

Common Voice

A Journal for the Anti-State, Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Reformist Sector

Issue Two
October 2004



LET'S abolish money?

Challenging the Right beyond the Left

Global labour in the age of Empire

Guesde and DeLeon on Co-operatives

In memory of Frank Girard

Only one other world is possible

What is 'Anarchist Communism'?

Submissions

Submissions can include original material written especially for Common Voice or material that has already been published elsewhere and that would benefit from a wider audience of groups in our sector. Some of the themes we would be interesting in exploring are listed below:

- the potential for revolutionary transformation in the present;
- the revolutionary potential of communes, intentional communities, LETS, autonomous spaces etc.;
- the relationship between feminism and socialism/communism/anarchism;
- debates over 'historical materialism';
- encouraging communication and co-operation between groups in our political sector;
- 'free access' and a non-monetary system of production and distribution;
- the anti-war movement;
- debates over 'human nature';
- what is 'class struggle'?
- the psychological/spiritual dimensions of revolutionary change;
- reviews of popular music, art, TV shows, theatre etc.

As a guideline articles should be no more than 2000 words in length with reviews around 500 words.

We would prefer it if all submissions were made electronically where possible - via e-mail or as a document file (Microsoft Word etc.) on CD-ROM, floppy or zip disk, although we are also happy to accept material that is typed or hand-written.

We would also be grateful to receive a brief description of your organisation or group (if you belong to one) - along with a contact address - to be included in our contacts page.

Please submit all material to the address below. We look forward to your contributions.

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LETS abolish money?

Adam Buick

If you listen to the enthusiasts they can recreate communities, cure unemployment, undermine the multinationals and even provide an alternative to the global capitalist economy. What can? LETS or *Local Exchange and Trading Schemes*.

This is what the enthusiasts say. First, Harry Wears from Haverfordwest:

"I'm really enthusiastic about LETS. I think it's the most exciting mechanism for social change I have ever come across. In LETS, debts don't accrue interest and there is no pressure to pay. A LETS cheque can't bounce, nor a LETS business go bust. LETS sees money as a symbol but, unlike sterling, it can't be manoeuvred to the detriment of people using it" (Woman & Home, October 1993).

Then Donnachadh McCarthy from Southwark:

"It is a system to recreate a community economy which we were losing because of multinational companies and big supermarkets. Money which comes into Southwark is used once and then leaves via the banks which use it to finance projects elsewhere" (Independent, 13 December 1993).

And Ed May of the New Economics Foundation:

"With mass unemployment in Britain many people have the time but not the cash. LETS gives them access to things they would not otherwise have" (Guardian, 12 March 1994).

Finally, from the same *Guardian* article by John Vidal:

“The implications, say the theorists, are enormous. In a cash-starved economy (one in five British households is severely in debt), despite the existence of wealth in the form of skills and resources, traditional exchange is hijacked by a lack of cash. With local currencies, as long as people make their goods and skills available, their exchange can go round and round. ‘The community therefore becomes richer,’ says Paul Ekins, a green economist.”

It is, of course, absurd that people who need things should go without even though the skills and resources to provide for them exist. We can go along with the LETS enthusiasts in denouncing this scandal of unmet needs alongside unused resources. The difference between Socialists and LETS enthusiasts is that, while both of us criticise money, they answer “yes” to the question “So, you want to go back to barter?” while we answer “no”. They want to retain exchange and trading with some new kind of money; we want a society based on common ownership geared to producing things directly for people to take and use in which exchange and trading, and money as the means of exchange, would be redundant.

Return to Barter

LETS schemes are essentially local barter clubs. A group of people with varying skills get together and agree to exchange the services they can provide with any other member without using money. Records, however, have to be kept. Each member has an account and when one member’s services are used their account is credited with the exchange value of that service while that of the user is debited by the same amount. What normally happens is that each member is given a sort of cheque book which they can use to pay for other members’ services either at a published price or as agreed between the two. Clearly for all this a unit of account is needed. Some schemes define this unit in terms of labour time. Others tie it to the pound. The accounts could in fact be done in pounds but generally the unit is given a special name. In Bath it is an “oliver”; in Brixton it is a “brick”; in Reading a “ready”, and so on.

Do LETS schemes really allow people, as is claimed, to by-pass money and so have “access to things they would not otherwise have”? Two unemployed people with different skills can always barter their services. Thus an unemployed plumber can repair an unemployed electrician’s central heating in exchange for some rewiring by the electrician. Neither needs money for this. A LETS scheme is merely an extension of this: the plumber or electrician joins a barter club and so gains access to a wider

range of potential clients as well as access to a wider range of reciprocal services (too often, though, things not normally needed by the unemployed like aromatherapy, holistic massage, acupuncture, tarot reading and other such New Age fads). So, it's an alternative to placing cards in newsagent's windows or relying on the grapevine to learn about work opportunities. As such, like the black economy, it's one way of surviving in the capitalist jungle but that's all. But don't LETS schemes help create a "local community spirit"? Maybe, but no more than any other local club.

Small is Small

The trouble is that the idea has been hijacked by all sorts of currency cranks and funny money theorists who see it as the basis for an "alternative money" and an "alternative economy". But they overlook two important facts.

First, the nature of the activities covered by LETS schemes. They are all activities that can be carried out by a single individual such as repairs and personal services, and which in the normal money economy could be done by self-employed people working on their own. In fact, from an economic point of view, LETS club members are acting as self-employed; a LETS scheme is a club in which self-employed individuals barter their services. It could never extend beyond this to productive activities that require expensive equipment and plant and a large workforce—such as, precisely, the manufacture of the things that LETS members and the self-employed repair.

Secondly, there are definite limits to the size a LETS scheme can attain. The biggest in Britain only has 300 members. If they got much bigger than this the administrative work of recording all the transactions would grow and could no longer be done by voluntary or part-time labour; people would have to be employed to do it, which would add to the running costs of the scheme and have to be shouldered by the members. The membership fees and transaction charges already levied by the scheme would rise. At a certain point this would cancel the advantages of being in the scheme and members would find it more convenient to re-enter the money economy and resort to newsagent's windows and contacts.

Funny Money

What most of the currency cranks who have latched on to the LETS idea envisage is converting the units of account – the schemes use olivers, bricks, readies, etc. – into a real money that would circulate. In fact most commentators, like John Vidal in the *Guardian* article, refer to the LETS units of account as "currencies", but

this is misleading. They are not money; they do not circulate. They only exist on paper or computer disk as a record of transactions. LETS schemes are in fact more cumbersome than money. After all, with a real money that circulates an individual account of a person's exchange transactions doesn't have to be kept.

Some of the advantages claimed for LETS units also apply to cash. So when Harry Wears says "a LETS cheque can't bounce", this is true but neither can cash. Similarly, when it is argued that people have an incentive to use LETS credits – and that when they do accumulate them this doesn't give them any power to manipulate other people – as they don't pay interest, the same applies to cash as such. A hoard of cash is no more useful than a large LETS credit balance. What is being advocated as the ideal is a money that can't be accumulated and can't be lent at interest, with LETS units being seen as the formula to achieve this.

But such an "alternative money" is never going to come into being, because it would be worse than existing money. If you have an exchange economy (which the LETS enthusiasts accept, as is seen by the full name Local Exchange and Trading System) then conventional money is the best means of exchange. Not only does it allow many more exchanges to take place than barter or a modified form of barter like LETS schemes, but the payment and receipt of interest also facilitates more exchange. Banks are not, as some LETS theorists (along with the traditional currency cranks) suggest, the villains of the peace who interrupt the normal circulation of money and goods by not making money available to match needs and resources unless they are paid a tribute in the form of interest. Banks are financial intermediaries which borrow money from people who have some but don't want to spend it immediately, and then lend it those who have something to spend money on but no money of their own. Naturally the banks take precautions to ensure that they are going to get back any money they lend, but the overall result that they help keep money circulating and exchange going. To want to keep exchange but do away with banks and the taking of interest is unrealistic in the extreme. It is typical currency crankism.

The way to end the scandal of unmet needs alongside unused skills and resources is not to retain the exchange economy while trying to get rid of some of its effects by reforming the money system. It is to get rid of the exchange economy altogether by establishing a society based on the common ownership of productive resources where goods and services would be produced directly for people to take and use and not to be exchanged, or bought and sold, at all.

<http://worldsocialism.org/spgb>

First published in the Socialist Standard, journal of the SPGB in Dec 1994

The following paper was presented to a meeting of Windsor, Ontario members of 'Socialist Project', a Canadian anti-capitalist group founded in 2000 with the aim of re-building the 'Canadian left.' Their website can be found at www.socialistproject.ca

The poet, painter, textile manufacturer, writer, leader of the Arts and Crafts movement and English socialist William Morris once stated that "the business of Socialists is to make Socialists". Morris made a relevant point. I think that the Socialist Project can (and must) fulfil that function. In some ways we are "starting over". Hopefully we will not repeat things as either tragedy or farce. The statement below is to that end.

Socialism: Challenging the Right beyond the Left

Len Wallace

It's time to reset the parameters of political debate in Canada. For far too long discussion has been monopolised by the politics of the mundane - how and who will deliver either more or less of the same. It's time for an explicitly Socialist politics in Canada that reveals the limits of capitalism (the system of capital) and the political, social and economic boundaries that system imposes, and challenges its apologists of the Right as it goes beyond the politics of the Left.

A few years back I recall performing onstage at Windsor's Labour Day parade and rally, singing labour songs as the marchers entered the park, banners flying high. I sang that old anthem of working class liberation, *The Internationale*. After I had finished and began putting away my instrument I was approached by an audience

member - "Your dream is dead! Socialism is dead!", he taunted me. I asked him, "What Socialism are you talking about?"

Socialism has meant many things to many people. How one defines Socialism determines the politics of the matter. Ask someone what Socialism means and you get various responses - it means government control, state ownership, regulations, deficit spending, economic intervention by government, redistribution of income, progressive taxation. It's the welfare state, the mixed economy, or totalitarianism. It's title has been used to describe the so-called "real existing socialism" of stalinism¹ or the "We all believe in the free market now" semi-demi-socialism of Ed Broadbent and "The Labour Party is the party of modern business" dishrag social democracy of Tony Blair.²

Some have concluded that the very meaning of Socialism has been lost and amongst certain Left circles it is quite unfashionable to even utter the dreaded 'S' word at all. Oftimes, when someone does proclaim that he or she is "a Socialist", they have difficulty defining what that actually means other than they are for good jobs, full employment, national health care, etc. To say that Socialists are simply for "all the good things in life" is to say nothing. Socialism, in the end, is relegated to electing the right Members of Parliament and perhaps getting a good public auto insurance policy. The problem with such "Socialisms" is that they all leave capitalism in place.

In the past number of years there has been a great public and worldwide outcry against the direction of capitalism as a worldwide system (globalization) and has taken the form of active protest by millions. The nature of much of this protest has been termed "anti-capitalist", but being anti-capitalist or anti-capital does not make an individual or movement consciously Socialist.

The present movement against the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, etc., while critical of capitalism's bad effects, does not yet attack the very premises upon which capitalism is based. While the problems of capitalism are attacked, the root cause of the problem (capitalism itself) is left untouched.

Understanding the System of Capital

Perhaps the best way to begin defining Socialism anew is to define what Capitalism is. Despite the opinion promoted by economists and political apologists (who Karl Marx called the "hired prize fighters of capitalism"), capitalism is not an eternal

principle of humankind's relations most in tune with human nature. It is an historical stage of human society, a specific mode of production.

Marx described capitalism as a society with the immense production of 'commodities' that are put on the market for exchange through selling and buying with a view to the realization of profit. Commodities are not 'goods' simply produced to meet human needs and social wants. They are only produced when the outcome is the creation of profit. Capitalism is a system of capital creation and accumulation. Capital must not only be created, it must be necessarily accumulated and expanded (and unless accumulated to a great extent the system breaks down resulting in recession and economic crises).

The existence of capital presupposes two things - first, a working class which is divorced from, does not own the means of production. The only thing that workers really possess is their labour power, their ability to labour which they must sell for a wage or salary. Secondly, the existence of a class which owns or controls capital, which buys the labour power of the workers and uses it for the creation of surplus value, profit. Thus, capitalism is a class divided society. On the one hand those who own only their labour power, on the other hand those who own capital. On the one hand those who survive by selling their labour power, on the other hand those who gain their existence by living off the profit (surplus value) created by the other class.

The working class was essentially created. Peasants, serfs, farmers were driven off their lands, dispossessed of everything they owned, forced into the cities, forced to sell the only thing they had left - themselves, their ability to work. It was either that or starve. In essence, it was enforced wage slavery in which capitalists made use of the powers of the State (laws in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries were made to that end; the enclosures throughout England and Europe; the destruction of Scotland's Highland clan system and the forced clearances of the 18th and 19th centuries; the forced dispossession and removal of the Irish peasantry; the imposition of an oppressive colonialist rule in what became known as the 'Third World'; apartheid; the brutal industrialisation and collectivisation in the Soviet Union and China. The process continues to this day with the destruction of lands of indigenous peoples around the world). Marx was correct. Capitalism came into existence dripping with blood. It was a process of subordinating labour to the domination of capital at every level of life.³

The distinguishing feature of capitalism is not that capital/property is privately owned or that production is anarchic, that there is no planning. It is that labour

is alienated, exploited. If the State, government intervenes into the system, it does not affect the fact that workers remain exploited. If the State nationalizes property and eliminates private capitalists the State itself becomes the single capitalist, its bureaucracy the de facto owners of capital. Capitalism as the 'system of capital' remains unchanged.

The producers (workers) do not produce 'goods' for themselves. They do not use their mental and physical abilities as the essential, creative part of their own nature as human beings. They simply produce to the dictates of capital and the need for capital accumulation. They are told what to produce, how to produce it, how fast and under what conditions. While various management methods sometimes allow workers decision-making input into production, that, in the end, can only be within the limits imposed by the need to accumulate. Labour, under capitalism, is a way in which workers garner 'earnings' to live another day to produce again. Life is what happens when they don't work.

Long ago the essentially conservative Thomas Carlyle noted, "We have profoundly forgotten everywhere that cash payment is not the sole relation of human beings". So pervasive and intrusive is the role of capital in everyday life that all things are now measured and judged in terms of price, money, profit. Culture, education, sex, music, art, the environment, health, even human life itself is measured by the standard of money and whether or not it is profitable ("Those who die with the most toys wins").

The actual existence of capitalism as a 'system of capital' imposes limits to what that system can do. In the end, the system cannot work in a way that is detrimental to capital and all action within this system of capital (reforms, taxation, public works, health care, issues of the environment and ecology, etc.) are determined and restricted by the inevitable fact that capital must accumulate.

To the consternation of many the inevitable fact remains that capitalism and capital cannot act uncaptalistically and has defined the politics of the Right and the Left - the Right which holds to a belief in the complete benevolence of a non-existent, mystical "invisible hand" and the totalitarianism of the so-called "free" market, the Left which believes in the benevolence of state interventions to greater or lesser degrees hoping for respite only to find that the logic of capital again reasserts itself.

The politics within capitalism is then a series of trade-offs for those who define themselves as part of the political Left. Environmentalists are limited to what industry must maintain as a healthy profit margin. Jobs versus environment becomes an

issue. Health care workers see public funds frozen, diverted or cut back because the State “just doesn’t have the money”. The same said for education, child care, scientific research, artistic development, unemployment assistance, etc. Trade unionists end up as supporters of multinationals to maintain jobs against workers in other countries. Unemployed workers fight for jobs against hired workers. Activism reproduces itself as a non-ending activism (i.e., the endless fight for higher wages, better work conditions, societal reforms) in a system that simply cannot deliver.

Capital not only limits what one can do it also divides people against each other in an acknowledged ‘Rat Race’ that lays the foundation for the politics of despair, racism, sexism, ethnic division as people compete for the crumbs offered (from the television game shows of ‘Survivor’ to the latest war).

Defining Socialism

By understanding capitalism and how it works, we come to a clearer understanding of what Socialism should mean. If Socialist politics means radical break from capitalism, then all the premises of capitalism (production for profit, buying and selling of commodities, etc.,) must be fundamentally challenged.

Production to the dictates and needs of capital must be replaced by a system of production controlled by society and based on the satisfaction of real human need. As the French *Situationists* of the sixties noted, capitalism is a society not geared to the satisfaction of needs but “directly geared to the fabrication of habits, and manipulates people by forcing them to repress their desires.” What is produced, how it is produced must be determined by society, not by capital.

Since the very existence of capital implies economic exploitation of a working class then capital itself has to be abolished. Property (the means of producing and distributing) is not to be statified or nationalized. It is to be taken over by the community, the collective, by democratic control of society as a whole. The very real and observable antagonistic relationship between capital and labour can only be overcome by the abolition of capital (and thus the abolition of waged labour).

