

The Libertarian **Communist**

A Discussion Bulletin:

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for Anti State, Non Market Communism

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What A Fracking Mess



Also articles on: Reply to Laurens Otter: Cars and Socialism: Presenting Manifesto Against Labour: Pamphlet Review, Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Agriculture and Capitalism: and Capital and History

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Contents

Page :2 **A Reply to Laurens Otter and Some Further Notes. Dedicated to Tony Turner: Lyla Byrne.** This relates back to issue 22 and some comments Laurens made to Lyla's article *The Inherent Unhealthiness of Hierarchical Systems* in issue 21

Page : 5 **Fracking About with the Planet:: Ricardo Monde.** The debate on fracking hit the headlines in Britain in August with protests in West Sussex. This article takes a critical look at fracking and examines the debate which erupted in the SPGB following a seemingly pro fracking stance in the Pathfinder column in the Socialist Standard last January.

Page : 11 **Cars and Socialism: Stephen Shenfield (Stefan).** This article examines the problems caused by cars in capitalism and whether they could have any future in a sustainable socialist society.

Page : 14 **Presenting the Krisis Groups Manifesto Against Labor: Norbert Trenkle.** This article appeared previously on libcom.org it seeks to explain the ideas contained in that manifesto and gives a brief introduction to the development of the Krisis group.

Page : 19 **Pamphlet Review:** Here we provide a brief review of a short work by **Moishe Postone** entitled **Anti-Semitism and National Socialism.** This pamphlet examines the roots of anti-Semitism and its relationship to the ideas of National Socialism.

Page : 22: **How Agri-Food Corporations Make the World Hungry:** Basically this article from a few years ago explores the relationship between the rule of capital and the hunger that still exists in so many parts of the world.

Page : 23: **Capital and History: Robert Kurz.** We are pleased to present this brief article by the late Robert Kurz. Written in 2009 this critiques the position taken by most which only concerns when and how capitalism will come out of its present crisis and fails to offer a perspective beyond the capital system.

Pages: 23/4: **Anti State, Non Market Group Directory**

A reply to Laurens Otter and some further notes. Dedicated to Tony Turner. Lyla Byrne

I seem to elicit erroneous representations of what I have said (and sometimes of what I am or have done), with associated criticisms. Especially in this type of society, many find themselves in similar situations I'm sure. I entreat those who are interested to be wary of this, to check the original and think about things for themselves. According to Laurens Otter I said that 'it's wrong to say capitalists are self-interested'. Firstly, my comment was couched in 'I think', which means it is not a statement as of fact, but speculation. Secondly I was speculating about ruling minorities in general, and thirdly I didn't say 'it's wrong'! An apology is in order, actually.

The thought in Libcom 21, is that *to describe a ruling minority as functioning according to self interest is an oversimplification that can be misleading.* And it has a context – which I will come to later. 'Over simplification' has a more than subtle difference in meaning to 'wrong'. To suggest that the meaning of 'over simplification' is equivalent to the meaning of 'wrong' is a big oversimplification. 'Over simplification' does not imply that something is entirely – or perhaps even largely wrong, but that it doesn't say enough. I am sure that capitalists are self interested - as we are all self interested in various ways. I did not deny this. I went on to suggest that it is *more*

accurate to say that capitalists tend to have, or perhaps necessarily have a 'too limited self interest', or 'an unhealthy self interest' – for reasons that I go into in the article that are explicitly both social and ecological (L.O also suggests that I am only making an ecological argument).

Something that comes out of this for me is more clarity about the importance of specifying what type of 'self interest' we are referring to, i.e. what the interest is in or for. For example: Profit making is in the interests of capitalists *for control*, and control is in their interests *for profit making*. We especially need to distinguish not only between the conflicting interests of capitalists and workers to do with finance, or possession in itself; but also between conflicting interests that that affect us all as human beings, namely:

a) Our self interest in capitalist terms.

Or: *interests according to the profit principle, financial value and individualistic morality/ethics.*

b) Our self interest in terms of healthy, enjoyable life. Or: *interests according to health principles – a health based morality/ethic.* By this I mean: directly valuing individual/social/ecological wellbeing; having humanitarian and ecologically sustainable principles.

b) Is our evolutionary and cultural legacy as social animals of empathy, care and appreciation for each other and our life supporting ecology, and of studying health in a more objective way. [There is more evidence about this in 'A life worth choosing' which is in libcom 22, and which I hope to make available in a fuller version at **stephenshenfield.net** together with more references.]

There is plenty of information now about how the forces that comprise capitalism – financial ownership, the pursuit of profit, competition instead of cooperation, class division and so on, cause unnecessary loss of health, and prevent healthy developments. Capitalism self perpetuates *by causing dysfunction*, and thus as it goes on, the health situation has been getting worse in fundamental ways that are completely socially and ecologically interrelated – such that now the very existence the whole biosphere is threatened. It is time for everyone to accept that

capitalism is an unhealthy system for human beings.

All of us, including capitalists, are part of society, and part of the ecology. Although there are still healthy things going on at present, being part of an unhealthy social system is by definition an unhealthy condition for any human being, in two interconnected ways: 1) In terms of having a healthy society and ecology to be part of – to live in. 2) In terms of developing their personal human potential for healthy consciousness and creativity. A layer of concerns about finance and status; about controlling others and indeed resources in general to make money out of them, is interposed in many social/ecological relationships; and this has affects in various ways on other relationships also, distracting from them and introducing fears and suspicions and habitual controlling attitudes for example.

Capitalism is in the interests of capitalists for maintaining themselves as capitalists, but it is clearly *not in their interests as whole human beings*. I think that this would now be accepted by most in the S.P.G.B; and that Tony Turners stand on the matter was important in moving things on to be more sensible. It is not an expelling issue now.

In comparison to b), a) is a very limited form of self interest indeed, and far too limited to be healthy. In the short term it limits the quality of interactions with others and the rest of environment; and in the long term, the associated lack of awareness, care and responsibility about the changes that are being produced is a road to ruin. Notably, to make sense, L.O. qualifies what he means by capitalist self interest as being 'short term interests' – which expresses that they are limited in this sense. However it is very odd that L. O. says that I 'neglect the possibility that the capitalist class are so caught up with their short-term interests, that they cannot see that they too would go down when [if] the ecology collapses' – as this is one of the main points that I am making by saying that their self interest is too limited.....

As indicated by a), workers self interest *in capitalist terms* is also very limited. One of the ways that capitalism perpetuates itself is by promoting interests that produce general psychological/social/ecological ignorance, such that the majority largely condone and collude with the multiple

psychological/social/ecological abuses of the capitalist class. It is mainly the working class that carry out these abuses – by doing what they are told to do for money – often for more money than they need for wellbeing as things are, by buying stuff that causes harm to produce and/or to use and by *not doing*; by not self organizing to make a healthier world.

Perhaps some capitalists consciously promote policies which cause ignorance and dysfunction, so as to keep people unnecessarily carrying out and buying into abusive practices/blaming each other instead of the system/fighting for their master's profits in wars/generally controllable. However this sort of thing is mainly maintained by the inherent structures, pressures and stresses in the system, without conscious manipulation.

One result is that the ruled majority also cannot see *that they will go down if the society/ecology collapses*. They also, as a whole, have remained in denial about increasing social and ecological problems, have thought little about the disastrous consequences, and have taken little action to solve or avert them - so far. Although this is of course to do with lack of access to resources now and the playing down of factual information in the mass media, it is also due to the dehumanization that has occurred because of the impositions of capitalist forces, including the removal of access to resources in the past, and the propagation of its ideology.

The forces of the system instil a *too limited self interest* by the structures that are set up. Large scale loss of community autonomy in particular is central to large scale disruption, perversion and displacement of our interest in healthy enjoyable life, because we lose a lot of practice. The system in general causes alienation from each other, our work and our ecology; the valuing of money and over real wellbeing; fear of not having enough; the taking of too much - and promotes an individualistic morality/ethic. We daily see the perpetration of crimes against humanity and the ecology rewarded with money and status. Looking at all this it seems highly likely that the system *can only be short term*.....But this is not all that is going on.

Which brings us to another note: to just describe a ruling minority – or workers - as

functioning according to self interest (in the sense of individualistic self interest) is over simplistic in another way also: despite the forces just listed, the principle of health still survives in society in a sufficiently undisrupted and unperturbed form to have influence in the actions of capitalists and workers.

What we have to take into account here is that human beings are very complex. Self interestedness can differ in form and quality. It may also vary over time. The interests of an individual are usually varied and can be contradictory (in fact that may be the norm in the present set up). Although a person may be indoctrinated into and/or conforming with the system in some ways, in other ways they may be wanting and working for something else.

Whether people qualify as workers or capitalists, they are perhaps not often completely taken over by (do not function only according to) capitalist principles. In particular, people are perhaps not often completely taken in by the erroneous justification that limited self concern is actually is the best way to contribute to society as a whole. Nor the notion that benefit to society only happens by supporting capitalists in making a profit, so that they can reinvest in making more profit.

We are not usually dealing with single and unchanging states of being, which is why I also talk of *tendencies* - which can of course be very strong tendencies. The individualistic self interest of capitalism involves an insufficient concept of the self – an insufficient development of the self - for truly healthy life, which causes a lot of suffering and over time threatens survival. It is testament to the power of the capitalist system that this scenario is presently already beginning to play out. But very few indeed of those who still support capitalism are consciously supportive of continuing with a disaster; and many are already consciously opposed to the capitalist system for health reasons - social and wider ecological - and involved in alternative projects of many types.

