About This Issue

DB 117 opens with three articles whose publication is prompted by the anti-unionism of left communist contributors to the Indiscet internet list that opened DB116. A veteran of capitalist union membership as a factory worker and a school teacher, I have no trouble agreeing with their critique of what the SLP called capitalist unions. But the inclusion by at least one list member of revolutionary unions like the IWW with the class collaborationist AFL-CIO unions raised my hackles. Fortunately the current issues of both the IWW’s Industrial Worker and the New Union Party’s New Unionist had articles that spoke to the

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

The Discussion Bulletin is a bimonthly magazine 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.

NOTICE

The Discussion Bulletin will cease publication with number 120, the July-August 2003 issue. From now on it will not accept payment for new subscriptions nor renewals. Subs that expire before 120 will be extended free through the concluding issue. For subs that expire after 120, the DB will refund the purchase price if it amounts to $1 or more. The last issue of your subscription is indicated by the number on your address label. New subscriptions for the remaining issues will be sent free.

All back issues remain available: Nos. 1-8 $2 each. Nos. 9+ $1 each (plus postage).

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A Wobbly strategy for fundamental change

[Following are excerpts from Stoughton Lynd’s speech to the IWW General Assembly Aug 30-Sept 1, 2002. It is taken from the October Industrial Worker, PO Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.]

Different ones of us may use different labels to describe the society that we seek. Whatever label we use, the good society to which we all aspire will be characterized by joint management and shared consumption of the good things of this earth. I don’t think the difficulty we face is defining our objective. ... Our problem is how to get there.

The Preamble to the IWW Constitution speaks of "do[ing] away with capitalism." But how do we do that? Wobbly literature refers grandly to a general strike. Under what circumstances do general strikes occur, and under what circumstances might general strikes lead to the transformation of capitalism into something qualitatively different?

Sometimes it seems that the IWW vision is very nice but also hopelessly abstract and utopian. I know one previously committed Wob who is now a UAW organizer. How many of us, I wonder, have so to speak a respectable second identity that we maintain along with our commitment to a new world arising from the ashes of the old? This kind of personal confusion is bound to happen when we collectively begin to wonder whether we really have a power greater than their hoarded gold, that is, whether we actually have a strategy to do away with capitalism.

That wonderful document, the Preamble to the IWW Constitution, sets forth two concepts that can be building blocks in a strategy for fundamental change. The first concerns trade unions. The second has to do with "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." Let us consider these in turn.

The Trade Unions

The Preamble declares: "We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests common with their employers."

In 1905, these words referred to unions in the American Federation of Labor. In any given workplace, if unions existed at all, there were likely to be a number of them, one for each craft, each with its own contract with the employer. These contracts would have different expiration dates. Hence the existing craft unions functioned to make it impossible for all the workers in an industry to "cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof." The American Federation of Labor was an An can separation of labor, Wobbly insists. The craft unions took from the hand workers their one great power of com action, preventing workers from "makin injury to one an injury to all."

Industrial unionism, it seemed, might be the answer. One of the few industrial unions in the old AF of L was the United Mine Workers. The IWW presented itself as "one union" potentially bigger and more inclusive than the UMW and, miners often became members. According to the late Michael Kozura, an IWW member and a labor historian, in the anthracite mine fields of eastern Pennsylvania from 1906 to 1916 there were as many members of the IWW as of UMW. Anthracite miners, Kozura writes, relied on wildcat strikes and other forms of direct action, refused on principle to submit grievances to arbitration, tenaciously resisted the contractual regulation of their labor, opposed union dues check-off, habitually rebelled against the UMW's dictatorial leadership, and sustained this militant syndicalism into the late 1940s.

Away from the mines, industrial unions had to be created from scratch. Understandably, Wobblies and
former Wobblies threw themselves into building local industrial unions in the 1930s. Len DeCaux wrote of his fellow CIO militants that "when the CIO lefts let down their hair, it seemed that only the youngest had no background of Wob associations." Even when flesh-and-blood Wobblies were not present, local industrial unions in what became the CIO often exhibited a Wobbly style of organizing. The Westinghouse plant east of Pittsburgh is one instance. Just before World War I, Westinghouse workers created an in-plant organization made up of their own elected delegates which cut across traditional craft lines. This organization, in the words of labor historian David Montgomery, "copied the IWW devoting itself to struggles around demands rather than negotiating contracts." More than twenty years later, when the CIO established itself in the plant, bargaining was at first carried on in the same Wobbly manner.

"Managers would meet with the leaders of UE Local 601 to negotiate about such issues as hours of work or layoff policy, There were no contracts; all agreements could be abrogated by either party at any time; and grievances were settled quickly according to the strength of the workers the floor of the plant."

Many CIO locals, not just in anthracite mining and electrical work but in the core industries of rubber, auto and steel, initially opposed written contracts and the dues check-off. I had the privilege of knowing John Sargent, first president of the 18,000 member local at Inland Steel in northwestern Indiana. I heard him give a speech in which he recalled: "Without a contract we secured for ourselves agreements on working conditions and wages that we do not have today ... If their wages were low there was no contract to prohibit them from striking, and they struck for better wages. If their conditions were bad, ... if they were being abused, the people in the mills themselves ... would shut down a department or even a group of departments to secure for themselves the things they found necessary."

The Wobbly practices so widespread in the locals of the early CIO were smothered out from above. Wobblyism was done in, not only by employers, but also by trade union bureaucrats like John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther, and by government bureaucrats, arbitrators and judges. In place of a praxis of direct action created from below, there came into being what historian David Brody calls "workplace contractualism," labor management relationships governed by collectively bargained contracts. No matter how short, these contracts almost always contained a no-strike clause. After World War II a second clause became equally universal: the management prerogatives clause that gave the employer the right unilaterally to close the plant. Within a very few years, the new CIO unions recreated the obstacles to collective direct action that Wobblies had criticized in the old AF of L.

Nothing in the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act) of 1935 required CIO unions to put a no-strike clause in their contracts. Trotskyist organizer Farrell Dobbs showed that over-the-road truckers could organize successfully despite the fact that their first contracts did not give up the right to strike. The establishment of workplace contractualism, with the inclusion of no-strike and management prerogatives language in all but a few CIO contracts, was substantially complete before the passage of the Taft-Hartley amendments in 1947 and the expulsion of leftist unions from the CIO soon afterwards.

The plain fact is that Lewis, Reuther, and most of the other CIO founding fathers deliberately and voluntarily chose to include no-strike language in their contracts. They appear to have done so for two reasons: first, to show employers that they were "responsible" labor leaders who would help to maintain labor peace; and second, to control their own rank-and-file members.

These developments posed a challenge to the IWW. I recognize that because of savage World War I repression and internal difficulties, the IWW of the late 1930s was a shadow of its former self. Nevertheless, the IWW was the logical organization to critique workplace contractualism and to establish a labor left based on a structural analysis of the new unions. It was no accident that when C. Wright Mills published his book The New Men of Power about CIO leaders, in 1948, he placed at the very beginning - as it were, in opposition to all that was to follow - the famous words spoken by Wobblies on the barge Verona as they approached the dock in Everett to reinforce the free speech fighters there in November 1916.
Sheriff McRae called out to them: "Who are your leaders?" They answered: "We are all leaders." leaders." The sheriff's men then opened fire, killing five.

Had the IWW been able to build a labor left in the late 1930s and 1940s, it could have used the words of the Preamble about the CIO. It could have said that the new industrial unions of the CIO were still "unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class." Thus, when a number of these unions struck just as World War II was ending, they were unable to maintain a common front. The IWW could have gone on to say that the CIO unions still fostered "a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars."

Today, this has become especially evident in the relationship between national unions headquartered in the United States and workers in the same industries in other countries. Think of the protectionist policies pursued by the steelworkers' union, the UAW, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, where even the so-called rank-and-file candidate for union president (Tom Leedham) criticizes incumbent Jimmy Hoffa for not doing enough to keep Mexican drivers from crossing the Rio Grande.

Lastly, the IWW could have said in 1945, and could say even more persuasively today, that "the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers." John Sweeney, elevated to the AFL-CIO presidency seven years ago to the cheers of dozens of left-wing intellectuals, has said as much, over and over.

When the IWW missed the historic opportunity to make itself the center of a thoroughgoing labor left, a more superficial kind of opposition filled the vacuum. First were the Communists, in their misguided romance with Phillip Murray. Then came the Trotskyists, all varieties of whom supported Walter Reuther to become president of the UAW. Since 1970, a variety of ex-Trotskyists in entities such as the Association for Union Democracy, Labor Notes, and Teamsters for a Democratic Union have encouraged us to view Arnold Miller, Ed Sadlowski, Jerry Tucker and Ron Carey as latter-day reincarnations of Eugene Debs who would lead workers to the promised land. The names are not important. What is important is the mistaken notion that the way to move toward abolition of the wage system is to elect new, so-called "progressive" personalities as leaders of national trade unions.

There is a name for this strategy: social democracy. Rosa Luxemburg denounced it as "reformism." Lenin criticized it as "economism." Daniel DeLeon called such union leaders "labor lieutenants of capitalism." IWW agitators invented a variety of names—pie cards, scissorbills, Mr. Block—for these same folks and those who believed in them. By whatever name, the social democratic strategy is first to elect new and allegedly better national trade union leaders, and then to create a mass labor party financed by those very men. Social Democracy showed its true colors, once and for all, when the socialist parties of almost all capitalist countries supported their respective national governments in World War I. It is a shame that for the past 88 years we on the labor left have had to contend with various warmed-over versions of this discredited approach to fundamental social change.

In effect, sixty-five years—the period between the end of the 1930s and the present (coincidentally, my entire adult lifetime)—have been wasted. The challenge I put to Wobblies is to do now what you should have done two generations ago: Analyze social democracy from the vantage point of the Preamble. Draw as well on the scattered worker intellectuals who have helped to keep the Wobby critique alive, such as our recently departed comrades, Stan Weir and Marty Glaberman. Reach out to rank-and-file workers to build a true labor left.

Within the Shell of the old

This brings us to the second strategic concept to be found in the Preamble: "forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." Criticizing the trade unions is the easy part of re-thinking IWW strategy, because it is negative. Now come the harder questions. What is the positive alternative to
conventional trade unionism? How do we create it?

The relevant sentences of the Preamble come in its last paragraph: "It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

What does it mean to say that doing away with capitalism is the historic mission of the working class? In Wobbly tradition I think these words are understood to mean that workers can do the job alone. ... But maybe we have been reading the words incorrectly. Maybe "the historic mission of the working class" is not a task that workers can do alone, but a task that cannot be done without workers. I want to suggest that the lesson we should draw from Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa is that both students and workers are required to change the system, and that they should cooperate as equals, as two hands clasped together in horizontal alliance.

The history of the 20th century demonstrates that students are characteristically first in the streets. And this is understandable, given the fact that most students are not yet committed to livelihood and support of a family, and are in a setting and a period of their lives where excitement over general ideas is encouraged. But protest grows to the point that it can threaten fundamental change only when the working class joins in. [Lynd went on to discuss how the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 illustrate this dynamic.]