Socialism as Practical Politics

One of the criticisms hurled at Socialists is that we are starry-eyed, utopian dreamers, not involved in the fine art of ‘practical politics’. The answer to this is that those who defend and work through the system of capitalism and expect a society fit for human beings are the ones who are the utopians. Their ‘practicality’ cannot

go beyond the limits of capital. Their proposed solutions to very real problems from joblessness to AIDS, from hunger to environmental destruction, are bound up with this inevitable limit. In the end, a society in which people's needs are met and the possibility of a full, creative life is simply impractical under capitalism. The politics of its 'shamocracy' becomes a game of the absurd where corporate millionaires become Prime Ministers and Presidents.

The goal of a society where the individual as part of the collective is able to determine production and meet his or her needs - what we call Socialism - is desirable, necessary and achievable. It is in every way 'practical', not a utopia conjured from out of the sky and imposed upon society. The knowledge of what capitalism is, how it works and its movement already suggests the solution Socialism offers.

Notes

¹ The term "real existing socialism" became the defensive catchword of Soviet ideologists in response to Marxist criticisms in the 1960s which saw in that system a real existing state capitalism.

² A much forgotten part of Ed Broadbent's speech made in Windsor at a dinner celebration given in honour of his retirement from federal NDP leadership and comments made by England's Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair to the Labour women's conference, April 1, 1995. I would add to this list the example of former Ontario NDP Premier Bob Rae whose nonsensical 'supply side socialism' which was supposedly based on 'love' found its practice in the imposed wage controls of the so-called 'social contract' legislation.

³ Istvan Meszaros' brilliantly analyzes this in his major work, *Beyond Capital*, (Merlin Press, 1995).

What Is Anarchist Communism?

Toby Thrall (Aotearoa)

What? Anarchist Communism? Surely that's a contradiction in terms. Doesn't communism mean a draconian police state, and anarchism the destruction of the state? Surely then the two are incompatible? Well, this article argues the opposite. A stateless and voluntary form of communism is an essential complement to anarchism. I believe anarchism is impossible without it.

From my experience in anarchist circles in Aotearoa all too often many anarchists seem to be stuck in a simplistic notion that anarchism is just something to do with forming small collectives of friends (affinity groups) who have occasional meetings where everybody sits in circles and tries to be non-authoritarian. If pressed, most of these anarchists will say anarchism is something to do with getting rid of authority and respecting individual liberty. I think we need to transcend this crude anarchist theory and practice - and here anarchist communism is very useful. Anarchist communism gets beyond the liberal notions outlined above that anarchism is a nice idea of individual liberty, an idea which is almost inevitably detached from the struggle of the oppressed. So the purpose of this article is to outline the basics, in very broad brush strokes, of anarchist communism and in particular non-market anarchist communism to an audience unfamiliar with this type of anarchism. Then it offers some brief observations on the potential for an updated anarchist communism today.

(1) Origins

Anarchist communism did not appear until the mid 1870s in Europe. It arose against the backdrop of the rise of industrial capitalism, with all the exploitation, alienation, poverty and misery that it created among workers and peasants; and the rise of an increasingly powerful and centralised state, which overall served the interests of the boss or capitalist class. Anarchist communism grew out of the anarchist collectivist wing of the First International Workingmen's [sic] Association, a wing which was expelled from the International by Karl Marx and his supporters.

Peter Kropotkin, perhaps the most influential anarchist communist theoretician, claimed that the real origin of anarchism was in the "creative, constructive activity of the masses". He contended "Anarchism originated among the people, and it will preserve its vitality and creative force so long only as it remains a movement of the people." The *Dielo Trouda* (Workers' Cause) group of exiled Russian anarchist communists, a group which included Nestor Makhno - a peasant leader who fought the Bolsheviks and the Whites after the Russian revolution - wrote in a similar vein in their Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (1926) that "The class struggle created by the enslavement of workers and their aspirations to liberty gave birth, in the oppression, to the idea of anarchism: the idea of the total negation of a social system based on the principles of classes and the State, and its replacement by a free non-statist society of workers under self-management. So anarchism does not derive from the abstract reflections of an intellectual or a philosopher, but from the direct struggle of workers against capitalism, from the needs and necessities of the workers, from their aspirations to liberty and equality. The outstanding anarchist thinkers, Bakunin, Kropotkin and others, did not invent the idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it in the masses, simply helped by the strength of their thought and knowledge to specify and spread it."

Thus we see that anarchist communism cannot be viewed as a nice idea detached from the struggles of the oppressed. The fortunes of anarchist communism are intimately related with developments in the class struggle. Anarchist communists learnt from the content and form of the struggles of the oppressed. Thus we tend to find that following the 1871 Paris Commune, anarchist communists adopted the 'commune' as their model of a future classless and stateless society; and after the Russian revolution of 1917 workers' councils.

(2) Politics: Free Association or Anarchism?

Anarchist communism is composed of two aspects: anarchism and communism. To look at anarchism first, anarchism is the continual forming and reforming of non-hierarchical voluntary groups, of varying sizes, to meet peoples needs. In Kropotkin's words, anarchism "seeks the most complete development of individuality combined with the highest development of voluntary association in all its aspects, in all possible degrees, for all imaginable aims; [they would] constantly assume new forms which answer best to the multiple aspirations of all."

So anarchism is the continual prevention of the re-establishment of any authority, any power, any State; and full and complete freedom for the individual who, freely and driven by his or her needs alone, freely bands together with other individuals into a group; then the freedom of development for the group which federates with others within the neighbourhood; then freedom of development for communities which federate within the region and so on; until a world without borders is established.

So in place of authoritarian organisations, non-authoritarian organisations would be formed by people themselves for the purposes of self-help and mutual aid. The tendency to this free association even exists in modern capitalist society - in the form of people supporting strikes and other forms of working class solidarity, international railway and postal networks, even the Red Cross and lifeboat associations. These voluntary associations are limited and distorted by capitalism; however, they give us a glimpse of what free agreement has in store for us if we establish a stateless society in the future.

(3) Economics: Free Communism

The second part of anarchist communism is communism. Unfortunately, communism is now a dirty word. In the sense it is used by anarchist communists, it does not mean a police state, or a barracks style socialism, or state capitalism; it means a free and voluntary communism.

People think economics has something to do with bosses, accountants, economists, money, the market, profits, production, the division of labour, work or wage-labour. Yet anarchist communists like Kropotkin have a refreshing approach to economics. Capitalists claim that all the things listed above like money and the market are natural, and it is impossible to have anything else. Yet they are just stuff made up by capitalists, like a veil to cover reality. Lift the veil, and what we have in reality

is human beings, with their multiplicity of needs and wants that ought to be satisfied.

Anarchist communism is human-centred and not otherworldly. Anarchist communists do not look to God (if it exists) or politicians or bureaucrats to change society, but instead to people themselves. Thus anarchist communism's approach to economics is to refuse to engage it on its own terms. We don't need to talk of money and the market and so on, we instead need to talk of the economic means for the satisfaction of the needs of all human beings with the least possible waste of energy to achieve them. Instead of the vague and ambiguous aim of some socialists to "the right to work", anarchist communists aim for "the right to well-being" (that is, the satisfaction of physical, creative and other needs).

But to satisfy these needs, we need to re-organise society. We need to have a revolution to abolish all classes & wage-labour. Anarchist communists reject the market, money, and profit as both exploitative and unnecessary. Instead, we need a society of common, voluntary agreement to meet these shared needs and wants. Thus if we solve the social problems of hierarchy and inequality, then 'economics' dissolves into a series of practical questions (how to produce a luxurious standard of living for all with a minimum of labour time; how to make production as safe, clean, and fun as possible; how best to integrate industry and agriculture, how best to integrate manual labour with intellectual labour etc.).

There are two aspects to communism. The first is the taking into possession of all of the wealth of the world, on behalf of the whole of humanity, because that wealth is the collective work of humanity. 'All belongs to all'. This requires the abolition of all property, and the holding of all resources in common for the well-being of all. The second is organising society around the principle "From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs." This means everything should be produced, distributed and exchanged for free according to need. Everyone would be the judge of their own needs and take for free from the common storehouse whatever they needed. If there was scarcity, things would be rationed according to need. One of the reasons the abolition of money is a necessity is because there can be no exact measure of the productive contribution of every individual, as production today is so interwoven. These two aspects of communism are intimately related: common possession of the necessities of production requires the common enjoyment of the fruits of production. The abolition of property requires the abolition of the wage system. Retaining some form of private property or monetary exchange would lead to the re-establishment of classes and the state. As Kropotkin noted, "the Revolu-

tion, we maintain, must be communist; if not, it will be drowned in blood, and have to begun over again.”

Communism is not some impractical dream. Even in today’s capitalist society, we have public bridges, beaches, roads, parks, museums, libraries and piped water (at least in some cities) which are free for anybody to use according to their needs. For example, the librarian does not ask you what your previous services to society have been before they get you a book from the shelves or stacks. Again, these are token examples which give us a glimpse of what is possible under a classless and moneyless society.

One of the most common misperceptions about communism is that it means a draconian police state where a small party elite exploit the majority of population, as what happened in the USSR, its Eastern European colonies, and what is happening in China, North Korea and Cuba. There are many theories on just what type of societies the above countries were or are, ranging from libertarian socialist Cornelius Castoriadis’ ‘bureaucratic capitalism’, to those of anarchists who claim it was ‘state capitalist’, but all are agreed that those societies are or were capitalist not communist.

John Crump lists five criteria for (libertarian forms of) communism: (1) The means of production will be owned and controlled communally, and production will be geared towards satisfying everyone’s needs. Production will be for use, and not for sale on the market; (2) Distribution will be according to need, and not by means of buying and selling; (3) Labour will be voluntary, and not imposed on workers by means of a coercive wages system; (4) A human community will exist, and social divisions based on class, nationality, sex or race will have disappeared (5) opposition to all states, even the ones who falsely proclaim themselves to be ‘workers’ states’. (Crump, *Non-Market Socialism*, MacMillan, 1987, pp. 42-46). On the basis of this criteria, we can now see that (say) the old USSR run by the Bolshevik elite from 1917 was a class society where the state, market and wage system were retained, enabling a small bureaucratic elite to be able to force the majority of the population to work for them. As a group of council communists said in the 1930s: “The socialisation concept of the Bolsheviks is therefore nothing but a capitalist economy taken over by the State and directed from the outside and above by its bureaucracy. The Bolshevik socialism is state-organised capitalism.”

(4) Synthesis: Anarchist Communism

Anarchism and communism are a necessary complement to one another. A synthesis of both are required for a free and equal society. To Kropotkin it is “communism without government, free Communism. It is a synthesis of the two chief aims prosecuted by humanity since the dawn of history - economical freedom and political freedom.”

On the one hand, communism needs to be anarchist or else it will become authoritarian communism. Communist economic arrangements without free, voluntary agreement could easily lead to dictatorship by a minority. Communism needs to be free, non-statist and voluntary from its outset. As Kropotkin noted, “communist organisations cannot be left to be constructed by legislative bodies called parliaments, municipal or communal councils. It must be the work of all, a natural growth, a product of the constructive genius of the great mass. Communism cannot be imposed from above; it could live even for a few months if the constant and daily cooperation of all did not uphold it. It must be free.” Communism could not exist without anarchism, without thousands and thousands of voluntary associations formed and reformed to meet people’s needs.

On the other hand, anarchism by itself, without communist economic arrangements, would perpetuate class divisions. If private property or money was retained in some form, it would be used by some groups to exploit others. It is futile to speak of political liberty when economic slavery still exists. The abolition of the state requires the abolition of capitalism. Anarchism needs communism because, by satisfying basic human needs such as food and shelter for all, communism provides the material basis for anarchism or political liberty.

Once both capitalism, the wage-system and the state are abolished, individuals will be truly free to develop their own potential as they wish. Anarchist communism aims to produce the greatest amount of individuality combined with the greatest amount of community, and in the process eudaemony and well-being for all.

Now we are in a position to see that many modern anarchists lack any notion of communism, or socialism for that matter. Anarchism to them is reduced to the formation of liberal non-authoritarian groupings, based upon people’s subjective tastes. It is seen as a purely anti-authoritarian & anti-governmental idea, rather than an expression of anti-capitalist/anti-statist or communist tendencies in society. On the other had we see that some modern anarchists, particularly those from Marxist or

Leninist backgrounds, tend to see anarchism only in its economic aspects, thus they focus on the class struggle without any notion of non-authoritarian organisation.

(5) Modern Anarchist Communism

There is a tendency for many anarchists today to see anarchist communism as out of date. It was a product of a society torn by vicious class divisions, but since then, they claim, these divisions are not so clear. This view is absurd. First of all, society today is still based on class exploitation much like 100 years ago, and this exploitation under neo-liberalism or the New Right has intensified! Second of all, there is a genuine need to bring class struggle anarchist communism up to date. The working class has changed: the image of a male, white, blue collar, industrial workforce is completely out of date. The working class is now largely dominated by (casualised) service workers, not industrial factory workers; the majority of the working class is female; and a high proportion of the working class in Aotearoa are Maori and Pacific Islanders. Hence we need to see the struggles of working class Maori, Pacific Islanders (see article on pages 6-7), the unwaged, and working class women as part of the class struggle. The struggle against class exploitation needs to include not only struggles against the boss class but struggles against the things that divide the working class, like sexism and racism. The class struggle is a struggle to liberate all of humanity, not just one particular class or group (that is, it requires the self-abolition of the working class).

One particularly valuable attempt to update anarchist communism comes through the work of American eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin. The ecological crisis means that we must not only seek genuinely democratic methods of production, but also produce things in an ecologically sensible way. Bookchin has formulated an eco-anarchist communism which claims that all forms of hierarchy are interlinked. For example, he claims ecological destruction is rooted in our hierarchical relationships to each other. Eliminate these relationships, and our relationship to nature will be transformed as well. Hence under Bookchin's formulation the struggle is thus to abolish all forms of authority (class, race, gender etc.). The problem with Bookchin is that he rejects the class struggle as the means to abolish authority, and instead places great hope on 'new social movements' capturing local body governments through participating in representative elections! This has failed in the past, or ended up with parties that inevitably move to accommodation with the establishment. A non-class approach almost inevitably fails because it does not seek to abolish the exploitative social relations that underlie capitalism. Revolutionary class struggle, as shown to some extent in Argentina today (see back page), is the only

means by which anarchist communism can be brought about. Experience shows us that only when the working class becomes conscious of its oppression and acts in a revolutionary manner that abolishing (or to be realistic, minimising to the highest degree possible) all exploitation becomes possible.

Today, many anarchist communist groups around the world are 'platformist' in orientation. Platformists rightly contend that anarchist communists need to be organised into coherent, unified groups capable of putting forward well-defined views. However, the problem with platformist groups is that in general they sacrifice the content of anarchist communism for a fetishisation of their own organisational form, and hence tend to become obsessed with their own internal and external practice, often regardless of the actual level of class struggle in society. They seem to be forever searching for the perfect anarchist communist organisation. While it is excellent that they see anarchist communism as part of the class struggle, often they overlook the necessarily communist (non-market) aspect of anarchist communism, and thus seem to be little more than anarchist collectivists rather than communists.

I believe anarchist communism is not an outdated theory but still has much relevance to today's authoritarian capitalist society. With the rise of a vague anti-capitalist or at least anti-corporate feeling in society, and a general skepticism towards political parties and unions, and increasing questioning of the militaristic state, the prospects for anarchist communism seem good. Anarchist communism is a viable, well thought out alternative to capitalism that goes beyond the vagueness of just being "anti-capitalist". The neo-liberal hegemony over society is somewhat skin-deep: it has forced us to work harder for less pay, reducing our living standards and producing a real disgruntlement with work among many people. Who wants to sacrifice 40 years or more of your life doing something you hate (work) for the profit of someone else?

Yet we need to keep our feet on the ground. Disgruntlement against neo-liberalism has not been translated into positive action against the system much. Across the "first world", the level of working class resistance to capitalism is at historic lows, if strike activity is anything to go by. Many people are today apathetic, alienated, and individualistic; even if many see through the spectacle of modern capitalism and its hollow promise of happiness through enforced consumption, most do not act against it. Once the level of working class self-activity increases, as it seems to be doing very recently, these attitudes will no doubt change, and radical movements like anarchist communism may suddenly become popular once again.

As well, its main rivals on the left have all but faded away: social democratic parties have collapsed (eg. the Alliance) or transformed themselves into right wing neo-liberal parties (eg. the Labour Party); Stalinists have lost the lure of the USSR; and other Marxist-Lemmingists (Leninists) have been reduced to tiny, irrelevant sects. This collapse of the traditional left offers us an unprecedented opportunity to encourage coherent anarchist communist tendencies among people without power.

Further Reading

This article is based upon the non-market anarchist communist theories of Kropotkin. His most important book is *The Conquest of Bread*, which is absolutely essential reading if you are interested in anarchist communism. Other important pamphlets by Kropotkin are his *Anarchist Communism* and his *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal*. The best overviews of Kropotkin's anarchist communism are in Alain Pengam's 'Anarcho-Communism' in (*Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. John Crump and Maximilien Rubel), and John Crump's chapter on anarchist communism in his *Hatta Shuzo and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan*.

