DISCUSSION BULLETIN

NUMBER 24 JULY 1987

Published by the Discussion Bulletin Committee

Address all correspondence to
DISCUSSION BULLETIN, P.O. Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

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BULLETIN MATTERS

Number 24 concludes the fourth year of Discussion Bulletin publication. It also concludes the subscriptions of many of our readers. If your label carries an "R24" or "S24", it is time to renew your sub. We hope that you will also include a donation. Like all publications in our political sector, the DB cannot live on subscriptions alone. Of the $1120.97 spent to print, mail, cover other expenses of the DB during the past year, exactly $371.60 was covered by subscriptions. The rest came from individual donations. We realize that many of our readers have commitments to organizational publications. But in this connection we should point out that as an independent forum available to groups and individuals in our ideological sector for presenting their ideas and criticizing those of others, it deserves everyone's support

union shop I.t. 480 printing by EASTOWN

As a rather questionable reward for donations, contributors automatically become members of the Discussion Bulletin Committee--along with those who contribute time in the form of letters and articles. As members of this "committee" they receive a dittoed "Report" with every issue including a financial statement and other news about the DB.

I apologize for occupying ten pages of this issue with the lengthy conclusion of "The Socialist Labor Party Revisited." It began in the September 1983 issue (DB2) and has been used since as filler to complete various issues. This practice has strained the patience of some readers who expressed doubt that I ever intend to do more than chug along, writing new installments to meet space requirements. This issue will restore their faith.

Once again--The DB is an independent forum where third-force socialists can present their ideas, criticize those of others, publish leaflets for comment, and inform a readership outside their own groups about new publications. Please remember that your copy must be typewritten and camera-ready. We do no editing here. To conserve space, please single space and use narrow margins. Three-quarter-inch margins, a seven-inch line length, is ideal.

Frank Girard
for the DB Committee

(Cont'd from p. 24)

for now and those who had alternatives were free to promote them, that would be enough. Most importantly it would provide a demonstrably fairer system than than central authority when people started to realise that the spontenious altruism of the 'day after the revolution' might become a bit [redacted] of a strain in the long run.

One problem which strikes me as insoluble unless commodities have something similar to a price/labour value attatched to them, is how we would know if our level of consumption was reasonable. Obviously there are alot of reasons why things have the price they do at the moment, but we do at least have a rough guide to whether a TV set is worth more than a box of matches.

Let us imagine day one of a utopia without prices, LVs, etc. It could be that I desired to live in a different place but keep in touch with the people I knew before. I might idealy like to travel back twice a week but decide that was extravegant in terms of train travel and so limit it to once a month. What though if rail travel specifically were to gradually become very cheap due to new technology so that with time it 'cost' society the same for me to do the journey twice a week as it had done to do it once a month. How could it be communicated to me (and more importantly to my disaproving neighbours!) that I was being no more extravegant in 2020 when I went twice a week than in 2010 when it was only once a month?

Such very gross variations could just possibly be communicated via thelocal assembly, but what happens when this proccess is multiplied a million times? Even if we were willing to go to the endless meetings involved it just wouldn't be practical. Surely it would be [redacted] more practical for everyone to agree a system to review prices and set a labour voucher rate then sit back (as far as possible) and let it all happen. If it was generally felt that the system of distribution was fair and open to change we could assume that if someone could afford something then (all other things being equal) it was fair they should have it.

In this way the human element would come in when setting the voucher rate (on the basis of "each according..." etc) and apart from that we could get on with having innocent fun - surely one of life's greatest delights.

--Mick Larkin

Box 2824 Station A
Champaign, IL 61820

Fellow Workers,

Richard Laubach more than somewhat misses the point in his attack on the notion that necessary goods and services should be distributed freely--or, if in short supply, on the basis of need. Laubach argues that such distribution "would very likely lead to misallocation of the community's labor time and resources" because "it can't effectively register relative preferences among possible productive outcomes." To bolster this rather flimsy argument, he assumes conditions of labor shortage and generalized scarcity (thereby necessitating a choice between production of shoes or cameras; no one besides Laubach could wonder which would be chosen under such conditions). Laubach further assumes that absent some sort of market mechanism, working people (in our capacity as consumers) would have no way to make our relative preferences known. (The marketplace is, of course, an ideal mechanism for ascertaining social needs and preferences for goods. The reason there is mass starvation in Africa is not because the market system doesn't work to meet human needs, but because our fellow workers prefer not to eat....)

To be fair, Laubach does differentiate his proposed "consumption credits" from market schemes--but the distinction appears arbitrary. He compares these "credits" to votes, which would be tallied to "provide information about the community's cummulative preferences among the possible goods and services." For this scheme to work, we'd have to plan our consumption (of shoes, houses and ice cream cones) well in advance--and we'd have to be darn sure to avoid any unforseen emergencies. Alternately (Laubach is not clear about this) we'd present these credits at the store, just like money--but this would eliminate the claimed advantages.

The proposal fails even on its own terms. There is no reason why, under conditions of free distribution, you can not keep track of social needs and desires through a combination of keeping track of what is taken off the shelves and asking people in periodic general assemblies what goods and services they'd like to see produced. Surely no real (or lasting) damage is done if we produce a few too many shoes for a few months. Yet to avoid just such a 'problem' Laubach would reintroduce money ("consumption credits"), but with the added disadvantage that we'd have to plan our purchases weeks or months in advance.

Laubach--like the organization (WSA) to which he belongs--has claimed to be an anarcho-syndicalist. Yet his arguments show not the slightest familiarity with our ideas, or with the concrete measures that our comrades have implemented in the past to ensure the equitable distribution of necessary goods and services.

--Jon Bekken

College Fm. Ho., Mill Lane, Wellington,
May 28th.; //TF1-LPR; C952.641852

Dear Frank

John Banks is too kind to Dave McReynolds in his response(May87 edn.).

The Liberation group, - which was the mainspring of the American Third Camp Movement, - certainly did admirable work within the Civil Rights' movement, & in such generalised war-resistance as the resistance to the Vietnam War, as in campaigning against weapons of mass destruction. All of this they were doing at the time of the Third Camp Movement and indeed before. But as a grouping it did not retain its Third Camp stance.

Early in the 1960s the uncritical position taken by the majority of Liberation editors vis a vis the Castro regime; their readiness to excuse the guerrillaist-violence of Castro's admirers elsewhere in Latin America, but not to excuse that of Cuban syndicalist self-defence groups; brought about a split & the one editor who remained Third Camp was forced to resign.

Later in the Sixties, understandably reacting to the violence of the U.S. government in Vietnam certainly, Liberation showed how far it had moved from a Third Camp position by supporting the slogan of "victory to the NLF". (Obviously the Third Camp position of demanding unilateral withdrawal by the Western powers would under the circumstances have had this effect; but it is one thing for a socialist to insist that it is his job to oppose the capitalists in his/her own country, it is quite a different thing to turn round and support the exploiters of another country.)