The Preamble also tells us that by "organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old." Wobblies have taken this to mean that the instrumentalities of revolution will be pre-existing workplace organizations, connected to each other in "one big union," and then acting together in a general strike.

But again, the words can have more than one meaning. They might mean that the in instrumentalities of revolution will be new kinds of structures, created for the occasion. They might mean that when power has passed to the people, these ad hoc bodies will turn to the workers of hand and brain and say: "Comrades, you now have the opportunity to assemble for the task of carrying on production; to gather in those forms of association that you have found through experience to be best suited to your needs; and through them, collectively to run the economy."

And in fact, in the moments of revolution or near revolution during the past century and a half we find that poor and working people did conduct the struggle through the organizations already in existence when the crisis began. Rather they acted through new institutions created for the purpose at hand. Typically, these new institutions brought together all the workers of a given locality and addressed the common interests, the class interests of all workers of that community. Often such bodies originated as committees to administer the general strikes. Typically, as the crisis deepened, the committee would turn to positive tasks such as maintaining public safety, ensuring that essential medical services remained available, guaranteeing a supply of basic foods, and so on. Built from below, gradually taking on responsibility for the whole range of human needs, the network of new organizations became a dual power confronting the existing structure of government.

Such were the Paris Commune of 1871; the Russian soviets (soviet simply means council) in 1905 and 1917; the Italian committees that administered the occupation of factories after World War I; local general strike committees in Seattle in 1919, in Toledo, Minneapolis and San Francisco in 1934, and in Oakland and elsewhere in the United States after World War II; the workers' councils of revolutionary Hungary in 1956; the inter-factory strike committees, first on the Baltic Coast, and then throughout the country, that came to call themselves Polish Solidarity; the workers' assemblies that met each day in France in the autumn of 1995 to decide whether to continue the strike for another day; and the workers' committees that
dismissed local factory managers throughout Serbia in the fall of 2000.

This is what workers do in revolutionary moments. What can be the role of Wobblies? First, Wobblies can foster the kind of class consciousness that emerges spontaneously when workers from different kinds of work and different unions meet to consider their common problems. Second, in the moment of crisis, Wobblies should forego preoccupation with calling something "IWW this" or "IWW that," and instead play the role of catalysts in the formation of parallel central labor bodies. Depending on the particular circumstances, constituent elements of such bodies may include: informal work groups; local unions, independent and otherwise; what Fellow Worker Buss calls "minority unions," that is, groups of workers who think and act together but do not yet represent a majority of their fellow workers in a given workplace; and trusted individuals and small groups of many different kinds.

Paris in 1968 left us the slogan: "Be realistic, demand the impossible!" A few years ago, Seattle, Quebec and Genoa would have seemed impossible. Now the realm of the possible has been expanded...

The practice of solidarity

In place of a conclusion, let me share one final concern. What we are about is a new set of values, the practice of solidarity. Capitalism developed within feudalism as the practice of the idea of contract. What was imagined was a society in which free and equal members of civil society would enter into mutually binding agreements. Thus, the free city. Thus, the guild of artisans. Thus, the congregation of Protestant believers bound together by a "covenant" (a different kind of contract). And thus, the capitalist corporation, its investors, its shareholders. Of course, the reality was and is that the parties to capitalist labor contracts were and are not equal, and therefore the ideological hegemony of the bourgeois idea of contract has always been and still is based on a sham.

Counter-hegemonically we practice solidarity. Solidarity might be defined as drawing the boundary of our community of struggle as widely as possible. When LTV Steel first filed for bankruptcy in 1986, Youngstown retirees debated whether they should seek health insurance only for steel industry retirees or for everyone. They decided, for everyone. When LTV Steel recently filed for bankruptcy a second time, the United Steelworkers of America made the opposite choice: they asked Congress to subsidize the so-called "legacy costs" of the steel industry, not for universal health care. ...

But we must also nurture solidarity, not only in struggle with the powers that be, but also within our own movement. This is very hard but absolutely indispensable. ...

I have the responsibility of carrying on for John Sargent; for Ed Mann, who at meetings of the Youngstown Workers' Solidarity Club would introduce himself as "Ed Mann, member of the IWW"; for Stan Weir, who learned labor history from Wobblies on shipboard during World War II; for Marty Glaiberman. You will have the responsibility of carrying on for me. This is as it should be. This is the deepest and most important solidarity. May the circle be unbroken.

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matter of organizing a different kind of union. Staughton Lynd's speech at the IWW's 2002 General Assembly concentrates on the unrealized potential of the IWW for organizing workers. It speaks well of the IWW that delegates to their assembly would listen willingly to a speech describing their failure to seize the moment in the 1930s and at least give the labor fakers a run for their money. Although Lynd takes into account the destructive results of a two decades of persecution the IWW had endured preceding the unionizing upsurge of the 1930s and also recognizes the success of individual Wobblies in organizing in some of the new industries, the burden of his talk seems to be a description of missed opportunities.

As though responding to Lynd's implicit criticism, Alexis Buss, the IWW's current general secretary, laid out what she sees as a realistic program for organizing workers outside the bounds set up by the political state and the capitalist union movement, bounds apparently designed to hamstring any self-

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Being Union on Our Own Authority

BY ALEXIS BUSS

At the recent IWW General Assembly, I got a chance to be on a panel to share ideas on how to rebuild the labor movement. My talk was on minority unionism. Here are some excerpts:

If unionism is to become a movement again, we need to break out of the current model, one that has come to rely on a recipe increasingly difficult to prepare: a majority of workers vote a union in, a contract is bargained. We need to return to the sort of rank-and-file on-the-job agitating that won the 8 hour day and built unions as a vital force. One way to do this, is what has become known now as "minority unionism." It's to form meaningful, organized networks of solidarity capable of winning improvements in individual workplaces, throughout industries, and for the benefit of the international working class.

Minority unionism happens on our own terms, regardless of legal recognition. It is not about settling for treating a tiny clique of professional malcontents. It should aspire to grow, but in the short term gives an example of what kinds of organization is possible when we decide that our unions are going to exist because we need them to.

U.S. & Canadian labor relations regimes are set up on the premise that you need a majority of workers to have a union, generally government-certified. In a worldwide context, this is a relatively rare set-up. And even in North America, the notion that a union needs official recognition or majority status to have the right to represent its members is of relatively recent origin, thanks mostly to the choice of business unions to trade rank-and-file strength for legal maintenance of membership guarantees.

The labor movement was not built through majority unionism - it couldn't have been. One hundred years ago unions had no legal status (indeed, courts often ruled that unions were an illegal conspiracy and strikes a form of extortion) - they gained recognition through raw industrial power.

When the IWW fought for the 8-hour day in the timber and wheat fields, they didn't decide to prove their majority to the boss through elections. Workers instead held meetings to decide what their demands were, elected shop committees to present those demands, and used tactics such as walking off the job at the end of an 8-hour shift to persuade recalcitrant bosses to agree to those demands. Union recognition in the construction crafts was built through a combination of strikes, direct action and honoring each others' picket lines (the latter not often enough).

The wave of sit-down strikes that established the CIO in auto and steel, for example, was undertaken by minority unions that had a substantial presence in workplaces with a history of agitating around grievances. The unions then drew upon that minority presence to undertake direct actions that galvanized the larger workforce in their plants -and inspired workers across the continent.

Unionism was built through direct action and through organization on the job. But in the 1930s, the bosses found it increasingly difficult to keep unions out with hired thugs, mass firings and friendly judges. Recognizing that there was no way to crush unions altogether, and tired of the continual strife, they offered a deal: If unions would agree to give up their industrial power and instead work through proper channels - the National Labor Relations Board in the United States, various provincial boards in Canada - the government would act as an "impartial" arbiter to determine whether or not the union was the bona fide representative of the workers.

In the short term unions were able to short-circuit the need to sign workers up one by one and collect dues directly. The bosses traded union busters in suits for the gun thugs they had previously employed. And after a short burst in membership, unions (particularly in the United States) began a long-term downward spiral.

Under this exclusive bargaining model, unions do not attempt to function on the job until they gain
legal certification. That legal process affords the bosses almost unlimited opportunity to threaten and intimidate workers, and to drag proceedings out for years. It is a system designed to interfere with workers' right to organize - and the IWW pointed this out when the National Labor Relations Act was passed.

However, while the labor law regime is designed around this majority-designated majority status unionism, it does not actually require it. As long as workers are acting in concert, they enjoy the same basic legal rights - such as those are - whether or not they are in an officially certified union. Indeed, in certain cases they enjoy greater rights, as the courts have ruled that most union contracts implicitly surrender the right to strike. It is illegal to fire members of a minority union for their union activity, to discriminate against them, to fire them for striking, to refuse to allow union representatives to participate in disciplinary hearings, etc. An organized group of workers has legal rights, though it would be a mistake to expect the labor boards to enforce them any more vigorously than they do for unions that have been certified. And an organized group of workers, even if it is a small minority, has much more potential power than unorganized individual workers.

For the most part you have as many legal rights as a minority union as a majority union does - with the single exception of being certified as the exclusive bargaining agent with the sole authority to negotiate a contract. A minority union has the right to present grievances (though there may not be a formal grievance procedure in place), to engage in concerted activity, to make demands upon the boss, to seek meetings, even to strike (though this isn't a great idea if you don't have majority support).

If you pick your issues well and use them as an opportunity to talk with and engage your fellow workers, you can simultaneously fight for better conditions and build the union. In campaigning around issues that matter to your coworkers you are building the union's credibility, you are gaining experience in self-organization, you are learning who can be relied upon, you are establishing that the union is workers on the job and that we're in it for the long haul.

The labor movement was built when groups of workers came together and began agitating over conditions. Sometimes they persuaded their fellow workers to approach the boss and demand that some problem be corrected. Sometimes they refused to work under unsafe conditions or in unsafe ways, and persuaded their coworkers to do likewise. Sometimes they acted on the individual job, sometimes they held citywide demonstrations over issues of common concern, such as working hours or unsafe work.

The important point is that they acted. They identified key issues of concern, they met together, they decided upon a course of action, and they acted upon it. That is unionism in action. It does not require official recognition, it does not require a contract. It requires workers to come together and act collectively.

If unionism is to become a movement again, we need to break out of the current model and return to the sort of rank-and-file on-the-job agitating that won the 8-hour day and built unions as a vital force.

Minority unionism is about forming meaningful, organized networks of solidarity capable of winning improvements in individual workplaces, throughout industry and for the benefit of the international working class. It is a process, a process that offers hope for transforming our greatest weakness -- the fact that our members are scattered in many largely disorganized workplaces -- a strength.

(From the October 2002 Industrial Worker, PO Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101)
Union Empowers Workers to Fight Back & Change Society

The law of supply and demand: When demand is high relative to supply, the price of the commodity rises. When supply is high relative to demand, the price falls. It works for any kind of commodity, anything that's bought and sold in an unregulated "free market." Cars, homes, computers, works of art, stocks, bonds, hogs and toothbrushes -- And you. More specifically, your labor power: your energy, your skills, your intelligence, all of which can be used to produce the cars, homes, computers and all the other goods and services we consume. The greater the supply of your skills in the labor market relative to the demand for them, the lower the price - the lower your wage or salary will be.