See also:

<http://www.freespeech.org/thrall/>

In Memory of a Revolutionary

Frank Girard - a Tribute

Frank Girard, the driving force behind the Discussion Bulletin – a publication which has had a seminal influence on the World in Common group - sadly passed away on the 19th February 2004.

Frank was born in 1927 in Michigan, USA. He was a long-standing libertarian socialist and popular local activist. He was a candidate for the Socialist Labor Party in many elections. He founded the *Society for Economic Equality*, co-authored a book on SLP and produced and distributed numerous leaflets and pamphlets.

In 1983 Frank started *DB* which ceased publication in 2003. For many of us who subscribed to *DB*, it was a great pleasure to receive the journal through the post every few months or so. In his own words, the Discussion Bulletin:

. . .places the great divide in the "left", not between anarchists and Marxists, but between capitalism's statist left wing of vanguardists and social democrats, and the real revolutionaries of our era: the non-market, anti-statist, libertarian socialists. It is organized in small groups of syndicalists, communist anarchists, libertarian municipalists, world socialists, socialist industrial unionists, council communists, and left communists. The perspective of these groups with their rejection of capitalism's wage, market, and money system, along with capitalist

politics and unionism, constitutes the only real alternative to capitalism in both its market and statist phases."

The purpose of DB was to bring together the "often fiercely antagonistic groups that make up this sector" and provide a forum in which they can "debate and discuss the issues that divide them, gain some understanding of their history and future possibilities, and begin a process, we hope, of at least limited cooperation." There can be no more fitting tribute to Frank than to carry on the good work that he pioneered. This is what we in the World in Common group have resolved to do.

Robin Cox (World in Common)

Frank Girard: In Memorial

I was deeply saddened to hear last month of the passing of Frank Girard, the long time editor of the publication. Frank stopped publishing the Discussion Bulletin in July 2003 citing his age and the increasing importance of the internet, which he felt made publications like the Discussion Bulletin less and less relevant. He planned continued involvement in the socialist movement. His death at 77 is a felt loss to his many friends and comrades. Frank worked as a machine operator and later a high school English teacher, but more important was his membership from the 1940s on in the Socialist Labor Party, the organization of followers of American socialist leader Daniel De Leon. Frank ran for political office several times in Michigan, but argued he was "running against capitalism." Unsurprisingly, he was never elected. In the early 1980s, as part of a seemingly endless series of schisms in the SLP, Frank was expelled from the party along with much of the Grand Rapids section (in 1991 he published a short history of the party along with another former Socialist Labor Party member Ben Perry). In 1983, Frank began to publish the Discussion Bulletin. The Discussion Bulletin was unlike many other socialist publications in that it was simply a forum for discussion. Its contents were, aside from Frank's editorial remarks and occasional contributions, entirely from its readership. It was also a model of regularity for socialist publications, appearing every two months like clockwork for twenty years. Frank's other strength was that he was genuinely committed to discussion and debate in what he called the non-market socialist sector, in which he included De Leonists, World Socialists, council and left communists, and class struggle anarchists among others. Throughout its existence the Discussion Bulletin featured, unedited, contributions from all of the above sectors. And although he never completely broke with De Leonist politics and all its incumbent weaknesses,

but which had played such an important role in his life, Frank was also prepared to learn from discussion, and admit when he was wrong. Frank was a non-sectarian in the best sense of the word. The cessation of publication by the Discussion Bulletin left a hole. Frank's passing leaves a much larger one.

Neil F. (Red & Black)

Obituary for Frank Girard

We have just received a report that Frank Girard, who edited and published - virtually single-handedly - the Discussion Bulletin for twenty years from 1983 to 2003 died last month at the age of 77. Frank had been a member of the Socialist Labor Party (the De Leonist organization in the U.S.) from the 1940s until his expulsion in the early 1980s, even running for political office on the SLP ticket. He began the Discussion Bulletin as an open forum for the exchange of political views by De Leonists, anarchists, libertarians, left communists, etc. - what he called "non-market socialists." Not only were the pages of Discussion Bulletin open to a wide range of political views, but the publication appeared like clockwork on a bimonthly basis, something of a rarity in this political milieu.

The ICC had many polemical exchanges with Frank, particularly on the political legacy of De Leonism, especially its blind spot when it came to the mystifications of bourgeois democracy. Despite its opposition to reformism, and despite the lessons of history, De Leonism, and Frank, persisted in a naive belief that capitalism could be overthrown at the ballot box. We also frequently criticized Frank for not publishing more exchanges on contemporary issues facing the working class, especially imperialist war. He once told us in a letter that he didn't republish any of the leaflets or articles against the various American imperialist ventures in the 1990s because all the groups had the same position, even though there were many different analyses for the causes of the war, and proposals for how the working class could oppose war. He finally seemed to take this criticism to heart at the time of the most recent US invasion of Iraq by publishing a collection of leaflets by various groups.

Whatever criticisms we made of Frank, and he of us, it was always clear that they were made as part of a fraternal debate between comrades who were committed to the destruction of capitalism and the liberation of the working class. When Frank Girard made the decision to cease publication we urged him not to. We argued that the Discussion Bulletin played an invaluable role of mutually introducing to each other the elements of a very disparate, far flung political milieu. After the publica-

tion of the last issue of Discussion Bulletin last July, we sent Frank a letter saluting his efforts on behalf of the proletariat, wishing him well in his retirement, and giving him a subscription for life to the press of the ICC. We had no idea at the time that his life would sadly end so soon. We extend our condolences and solidarity to the family and friends of Frank Girard.

*Internationalism,
Section in the US of the ICC.*

Global Labor in the Age of Empire

Eugene. W. Plawiuk

Paper presented at the Alberta Social Forum October 2003, and at a Public Meeting of the Council of Canadians, Red Deer Feb 17, 2004

Proletarian struggles constitute – in real, ontological terms – the motor of capitalist development. They constrain capital to adopt ever-higher levels of technology and thus transform the labor process. The struggles force capital continually to reform the relations of production and transform the relations of domination. (Pg. 208)

Empire, Michael Hardt and Tony Negri, Harvard University Press, 2000

We are here today not to bury Globalization but to praise it. The very nature of the World Social Forum reflects the dialectic of Globalization; it is both the creation of a global corporate state and a worldwide movement in opposition to the global agenda of that corporate state. Had this movement not been world wide, then we perhaps we could identify Globalization as the enemy. This is the contradiction of globalization; it has created a worldwide movement of opposition, it has brought together peoples from around the globe through communications and computer technology, through mass transportation, it has created a mass movement of internationalism. It is our globalized solidarity that is confronting our real problem: the privatization of everything.

Globalization is the term in vogue to describe an evolution of trade agreements from a protectionist national model to one of a corporate state model of free trade. There is nothing “new” in globalization its impact is more apparent to us thanks to the technological transformation of communications in the last century. Many pundits have made much of the new technology as creating a form of permanent crisis free capitalism. In fact *Wired Magazine* in the 1990’s predicted that the Internet combined with computer technological advances in business would lead to a 25-year boom for capitalism. And then the dot.com bubble burst so much for that theory.

What I am going to talk about is the transformation that Capitalism, and its competing national capitals, have made in the past thirty years. A transformation that has created a global proletariat, a condition that has never before existed. The very transformation of developing nations into industrial beltways for global capitalism has taken fifty years to evolve. This evolution began after WWII and the boom in economic expansion in the advanced industrial countries, while developing countries in the Third World, in Russia and the East and in the Pacific Region, saw the formation of modern states arising where once were colonial outposts of the old 19th Century Empires.

The reality is that the technological revolution touted as key to globalization has been the engine of capitalism for the past three hundred years. Beginning with printing and moving to steam, shipping, railways and telegraph, newspapers, and telephones, TV and fax machines and now computers and the internet, communications and technology have been the products of and machinery for advanced capitalism. The trade agreements of the past fifty years were based on a social contract and a protectionist model that recognized national sovereignty. GATT, the Bretton Woods Agreement creating the IMF and World Bank, the creation of the UN itself, was the result of the tumultuous booms and busts of the early years of the last century, ending in the great depression and WWII.

It is in the Seventies that the neo liberal agenda gets cooked up in the think tanks of the right wing; the Cato and Fraser Institutes. The ideological class war began way back then, in the pages of right wing libertarian journals like *Reason*. Theorists of right wing free market anarchism like Murray Rothbard, proclaim the privatization of everything, including police, firemen, a return to child labor, and animal abuse, all is allowed in the market freed of the “nanny state”. All relations between men are to be contractual, and that is the only reason for the law to maintain my right to private property. Rothbard wrote of this in 1973 and further expanded his ideas of

privatizing everything in the 1980's.

Far from being a fringe element as he was taken to be originally, his ideas and those of Von Mises and Frederick Hayek would be embraced, by today's advocates of neo-conservative politics and economics. The political action taken by the right wing began in California with the Proposition 13, which ended state funding for schools and hospitals. The slide down the slippery slope of privatization had begun. Embraced by Reagan and Thatcher, the kooky free market ideas of the Austrian school returned once again reeking havoc in the economy. Privatization is the result of tax cuts. Proposition 13 called for a tax cut which resulted in a decline in funding to essential services, in turn this meant the right wing could say if the state cannot provide the services then the private sector can.

And this is the real meaning of privatization and tax cuts, the ideology is that private business is more efficient than state capitalism. However private business needs the state to fund it, to educate its workers, to insure them from catastrophic legal costs (hence the WCB). What right wing ideology was really saying was that all aspects of our public lives must be dominated by the market. Which is effectively what has happened. All the so-called social reform issues of the seventies and eighties were driven by the right wing agenda. The Crisis in Public Education wasn't about students not being able to learn, which they couldn't because of lack of funding, but about smashing teachers unions.

All of this was to promote making all aspects of the public sector open to being competitive, market orientated, driven by the bottom line, all the while more and more tax breaks left these services starved of funds, driving them into the waiting arms of the lowest bidder. In Alberta the Tories created the boom in the civil service. Yep the same guys in power today, crying about the cost of health care. They built all those hospitals in Lougheeds day to win rural votes, they built schools to win urban votes and they build seniors homes to win their votes. To dismantle this state the government wants to privatize everything. What this really means as New Zealand and Australia show is that once workers and their unions are smashed then you give them individual contracts, everyone becomes a contract worker.

The insidious ideology of the sixties which laid the base for this attack was that of Daniel Bell whom declared the end of ideology, the age of the middle class, the end of class war, we were all equal as consumers now. This matched the right wing economics of Frederick Hayek and the Austrian school, which denies labor, produces all value and focuses instead on prices, costs, and profits.

All of this now is our future. Working multiple jobs, teleworking and working from home, we all become contract workers, responsible for our own health care insurance, our own retirement plans, all of the benefits usually paid for by the employer and state now paid for by us. This is the privatization agenda, to free business and the state from their social responsibility in order to amass large amounts of capital.

We have been in a crisis of capitalism for thirty years, and that crisis is why we have the privatization agenda worldwide. Imperialism, Globalization, call it what you will but it is the idea once again the return of the bad old days.

The State was a creation of capitalism, its function was to protect business. Its return to its roots is not something to be cheered. It simply means that we will have wars to enforce the privatization of competing states. The attack on Serbia and Iraq were attacks on the last vestiges of social states, state capitalism. The current hysteria against Cuba is the same. Russia is a shining example today of the success of the Austrian School of Economics. It's a basket case. While under state capitalism people had to line up for rations, today the markets are overflowing with goods, there are no line ups, because no one has any money to buy anything.

The changes in global trade agreements in the past decade has been the creation of a corporate state model of agreement, not between sovereign nations but the creation of corporate trading blocks, with corporations meeting on the level of governments. Agreements are not binding, except in extra parliamentary bodies of an international tribunal. National laws are subject to corporate contract governance. Free Trade is not about trade it's about the World Bank and the IMF funding states to privatize their essential services.

What does this mean for the mass movements of workers and unemployed. Well out of the bad old days of the robber barons came the unions, defeat after defeat in the 19th century still did not stop workers from organizing to over throw capitalism. And with the mass mobilizations against the war we have seen, can give us hope that resistance is not futile.

The modernization of the world was an economic and political movement that included a mass workers opposition, a movement towards socialism that countered imperialism and rapacious capitalism. Keynesianism, the creation of the World Bank, the IMF, and even the social contract of labor peace in Europe, were the result of capitalism responding to and adapting to the revolutionary movements of workers after these earlier attempts at world revolution.

Capitalism is more than just industrialization, it recreates the entire world in its image, it is a form of social relation, whereby all production, all values, all social services, are made into objects of consumption, they are commodified. Art loses its patrons, its last link to feudalism and becomes the object of mass consumption. Workers lose their relationship to their work and to the products of their work only to become consumers. Social safety nets are created by the state to eliminate the harshest realities of capitalism's dog eat dog world, poverty and homelessness are ameliorated by the welfare state. Universities lose their medieval otherworldliness and become research arms for the military and corporations. Public Education is embraced as a way of reducing unemployment and reinforcing a unitary vision that the world is the way it is and will always be this way.

Capitalism is in the process of becoming more than competing capitals, national institutions or even individual corporations, it is and has become the world in which we live. From Johannesburg, to Edmonton, from Moscow to Seoul, from Wellington to Porto Valegro, the world is now a unified capitalist system. The reality is that capitalism is what we are fighting, not some misshapen creature called globalization. The reality is that globalization is what is happening in opposition to the capitalist transformation of the world.

Globalization is the linkages being made between the peoples of diverse nations, of workers and intellectuals through the use of the Internet, fax machines, international travel, books and publications, telephones, radio, and TV. The transformation we are experiencing is the privatization, the commodification of all that surrounds us. The fact is that we did not create the state, capitalism did, it destroyed and transformed the feudal institutions into a modern state that could meet its needs. In the process it used this state to transform agriculture, the economy of the Old World, into an industrial economy. Through the enclosure acts it used the state to force the peasants and village artisans to become industrial workers to feed its "dark satanic mills" of steam driven production.

These workers, the new proletariat of modern capitalism, fought to resist this change, first by trying to destroy the machines, then by creating unions which were outlawed, then by demanding control of their workplaces as they once had in their home based industry, and finally by demanding a say in the political affairs of the capitalist state. This in short is a thumbnail sketch of the development of modern capitalism. As capital evolved it evolved its own negation, a revolutionary workers movement, a movement for socialism, an ideal that looked not backwards to some golden age of the past, but forward to a bright future of a classless society of abun-

dance.

The workers revolutionary movement began fighting change and then embraced it, they saw that the past offered nothing but a brutal existence of subsistence while the future was a world where all could have both plenty and freedom. This was not inherent in capitalism, it was the result of class struggle. The world was transformed not just by capitalism but by the opposition to capitalism. Democracy is not inherent in capitalism, it is the result of the transformation of the capitalist state by workers revolution. Likewise socialism is not inherent in capitalism, it is the result of the negation of capitalism by those subjected to it.

That is why the globalization has created its own negation, a world wide revolutionary movement of the proletariat. A new socialist vision is being created in opposition to capitalism. It has many names and variants, mass democracy, direct democracy, etc. but like the workers movement of old, it is still a movement against capital. Why it does not call itself socialist is a result of the failed revolutions of the 20th Century that turned socialism from a mass worldwide movement for the future, into a backwater ideology of nationalism.

That moment of nationalism was needed to develop the productive forces in the developing world. Nationalism acted as a form of enclosure, ending colonialism but forcing the peasants to become workers in the newly established industrial state. Production remained for export while the state became the creator of industries and social services in the developing world.

That transformation was needed but limited, and now capital is reinventing the world in its own image. The WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, the Fraser and Cato Institutes, all expound the virtues of contracting out, privatization, elimination of State owned industries. The rallying cry of the right wing is "the private sector can do it better".

This applies in Alberta today as much as it does in the Sudan, or Iraq, or Seoul, or Detroit. We hear it all the time. It is the ideology of libertarian free market, free capitalism to provide all services and we will see wealth produced beyond our wildest dreams. It is the ideology that says the world is a market, not a social community, that we are no longer hewers of wood and gatherers of water, nor even producers of goods, we are consumers and shareholders.

The international trade agreements that we have been opposing, are global encroachment acts. Take for instance the Uruguay round of the GATTs talks, which

opened the world up for trade in agriculture. This allows global corporations like Cargill, Archer Daniels Midlands, etc. to move into developing countries and transform their peasant/farmer village based agriculture into industrialized factory based production. In the process the land is destroyed and the environment is threatened. An example is the case when Cargill moved into Indonesia and created Palm Oil fields and refineries. The resulting use of slash and burn led to the worst mass forest fire to threaten the region, creating a cloud of smoke that traveled across Indonesia into Malaysia and north towards Japan.