Neither capitalists nor workers are all completely heartless about the plight of others and environmental problems, as is evidenced in numerous ways in society. Many who financially qualify as being capitalists

have concerns about others/communities/the ecology, and don't always just do what would be most efficacious for making profit or for keeping the system going. Perhaps most capitalists are not entirely capitalist ideologically, and some are not ideologically capitalist at all. Some such have joined the S.P.G.B. Famous socialists from the ruling class include Engels and William Morris; and there is also Prince Kropotkin the anarchist.

Whether increasing consciousness of the health principle, and commitment to health as a value system will contribute to making enough of us conscious enough of the damage done by economic hierarchies to overcome those systems on a global scale remains to be seen. If so, this will be done by ever more of us learning from the experience, and managing evermore of our resources, including our human potentials, directly for peace and wellbeing.

A social situation of minority rule by means of financial ownership necessarily involves overt and covert coercion and ruthless competition for financial profits – with all the suffering and waste that this entails. This is not helpful for anyone's development as a human being – capitalist or worker, even in the short term. – Except in the sense that anyone – capitalist or worker, can learn from the experience to do things in a different and healthy way.

The presence of health as a core principle is fundamental to being human – to being a conscious social animal. In capitalism, capitalist 'think' *tends* to dominate – but even then 'domination' implies that there is something there being dominated. Nor is the domination complete or constant. By existing, the health principle has effects in our behaviour, and comes to the forefront more often than we might think, because it is so integral to us that it tends to be taken for granted. Its presence is evident not only in actions directly for individual/community/environmental wellbeing, but as the reason why there has to be so much deception (including self deception) in capitalism about its unhealthy effects.

I am looking at society as part of the ecology. The effects of a system/the practices of a society on human beings and the ecology as a whole, indicate the healthiness or otherwise (and in that sense the desirability or otherwise) of that system/those practices.

Healthy survival (which necessarily requires sufficient wellbeing in the whole society and ecology), is an essential basic value by which long term interests can be judged. But we need to judge our short term interests by this also, for the sake of the quality of life in the present.

Awareness that health is a core principle in humanity is bound to help in the process of developing that principle, so that it becomes a more powerful force in the world. [I would confirm that I am referring to awareness and principles as physical states – part of the material, with causes and effects.] I see common ownership and democracy in a mutually productive relationship with the health principle. As the health principle develops, common ownership and democracy becomes more clearly seen and enacted as the system that we need to facilitate action for wellbeing and so on.

Individualism is an illusion. We have to escape capitalism's fundamentally corrupt value system, and unrealistic belief system; and understand that our individual wellbeing is generated by, and helps to generate, community and environmental wellbeing as a whole. At any rate, we will not have much chance of a healthy future without holistic health as a conscious core principle.

Fracking about with the planet?

*"In recent years the environment has become a major political issue, and rightly so **because a serious environmental problem really does exist.... Since the publication of our Ecology and Socialism pamphlet in 1990 environmental problems facing the planet have got much worse...** Voices claiming that the proper use of market forces will solve the problem can still be heard, but as time goes on the emerging facts of what is happening serve only to contradict those voices."*

The above quote comes from the introduction to the SPGB **pamphlet *An Inconvenient Question? Socialism and the Environment*** published in 2008. In the five years since its publication the ecological problems we are facing have magnified as the article ***Global Heating and Socialism*** by **Stefan** in **LC 23** illustrated with devastating effect. This article concerns the debate on energy supplies which, quite obviously,

cannot be divorced from the issue of global heating. Fracking, a major issue in areas of the U.S for some time, hit the headlines in Britain in August following protests in Balcombe, West Sussex against the possibility of a fracking site being established there. However there has also been some controversy over the issue within the party who produced the pamphlet quoted above, notably in the Pathfinders column of the Socialist Standard in January of this year. We believe this is an issue of importance to the whole ASNM sector and therefore worthy of discussion in a journal related to that sector.

About Fracking

Hydraulic fracturing is the fracturing of rock by a pressurized liquid. Induced hydraulic fracturing or hydro-fracturing, commonly known as fracking, is where water is mixed with sand and chemicals, and the mixture is injected at high pressure into a wellbore to create small fractures along which fluids such as gas, petroleum, uranium-bearing solution may migrate to the well. [**Hydraulic fracturing – Wikipedia**] Fracking in various forms has been around for a long time but horizontal oil or gas wells were rare until the late 1980s when, in Texas, thousands of oil wells were completed by drilling horizontally in the Austin Chalk. Horizontal wells proved more efficient in getting oil from the tight chalk. The beginning of this century witnessed advances in drilling and completion technology resulting in horizontal wellbores becoming increasingly economically viable. From 2010 it has been reported that up to 60% of all new oil and gas wells worldwide were being hydraulically fractured and from 2012, 2.5 million hydraulic fracturing operations were performed on oil and gas wells worldwide, over one million of them in the United States [**Ibid**].

Supporters of fracking point to its economic benefits because of the amount of hydrocarbons that the process can extract which were not previously accessible. It is also argued that fracking will bring economic benefits in the form of jobs, energy security and cheaper energy bills. However as we will see later many of these claims are debateable.

The Socialist Standard and the fracking debate

"Protesters in Balcombe, one UK fracking site, insist that it is a 'very, very short term choice. We should really be putting money into renewables', Caroline Lucas of the Greens complains of the government's 'irrational obsession with hard to reach shale and with keeping the UK addicted to fossil fuels' [Pathfinders column Socialist Standard, January 2013]

The column continues by arguing that the Greens are up a tree is they believe that this or any future government are going to turn renewables, (currently merely 3.8 per cent of the National Grid) into a major source of energy in a period of depression. It is then suggested that fracking could be a practical and immediate solution to existing energy problems. Whilst not clean, the writer suggests, it is 50 per cent less carbon omitting than coal. After then suggesting that it is not for socialists to take either a pro or anti position on fracking as it is not a class issue it then goes on to take a pro stance by adding that with proper regulation which could be a problem in some countries there does not seem to be much of a case against it and later it is suggested that it looks like a good bridging solution. [**ibid**] In a more recent issue of the Socialist Standard (June 2013) a writer reviewing the film Promised Land which deals with hydraulic fracking commented that:

"Socialists argue that fracking is a mining technology, and if it can be made safe, and if we need it, we may use it in socialism."

So, one could ask, is the SPGB advocating fracking would or could be used in a socialist society, despite the ecological problems such a society would face? The Pathfinders column, especially, provoked a good deal of heated debate on the SPGB forum. The tone of the column, it was suggested belittled the concerns of local residents and protesters and anyone who opposed fracking. As one person put it;

"I find the dismissal of concerns of residents, who are not rich and powerful, in favour of the spin of energy companies and their political lackies a worrying development in a socialist journal".

Another critical comment suggested that;

"... the main target appears not to be capitalism and how it distorts our energy needs, but those who attempt to contest capitalist interests, who

are attacked on grounds of 'realism' and 'common sense'. What emerges is capitalist apologetics. Little different from much coverage in mainstream media, which posing as 'scientific' 'objective' and 'impartial', conceals subservience to the current economic system".

In an editorial committee reply it was suggested that the reasoning behind such criticism was that anything that is supported by Tories or business must be wrong whilst any opposition from local residents and protestors must be right. The reply then, somewhat surprisingly in view of the criticisms already received, made the following statement;

"... a report from accountancy firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers (BBC Business, 14th February) which estimates that shale gas reserves could push down oil prices by 40 per cent and boost the world economy by \$2.7tn, developments surely in the interests of many workers". (1)

Supposed Benefits of fracking and counter arguments

Firstly there is little doubt that by reading the Pathfinders column you might well be drawn to the conclusion that the SPGB had decided to take a pro position on fracking which is rather surprising because fracking, if it has not already, will become a hotly contested issue. To argue that something that seems to have more negative than positive points and is clearly not an answer to global heating might be used in a socialist society is like taking a look in a very cloudy crystal ball. Let's examine some of the 'positive' points of fracking as presented in the Pathfinders column. Firstly it states;

"Its not clean, but its 50 percent less belching than coal" [**Socialist Standard: op.cit**]

Firstly because of the dire consequences for us all if action is not taken to tackle global heating, the case for anti state, non-market communism cannot be divorced from an ecological perspective. Yes members of organisations such as the Green Party can be criticised as they fail to see the connection between global heating and capitalism but not for a perspective that seeks to lower the reliance on the burning of fossil fuels. It has been reported that a few years ago some sections of the environmental movement held the view that shale gas could play an important role as a transition fuel. However they have now come to the conclusion that investing in renewable energy rather than

putting resources into the extraction of fossil fuel from the ground is the only answer to avoiding dangerous levels of climate change [**The Guardian, Fracks and Figures, August 2013**].

Whilst since shale gas has been exploited in the U.S emissions have been reduced this is due to the fact that it replaced coal. However there is the same argument presented earlier that even if emissions are reduced continuing with the extraction and burning of gas for the foreseeable future will do nothing to help stabilise the temperature of the planet [**Ecology and Socialism, 2010. p.95**] There is also a growing debate as to if shale gas is that much less carbon belching than coal due to the release of methane gas during the fracking process, as methane is a major contributor to global heating [**The Guardian; op.cit**]. Whilst it is true that in April of this year the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the U.S lowered its estimate of the level of methane gas that is released into the atmosphere during fracking by 20 per cent it has previously been noted that there is a deep suspicion that companies have been negligent and have issued false statements to the EPA with regard to preventing diesel from getting into the water supply [**Ecology and Socialism, p.96, op.cit**] It is also the case that because hydraulic fracturing requires such high volumes of water as this transportation will carried out by road transport this will lead to high volumes of air emissions [**Wikipedia,**]. A study by Robert Howarth at Cornell University in 2010 questioned if hydrofracking is less carbon emitting than coal due to the energy and water intensive method involved in the extraction process [**Ecology and Socialism, p.95, op.cit**] So even with the case that fracking leads to lower carbon emissions than burning coal we can say that the jury has not yet returned with a definite verdict.

