out by the mass organization of the working class - the socialist industrial unions, which will enforce the victory at the polls by the real revolution, the occupation of the workplaces and their conversion into social property ... As the IWW puts it, "We will build the new society in the shell of the old". And as the SLP slogan of the 1930's and 1940's, put it, "All power to the Socialist Industrial Union" (pp 28-29).

The point of the article in Socialist Studies was to indicate that when the SLP was established it did have a reform programme prefixed to its object, but when the SPGB was established in 1904 it did not. So how could they be cousins? The unique revolutionary characteristic about the SPGB in 1904 was that we drew up an Object and Declaration of Principles that aimed at socialism and nothing but Socialism.
Another criticism of the SLP and De Leon was their insistence that Marx had given textual support to industrial unionism. The SPGB constantly asked the SLP for evidence of where Marx gave his support (see "The Socialist Labour Party Runs Away," Socialist Standard, January 1930). We are still waiting for the evidence.

The SPGB, at its formation in 1904 was highly critical of the Socialist Labour Party and early Socialist Standards carried articles opposing Industrial Unionism. The SLP was also criticised in the SPGB's Manifesto (second edition 1911, page 6). In the passage quoted in Socialist Studies No 3 the criticism levelled against the SLP is not at their immediate demand programme but at their strategy of direct action, which, incidentally, is described as "on Anarchist deviation".

The author of the article in Socialist Studies No 3 also quotes from A Handbook of Socialism by W D P Bliss, written in 1907. It is in this book that the 1896 Socialist Labour National Platform with its immediate demands is cited. Unlike the SLP in Scotland who dropped their "social and political demands" after 1904 under pressure from the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the Socialist Labour Party in the US continued their demands for another four years until 1900.

We are well aware of the SLP's history. There was no attempt to deceive. Perhaps, in retrospect, the time frames in which the writer was discussing the two parties could have been more explicitly stated. However, the issue addressed by the article was not the history of the SLP but to show that there was no kinship between the SLP and the SPGB.

(From Socialist Studies No. 42, Winter 2001–71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Rd, London N128SB)

12 December 2001

Dear Mr May:

When I received Richard Lloyd's "reply" to my 6 June 2001 letter to you on the subject of the SLP my first reaction was: "Who is he trying to kid? I hope that it is not me?" My second reaction was one of feeling very dispirited by its failure to acknowledge any meaningful deficiencies in the articles on the SLP in Socialist Studies that I had brought to your attention and by its smug and insular sectarianism.

After receiving issue #42 of Socialist Studies I now realise why Lloyd's "reply" was so peculiar: It was not a reply at all, but was intended for publication as one more exercise in a campaign of one sided knocking of the SLP and De Leon. Publishing your "reply" without publishing the letter that it was "replying" to may be your idea of a public debate and exchange of ideas, but it is not mine.

A Kafkaesque situation. The "court" gets to hear the charges and the "prosecution's" case against the SLP (your original articles). It then gets to hear the "prosecution's" final summing-up (the item in the current issue of your journal). The "jury" (your readers) then have to decide on the merits of the case without ever hearing the intervening case for the "defence" (my 6 June letter). Seeing the way your "scientific socialist" organisation works I do not now have any misgivings about not dignifying Lloyd's piece of hack work with a response at the time that I received it.

Yours sincerely

J. Plant
to: Discussion Bulletin

Fellow Workers,

In the most recent Discussion Bulletin, two minor errors have crept in. Alexis Buss' article on the demise of the Turtles & Teamsters front in fact ends with the reference to turtle soup. What followed was a separate article, not by FW Buss. Similarly, the Libertarian Manifesto reprinted from Anarcho-Syndicalist Review did not include the quote from La Acracia -- it was printed (separated by a rule) to balance out the page.

On an unrelated note, I was somewhat shocked by Frank Girard's review a couple of issues back of my pamphlet on the Four Hour Day. It is one thing to disagree with my position, it is quite another to so grossly misrepresent the argument. Contrary to FW Girard's claim, the pamphlet nowhere suggests legislative action for this or any other purpose. Indeed, as he later notes (suggesting that I, rather than he, am confused) I explicitly note the futility of legislation, arguing that only through direct action at the point of production can real progress be made on this front.