Meanwhile in Alberta Cargill and other southern Alberta meat packing plants are importing workers from the developing world to work in their factories here. Cargill is unionized, yet when the workers went on strike they were dealt with as brutally here as they would be in Indonesia. Brooks in Southern Alberta is a perfect example where a non union meat packing plant, operating without concern for basic health and safety for the workers, models its operations on those it uses in the Third World, and in fact imports workers from the Third World to work there.

This immigration of labor, fills capitals need and the workers need. It has made it difficult for UFCW to unionize these workers, because they speak diverse languages, and UFCW has not mobilized them according to their needs, but using an old out-moded business union model tried to get them to join as if their needs were those of Calgary Safeway's workers. This disconnect is the problem that business unions face when dealing with immigrant workers.

The fact is that Alberta has some of the worst labor legislation in the world. And while our standard of living is certainly above the living conditions in Indonesia, or Nigeria, we like them have a minimum wage rather than a living wage. In these newly industrialized countries a minimum wage is based on the food required to feed oneself and ones family, here it is based on the same, the minimum required to feed oneself. A living wage would be based upon a wage needed to support ones family, as well as the required benefits, health care, education, housing, the worker needs.

In the Philippines the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) is a partner in the privatization of universities in Manilla, In Edmonton NAIT contracts out not only the ownership of its new IT facilities to Hewlett Packard, but contracts out the faculty as well, and promotes the contracting out of its computer students work. Meanwhile Filipino women make up the majority of nannies in the world. In Hong Kong or Alberta Filipino nannies are brought in as indentured serv-

ants with no employment rights, no union rights, and kept as chattel slaves in their owners house, must not leave to seek employment elsewhere or be deported.

Most immigrant labor finds jobs in the janitorial industry, this largely non-union industry has seen a massive boom across North America. Bee Clean, which employs 5000 workers in Alberta alone, was awarded KPMG Entrepreneur of the year award a week ago. Yet it remains unorganized. It has gained its success by contracting out and privatization of public sector custodial jobs. This building we are in, was one of the first contracted out on campus to Bee Clean. Bee Clean also contracts with the City of Edmonton for cleaning your public library, and with ETS to clean bus shelters, all jobs formerly done by unionized public sector workers.

The largest growing sector of part-time workers in the industrialized world are call center workers. There are 10, 000 in Edmonton, thousands more across Canada, in the United States, Germany, France, Italy. They are largely unorganized, because they are part time workers. They also face competition from another growing industrial sector in North American capitalism, the prison industrial complex. Across North America prisoners are being used for call centre work. Because call centre workers have a high turn over, are not career-based jobs, and certainly lack any “industrial” base, unions have been reluctant to organize them, despite the poor pay and terrible working conditions these ‘workers’ face.

Contracting out has become a crisis in the United States. The failure of the Bush economic agenda, the corporate collapse of the Dot.Com industries, the crony capitalism of Enron and other privateers who played fast and lose in the stock market, has created an economy that has seen massive job losses. Now the Wall Street Journal and the Cable Business Channels, Lou Dobbs of CNN in particular, are crying about American industries outsourcing and contracting out jobs from America. The Congress is calling for a special committee to investigate the contracting out of American jobs. This after almost twenty years of a relentless push to privatize and contract out everything.

In this case the concern is focused on the high tech computer jobs being lost to India. Germany has just opened up two new faculties, in cooperation with Indian Universities, to develop a German speaking program for computer programmers, so they can outsource their computer programming needs. When Hewlett Packard is not outsourcing work to India, it is bringing in Indian University computer graduates into the US on temporary green cards to work. Again these indentured workers have no rights, are temporary workers housed in company housing, and can only remain working in America as long as they have a contract with HP. They are need-

less to say paid significantly less than their American counterparts.

The recent march on Washington by thousands of undocumented workers, falsely called illegal immigrants, exposes the fact that America needs these workers. The California election was as much about giving these workers drivers' licenses as it was about Movie Star politicians or the budget crisis. The reaction against these workers will grow as the employment crisis grows in the US. Once again racist reactionary politics will pit worker against worker. Because undocumented workers are workers, let us ask who employs them? Governors, Presidents, corporate bosses, anyone who needs a gardener, a nanny, or a cheap source of labor to build Las Vegas hotels.

Let us look at the impact of capitalism on the union movement. Unions are a business, they look at gaining large numbers of members in order to bargain with the bosses. To effectively bargain they need a steady work force, in many cases their disconnect from their members is this servicing model, the membership see a bureaucracy of union reps and leaders, who bargain for them, who service them, who do not challenge capitalism, but maintain business as usual.

I will not go into examples of specific unions, but overall, their purpose is to maintain themselves in power, not to mobilize for workers power. As a result union membership in North America is on a serious decline. Where unions have spent their energy in the past decade has not been organizing the unorganized, or the poorest workers, or even the growing part time or contracted out workers, but in raiding each other. That's right, gangsterism has replaced revolutionary struggle. Competing unions want each other's membership, or as the old industries collapse the unions move into non traditional areas, such as the public sector to compete with existing public sector unions for a decreasing membership base.

In a real tribute to Wall Street, a number of unions have adopted the methods of big business; merger and acquisitions.¹ The Brotherhood of Railway workers is talking about merging with the Teamsters. Talks are under way for Steel and other Metal workers unions to merge with Coal and Transportation unions, nationally and internationally. Unlike the One Big Union of the last century, that believed all working people, regardless of their jobs, should be in a union to overthrow capitalism, these mergers will create new capitalist enterprises that guarantee the union bosses their jobs, in a declining growth market.

We need a new union strategy to deal with the changes in capitalism, we need a new union movement to combat capitalism and promote workers power, not pro-

mote our powerlessness. We need a movement that sees all of us as the proletariat, whether we work in the home, go to school and work, work part time or full time, whether we are computer programmers, teachers, or janitors.

We need a social movement to challenge capitalism, we need a living wage campaign in Alberta, and we need to end indentured servitude of nannies and farm-workers. We need to fight for union rights for university professors, graduate students and cab drivers. We need to fight for wages for housework rather than tax credits for single income families.

Capital needs its state. Alberta is the perfect example of this. In the past year the government has passed work for welfare, and legislated an end to all strikes by any unionized health care workers, and eliminated the right of faculty and graduate students in post secondary institutions to have unions. And we still have the lowest minimum wage in Canada, as well as the lowest taxes. But most importantly the state must regulate workers, and their right to organize. This government is the most anti-union in Canada. Capital detests unions and workers organizing whether it is here in Alberta, or in newly industrializing China .

Despite the dismissal of those who say unions are a thing of the past. The business unions of today live in the past, we need a union for all of us, a union of the proletariat of the hand and brain in resistance to global capitalism. The future never looked brighter.

Globalization must be met with counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire....From this perspective the IWW is the great Augustinian project of modern times. The perpetual movement of the Wobblies was indeed an immanent pilgrimage, creating a new society in the shell of the old without establishing fixed and stable structures of rule. The Wobblies had extraordinary success among the vast and mobile immigrant populations because they spoke all the languages of the hybrid labor force.....The primary focus of the IWW was the universality of its project, workers of all languages and races across the world and workers of all trades should come together in "One Big Union". (Pg. 201-202)

Empire, Michael Hardt and Tony Negri, Harvard University Press, 2000

Notes

¹ U.S. union merger combines hotel, restaurant workers and retail, textile
<http://www.canada.com/search/story.html?id=14f37e9a-cc9a-46aa-8376-9944f01fd878>
 Industrial, Wood and Allied Workers of Cda seek merger with Steelworkers

<http://www.canada.com/search/story.html?id=a7016ac5-bc54-40fe-bd61-3cef1be21554>
Canadian Press, February 27, 2004

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With his partner Donalda Cassel, they transcribed to the Web the last public speech of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn founding member of the IWW and President of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.

Memories of the IWW by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/rebelgirl.html>

He is a founding member of the Edmonton Mayweek Labour Arts Festival society, the Alberta Labour History Institute, the Alberta Spanish Civil War Memorial Foundation, and the Alberta Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

He was a founding member of Erewhon Books, Edmonton's anarchist Bookstore
He describes his political influences as an esoteric blend of anarchism, syndicalism, surrealism, Marx, and Left Communists.

His works can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/5202/>

Co-operatives and Socialism

Jules Guesde

Speech given in July 1910 to a congress in Paris on cooperatives of the French SFIO party.

Comrades,

I will detain you for a few moments because I am very tired and also because the party to which I belong has at its disposal only two hours, and I would not like to block those of my friends who desire to develop before you their ideas upon the question in order.

What I wish to do, and I believe it is necessary to do it, in order that we may speak with a knowledge of the case, is to examine what co-operation is in itself.

Co-operation is simply one of the forms of association, a means of grouping in modern society; it even belongs sometimes to the class of ordinary stock societies, with this only difference that the share offered by the co-operative barely reaches 100 francs, while the shares of capitalist societies go above 500, or even 1,000 francs. And it is because co-operation is nothing but a form of association or grouping that

you see it advocated by all social opinions and categories. Co-operation has even been advocated as - what shall I say? - as nascent socialism; co-operators, some of them even workingmen, have set themselves from the start against the class-conscious organization of the proletariat. I recall, when I returned banishment in 1876 - not to go very far in the past - the state of mind of the first Syndicalist Congress in Arras Hall. The *syndiqués* of that time were exclusively co-operators and carried co-operation, which they called the brotherhood of capital and labor, so far that in their public meetings, when a portion of the proletariat was driven to fight under the form of a strike and they came as far as Paris to ask us for contributions, that is ammunition for our struggling brothers, Chabert, to name only one of them, rose against the collection for the benefit of the striking workingmen of Monceau-lès-Mines, claiming that it would be impossible for our hard-working working class, which since years was treading the road of co-operation to uphold a strike without contradicting itself, even though said strike be born outside itself and forced on its victims by capitalist greediness.

REVILLON - It is an easy thing to make the dead speak!

GUESDE - I ask the testimonial of all our Parisian comrades, not one of whom will rise to belie me. What I wished to establish with this page from yesterday's history is that this form of association, of grouping, which co-operation is, can be put to all sorts of use, and is of value to us Socialists, only according to the use it is turned to. Leaving history aside, I will now turn your attention simply to what is happening in a neighboring country. Take Belgium, there you see admirable socialistic co-operatives; but you see others, powerful ones, too, organized by the clerical party, by the liberal party. And I ask you whether this co-operation thus cooked with all the different sorts of sauces, conservative, clerical, bourgeois here, socialistic and revolutionary there, is not enough to prove that the co-operative in itself has absolutely nothing socialistic. Co-operation and co-operatives become socialistic when they are made to help towards reaching the aim pursued by socialism, viz., the gathering into the same social hands of all the means of production and exchange. Any joining on a small scale of capital and labor in the same individual hands, such as is done by even the best co-operatives, is necessarily powerless, as long as in other co-operatives capital is still furnished by one and labor by others.

Co-operatives therefore are and can be of value only through the use they are put to. In the measure in which this form of grouping or association serves and helps the Socialist Party, it certainly becomes a sort of arsenal bringing arms to the fighting proletariat. But there lies the exclusive sense of socialist co-operation. If the co-op-

eration remains autonomous, if workingmen gather and say: "We are going to ease our life by purveying our families with more articles for consumption, which we will buy in common, at wholesale prices so as to benefit by the difference with retail prices", no doubt this is a respectable aim. I understand very well that in our present state of society the workers try to ease as much of their misery as they can, and to give their families as much satisfaction as they can. I am not at all condemning those co-operatives; they are according to workingmen's rights, that is understood. But I must note, on the other hand, that if these means of diminishing their misery and rendering their life more bearable were generalized, instead of being as to-day an exception to the present state of affairs, the fatal consequence would be that the cost of living having become cheaper, wages would not increase and would even decrease. (*Interruption and applause.*)

I know very well that when I express myself thus, I go against the opinion of some of my comrades; but they will explain their opinion in a little while and I assure them I will listen to them with all the patience I beg from them. (*Applause.*)

I repeat therefore that without any doubt, if consumers' co-operatives were generalized in the country, if they became the rule instead of an isolated fact, there would be two reasons why the morrow of these co-operatives would be either a stagnation or a lowering of wages. The first reason, the one brought forth by Lafargue, is that the bosses were the first ones to use this means: railroad companies, big industrialists, turned towards co-operatives born out of their own initiative when they refuse to increase the wages of their employees, saying to them: now you can live very well, with the cost of living thus reduced. There lies the first proof; but there is another one: everywhere, in all the localities, one may see that wages are higher where life is dearer, lower where life is cheaper. why are wages higher in Paris than in the Normand country or in the center of France? It is because in Paris, due to the *octroi*, life is more expensive, and nobody will deny that the high or low cost of living has an influence over the rate of wages. There is no question here of the iron law of Lassalle, I leave that aside. I speak purely and simply of a general fact which is within the reach of anybody who has eyes to see.

I am coming now to a third proof of my contention. In the resolution drawn up by the majority from the Seine, do they not tell you expressly: "we must do away with commercial parasitism, through co-operation" ? Well now, what you call commercial parasitism is represented in France by a million or twelve hundred thousand small tradesmen. They manage to live somehow or other from the product of their shops, and at the expense of the workingman consumer, certainly; but after you

close their shops they will have to keep on living. And then it will be a million or twelve hundred thousand new proletarians whom hunger will throw upon the labor market, and what will be the consequences of these twelve hundred thousand new unemployed coming on top of the unemployed already in existence? Will not this new reserve army forcibly be the cause of reduced salaries? Will not the bosses, seeing more workers at their doors than they need, shave the wages of those at work? Come now, comrades! (*Applause.*) If the co-operatives were being extended all over the country, wages would fatally be reduced at all points.

Do you want another example, taken from to-day and not to-morrow? Which is the occidental country - and I am sure none of those who belong to that country and happen to be here will belie me, nor reproach me for giving it as an example in this circumstance - which is the neighboring country the workers of which pass the frontier in great numbers and come to work in our Northern France, either permanently or intermittently? Is it not Belgium, are they not our Belgian comrades. And why do they migrate so? Because in Belgium the wages are lowest, and they are lowest because Belgium is flooded with co-operatives of all colors. (*Interruptions and applause.*)

There is still another reason why co-operatives can have no socialist value. I know that I myself, when once I tried to throw light into bourgeois brains, in the Chamber of Deputies, when they refused to understand that a new society, our socialist society could be substituted for the capitalist society which ours is at once the natural and legitimate child, I was obliged, in order to open their eyes, to make comparisons - which are not always reasons. I took co-operation as an example which could give them an idea of what the society of to-morrow would be, and I took co-operatives, not such as they are working now, but such as they should work by definition, and I said to them: "See how in the co-operatives for production the union of capital and labor in the same hands does away with all exploitation; see how in the co-operatives for consumption all antagonism between seller and buyer who henceforth are one and the same man is done away with just as with profit of one at the expense of the other."

The question was to make them foresee, through an ideal co-operative, what would be and shall be a society in which neither the production nor the distribution of products will give rise to profits or exploitation. But, as well try to open the eyes of the blind, or make the deaf hear me. (*Laughter.*)

At the present time anyhow, our co-operatives do not at all belong to this order

of things. Nearly all of them are obliged by the capitalist milieu, to go in for capitalism themselves, for instead of selling only to their members at the price of cost, they are more and more obliged to sell to outsiders for the sake of profits. The antagonism between seller and buyer, which it is the role of co-operation to abolish, is still in existence. I admit there are exceptions. But as a rule you are more and more compelled by a milieu based upon competition to look for means of existence and development outside the distribution of products; you are compelled to sell to the public; to realize profits, to go in for commerce; in a word, you thus become only a new sort of department store, constituted by small workingmen share-holders instead of department stores constituted by large bourgeois share-holders. (*Applause.*)

Such is reality. It is no use going off on illusions; such is and will be more and more that co-operation, which they would have us look upon as nascent socialism. To imagine that it could be otherwise in our present society, would be to fall back upon the Utopias of former days, represented by Fourier and his "phalanstery", or Cabet and his "Icaria". To pretend that you can go in for anything but capitalism in a capitalist society is really an unheard-of folly. General laws, born out of the form of property, impose themselves, and those people who want to build oases in the desert cannot escape those laws; the oasis will be swept by the simoom just as the desert is. And the oasis in this case is the co-operative, forced to bow before commercial or mercantile necessities. I know that you can remedy this evil partly by confederating your societies, and I congratulate you for entering upon and persevering in this road; but, once more, whatever you do upon co-operative ground, you cannot help being governed by all the laws which determine and regulate production and exchange in the society of profit of to-day.

I repeat therefore that it is impossible to attach any socialist value to co-operation in itself. It does not even prepare the elements of the new society, prepared as they have been for a long time, both as material and as organization, by capitalist concentration which preceded co-operation by far and in proportions which it will never equal. It is precisely because, thanks to this capitalist concentration, all the work to-day is one of administration, direction, execution, the most scientific sort of work as well as the most manual, executed by hired men, that we can exchange any day, without any shock, the present order of things for a new one. Everything is ready for this transformation or revolution, because the nominal property of the capitalists to-day, does not represent any sort of work, even of directing, and it may disappear to-morrow without anything being touched or destroyed in the operating of the different sorts of industries; factories, fields, railroads, stores, etc.