Moreover, however good the general influence of the Liberation group, in introducing MLK to civil disobedience, in the inspiration that the original post-war bus freedom ride had in creating the bus protests; it also has to be remembered that prominent members of the Liberation Group became identified in the popular mind with the American Establishment, that - because they had already achieved the abolition of discrimination within the armed forces - well-known Liberation group pacifists came to accept the armed forces as the way out of the Ghetto for southern blacks.

Liberation consistently attacked Malcolm X, and (less consistently,) the later Black Power activists for their campaigns against black enlistment in the forces. No doubt the slogan of Malcolm X & Stokeley Carmichael that the war was white imperialism, the Vietnamese were oppressed blacks and should not be shot by American blacks, was something less than a sound class analysis; but in a society were the blacks were a super-exploited section of the working class, <u>in most instances</u>, it should not have been rejected out of hand. Support for the war, on the purely pragmatic basis that those blacks who were in the US forces were better off than those who weren't, (at a time when LBJ was saying "We shall overcome" of that war,) can have no excuse.

Two other organizations played a major role in the American Third Camp movement; - the I.S.L., & the left wing of the S.P.A.; (the Libertarian League, the I.W.W., and a number of smaller groups played their part, & honourably continued later to advocate Third Camp policies;) though a section of the former resisted the trend towards liquidation into the Democrats, becoming the I.S. Clubs, the American I.S., they too abandoned a Third Camp position to support the Vietnamese N.L.F.; while the SPA (except for a miniscule splinter) Left as well as Right degerated into a mere ginger

group of the Democrats, shaping its policies to fit the role and so abandoning Third Camp positions.

No doubt there were honourable exceptions, and indeed the battles ~~wit~~ within the New England Committee for Non-Violent Action between those associated with "Peacemakers" & the Committee leadership in some ways reflected disagreements as to how firmly the proponents insisted on a Third Camp analysis. (Such a division was certainly apparent within the equivalent civil disobedient peace movement in the late Fifties and early Sixties here in Britain.)

Dave McReynolds's association of the International Peace Bureau with Third Camp is particularly inexcusable. Certainly this was a movement which in its foundation was an attempt to rally unilateralists in each and every country, - the upsurge that had created it was of movements which insisted on such unilateralism, & was well aware that no ruling elite has ever willingly abandoned its major weapons of coercion, - & as such was Third Camp in spirit; but the Bureau was bureaucratic in the extreme from the beginning, and as such allowed the bureaucracy to tinker with the policies watering them down, so that the Bureau was no longer clearly unilateralist.

fraternally

Laurens Otter

P.S. It might be best for me to state - in case Dave McReynolds misunderstands my case - that I was one of those British Third Camp members who held that the logic of the Third Camp position dictated involvement within the direct actionist wing of CND, and movements that arose from this.

Spring-1987 Re:DB March '87

Frank Girard's answer to my criticism of his illogical position on the DeLeonist strategy and tactic for the American labor movement, that is; Socialist Industrial Unions must be organized prior to the advent of abolishing the state, was:"As to when Socialist Industrial Unions will be organized, I suspect that Comrade Dekovich and I are closer than he seems to think. I agree that socialists must always hold out the program to our class, but for the reasons I gave it seems more likely that such unions will be organized as part of the revolutionary act itself, not prior to the revolution, as the early SLP envisioned"

This is no answer to my positive statement that American workers must organize at least a minimum of class-conscious unions to back up a ballot box victory. At this point we part company with Girard, who wants a ballot victory first, which is what the Socialist Party works for, as do the Social Democrats and the Communists in Europe; a strategy these hollow parties have practiced for many years. Apparently, Hitler's Germany did not teach them any lesson. Prior to the take-over by Hitler, the Social Democrats had about 8 million votes: the Communists had about

4 million, and Hitler had little trouble taking over the political government. Why? Because the Social Democrats and the Communists did not teach German workers to take, hold and operate socially-necessary industries for all of society. What makes Girard think that it would be a different story in the United States?

History teaches that no class has been ousted from power without physical struggle. The liklihood is that the U.S. capitalist class will not submit to a ballot decision that would destroy its system. When DeLeon said that a proletarian victory at the ballot box without industrial unions to back up that victory would be a disasterous defeat, he had taken a history lesson from the European story and applied it to the U.S. labor movement. We cannot compare the U.S. to the Russian and Chinese experience because the latter are differently constructed in both social and economic development, and we should not be charmed by their respective successes. We must travel our own path to social revolution dictated by our own peculiar political and industrial development.

Girard's position on the ballot is illogical, contradictory and harmful. He suggests that we do not vote, but he believes that socialist industrial unions will be organized "as part of the revolutionary act itself." We assume that the "revolutionary" act will be the ballot-box overthrow of the system, unless Girard has another definition of that act, which would be interesting to learn. Assuming that Girard is right on his point, how will we capture the political government if workers do not use the ballot? If workers do not capture the political government by vote, then they must take it by physical force, which is what anarchists teach workers.

There is no other way to the kind of revolution DeLeonists work for but by organizing industrial unions before the "revolutionary act itself." How can workers organize a physical force superior to a capitalist force? Please tell us, comrade Girard. What are you trying to do? DeLeon is still smarter than you when we talk about strategy and tactics for a social revolution in the United States.

I suggest that you drop your fascination with the DB and start to distribute one DeLeonist leaflet a day printed by the SLP or the Industrial UNion Party or the New Unionist. That would be constructive work. That way you would be planting revolutionary seeds in workers minds. We have several DeLeonist parties. Are you planning to organize a third? Three hundred DeLeonist leaflets per year, distributed by Frank Girard, would be more productive than what IS NOW BEING DONE WITH THE DB, a publication which seems to collect a bunch of so-called radical thinkers who try to outsmart each other and DeLeon.

Marin Dekovich

MD.

5-11-87

Dear Comrades,

Hungrig Arbeiter (whoever he may be) wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants to accuse the "WSP/SPGB friends" of neo-utopianism and to criticise them when, as in the 1977 report on the SPGB's attitude to violence, they show that they don't envisage a problem-free changeover to the new society. (Incidentally, the way Hungrig Arbeiter presents this report you would get the impression that it was some secret document he had succeded in getting his hands on. Actually, like all SPGB documents, it is a public document, as a matter of principle).

Hungrig Arbeiter sees a contradiction between what the report says and what has been said elsewhere about there being no armies in socialism and no need for a transition period. Actually, what the pamphlet Questions of the Day says is that "there is no need for a 'transition period' between capitalism and socialism". The term "transition period" was put in inverted commas deliberately, precisely to show that the SPGB do not consider as necessary the longish period of gradual abolition of capitalism after the capture of political power which this term has come to mean amongst radical critics of capitalism.

Obviously, there must be a period however short of "revolutionary transformation", "social re-organisation", "changeover" "revolution", whatever you want to call it, since we're not going to move from capitalism to socialism by waving a magic wand. The rejection of the term "transition period" is meant to convey that the SPGB consider that the period of the revolutionary transformation of capitalism into socialism will be very brief, consisting essentially in the use of political power to dispossess the capitalist class.