FW Girard may well take exception to my argument, believing along with De Leon that it is impossible to ameliorate our condition until the great day when capitalism is overthrown. It seems clear to me that in fact our conditions have been improved in substantial ways over the last 100 years, even if the capitalists are now in the process of seizing back much of what was gained, taking advantage of our disorganized and misorganized condition. I believe that such gains are a necessary part of the revolutionary struggle, teaching our fellow workers that it is in fact possible for us to materially change the conditions of our existence -- and in the school of struggle we develop both our capacity and our vision. A working class that meekly accepts whatever working hours and conditions the capitalists seek to impose will never find the strength and determination to put an end to their vicious rule.

Moreover, even when capitalism has been overthrown the question of how long we should work, and to what purpose, will remain. The struggle over the work day is at root a struggle to reclaim our lives, a declaration that it is not enough merely to demand a better wage, a refusal to allow our lives to be measured out in dollars or products. Our lives are, in every sense, more than our work, and the struggle to reclaim them is a fundamentally revolutionary one.

For a world without bosses,
Jon Bekken

COMMENT:
First of all, my apologies to Jon Bekken (Editor if the IWW's Industrial Worker) and to DB readers for any confusion I created by adding a separate article to the tail end of Alexis Buss's "Teamsters and Turtles," taken from the September '01 Industrial Worker, as well as a similar mistake in an article from the Anarcho-Syndicalist Review. In all fairness, though, my scanner found them there in the originals.

As to my brief review in DB108 of Jon's pamphlet "Arguments for the Four-Hour Day," nowhere does it claim that Jon advocates legislative action for a four-hour day, although on rereading it I can see that he might think I am suggesting that. My point, though, was that when workers reach a level of militancy such that they can force capital to grant a four-hour day throughout U.S. industry, they are unlikely to stop short of taking over the industries and abolishing capitalism entirely. Certainly he is right
about gains in wages and hours of labor being the result of the class struggle — gains that were
granted by capitalists and negotiated by their labor lieutenants to defuse militancy. Such gains are
welcome though temporary, a fact recognized by both the IWW and De Leon. If Jon has any doubts, he
should check to see how many GM workers in Flint, Michigan are enjoying their gain of a few years ago:
the ban on mandatory overtime. Also, for at least the last thirty years losses have outnumbered gains
both here and worldwide.

—Frank Girard

AS TO PREMISES!

In his Comment on our submission Exploring the Gotha Program (DB110), Frank Girard says: "What the DLSC seems to be saying is
that humanity has been so corrupted by capitalism that it will not
be able to function in a socialist society."

"Seems to be saying"? Nonsense! If Girard will take time to
reread our article he will discover that what we actually said was
as follows: "In our various submissions to the DISCUSSION BULLETIN
we have repeatedly emphasized the moral depravity of the capitalist
class and its lackeys as constituting a prime reason for the impos-
ition of Labor Time Vouchers during Socialism's first phase."

Bulletin readers will be aware that we have been debating the
Labor Time Voucher issue with Frank Girard over a period of several
years. Now, however, Girard serves effective notice that he is
withdrawing from this debate. He does so by setting up a straw-man
premise to replace the LTV premise—a diversionary premise and one
that we did not agree to debate.

Under these circumstances, while we remain convinced that LTVs
are crucial for socialist victory, we can only conclude that any
further effort of ours to convince Girard of their importance would
be counterproductive.

Sincerely,
The De LeOnist Society of Canada

COMMENT:
Consider the quotations from "The Gotha Program" that the De LeOnist Society uses in DB110 to
bolster its claim that labor time vouchers (LTVs) will have to be a feature in the post-revolutionary
society:
(1) "What we are dealing with here is a Communist [i.e. a Socialist] society, not as it developed
on its own basis, but, on the contrary, 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."
(2) "In the higher phase of Communist [i.e. Socialist] society, after the enslaving subordination of
the individual under the division of labor has disappeared, and therewith also the opposition
between manual and intellectual labor, after labor has become not only a means of life but also the highest want in life; when, with the development of all the faculties of the individual, the productive forces have correspondingly increased, and all the springs of social wealth flow more abundantly—only then may the limited horizon of capitalist right be left behind entirely, and society inscribe on its banners: From everyone according to his faculties, to everyone according to his needs!"