There you have the conditions which not only do more than allow collectivist order but render it necessary. Co-operation does not enter there for an atom, and when I heard this morning our friend Poisson saying: "But, if to-morrow you become the masters of the government before co-operatives had covered the country, how would you establish the new society?" I thought that Comrade Poisson was imaging useless nightmares. We can, once we conquer power, realize the whole of socialism, what in America they call the *co-operative commonwealth*, because co-operation is not a means, but the aim of the proletariat. It will then triumph and gather into the hands of the whole of society all capital and labor, so that there shall be no more exploitation, sale, nor profits. Co-operation I say, is not a means - or it can only be one of the means, if co-operatives bring their help to militant socialism. Yes, the co-operatives' only value is to coin money, to furnish the workingmen's party with arms and ammunition. It is not the duty of the party to help the co-operatives, but it is the strict duty of the co-operatives to help materially the party with all of their strength.

The co-operative as an auxiliary to the party - that is how we have always viewed the problem, and how we have always worked towards its solution. This morning they spoke of our former campaigns with some contempt, comparing us to sky-lark hunters with mirrors. My answer is that we have never made to shine before the eyes of the workers any but good living realities. We, the Socialists, were the first ones to take the initiative of the co-operative movement in the North; I with a comrade from the Bouches-du-Rhône, went in 1885 to Roubaix there to organize the first socialist co-operative: "L'Avenir du Parti Ouvrier". I don't mean to say that there were no co-operatives already in existence, but all were of a bossist or clerical type. Those co-operatives destroyed any class-conscious spirit in the workingmen who belonged to them. All they found there was a material advantage for themselves and their families. We told them: come to the socialist co-operative, you will find in it not only a low price store, but also powder and bullets for your everyday struggles, strikes and elections, and therefore a new means of emancipation. And remembering the old saying of Aesop, "The tongue is at once the best and the worst", I added: co-operatives are the worst things if they tend only to lower the cost of living, for the benefit of the bosses; they are the best, if they tend to constitute as many citadels for the party and bring to it new resources for the battle of final freedom. (*Applause.*)

There, comrades, is what distinguishes us from other comrades who think differently. However, I will add that if they should show us that we are wrong, that co-operation in itself is socialism aborning, how many things have already been represented as socialism aborning, just to make the workers forget it, when they

have nothing to hope for outside it! Yes, if they would show me that there really is an embryo which only needs to be developed, to-morrow's society in the germ, I would surely renounce my fears and welcome the new light brought to the proletariat. But until now, not one argument has been offered me. And I am bound to say once more that co-operatives, as they are operated to-day, have nothing in common with socialism; if they do not contribute with their dollars and cents to the struggles the working class has to undergo, they may and oftenest to do become a diversion if not an obstacle to the recruiting and developing of the socialist movement; a diversion, because - and you cannot deny it - when an elite of workingmen put their intelligence into a co-operative, when they carry inside their heads nothing but commercial schemes, how to create a custom for it, how to secure its prosperity and development, there is no room left in brains thus occupied, for the socialist idea, no more time for the socialist education of the masses, to whom we cannot repeat enough that there is only one means of emancipation, viz., the capturing of the political power, and by the help of it, of the capitalist property, industrial and commercial. As I wrote once, the co-operative mustard catches easiest those who could render incalculable services to propaganda, but who, hemmed in, confiscated, paralyzed by a necessarily commercial work, become on the contrary dead losses to the struggling proletariat from whom they were torn away. (*Applause.*)

Comrades, in the industrial realm of the factory, co-operation brings nothing to the socialist movement but the fruits it can contribute when it is a socialist co-operative. But there is another realm where co-operation can play a great and useful role : the realm of the country. Ah! the socialist idea, the idea of a society owning its means of production, utilizing them socially, and distributing between all its members the products of a common labor; in the industrial towns it is the factory which does the work of teaching this freedom-giving notion to the workingmen, it is the factory, with its work in common, which puts up in front of the workers the necessity of collectivist or communist society. Hence no need there for the co-operatives' school: the communism of the shop is enough. But in the country, it is different; there we have small scattered land-owners, cultivating individually their bits of land; they, too, are exploited by capitalism in several ways, but no common action or association presents itself as the very thing to create this bond, this common interest. A co-operative which brings together 500 vineyard farmers, takes them out of their individualism, initiates them to the work in common, teaches them solidarity; it does not prepare, as some people claim, the co-operation or socialization of the ground; that will be the work of the new society - no, but it prepares the formerly individualistic brain of the peasant for that society in which the individualistic character of property has here a really socialistic meaning, because it has an educational

meaning. But do not claim that it would have a similar meaning in the towns, for I will tell you once more that it is the factory, the exploitation in common which, by creating laboring collectivities, is the best school of collectivism - by showing them that the collectivist society is not only possible but necessary to human liberation.

I spoke at such length, because it seemed to me necessary to say certain things, however ill I be. But I am going to stop, and here is my conclusion:

The co-operatives in existence to-day have either been founded by Socialists, or penetrated by them. In those where they have penetrated they must promote the idea, the party they represent. In those which they founded, they must increase to its maximum the material collaboration given the idea and the party. Anyway, I hope there will not be a single comrade in this Congress to reproach the co-operatives of the North for having served, as they did, the cause of Socialism! It would be too frightful that Socialists should make themselves the echoes against our co-operatives, of our worst enemies among the bosses. What Motte and the other great bosses of the North cannot forgive them, what they throw in their faces as an insult, is that they are *milch cows of the revolutionists!* And you would take up this language here (*Applause.*) No, you will not want to unarm our brothers over there in accordance and with the arms of the pillars of the capitalist class. You will let the co-operators of the North do their duty as Socialists. If you knew how beautiful a scene it is in the general meetings, when man, woman and child are present! They do not come there only to receive a "dividend", they come to know the use to which has been put this dividend which they have abandoned to the party, to the collectivist future, to the general emancipation of mankind! You would have to be present at a general session of the Union de Lille, for instance; then I am sure that you would not hear one single speaker pronounce words such as I had the sorrow to hear this morning, meaning precisely these co-operatives of the North, which are at the head of the whole French co-operative movement, don't forget it. Have you got in Paris co-operatives like ours, helping all the battles with their strike funds, unemployment funds, etc.? I am very glad to greet the co-operatives of the Seine, but don't forget that your elders over there gave you the example, which you ought to follow to the end. (*Prolonged applause.*)

Source: Daily People, 25 December 1910 (translated Jaime de Angulo) <http://www.slp.org>

Editorial: Co-Operative Communities

Daniel De Leon

It cannot have failed to attract the attention of newspaper readers how frequently of late mention is made of the starting of some new co-operative community. They are cropping up North, South, East and West. To some this is an encouraging sign; to us it is not; at least it does not appear to be an unalloyed good.

In so far as the starting of such colonies may be taken as a barometer of the Socialistic sentiment that is now leavening the land it certainly is cause for joy; nevertheless, in so far as such sentiment is manifesting itself in the starting of such colonies it is an evil; at least it is a dangerous thing—more likely to lead to harm than to good; and, furthermore, indicative of a very unripe understanding of Socialism.

Socialism, i.e., the movement that demands the collective ownership of the people's machinery of production, springs from that development of industry that renders peoples dependent one upon the other. Time was when the family could be the unity of society. That was the time when small production was in vogue. At that time the family was substantially self-supporting; the town or township was absolutely so. Under such conditions Socialism could not suggest itself. But with the introduction of machinery and its perfection the social basis was revolutionized. Not only did the machine force co-operation upon hundreds of families within one industry, but it subdivided labor to the extent of forcing cooperation upon whole countries, whole States and, finally, upon the whole nation. Today the New Bedford or Fall River spinner is not an independent entity resting on his own bottom; he is

a link in a long chain that spreads through the whole country that makes him dependent upon the shoemakers of Auburn, Me., the miners of Ohio, the farm hand of Kansas, the shippers of California, the cottonfield workers of Texas, the hatters of Danbury, the sugar workers of Louisiana, etc., and each and all of these dependent upon him and interdependent upon one another. When production has reached that point Socialism is demonstrated and becomes a necessity.

The co-operative community is based on a denial, at least on a disregard, of that fundamental principle of Socialism that establishes the idea of integral co-operation, i.e., of the necessity of modern society to co-operate in all the fullness of production. The co-operative community ignores the extensive interdependence man has reached; it accordingly ignores the Socialist conclusion that today the Co-operative Commonwealth must be co-extensive with the nation's boundaries.

Societies of this sort are, accordingly, wrongly poised and cannot last. The work of Noyes on American Socialisms¹, giving an account of all the communistic settlements in America and the cause of their failures, is valuable reading at this time. These communities are either in the nature of cloisters to which men flee for asylum-and then they draw forces from the struggle that is going on where all the available forces are needed; or they are meant to be miniature demonstrations of Socialist theory-and then they are fraught with danger because their wrong construction insures their failure, thereby rather injuring than promoting the cause they have at heart.

Socialism is a national evolution; like the eagle that needs the wide expanse of the dome of heaven to spread its wings, and could neither develop nor be "exhibited" in a rat hole, so does the Co-operative Commonwealth need for its field the full extent of a commonwealth of the broad dimensions that modern civilization requires, and never could thrive or be "demonstrated" within the narrow compass of a "community."

The People, Vol. IV, No. 41. Sunday, January 6, 1895 www.slp.org
A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America

Notes

¹ John Humphrey Noyes *History of American Socialisms* New York, 1870.

Co-operatives and Trade Unions

Karl Marx

Co-operative Labour

It is the business of the International Working Men's Association to combine and generalise the spontaneous movements of the working classes, but not to dictate or impose any doctrinary system whatever. The Congress should, therefore, proclaim no special system of co-operation, but limit itself to the enunciation of a few general principles.

(a) We acknowledge the co-operative movement as one of the transforming forces of the present society based upon class antagonism. Its great merit is to practically show, that the present pauperising, and despotic system of the subordination of labour to capital can be superseded by the republican and beneficent system of the association of free and equal producers.

(b) Restricted, however, to the dwarfish forms into which individual wages slaves

can elaborate it by their private efforts, the co-operative system will never transform capitalist society. To convert social production into one large and harmonious system of free and co-operative labour, general social changes are wanted, changes of the general conditions of society, never to be realised save by the transfer of the organised forces of society, viz., the state power, from capitalists and landlords to the producers themselves.

(c) We recommend to the working men to embark in co-operative production rather than in co-operative stores. The latter touch but the surface of the present economical system, the former attacks its groundwork.

(d) We recommend to all co-operative societies to convert one part of their joint income into a fund for propagating their principles by example as well as by precept, in other words, by promoting the establishment by teaching and preaching.

(e) In order to prevent co-operative societies from degenerating into ordinary middle-class joint stock companies (*societes par actions*), all workmen employed, whether shareholders or not, ought to share alike. As a mere temporary expedient, we are willing to allow shareholders a low rate of interest.

Trades' unions. Their past, present and future

(a) Their past.

Capital is concentrated social force, while the workman has only to dispose of his working force. The contract between capital and labour can therefore never be struck on equitable terms, equitable even in the sense of a society which places the ownership of the material means of life and labour on one side and the vital productive energies on the opposite side. The only social power of the workmen is their number. The force of numbers, however is broken by disunion. The disunion of the workmen is created and perpetuated by their unavoidable competition among themselves.

Trades' Unions originally sprang up from the spontaneous attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition, in order to conquer such terms of contract as might raise them at least above the condition of mere slaves. The immediate object of Trades' Unions was therefore confined to everyday necessities, to

expediences for the obstruction of the incessant encroachments of capital, in one word, to questions of wages and time of labour. This activity of the Trades' Unions is not only legitimate, it is necessary. It cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts. On the contrary, it must be generalised by the formation and the combination of Trades' Unions throughout all countries. On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the Trades' Unions were forming centres of organisation of the working class, as the mediaeval municipalities and communes did for the middle class. If the Trades' Unions are required for the guerilla fights between capital and labour, they are still more important as organised agencies for superseding the very system of wages labour and capital rule.

(b) Their present.

Too exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital, the Trades' Unions have not yet fully understood their power of acting against the system of wages slavery itself. They therefore kept too much aloof from general social and political movements. Of late, however, they seem to awaken to some sense of their great historical mission, as appears, for instance, from their participation, in England, in the recent political movement, from the enlarged views taken of their function in the United States, and from the following resolution passed at the recent great conference of Trades' delegates at Sheffield:

“That this Conference, fully appreciating the efforts made by the International Association to unite in one common bond of brotherhood the working men of all countries, most earnestly recommend to the various societies here represented, the advisability of becoming affiliated to that body, believing that it is essential to the progress and prosperity of the entire working community.”

(c) Their future.

Apart from their original purposes, they must now learn to act deliberately as organising centres of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves and acting as the champions and representatives of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as the agricultural labourers, rendered powerless [French text has: “incapable of organised resistance”] by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large [French and German texts read: “convince the broad masses of workers”] that their

efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.

From The Different Questions – Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council (International Workingmen’s Association, 1866)

<http://www.marxists.org/>

Only one other world is possible: communism!
Against the mystifications of the 'Social Forums'

Jens

Between 12th and 15th November, the “European Social Forum” was held in Paris, a kind of European subsidiary of the World Social Forum which has taken place several years running in Porto Alegre, Brazil (in 2002 the ESF was held in Florence, Italy, while the 2004 event is planned for London). The ESF has attained considerable proportions: according to the organisers, there were some 40,000 participants from countries ranging from Portugal to Eastern Europe, a programme of 600 seminars and workshops in the most varied venues (theatres, town halls, prestigious state buildings) distributed across four sites around Paris, and to conclude a big demonstration of between 60 and 100,000 people in the streets of Paris, with the unrepentant Italian Stalinists of Rifondazione Comunista at the front, and the anarchists of the CNT at the rear. Though they received less media attention, two other “European forums” took place at the same time as the ESF, one for members of the European parliament, the other for trade unionists. And as if three “forums” were not enough, the anarchists organised a “Libertarian Social Forum” in the Paris suburbs, at the same time as the ESF and deliberately presented as an “alternative” to it.

“Another world is possible!”. This was one of the great slogans of the ESF. And there is no doubt that for many of the demonstrators on 15th November, perhaps above all for the young people just entering political activity, there is a real and press-

ing need to struggle against capitalism and for “another world” to the one where we live today, with its endless poverty and its interminable and hideous warfare. Doubtless some of them drew an inspiration from this great united gathering. The problem though, is not just to know that “another world is possible” - and necessary - but also and above all to know what kind of world it could be and how to build it.

It is hard to see how the ESF could offer an answer to this question. Given the number and variety of participating organisations (ranging from organisations of “young managers” and “young entrepreneurs”, to Christian unions, Trotskyists like the LCR or the SWP, the Stalinists of the PCF and Rifondazione, and even anarchists like *Alternative Libertaire*), it is hard to see how a coherent answer, or even any kind of answer at all, could emerge from the ESF. Everybody had their own ideas to put forward, whence an enormous variety of themes expressed in leaflets, debates, and slogans. By contrast, when we look more closely at the ideas that came out of the ESF, we find first, that there is nothing new in them, and second, that there is absolutely nothing “anti-capitalist” about them either.

The extensive mobilisation around the ESF, plus the publicity given to a multitude of themes from the “anti-globalisation” tendency by so many groups of the left or far left, prompted the ICC to intervene in the event with all the determination that our strength allowed. Since we suspected that the ESF’s “debates” were sown up in advance (a suspicion which several participants in these debates confirmed to us), our militants from all over Europe concentrated on selling our press (in several European languages) and on taking part in informal discussions around the ESF and during the final demonstration. Similarly, we were present at the LSF in order to intervene in the debates and to put forward the perspective of communism against anarchism.

“The world is not for sale” is a fashionable slogan, with various different versions when a “realistic” slogan is called for: “culture is not for sale” for the artists and theatre workers,¹ “health is not for sale” for nurses and health workers, or again “education is not for sale” for the teachers. Who would not be touched by such slogans? Who would want to sell his health, or his children’s education?

However, when we look at the reality behind these slogans, we begin to smell a swindle. In fact, what is proposed is not to put an end to “selling the world”, but just to limit it: “Free social services from the logic of the market”. What does this mean, concretely? We all know that, as long as capitalism exists, everything has to be paid for, even services like health and education. All those aspects of social life that

the “anti-globalists” claim to want to “free from the logic of the market” are in fact a part of the workers’ overall wages, a part which is usually managed by the state. Far from being “freed from the logic of the market”, the level of workers’ wages, the proportion of production which returns to the working class, lies at the very heart of the problem of the market and capitalist exploitation. Capital always pays its labour power as little as possible: in other words, the minimum necessary to reproduce the next generation of workers. Today, as the world plunges into an ever deeper crisis, each national capital needs fewer hands, and must pay those hands it needs less if it is not to be eliminated by its competitors on the world market. In this situation, the working class can only resist reductions in its wages - however “social” these may be - through its own struggle, and not by calling on the capitalist state to “free” its wages from the laws of the market, something the state would be perfectly incapable of doing even if it wanted to.