The SPGB envisage this as being, if you like, a single political act rather than a prolonged period of the exercise of political power. They also envisage that it may be necessary, if sections of the capitalist class were to try to resist with violence the establishment of socialism, to employ armed force to restrain them. Obviously, the socialist working class majority is not going to allow a handful of ex-exploiters to hold up the carrying-out of the democratically expressed will for socialism.

But this hypothetical employment of armed force against a hypothetical violent resistance by a tiny pro-capitalist minority would take place before socialism was established, in fact as part of the process of establishing it. Once socialism was established, political power --the state, with its means of coercion-- would be dismantled, including the armed forces. So there would indeed be no armies in Socialism.

I hope this clarifies the situation for Hungrig Arbeiter. I must add, however, that I feel that he has been less than honest is some of the arguments he employs. He claims to have read Questions of the Day, yet taking the SPGB to be archetypal neo-utopianists states that they consider "anything short of revolution is futility and reformism" and that workers in countries where they don't have access to the ballot "should not be concerned with such things". Questions of the Day, however, states on p. 64 in a chapter on "Socialism and the Less Developed Countries":

> In many of the less developed countries political democracy does not exist (...) In such circumstances socialist activity is very difficult and the workers (being only a minority of the population), besides trying to organise into a socialist party ought also to struggle to get the freedom to organise into trade and win elementary political rights. As in the advanced capitalist countries, however, this should still involve opposition to all other parties in order that the socialist issue shall be kept free from confusion (emphasis added).

Similarly, Hungrig Arbeiter implies that the SPGB denounces workers' attempts to "fight back" against capitalist attacks on their wages and working conditions as reformist and a waste of time. Yet on page 45 of Questions of the Day in the chapter on "Trade Unionism" it is clearly stated:

> The Socialist Party of Great Britain, while recommending trade unionists to offer their utmost resistance to the worsening of conditions, never fails to point out that under capitalism the pressure on the workers is inevitable. It is not enough, therefore, merely to apply the brake to these worsening conditions. The system that gives rise to them must be abolished (emphasis added).

As a matter of fact, as an active trade unionist myself, I rather resent the way Hungrig Arbeiter accuses me of

"sneering" at workers' struggles.

I appreciate that some readers will find this letter to be an example of what they want to avoid in the columns of the Discussion Bulletin --polemics between organisations with settled positions. But if the Discussion Bulletin is to serve a useful purpose it can only do this if the positions of the various groups and individuals are fairly presented. Only on this basis can fruitful discussion take place.

Yours for world socialism

--Adam Buick, 21 rue Gambetta, 77400 Thorigny, France.

The Socialist Labor Party Revisited (Conclusion)

The defeat of the New York Tendency (the Petersenian Old Guard) at the 1977 Convention and the subsequent resignations and dropouts left National Secretary Nathan Karp and his headquarters unit in undisputed control of the Americam SLP. The single vocal source of DeLeonist opposition was in Canada. There the National Secretary of the Canadian SLP, Alan Sanderson, who had been an observer at the 1977 Convention in Chicago, together with his supporters in Toronto, attempted to rally the Canadian SLP against the changes. To this end, he and the Toronto-based national executive committee sub-committee produced an enormous--250 mimeographed pages--document as their main weapon. Published in April 1978 and titled RECENT CHANGES IN THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY OF AMERICA (1975-1977), it consisted almost entirely of documentation. Lengthy excerpts from Weekly People articles party resolutions, and other SLP sources were contrasted with current material on the same subjects to show the changes in party positions. A copy was mailed to each member of the Canadian party.

At its October 1978 session in Palo Alto, the American SLP's NEC wrote proposing a joint meeting of delegates from the Canadian and American SLPs. A delegation was elected consisting of Karp, Massi, and me. [I had been elected to the NEC in January 1977.] The committee, later expanded to five, met with the Canadians in Toronto in late January 1979. It turned out to be a one-sided debate in which Sanderson, the champion of orthodox DeLeonism was outclassed by Karp and Massi. Again the American National Office won; the Canadian SLP did not endorse Sanderson's position at its 1979 convention, but the price of victory was high. The largest section, Toronto, evaporated, the monthly BULLETIN of the Canadian SLP ceased publication, and the party there became largely inactive.

The SLP and the SWP

One of the more curious results of the internal stresses in the party began early in 1977. Like a scavenger circling a dying competitor, the Socialist Workers Party, largest of the Trotskyist

denominations in the U.S., suddenly showed an interest in the SLP. In a carefully orchestrated maneuver, some of its leaders made overtures of friendship to Karp, two of them visiting him at the party headquarters in Palo Alto and inviting him to visit their New York national office, then bustling with the activity of the greatest boom in SWP history. The basis for this interest in the SLP was a "convergence" in views between the SWP and SLP, which they claimed to see resulting from the SLP's new ventures into issue-oriented activities.

The courtship was carried on mainly in New York City. SLP members were invited as guests to SWP conferences and conventions and attended other SWP meetings. In fact, their strategy apparently involved the use of a couple of SLP members in what remained of Section New York, one of whom seemed to be a plant and the other a convert. SWP leaders attended the 1978 National Convention Banquet in Philadelphia.

Karp had kept the NEC apprised of the SWP's actions. and the national convention delegates, understanding the SWP's plan, took action against two New York City members who were acting in behalf of the SWP. At the same time the convention decided to challenge the SWP's claim of a convergence between its political positions and ours. The party would ask for a public discussion to be carried out in our respective publications, the WEEKLY PEOPLE and THE MILITANT. Robert Massi suggested a plan for the discussion, which he and I were chosen to implement. We had drafted the letters containing the initial challenge and first points for the exchange when the National Office pulled the rug from under the venture at the 1978 NEC Session. There Karp argued that an exchange would play to SWP strengths and SLP weaknesses, basing this assessment on what he claimed to see as a disarray in SLP theory and positions, which needed discussion and change before we were ready to challenge the Trots and other left groups.

The Report of the WP Staff

The specifics of Karp's reservations about the party's readiness to debate the SWP were spelled out in the Weekly People Staff's report to the 1978 NEC Session. Apparently encouraged by the party's obedient response to changes initiated by the N.O. on the reinterpretation of the US/USSR conflict and activity in single-issue movements and capitalist unions, the staff produced a report that began with the bold assertion that the party's program had been frozen since the death of De Leon in 1914 and characterized it as dogmatic and inadequate to represent the party's new positions on single issues and the struggles of oppressed classes in undeveloped countries. It also claimed that the SIU program appeared utopian to persons not familiar with De Leonism and raised basic questions about SLP positions on revolution, the functioning of an SIU society and the need for a transition period, and above all, the SLP's failure to re-examine the program in the light of social changes over the past sixty years.

Acting for the NEC, Massi boiled the report down to four areas which covered the questions raised:"(a) What is the 'program' of the SLP [or a revolutionary party]; (b) The underdeveloped world and national liberation movements; (c) Aspects of the SLP program that leave certain questions open concerning the period prior to and after the revolutionary change; (d) Aspects of the SLP program that leave certain questions concerning the form of the new society." After a two-day discussion of these topics lasting eleven hours, the NEC decided to send them to the membership for discussion and resolution.