When consumers go shopping one big consideration about where they shop and what they buy is price. You want to pay as little as possible for what you're looking for. Employers are consumers too. They want to pay as little as possible for the raw materials, energy, machines and other "means of production" they must buy to produce their product. But they also have to buy a certain amount of labor to produce their product. And they naturally want to pay as little as possible for that commodity as well.

Employers understand the law of supply and demand. The way to lower the price of labor is to increase its supply. Their major means of doing that today is "globalization." Modern communication and transportation technologies make it possible for American companies to set up operations anywhere in the world. This increases the supply of labor they can choose from because now it's not just American workers who constitute the available labor pool. Hundreds of millions of workers in Asia, South America, Europe and Africa are now part of a global workforce employers can consider when they go shopping for labor. U.S. companies not only can leave this country to hire foreign workers, they can hire foreign workers who come here to live and work. Either way, the effect is to increase the supply labor and so lower its price.

The law of supply and demand isn't like a natural law that works on its own, like the law of gravity for instance. Supply and demand is a social law that requires the action of people to make it operate. Competition is the action that makes the law of supply and demand work. When the supply of a commodity exceeds demand, the sellers compete against each other to make the sale by cutting their price. So when the supply of labor exceeds demand, workers compete for jobs by offering themselves at a lower wage. Though competition is praised in our society because it supposedly brings out the best in us, as far as the labor market is concerned competition is destructive of workers' living and working conditions.

But competition is also destructive to business. To compete for sales companies must cut prices, which lowers their profit margin. If the price cutting continues profits are wiped out altogether, and some companies are forced out of business. With now fewer sellers in the market competitive pressures ease. Prices and profits can rise for the remaining companies, which also take over the market share of the failed companies. All is calm - until the next downward phase of the business cycle and a renewed wave of price cutting and business failures concentrates ownership into still fewer yet larger firms.

So what we have is a rising number of workers competing for jobs in a global labor market while the number of companies buying labor decreases. Also, the continual advances in technology allow those corporate giants to produce the same amount with less total labor. In the supply/demand equation, this means advantage to the buyers.

Unionism isn't a new idea by any means. It goes back to the earliest years of the industrial revolution. As the first large factories and mills were being started in the 19th century their owners increased the labor supply by bringing in women and children to work. The results were devastating for the working class—inhuman hours and conditions of work at starvation wages. The capitalists defended their
action as the proper thing to do because it was in accordance with the eternal law of supply and demand. To try to tinker with these natural economic forces was not only futile but immoral as well. And their well-paid apologists in the courageous free press, the truth-seeking halls of academe and the holy precincts of the churches all nodded their wise assent. The propaganda barrage coming from all the "experts" on economics and morality did work to confuse and dampen the rebellion of the workers.

But all the propaganda in the world couldn't change the real conditions of their lives, which were growing worse all the time. The point came where their knowledge of their own condition overcame the false knowledge they were being taught, and they rebelled against the forces that oppressed them. Worker's gained the insight that they were powerless. Their only hope therefore was to confront the employers not as individuals needing employment, but as a collective body controlling the labor that the employers needed. By organizing to withhold their labor from the market they could alter the supply/demand relationship in their favor, and thereby force the employers to increase the price.

Of course, it wasn't quite that easy. First, the workers couldn't withhold their labor indefinitely because they needed to sell it in order to live. If the employer could hold out longer than they could, they would be forced to give in. Second, while the capitalists demanded that the government keep out of the economy and let the free market work unhindered for the benefit of all, when faced with an organized challenge from labor in the economic sphere they demanded government come in to "restore order." And, having already been sufficiently bribed by the captains of industry, the judges and politicians responded with court injunctions, police and troops to crush strikes.

These obstacles caused those first unions that did survive to grow cautious. They concentrated on holding onto the gains they did make without risking them in new confrontations with the bosses. The cautious approach worked best in the organization of skilled workers. As long as employers needed certain specialized skills that only some workers possessed, the unions had some leverage. And by deliberately limiting the number of workers learning the skills and keeping union membership restricted, they could continue to limit the supply of skilled labor and prop up its price.

These craft unions were thus "unions" for themselves only. For the working class as a whole they provoked division, not unity. Their strategy of craft exclusion meant policies of discrimination, especially against blacks and women. The great mass of unskilled workers in basic industry and the service industries were left to fend for themselves.

As the craft unions reflected the selfish look-out-for-number-one-and-screw-everyone-else spirit of capitalism, it was natural that they became capitalist institutions themselves. Their leaders became high-paid professional executives aping the corporate executives they bargained with, and protected their privileged positions through dictatorial control over their organizations. Their members were intimidated and kept in line by the threat of expulsion from the union, which would mean expulsion from their means of livelihood. This was the sad state of the so-called labor movement in the United States when the country, and the world, entered the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The 1920s was the first "me" decade. The economy boomed, and the stock market went through the roof. Everyone, including the mechanic, the farmer, the bellhop and the shoeshine boy, could get rich in the stock market. Or so the story went.

Of course, most workers did not take part in the stock market frenzy. But the mood of the time was look out for yourself, buy things for yourself (on easy credit terms), enjoy yourself and don't think about all the social problems still bubbling beneath the glittering surface. In that individualistic social atmosphere, unionism languished. It wasn't only the stock market bubble that burst in the 1930s. People's illusions also burst as unemployment, unlivable wages, brutal exploitation, malnutrition, homelessness and despair became realities for the majority of Americans. Free of their illusions about the "freedom" of competitive individualism, American workers faced the crisis in their collective lives with a
renewed spirit of solidarity and recognition of the need for collective action. Getting ahead no longer meant climbing over the backs of your fellows, but cooperating together for the mutual benefit of all.

Workers throughout the country wanted and demanded unions. When the backward-looking old craft unions of the AFL were unable and unwilling to respond, a new movement arose to organize the industrial workforce - the CIO. Though the capitalists fought unionization tooth and nail, often with murderous actions against the workers, the collapse of capitalism had so discredited and weakened them that in the end they were forced to give in and recognize the new unions.

The CIO brought unprecedented wages and benefits to workers. Economic organization also gave the workers political muscle, and the capitalists were forced to pay taxes to support social programs such as Social Security and unemployment insurance. None of these gains—many of which today are taken for granted—could have been won without the power of unionism. Still, much more that could have been achieved was not.

The spirit of solidarity and cooperation that animated the working class, consolidated as a social power in unionism, had the potential of changing the economic and social system itself. Cooperation could have replaced competition as the ruling principle of economic and social life. Capitalism's production for profit, in which labor is degraded to a commodity bought and sold like slaves on the auction block, could have been replaced by production for use. By becoming the rightful owners of the nation's industries workers would work for themselves, democratically controlling production and the use of their labor, owning directly the product of their labor.

But instead of this farsighted approach the leadership of the CIO chose to restrain the power of the workers in favor of cooperation and a new partnership with the employers. This was seemingly the safest way to maintain the gains already made and insure the future security of their organizations, rather than to risk them in further conflict with the economic and political forces of capitalism.

The partnership of the old craft unions with their employers consisted of securing employment and better wages for their own members in exchange for allowing—even assisting—the companies' unrestrained exploitation of the unorganized workers.

The partnership of the CIO unions with their employers would consist of giving the companies free rein in exploiting workers in third world countries, in exchange for living wages and benefits for workers back home. The unions also helped these now multinational corporations and the U.S. government fight the Cold War by working with the CIA to subvert "communist dominated"—which meant any militant—unions in those countries.

Just as the capitalist philosophy of advancing yourself at the expense of others had corrupted the craft unions, it corrupted and overturned the initial spirit of solidarity of the CIO. The same kind of entrenched bureaucracy installed itself in the CIO and, seeing their basic philosophical identity, merged it with the AFL. Rather than the enemy of capitalism the unions became its most enthusiastic defender, and for their leaders profitable capitalist business enterprises themselves.

While the bureaucrats imagined they were safeguarding their organizations by becoming part of the system, they forgot that any partnership in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism is always a partnership of convenience. As soon as conditions permitted the corporations would free themselves from the constraints of unionism by stabbing their precious union partners in the back.

Those conditions came about through the continued development of technology. New technologies eliminated more and more the need for specialized skills in industry. No longer dependent on these skilled workers, employers could tell the craft unions to take a hike, or at least dictate terms favorable to capital if the unions stayed. New technologies also made it feasible for U.S. manufacturing companies to flee the U.S. and join the multinational mining and agribusiness companies operating overseas. This gave employers the leverage to bring the industrial unions into line and convert them from the partners to the
patsies of big business.

As the unions had previously granted ownership and control of the technology to business, they were responsible for handing business the weapon it used to reduce them to insignificance. In the 1980s a rank-and-file rebellion erupted against the corporations' labor crushing industrial tactics, and against the sellouts being pushed down workers' throats by the union bosses. Militant strikes broke out in key industries, and it looked as if that old fighting spirit of solidarity was back again. But the rot had gone too deep in the American labor movement. Its own parochial self-centeredness and internal corruption had alienated the very workers it needed to be organizing if only to preserve itself. The solidarity failed to spread to the vast ranks of unorganized workers, or even throughout the union memberships. The struck companies easily recruited scabs to break the strikes. When the government acted with court injunctions and National Guard troops in support of the companies, no public outcry was forthcoming. The strikes were defeated, and the union movement left prostrate.

In the 1990s new AFL-CIO president John Sweeney promised changes. But despite his militant posturing Sweeney's whole approach was to persuade employers to make the unions their partners once again. "Good" employers would see the wisdom of John's advice on their own. Only "bad" employers would have to be convinced by noisy protests by Sweeney's coalition of union members, environmentalists, anti-globalists and "friends-of-labor" Democrats. The response of employers both "good" and "bad" has predictably been, "Who needs you?" So, despite some marginal organizing successes, union membership overall continues to decline.

The corporate scandals of the past year have dramatically turned public sentiment against the very corporations that were throughout the go-go 90s being looked upon as job-creating benefactors. The radical new mood creates radical new opportunities to challenge corporate power. But don't expect any challenge to the system from the AFL-CIO. Sweeney's response to the scandals was a speech at a Wall Street protest demonstration where he said tough action must be taken in order to -- restore the people's trust in our employers!

Given the pathetic state of the labor movement today, results of a recent poll are striking. Half of those workers surveyed said they'd want to join a union at their workplace if they could, the highest percentage in decades. When conditions begin to worsen workers turn instinctively to the idea of union. This is true even if the idea has been relentlessly attacked and dismissed by the corporate propagandists. It is true even if the true idea of unionism has been betrayed and corrupted by those calling themselves union leaders.

It is the real facts of life of the capitalist system that draw workers to unionism. Alone and separated we are powerless and at the mercy of those who control our livelihoods. By organizing and acting as a single unified body we have the power to resist the exploitation of capital, and then to overturn and end it altogether.

But we can't do it unless we have the knowledge and understanding needed to reach the goal. We must learn the mistakes of the past labor movement order to avoid repeating them in the future labor movement.