In capitalist society, the proletariat can, at best, impose a more favourable division of the social product through the power of its own struggle: it can reduce the level of surplus-value extorted by the capitalist class in favour of variable capital - ie its wages. But to do this in today’s context firstly demands a high level of struggle (as we saw after the defeat of the struggles in France in May 2003, which was followed by a storm of attacks on the social wage), and secondly can only be temporary (as we saw after the movement of 1968 in France).

No, this idea that “the world” is not for sale is nothing but a wretched fraud. The very nature of capitalism is precisely that everything is for sale, and the workers’ movement has known this since 1848: *“It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade (...) The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers”*. This is how Marx and Engels put it in the Communist Manifesto: it just goes to show how valid their principles remain today!

“Fair trade, not free trade!” was another major theme at the ESF, given a great boost by the presence of French smallholders with their “biological” cheese and other products. Who indeed could not be touched by the hope of seeing the peasants and small craftsmen of the Third World live decently from the fruit of their labour? Who would not want to stop the steamroller of agribusiness from throwing the peasants off their land and heaping them up by millions in the slums of Mexico and Calcutta?

But here again, as with the question of the market, fine sentiments are a poor guide. First of all, there is absolutely nothing new about the “free trade” movement. The charity business (with companies like Oxfam, present of course at the ESF) has been practising “free trade” for handicrafts sold in its shops for more than forty years, without this in the least preventing millions of human beings from being plunged into poverty in Africa, Asia, or Latin America...

Moreover, in the mouths of the “anti-capitalists”, this slogan is doubly hypocritical. Someone like José Bové, president of the French Confédération Paysanne, can play the anti-capitalist super-star all he likes with his denunciation of the food industry and the evil McDonalds: this does not prevent the militants of the same Confédération Paysanne from demonstrating to demand the maintenance of subsidies they get from the European CAP.² By artificially lowering the price of French products, the CAP is precisely one of the main instruments for maintaining unfair trade to the advantage of some and, inevitably, to the disadvantage of others. Similarly, “fair trade” for the American steel industry unionists who demonstrated at Seattle and who have been lionised for it ever since, means imposing tariffs on the import of “foreign” steel produced more cheaply by workers in other countries. In the end, “fair trade” is just another name for trade wars.

In capitalism, the notion of “fairness” is anyway an illusion. As Engels put it already in 1881, in an article where he criticised the notion of the “fair wage”: “*The fairness of political economy, such as it truly lays down the laws which rule actual society, that fairness is always on one side – that of capital*”.³

The most outrageous swindle in all this business of “fair trade” is the idea that the presence of “anti-globalist” demonstrators at Seattle or Cancun “encouraged” the negotiators from the Third World countries to stand up to the demands of the “rich countries”. We will not go into detail here about the fact that the Cancun summit ended as a bitter defeat for the weaker countries, since the Europeans will not dismantle the CAP and the Americans will continue with their massive farm subsidies against the penetration of their market by cheaper commodities from the poor countries. No, what is really disgusting is to credit the idea that the members of government and the besuited bureaucrats of the Third World countries were present at these negotiations to defend the peasants and the poor. Quite the contrary! To take just one example, when Brazil’s Lula denounces the tariffs imposed on imported orange juice to protect the American orange industry, he is thinking not of the poor peasants but of Brazil’s enormous capitalist orange plantations, where the workers slave just as they do in the orange plantations of Florida.

The common thread that runs through all these themes is the following: against the “neo-liberals” and the “transnational” companies (those same evil “multi-nationals” that the anti-globalists’ predecessors denounced back in the 1970s), we are supposed to place our confidence in the state, or better still to strengthen the state. The “anti-globalists” claim that business has “confiscated” power from the “democratic” state in order to impose its own “commercial” laws, and that therefore a “citizen’s resistance” is necessary in order to recover the power of the state and revive “public services”.

What a scam! For one thing, the state has never been more present in the economy than it is today, including in the United States. It is the state that regulates world trade by fixing interest rates, customs tariffs, etc. The state is itself the major actor in the national economy, with public spending running at between 30% and 50% of GDP depending on the country, and with ever-increasing budget deficits. More important than this, whenever the workers get it into their heads to defend their living conditions against the attacks of the capitalists, who do they find in their path right from the outset if not the police forces of the state? Demanding - as the “anti-globalists” do - that the state be strengthened to defend us from the capitalists, is really a gigantic fraud: the bourgeois state is there to protect the bourgeoisie from the workers, not the other way around.⁴

It is not for nothing that the ESF produced this call to support the state, and especially to support its left fractions presented as the best defenders of “civil society”, against “neo-liberalism”. As the saying goes: “He who pays the piper calls the tune”, and it is wholly instructive to look at who financed the ESF’s 3.7 million euro costs:

- First of all, the local authorities of Seine-St-Denis, Val de Marne, and Essonne contributed more than 600,000 euros, while the town of St Denis alone forked out 570,000 euros.⁵ In fact, this is the French “Communist” Party - that bunch of old Stalinist scoundrels - which is trying to buy its political virginity after years of complicity in the crimes committed by the Stalinist state in Russia, and decades of sabotaging the workers’ struggles.
- The French Socialist Party has been much discredited by the attacks it made against the workers during its time in government, and it is true that the audience at the ESF did not miss the chance to make fun of Laurent Fabius (a well-known Socialist leader) when he dared to turn up in the debates. One might have thought that the PS might not be too keen on the ESF, but in fact, quite the reverse! The city of Paris (controlled by the PS) contributed 1 million

euros to the costs of the ESF.

- And what about the French government? A right-wing, thoroughly neo-liberal French government, denounced in articles, leaflets, and posters by the whole left from the anarchists to the Stalinists - surely it would be uneasy, at the very least, to see the Forum attracting so many people? But no, not at all! It was by personal order of the president, Jacques Chirac, that the Foreign Ministry contributed 500,000 euros to the ESF.

He who pays certainly intends to profit! The ESF was liberally financed and housed by the whole French bourgeoisie, from right to left. And the whole French bourgeoisie, from left to right, intends to benefit from the undoubted success of the ESF, on two levels in particular:

- First of all, the ESF is a means for the left wing of the state apparatus to renew itself (after being discredited by years spent in government dealing blow after blow to the workers' living conditions and assuming the responsibility for the imperialist policy of French capitalism). Since political parties are no longer in fashion, they are disguised as "associations" in order to give themselves a more "citizen", "democratic", "network" look: the PCF appeared in the form of its "Espace Karl Marx", the PS with its "Fondation Léo Lagrange" and "Jean Jaurès".⁶ We should emphasise that it is not just the left which has an interest in making us forget its past misdeeds - something which is clear enough to anybody. The whole ruling class has an interest in covering the social front, in making sure that the workers' struggles - and even more generally the disgust and questioning provoked by capitalist society - are diverted towards the old reformist recipes, and prevented from finding the consciousness necessary to overthrow the capitalist order and put an end to all its ills.
- Secondly, the whole French bourgeoisie has an interest in the extension and strengthening of the ESF's clearly anti-American atmosphere. The enormous destruction and terrible loss of life in the two world wars, and above all the renewal of the class struggle and the end of the counter-revolution in 1968, have all contributed to discrediting the nationalism which the bourgeoisie used to send the populations to the slaughter in 1914, and again in 1939. Consequently, even though there is no such thing as a "European bloc", much less a "European nation", the bourgeoisies of the different European countries, especially in France and Germany, all have an interest in encouraging the rise of anti-American and more vaguely "pro-European" feeling with the aim of presenting the defence of their own imperialist interests against US imperialism as the defence of a "different", or even an "anti-capitalist" world view. For

example, the "anti-globalist" support for a ban on the import of American GMO's into France, in the name of "ecology" and the "defence of public health", is in reality nothing but an episode in an economic war, designed to give French research time to catch up with its American rivals in this respect.⁷

Modern marketing techniques no longer sell products directly, they use a system which is both more subtle and more effective: they sell a "world view", a "style" to which they attach the products supposed to express that style. The ESF's organisers use exactly the same method: they offer us an unreal "world view", where capitalism is no longer capitalist, nations are no longer imperialist, and "another world" is possible without going through a communist revolution. Then in the name of this "vision", they propose to dump on us old products, long past their sell-by date: the so-called "communist" and "socialist" parties, disguised for the occasion as "citizen networks".

Since the French bourgeoisie coughed up the funds on this occasion, it is normal enough that its political parties should be the first to profit from the ESF. However, we should not imagine that the business was established by the French ruling class alone, far from it. The campaign to renew the credibility of the left wing of the bourgeoisie, undertaken in the various European and world "social forums" benefits the whole capitalist class worldwide.

The "Libertarian Social Forum" was deliberately announced as an alternative to the more "official" forum organised by the big bourgeois parties. One might ask just how much of an alternative it really was: one of the LSF's main organisers (Alternative Libertaire) also took an active part in the ESF, while the LSF's demonstration joined the big ESF one after a brief "independent" stroll.

We do not intend to report exhaustively on what was said at the LSF and will simply mention some of the main themes.

Let us start with the "debate" on "self-managed spaces" (ie squats, communes, service exchange networks, "alternative cafés", etc.). If we put the word "debate" in quotes, it is because the chair did everything possible to limit any discussion to descriptions of the participants' respective "spaces", and to avoid any kind of critical evaluation even from within the anarchist camp. It very quickly appeared that "self-management" is something very relative: a participant from Britain explained that they had bought their "space" for the tidy sum of £350,000 (500,000 euros); another recounted the creation of a "space"... on the Internet, the creation, as everybody

knows, of the US DARPA.⁸

Still more revealing was the action proposed by these various “spaces”: free and “alternative” pharmacy (ie amateur herbal remedies), legal advice services, cafés, exchange of services, etc. In other words, a mixture of the small shopkeeper and social services abandoned by state cutbacks. In other words, the ultimate in anarchist radicalism is to underwrite the state by doing its work for free.

Another debate on “free public services” fully revealed the vacuity of “official” right-thinking anarchism. It was claimed here that “public services” could somehow involve an opposition to the market economy by satisfying the needs of the population for free - and “self-managed” of course, with consumers’ committees, producers’ committees, and community committees. This and the “local committees” being set up today by the French state for the inhabitants of the Paris suburbs are as alike as two peas in a pod. The question is posed as if it were possible to introduce an institutional opposition to capitalism from inside capitalist society itself, for example by establishing free public transport.

Another characteristic of anarchism which made a strong appearance at the LSF, is its profoundly elitist and educationist nature. Anarchism has no idea that “another world” could emerge from the very heart of the present world’s own contradictions. As a result, it can only imagine the passage from the present to the future world by means of the “example” given by its “self-managed spaces”, through an educative action on the ills of today’s prevalent “productivism”. But, as Marx already put it more than a century ago, if a new society is to appear thanks to the education of the people, who is to educate the educators? For those who plan to be the educators are themselves formed by the society within which we live, and their ideas of “another world” remain in reality solidly anchored in the world of today. In effect, the two “social forums” served up, under the disguise of new and revolutionary ideas, nothing other than a bunch of old ideas which have long since revealed themselves inadequate if not downright counter-revolutionary.

The “self-managed spaces” recall the co-operative companies of the 19th century, not to mention all the “workers’ collectives” of our own time (from Lip in France to Triumph in Britain) which either went bankrupt or remained ordinary capitalist companies, precisely because they were forced to produce and sell within the capitalist market economy; they also recall those “community” enterprises of the 1970s (squats, community committees, “free schools” etc.) which ended up integrated into the bourgeois state as social services.

All the ideas about carrying out a radical transformation thanks to free public services recall the gradualist reformism which was already an illusion in the workers' movement of 1900 and which fell into definitive bankruptcy in 1914 when it took the side of "its own" state to defend its "gains" against the "aggressor" imperialism. These ideas recall the creation of the "Welfare State" by the ruling class at the end of World War II, in order to rationalise the management and the mystification of the workforce (in particular by "proving" that the millions of casualties had not died in vain).

In capitalism as in any class society, it is absolutely inevitable that the dominant ideas should be the ideas of the dominant class. It is only possible to understand the necessity, and the material possibility, of a communist revolution because there exists within capitalist society a social class that embodies this revolutionary future: the working class. By contrast, if we simply try to "imagine" what a "better" society would be like, on the basis of our desires and imaginations as they are formed today by capitalist society (and following the model of our anarchist "educators"), we can do nothing other than "reinvent" the present capitalist world, by falling into either the reactionary dream of the small producer who can see no further than the end of his "self-managed space", or the megalomaniac delirium of a benevolent world state, *à la* George Monbiot.⁹

Marxism, on the contrary, aims to discover within the capitalist world today the premises of the new world which the communist revolution must bring into being if humanity is to escape its doom. As the *Communist Manifesto* put it in 1848, "*The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes*".¹⁰

We can distinguish three distinct, but closely interwoven major elements in this "*movement going on under our very eyes*". The first, is the transformation that capitalism has already carried out in the productive process of the entire human species. The least object in daily use is today the work, not of a self-sufficient artisan or local fabrication, but of the common labour of thousands, if not tens of thousands, of men and women participating in a network that covers the entire planet. Freed by the world communist revolution of the constraints imposed on it by the capitalist market relations of production and the private appropriation of its fruits, this destruction of all local, regional, and national particularities will be the basis for the constitution of a single human community on a planetary scale. The progress

of social transformation, and the affirmation of every aspect of social life in this world wide community, will lead to the disappearance of all distinctions (which the bourgeoisie encourages today in order to divide the working class) between ethnic groups, peoples, and nations. We can envisage that populations and languages will be mixed until the day when there no longer exist Europeans, Africans, or Asians (and still less Catalans, Bretons, and Basques!), but one united human species whose intellectual and artistic production will find expression in a single language understood by all, and infinitely richer, more precise, and more harmonious than those in which the limited and decomposing culture of today finds expression.¹¹

The second major element, intimately linked to the first, is the existence within capitalist society of a class which embodies, and which expresses at its highest point, this reality of an international and unified productive process. This class is the international proletariat. Whether they be an American steelworker, a British unemployed worker, a French office worker, a German mechanic, an Indian programmer, or a Chinese construction worker, all are workers with this in common: that they are more and more unbearably exploited by the world capitalist class, and that they can only throw off their exploitation by overthrowing the capitalist order itself.

We should emphasise particularly here two aspects of the working class' very nature:

- First of all, unlike the peasants or small artisans, the proletariat is the creation of capitalism, which cannot live without it. Capitalism grinds down the peasants and the artisans, reducing them to the status of proletarian - or rather to unemployment in the present decadent economy. But capitalism cannot exist without the proletariat. As long as capitalism exists, the proletariat will exist. And as long as the proletariat exists, it will bear within it the revolutionary communist project for the overthrow of the capitalist order and the construction of another world.
- Another fundamental characteristic of the working class lies in the movement and mixing of populations to answer the needs of capitalist production. "The workers have no country" as the Manifesto said, not only because they possess no property but also because they are always at the mercy of capital and its demands for labour power. The working class is, by nature, a class of immigrants. To see this, we only need to look at the population in any major industrialised town: the streets are full of men and women from every corner of the globe. But the same is true even in the under-developed countries: in the Ivory Coast, many of the agricultural workers are Burkinabé, South African miners come

from all over the country but also from Zimbabwe and Botswana, workers in the Persian Gulf come from India, Palestine, or the Philippines, in Indonesia there are millions of foreign workers in the factories. This reality of working class existence - which prefigures the mixing of populations that we spoke of earlier - demonstrates the futility of the ideal dear to anarchists and democrats of the defence of a local or regional "community". To take just one example: what can Scottish nationalism possibly have to offer to the working class in Scotland, composed in part of Asian immigrants? Nothing, obviously. The only real community that the workers who have been ripped from their roots can find, is the planetary community that they will build after the revolution.

- The third major element that we intend to emphasise here can be summarised in a single statistic: in all the class societies that preceded capitalism, 95% of the population (more or less) worked the land, and the surplus that they produced was just enough to support the other 5% (landlords and the church, but also merchants, artisans, etc). Today, this ratio has been reversed, while in the most developed countries even the production of material commodities occupies less and less of the working population. In other words, at the level of the physical capacity of the productive apparatus, humanity has achieved a level of abundance which is to all intents and purposes unlimited.