This became a major activity of the party during the winter of 1978-9. In Michigan during one of the worst winters on record, Grand Rapids members made four trips to Detroit where discussion took place in general party meetings at Section Wayne County's headquarters. Here, as in other subdivisions of the party, we struggled with the questions and succeeded in reaching a consensus on each. The resulting report was sent to the national office, as were those of twenty-five other subdivisions and individuals.

In his report on the matter at the 1979 Convention Karp expressed his disappointment in what he claimed to see as widely divergent views in the summaries submitted to the NO. Implying that members were unable--because of inexperience in the dogmatic, sectarian SLP of the past--to discuss the questions intelligently and that answers indicated a low level of understanding, he concluded that any attempt to produce a summary and to formulate programatic changes from it was futile. In place of what he saw as the political incoherence of the total membership, he proposed that a set of specific topics be formulated from the four basic topics and that certain members be asked to write position papers on one or more of them. These would then be published in the SLP Newsletter and discussed at the 1980 NEC Session in February.

Waiting for the NEC when it met in February, 1980, were five position papers, two of which--those on the role of the party and on national liberation movements--were in line with the National Office positions. Early in the discussion it became clear that the N.O. would be satisfied only with a position on the role of the party after the revolution that reversed De Leon's statement in SOCIALIST RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY that the party must disband at the moment the working class took over the means of production. Efforts of the NEC committee charged with writing the report on the position paper quickly degenerated into a farce, since for the first time the NEC did not consist overwhelmingly of Karp's supporters. As a result, the reports on this and the position paper on national liberation movements had enough critics to require that they be returned for rewriting--twice in the case of the former--and with results clearly unsatisfactory to the N.O. The committee, consisting of Karp's most dedicated supporters, struggled manfully to produce reports acceptable to both sides. Unfortunately they were hampered by his refusal--in keeping with the needs of the mythology of the moment--to spell out exactly what he wanted. A satisfactory position on national liberation movements was never reached; that on the role of the party in post-revolutionary society succeeded in rendering equivocal the unequivocal position expressed by De Leon. Its significance can be

judged by the reprinting in a 1982 SOCIALIST STUDIES pamphlet a 1977 Weekly People article on the role of a revolutionary party that expressed a standard DeLeonist view.

With the departure of Karp's sons and other revisionists from the editorial staff and the party, the need for new positions seemed to end. The 1980 Convention didn't take up the matter at all. The last reference I could find was in notes taken at the 1981 Convention when a delegate suggested that matters of this kind are best taken care of by the People staff, since they represent the best thinking in the party.

The Industrial Union Caucus in Education

The new position allowing SLP members to become active in their local unions and even to seek unpaid offfice came too late. By that time over half were retired and most of the rest were close to retirement. Of the younger members few were in basic industry. The largest concentration of SLP members was in education. At the 1978 NEC Session a detailed proposal was presented for a union caucus that would consist at first of SLP members and sympathizers who were either employed in some capacity in education or were students. This caucus, independent of the SLP, was to recruit members outside the party and to serve as a transmission belt for dispensing DeLeonist ideas among those recruits and among education workers in general. The NEC responded enthusiastically, voting a 1000 dollar subsidy and instructing the NO to cooperate in identifying members and sympathizers in education.

Introductory materials were produced and mailed to these potential members, and by the time of the 1979 convention enough SLP students and workers in the education industry had been identified to consider organizing an industrial union caucus in the industry. During a recess of the convention about thirty members and sympathizers met and formally organized the Industrial Union Caucus in Education (IUCE).

Conditions were in the education industry were such that we could expect some measure of success. Inflation was cutting real wages in education as in other industries, the major education unions were competing for dues payers, and little effort was being made to organize non-teaching education workers and part-timers, who were a large contingent among college instructors. We began by producing literature that pointed out the deficiencies in the existing unions--a typical DeLeonist critique of capitalist unionism. Our introductory leaflet, "Unionism and the Schools: Looking to the 80's," and the two subsequent leaflets we wrote for general dustribution were printed in a format that made them available for easy and cheap reprinting locally. Several groups and individuals, mainly but not entirely SLP, availed themselves of the opportunity. This together with the other general leaflets we produced--on teachers' strikes and on educational cutbacks--contained an explicit statement on the socialist goal of the IUCE. In the introductory leaflet it took the following form as an IUCE goal:"Democratic management of the schools by education workers

and a general reconstruction of society that includes social ownwership and worker management, not just of education, but of all services and industries."

Besides these leaflets we produced a mailing piece for mass mailing, eight issues of a printed newsletter, which ranged from eight to ten pages, and a regular dittoed "Progress Report" during the approximately three years of the IUCE's life.

But the IUCE always labored under difficulty. For one thing the whole concept of working as a caucus within capitalist--and thus hostile--unions was new to us. And we had little immediate success in attracting members. It became clear early on the we could not recruit from what we had assumed would be our chief source of support: those radical and leftist veterans of the student ferment of the sixties who had become teachers. The membership, then, had to come from the SLP and its supporters and--to the dismay of some--from ex-members or rival industrialk unionists, from the IWW, for instance.

Aside from these problems in organizing a revolutionary socialist caucus and our own amateurness, the principal stumbling block was the NO. Although opposition from this source was not apparent at the 1978 NEC Session in Palo Alto, lack of enthusiasm among the NO staff became clear at the 1979 Convention. One result was that we waited over seven months for a write-up in the Weekly People. And one was finally forthcoming only because the NEC at its 1980 Session explicitly instructed the People Staff to act. Actually we got more ink from the IWW's INDUSTRIAL WORKER than we ever did from THE PEOPLE.

The demise of the IUCE can be attributed to internal problems in the SLP. As a prime mover in the IUCE, my situation in the party was bound to affect it. My fall from grace during and after the 1980 NEC Session and the beginning of new internal problems in Section St. Louis, where the IUCE had several members, led to serious difficulties. In March 1981, shortly after the NO suspended me from membership, the new in-house, Palo Alto NEC located a phrase in an IUCE publication that it could interpret as a reformist demand. Then, without a warning of any kind, it withdrew the party's endorsement of the attempt to organize the IUCE. My subsequent letter to SLP members of the IUCE defending it against the NEC's allegations was declared anti-organizational and would almost certainly resulted in new charges against me if other events had not intervened. The final chapter of the SLP's involvement in the IUCE was the 1981 Convention's endorsement of the NEC's action.

Section St. Louis

By the end of the seventies the SLP's new positions and its forays into single-issue movements and capitalist unions had begun to bring in a few recruits. It didn't take some of them long to find that behind the myth of membership control the real seat of authority was the NO. In 1980 Don Fitz and Louise Donnell of Section St. Louis and other new members in California and Oregon began a correspondence to prepare a proposal for reforming the party's administration. In the course of the correspondence Fitz referred to Nathan Karp, whom he

had seen in action at the 1979 Convention, as "obnoxious."