The Pathfinders column suggested that:

"The much publicised fire faucets and poisoned water were almost certainly preventable accidents and cowboy carelessness at the well-head."

Let's delve into some analysis regarding water contamination. Reports suggest that up to August 2011 there were a minimum of 36 cases of suspected groundwater contamination relating to hydraulic fracturing in the United States. More recently at a congressional testimony in April 2013 Dr. Robin Ikeda, Deputy Director of Non-communicable Diseases, Injury and

Environmental Health at the CDC indicated that there were several sites where the EPA had documented contamination and in several of these cases the EPA has linked hydraulic fracturing as the likely the source of the contamination. [Wikipedia: op.cit] There is also concern because chemicals which are added to the water used for fracking, a necessary aid to the process, could contaminate groundwater reservoirs. Although geologists believe this is unlikely as groundwater reservoirs usually lay well above the rocks that are fracked, in well-managed operations; they add that there has been little extensive research into the subject [New Scientist: Aug 2013] Supporters of fracking, including Viscount Ridley, former chairman of Northern Rock, claim that there has not been a single proven case of groundwater contamination in the tens of thousand of wells that have been drilled in the U.S. As has been suggested the word to highlight in that statement is "proven" and as we have noted above many studies have indicated a suspected link with groundwater contamination. The mixing of water with chemicals and the process of pumping it underground releases not only gases such as methane but also salts and metals. There is also the point that much of the contaminated water used resurfaces and is classed as hazardous waste which needs treatment and this is another potential pollutant risk. Actually proving that water contamination is due to the fracking process is almost impossible as there are always natural pollutants but water contamination caused by fracking is a distinct possibility [The Guardian, Op.Cit] In addition to the contamination of water supplies there is the effect on the water supply as each fracking well uses millions of litres of water which is injected underground. They are therefore competing with many other consumers of water and whilst in the case of Britain it is unlikely to effect supplies on a national basis in could affect areas where it is scarce such as the South and South-East of England [ibid]

In the editorial reply to critical comments on the forum it was argued that shale gas reserves could reduce the price of oil significantly and radically boost the world economy which was in the interests of many workers. The first thing to say about this is it sounds extremely reformist in as much as it is favouring developments that will aid the capitalist economic system, rather strange for a party and journal that considers itself

revolutionary. A second point is that the economic benefits of fracking are debatable. A number of studies considering the relationship between fracking and economic growth have suggested a beneficial outcome. However the funding source of the studies is somewhat controversial as most studies are funded by mining companies or by environmental groups, which can lead to unreliability Some research studies have concluded that mining has not produced an upturn in the population or in employment [Wikipedia, op.cit] As regards job creation the fracking industry have come up with a figure of between 70 to 150,000 new jobs should the industry's figure of 1,000 wells in Britain be realised. This would amount to between 70 to 150 jobs for each well, which is a rather high figure as the wells will be mostly automated. It is concluded that there will be jobs created in such areas as construction, transport and mining [The Guardian, op.cit] So not only is it not clear if fracking will bring economic benefits, if that is what we are looking for, but if it does lead to some job creation they will not be in areas beneficial to bringing global heating under control.

Another debatable point is whether or not fracking would bring about energy security. Some estimates have made the claim that there are around 1,300 trillion cubic feet of shale gas underneath this country. The problem is that what is unknown is how much of this is actually accessible, exactly what the ecological cost will be to extract it and how long a period the supplies will last. A proper analysis of many of the formations believed to contain the gas has yet to be carried out. In addition to this the oil and gas industry is well known for overstating its case for both financial and political objectives [Ibid] On that account it shares a common cause with capitalist interests in general, so why believe what they say?

One concern for many, perhaps not to all, would be what fracking would do to the countryside if conducted on the mass scale some envisage. The fracking industry itself has estimated that as many as 1,000 sites in Britain could be in operation by 2020. Each site will be about the size of four or five football pitches [The Guardian, op.cit] Whilst the jury is still out on the impact on wildlife if it leads an increase in climate change emissions it may well effect the whole natural world. In the case of Britain the RSPB fears that fracking will take place in many areas

that are close to important bird migratory routes [**ibid**]. Prime Minister: David Cameron stated

"I would never sanction something that might ruin our landscapes and scenery. Shale gas pads are relatively small – about the size of a cricket pitch... The huge benefits of shale gas outweigh any very minor changes to the landscape."

It has been argued that this is putting a very thick gloss on things. If shale gas is to provide a meaningful share of 'our' energy thousands of these rigs will have to be established. Replacing current North Sea gas production may well require something like 10 or 20,000 wells [**What is behind this fracking mania? Unbridled machismo, The Guardian, August 20th 2013**] What would that do to the landscape and scenery?

How the Fracking industry deals with opposition to it.

The opposition to fracking in the U.S and the response of the industry to it might give us a foretaste of what might take place in Britain if fracking activities take off on a large scale and the opposition movement to it grows. Fracking companies in the U.S have adopted various public relations exercises to counteract opposition, some of which has been aggressive and imaginative which shows how important some regard this issue. In a discussion on the adoption of public relations measures to counter hydraulic fracturing protesters the following comments, from a senior executive at Anadarko Petroleum were recorded:

"Download the US Army / Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual, because we are dealing with an insurgency."

A spokesperson for Range Resources suggested that, when confronting and dealing with local people in Pennsylvania, Range had employed psychological warfare and that these experiences gained from Middle East operations had been invaluable. [**Wikipedia, op.cit**]. If some of the opposition to fracking has been aggressive, the industry itself is open to a charge of secrecy and making research into fracking operations difficult. It has been reported that researchers, the media and other organizations have outlined difficulties in both the conducting and reporting the results of studies into fracking as a result of industry and government pressure. There is also the case of the possible censoring of environmental reports.

Researchers claim that there should be full disclosure of all fracturing fluids, the testing of animals raised close to fracturing sites and that there should be better inspection of all environmental samples. Once court cases in the U.S regarding contamination from hydraulic fracturing have been settled the related documents are sealed. Not surprisingly the American Petroleum Institute disputes that this has had the result of concealing problems with drilling for gas [**ibid**].

Learning lessons from the past

In a further article in The Guardian, Dr Robin Russell Jones suggests that to understand the arguments about fracking we need to study the history of lead. This dates back, he argues 250 years ago and concerned lead lined cider presses in Devon and the fact that some cider manufacturers were adding sugar of lead to their cider. In 1767 Sir George Baker, future president of the Royal College of Physicians published experiments that proved the presence of lead in Devonshire Cider. Despite absolute denial by the Cider manufacturers and the vilification of Baker himself, he was proved right. Fast forward to the 20th century and we have the long running battle of lead in petrol, by the early 1970s oil companies were adding 400,000 tons a year to petrol worldwide. Once again despite the industry's denial that there was any link to leaded petrol and ill health, especially in Children, the link was finally proved beyond doubt. In 2011 the UN announced that it succeeded in phasing out leaded petrol almost world wide and this had resulted in, amongst other annual benefits, 1.2 million fewer premature deaths. Dr Robin Russell-Jones argues that the lesson to be learned from the experience of campaigns against lead are that new technology is all too often adopted without thoroughly examining consequences; that industry cannot be relied upon to act in the best interests of the general public, even in a situation when their activities are threatening the whole planet with pollution; that today's politicians can be no more trusted to act in the interest of public health than was the case in the 18th century; that remedial action is only likely when individuals state and raise their voices above those of vested interests and, as we have already argued, that disinformation is a well known and standard tactic whenever industry and company profits are under

attack [We should learn our lessons form lead, The Guardian August 20th 2013] (3)

Government dismissal of renewables

In The Guardian George Monbiot looks at how those capitalist vested interests respond, (he would not put it in those terms) to the case for renewable energy in comparison to something like shale gas. First there is Biogas which is produced by the breakdown of organic matter in the absence of oxygen, it is a renewable energy source, comparable to solar and wind energy using regionally produced raw materials and recycled waste and is ecologically friendly. Monbiot notes that the vast majority of this is untapped, capturing it is unproblematic but it needs changes to the way waste is presently handled. To this point the government has not been interested in developing biogas; but at the same time it has gone head over heels to support the fracking industry, by setting up a special office, establishing a tax system which the chancellor boasts;

"is the most generous for shale in the world".

At the same time biogas is pushed to one side and forgotten [What is behind this fracking mania: Unbridled machismo, The Guardian, August 20th 2013]

Meanwhile the government is almost establishing its own campaign against wind power. It is setting up a veto so that local people are enfranchised and able to prevent the building of wind turbines. The government's case is explained in terms of 'people power', local people, it suggests have to be taken into account regarding windfarms. However when it comes to fracking 'people power' cannot be traced. Where fracking applications are concerned the planners overseeing them are prohibited from looking into alternatives to oil and gas, there exists no regulations regarding distancing fracking rigs from houses and priority is supposed to be given to the positive implications of mineral extraction, especially economic ones. Wind turbines do seem to be less than welcome by many people but they are far less of an interference in everyday life than fracking drilling set ups. In contrast to fracking operations wind turbines are constructed on high ground, distanced from most houses and as noted no such rules are in place in respect to how fracking operations are set up [ibid].