I submit that in blindly repeating Marx’s assertion, made 125 years ago—the sense of which is that a post-revolutionary society in its early phase will be both corrupted by capitalism’s mores and unable to produce enough to satisfy human needs—the DLSC is forgetting two basic DeLeonist concepts: 1) that the task of the socialists is to educate our class before the revolution, and 2) that through decades of industrial development under capitalism our class has created the material basis for plenty in a socialist society—plenty that will end the scarcity and resulting insecurity that lie at the root of the greed that marks society under capitalism.

It’s possible, I suppose, that the “capitalist class and its lackeys” could foil the efforts of an overwhelming socialist majority, the working class that has just overthrown capitalism, but of course that was not the problem that Marx foresaw when he wrote The Gotha Program. Marx was writing about a corrupted “society,” which would include the ex-working class. This idea that we will have to be educated to function in a socialist society after the revolution lies at the root of the view that a post-revolutionary society must function as a dictatorship to save us from ourselves and that we need LTVs to prevent us from cheating ourselves.

—Frank Girard

(From p. 2)

Kolstegg has also written an interesting article “9/11: A Desperate Provocation by U.S. Capitalism” available at <http://de.indymedia.org>, which he summarizes as follows: “The War on Terrorism is fraud. It’s purpose is to maintain carte blanche for the ever more desperate agenda of American capital: the domination of the continent of Eurasia, and the crushing of the Left worldwide, especially its anti-capitalist core.” Incidentally I hope readers will excuse the problems the scanner and I had with margins.

The next four letters and articles concern a longstanding political feud between two closely related members of the non-market socialist spectrum: The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Labor Party of America. How the two parties managed to get close enough geographically to carry on hostilities is an interesting story in itself. Around the turn of the 20th century the socialist movement worldwide split between the reformists and the revolutionaries. In Great Britain, many of the Scottish revolutionaries had been influenced by the American SLP and its paper, the People. Instead of keeping their agreement with the London revolutionary group to delay leaving the old party, the Social Democratic Federation until they had gather more support, the Scottish group jumped the gun and organized the Socialist Labour Party of Great Britain. This didn’t endear them to the Londoners who left a year later in 1904. And of course it left Britain with two revolutionary parties. As one might expect, competition for members in the limited pool of potentially revolutionary workers resulted in open journalistic hostilities—at least on the part of the SPGB; I have no way of checking the extent to which the British SLP responded. In America the feud began during WWI when a couple of live-wire SLP members arrived from Britain and organized what later became the World Socialist Party (WSP). Their journal the Western Socialist carried on the anti-SLP mission into the 60s—with no response from the SLP that I can recall. Around 12 years ago two London branches left the SPGB on the grounds that the organization had departed from its original principles. They organized a “reconstituted” SPGB and began publishing their own journal and other literature. The resumption of hostilities by the SPGB(R) is
We Don't Need No Education
We Don't Need No Thought Control

There has been controversy in Kansas over the teaching of evolution in government schools since 1999, when evolution was "de-emphasized" in science teaching at the behest of an elected state education board. Opponents of teaching about evolution consider it just another theory about human development, comparable to that of creationism or intelligent design and feel the state should not favor one of these theories over another in its science curriculum. While this issue seems to be resolved at present since a pro-evolution majority was elected to the state board in 2000, during the debates about evolution no one seemed to be concerned about the broader question of whether the government should be mandating anything, regarding what is taught to students, or even whether the state should be in the business of education at all.

From Christian conservatives to "freethinkers," it appears that most people in Kansas and the rest of the United States favor the continued existence of government schools. Even when people disagree with what or how the schools are teaching, they organize to change only the parts of the curriculum or the methods they dislike, never challenging the very institution of compulsory "public" education: conservative religionists try to get prayer back into schools and evolution out, while atheists try to make the schools god-free, but neither side suggests freeing children from the system altogether. They all agree that it is alright to indoctrinate all students with certain ideas. They simply differ on what those ideas should be. It is rare to hear anyone advocate dismantling the government school system and letting people provide for the education of themselves and their children without the interference of politicians.