Later one of his correspondents loaned the letters to another member who handed them over to Robert Bills, Karp's assistant at the NO, who was visiting Oregon on party business. When Karp read the letters, he immediately phoned Fitz and fired him from his job as field worker for the party and then preferred charges against him and Donnell in Section St. Louis.

Instead of expelling them the section, unwilling to lose two of its most active members voted to censure Fitz. This action didn't appease Karp, who then had the NEC expel them. Next the section took the constitutional action necessary to recall the NEC and the National Secretary. This caused the NEC to suspend the section and expel it, thus eliminating the need to carry out the constitutional procedures for a recall election. All this took place in the late winter and early spring of 1981.

The section then wrote a statement setting forth the facts, which it hoped to present to the committee that would hear the case at the upcoming 1981 Convention. Instead the NO prevented any testimony by the expelled St. Louis members and gave its own one-sided report to the convention. Predictably the convention endorsed the NO/NEC's action.

In the hope of presenting delegates with Section St. Louis's side of the story we (I attended the convention although not as a delegate) distributed the section statement to SLP members attending the convention. Impact was minimal. But for me the result was censure and expulsion from the convention audience. Then in what amounted to a one-day suspension of the party's constitution, the convention expelled me on the spot, leaving me with the possible distinction of being the only person ever expelled from the SLP at a national convention. I had been a member nearly 34 years. The St Louis convulsion precipitated a new spate of resignations and dropouts and the expulsion a few months later of all but one member of Section Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The SLP and the ENC

After destroying the IUCE, the NO made no more efforts to intervene in the union movement. It did, however, make one last effort at large-scale intervention in a single-issue movement. This time the arena was the newly hatched Emergency National Council (ENC), a coalition of groups opposed to U.S. interference in Central America. The NO, always haunted by what it perceived as the lost opportunities of the Vietnam era, saw this group as a promising component of a possible new upswing of disaffection in the eighties. The most active members of the party were involved locally, and several were members of its national board. The SLP also contributed handsomely to finance the ENC. The NO coordinated the whole SLP effort, and members of the NO staff and the National Secretary attended National ENC conferences.

Somehow the SLP's efforts didn't pan out to the satisfaction of

the NO, in part because the SLP investment of money and time didn't reap the publicity for the party and the speaking opportunities it was thought to deserve and, more importantly, because SLP influence couldn't prevent the ENC from espousing an out-and-out reformist program that the SLP couldn't support. A story in the June 6, 1986, PEOPLE reported that the NEC had decided not to endorse the ENC, thus ending the party's two-year effort at a major intervention in a single-issue movement.

The Karp Era Reviewed

Certainly the nearly two decades from 1968 to 1987 can be called the Karp years, for although Robert Bills, his protege succeeded him as national secretary in 1980, Karp retained his hold on the party through a new post created for him, National Financial secretary, and later through his position on the new Palo Alto-based NEC. Back in 1973, the crisis in the party was brought home to Karp by John Timm's resignation from the post of National Editor and the resulting emergency in producing the Weekly People. But Karp quickly realized that the difficulty in finding a replacement for Timm was just a symptom of the real problem: the decline in membership that was pushing the SLP below the critical mass needed to continue it as a significant national organization. To meet the immediate problem he recruited three young people, one of them his younger son--not then a party member--to form an editorial staff. It was in consultation with them--we must assume--that he worked out the broad outline of the changes that would move the SLP out of its self-imposed isolation and give it some of the relevance it had had before Arnold Petersen had moved it into sectarian isolation after WWI.

In fact one can make a very significant comparisons and contrasts between the 1917 and 1973 crises and the responses to each. The key difference lies in the dangers as Arnold Petersen and Nathan Karp perceived them. To Petersen, who saw the activity of the National Editor and other prominent members at the 1917 Unity Conference with the Socialist Party as treasonous, there was only one solution: to force the traitors out and to isolate the party from the poisonous influence of the leftwing politics of the SP, the CP, and the "anarchy" of the IWW. Even the WIIU was sacrificed partly to prevent contamination. Along with this policy went an ongoing centralizing effort whereby constitutional changes were made year by year which put the reins of the party in safe hands, namely those of the National Secretary and the NEC Sub-Committee.

For Nathan Karp the crisis was significantly different. Petersen had a relatively young party of over 3000 members and saw his task as safeguarding it from the baneful influence of "bougeois bolshevism" and other species of radical refformism. Karp's SLP was dying on the vine. Its only possible salvation was a transfusion of new blood. And this new blood could be obtained only by getting out into the world and competing for it in the unions and single-issue movements.

Certainly there is irony here. Seven years after the bitter split of 1967-70, when Karp had been insrumental in expelling from the party those who had advocated a new outward-looking policy during the

anti-war ferment of the Vietnam War era, he found himself advocating those policies to the SLP and squeezing out of the party those who opposed him.

Like Arnold Petersen, Karp clothed his reversal of party policy in the robes of democracy and the mantle of De Leon. But the changes were imposed on a very reluctant membership, many of whom found the isolation of the Petersen era comfortable. In fairness to Karp and his NO faction, it should be noted that he not only largely observed the democratic practices of the SLP but expanded them. Beginning in 1975 with a special NEC session and later the same year with regional conferences designed to bring home to the membership the seriousness of the crisis and the need for a turnaround, Karp encouraged the widest, freest discussion of the crisis and its causes and possible solutions.

But like Petersen it appears that he didn't trust the membership; he had his own program for the rejuvenation of the party and intended to see it through. Opponents charged that he manipulated the conventions and NEC sessions by a combination of sharp parliamentary tactics, threats--playing on an aging membership's fear of the mass resignations of the NO and Weekly People staff if their policies weren't approved, and when all else failed, verbal abuse. It was the last that put me reluctantly on the NEC, my predecessor having experienced a Karp tongue lashing.

Eventually, like Arnold Petersen, Karp was forced to promote greater centralization of authority in the NO. Dissention at the 1980 NEC Session made it clear that he could no longer depend on the automatic approval of his proposals by the great majority of NEC members, and any significant dissent in the NEC would end his dominance. The 1980 Session was the last one held by an NEC elected by members from their regions. At the 1980 Convention a measure was adopted that would elect the NEC from sections within a 150 mile radius of the seat of the National Office, Palo Alto. In practice this has resulted in an NEC consisting overwhelmingly of NO staff members. A final move in the same direction made national conventions biannual instead of annual. The last was held in 1984.

On the plus side, the Karp decades produced a spate of new literature as opposed to reprints of Marxist and DeLeonist classics. The top year was 1978 when the New York Labor News published pamphlets on the SLP's position on the Russian revolution, the nature of Soviet society, and the role of the party in post-revolutionary society. One pamphlet containing an exchange between the Weekly People and William Winpisinger, President of the Itnernational Association of Machinists and darling of social democrats, revealed the phoniness of his socialist pretensions--and of his commitment to freedom of speech when, on the pretext that the cover used the IAM logo, he succeeded in suppressing it through court action.