Already under capitalism, the human species' productive capacity has created a qualitatively new situation relative to the whole of previous history: whereas beforehand, scarcity, or at times outright famine, was the lot of the vast mass of the population above all because of the natural limits of production (low productivity of the land, poor harvests, etc.), under capitalism the one and only cause of scarcity is capitalist production relations themselves. The crisis that throws workers onto the street is not caused by an inadequate level of production: on the contrary, it is the direct result of the impossibility of selling everything that has been produced.¹² Moreover, in the so-called "advanced" countries, an ever-increasing part of economic activity has absolutely no utility outside the capitalist system itself: financial and stock-market speculation of all kinds, astronomical military budgets, fashion items, "planned obsolescence" designed to force the renewal of a product, advertising, etc. If we look further, it is obvious that the use of the earth's resources is also dominated by the increasingly irrational - except from the standpoint of capitalist profitability - functioning of the economy: hours spent by millions of human beings in the daily migration to and from work, or the transport of freight by road rather than by rail to respond to the unforeseen demands of an anarchic production process, for example. In short, the ratio between the quantity of time spent in producing to satisfy minimum needs (food, clothing, shelter), and that spent in producing "beyond the

minimum” (if we can put it like that), has been completely overturned.¹³

When we sell our press, in demonstrations or at the factory gates, we are often confronted with the same question: “well, what is communism then, if you say it has never existed?”. In such situations, we try to give an answer that is both global and brief, and we often answer: “communism is a world without classes, without nations, and without money”. While this definition is very basic (even negative, since it defines communism as being “without”), it nonetheless contains the fundamental characteristics of communist society:

- It will be without classes, because the proletariat cannot free itself by becoming a new exploiting class: the reappearance of an exploiting class after the revolution would in reality mean the defeat of the revolution and the survival of exploitation.¹⁴ The disappearance of classes flows naturally from the interest of a victorious working class in its own emancipation. One of the class’ first objectives will be to reduce the working day by integrating into the productive process the unemployed and the masses without work in the Third World, but also the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants, and even the members of the overthrown bourgeoisie.
- It will be without nations, because the productive process has already gone well beyond the framework of the nation, and in doing so has rendered the nation obsolete as an organisational framework for human society. By creating the first planetary human society, capitalism has already gone beyond the national framework within which it was itself born. Just as the bourgeois revolution destroyed all the old feudal particularities and frontiers (taxes on the movement of goods within national frontiers, laws, or weights and measures, specific to this or that town or region), so the proletarian revolution will put an end to the last division of humanity into nations.
- It will be without money, because the notion of exchange will no longer have any meaning in communism, whose abundance will allow the satisfaction of the needs of every member of society. Capitalism has created the first society where commodity exchange has been extended to the whole of production (contrary to previous societies, where commodity exchange was limited essentially to luxury goods, or certain articles which could not be produced locally such as salt). Today, capitalism is being strangled by its inability to sell on the market everything that it is capable of producing. The very fact of buying and selling has become a barrier to production. Exchange will therefore disappear. With it will disappear the very idea of the commodity, including the first commodity of all: wage labour.

These three principles are directly opposed to the commonplaces of bourgeois ideology, according to which there exists a greedy and violent “human nature” which will determine for ever the divisions between exploiters and exploited, or between nations. Obviously, this idea of “human nature” suits the ruling class down to the ground, justifying its class domination and preventing the working class from identifying clearly what is really responsible for the misery and the massacres that overwhelm humanity today. But it has nothing whatever to do with reality: whereas the “nature” (ie the behaviour) of other animal species is determined by their natural environment, the more humanity’s domination over nature advances, the more “human nature” is determined by our social, not by our natural environment.

The three points we have outlined above are no more than the briefest of sketches. Nonetheless, they have profound implications for the communist society of the future. It is true that marxists have always avoided drawing up “blueprints”, first because communism will be built by the real movement of the great masses of humanity, and second because we can imagine what communism will be like even less than a peasant of the 11th century could imagine modern capitalism. This does not, however, prevent us from indicating some of the most general characteristics that follow from what we have just said (very briefly, of course, for lack of space).

Probably the most radical change will spring from the disappearance of the contradiction between the human being and his labour. Capitalist society has raised to its highest point the contradiction - which has always existed in class society - between labour, in other words the activity we only undertake because we are forced to do so, and leisure, in other words the time when we are free (in a very limited sense) to choose our activity.¹⁵ The constraint that forces us to work is due on the one hand to the scarcity imposed by the limits of labour productivity, and on the other by the fact that a part of the fruit of labour is seized by the exploiting class. In communism, these constraints no longer exist: for the first time in history, the human species will produce freely, and production will be directed entirely towards the satisfaction of human need. We can even suppose that the words “labour” and “leisure” will disappear from the language, since no activity will be undertaken constrained by necessity. The decision to produce or not to produce will depend not only on the utility of the thing produced, but also on the pleasure or interest of the productive process itself.

The very idea of the “satisfaction of needs” will change its nature. Basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), will occupy a proportionally less and less important place, while the needs determined by the social evolution of the species will come more

and more to the fore. There will no longer be any distinction between “artistic” work and that which is not. Capitalism is a society which has exacerbated to the extreme the contradiction between “art” and “non-art”. Whereas the great majority of artists in history never signed their work, it is only with the rise of capitalism that the artist begins to sign his work and that art becomes a specific activity separated from day-to-day production. Today, this tendency has reached its paroxysm, with an almost total separation between the “fine arts” on the one hand (incomprehensible for the great majority of the population and reserved for a tiny intellectual minority), and the industrialised artistic production of advertising and “pop culture”, both of them being reserved for “leisure activity”. All this is nothing but the fruit of the contradiction between the human being and his labour. With the disappearance of this contradiction, the contradiction between “useful” and “artistic” production will also disappear. Beauty, the satisfaction of the senses and the mind, will also be fundamental human needs that the productive process will have to satisfy.¹⁶

Education will also change its whole nature. In any society, the purpose of educating children is to allow them to take their place in adult society. Under capitalism “taking their place in adult society”, means taking their place in a system of brutal exploitation, where those who are not profitable do not, in fact, have any place. The purpose of education (which the “alternative worlders” tell us should not be “for sale”) is therefore above all to equip the new generation with abilities which can be sold on the market, and in this age of state capitalism to ensure that the new generation has the abilities necessary to strengthen the national capital against its competitors on the world market. It is also obvious that capitalism has absolutely no interest in encouraging a critical attitude towards its own social organisation. In short, the purpose of education is nothing other than to subdue young minds and to mould them to capitalist society and the demands of its productive process; small wonder then, that schools are more and more like factories, and teachers like workers on the line.

Under communism, on the contrary, the integration of the young into the adult world will demand the greatest possible awakening of all their physical and intellectual senses. In a system of production that has been completely freed from the demands of profit, the adult world will open to the child gradually, as his capacities develop, and the young adult will no longer be exposed to the harrowing experience of leaving school to be thrown into the ferocious competition of the labour market. Just as there will no longer be any contradiction between “labour” and “leisure” or between “production” and “art”, so there will no longer be any contradiction between school and the “world of work”. The very words “school”, “factory”, “office”,

“art gallery”, “museum” will disappear¹⁷ or change completely their meaning, since the whole of human activity will combine in one harmonious effort to develop and satisfy the physical, intellectual, and sensual needs of the species.

Communists are not utopians. We have tried here to give the briefest, and inevitably most limited of sketches of what must be the nature of the new human society that will be born from present-day capitalism. In this sense, the “alternative worlders” slogan, that “another world is possible” (or even “other worlds are possible”) is a pure mystification. Only one other world is possible: communism.

But there is nothing inevitable about this new world’s birth. In this respect, there is no difference between capitalism and the other class societies which preceded it, where “*Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes*”.¹⁸ In other words, no matter how necessary the communist revolution is not inevitable. The passage from capitalism to the new world will not be possible without the violence of the proletarian revolution as its inevitable mid-wife.¹⁹ But the alternative, in the conditions of advanced decomposition of today’s society, is the destruction not just of the two “*contending classes*”, but of the whole human species. Whence the gigantic responsibility that weighs on the shoulders of the world revolutionary class.

Seen from the situation today, the development of the proletariat’s revolutionary capacity might seem such an impossibly far-off dream that there is a great temptation to “do something” now, even if it means rubbing shoulders with those old villains of the Stalinist and Socialist parties, in other words with the left wing of the bourgeoisie’s state apparatus. But for the revolutionary minorities, reformism is not a stopgap that we do “for want of anything better”, on the contrary it is a lethal compromise with the class enemy. The road towards the revolution which alone can create “another world” will be long and difficult, but it is the only road that exists.

From the ICC’s International Review, issue 116, 1st Quarter 2004.
(<http://www.internationalism.org/>)

Notes

1 The teachers’ strikes in France in 2003 were closely followed by strikes by theatre workers

(both players and technicians).

2 Common Agricultural Policy, an enormous and expensive system for artificially maintaining the prices paid to European agricultural producers, to the fury of their competitors in other exporting countries.

3 The article was published in the *Labour Standard*. See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/05/07.htm>

4 It is particularly amusing to read in the pages of *Alternative Libertaire* (a French anarchist group) that “*we want the demonstration to be as big as possible in order to make them hear once again that we don't want the capitalist and police Europe*” (*Alternative Libertaire* n°123, November 2003), when in fact the ESF is entirely financed by the state and based on the mystification of strengthening the state in Europe in order supposedly to protect the “citizen” from big industry. There really is no incompatibility in practice between anarchism and the defence of the state!

5 Several of these towns or local authorities are controlled by the French “Communist” Party.

6 It is interesting to see that the British “Socialist Workers’ Party” - an unreconstructed Trotskyist party of the old type - appears in France disguised as a sort of “network” under the very modern name of “Socialisme par en bas” (“Socialism from below”).

7 As Bismarck said: “*I have always found the word Europe in the mouth of those politicians who were demanding from other powers something that they did not dare demand in their own name*” (cited in the *Economist*, 3/1/04).

8 Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency

9 Well-known anti-globalist personality, author of a *Manifesto for a new world*, and one of the leaders of the British “Globalise Resistance”.

10 It is impossible to overstate the extraordinary power and prescience of the *Communist Manifesto*, which laid the foundations for a scientific understanding of the movement towards communism. The *Manifesto* itself is a part of the effort undertaken by the workers’ movement since its beginnings, and which it has continued since, to understand more profoundly the nature of the revolution towards which its strength tends. We have chronicled these efforts in our series “Communism is not just a nice idea but a material necessity”, published in the pages of this *Review*.

11 “*In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature*” (*Communist Manifesto*).

12 “*In these crises, there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity - the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation, had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed. And why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further*

the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them” (Communist Manifesto).

13 We cannot go into detail on this point here, but we should simply point out that this is an idea to be wielded with caution, since even “basic” needs are socially determined: Cro-Magnon man did not have the same needs as modern man for food, clothing and shelter, nor did he satisfy those needs in the same way or with the same tools.

14 In fact, this is precisely what happened after the defeat of the October 1917 Russian Revolution: the fact that many of the new leaders (Brezhnev for example) started life as workers or as workers’ children gave credence to the idea that a communist revolution that brings the working class to power would in reality do nothing other than put into power a new, “proletarian”, ruling class. This idea that the USSR was communist and its leaders something other than a fraction of the world bourgeoisie, was of course knowingly encouraged by all sections of the ruling class, from right to left. In reality, the Stalinist counter-revolution put the bourgeoisie back in power: the fact that many members of this new bourgeoisie were of worker or peasant origin is of no more significance than when an individual of working-class origins becomes a company director.

15 It is significant that the origin of the French word for labour (“travail”) should have originated from the Latin “tripalium”, meaning an instrument of torture, and should then have passed into English with the meaning of “trouble” or “suffering”. IF POSSIBLE - find similar etymological derivation for “labour”?

16 An anarchist at the LSF tried, very learnedly, to explain to us that marxists only consider “homo faber” (“the man who makes”), while the anarchists consider “homo ludens” (“the man who plays”). This idea is not any the less stupid for being expressed in Latin.

17 Not to mention “prison”, “gaol”, and “concentration camp”.

18 *Communist Manifesto*

19 For a much more developed view, see our series on communism mentioned previously, and in particular the article published in *International Review* n°70.

Identity Theft on a Mass Basis

Michael James

There is a lot of talk these days about identity theft. There is, however, a terrible silence about one of the most systematic, thorough and tragic cases of identity theft in American history: the stripping of class consciousness from the American working class.

This sweeping identity theft is a profound yet subtle process. Most members of the working class don't even realize they have been robbed. They become *class-unconscious*, as Daniel De Leon said, without suspecting they have been denied the most essential aspect of their identity. Yet, class is arguably the most fundamental element of identity because, as Marx taught, we are material creatures with primary needs for food, water, clothing, shelter, safety, security and belonging. Our class is determined by our relationship to the means of production or the means of life.

Most of us in capitalist society, whether we are black or white, gay or straight, male or female, are not owners of the means of production. Most of us survive by selling our physical or intellectual labor power. We survive and perhaps even prosper somewhat, so long as we can successfully market our sweat.

Where does this identity theft begin? It begins in childhood where schools are a huge part of the problem. History and the social sciences, for example, routinely deny a working-class perspective to children. There is a pretense of neutrality in education, but this is a myth and a bias in itself. Paulo Freire, in his *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, wrote that every pedagogy and curricula must 1) invite students to question and resist the prevailing economic system or 2) invite students to accept the prevailing economic system.

Textbooks and teachers hardly present the glory of labor, the primacy of labor and the Marxian reality that only labor can create wealth. More typically, we are academically misguided with the propagandistic Chamber of Commerce myth about the partnership between capital and labor.

Our educational system denies class consciousness to young workers and even invites them to be a partner in their own fleecing! James W. Loewen, author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, wrote, "Six of the dozen high school American history textbooks I examined contain no index listing at all for 'social class,' 'social stratification,' 'class structure,' 'income distribution,' 'inequality' or any conceivably related topic. Not one book lists 'upper class,' 'working class' or 'lower class.'" He confirms, "Social class is probably the single most important variable in society." And he adds that "the working class usually forgets its own history" and, "The tendency of teachers and textbooks to avoid social class as if it were a dirty little secret only reinforces the reluctance of working-class families to talk about it."

Popular culture, so-called, is another culprit. A critical viewing of television and films reveals that members of the working class are commonly depicted as boorish, crude louts. A 2003 issue of *Newsweek* carried an article about how certain celebrities and models enjoy wearing ball caps with some company logo on the front. But watch out, the writer warned, if you are not one of the beautiful people someone might think you are a real trucker! And the offensive, predatory, exploiting Jenny Jones once did a show entitled "blue-collar makeovers."

We who have class consciousness must always remember that all news and entertainment is corporate. Every TV show or magazine bombards us with bourgeois ideology. Michael Parenti, in *Dirty Truths*, says that workers in TV and films are typically "portrayed as emotional, visceral, simple-hearted and simple-minded, incapable of leadership or collective action" so that "it is individual heroics rather than collective action that save the day."

Dominant values are another tool used in this robbery. The American value of extreme or rugged individualism, for example, is a barrier to class consciousness. We are urged, beginning in childhood, to be "self made" individuals, to rise above personal limitations, and even to overcome external barriers such as poverty or racism.

The Chamber of Commerce mentality would like nothing more than for all of us to be entrepreneurs, scratching and clawing our way “to the top.”

Our individuality is, of course, a wonderful thing, but it must not be mistaken for capitalist individualism, which isolates and alienates the individual. As Daniel De Leon explained: “Individualism and individuality are opposing terms. The latter is the mark of strength of character; the former is the sign of weakness. The latter, accordingly, is self-possessed, elevating; the former is blustering and degrading. Capitalism breeds individualism; only socialism can nurture individuality.”

Consider the famous hierarchy of human needs outlined by psychologist Abraham Maslow. It truly reinforces the materialism taught by Marx. Maslow suggested that our most fundamental needs are for food, water, sleep and elimination of bodily waste. We next advance to a need for safety, shelter and security. We then are free to address our need for belonging. Only then can we set about fulfilling our need for esteem. It is striking that Maslow declared that we must belong before we can have esteem. In other words, we must be connected and feel our solidarity with something greater than ourselves before we can realize our individuality. This is why the prized individualism of capitalist society is a pathological and alienated endeavor.

Stripped of class consciousness, we are invited to compete rather than cooperate, to advance ourselves at the expense of community or environment. It is a fragile and lonely success we are taught to achieve. The entrepreneurial and individualistic ethos of American capitalist culture is an invitation to define, pursue, and advance self and leave comrades behind. Class consciousness is strength, dignity and awareness. It is more profound and fundamental than racial or ethnic identity.

Multiculturalism, for example, popular among educators, does nothing to challenge the economic injustice inherent to the capitalist system. Malcolm X looked beyond racial divisions to economics: “I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those who do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those who want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the system of exploitation. I believe that there will be that kind of clash, but I don’t think it will be based on the color of the skin...” And poet Langston Hughes wrote:

Revolt! Arise!

The Black And White World

Shall be one.

The Workers World!

The past is done!
A new dream flames
Against the Sun!