The worst thing about government schools is not that they promote this or that incorrect or inaccurate idea, bad as that may be, but that participation in them is forced. Children are required to attend these schools by compulsory education laws, and working people are compelled to support them with tax money extorted from them. While these laws do allow children other education options besides government schools, their parents are taxed whether their children attend public schools or not making private "alternatives" unaffordable to many. And even when parents and children do manage to choose non-government methods of teaching and learning, they are still hounded by the state. Governments presume to license or approve private schools and require home schoolers or deschoolers to present education plans or curricula to education bureaucrats for their approval before they are allowed to educate their children themselves.

Government schools have a mission: to educate children sufficiently that they can function as workers in the American economy, and to indoctrinate them in the ideas important to the continuation of current economic and political institutions. While they often do a lousy job of teaching even basic skills like reading, writing, arithmetic, public schools are quite efficient in promoting loyalty and obedience to government, hierarchical relationships, and conformity among students. Students are forced to pledge allegiance to the government's flag; vote in mock presidential elections; participate in behavior control programs like the cop-run DARE; perform mandatory community service, which is paradoxically called "volunteerism," engage in team-building activities where they are taught to sacrifice their individuality to be part of the group; and, more and more often, wear uniforms. They are forced to attend classes, eat, and even use the bathroom on a rigid schedule. They are encouraged to show loyalty to "their" teachers, "their" class, "their" school, "their" athletic teams. Such regimentation and institutional loyalty set them in good stead for their later lives as employees.

Students are seen as members of groups, not individuals with developmental needs and goals based on their age and grade, not their personal desires and preferences. Students who are bored with school or
can't stand being confined in a classroom are commonly labeled as discipline problems or "diagnosed" with a fake disease like hyperactivity/attention deficit disorder. Children with this diagnosis are then drugged into submission to make them more malleable in the classroom. Same-age groups are all taught the same thing in the same way. Forcing children to associate with others of the same age, whether they share interests or not, promotes conformity with others in their arbitrary - group, instead of individuality and freely chosen friendships and alliances. Students who don't fit in are disciplined and punished by teachers and administrators and/or terrorized and bullied by more compliant "peers."

The disregard in which students are held by the education establishment is demonstrated in many ways. Physical facilities are allowed to deteriorate, doors are removed form toilet stalls, inadequate cooling and heating are provided, and less than nutritious food is provided in cafeterias. Students in Boaz, AZ, were even fed chicken nuggets made from diseased poultry. Out-of-date and inaccurate textbooks are used, incompetent teachers are hired and promoted, and violent students are allowed to attack their more vulnerable fellows. Like prisoners, students are confined in unsanitary, sometimes dangerous, institutions and punished with more intensive incarceration if they rebel. Unlike most prisoners, however, students have done nothing to put themselves in this position besides living in a certain place and being a certain age. It should come as no surprise that so many students leave these places as soon as they are old enough to do so.

Students are routinely denied the due process usually granted to adults accused of "bad" behavior. Zero tolerance policies in regard to guns and drugs in schools result in suspensions of even very young children for "crimes" such as bringing an inch-and-a-half long gun-shaped medallion to school, pointing a chicken finger at a teacher and saying "pow, pow, pow," or giving a nonprescription pain-killer to a friend. In a particularly outrageous incident, five students in Parsons' KS, were charged with conspiracy to "commit murder in December 1999, solely on the basis of a lie told by another student that they were planning to shoot people at school. They were detained for two months and then released into 24 hour adult supervision, despite the fact that their accuser admitted making up the story in February 2000. The conspiracy charges were not dropped until April 14. However, despite this, the students were barred from returning to school, and administrators advocated barring them for the rest of the school year, because their presence would be "disruptive." An object lesson in American justice. Many parents, unwilling to sacrifice their children to the public school system, have turned to non-government alternatives. Private schools often provide a better education in basic skills and sometimes a more varied curriculum, at least in part as a result of the need for these schools to compete for paying customers with a "free" public system. Tuition at these institutions, however, is an added, and at times prohibitive, expense for parents who are already forced to pay taxes to support government education, whether they have children in public schools or not. Attempts to facilitate use of private schools by means of vouchers have been consistently opposed by education bureaucrats, public school teachers, and most politicians, large numbers of whom manage to put their own children in private or better-off suburban public schools. Of course, such vouchers would increase government control of private schools by setting standards that such schools would have to meet to qualify to receive stolen tax revenues, thereby gradually whittling away at the advantages currently enjoyed by private institutions. Despite their better academic performance and less violent environments, private schools even now are still required to comply with various state rules and regulations which stifle innovation and promote traditional curricula. In most private schools, just as in government ones, discipline, conformity, and hierarchy remain the rule.