First and foremost is the lesson that solidarity must be applied universally. As soon any one group of workers thinks it can and should advance at the expense of other workers, it is agreeing to its own ultimate demise without knowing it. In today's global economy "solidarity" means global solidarity. "Labor" is not just one of many interest groups in a supposedly "pluralistic" society. Labor means all those who sell their labor to an employer in order to live. Labor is a class -- the working class. And the labor movement is the class movement of all workers, everywhere, all the time.

While the labor movement in the course of its development will win many concessions large and small from capital, these improvements can't be seen as ends in themselves. As long the economic system
that keeps labor in the status of a commodity remains entrenched, all such improvements are transitory and will be lost once supply and demand conditions in the labor market turn unfavorable.

Labor must set its sight on the ultimate goal, its liberation from wage slavery.

And the genuine union movement must educate its members to the need of reaching this goal if they are to achieve the economic security and well-being they seek.

(From the November, 2002 New Unionist, 1821 University Ave. W #S-116, Saint Paul, MN 55104)

(from p. 7)

organizing efforts by rank-and-file workers. The basic idea of her talk describes what amounts to a return to the IWW’s roots when members of a mixed local – the IWW’s present “general membership branch” – working in a shop would capitalize on existing worker discontent and provide the literature and speakers for an unrecognized union that could wring concessions from the company by immediate and direct action a la sitdown strikes and other unorthodox tactics. The strategy her article describes resembles in some respects a similar effort in the SLP. After decades during which we SLP members were not allowed to join unions unless holding our jobs required union membership, we were suddenly, during the 1970s thaw, allowed—in fact encouraged—to join unions. At the SLP’s 1978 National Convention in Milwauke a group of members employed in the education industry organized the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (UCE) for the avowed purpose of working within the capitalist teachers unions—the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)—in order to agitate for socialism and to critique the education unions. The Party funded it with a $500 loan which we used to publish a newsletter and some leaflets. It had lasted a couple of years. We had about 50 members when the party management pulled the rug out from under us by ordering SLP members to leave it. I still think the UCE had potential as does the IWW’s minority unionism.

The article from the New Unionist does everything a communication from a revolutionary union should do. It lays the blame for current conditions just where it belongs, on capitalism, and more, it explains why in easily understandable Marxist economic terms. It also seeks to break working class attachment to the capitalist labor movement by a brief history of the US labor movement. And finally it connects the whole thing to current events: capitalism’s enthusiasm for free trade and the mounting unemployment.

Next Adam Buick comments on the Reconstituted SPGB pamphlet, Setting the Record Straight, reviewed in DB116. Aside from the evidence he provides to show that the SPGB was influenced by De Leon, what will interest many readers is his description of De Leon’s sudden break with his earlier position that the working class using the ballot should gain control of the political state in order to build socialism. This is the view of the SPGB, and Buick sees the changed position of De Leon and the SLP as a significant departure from the true faith. One might argue that De Leon, far from being the immutable sectarian that his followers became, was perfectly willing to change as circumstances dictated. I personally had some trouble believing this, having been brought up to believe that, like Jesus, he was the same yesterday, today, and forever. I was cured of this view by reading Carl Reeve’s biography of De Leon and doing a little research.

Next Ron Cook sees in the ideas in the “Workers’ Democracy Network” flyer in DB116, the germ of the reformism that we see in the British Labor Party and similar social democratic political groupings. He also questions the lesser explicitly described socialist goal and anti-capitalist goal of the group.

William Morris holds a position among members of the SPGB only slightly inferior to that of Karl Marx. That being the case we may well ask how to explain his anti-electoralism as described by Wayne Price in the anarchist journal Fifth Estate. In this connection I have a personal debt to the Fifth Estate: I
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND DE LEON

The Socialist Studies Group pamphlet which you reviewed in DB 116 repeats a claim already made by Richard Lloyd in the DB that De Leon had no influence on those who founded the SPGB in 1904. But they are not writing as historians aware of or interested in the facts, but as people trying to make a contemporary political point. They think that if you accept this influence this means that you endorse De Leon's views and they feign to believe that those SPGB members who have recognised this influence—David Perrin in The Socialist Party of Great Britain: Politics, Economics and Britain's Oldest Socialist Party (2000) and Stephen Coleman in his book Daniel De Leon (1990)—actually do seek some sort of joint activity with the SLP on the basis of its present programme of "socialist industrial unionism".

But what are the facts? In 1900 the SLP of America dropped its reform programme and began to advocate political action for the sole purpose of capturing the machinery of government, via the ballot box, with the objective of disposessing the capitalist class and instituting the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. The reformist elements then left. Even before then the SLP had been publishing cheap editions in English of the key works of Marx and Engels, some translated by De Leon himself. Naturally, these were available to socialists in Britain, as was The People, the SLP paper edited by De Leon.

T. A. Jackson, a founder member of the SPGB (who later left to join the ILP, then the SLP of Britain and then became a paid official of the CPGB) in his autobiography Solo Trumpet (1953) says of Jack Fitzgerald, another SPGB founder member (whose expulsion from the SDF in 1904 for organising economics classes was one of the events that provoked the founding of the SPGB in June of that year):

"It was Fitzgerald who brought to our notice the works of Marx published by the Socialist Labour Party in New York ... He also drew our attention to the official organ of the American SLP, the Weekly People, edited by Daniel De Leon, which we could get posted to our home-address for a subscription of a dollar a year (then at the par-rate of 4s 2d). This was, he thought, the best Socialist journal published in English" (p.61).

But we don't just have to rely on Jackson's memory. In 1906 an important debate took place within the SPGB over the attitude the party should take towards trade unions and economic organisation. The Socialist Standard (September 1906) records one of Fitzgerald's contributions to the debate:

"He hoped a lot of them has read 'What Means this Strike'. In that you had one of the clearest expositions of the Socialist attitude to an economic strike. Moreover, some of them had heard De Leon in London. He knew of no man who could put the Socialist principles simpler than De Leon. It could not be said he did not understand the position".

Fitzgerald is then recorded as saying "then why did he attempt to wangle round the Preamble to the IWW when he said ..." There followed a criticism of De Leon for supporting the IWW and for contending that it could be an instrument for establishing socialism, even though it admitted non-socialists and even people who voted for openly capitalist parties into its ranks. In other words, Fitzgerald had detected a change between the position taken by De Leon in 1898, when he delivered
the speech to strikers later published as the pamphlet *What Means This Strike?*, and that taken in 1905.

In his 1898 speech/pamphlet De Leon lays the emphasis on the absolute necessity for the working class to first gain control of the machinery of government (and he criticises those workers in unions who voted for capitalist parties and politicians):

"Proceeding from the further knowledge of the use of the government by the capitalist class, and of the necessity that class is under to own the government, so as to be able it to uphold and prop up the capitalist system; proceeding from that knowledge, it is clear that the aim of all intelligent, class-conscious workingmen must be to bring the government under the control of their own class by joining and electing the American wing of the International Socialist party—the Socialist Labor Party of America, and thus establishing the Socialist Cooperative Republic" (pp. 109-110).

"A labor organisation must be perfectly clear upon the fact that it cannot reach safety until it has wrenched the government from the clutches of the capitalist class; and that it cannot do that unless it votes, not for men but for principles, unless it votes into power its own class platform and program: the abolition of the wages system of slavery" (*Socialist Landmarks*, 1977, p. 118).

Besides De Leon's clear explanation of what a strike implies (that we are living in a class-divided society in which there is an irreconcilable antagonism of interests between the working class and the capitalist because the former are exploited for profit by the latter), this emphasis by De Leon on the need to first win control of political power was another reason why Fitzgerald commended the pamphlet. This was, after all, the same message that the SPGB was trying to get across.

However, in 1905 De Leon changed his position. In 1895 the SLP had set up a socialist trade union—the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance—, i.e. a trade union composed only of socialists, i.e. in effect essentially of SLP members or at least voters, to the exclusion of people voting for any capitalist political party. Needless to say, it was ineffective as a trade union. When the SPGB was set up there were members who proposed that it too should seek to set up an exclusively socialist trade union (see report of 1st SPGB Conference in *Socialist Standard*, May 1905) but the idea was turned down as unrealistic; instead, the policy was adopted of remaining in the existing trade unions but opposing everything they did—such as sponsoring or supporting non-socialist candidates in elections—that was incompatible with socialist principles.

In 1905 De Leon attended the founding congress of the IWW. Although the preamble to the IWW's constitution proclaimed it to be anti-capitalist (the word socialism was not actually used) it was not a socialist trade union in the sense that the SLP and De Leon had previously understood the term, i.e. being a socialist was not a condition for membership. Non-socialists, including workers who voted for pro-capitalist parties, were admitted as well as socialists. This was of course sensible if the IWW was to act as a defensive workers organisation, which in fact was what it was in practice, but ruled it out as an instrument for socialism.

The SLP dissolved the STLA into the IWW and De Leon began to defend the basis on which the IWW had been formed—that industrial organisation was necessary to "take and hold" the means of
production. Previously he had argued that industrial organisation was a “shield” to defend workers against the encroachments of capital while political action was the “sword”, the weapon of attack to capture the machinery of government and then use it to dispossess them. After 1905 he saw industrial organisation as the sword, with political action relegated to a back-up role.

It was a significant change—and well-known. Even the SLP itself recognises this: in the edition I have of *What Means This Strike?* Arnold Petersen describes the passages above where De Leon emphasises the need to gain control of the machinery of government as “dated”. The Socialist Studies pamphlet recognises this too, thereby undermining their whole argument by accepting that there was a pre-1905 and a post-1905 De Leon with different views. Although the language is that of the CP member he was when he wrote his autobiography, Jackson got it more or less right when he wrote:

“De Leon, in America, after preaching for years dogmatically that the Trades Unions, to justify their existence, simply must ‘endorse’ and work under the tutelage of the ‘true political party of Labour’—meaning the SLP—threw a somersault and (taking the occasion from the launching of the IWW) declared that, ‘only the industrial movement can set on foot the true political party of Labour’” (p. 73).

Fitzgerald, too, saw this as a reversal of De Leon’s previous policy and that was why he criticised him in 1906 for now arguing that the IWW, which admitted non-socialist including supporters of capitalist parties as members, could serve to further the cause of socialism.

This represents, if you like, the end of De Leon’s influence on those who founded SPGB. It was over this issue that the early SPGB members parted company with him, sticking to the previous policy shared by both of emphasising the need to win control of political power as the first step to ending wage slavery. The SPGB has never accepted so-called “socialist industrial unionism” (on the grounds, precisely, that it wasn’t socialist) and was never influenced by De Leon’s mistaken ideas on this and could not have been anyway since when the SPGB was in the process of being founded in 1903 and 1904 De Leon himself didn’t hold this view either.