For the first time the party produced an SLP Newsletter, which was supposed to be open to members who wished to write on theoretical topics or practical ideas for agitation. Unfortunately NO censorship stifled it almost from the beginning.

Perhaps the most successful of the new publishing ventures was SOCIALIST STUDIES, a set of inexpensive reprints of key articles from the Weekly People. At total of 35 were issued on topics ranging from the role of the party to the SLP's views on Cuba.

Socialist Studies, though, was a symptom of the decline in the strength of the party. It was begun coincidentally with--and probably to make more palatable to the membership--the reduction of the Weekly People to a biweekly "The People." The latter signaled the failure of the new positions and tactics to reverse the fifty-year downward trend in the party's fortunes. By 1981 nearly all the WP staff that had shaken the party to its foundations had departed from the NO and several from the SLP. The People, without abandoning the new positions completely, stepped back a measure to a coverage and selection of topics less likely to alarm the old-time members. Despite the authoritarian structure of the SLP, the People remains consistent with views held by most "third force," libertarian socialists, and because of its frequency (26 issues a year as opposed to the 12 of the Industrial Worker and New Unionist) and its circulation, it is easily the most influential.

Conclusion

Organized in 1876, the Socialist Labor Party was the second working class party in the world. (The Social Democratic Workers Party of Germany was the first in 1875.) Ultimately every group in the U.S. calling itself socialist--with minor exceptions--can trace its organizational ancestry back to the pre-1900 SLP. Even anarchists and syndicalists can find their ideological ancestors there prior to 1880. The Haymarket martyrs, except Louis Lingg, had all been members, and at least one returned to its ranks after serving his sentence.

The Socialist Labor Party we have revisited in this lengthy and long-drawn-out article (begun in DB2, September 1983) remains closer to the revolutionary positions held by socialists of that era than do any of its descendents. In the revolutionary-versus-reform struggles that shook socialist parties worldwide in the 1890's, the revolutionary wing of the SLP, influenced by De Leon managed to retain the party's name, organization, publishing house, and newspaper. But in a sense the victory was meaningless. The reformist Socialist Party soon outnumbered it fifteen or twenty to one.

In the past 87 years the SP and its Leninist descendents in the Communist Party and various Trotskyist and Marxist-Leninist groups have played the part of capitalism's leftwing opposition. The SLP, on the other hand, has presented our class with a clear revolutionary program calling on workers to abolish capitalism and build the new society described in the socialist industrial union program.

The problem of authoritarian leadership that the SLP developed stemmed, in my view, from the composition of the party. Unlike the Socialist Party and the Leninist denominations that grew out of the SP's left wing, the SLP had few intellectuals with academic training. We were overwhelmingly a party of industrial workers, many of us immigrants barely speaking English. With a revolutionary program well

defined, we assumed that we didn't need theoreticians to develop "positions" on events and actions of the ruling class. Our positions developed automatically from our program: No Compromise!

But the intellectual leadership of De Leon, which provided the theoretical underpinning for the SLP's program and commanded the loyalty of the membership was replaced after his death by the organizational leadership of Arnold Petersen, who was able to obtain the discipline needed to freeze the party in the theoretical mode of 1914 and isolate it from contact with the left. Had it won, the anti-Petersen revolt of 1947 might have brought the party out of its isolation. The victory of the dissidents in the equally strong rebellion of 1967-70 might have provided the party with the expertise and increment of young members that could have saved the party from the apparently hopeless decline of the Karp years.

Of course the easiest thing is to place on the leadership the full blame for the present condition of the party. To do so, however, is to expect of Petersen, Karp, and their supporters a higher understanding of the world than that held by the membership. Rather obviously they retained control in part because they reflected the temper of a membership that felt comfortable with isolation and authoritarian control.

As for the future, we can only hope for the best. The Thirty-Eighth National Convention is scheduled to open in Akron, Ohio, in July

A Postscript

The purpose of revisiting the SLP was to seek truth, something not always obvious to someone whose feelings are tangled up in a subject. Readers who find errors in fact or interpretation, especially in the sections dealing with the history of the party since 1970, where they are most likely to appear, are urged to write. The DB will print even the most hostile review of this effort. I might add that an edited version of the section on the post-1970 history will be one of the chapters in the pamphlet-length overview of the history of the SLP from 1876 to 1987 that Ben Perry and I are writing.

--Frank Girard

the People
Published by the Socialist Labor Party Established in 1891
One year $4; four months $1; from 914 Industrial Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94303

Dear Comrades,

I would like to take the opportunity to answer Thunder's letter. First off, Thunder starts off by saying that I should add 'anti-family violence, anti-drug," etc., immediate demands to my program. Apparently Thunder doesn't, or rather doesn't want to, understand what I meant by immediate demands. If you look closely Thunder, you will see the immediate demands that I mentioned were class-struggle demands. While socialists can make 'political hay" out of the issues you mentioned, these are at the present not class-struggle issues. Many capitalists fight side-by-side with workers to do away with family violence, prostitution, and pollution. It is the demands by workers versus capitalists that I was talking about. However, Thunder knows this. His intention on this topic, as well as everything thing else he mentions, was an intent to make me look ridiculous. However, you, Thunder, were the one who ended up looking ridiculous for trying to twist what I said out of proportion and context.

Secondly, as for joining the SWP because it "believe such 'transitional demands' will get the attention of the workers and lead the workers by the nose into 'socialism.'" I would have to say that I wouldn't know if the SWP stands for such things or not, since I am not a member of that organization and have not had too much contact with it. As for the SWP wanting to lead workers by the nose, again I wouldn't know. However Thunder, I see your feeble attempt to link this "leading by the nose" to my leadership statements. I believe I made myself perfectly clear as to where I stood on the issue of leadership. I challenge you, no I defy you Thunder, to find where I stand for "leading by the nose." So c'mon Thunder, put up or shut up! As for leadership, perhaps you should read DeLeon on this issue (especially since you like to quote him so much.) DeLeon stated in "Reform or Revolution", pgs. 22-23, in a chapter entitled "The SLP The Head of the Column";

"In all revolutionary movements, as in the storming of the fortresses, the thing depends upon the head of the column-upon that minority that is so intense in its convictions, so soundly based on its principles, so determined in its action, that it carries the masses with it, storms the breastworks and captures the fort. Such a head of the column must be our Socialist organization to the whole column of the American proletariat." Then,
"The army that is to conquer it is the army of the proletariat, the head of whose column must consist of the intrepid Socialist organization that has earned their love, their respect, their confidence."