More and more people are pulling their children totally out of the school system. While education bureaucrats usually require home-schoolers to register with school boards and/or submit curricula, parents can sometimes manage to avoid all contact with education authorities and are overlooked by the system. Some home-schoolers are disciplinarians and force their children to follow a strict curriculum.
Others, however, known as deschoolers, completely reject the model of education and teaching, instead promoting self-directed learning. They see the role of parents and other helpers as simply assisting learners when they lack the expertise or experience to learn on their own or in conjunction with their fellow learners. Such children are encouraged to choose friends and associates on the basis of shared desires and interests, regardless of age, sex, color, and so on. Deschooling challenges categories based on shared group characteristics or identities and promotes individuality and mutual aid. Learning is seen as a joint project of all concerned, with the learners choosing the direction of their own development, viewing the mastery of manual skills as just as important as academic pursuits. In this model, learning is completely individualized, with each child seen as a unique person whose progress is not to be constantly compared to that of others or judged according to some developmental model created by "experts."

The public education system cannot be reformed, any more than other branches of government. It can exist only because the state forces children into schools with its compulsory education laws, confiscates the money to fund them by taxing working people and confounds the efforts of people to create their own alternatives by insinuating itself into private schools and even the homes of those who reject schools altogether. The only solution for the problems of government schools is to abolish them and all other intrusions by government into the lives of individuals. And this will only come about with the abolition of government itself.

From Anarchy in Kansas #2, February 2001, c/o Bad Press, PO Box 3682, Kansas City, KS 66103

(From p. 26)

the most recent in Great Britain. In the U.S. the most recent outbreak was an entire issue of the WSPUS's World Socialist Review a few years ago.

Jon Bekken's letter reproaches me for errors in judgment regarding a couple of reprints from journals he is connected with and a review of a pamphlet he wrote. And I comment. Next the DeLeonist Society of Canada expresses its disappointment at what it seems to regard as my willful misunderstanding of their position on Labor Time Vouchers. Again, I comment.

Anarchy in Kansas is convinced that people don't need no education and makes a good case for eliminating schools entirely, not just those mandated by the state but by any social organization including the family. A part of their argument recalls Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society, which has a similar critique if not exactly the same solution to the problem of education.

Besides an eye catching graphic "noclass2002," like most radical groups, has a excellent grasp of the problems the working class must struggle with. It's all there except the answer to the obvious question: Why? And the obvious answer: the capitalist system. I suspect that it is the refusal to "name the enemy" that made noclass2002's leaflet acceptable to mindful6.org and writers for the San Francisco Chronicle.

As usual we end with some notes, announcements, and short reviews.

Finances

The dismal picture of DB finances reported in No. 111 has changed thanks to the generosity of supporters and an increase in subscriptions and sales. We shouldn't returned to the level of optimism reached a few months ago, though, when I was suggesting that we could anticipate a dividend payment to stockholders. But we have avoided for the immediate future the deficits we ran from time to time until the mid nineties (The last reported in DB77).

(To p. 31)
In the last several months, the US government—in the name of avenging the WTC attacks—has killed thousands of Afghan civilians, triggered a huge refugee crisis, and installed a notoriously brutal regime in Kabul. The conditions under which US capital and geopolitical interests may be served in Afghanistan are created, naturally, at the expense of mass numbers of people. Likewise, the patriotic unity expected of us here following 9/11 has served to conceal and give license to intensified attacks on the lives of working-class and poor people in the US. Patriotism means working people identifying with rich peoples' interests. Within days of 9/11, the government bailed a $15 billion bail-out to the airline companies, while the 300,000 laid-off airline and travel industry workers got nothing. In the past year more than 1.5 million people in the US have lost their jobs—with many more to come. Meanwhile, we're sinking deeper and deeper into debt: the average household's debt load has increased to $8,100 from $3,000 in 1990. The recession is hitting a lot of us hard, and the only real holdover from the boom economy is exorbitant rents. How many of us are one pay check away from the street? Enron, higher health care premiums and millions with no coverage at all, worthless stock options, mass lay-offs, more work for less pay; we're getting screwed! People in Argentina, Nigeria and elsewhere are fighting back against these kinds of attacks. So can we.