It only remains to add that the SPGB position did not preclude socialists being in non-socialist, defensive trade unions nor, at a later date, socialists setting up socialist trade unions—as Fitzgerald put it during the discussion on trade unions, “trade organisation must exist to bring about Socialism, and industrial organisation would be necessary under Socialism itself”—but it did preclude seeing an organisation based on the “open house” principle of admitting non-socialists as well as socialists as a potential instrument for the establishment of socialism. This has remained the position of the SPGB to this day and is not altered by recognising the undeniable fact that the pre-1905 De Leon’s idea about a socialist party not advocating reforms and that political action to win control of the machinery of government was primary did influence those who founded the SPGB.

Adam Buick, Brussels, Belgium
WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

It is very encouraging to see the building of a grass-roots democracy amongst American workers, but I can't help feeling a terrible sense of déjà vu. I’m too ignorant of United States working class history to see parallels from the past over there, but the similarities with Britain at the beginning of the 20th century are painfully clear.

With its ‘long term goal’ of establishing a socialist society, the Labour Representation Committee (which became the Labour Party) set out to press working class interests in Parliament. When socialists argued that setting out to run capitalism, even with ‘nationalisation’, was not on the ‘road to socialism’ they sneered at us and told us that they were going to strive for what workers thought they wanted and then direct them towards socialism. They said that they were going to reach socialism long before we could. Well, Tony Blair’s government, backing President George ‘dubya’ Bush to the hilt, is what it has all come to.

Nationalisation was tried by the Atlee government after the Second World War. Labourites now agree it was a failure, just as nationalisation on a far more far-reaching scale in Russia was a failure from a working class point of view, because capitalism cannot be made to work in the interests of any but the capitalist class. Unless that well-substantiated fact is acknowledged by all those taking part, those who expect some immediate improvements in their working and living conditions are going to become disillusioned—as has happened to Labour Party supporters. They have now got their own government in power again, and again that government has brought the troops out against striking firemen. Capitalist governments have no choice in such matters.

Unless the objective is clearly understood as the ending of capitalism and the establishment—worldwide—of a society in which the means of production and distribution are commonly owned and democratically controlled, there will be dissatisfaction, distrust, disillusion, dissenion and dissolution. It would be sad to see yet another working class democratic initiative going down this same road again. Repeated failure, as the British working class demonstrates only too painfully, tends to generate chronic apathy. I hope the members of Workers’ Democracy will keep our pathetic example in front of them at all times as an example not to be followed.

Ron Cook

(remembered Marx’s cautionary statement about the working class not laying hold of the state machinery in order to build socialism, but I couldn’t remember the source and the exact wording. Now, thanks to FE it is available for me to throw at Adam Buick and other WSMers.)

Dave Zink’s review of Peery’s book makes it clear that revolutionary wisdom may occasionally rise from people infected by the Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist perversion of Marxism. Peery seems to have everything right except that some of us may question his view that revolution was impossible in the 1930s because the “technological ability to produce and distribute an abundance of the necessities of life for all” didn’t exist. It would be interesting to learn how he came to that conclusion.

Mike Ballard’s review of The Death Ship may or may not have been published in the Aussi Wob, but at last it will get some exposure here. It’s the least I can do as a Traven fan. Perhaps one of these days I’ll come up with a review of some of Mack Reynolds’ science fiction, another of my literary enthusiasms.

My rationale for discontinuing publication of the Discussion Bulletin follows and as usual we end with some notes, announcements and short reviews.

Finances (to p. 22)
It is generally a waste of time to argue with individuals about their voting or not voting. Among tens of thousands, one vote either way makes no difference (even when it gets counted).

The question is what large social forces should do in elections. Such forces include the labor unions, the African-American communities, Latino communities, the organized feminist movement, Gay and Lesbian organizations, organized environmentalists, and the network of anti-globalization/anti-corporate activists.

Such groups involve very large numbers. They include the core constituencies of the Democratic Party, which would collapse without their support. Conservatives sneer at them as "special interests," but potentially they represent the vast majority (working people, women, people who want to breathe clean air).

The historical position of anarchists and other anti-authoritarian socialists has been that such forces should not participate in elections. In Kropotkin's words, "Anarchists ... do not seek to constitute, and invite the workingmen (sic) not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments ... They have endeavored to ... induce [labor] unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation."

The opposite approach was raised by Karl Marx and his followers. Marx proposed a resolution to the First International, "The working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, - distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the property classes."

With such parties, "Universal suffrage ... will ... be transformed from the instrument of fraud that it has been up till now into an instrument of emancipation." This (unlikely) strategy was the main political issue in the conflict between the Marxists and anarchists which split the First International. When the Second (or Socialist) International was formed, its leaders physically threw out the anarchists and insisted that only pro-electoralists could be members.

Marx's pro-electoral arguments did not immediately sweep all before them; it took a while before they became dominant even among non-anarchist socialists. There was an anti-electoral minority which correctly predicted the evolution of the electoral parties.

A special example was the British poet and artist, William Morris. He became a socialist (or, as he liked to call himself, a communist) at the age of 50 in the late 1880s. He knew both Kropotkin and Engels. What he meant by "socialism" or "communism" had an anti-authoritarian and anti-statist content.

Hal Draper, the Marxist, calls Morris, "the leading personality of revolutionary socialism of that period ... Morris's writings on socialism breathe from every pore the spirit of Socialism-from-Below." For various reasons, Morris did not regard himself as an anarchist, but he allied himself with the anarchists in his organization to fight the Marxists (associates of Engels) over the issue of participating in elections and parliament. His writings on the subject are unusually prescient.

His views on elections began with what he learned from Marx: that there is an irreconcilable conflict between the capitalist class and the working class. This is not to deny other conflicts involving race, gender, or the ecology. But a multidimensional analysis of authoritarianism does not require abandoning an analysis of class conflict.

As Morris learned from Marx, the state serves the ruling class; it is on their side of the class line. We can add that the state is also essential to maintaining the patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of oppression. While the state may grant reforms when under pressure, it cannot be used to create a new and better society.

In his 1871 The Civil War in France, Marx famously concluded, "The working class cannot simply lay
hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes." The centralized, bureaucratic-military, structure of the state is not capable of organizing a free society. That requires a wholly different sort of structure, a federation of workplace and neighborhood councils, with directly recallable representatives, a commune-like (or "soviet") non-state. Given the nature of the patriarchal-capitalist state, there is no "parliamentary road to socialism" (as it used to be called). If anti-authoritarian socialism is the necessary goal, and if elections to the U.S. government are the means, then you can't get there from here.

Morris thought that to say, "Elect our socialist party and we will create a new, socialist society" could only be a lie. Of course it is possible to disagree with Morris and other anti-electoralists. Most people do.

But I do not see how it is possible to believe both (1) that the existing state cannot be used to create a freer, cooperative, society, and (2) that the use of elections by workers' parties would lead to "emancipation." I have looked through the works of Marx and Engels to find out just how they squared these conceptions. I have been unable to find any explanation or any explicit electoral strategy.

Policy of Abstention

As he explains in his 1887 The Policy of Abstention, William Morris felt that "It is necessary to keep the two camps of labor and monopoly [capitalism] as distinct as possible. . . . Everything that tends to weaken that opposition, to confuse it, weakens the popular force, and gives a new lease of life to the reaction. . . . If our own people are forming part of parliament, the instruments of the enemy, tsdy are helping to make the very laws we will not obey. Where is the enemy then?"

Morris argued that a socialist party, if it seriously wants to get elected, would have to advocate something besides "socialism:" it would have to advocate some sort of lesser, intermediate, demands. Except in revolutionary periods, most people are not yet in favor of socialism. So if the party wants to elect members, then it must modify its socialist program.

"They will then have to put forward a program of reforms deduced from the principles of socialism. . . . They will necessarily have to appeal for support (i.e., votes) to a great number of people who are not convinced socialists, and their program of reforms will be the bait to catch these votes; and to the ordinary voter it will be this bait which will be the matter of interest, and not the principle...

"It will be impossible to honestly tell the voters and recruits that these reforms are only bait and not the real program. Therefore, "the socialist members when they get into parliament will represent a heterogeneous body of opinion, ultra-radical, democratic, discontented non-politicals, rather than a body of socialists, and it will be their opinions and prejudices that will sway the actions of the members in parliament."

In practice, as the socialists have success with their reform demands, these will be adopted by the liberals, leaving the socialists without anything special to say. Or the socialists will themselves dissolve into the liberals (the "progressive democratic party"). Even in the unlikely event that the reform socialists did by "cumulative reforms manage to bring us to the crisis of revolution . . . they would then have to govern a people who had rather been ignorantly betrayed into socialism than have learned to accept it as an understood necessity. . . ."

Instead, he proposed to expand the scope of the existing labor unions to form widely organized labor combinations which would stand opposite parliament as an alternate power (note that Morris was not against working in unions or in other limited struggles). By strikes, boycotts, and other mass actions, the power of the workers would oppose that of the capitalists organized in parliament. His proposals sound remarkably like a prediction of the popular committees which have burst out in every mass revolution from the 1917 Russian revolution on.

It has been argued that the ill effects Morris predicted from socialist electoralism could be avoided by a revolutionary party which would openly argue for socialist revolution and maintain an internal discipline
so that their electoral agents can be controlled by the party leadership to keep advocating socialism. In fact, this was the argument of Lenin against the anti-electoralists of his day.

Perhaps this is possible for a very brief period in a revolutionary situation—and Morris was open to this. But realistically, a party cannot maintain a revolutionary electoral posture for election after election, year after year, and decade after decade. The pressure to adapt to the low level of the voters' consciousness on the one hand, and to the nature of the electoral (parliamentary) system on the other, must corrupt the socialist party.

An electoral strategy means persuading the working people to elect leaders who will be political for them, people who will act in congress (parliament, whatever) in their place, as their representatives. Of his plan for labor councils, Morris said, "The organization I am thinking of would have a serious point of difference from any that could be formed as a part of a parliamentary plan of action: its aim would be to act directly, whatever was done in it would be done by the people themselves."

His prediction is our history

What was a prediction in Morris' day has become history in ours. From the beginning, electoralists united both revolutionists and reformists behind their approach—both those who wanted electoral parties in order to get to a revolution and those who wanted electoral parties in order to prevent a revolution.

The European Social Democratic parties became mere electoral machines. By now, they have so degenerated that they no longer claim to be for a new kind of society at all; they merely claim to be liberal pro-capitalist parties. They are presently in the governments of most of the Western European countries.

They all supported the bombing of Serbia and of Afghanistan, the U.S. support for Israel, and U.S. preparation for other wars (with various quibbles here and there). The Communist parties in Western Europe also became no more than electoral machines. If, as Engels often quoted, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating," then electoralism should be decidedly discredited.

The most recent awful example of electoralism is that of the German Green party. It was founded as the unparty, the antiparty party, a virtually anarchist party, with rotating representatives and a program which could not be granted by industrial capitalism. In a couple of decades, the Greens' elected representatives "realistically? adapted to the German parliament. Now, in coalition with the Social Democratic party, their leader Fischer is the German foreign minister. They support NATO and its current wars. This should not give us confidence in those U.S. activists who are trying to follow the same model by building a U.S. Green party.