This main aim of this article has been to examine the controversy surrounding fracking in general although it has been based on many of the issues raised by the Pathfinders column in the Socialist Standard early this year. It is fairly clear that the stance taken toward fracking in that column was a pro one and this is the reason why much space has been taken up dealing with it. As stated earlier whilst the ecology movement can be criticised for failing to make a real connection between capitalism and global heating their arguments in opposition to the burning of fossil fuels and to fracking must be seen to be correct as that would do nothing to arrest the threat of global heating.

Fracking is, at the very least a controversial issue and to give any endorsement to it is clearly unwise. To suggest that it could possibly be used in a socialist society seems to be foolhardy as we have no idea what situation we may be faced with. As far back as 1990 in their pamphlet *Ecology and Socialism* the SPGB took a far more realistic stance when examining the situation regarding nuclear power; it stated:

"Future generations will rightly regard the decision to utilise nuclear power on a widening scale for electricity generation, let alone for military purposes, as an act of folly, especially as right from the start it was known that there was no satisfactory solution to the problem of disposing of the radioactive waste." [p.24]

Any socialist comment on the energy problem, which is so bound up with the global heating issue, must begin with the basic issues of energy conservation and the case for renewables rather than joining with the government's dismissal of them. In the editorial reply to criticisms of the Pathfinders column it was suggested that the reasoning behind much of the opposition to fracking was that it was supported by the Tories and business and therefore it must be wrong. Whilst it is true that support from that direction does not by itself make it wrong, it is likely that it is far from a neutral point of view and is likely to be promoting some self vested interest. As for the suggestion that many are opposed to fracking because it is part of capitalism and therefore it must be bad for the environment, it can hardly be argued that the profit system has put ecological interests at the top of its priority list. Many who responded to the original column argued that it was little more than

"*capitalist apologetics*" and this applies even more to the editorial reply. In addition several respondents raised the fact that the column failed to address the key point, namely that both the energy problems and fragile state of the planet needs to be placed firmly on the doorstep of the capital system.

Finally a related and negative outcome of the column was that it potentially increases the gulf between anti state, non-market communism and the ecology movement which is already too wide. The opinion of this journal is that we have to at least try and relate to the ecology movement with the aim of creating within that movement recognition of the inevitable link between a system of capital accumulation and global heating. This would be more to the point than retreating into the false realm of patching up the capitalist system via benefits to the economy and job creation schemes. Like it or not the ecological issue is the most important issue facing us and failure to act on that fact will mean that any alternative to capitalism is consigned to dust.

Footnotes

1) For a full discussion of the topic on the SPGB forum see <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/forum/comments/pathfinders-fracking>

2) Ibid

3) Dr Robin Russell-Jones was the medical and scientific advisor to Clear: the Campaign for Lead Free Air from 1981-83 and its chair from 1984-89]

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The following article appeared in the Socialist Standard in two parts in February and March this year. The first part was entitled RoadKill and the second Cars and Socialism. As this is the complete article it is being included under the latter title. It can also be found on the author's website at stephenshenfield.net which is also in our directory.

Cars and socialism: Stephen Shenfield (Stefan)

A massacre of 28 children and teachers at a school in Connecticut on December 15 has received weeks of intensive media coverage. And yet very little attention is paid to the roughly 100 people killed in the U.S. every day by motor vehicles. The carnage at the scene of a serious road accident is just as horrific as a battlefield, but only those directly involved – the victims and the workers whose job is to clean up the mess – are fully aware of it as an everyday reality. Millions of animals – deer, badgers, frogs, birds, etc. – also die on the roads. They are called "roadkill". That seems an apt term for the human casualties too. Worldwide human roadkill is estimated at 1.3 million a year. The injured number in the tens of millions. Average annual human roadkill in the U.S. in recent years has been about 40,000. (Another couple of million are hurt; 250,000 of them have sufficiently bad injuries and sufficiently good health insurance to be hospitalised.) There has been a modest decline since the 1970s, when the yearly average was about 50,000.

Various reasons have been suggested for the decline, including a crackdown on drunk driving and the adoption of certain safety features, especially seat belts and eventually (in the 1990s) air bags. We owe these improvements to persistent efforts by campaigners for safer car design, Ralph Nader being the best known.

Feeling safe

This example demonstrates that campaigns for reform can sometimes achieve worthwhile results. Worthwhile, but limited and temporary. Because there has been no

decisive reorientation of car design toward safety, as opposed to style, power and comfort. Thus, as Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernandez point out, car manufacturers prefer to make the driver feel safe rather than help him drive safely. By swaddling driver and passengers in a warm, quiet and smoothly moving cocoon, insulated from the noise and bumps of the road, they "prevent drivers from sensing how fast they are going or how dangerous the road conditions are" (*Carjacked: The Culture of the Automobile and its Effect on our Lives*, Palgrave Macmillan 2010, p. 179).

However, the biggest setback to the cause of safe design has been the rise of the monsters known as Sport Utility Vehicles. SUVs are much more prone to roll over than ordinary cars and much more lethal when they collide with other road users (*Keith Bradsher, High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV*, Public Affairs 2002).

The decline in human roadkill is partly the result of people minimising their exposure to traffic as pedestrians, though at a high cost in the form of isolation and loss of community. In the old days, when motor vehicles were few and far between, children were free to roam around on their own and play with friends in the streets. Now they are cooped up at home. There they can prepare for their future role as drivers by playing video games like Carmageddon, where the goal is to smash up as many other cars and run down as many pedestrians as possible.

Pollutants

Besides direct roadkill, cars harm and kill people through the pollutants that they emit into the air we breathe. Here too campaigns for reform have had some successes. In particular, exhaust filters are now in wider use and petrol no longer contains lead additives. Here too, however, the few successes are overshadowed by a daunting list of failures. And here too SUVs are the worst culprits. Motor vehicles still emit enormous quantities of tiny particles and poisonous compounds, including nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds that react in sunlight to form ozone. Most of these gases and particles do most harm to the respiratory system, causing such diseases as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and lung cancer. Another pollutant, benzene, damages the bone

marrow and immune system and causes leukaemia and other blood cancers. A car emits poisons into the air both inside and outside, making it hard to tell whether it is less unhealthy to ride with the windows closed or open.

Burdens on society

These are not the only burdens that the car imposes on society. It devours enormous material and labour resources and generates a vast stream of material waste, much of it hazardous and/or non-recyclable. The car and the hydrocarbon fuels that power it make a big contribution to the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases and thereby to climate change. Cars have a huge impact on land use. Land is used to manufacture cars, sell cars (showrooms), service and repair cars (garages, filling stations), wash cars, drive cars (roads, driveways) and – no small item! – park cars (roadsides, car parks, home garages). An expanding area of arable land is being used to cultivate biofuels for cars. These burdens grow heavier as the numbers of cars (and especially SUVs) increase. The total number of motor vehicles in the world passed the one-billion mark in 2010. It can be expected to continue rising rapidly as cheaper models open up new consumer markets in countries such as India and China.

Cars and socialism

Thus, society pays a terrible price for the motor car – in pollution and disease, ugliness and noise, social atomization, injury and death. Does it follow that a socialist community is likely to decide to stop producing cars? How compatible would such a decision be with the idea of socialism as a world of material abundance and free access?

First point. Socialism will make a lot of car travel unnecessary. This applies especially to commuting. Many jobs to which people now commute will disappear with the abolition of money). Over time geographical patterns of habitation and production can be changed to enable most people to live close enough to their work not to need a car to get there. We can expect new forms of public transport and the restoration of environment-friendly old forms such as trams and canal barges (for non-perishable supplies). Sizeable urban areas can be made safe as pedestrian

precincts. Some towns in Germany are already car-free and accessible only by rail.

Second point. Replacing petrol-guzzling motor cars by electric cars should reduce pollution from cars and their contribution to global heating, provided that the electricity comes from low-carbon sources (not from coal, as it often does at present).

Sharing systems

Third point. Free access to car transport as a service can be achieved without permanently assigning a car to each family or individual. In social terms, the current arrangement, with most cars sitting unused most of the time, is extremely wasteful. The total number of cars required can be minimised by relying on a pool of cars available through a network of depots.

When people want to go on a trip that cannot conveniently be made by public transport, they will borrow a car from the nearest depot. When they no longer need the car, they will return it to the network (not necessarily to the same depot). The depot staff will recharge, repair and maintain the vehicles and monitor their use. Such arrangements already exist, though not for cars. The public lending library provides free access to books and cassettes. A free-access sharing system for bicycles was pioneered in Amsterdam by the Provos in the 1960s, and now exists in Paris, Hangzhou and many other cities. In socialism sharing systems will expand to cover specialised tools and other things that people need to use occasionally.

In a free-access society people will develop a different psychology. They will view the goods being held for their use in public stores and depots as already belonging to them. As they will have free access to those things whenever needed, they will feel no urge to transfer stuff to their homes in order to make it "theirs". Such pointless behaviour will appear pathological. People will feel a need for exclusive and permanent possession only of those things which have a special personal meaning for them.

Electric cars still a problem

So it may be possible to provide free access to electric cars at a social cost lower than that now paid for motor cars. Much lower, perhaps, but still considerable. Switching to

electric cars will not stop the carnage on the roads. Electric cars also pose environmental problems of their own. There are two types of electric car: one runs on a battery, the other is powered by a stack of hydrogen fuel cells. However, the manufacture of both devices depends on the availability of rare earth metals (REMs). These substances occur in very low-concentration ores from which they have to be separated out by means of acid baths and other processes, generating vast quantities of highly toxic waste. The REM smelting plants in Inner Mongolia dump the waste into a large pool. From there the "radioactive sludge" seeps into the soil and groundwater, destroying local agriculture and the health of local residents. A socialist society could not tolerate such poisoning of the environment, even in a single locality. No local community would voluntarily sacrifice itself to provide the world with certain raw materials. And the world administration would lack the coercive power to sacrifice a local community against its will.