As for your DeLeon quote, let me ask you where I ever put forth the idea that we socialists should <u>only</u> involve ourselves in the immediate demands field and forget the ultimate one of socialism? If you had taken the time to read what I wrote you would have seen my quote from the Communist Manifesto that stated;
"The Communists fight for the attainment of the momentary interests of the working class, but in the movement of thepresent they also represent and take care of the future movement." I don't stand for reforming capitalism Thunder and you know it! I explained why I consider taking part in the immediate demands field important. This being to help the working class to raise its consciousness through its struggle so that it can come to the conclusion that patching up the system is futile and that revolution is what they need. These are class struggle Thunder, and to ignore them, to ridicule them, is to break all contact between the workers involved and the socialist organization. Isolated revolutionaries won't make the revolution themselves, only a huge revolutionary workers movement will. This can only be built through close working contact between the socialists and the , at present, unclassconscious workers.

Then Thunder, you top off your ridiculous little statement by stating; "When our American Revolutionary forefathers had decided to forego all ties with 'mother England' they did not list a host of demands. They had only one--"idependence."

How do you think they came to this conclusion that they needed "independence" Thunder? Did they get up one morning and say; "Geez, what we need is independence!"? No they didn't! If the readers will bear with me, I will give a brief outline of the American Revolution, how the revolutionaries came to the conclusion of independence being needed, and how I believe this fits in today.

To start with, the causes of the American revolution started after the French and Indian war. The British limited westward settlement, which upset the land-grabbers who had huge claims in the west. Then, the British decided to tax the American for the military support it gave to those settlements that already existed in the west. This was done thru taxes and duties on molasses, sugar, wine and other commodities. This led to an uproar amongst the populace most effected. Smuggling became a big business. So, to counter this the stamp act was passed. This affected even larger amounts of the population and led to another huge outcry from the colonists. Then, the British passed the quartering act which allowed British troops quartered in America to have part of the bill footed by the colonies. Then the currency act, which called for the Coloinies to immediately pay off their debts to England.

What did these acts lead to? First, it led to the population in the colonies to organise to oppose the British acts. The colonists organised through smuggling, demonstration and sometimes riots. These actions ultimately led tomost of these acts being withdrawn. And yes, there were immediate demands at this time. "No taxation without representation" was one of them. At this point, only a few far-sighted individuals saw the need for a revolutionary break with England. However, the majority felt that reconciliation was possible. Sort of sounds like the position of the majority today, doesn't it Thunder.

After the British had repealed most of the above acts, things quieted down. Then, the British tried to place taxes on lead, paint, glass, paper and tea, when they were imported into America. This affected more people than ever and led to another rising in protest amongst the colonists. Again, the British backed down, except for the tax on tea. When, this happened, smuggling tea became so big that nine-tenths of all tea in America was smuggled. The British countered by giving special priviledges to the East Indian Tea Company, which if it held up, could have been a precedent for monopolies on everything by English based companies in favor with the king. So, the Boston Tea Party was organised. The British countered by the "intolerable acts." This included the closing of Boston Harbor, an economic disaster for the town and surrounding areas. Also included was the taking away of self-government rights for many colonists,quartering rights for troops in hotels and taverns, religious laws, and a separate justice system for British officials (to their benefit of course.) The colonies rose up with demands of "no taxation without representation," "Rights to life, liberty and property" and others. Still, even though a growing minority saw the need to break with England, the vast majority still hoped for reconciliation. As frictions increased, the colonists set up a congress which appealed to the King for justice. The British sent out the troops in 1775, fighting broke out, and while the numbers calling for revolution were growing, the vast majority still hoped for reconciliation. However, the British made it clear that only complete submission would be the answer for them and the colonists finally issued the Declaration of Independence, in July 1776, over one year after the fighting started! So, Thunder, you can see that the forefathers did indeed struggle for immediate demands. They took every action possible to avoid the final split. Then, when it became clear that [illegible] revolution was their only answer they hoisted up the banner of "indpendence." This is something like how the socialist revolution will be brought about. The workers will have to be convinced through the struggle with the capitalists that only revolution will be the answer. Presently, we have not

reached that point as of yet. Until we do, it is our duty as socialist to take part in these class struggles, so that the workers won't be misled by the fakers and reformists, and to help the workers see that ultimately, only revolution is the final and best answer to there problems. We must fight side-by-side with the class whose historic mission it is to overthorw capitalism. Let me again apologise to the readers for the American History lesson, but since Thunder needed the lesson, I did it for him!

Hungrig A'rbeiter

Dear Comrades,

As I pointed out on another occasion, my job on the DB assembly line allows me to locate and combat heresy as it appears in DB letters and articles. Comrade H. Arbeiter's letter with its attempt to place DeLeon on the roster of Trotskyist saints is a case in point. The use of the head-of-the-column quote to defend the vanguardist policies of Leninist parties illustrates the danger of taking a statement out of context to prove a point. In this case the context includes revolutionary strategy of the SLP, which both De Leon and his audience understood. The SLP was recruiting workers for socialist revolution. Its speakers and literature proclaimed the goal foursquare. De Leon and the SLP realized that the entire working class would not rise as one to an outright call for socialist revolution. Then as now, the number who reject capitalism and join the party of revolution will be a small minority at first, one that will grow as conditions force our class to seek an alternative to capitalism. In the revolutionary moment their conviction will carry with them enough of our class to win the day. BUT this head of the column is not a leadership; rather it is a part of the revolutionary army.

Far different with Leninists. They intend to be, not the head of the column, but the hand that directs it. Unlike the DeLeonists their speakers and literature conceal rather than emphasize their revolutionary socialist purpose. In the unions their militancy is designed to gain them opportunities to provide a new union leadership rather than present a socialist alternative. In the single-issue movements they advocate demonstrations and mass actions that will give them chances to show their stuff as leaders.

And in all cases their work is aimed at recruiting cadre whom they will indoctrinate in the real revolutionary objective of the Leninist group. These cadre are on the first step of the Leninist party's heirarchy. After the revolution they will be busy teaching our class how to behave as socialists in the party-controlled society they envision. And if we don't pass their tests, we will be dealt with by whatever they will call their version of Lenin's Cheka. Read the history of the USSR 1917-23, the Lenin years, for a model.

So there you have it: the difference between being the head of a self-directing column and the vanguard officer directing it.

Frank Girard

Dear Comrades,

About ten years ago the Socialist Labor Party put out a pamphlet THE NATURE OF SOVIET SOCIETY, which I consider to be well written and I recommend it as the best on the subject. It is, however, unfortunate that it concludes that the Soviet Union has state despotism with no mention of industrial feudalism. In light of its analysis that Soviet society is different from capitalism, it is unfortunate that it couldn't find a better description for it than bureaucratic state despotism because despotism in the Soviet Union is worse than capitalism's only by degree. It is logical, therefore, for the SLP to plead that the United States should avoid all foreign involvements with the Soviet Union as for example in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Granada, etc. Common sense tells us that when the Soviet Union gets control of a country it imposes its system upon it. Ignorance of what socialism is and the misconception that the Soviet Union has socialism or is working toward it makes many people permissive to Russian expansion because they believe it is not a bad thing. However, it is inexcusable for the SLP or for any DeLeonist to tolerate Russian expansion because it is reactionary or feudal, as we know the Soviet Union to be reactionary.