This history has a message. The problems of our society will not be solved by making the Democratic party more liberal nor by replacing the Democrats with a new party. They will not be helped by a new, pro-capitalist party (such as the Nader/Greens effort) nor by a union-based party with a pro-capitalist program (as advocated by the leaders of the Labor Party movement). Not even by a party with an openly anarchist or socialist program. The whole electoral approach is unworkable.

Morris was perfectly aware that there was a real difference between liberal politicians and conservatives. Yet he also knew that the lesser evil was still an evil. It is not that the liberals are the same as the reactionaries; it is that the lesser evils cannot be effective in fighting the reactionary right. This can be demonstrated by the steady move of U.S. politics to the right, as the lesser-evil Democrats keep on following the lead of the Republicans. What oppressed people need the most is not lesser-evil presidents or judges but militant and independent movements of workers, women, African-Americans, and everyone with grievances against this system.

This is the rulers' state, the organization of oppression in all its aspects. The oppressed do not gain by participating in it. Elections run on rivers of cash (legal and illegal, soft and hard) and no "campaign finance reform" will change that.
Working people, oppressed "minorities," and the poor do not have such funds. What we have is numbers and the possibility of organizing ourselves. Instead of organizing to support our enemies, the oppressed should be organizing people into anti-hierarchical unions and other popular collectives, building demonstrations, engaging in civil disobedience/strikes/boycotts/direct actions, and in general, raising hell.

The popular forces have won their biggest gains by non-electoral direct struggle. This includes the mass strikes of the 1930s, with their factory sit-ins and clashes with the National Guard, which won the unions the right to exist. Also, the mass civil disobedience of the Civil Rights and Black Liberation movements including broke legal segregation in the South and won federal anti-discrimination laws. From the anti-war movement of the 1960s to the global justice demonstrations of today, the struggle against military and economic imperialism has taken place in the streets, not in Congress.

This does not mean that anarchists should be neutral when oppressed people demand the right to vote. Likewise, if some radicals vote defensively, we need not lectum them about this decision as long as it is not seen as a substitute for direct action. On the contrary, we should support this both because 1) it is what people want and have a right to, and 2) the more "democratic" the country is--although still really run by a ruling class minority--the easier it is for people to organize and use free speech to fight the system.

Voting rights for the oppressed became an issue again at the end of the last presidential election. The way in which African-Americans in particular were denied the right to vote and be counted in Florida exposed the reality of capitalist "democracy." Black people were furious. But no one organized this fury into mass marches and protests--not even the Democrats who were being cheated out of a political plum. They preferred to lose rather than to mobilize the Southern Black population! The Green party too did nothing, chained to their electoral strategy. Hopefully, if there had been an uprising in Florida, anarchists would have participated in mass demonstrations and direct actions around the election fraud.

We live in a society of oppression and of a galloping destruction of the balance of nature. It is past time for people to say that we will no longer participate in our rulers' shell games.

(From Fall 2002 Fifth Estate, PO Box 201106, Ferndale, MI 48220 / One year-four issue sub US $10, Canada & Mexico $18, Other $20, Prisoners and GIs - Free)

(from p. 18)

There is no goods news on the economic front so far as the DB is concerned. Receipts are even lower than they were last month, and that was pretty close to an all-time low. In addition postal costs are skyrocketing. The annual bulk mailing fee which enables us to mail the DB in the US for 22 cents instead of 60 cents rose by 20 per cent from $125 to $150. Other postal costs are rising also, especially foreign postage, the Postal Service having wiped out surface mail rates outside North America.

Contributions: Joe Tupper "for the abolition of capitalism" $20; John Cassella $4; Joshua Freeze $2; Dionisio Villarreal $4; Jim Davis $7; S. Peterson $1  Total $38. Thank you, comrades.

BALANCE October 31, 2002 $ 287.81

RECEIPTS
Contributions $ 38.00
Subs and sales 63.00
Total $101.00

(to p. 25)
The Future is Up to Us: A Revolutionary Talking Politics with the American People
by Nelson Peery. (Speakers for a New America Books, Chicago, 2002)
Review by Dave Zink

Nelson Peery's new book challenges doctrine long held dear by many would-be revolutionaries. After his memoir, Black Fire: the Making of an American Revolutionary, was published in 1994, Peery toured the country on a series of speaking engagements. He was interviewed, was featured on talk shows, and spoke with thousands of people about how changes in the means of production are setting the stage for far-reaching political and social change. The Future of Us is a result of those conversations.

Many asked Peery why there hasn't been any decisive working-class uprising against capitalism in the USA yet. Working class consciousness, an essential requirement for revolution, was comparatively high during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Organized labor won the Wagner Labor Relations Act, which legalized the workers' right to organize into unions. Membership in the Socialist and Communist Parties was higher in the 1930s than it is today.

There were some militant strikes in the 1930s, including the Minneapolis Teamsters' Strike and the Sit-Down strikes in Flint, Michigan, which affected nearly everybody to some extent in those cities. In the 1960s, social consciousness ran high, and the anti-war and civil rights struggles rocked America. If an American socialist revolution failed to occur in the 1930s, or in the 1960s, then how can we expect it to happen in the 2000s?

Peery answers this question from a dogma-challenging perspective. He says these earlier struggles failed to develop into a revolution because the objective foundation for a communist society (the technological ability to produce and distribute an abundance of the necessities of life for all) wasn't yet in existence, and the subjective factor - a popular vision of an alternative, socialist society - wasn't widespread enough.

The system of industrial production developed before the introduction of high technology, workers sell their labor power, produce commodities or services, earn a paycheck, and spend their money buying what they need. The introduction of high technology is changing all this. We are now in the midst of an economic revolution - a qualitative shift in the means of production from electro-mechanical machinery to electronics, computers, and robotics. Robots produce, but don't buy or sell anything. The manufacturing jobs being eliminated by high tech far outnumber the jobs being created for software writers and computer designers.

In the same amount of time that fifty industrial workers could produce five cars, computers can produce fifty cars with five workers. Competing with robots, flesh-and-blood workers cannot produce enough value for the owners to equal their wages, so they get laid off. Goods produced at lower costs with high technology are increasingly flooding the market, but are becoming unavailable to growing numbers of people. More and more people don't have enough money to buy the products they need.

The social problems that are exploding today - drug abuse, crime, and homelessness - are a result of an increase in poverty, caused by growing unemployment created by the new, labor-replacing technology. The old system is being disrupted, Peery says, and as robots become more common, the disruption will continue until the old system no longer works.

In the "developed" world, workers are displaced by electronics and condemned to poverty. There aren't enough new jobs to absorb those left out to dry by the shrinking industrial base in America. Most jobs in the service industry pay only a fraction of what workers earned in the lost manufacturing jobs. Meanwhile, in the "third world", labor is worked to death in sweatshops at starvation wages trying to compete against the high-tech developed world.

Peery isn't the only one to critique modern capitalism and conclude that living labor cannot compete with robots for long. In this, he finds himself in company with even such establishment papers as the Wall Street Journal. What distinguishes Perry's critique is what he infers from this reality about the distribution of goods in such a society.

How are workers driven out of the labor market supposed to cope? Putting it simply, Peery says that if
production is increasingly carried on without wages, by robots, then the means of life will have to be distributed without money. Growing demands will strike at the heart of the old, capitalist system. This spells the historic end of capitalism.

Like most people who consider themselves revolutionary socialists, I believe that the primary struggle today is between the working class ("proletariat") and the elite minority that controls the economy and makes the command decisions via its ownership of the major means of production. According to this view, the working class is the only class having both the strategic position in the system of production and the numbers necessary to make it a revolutionary class. Peery challenges that conventional view.

**What is "Revolution" anyway?**

According to Peery, revolution is a historical process by which a subordinate class overthrows the ruling class and establishes a new political system that is in synch with the new economic and social realities. He outlines the three stages that every revolution has gone through:

1. changes in technology bring about an economic revolution in the means of production,
2. changes in the economy force changes in society—a social revolution, then
3. changes in society cause a political revolution.

These three stages are not chronologically discrete. They overlap in time. We are currently witnessing the rapid development of stage one and the beginnings of stage two.

A revolution does not, and cannot, come simply from the will of the people. There must also be material reasons rooted in the economy. Historically, enough people to ensure success of a revolution will only support revolutionary activity when they perceive that "the system doesn't work anymore". America hasn't reached that stage yet. Capitalism is perceived by most people to be working unfairly and unevenly, but it is still perceived to be working.

Peery draws some lessons from an earlier economic and social transition: the death of feudalism and the birth of capitalism. The major classes under feudalism were the nobility, who owned the land, and the serfs, who supplied the labor. Occasional serf rebellions were ruthlessly smashed. At most, they reformed the system to varying degrees. None of them resulted in the overthrow of feudalism. Why not?

Peery says that a class that is an integral part of a system can reform that system, but cannot overthrow it. In order to overthrow a system, you need a force that is outside the system. The nobility didn't end feudalism. The serfs fought not to overthrow the feudal order, but to improve their lot *within* it.

It was the rising capitalist class (the "bourgeoisie") and the new, unlanded industrial wage-working class —classes outside of and alien to feudal system - that overthrew the old order and the agrarian system it stood upon. These classes formed around a new means of production totally alien to feudalism: industrial machinery. Those were the agents that brought in a new system, capitalism.

Today, people who must work for a living, and their families, make up the vast majority of society. The class that owns the major means of financing, production, and distribution, and dominates society because of that ownership, constitutes about 3% of society. Together, these are the two main social components of the capitalist system, just as the poons and the baronage were the two main classes of the feudal system. Attempts to empower workers against capitalists end up as reforming the system, just as attempts to increase the power of the serfs reformed, but didn't overthrow, feudalism.

Long before the advent of the computer and the robot, labor-saving devices already created problems due to automation displacing labor. This comparatively limited automation benefited the capitalist class, but often meant unemployment and insecurity for workers. The advent of high tech has a geometric impact. We are now talking about not just labor-saving devices, but labor-replacing technology.

Peery accepts the historic Marxist tenet that revolution comes as a result of changes in the means of production. Contradictions develop between new, emerging economic realities and the political relations within the old society. The result is an economic collapse. As the economy collapses, it drags down society.
The corporate media has people so confused that most of us think social disintegration is the cause of the problem, rather than the result.

Society is striving to reorganize itself on the basis of the developing high-tech means of production and distribution. It can't quite do so due to the limitations of the system of private property, which is at the foundation of the capitalist order. The private ownership of the major means of production and distribution prevents the development of the robot to its fullest extent. The government is fighting the social effects of electronics by helping corporations create low-paid jobs to offset the mass unemployment that would follow a greater utilization of robots.

Today we are witnessing, and are likely to be part of, the formation of a new caste that is being created by robotic technology. This section of the working class is composed of the temporary employed, permanently unemployed, and permanently poor people. Economists call this "structural unemployment" because it is part of the emerging economy. It cannot be eliminated because it is built into the system. This rapidly growing element finds itself increasingly outside of capital/labor relationships. Being outside the system, they have the possibility and eventually the necessity of overthrowing it and bringing in a new system based on their needs - and reorganize society along lines that make sense and are in synch with the new electronic and robotic means of production.