So the waste would have to be reprocessed, stored in sealed vessels and buried in stable geological structures deep underground. This is not done under capitalism because it would cost too much. But even in socialism it will surely be impracticable to store more than a certain quantity of waste in this way, especially as it will be in addition to hundreds of thousands of tons of accumulated nuclear waste in urgent need of similar treatment. That constraint will limit the amount of REMs extracted. And as REMs will be needed for many other uses (including energy-efficient fluorescent lamps and magnets for wind turbines) it will be necessary to set priorities for their allocation.

Free access to everything?

Thus, we cannot be sure whether socialist society will be able or willing to provide free access to car transport. The social cost associated with maintaining an adequate pool of electric cars may still be judged unacceptably high. It is doubtful that there could ever be free access to everything – to space travel, for instance. The world socialist community will have to decide, through its democratic institutions and procedures, what free access will and will not cover, and how to distribute things to which free access cannot be provided.

The following article was featured on **libcom.org**. It features Norbert Trenkle's 2001 discussion of the *Krisis Group's Manifesto against Labor*, summarizing its main points and providing a brief account of the history and origins of the *Krisis Group*.

Presenting the *Krisis Group's Manifesto against Labor*—Norbert Trenkle

I would first like to say a few words about the *Krisis Group* and its journal, *Krisis*. I will not speak at length about them, but will only offer a definition of what they are.

First, *Krisis* is a German language theoretical journal of social critique which appeared after 1986 and arose within the context of the leftist movement of 1968. A group of people who had passed through various communist and Marxist groups reached the point where they understood that the critique developed by Marxism, the critique of capitalist society, had reached its limits and that they had to go beyond it, that is, Marxism must also be subjected to criticism. Not from the point of view, however, which is fashionable today, i.e., saying that Marxism was completely mistaken and that capitalist society is the best possible society, but from the point of view that Marxism itself was not sufficiently radical in its critique.

From that perspective, which the group had acquired during the mid-1980s, they began to re-read the works of Marx and the theoreticians of what is known as western Marxism, such as Lukacs, the Frankfurt School, and others. From that basis, we began to develop a critique founded primarily upon the critique of the commodity and of value, or, more precisely, on the critique of commodity and value fetishism, which we consider to be an essential aspect of Marx's work. Whence a whole series of radical critiques of modern society were developed, including the critique of politics, the critique of democracy, the critique of patriarchal domination and, most essentially, even a critique of labor.

We began to undertake this critique of labor already at the end of the 1980s, in a very different social context from the one we live in today. At that time, at least in certain segments of society, there were various forms of a critique of labor, critiques which

were not perhaps very coherent and were somewhat inconsistent, but which constituted points of reference. During those years, however, the "value of labor" began to be increasingly emphasized in official discourse—its ethical, moral and political value—precisely in the very midst of a situation where increasingly larger numbers of people were unemployed or else under-employed in more or less acceptable conditions. And it was in that context that we decided to publish the *Manifesto against Labor*—as a provocation. As a provocation it caused powerful repercussions not only in Germany, but also in other countries, having appeared in a Brazilian edition, for example. Later, our friends from Fortaleza and Sao Paulo will speak a little about the *Manifesto's* impact in their country, as well as that of other texts.

I shall attempt to present a brief introduction to our critique of labor, without taking too much time, because I want to leave some time for discussion. To begin my short summary, I shall refer to the headline of a German newspaper, the *Bild-Zeitung*, which has 5 million readers, a very populist muck-raking type of newspaper. In an interview with this newspaper given on April 6th of this year, (2001: ed)Chancellor Gerhard Schröder said: "There is no right to be lazy", implicitly referring to Paul Lafargue's book, *The Right to be Lazy*. The ordinary reader of this newspaper, of course, does not know who Paul Lafargue is, he has never heard of him. He does, however, have some understanding of this insinuation. What was Schröder's message? That the cause of massive unemployment is not the dynamic of the capitalist economy, but is the fault of those people who do not want to work and who prefer to "take advantage" of the social state, of the "community", and the rest of that sermon. What surprised us a little was that this polemic had a very positive impact on almost all sectors of society. "Yes, yes, it is true, there are many people who do not want to work, who cannot be..., etc." And, of course, as a consequence, the restrictions on the unemployed increase. The rates are cut, more pressure is exerted to make them accept any kind of work, in dreadful conditions and with low pay, saying: "If you do not accept this, you will not receive any more money", and things of that kind. But why does such a large part of the population identify with this polemic? Why is it believed that the unemployed are responsible for a situation which is obviously the result of the enormous productivity developed by

capitalism, which is no longer capable of organizing labor on a generalized level?

It is truly paradoxical. Productivity is constantly increasing, there is more and more potential to produce social wealth, but under capitalist conditions this potential cannot be mobilized so that the whole world participates in this wealth—material wealth and the wealth of disposable time. To the contrary: a schism is produced on a global level. A minority labors in the smaller sector of very high technological productivity, while the majority of the world's population, from a capitalist point of view, is superfluous; which means that it is expelled from the more or less regulated sector of labor and must gain its livelihood under dreadful conditions, with very low pay and no job security. In both sectors, the pressure to waste yet more of one's time of life increases and competition is also outlandishly exacerbated, simultaneously regulating the division of an extremely unequal material wealth. In the capitalist core, and especially in Europe, this process of schism is still restrained, or, more precisely, retarded, by the existence of what remains of the social state. But the latter is being continually reduced, which leads to a continuous expansion of the precarious sector here as well.

Since it is obvious enough that the cause of massive unemployment and the lack of job security is the capitalist structural dynamic, why, then, does this polemic which blames the unemployed, those people who supposedly do not want to work, have such an impact? The basic reason for this is that labor is and continues to be the basis of modern capitalist society. It continues to be its basis, not only materially—I shall explain this shortly—but in the sense that it is also its psycho-social basis, drilled into the people's minds and consciousness, people who are—or, actually, we are—constituted capitalistically. The whole world today is socialized in this society as it exists and is impregnated by it. Capitalism is not an external thing, but exists within the people themselves. And labor is one of the basic moments of this psycho-social constitution.

What is going on here? One of the main foundations of society, labor, is breaking apart. The whole world knows this, knows that unemployment is always growing and that working conditions are getting worse. This is pointed out in the newspapers, in sociological studies and is also, of course, an everyday experience. For some 25 or 30

years this knowledge has been present in social consciousness. But, at the same time, identification with work as the centre of life itself is almost total. A contradictory situation is consequently produced. Precisely because the foundations of society are breaking up, there is a very strong tendency to want to re-establish them, to fundamentally reaffirm labor. A quite generalized fundamentalism of labor is thus established. This is a very important psychological reason why a polemic such as that of the German Chancellor—Tony Blair and others, especially the social democrats, do the same thing—has such widespread resonance.

What do I mean by saying that labor is the basis, the material foundation of capitalist society? It has traditionally been asserted that labor is the foundation of all societies. This was especially true of Marxism: it replies that labor is the foundation of all societies, from the beginnings of culture to communism. I deny this. Of course, all societies have always needed to produce goods in one way or another. There has always been the need to produce food, build houses, make clothing and other things of that kind. Every society must have some way of producing. But this production of the means of existence, of means of life in the broadest sense, never constituted the centre of society in non-capitalist societies; it did not constitute society itself, nor was it society's driving force. This role was not played by work or production, but by other factors and other moments, such as kinship, consanguinity and religious relationships, which constituted the social context and which, within this social context, in one form or another, produced goods to sustain society. In capitalist society, meanwhile, the opposite is true. Here it is labor which has the function of constituting society, it is what forms society itself. And within this social context formed and constituted by labor, of course, other relations and other spheres exist that are not directly defined by the logic of labor and the economy: the private sphere, sexual relations, the political and cultural spheres, etc. This form of social constitution is specific to capitalist society. I think it is very important to emphasize this, but it is necessary to approach it more closely in order to understand it better. If I said that, in capitalist society, labor constitutes society, this function is not fulfilled merely by being an activity producing concrete useful goods, but because labor is an activity of abstract production. This does not mean that it does

not produce concrete goods, but that the goal of production is not concrete use, but an abstract end. Goods are produced so as to become representatives of value. And value is nothing but past labor, dead labor.

These goods which are produced as representatives of dead labor are commodities. But these commodities are not produced for simple exchange, in the sense that I make a loaf of bread, you produce a dozen eggs, I give you the bread, you give me the eggs, and the business is finished. No. Commodities are not produced for direct exchange, but for a presupposed end. And this presupposed end is the production of value for the valorization of capital. It is what one could call—and Marx did call it this—“an end in itself”. Why is it an end in itself? Because the reason for production is to increase a certain quantity of value as represented by money. In simple terms: capital valorization is ultimately nothing but investing a certain sum of money to produce commodities, to sell them and to obtain at the end of this process a larger sum of money. At the beginning and at the end of the process we find the same abstract thing: value represented by money. Money is something totally abstract; abstract, because it abstracts from the concrete content of what is produced and what is bought or sold by means of it. It does not matter whether bread, houses or hospitals are produced, or weapons, or automobiles for a totally destructive and irrational transportation system. It does not at all matter to what concrete uses the products are put, or the consequences of their production processes, or even the consequences of their consumption—such as, for example, the ecological consequences of the system of private automobiles. Of course, concrete objects are always produced, but these concrete objects are always related and subordinated to the abstract goal of production.