CLASS WAR IS REAL!

CONTACT US: NOCLASS2002@hotmail.com

mindfully.org note: The graphic and text above was copied from a flier we found in Berkeley, CA. It is
an extremely intense point of view that all of us should seriously contemplate. It is the stark reality of life for the greater proportion of people around the world. To ignore the billions of people who are hungry and jobless, and continue to demand what are perceived as our God-given rights—SUVS, toxic food, and useless plastic objects—is an increasingly dangerous path to take. Our pleasures are created at the expense of their freedom, environment, society, and health.

"This warning was recently joined by more than 60 Nobel laureates, who in December co-signed a statement that begins: 'The most profound danger to world peace in the coming years will stem from the legitimate demands of the world's dispossessed. Of these poor and disenfranchised, the majority live a marginal existence in equatorial climates. Global warming, not of their making but originating with the wealthy few, will affect their fragile ecologies, the most.'"

From "Trust us, we know what we're doing." Michael Graf & Matthew Orr / SF Chronicle 7Feb02.

In order to understand what's wrong with the world today, each one of us needs only to look in the mirror. At the same time keep the vision of those billions of starving, jobless, and homeless people clearly in your mind. Globalization, led by the corporate elites of the US, is taking a heavy toll on those people and their environment. The ramifications of this unrelenting pressure is being witnessed everywhere. 9/11 brought the action to our doorsteps. Somehow, about 75% of the citizens of the US have missed the reality of its causes. Our cities can no longer be free if we continue to abuse our power. It must be used for peaceful and loving actions that will unite the world instead of tearing it apart. In order for anyone to be free, all must be free.

The two greatest obstacles to democracy in the United States are: first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich, lest we get it.

Edward Dowling, Editor and Priest, Chicago Daily News, 28Jul41

(From p. 29)

Contributions: Joe Tupper (for the abolition of capitalism); Will Guest $11; Richard Evanoff $ 10; Mike Ballard $20; Anonymous $ 7; Monte Throneburg $ 20; Rado Mijanovich $ 100; Walter and Dorothy Petrovich $ 47; William Cashin $20. Total $ 255.00 Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE December 30, 2001 $ 47.02

RECEIPTS

Contributions $ 255.00
Subs and Sales .127.00
Total $ 382.00

DISBURSEMENTS

Postage $ 108.90
Bank Charges 8.00
Printing 36.29
Postage Due 5.70

(To p. 13)
NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

Margaret E. Ahrens, a DB subscriber for many years and a long time member of the Socialist Party of Canada, died March 29, 2001. In a recent letter informing the DB of her death, her husband goes on to say, “With her political friends she worked to make the world a better place to live in for everyone—a world without poverty, war, pollution, etc. She wanted to see a real democracy where the means of life belong to everyone. This has never been tried and is long overdue. Yet another voice for a new way of life has been silenced.”—A.J. Ahrens

The New Internationalist is the U.S. Workers Voice Journal and reflects, according to a covering letter, “serious disagreements with our (now former) allies in the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party (IBRP).” It apparently replaces Internationalist Notes, which had served as the journal of IBRP supporters in the U.S. and continues its numbering. Volume 3, No. 4, the first issue with the new name, carries a revision of “Our Basic Positions” which differs from the earlier version by omitting the reference to the dictatorship of the proletariat, blames the degeneration of the Russian revolution largely on the Bolshevik leadership, and advocates a form of soviet that will prevent the rise of a bureaucracy. The contents include the last in a four-part series, “Marx and Engels on Human Nature” along with articles on the new war: “War on Terrorism or Control of Oil,” the Enron scandal, “Peacemakers or Peacefakers?: It’s Time to Wake Up and Smell the Kofi,” about the role of the United Nations in the present conflict and the ceaseless wars that have followed WWII., articles on the present economic crisis. Single copies $2, a four-issue sub $8 from NI, Box 57483, Los Angeles, CA 90057.

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