Proliferation of robotic technology has also given birth to a new section of the owning class. The very nature of electronics demands internationalism. A class of transnational corporate financiers is necessary to stabilize a global corporate system. A world market is the only kind of market that a robot can operate within. If robots operated in a national market, it would flood that market overnight. Robotic technology is the spur that brought about corporate globalization, and globalization is the spur that is driving the trend to increasing use of robot technology.

The economic foundation of our current society is the production of value, which is based upon the expenditure of labor and the extraction of surplus value. Surplus value is value produced by labor that is above what workers receive in the form of wages or salaries plus benefits. Money is merely the expression of value. The appropriation of surplus value by the capitalist is the source of profit and capital. This is what makes capitalism, capitalism.

The robot is undermining this value system. The whole economic structure is being revamped. The new unemployment is a symptom of the destruction of this system, signaling an end of the age of the buying and selling of labor power, which characterizes the capitalist system. Now, large numbers of producers (robots) are no longer consuming, and burgeoning numbers of consumers (people) are no longer producing - nor earning a paycheck.

Robots can make cars, but they don't buy them. They don't earn a paycheck, and they don't buy the commodities they need with it. They're totally outside the surplus value-creation and wage relationships of capitalism. Since production is increasingly carried on without human labor, without creating any surplus value, such production can't be logically distributed according to money.

(from p. 22) (to be continued in the next issue)

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**BALANCE**

December 22, 2002

$28.92

Fraternally submitted

Frank Girard
Dear Friends,

I am a member from Melbourne, Australia. I have a particular interest in issues surrounding seafarers and thought that maritime members in the U.S might be interested in this article? I don't know the email for "Industrial Worker" so maybe you could forward it to them for submission? Hope you like it, please write back, all the best, Paul.

Sadly, these days B.Traven and his many novels have been assigned to relative obscurity in the world of literature and politics. Traven was but one of the many aliases used by this mysterious author, adventurer and revolutionary. Many historians have tried to uncover the secret behind Traven's identity, linking him from the illegitimate son of Kaiser Wilhelm II to a theology student from Cincinnati. Whatever the case, Traven always shied away from the spectacular role as author as superstar, preferring to let his novels be judged by the ideas contained within.

Traven's wish for privacy and anonymity can be witnessed by the number of different assumed names he went under to disguise his identity. Over the years he went under many different guises such as Ret Marut, Traven Torsvån and Hal Croves. Our interest in Traven begins with his earliest proven incarnation as Ret Marut. Marut was an aspiring German actor who later became involved in anarchist politics and also edited an anarchist/pacifist magazine, Der Ziegelbrenner; "The Brick burner."

Marut wasn't just an armchair revolutionary though. He actively participated in the insurgent Bavarian Republic of Councils in 1919 as chief censor of the bourgeois press, keeping the latter day Andrew Bolts in their place.

Marut was active in the Bavarian capital, Munich, and narrowly escaped summary execution when the revolutionary fervor was crushed by nascent fascist Freikorps and "loyal" troops sent in by the German equivalent of the Labor party, the Social Democrats. Understandably, Marut went underground after the White reaction destroyed the Council Movement in May 1919. Up until September there were still executions of revolutionaries taking place to avenge the middle classes who had had power temporarily wrenched away from them by the proletarian class. Marut later resurfaced in Chiapas, Mexico in the early 1920s under the name Traven which he wrote his first, and in my humble opinion, greatest novel, The Death Ship.

The Death Ship is the story of a horrendous chain of events that befall an American sailor appropriately named Gerard Gales. Gales loses his identity, humanity and right to existence when his ship sails without him with his sailor’s card and passport still on board in his jacket pocket. Stranded on foreign shores, our sailor is systematically persecuted by the authorities of various European countries he has no desire to even be in. Gales is frequently jailed, deported and even sentenced to death simply for the crime of being a worker without papers. Needless to say he is treated with respect only by fellow workers who share what little they have with him.
Bereft of a sailor's card, Gales cannot secure a job on a ship to go home to New Orleans. To further complicate matters, the American consulate won't supply him with the necessary papers because he has no proof of his identity. Gale's travails with bureaucracy assume truly Kafkaesque proportions in his attempts to prove his American citizenship, while wealthy fellow travelers obtain the necessary documents within minutes provided by ubiquitous officials who make ordinary folk wait around like cattle.

Desperate to escape his precarious situation, Gales reluctantly accepts a job on the *Yorikke*, a rusting hulk rumored to have been built in the times of the ancients. Gales fellow crewmates are all in the same unfortunate position, unable to secure passage on a decent ship with Union conditions. The *Yorikke* is truly a death ship. The work regime is torturous and simply unsustainable with sailors jumping overboard or murdered by the captain, unable to keep pace with the hellish amount of work. Not much can be said for the health and safety conditions either with sailors frequently burning themselves in the antiquated steam room, and even the ship's rats won't touch the swill doled out to the hapless and perennially hungry sailors.

Some critics have dismissed *The Death Ship* and Traven's body of work as being hopelessly dated and idealistic because Traven makes explicit attacks on the dehumanizing aspects of capitalism and unfettered greed. Indeed, the last few decades have seen popular literature retreat either into general misanthropy or even worse, the glossolalia of post modernism. These days novels that articulate the premise that any positive change from below is possible are as rare as hen's teeth. Indeed we are expected to consume defeatist literature which not only depicts the working class as boorish, uncultured thugs, schooled in misogyyny and mired in xenophobia and self-hatred, and yet we are given no plausible reasons for such outlandish stereotypes.

Traven was cut from much different cloth compared to the current crop of defeatists and out right reactionaries masquerading as serious authors so popular today. While Gales and his fellow sailors often faced insurmountable odds put in their way by the real axis of evil, the bosses, cops and the state, they always fight back using solidarity and mutual aid as the only weapons they have. While *The Death Ship* is a truly terrifying book to read, it is also full of black humor, the inventiveness of which is truly astonishing. There are also numerous references to the Industrial Workers of the World and the Russian Revolution which remind the reader of a time not so long ago when the ruling class was in collective retreat and world-wide revolution seemed just around the corner.

In the current political climate, *The Death Ship* serves to remind the reader of the plight of seafarers, particularly those from Majority world (Third world) countries who sail on modern day death ships which are registered under flags of convenience so the owners can circumvent environmental, health and safety, and pay conditions hard fought for by previous generations of sailors. At the moment in Australia, ships that operate in Australian waters are being refagged, the crews sacked and then replaced by Ukrainian sailors on only $20,000 a year. Needless to say, the Ukrainian crews will be forced to work much harder for much less than their now unemployed Australian class brothers and sisters as transnational capitalist seeks to push wages and conditions down in the global race to the bottom. Hopefully sailors, who have traditionally been the most revolutionary sector of the working class, will not fall for the fratricidal myth that their jobs are being stolen by cheaper Third world labor. This blame the victim mentality only serves to disguise the role that governments in conjunction with shipping companies have played in decimating the working conditions of sailors.

Likewise, comparisons can be drawn between *The Death Ship* and the current plight of workers wishing free movement across borders worldwide. Not much has changed since Gales was locked up for being an illegal alien in the 1920s to Australia in 2002 where workers are put in camps in the desert simply for the crime of arriving without the necessary documentation. In fact authorities would prefer that undocumented workers died in their quest to reach the workers' paradises of America, Australia and
Europe. Who mourns the 2000 Latin Americans who have died in the last 10 years trying to cross the militarized border between Mexico and the U.S.A., or the 351 Afghans and Iraqis who drowned trying to reach Australia in an area under constant military surveillance? Not to forget the Moroccans washed up on Spanish beaches, Chinese suffocated in shipping containers en route to Britain or Gypsies murdered by racists everywhere?

Every time a Union leader blames “foreigners” for taking jobs this serves as justification for the unabated pogrom committed against workers without papers everywhere. Adopting the rhetoric of the masters only makes workers more despicable slaves when they swallow wholesale the bile spewed forth by their rulers. To be a patriot is to be an assassin especially when a fellow worker is at the other end of sights. Now more than ever, workers of the world have to realize that national boundaries are no more than lines a cartographer has drawn on a map. Capital knows no boundaries, so why should we continue to self-administer the poisons of nationalism and racism which divide us rather than unite us. Workers of the world, you have no country!

(from p. 32)

Website <www.akpress.org> AK Press in the UK also issues a catalog and European readers may find it easier to order from AK Distribution, PO Box 12766, Edinburgh EH8 9YE Scotland E-mail <ak@akedin.demon.co.uk> Web <www.akuk.com>

Charles H. Kerr’s Books for an Endangered Planet catalog for 2003 has grown since the 2002 issue with some new titles. Among them is Franklin Rosemont’s Joe Hill: the IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Working Class Counterculture, which labor historians praise for its new material on Joe Hill and the Wobblies. “Older books focused on the crime he didn’t commit... But he overall focus of this book is on Hill’s ideas and activity as a poet, cartoonist, songwriter, hobo.... Another new volume: The Lesson of the Hour: Wendell Phillips on Abolition and Strategy, edited and introduced by Noel Ignatiev. As might be expected most of the titles are the more recent publications. Some important ones include David Noble’s Progress Without People, Haymarket Heritage, a memoir by Irving S. Abrams, The Port Huron Statement, the “manifesto” of SDS, Haymarket Scrapbook, an anthology of writings on Haymarket edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, who, with his wife Penelope is the moving spirit the Charles H. Kerr Company. Very few publications from the classic period are still in print: The Communist Manifesto and Marx’s The Civil War in France, Debs’s Walls and Bars —although I have a hunch that may not have been published originally by Kerr. John Kercher is still there but with only one pamphlet: The Head-Fixing Industry, and of course that dates back, not to the classic period of 1900 to 1920 or so but rather to the Proletarian Party era of 1920+ to 1954 or thereabouts. This issue also carries Kerr’s usual listing of Surrealist literature as well as a new department: Kerr inherited the stock of Martin Glaberman’s Bewick Editions, which included books by Glaberman himself along with those of CLR James and others. Printed on the back page of this 12-page tabloid-size catalog is an interesting history of the Charles H. Kerr Company. For a free catalog write to Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1740 West Greenfield Ave. Chicago IL 60626.

Off the Hook: The Newsletter of the Missouri Prison Labor Union. Number 4, the Fall 2002 issue, is a ten-page compilation of articles written by prisoners, largely about the general conditions within prisons rather than work or union issues. In the lead article, Jerome White-Bey, president of the MPLU describes the circumstances under which prisoners live, now that the War on Terrorism has given new life to the patriotism of neo Nazis, Skinheads and the KKK. Prisoners who work are paid $750 per month, assuming (to p. 30)
ON ENDING PUBLICATION OF THE DISCUSSION BULLETIN

DB 120 will complete the twentieth year of the Discussion Bulletin’s publication. In some ways I’ll miss putting it out. It was a rewarding activity in many ways. For one thing it enabled me to reach new heights—or depths—of humility as I examined each new issue and found the blunders I had committed. And thanks to readers, those I didn’t find were brought to my attention. I also learned a lot about the international movement to abolish capitalism. I had belonged to a rather exclusive revolutionary grouping that cultivated its own political garden and didn’t encourage sightseeing excursions into those of others. With publication of the DB began exchanges with the journals of the various left communist factions, the infinite variety of anarchists, council communists, non-SLP revolutionary industrial unionists, the world socialist movement, and a great number of unaligned—or perhaps uncategorized—revolutionary groups (like the Majdoor Library group in Faridabad, India). This experience convinced me, after 35 years in the SLP, that the cause I had been a part of all those years consisted of more than the pitifully small remnant I had known.