To say that labor constitutes society always implies this self-referential process which is its own end. Labor constitutes society insofar as society is constituted by commodity production and capital valorization. These are three aspects of the same system. Only in this way does labor constitute society, and only this kind of society can be called a commodity society. Many non-capitalist societies have also produced commodities in another context—always for direct exchange. But only capitalist society is the total

commodity society, a society where all relations are subordinated to the logic of the commodity.

Describing modern society in this way also means changing the perspective concerning the relation between capital and labor, or between capital and the working class. Not only does capital represent that end-in-itself, which is defined by the “money—commodity production—more money” circuit; labor also represents this circuit. Of course, the person who sells his labor power does not do so in order to work, but to survive; he sells his labor power so he can buy the commodities he needs to live. From this immediate point of view, labor is not an end in itself, but an end for something else: the purchase of means of subsistence. This is, however, only a particular moment and a particular point of view within the presupposed self-referential process of valorization. In the material sense, all labor power constitutes an integral part of the great self-referential machinery of production for the sake of production, which does not cease to produce even if it destroys the social and natural foundations of society. It does not stop producing because it cannot do so without breaking with its own logic, a logic which requires a constant dynamic of production, since it consists merely of the increase of that abstract category, that fetish called “value”. Labor not only participates in this process, it constitutes its essence. Value is dead labor.

And this fact is most recognized when people are obliged to defend their jobs in one way or another. As they defend them, they do not ask, “Does what we are producing make sense? Is it even a danger to our own lives?” Even if it is a nuclear power plant, it does not make any difference; jobs are defended by all possible means. In this defensive struggle, no one asks about the concrete end of production or about its possible or actual consequences; the only issue is whether or not they can continue to sell their commodity: labor power. But in order to be an integral part of this gigantic machinery of valorization on a material level one must mentally and ideologically identify oneself with that machinery. In this way modern individuals do not distance themselves from labor. They do not define it as merely any function necessary to make money, in the sense of “I work, I make money, and that’s all”, but they consider it honourable to work and to make their living by working, instead of being “lazy”. But that is not all. In addition,

the mechanism of working, that is, of functioning within the machinery of valorization, is implanted in the very psyches of individuals socialized by capitalism. For this reason, they feel the need to constantly be in some kind of motion, even if they are not working in the strict sense of the word. They cannot stop moving, they constantly feel the need to be doing something, and they are not capable of leisure. This phenomenon may, perhaps, be more prevalent in Germany than it is here in Portugal, but I think that the trend is the same. It is the tendency to continue in the rhythms of work even outside the job, of occupying one's free time with activities which have the character of labor, such as, for example, the whole cult of sports, of body building, but also the endless "entertainment" within the culture industry. In this sense, one can say that labor has also established itself as an end-in-itself in the psyches of modern individuals.

Seen from this angle, the relation between labor and capital must be re-evaluated—and analyzed in a very different way than traditional Marxism has analyzed it. From the perspective of traditional Marxism, as everyone here knows, the class struggle was the cardinal point. Only the working class was supposed to be capable of overcoming capitalism. This belief was justified with the argument that the interests of the working class were opposed to capital. It was, then, logical to concentrate on the working class as the revolutionary subject. But if we shift perspective, as I am attempting to do now, this point of view is invalid. Of course the interests of capital and labor are opposed in some way: struggles for higher wages, better working conditions, recognition of union rights, etc., cannot be immediately reconciled with capital's interest in increasing its profits. But these opposed interests are rooted in a common social system. Two poles exist within this common social system, capital and labor (other interests also exist, but I am now speaking from the point of view of traditional Marxism). And these poles struggle with each other, of course, but this struggle, in itself, neither transcends nor overcomes the social constellation which constitutes their common boundaries or foundations.

From the historical perspective, one could say that it seemed for a while that the class struggle went beyond capitalism. Why? I would say that the principle reason for this appearance was that in that period, above all during the second half of the 19th century

and the first half of the 20th century, capitalism had not yet fully developed in accordance with its own logic. What does this mean? Well, according to the immanent logic of capitalism, if we view it as a totalized commodity society, each producer and seller of commodities must be the bearer of rights. And the worker, from the formal point of view, is nothing but a seller of a commodity, of the only commodity he possesses: his labor power. But during the period under discussion he did not possess those rights which correspond to a seller of commodities.

The proletarian classes, the working classes of the 19th and early 20th century did not have the right of political representation, to form unions, they were not bearers of the rights of the citizen; they did not possess those basic rights which, by the logic of capitalism itself, correspond to every seller and producer of commodities. What, then, was the unconscious objective of the class struggle? The objective was to realize these rights. The bourgeois classes, of course, did not voluntarily renounce their privileges, but defended them with all the means at their disposal. But this was not a defence against a supersession of capitalism—as the two contending parties imagined it to be—but against the supersession of a particular phase of capitalist development. The result of class struggles was thus the realization of a society where the whole world is the bearer of the same rights, where the existence of trade unions, of social legislation, and of the rights of labor, become the norm. This does not, of course, mean the end of human exploitation, of repression and social inequalities (which are, to the contrary, increasing), etc., but all of this takes place within the established and generalized form of the democratic and legal State, the latter being the political form which corresponds to commodity society.

The systemic identity of capital and labor became increasingly clear in this historical process of the realization and generalization of capitalist society as a totalized commodity society. We see this, for example, in the ideological expressions of the representatives of the labor movement, which went more or less like this: "Those capitalists do not work! We work, they do not work, they are parasites, they do nothing! We are the basis of society because we work!" This is exactly the same polemic which the bourgeois classes directed against the feudal classes in the 18th century: "We are the ones who work! Those dukes, counts and other nobles do no work at

all. We are the ones who represent society.” The workers movement only assumed this polemic and turned it against the bourgeoisie. In this manner, they undoubtedly increased their self-confidence and won public acceptance. But how? By identifying themselves offensively with their supposed enemy: the bourgeois class. The latter, on the other hand, had no difficulty in showing that it also worked and was by no means “lazy”. Henry Ford, for example, called himself “the number one worker in my company”—just as the Prussian king Frederick II said: “I am the number one employee of my State”. Nor was he lying, in any respect. The functionaries, the managers and businessmen of capital obviously work. And they often work an extremely gruelling schedule: 11, 12 or 15 hours a day are not exceptional for them. Of course, they work at a much higher level in the social hierarchy, they make a pile of money, but in order to do so they make themselves into slaves of the valorization process of capital, just like the worker in a factory or a cashier in a supermarket. They, too, must obey that abstract end-in-itself which yields to no one. The capitalists do not rule over this automatic process, but are ruled by it, they are functionaries of its constant dynamic.

Little by little, this social reality was positively accepted, it was declared to be a kind of second nature. This has reached the point where workers are now exhorted to see themselves as businessmen, as the “entrepreneurs of their labor power.” This is quite consistent ideologically, because if the businessman is a worker, the worker is also a businessman. But it is not by chance that this reversal of the identity of the two poles takes place now. It has the function of legitimizing the deregulation of the labor market, in a situation of a crisis of labor characterized by the constant diminution of sectors of labor with job security and the constant growth of sectors with temporary, precarious and low-paid jobs. This situation is sold ideologically with a defence of the businessman, saying: “We are no longer workers, we are all businessmen”. The relative advantages of a secure job are called obsolete and a kind of barrier to the realization of one’s “individuality”; and the life of the “new businessman” is described as that of a “creative individual” who does not allow himself to be restricted by formal rules, by bureaucracy, and things of that sort, but who is happy to constantly be in motion and not to be tied down to a definite job.

What is terrifying about this is that this ideology has been so widely accommodated. I know many people of my own generation, for example, who as of 8 or 10 years ago, did not identify with work at all. They worked only when necessary, in order to survive, or they tried to live on social security. But today they are small businessmen, they work with computers or in advertising, they don’t earn much money, but they identify with what they are doing, they work 15 hours a day and are proud of it. They are often only minor employees in precarious conditions, without long-term contracts, and are obliged to take several temporary jobs at the same time, but they actually define themselves as entrepreneurs of their own existence and are proud of their “flexibility”.

We are, then, confronted by a paradoxical and contradictory situation: the crisis of labor, the crisis of the society of labor, of the society of commodity production, is accompanied by an extremely strong identification with labor—as the reactions to Schröder’s attack on the “lazy” has already demonstrated. In other words, the material foundation of the society of labor is breaking up while, simultaneously, a fundamentalism of labor is produced which seeks to achieve the impossible: to re-establish that foundation. I confess that for some ten or twelve years now I have nourished the slight hope that, with the downfall of labor’s objective basis, the ideology of labor would also be shattered. One must, of course, take account of the fact that the social climate of that time was different. Today we face a very different situation. I do not want to say, however, that the identification with labor is total and airtight. There are always many contradictions, not only economic and social but also ideological. For example, the very well-known contradiction wherein labor is being eliminated by the permanent increase of productivity and, despite this fact, it is the unemployed who are blamed for this process. It is quite obvious that this is an irrational argument—but it does work.

One thing remains clear: there is no automatic emancipatory process set in motion by the crisis on an objective level. No. The reactions to “resolve” the system’s contradictions could be totally opposed to any impulse towards liberation from the system.

One must view the tremendous increase in racism, which is almost always related to the ideology of labor, within this context; as is shown by such expressions as the following,

for example: "These people who come here, these blacks, they don't want to work, they take advantage of our social welfare system", and things of that kind. Or else the immigrants are accused of "stealing" jobs. These two forms of denunciation are, of course, mutually contradictory: if one does not want to work one cannot at the same time be a rival in the struggle for jobs. These two things cannot simultaneously co-exist. But in racist ideology—as in any other ideology—this does not constitute a problem, because it is not a matter of rational and coherent argument. Racism, like other ideologies which capitalism produced in its long history—above all, anti-Semitism—comes into its own during the crisis because it allows the supposed culprits to be defined and thus reaffirms society as it is.