Over the last decade the SLP has regretted that it did not get more recruits from those opposed to the war in Vietnam. It resolved to exploit similar peace movements in the future for needed manpower. The last I heard the SLP is not making any headway in attracting members; in fact its membership is declining. Is it not possible that people regard the tolerant stand of the SLP to Russin expansion as sympathy for fellow travelers. Those who really like what Russia stands for find positive groups to join, and those who hate the Soviet system but want peace in the world can join religious or ethical groups where they do not get abused with the label of communist or traitor. In order for DeLeonists to be understood in these critical times we must publicly disown the Soviet Union by calling it by its proper name, industrial feudalism.

Monroe Prussack

EXCHANGE:A MINARCHIST APPROACH

First, what do I mean by this word 'minarchist'? An anarchist (at least in the popular imagination and certainly to alot of modern anarchist) is taken to be someone who says that a society can be organised completely without any authority. A minarchist would say that authority can be minimised but never totally abolished.

This is because the remedies that exist for authority do not exist in an isolated way and, in fact, can often be opposed to each other. As a result no solution is absolute. Instead we have to work towards the best possible balance of remedies which will minimise the amount of authority which exists.

As an example, take accountability. An increase in accountability always means more communication is needed. If the idea of accountability is turned into a fetish you would never have time to do anything but check up on all the people who are accountable to you and report to all those you are accountable to. This would create a massive beaureaucracy and alienation which in itself

produces new forms of authority. Similar conflicts exist for decentralisation vs planning and equality, freedom vs responsibility, etc. My point is that a single minded persuite of any one virtue, one remedy, to the exclusion of all others would be disasterious. Equally the usual 'solution' to this dilema of ignoring the contradictions involved and imagining that you can even push both contradictary remedies to their extreme at the same time will not work.

From these ideas it follows that it is impossible to totaly remove the elements of authority which arise from one cause (say, lack of accountability) without grossly inflating those that arise from another (say, alienation). Most ordinary people realise this as common sense, which is why you dont see many anarchists about.

On this basis, a minarchist analisis does not seek an absolute solution to the problem of authority. Rather it tries to influence the dynamic balance between different causes of authority so as to minimise the net result.

Far from being a cop-out this attitude is an anti- dote to smugness as it involves a constant vigilance and an honest assesment of what effects our actions really are having. Too many anarchists just go full steam ahead on the basis of a set of simplistic dogmas and if reality dosn't respond as they want it to they look for someone other than themselves to blame.

Minarchists solutions are never totally exacting. They work in a more ecological way, moving towards an optimum situation by means of a continual series of corrections to an original attempt to solve the problem. This involves dropping the macho pretence that we always know exactly how were going to get where we want to go, ie that we've got all the answers. This process involves changeing with time in response to reality. In other words it is a genuinely historical approach. It does not produce a perfect solution, just one that on a statistical basic will increase the probability of things improving.

Whilst I am describing these ideas under the heading of a new word, 'minarchist', its a tendency which has always existed within anarchism. I myself myself am a member of an anarcho-syndicalist organisation, the Spanish CNT.

Perhaps some practical examples will help to clarify these ideas. My ideas assume that alot of things would remain scarce 'after the revolution' and are mainly in response to Adam Buick in D.B. no.16 and 21 and the article by La Guerra Social in no.20 - all of which I found very thought provoking. = ANY ALTERNATIVE TO

I would readily agree that there are alot of problems with the utopian attitude, 'Just let anyone take whatever they wanted', ie some kind of Labour Voucher System (LVS). There's no doubt that a LVS would involve alot of paperwork, which is a shame. However it's not as bad as what would happen with the 'absolutist' approach taken by GS, which is summed up at the end of their article by a serdes of chilling euphamisms along the lines that people who wanted to be 'parasites' would be suitably dealt with.

Their basic mistake, as I see it, is to look at one aspect of the present system (probably the worst one it's true) -ie the tendency to reduce all human life to a series of calculated exchanges and in this way reduce people themselves to commodities- and go all out to get rid of it. In the process they forget about a whole series of other problems, specificaly the excess of community pressure they end their article with. Personaly I would hate to think I could never say to myself 'What the hell, I've got the vouchers, I'm going to do it'. Obviously, independent of any ecomomic considerations, a person who was always thinking like that would be pretty shallow. On the other hand, if you were always worrying about the rights and wrongs of what you were doing you'd end up neurotic. A balance needs to be struck.

At the moment, money is a problem because it is the basis of a system which wants to give everything a price, or in other words remove all generosity from life and make it work on a basis of strict exchange. LVs would be different from this as, to a large extent, they would not involve the worker exchanging her labour for vouchers in the strict sense of the term. To a large extent workers would be involved in 'generously' supporting the system which gave old, disabled, etc workers the same number of vouchers for a shorter working week, etc, via their local assembly This would also involve alot of human interaction, so no chance of us all becoming cogs in a machine. An LVS could give us the possibility of structuring fairness into the system we lived by but need not make people into mercenary bastards, as is the aim of capitalism. In this

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way a LVS could go along way towards undermining the psychology of the present system.

Although it is true that the individual value of a particular person's labour cannot be defined it should be possible with a LVS to give some idea of how much an individual had given of her time. In other words, once it is established that, say, parents who have half as much free time as single people get twice as many vouchers per hour then, in a reseonably fair sort of way, people could decide to work less if they wanted to as long as they were willing to consume less. This is an option that would quickly disappear under a system which just relied on social pressure.

Abuses such as fraud could be a problem (as GS pointout) but these could be 'dealt with' to use their phrase. At least with a LVS they could be dealt with on the basis of a system which was clear and whose structures could be defined, rather than on the basis of wispering campaigns, etc. LVs would also have to be guarded against theft, perhaps, but if this was the case the same would apply to anything valuable and portable, eg videos.

As economics is not my strong point I'm not in much of a position to think up solutions to the problems of too many vouchers/goods being in circulation. One solution might be to make sure that there was, if anything, always too many goods, then every once in a while give away noticable excesses. This idea will no doubt not apply to exacting Marxist minds and it's true it could lead to all sorts of resentments and similar problems. On the other hand it might just be accepted as one of those things then from time to time people would get a pleasant suprise if they happened to be in the right place at the right time. And why not? We dont want to take all the mystery out of life, do we?

Personaly I would NOT want to live in a world where everything was measured out and always fair, in the boring sense of the word. I would, however, like some sort of reasonably clear and simple means to influence the way things are organised in any group I belonged to, in proportion to how big it was and without having to sort it out with everyone from scratch everytime. In other words I'd like the option of dealing with reality in terms of abstractions when this seemed a good idea, as well as direct, painful, exiting, etc relationships with people when this was what I wanted.

As has been pointed out, the intricacies of a LVS would not be appropriate to the exitements of a revolutionary situation. I see it more as a useful idea for the meddium term, say from six months onwards, until it became unneccesary (if ever). It needen't be imposed all at once - at twelve o'clock on a certain day- it could spread by example. Also it needen't be perfectly fair - what is in life? As long as most people accepted it as the best we could do

(Cont'd on p. 2)