This reading opened a new vista of what I came to see as the real revolutionary movement, one that had entered the struggle to end capitalism from a wide variety of perspectives. Many of these viewpoints result from the divergent historical roots of the groups, not to mention doctrinal and personal feuds that date back a century or more, and many are the result of economic and strategic group decisions that became hardened in the effort to preserve a group’s identity and to convince potential recruits of its ideological rectitude. A few years of such reading convinced me that the differences in ideology and tactics among the groups were negligible considering the importance of the goal we all have in common: the abolition of capitalism and its political state.

Having read the above catalog of the advantages I reaped from producing the DB, one might ask why I’m about to end it. Here is a list of reasons:

1. After 20 years it is no longer fun, but has become a tiresome chore that I must do every two months.

2. It involves quite a bit of work. When I started in 1983, about all I had to do was paste up the pages and take them down to be printed and folded. By 1990 when I retired, the cost of printing and folding had risen, so I bought a copier and later a used duplicator to keep costs down. And since the DB has always been a one-man operation, I find myself doing a lot of time-consuming—and boring—work: printing, collating, folding, stapling, and otherwise preparing it for mailing out.

3. Since the DB is not an “evangelistic” publication but is aimed at the already “converted,” I needn’t reproach myself for having deserted the struggle to inform workers about capitalism and socialism.

4. The major purpose of the DB is now being served by the internet. In 1983 the DB was unique in providing a forum in which non-market socialists of all persuasions could discuss and debate or simply read the contributions to the forum. Today I can think of at least four internet discussion lists that provide platforms for various elements in our political sector. These make discussion almost as immediate as a face-to-face meeting instead of having to wait two months for publication in the DB and another two months for replies.

5. Almost as soon as the DB began, it became clear that much of the copy would not be readers’ contributions to an internal non-market socialist debate. In fact, most of the content has become articles gleaned from the journals published by various non-market socialist groups and reviews of their books.
and pamphlets. Here again technology has rendered the DB outmoded. Instead of depending on my wisdom for selecting worthwhile material to read, we can all check the websites of almost every group in our sector and choose for ourselves.

6. I'm well beyond my allotted three score and ten years and there are a lot of things I have to do. One of these is to bring the DB to clean-cut stop instead of having readers beginning to wonder one day—while I'm disabled by a stroke or galloping Alzheimers—why they're not getting the new issues.

Another thing is that I still have a lot of unfinished tasks and unrealized ambitions. For one thing I have accumulated an enormous amount of printed matter—books, pamphlets, leaflets, magazines, and newspapers—that I should dispose of instead of leaving them for my wife and children to deal with.

Besides that project I would like to reprint some pamphlets and other material that may interest some readers—like additional portions of the now out-of-print *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, which I promised to continue as well as *The Marxist Anatomy of October and the Present Day*, the text of the Marxist Labour Party of South Russia. Some old SLP material dating back before the “let a thousand flowers bloom” era also deserves reprinting as well as a multitude of long texts on the internet that should see the light of day again in hard copy. With the names and addresses accumulated over the years it should be possible to set up a free literature distribution of such material.

My principal regret is that although most readers won't be inconvenienced by the discontinuation of the DB because they have access to the internet, prisoners do not have this access and will be deprived of another tie to the outside world. On the plus side, though, they have available at least three journals that are designed to serve prisoners, needs: *Chain Reaction*, the Anarchist Black Cross's *Chicago ABC Zine*, and *Off the Hook*, the newsletter of the Missouri Prison Labor Union. These publications share many of the DB's views.

One more thing. Regarding finances, page two explained how expiring subs, new subs, and extended subs would be dealt with. Now I's like to return to the matter of subs that are paid ahead. A surprisingly large number of subs expire far in the future. US subscribers whose subs extend beyond 121 will receive 50 cents per issue, the subscription price. Non-US subscribers will be paid at the airmail rate of $1.67 and surface $.83. One more thing in this connection: At the time these extended subs arrived with their fat checks in payment I was overjoyed. Now I have to pay the piper. I checked the address labels and found 38 subs that expire after 121. The total cost of refunding will be $172.14 according to my figures. I would like to say to subscribers in this category who can see their way to excuse the DB from refunding their overpayments that I would welcome a note or e-mail to that effect.

---Frank Girard

(from p. 28)

a forty hour week. This amounts to something like $4.25 an hour. “Health in Prison” by Gretchen Schumaker, a prisoner in Oregon describes at length the problems of prisoners who have persistent health problems. Although the media lead us to believe that Oregon prisoners even receive heart transplants, the reality according to Ms. Schumaker is that they can’t even get the tests needed to determine the seriousness of—in her case—Hepatitis C. The issue ends with a model letter to government officials, a letter that in effect begs for mercy—an evidence, I suppose, of the desperation of people who have no other way to turn for help. For further information and to subscribe write to Off the Hook, c/o NYCABC, PO Box 20449, New York, NY 10009.

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NOTES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHORT REVIEWS

The World in Common group (WIC) sent a last minute e-mail announcement about the formation of their new organization with its roots in the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Because of space considerations only the first paragraph of it "Our Stand" is printed here. The rest will appear in DB118, and in the meantime readers can find more information at the website <www.angelfire.com/ang/socialism/wic/>.

Our purpose is to help inspire a vision for an alternative way of living where the technological and material resources for creating wealth (factories, farms, land, communications etc.) are owned in common and democratically controlled by the community on an ecologically sustainable and socially harmonious basis. Individuals will voluntarily co-operate to produce goods and services and will freely take these from the stores and other such establishments, according to their needs. Buying and selling, money transactions, profits and employment for a wage or salary etc., will cease altogether, along with the very idea of property itself (except for individual possessions for one's own use). Individuals will be able to freely develop their creative potential and to make meaningful decisions that will allow them, at last, to take real control of their own lives.

The Redline Publications Catalogue of Socialist Literature provides a full array of literature from the DeLeGeb sector of the non-market spectrum of socialist groups, something that has been missing from the UK for the past 30 years or more. Among the titles offered are all of De Leon's works still in print including some of the more obscure like The Ballot and the Class Struggle, A Socialist in Congress, and Capitalism Means War! Besides De Leon's works, readers will find a good selection of books by Marx and Engels including Marx on Religion and Capital (volume one) as well as a few books by Indian writers commenting on Marx's works like A World to Win: Essays on the Communist Manifesto. The New York Labor News, the publishing arm of the Socialist Labor Party of America also publishes works by other authors. Some readers may be interested in its edition of Lewis Henry Morgan's Ancient Society in a readable print format unlike that of the old Charles H. Kerr edition. Also available: Arnold Petersen's War...Why?; the old collection, Daniel De Leon: The Man and His Work, a symposium by his co-workers first published in 1919; as well as a couple of pamphlets on racism by Eric Hass, one-time editor of the Weekly People. Some fairly recent pamphlets from the SLP include The Nature of Soviet Society, The SLP and the USSR, and After the Revolution: Who Rules. I was delighted to find a pamphlet by John Kerecher, his short biography, Frederick Engels, and after being out of print LO! These many decades! his pamphlet How the Gods Were Made. Included as well are books whose authors date back to the Second International: Rosa Luxemburg, George Plekhanov, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Paul Lafargue, August Bebel, and Franz Mehring. William Morris is also represented as well as the SPGB with, Yes--Utopia! by Ron Cook and A Socialist Life by Heather Ball. All in all the catalogue is a delight and a treasure for any reader who claims to be a revolutionary socialist. For a free copy of this attractively laid out and illustrated catalog write to Redline Publications, PO Box 6700, Sawbridgeworth CM21 0WA, England.

Books for Rebellious Workers: The Literature Department of the Industrial Workers of the World carries a list of books that will interest many unrebellious workers and perhaps render them rebellious. Besides the justly famous Solidarity Forever Labor History Calendar (2003 edition) at $10, the list includes books, recordings, and other items including IWW pins, caps and other items that sell well on literature tables. The books cover a wide range of subjects and are especially strong on labor history. Consider these: Convicts, Coal, and the Banner Mine Tragedy, a book that "throws new light on mining practices in Alabama during the early 1900s"; Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of
the World in British Columbia, "an important contribution to the history of the IWW in Canada"; Juice Is Stranger Than Friction; Selected Writings of T-Bone Slim, an IWW columnist; The Autobiography of Mother Jones, with an introduction by Clarence Darrow; The Case of Joe Hill by Phillip Foner; and two of B. Traven's jungle books: The Rebellion of the Hanged and March to the Moniteria (a special: the two books for $14). Also, "Cool Stuff for Kids" and IWW songbooks and CDs as well as the aforementioned IWW pins, caps, and a pennant (cool stuff for grownups). All this from the Industrial Workers of the World, PO Box 42777, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

AK Press Distribution 2003 Catalog. I envision a day when the AK Press catalog will be as thick as the Sears and Roebuck catalogs of my youth, although I doubt if they will end up in the outhouse like Sears and Roebuck's. The 2003 issue runs to a hefty 192 pages with major divisions into AK Press (AK has published an impressive list of books over the years—new titles run to three pages and include Anton Pannekoek's Workers' Councils for $10.95); and AK Audio, which features two pages of Chomsky and Zinn tapes and two pages of new titles. The non-fiction section of the books department covers 80 pages (from Anarchist Yellow Pages through Zerzan and Zinn to Zizek) and figuring an average of 20 titles per page, this amounts to 1600 books, each described and contents noted. AK began as a distributor of anarchist publications and it's not surprising to find Paul Avrich among the listings (four titles) nor Mikhail Bakunin, eight, including The Capitalist System described as the "first full length translation." Janet Biehl rates four titles and Murray Bookchin, thirteen. But AK frequently and fortunately deviates from its anarchist mission: Michael Albert of Z Magazine (an anarchist?) has eleven, and even Karl Marx, the declared enemy of most anarchists is allowed five. Not unexpectedly Noam Chomsky, who has become a publishing industry in his own right tops the charts with 46 titles. Howard Zinn does pretty well too with 15, but John Zerzan makes a surprisingly poor showing with only four. I also expected Bob Black to do better than just one. Despite a note that AK Distribution is always on the lookout for new material I found nothing from the DeLeonist sector (the SLP's New York Labor News) nor from the SPGB. These omissions may well result from the such groups' failure to ask for inclusion. Councialism hasn't done very well by AK either; another Pannekoek item and one by Henri Simone. I could find nothing from the communist left. Perhaps this problem could be solved by the initiative of supporters of the groups involved, myself included.

Order from AK Press Distribution, 674-A 23rd St., Oakland, CA 94612. E-mail <akpress@akpress.org>

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