We find ourselves, then, in quite a difficult situation for thinking about the formation of an emancipatory social movement. There is no specific social interest which one could say is opposed to capital and therefore the capitalist system. There is no social class (nor has such a class ever existed, and it never will exist) which could be defined as a potential revolutionary subject. And this means that the revolutionary strategies of traditional Marxism—and in a wider sense, of the traditional left—must be tossed in the gutter; strategies which essentially consist in the attempt to awaken the alleged revolutionary subject by means of agitation and propaganda and to organize it in the party form.

What, then, should be done? There is no simple answer. What can be said is that, on the one hand, it is absolutely necessary to struggle against the increasing economic and social pressure and repression which grows along with the crisis process. But these struggles can only become powerful if they cast doubt upon the prevailing logic of valorization and the commodity, if they do not accept them as invincible social forms. Otherwise, they can always be easily derailed by having to accept, for example, that social spending "must" be reduced because global competition allows no other alternative, or that squatted buildings "cannot" be occupied because this violates the rights of private property, etc.

Against such ideological and practical deception, which is one of the principle causes for the collapse of the social movements of the 1980s and 1990s, it is absolutely necessary to put forth and extend

a discourse of radical criticism of commodity society and labor and all of its institutions, these being principally the State, the market and patriarchal domination. Such a discourse could be capable of creating points of orientation of reference for the various particular struggles and helping to ensure that they could be the basis for an anticapitalist movement which measures up to the 21st century.

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Pamphlet Review: Anti Semitism and National Socialism by Moishe Postone

This pamphlet reproduces an essay by Moishe Postone which was first published in 1986 in *German and the Jews since the Holocaust: The Changing Situation in West Germany*.

Postone begins by arguing that in Germany (West Germany when the original essay was written) neither the conservative/liberal political wing nor the left have been able to come to terms with the relationship between anti-Semitism and National Socialism. The conservative/liberal position has concentrated on the gulf between the Nazi past, focusing on the treatment of the Jews whilst largely ignoring other central features of Nazism and the present situation. However because of the obsession with the division between the past and present it has avoided what Postone describes as; "a fundamental confrontation with the social and structural reality of National Socialism" This reality, he adds, did not just vanish in 1945 and the condemnation of anti-Semitism has been used to legitimise the present system. Anti-Semitism has been viewed primarily as a form of prejudice, a scapegoat ideology and this has failed to bring to the surface the concrete relationship between anti-Semitism and central aspects of National Socialism [pages 3-4].

The left has concentrated on different aspects of National Socialism. These include how it functions for capitalism, the destruction of working class organisations, the rearmament programme, its expansionist policies and the bureaucratic nature of party and state domination. However it shares with the conservative/liberal viewpoint a failure to view anti-Semitism as a central block of National Socialism and has also failed to bring out the central relationship between the two.

Furthermore, Postone points out, both the left and conservative/liberal perspectives view modern anti-Semitism as anti Jewish prejudice, as a form of general racism. But, Postone argues, the Holocaust cannot be understood as long as anti-Semitism is linked to a general form of racism or so long as Nazism is viewed simply in terms of large capital and a bureaucratic police state [page 4].

The Holocaust, Postone argues, should not be viewed in a quantitative way either in terms of the number of people murdered or in the degree of suffering imposed, as there are too many other examples of mass murder and genocide. The particular question to be addressed is qualitative as aspects of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis seem beyond explanation if anti-Semitism is treated as a scapegoat strategy where the victims could have belonged to any other group. Why for example when Germany was on the verge of defeat was so much effort diverted to transport Jews to the gas chambers [Pages 5-6].

Anti-Semitism, which should not be mistaken with ordinary anti-Jewish prejudice, is an ideology which emerged in Europe in the late 19th century. What is common to all anti-Semitism is that there is a degree of power attributed to the Jews. But it is not only the degree but also the quality of this power that separates anti-Semitism from other types of racism. The power attributed to Jews is much greater and is seen as actual and not merely potential. It is also considered to be a power which does not manifest itself directly but needs to find another form of expression. Modern anti-Semitism views this Jewish power as not concretely bound, as lacking roots and therefore assumes it to have a force that it is hard to control [Page 7].

It has often been argued that modern anti-Semitism is bound up with the rapid development of industrial capitalism and all the social problems this brings with it. Such problems tend to be personified and identified and Jews are the ideal candidates. Jews are viewed not merely as the owners of money as in traditional anti-Semitism, Postone notes, they were held responsible for economic crisis and with a range of social restructuring and dislocations resulting from rapid industrialisation [Page 9].

With regard to this sort of analysis there are

two themes. One is the association of Jews with money and the sphere of circulation. Such an explanation was offered, Postone notes, by Max Horkheimer. But as Postone points out the problem with this type of analysis is that the Jews were also seen by the anti-Semitic movement as the force behind social democracy and communism. A second theme linking the rise of anti-Semitism and rapid growth of industrial capitalism concerns the concept of modernity. One advocate of this theory was George L Mosse. This, Postone argues, does at first glance seem an improved analysis from the money and circulation thesis. However despite links such as the rise of plutocracy and growth of working class movements being associated with modernity and the massive and problematic social upheavals related to capitalist industrialisation, this theme also has its weaker points. The Modern would certainly encompass industrial capital but this was not a target for anti-Semitic attacks even in periods of rapid industrialisation. National Socialism also favoured some aspects of modernity such as modern technology. There is a pattern, Postone argues, to the parts of modernity that National Socialism accepted and rejected and that pattern is vital to an understanding of the problem. Such patterns, Postone adds, are not unique to National Socialism and this has far reaching implications.

The acceptance of industrial capitalism by modern anti-Semitism shows that we require an approach that differentiates between what capitalism really is and surface appearances [Page 11]. At this point Postone delves into Marxian concepts such as commodities, capital, labour and money relating them to Marx's concept of the fetish [pages 11-18]. He then relates this back to the nature of National Socialism and anti-Semitism. Whilst we do not have the space to follow this analysis in full, this part of the pamphlet is of vital interest both in its own right and more importantly for the analysis Postone is developing.

Postone notes an almost exact match between the supposed nature of the power attributed to the Jews by modern anti-Semitism; abstractness, intangibility, universality and mobility and the essential parts of the value dimension of the social forms analysed by Marx. From this Postone attempts to explain the personification outlined above and explain the problem

regarding why modern anti-Semitism which rejected many aspects of the modern world was more or less positive regarding industrial capital and modern technology [Page 13]

National Socialism and anti-Semitism whilst at odds with many anti capitalist movements existing today do share one characteristic and that is the acceptance of the concrete, surface appearance which is not viewed as capitalism alongside a rejection of the abstracted forms which alone are viewed as capitalism. An example was the supposed division between financial and industrial capital in the recent economic crisis. Postone states the following on page 18:

"The hypostatization of the concrete and the identification of capital with the manifest abstract underlie a form of "anti capitalism" that seeks to overcome the existing social order from a standpoint which actually remains immanent to that order. Inasmuch as that standpoint is the concrete dimension, this ideology tends to point toward a more concrete and organised form of overt capitalist social synthesis."

In relation to the Jews they were identified not just with money or involvement with the sphere of circulation but with capitalism itself. But, Postone adds, due to it fetishised form capitalism was not associated with industry and technology. Capitalism was only recognised in its abstract form and this was to blame for a wide range of real social and cultural changes linked to the rapid development of modern industrial capitalism [Page 19]. Postone goes on to state;

"The Jews were not seen merely as representatives of capital (in which case anti-Semitic attacks would have been much more class specific). They became the personifications of the intangible, destructive, immensely powerful, and international domination of capital as an alienated social form." [Pages 19-20]

One question that might be raised, Postone notes is; *"why the biological interpretation of the abstract dimension of capitalism found its focus in the Jews"*. The answers Postone provides are as follows: the long history of anti-Semitism in Europe and the known association of Jews with money. The last third of the 19th century saw a rapid expansion of industrial capitalism and the political and civil emancipation of the Jews took place in the same period. Jews were to be found in the universities, liberal professions, journalism and the arts. The Jew became widely visible especially in the expanding sphere and professions and these

were associated with the new form of society [Page 21].

The following quote perhaps best sums up the analysis presented by Moishe Postone.

"Modern anti-Semitism, then, is a particularly pernicious fetish form. Its power and danger result from its comprehensive world view which explains and gives form to certain modes of anticapitalist discontent in a manner that leaves capitalism intact, by attacking the personifications of that social form. Anti-Semitism so understood allows one to grasp an essential moment of Nazism as a foreshortened anticapitalist movement, one characterised by a hatred of the abstract, a hypostatization of the existing concrete and by a single minded ruthlessness – but not necessarily hate filled – mission: to rid the world of the source of all evil." [Page 22]

We finish with a quote from near the end of the pamphlet.

Auschwitz, not the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, was the real "German Revolution," the attempted "overthrow," not merely of a political order, but of the existing social formation. By this one deed the world was to be made safe from the tyranny of the abstract. In the process the Nazis "liberated" themselves from humanity. [Page 23]

If you have not already read this pamphlet we recommend that you obtain a copy, even if you do not entirely agree with all Postone has to say it will make you think. That cannot possibly be a bad thing.

Moishe Postone: Anti-Semitism and National Socialism, published by Chronos Publications.

Available from Chronos Publications £3, post and packaging included, Cheques made payable to Chronos Publications.

Also available from Stimulants and Libertarian Communist Literature. Details of all three can be found in the directory at the back of this issue.

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How Agri-Food Corporations Make the World Hungry

February 2010 Al Huebner

The Winter 2009 issue of Food First News reports that last November the World Summit on Food Security in Rome issued a declaration that the world is now hungrier than ever before. Significantly, this is not the result of food shortage, with world production at 1 1/2 times that needed to feed every man, woman, and child on the planet.

The root cause of this insecurity is the food system itself, which is controlled by a handful of global monopolies. In fact, the crisis comes at a time of record global profits for the world's agri-food corporations. Archer Daniel Midland, Cargill, Monsanto, General Foods, and Wal-Mart all posted profit increases in 2008 of 20% to 86%. For Mosaic, a fertilizer subsidy of Cargill, profits increased by a stunning 1200%.

The World Food Summit did nothing to confront the hunger crisis. The lack of any political will in Rome was so low that not one head of state from a G-8 country showed up (except for Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who of course lives there). With a shocking lack of commitment the G-8 representatives decided to drop the goal of ending world hunger. Now the rich countries need only work to halve hunger by 2015.

In a situation with many parallels, in November the US Department of Agriculture reported an alarming increase in food insecurity in the US; one in seven Americans don't get enough food throughout the year. The USDA report refers to household food shortages, yet in the US, as in the world, there is no food shortage. An obvious question comes up: why, in the most productive farming country in the world, do we have so many hungry people? The answer is that families simply don't have enough money to buy the food they need.

The reasons for this aren't hard to find. The nation's food workers make up 18% of all workers in the US. But those who pick, process, pack, and serve our food are the lowest paid of any industry. This is analogous to the global situation, where most of the world's hungry are poor farmers. In both cases women and children suffer the most.

While more than 1 billion people in poor countries aren't sure where their next meal is coming from, many chronically food-insecure countries are selling their land, as Raphael Grojnowski reports in the same issue of Food First News. Sudan, Ethiopia, and Cambodia, for example, have already sold nearly 40 million hectares of their best agricultural land to foreign investors, mainly from the Middle East, China, and South Korea. This is a classic imperialist land grab that, like those familiar from the past, leads to a steady deterioration of the condition of human beings, not to mention degradation of the environment.

Spurred by the global food-price crisis and supply shortages in the volatile world food market, wealthy but food-deficient countries are buying up vast tracts of land, especially in Africa. There they expect to grow food and fuel long distance. Promising new technologies and employment to some of the world's most neglected areas has many poor governments rushing to attract these new investments.

These land deals are negotiated in total secrecy and are having devastating effects on local farmers and their families. To make room for the new foreign mega-farms, small farmers are being dispossessed of their land. In their place, huge monoculture plantations to feed foreign consumers are being established, using industrial farming techniques that have extremely damaging environmental effects, such as chemical contamination of rural water supplies.

While many peasant organizations are relentlessly drawing attention to this devastating land-grabbing, the UN and other agencies have been characteristically slow to act. At last year's World Food Summit three UN agencies and the World Bank finally announced plans to draft a code of conduct for such "foreign land acquisitions." But the proposed guidelines are only a non-binding and voluntary code. Worse yet, its implementation is scheduled for late 2010, leaving investors another year to make secret deals for prime agricultural real estate overseas.

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Capital and History

Robert Kurz

Published as "[Kapital und Geschichte](#)" in [Neuen Deutschland](#) on April, 24, 2009

Translated by Parker Everett of [The Chicago Political Workshop](#) on May 18, 2009

The confidence in capitalism is apparently unshakeable; also on the Left. Out of all crises it will rise like a phoenix from ashes and will start a new recovery. In the meantime, it can no longer be denied that we have to be concerned with the contemporary historical slump. A new world economic crisis with unpredictable consequences stands on the agenda of history. But nevertheless everyone asks only: When will the crisis end? Which type of capitalism will come after the crisis? This anticipation supports itself on the understanding that capitalism is "the eternal return of the same." The elementary mechanisms of exploitation always remain the same. There are technological revolutions, social upheavals, changes in "the balance of power" and new hegemonic powers. However, that is only an outward "history of events," a perpetual on and off of cycles. From this point of view, the crisis is purely functional for capitalism. It leads to a "correction," by devaluating surplus capital. Thus making the way free for new processes of accumulation.

This understanding does not take the internal dynamics of capitalism seriously. There is also another conception. Accordingly, exploitation exists actually only in the historical dynamics of an ascending development of productive forces. It is not merely technological change, but, in this way, new conditions of exploitation are established. Therefore capitalism is not the "eternal return of the same," but an irreversible historical process, which drives toward a point of culmination. Because in the process of the internal history of capitalism, the margin [Spielraum] for the exploitation narrows itself. The impetus for this is the liberation/redundancy [Freisetzung] of labor power, which is made superfluous/redundant [überflüssig] to an always increasing extent by scientific-technological aggregates. Labor constitutes, however, the substance of the capital, since it alone produces real increases in value. Capitalism can compensate this internal contradiction only by an expansion of

the credit system, thus through anticipation of a future increase in value. However, this systematic "snowballing" must press at its limits if the anticipation is stretched too far into the future. From this point of view, crises do not constitute a purely "corrective function," but they historically strengthen and advance toward an internal barrier of exploitation.

Now the question is what status does the new world economic crisis have. The representatives of the second point of view are accused of just wanting to wait to the end of capitalism. However, the reaching of an inner barrier does not replace social emancipation, but would just plummet global society into chaos. Much more the representatives of the first point of view could be accused of believing that they themselves naively want to wait, as capitalism begins to grow again after the "correction." A lot of the left shares this hope with the ruling elites. However, what if it does not behave this way? If no new potential for real exploitation can be specified, then the theory of "correction" remains an empty formula. A new form of labor-intensive production, however, is nowhere in sight. It could provide a rude awakening for the general expectations. The question then would be: What comes after capitalism? The mere nationalization of capitalist categories is no longer an option, but is itself already history. If this crisis should be overcome by and through civilization, then perhaps more is required than to wait for the next upturn.

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Anti State, Non Market Sector Groups

worldsocialistmovement/SPGB:

worldsocialism.org/spgb: Postal address: 52 Clapham High Street London SW4 7UN. Email spgb@worldsocialim.org

Promotional Material for the World Socialist Movement:

See previous issues or contact veronica.clanchy@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01202 569826

"Role Modelling Socialist Behaviour: The Life and Letters of Isaac Rab. Further details can be obtained by contacting the address below.

World Socialist Party US (WSPUS) website: www.wspus.org Postal address: World Socialist Party, Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144.

Visit <http://stephenshenfield.net> contains all issues of The Libertarian Communist and a host of useful articles for the ASNM sector.

Andy Cox's website looks at how socialism might be developed:
<http://socialistmatters.webs.com/>.

World In Common: www.worldincommon.org
Email worldincommon@yahoo.com

www.libcom.org. Highly recommended with stacks of articles of interest to our sector

The Commune

For workers' self management and communism from below. Website: www.thecommune.co.uk
Postal address: The Commune, Freedom book shop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E17QX

Comrades may be interested in the following links:

For Libertarian Communists in Russia and Belarus: <http://wiki.avtonom.org/index.php>

"Eretik" (Heretic) is a left communist journal in Russian and English that appears both on the net and in print. This is produced by a group in Moldova. See: <http://eretik-samizdat.blogspot.com/2012/immunity-of-rich-and-powerful.html>

A couple of places to purchase Literature and help support the ASNM sector.

"There is an Alternative!"

STIMULANTS: A collection of material highlighting an opposition to the Mantra that "There Is No Alternative" to how we live today. Journals, Pamphlets, Books, DVDs and Cds etc available www.radicalbooks.co.uk

Libertarian Communist Literature has a selection of pamphlets and journals related to the anti state, non Market sector. Journals Include: **Black flag, Aufheben, Socialist Standard, Organise** and others. We have a variety of pamphlets and a few books.

If you are interested please contact the postal or email address on Page 2 with your details, (please note the changed email address libcom.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk)

The Libertarian Communist is now available from Housemans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX email shop@housemans.com
<http://www.housemans.com/>

Chronos Publications
BM Chronos, London WC1N 3XX

The Life and Death of Capitalism Series No.1

Pamphlets available include:

No Revolution Anywhere By Robert Kurz

Anti-Semitism and National Socialism By Moishe Postone

Worth taking a look at

The Socialist Labour Party of America (www.slp.org),

Marxist Internet Archive <https://www.marxists.org>

Marx Myths and Legends www.marxmyths.org
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Direct Action Industrial Unions

Industrial Workers of the World: www.iww.org Or
P/O Box 7593, Glasgow, G42 2EX Email: rocsec@iww.org.uk.

Workers International Industrial Union.
www.wiuu.org or www.deleonism.org/wiuu.htm see the article on Industrial Unionism in issue 9

See Also

International Libertarian Socialist Alliance: Formerly called the *World Libertarian Socialist Network*

An excellent resource for groups who come under the heading of Libertarian Socialism many of which come within the remit of the anti state, non market sector
www.libertyandsocialism.org

Wrekin Stop War www.wrekinstopwar.org or contact Duncan Ball, 23 Sunderland Drive, Leegomery Salop, TF1 6XX email: Duncan.ball@blueyonder.co.uk.

The following are recent additions to the directory :
www.theoryandpractice.org.uk
www.marxisthumanistinitiative.org

See also: libcom.org/aufheben

For information on issues related to Global Heating See:
<http://thinkprogress.org/climateissue/>