Of course, racial identity is a beautiful thing to be celebrated but something even more beautiful is worker solidarity, a united working class—male and female; gay and straight; black, white, brown, yellow and red; intellectual and physical toiler—who stand together against capitalist exploitation. Indeed, class consciousness is the thing the exploiters fear the most.

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Book Review: *Beneath the Paving Stones: Situationists and the Beach, May 1968* (AK Press/Dark Star ISBN: 1902593383)

Nate Holdren

“If you make a social revolution, do it for fun.”

It's 1968 and the world is on fire. Paris, Berlin, Prague, Chicago, Tokyo, Mexico City, Rome - cities separated by geography and culture are united by the flames of riotous protest. The twin embers of outrage at the present and hope for the future flare and ignite. Parisian students occupy university campuses. Workers occupy factories. In the streets, a question is asked - a slow death on an installment plan, or the joy of living? Crowds battle cops for control of streets and public squares, but more, they battle over how life will be lived - the same old shit or a world where many worlds fit. The arguments for and against each side take the shape of overturned cars and barricades, clubs and tear gas. The 'Events of May' later prove to be the single biggest influence on a generation of French intellectuals.

The Situationist International, though a small group, was an enormous shaping force on the Paris Events. The SI began as an avant-garde artists' cabal, creating new visions of urban space, and ended as an ultra-revolutionary sect, pioneering new forms of theory and practice of the city as site of oppression and resistance. Unlike some other so-called revolutionary organizations, the SI wanted not the “self-management of the existing world ... but its uninterrupted transformation.” (p105)

The Situationists took the very old marxist idea that under capitalism most of us are forced to sell ourselves piecemeal at work in order to live, and extended it into a far-reaching condemnation of a society which systematically forecloses human possibilities, replacing activity and creativity with passivity, life with mere survival. In doing so, the SI bypassed the old and stale division between marxism and anarchism, pioneering a perspective antithetical to all bosses and authorities, spurring many people into political and intellectual action.

To really understand the Situationists, one must read the classic works produced by their two leading lights - Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* and Raoul Vaneigem's *Revolution of Everyday Life*. This collection, however, is a fine introduction to the SI, and a historical event where their ideas found practical expression. The collection takes its name from a slogan graffitied around Paris during the month of insurrection, "beneath the paving stones, the beach!", coined when protesters discovered sand under the cobblestones they tore up to make projectiles to hurl at cops.

This collection reprints pamphlets by which the Situationists first appeared to English speakers, giving readers today a sense of how the SI was perceived by like-minded folks outside of France back in the day. Among the texts reprinted here are the infamous "On the poverty of student life," condemning the intellectual, sexual, and economic poverty faced by students, printed by Situationist students at Strasbourg using university funds and causing great controversy among the sober authorities. Also included is the spell-binding first-hand account of the May Events by a member of the English revolutionary organization Solidarity. This pamphlet is by far the most energizing in the book, conveying the excitement and sense of possibility which the upheaval in Paris had for participants and observers at the time. All the pamphlets, but this one most of all, along with photos and reproductions of leaflets and graffiti, provide an inspiring depiction of the May Events.

If there's one major flaw with this book, it's the failure to make links between the different interruptions of the global order which occurred at the time, and how these struggles and subversive communication circulated globally, surging across and blurring the artificial lines drawn onto maps and between people. Reading this book one almost gets the impression that the Paris Events and the development of the SI occurred in a vacuum untouched by events elsewhere. Still, this book remains an excellent doorway to vitally important ideas and historical events, which resonate deeply with anyone who wants to turn the world upside down, or better yet, to finally put it right side up.

Book Review: *The Creation of Patriarchy* by Gerda Lerner (1987: Oxford University Press, ISBN 0195051858)

Torgun Bullen

Gerda Lerner, the American feminist and historian, was born in 1920 in Vienna into a prosperous Jewish family. She was forced to flee to America in 1938 when the Nazis rose to power in Austria. Before she retired, she was Robinson-Edwards Professor of History Emerita at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Out of her experiences as a Jew, and as a woman in the Jewish community, grew a life-long commitment to fighting sexism, racism, poverty and injustice. An ex-communist and “post-Marxist”, she has found it necessary to expand on Marx’s class analysis of society, explaining how class has always affected women differently to men.

Having grown up with the impression (like black people used to) that we, as women, ‘have no history’, Lerner’s works are a revelation. According to Lerner; “Women’s History changes their (*women’s*) lives. Even short-term exposure to the past experience of women, such as in two-week institutes and seminars, has the most profound psychological effect on women participants.” She also says it is wrong to picture women primarily as victims. “Women are essential and central to creating history; they are, and always have been actors and agents in history. Women have ‘made history’, yet they have been kept from knowing their history and from interpreting history, either their own or that of men.”

In *The Creation of Patriarchy*, she traces women's subordination in the Western World back to the beginning of historical records in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium B.C. Although her main research was carried out using Mesopotamian records, she also touches on the development of patriarchy in the Old Testament and in Classical Greek thought. She speculates on whether there ever was a system of 'matriarchy' in pre-history and concludes that there is no proof of this. By this she means, there is no historical proof that men were ever subordinate to women, the way women have been subordinate to men for thousands of years. She does believe that it is likely that the relationship between the sexes was more equal in pre-history, with women having a high status due to their role as procreators.

Women's high status in pre-history, she believes, is pointed to by the prevalence of the cult of the fertility goddess, a cult it was very difficult to get rid of even after the state and patriarchy forced the replacement of the supreme mother goddess by a male godhead. In the Old Testament, written from the tenth century B.C. to the fifth, battles were still being fought to prevent people making offerings to the mother goddess and to force allegiance to the newly created patriarch in heaven, 'Yahweh'.

Lerner stands firmly in the Marxist tradition. She pays tribute to the contribution made to the Marxist theory of origin in Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, as well as pointing out some of its shortcomings. For example, she says that Engels's description of the primitive sexual division of labour "reads curiously like a description of European peasant households read back into pre-history". We now know that there is more than one pattern for the sexual division of labour. We know that women provide on average 60 percent of the food in hunting and gathering societies. Engels was also influenced by the nineteenth-century standard of female prudery, which he projected back into ancient times by saying that women saw monogamous marriage as an improvement in their situation, as it gave a woman "the right to give herself to *one* man only".

Although Lerner acknowledges Engels's contribution to feminist debate in braking with the biological determinism of the traditionalists and pointing up "*the impact of societal and cultural forces in structuring and defining sexual relations*", she disagrees with the "*world historic defeat of the female sex*" being a "*revolutionary overthrow*", the result of a single and sudden event; i.e., the development of private property. As she says: "*If the cause of women's 'enslavement' was the development of private property and the institutions that evolved from it, then it followed logically that the abolition of private property would liberate women.*" Lerner doubts this and argues that the estab-

lishment of patriarchy was not a violent and sudden overthrow of the old order, but a process taking place from approximately 3100 BC to 600 BC.

She talks elsewhere in her book about “*a vast cultural revolution*” being necessary in order to transform and abolish patriarchy and about the enduring power of “belief systems, symbols and mental constructs”, as well as of the patriarchal mode of thought “being so built into our mental processes that we cannot exclude it unless we first make ourselves consciously aware of it”.

Regarding Lerner’s position on women and class, it can be summed up in the following sentence: “*As men’s class positions became consolidated and defined by their relationship to property and the means of production, the class position of women became defined by their sexual relationships*” (p. 96). Women’s access to wealth and any privileges that came with it was always mediated through men; at the start of their lives through fathers and brothers, and later through the man they slept with, whether as legal wife, concubine or mistress. A slave woman could rapidly advance up the class ladder by becoming the concubine of a wealthy man. As rapidly as they could ascend the class ladder, as quickly they could slide down the rungs of privilege. If a man tired of a woman’s sexual services, or she did not produce sons, he could easily divorce her or disassociate herself with her, and unless the woman’s family was willing to take her in, slavery or prostitution were often the outcome (and for women, slavery almost always equalled sexual exploitation): “*For women, sexual exploitation marked the very definition of enslavement, as it did not for men.*” (p.89).

Probably the most revolutionary assertion Lerner makes in her book, seen from a Marxist point of view, is that “*The appropriation by men of women’s sexual and reproductive capacity occurred prior to the formation of private property and class society. Its commodification lies, in fact, at the foundation of private property.*” (p. 8). The main thread she follows in support of her argument is that the agricultural revolution created an increased need for labour and women, as women as producers of labour power in the form of children, became highly prized. She quotes the anthropologists Lévi-Strauss, Claude Meillasoux and Peter Aaby as proponents of the theory that it is the exchange of women through which private property is eventually created. She talks about women’s reproductive capacity first being “*recognized as a tribal resource, then, as ruling elites develop, it is acquired as the property of a particular kin group*”. She goes on to argue:

“This occurs with the development of agriculture. The material conditions of grain agriculture demand group cohesiveness and continuity over time, thus

strengthening household structure. In order to produce a harvest, workers of one production cycle are indebted for food and seeds to workers of a previous production cycle. Since the amount of food depends on the availability of labor, production becomes the chief concern. This has two consequences: it strengthens the influence of the older males and it increases the tribes' incentive for acquiring more women. In the fully developed society based on plow agriculture, women and children are indispensable to the production process, which is cyclical and labor intensive. Children have now become an economic asset. At this stage tribes seek to acquire the reproductive potential of women, rather than women themselves. Men do not produce babies directly; thus it is women, not men, who are exchanged. This practice becomes institutionalized in incest taboos and patrilocal marriage patterns. Elder males, who provide continuity in the knowledge pertaining to production, now mystify these 'secrets' and wield power over the young men by controlling food, knowledge and women. The young men must first offer labor services to the old men for the privilege of gaining access to women. Under such circumstances women also become the spoil for the warriors, which encourages and reinforces the dominance of older men over the community. Finally, 'women's world historic defeat' through the overthrow of matriliney and matrilocality is made possible, and it proves advantageous to the tribes who achieve it."

Another question Lerner sets out to answer, is the following: *"What could explain women's historical 'complicity' in upholding the patriarchal system that subordinated them and in transmitting that system, generation after generation, to their children of both sexes?"*

Going back to the dawn of civilization, the division of labour between men and women was already becoming a fact. At the time, the particular division into men's and women's work seemed sensible, for example it was not easy for pregnant and breast feeding mothers to take part in a hunt or to cope with the heavy work of plough agriculture. It must be remembered that at the time, women would have spent most of their comparatively short adult life either pregnant or with small children. What seemed sensible at the time, developed over time to concentrate power in male hands. In other words, men and women were unaware at the time of what the division of labour was going to lead to, so there was no 'conspiracy' on the part of men and no 'guilty accomplice' syndrome attributable to women. So what lead women to perpetuate the system further down the line of historical developments? Here Lerner argues that women were split and prevented from seeing their collective group interest (and still are) in a way that no other group of oppressed people have been. For one, they have their closest relatives and loved ones in the "enemy camp" so to speak, in the form of fathers, husbands, sons and lovers. They also got immediate and tangible benefits from perpetuating a system of considering them-

selves “better” than other women. As a “respectable” woman, defending her chastity before marriage and staying attached to one man, she would stand a better chance of improving her own and her family’s position by marrying “well”; i.e., securing a more prosperous husband. The division of women into the well-known dichotomy “respectable” (attached to one man) and “not respectable” (sexually attached to more than one man) occurred very early on. Lerner writes a very interesting chapter of how the veiling of women played a part in this. The veiling of women is *not* an invention of Islam, it goes back to at least the second millennium BC in Mesopotamia.

One of the most powerful chapters of this book for me, is the one on “Symbols”. Because at the time “*when humankind made a qualitative leap forward in its ability to conceptualize large symbol systems which explain the world and the universe, women were already so greatly disadvantaged that they were excluded from participation in this important cultural advance.*” This means that they were excluded from education from the earliest times, and from interpreting and altering the religious belief systems as well as the scientific, political and historical systems of thought. Hence, all our knowledge of history has been passed down to us in the words of “*great men*”; the events and interpretation of history for nearly four thousand years having been given an exclusively “*male slant*”, recording only what seemed important in a man’s world. What is needed, according to Lerner, is nothing less than a complete re-interpretation of history, not “*adding*” the female perspective, but seeing human history as a joint male and female experience and being shaped by the joint actions of men and women: “*As long as men believe their experiences, their viewpoint, and their ideas represent all of human experience and all of human thought, they are not only unable to define correctly in the abstract, but they are unable to define reality accurately.*”

Lerner describes the real problems women have had with securing enough “*private time*” for themselves to be able to contribute to the world of learning. She herself could stand as an example of this, only starting out on a serious academic career in her forties, after bringing up children. She describes this situation as follows:

“But the generation of abstract thought and of new conceptual models – theory formation – is another matter. This activity depends on the individual thinker’s education in the best of existing traditions and on the thinker’s acceptance by a group of educated persons who, by criticism and interaction provide ‘cultural prodding’. It depends on having private time. Universally, women of all classes had less leisure time than men, and due to their child-rearing and family service function, what free time they had was generally not their own. The time of thinking men, their work and study time, has since the inception of Greek

philosophy been respected as private. ...women... have for more than 2500 years suffered the disadvantages of fragmented, constantly interrupted time."

And in the following extract she echoes my unease with prevailing attitudes within not just the capitalist mainstream ideology, but within the thinking in our own sector as well. She talks about how any woman in the past hundred years who aspires to an academic career, must first learn "*how to think like a man*".

"The way to think abstractly is to define precisely, to create models in the mind and to generalize from them. Such thought, men have taught us, must be based on the exclusion of feelings. Women, like the poor, the subordinate, the marginals, have close knowledge of ambiguity, of feelings mixed with thought, of value judgements coloring abstractions. Women have always experienced the reality of self and community, known it, and shared it with each other. Yet, living in a world in which they are devalued, their experience bears the stigma of insignificance. They have thus learned to mistrust their own experience and devalue it."

She then elaborates on this theme in a beautiful and poetic way:

"Women deal with the irredeemably particular: they experience reality daily, hourly in their service function (taking care of food and dirt); in their constantly interruptable time; their splintered attention. Can one generalize while the particular tugs at one's sleeve? He who makes symbols and explains the world and she who takes care of his bodily and psychic needs and of his children – the gulf between them is enormous."

Lerner encourages women to "*trust our own, the female experience. Since such experience has usually been trivialized or ignored, it means overcoming the deep-seated resistance within ourselves toward accepting ourselves and our knowledge as valid.*" She warns that "*In line with our historic gender-conditioning, women have aimed to please and have sought to avoid disapproval. This is poor preparation for making the leap into the unknown required of those who fashion new systems.*"

I found the following paragraph of great importance to women:

"Finally, it (to step outside patriarchal thought) means developing intellectual courage, the courage to stand alone, the courage to reach further than our grasp, the courage to risk failure. Perhaps the greatest challenge to thinking women is the challenge to move from the desire for safety and approval to the most 'unfeminine' quality of all – that of intellectual arrogance, the supreme hubris which asserts to itself the right to reorder the world. The hubris of the god-makers, the hubris of

the male system-builders.”

And what future does Lerner see for men? She outlines it as follows: “*We may find that those who had previously taken upon themselves the burden of both action and definition may now have more freedom for playing and experiencing the pure joy of existence.*”

Reading this book has for me been as much of a jolt to my thinking as when I came across the literature of the Socialist Party of Great Britain over 20 years ago, and my subsequent introduction to Marxist thought. It has thrown light on many experiences in my own life and made me realise that I am not alone in those experiences. It has also convinced me that we cannot just sit back and expect the abolition of private property to take care of the millennia old disparities between men and women. The acceptance of patriarchal thought is so embedded in our psyches that it has become, as Lerner says, ‘invisible’, and we have to make a conscious effort to reach beyond these constraints.

As women, we must make sure that our voices are heard, that our opinions are not trivialised and that our various contributions are valued. Everything, including the teachings of Marx and Engels, can be improved on.

Contacts

*One of the aims of Common Voice and the World in Common network is to try and facilitate communication, co-operation and collaboration between the individuals and groups that comprise the global anti-state, anti-capitalist, anti-reformist political sector. To help achieve this aim we will publish a contacts list in every issue of Common Voice. If you, your group or publication would like to be included please submit the following information either via e-mail to editors@cvoice.org , or via post to **World in Common, Box 44, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB, UK.***

Name of organisation: _____

Contact Name: _____

E-mail address: _____

Website address: _____

Postal address: _____

Telephone/Fax number: _____

Year of formation (for groups/organisations): _____

Publications (with subscription details): _____

A short description of your aims/objectives: _____

Current Contact List (*in no particular order*):

Name of organisation: **The Land is Ours**

Contact Name: Mark. S. Brown

E-mail address: everythingincommon@tlio.demon.co.uk

Website address: www.thelandisours.org

Postal address: 16b Cherwell Street, Oxford OX4 1BG

Year of formation: 1995

Publications: The Land is Ours newsletter (Subscription: £1/donation per issue).

TLIO campaigns peacefully for access to the land, its resources, and the decision-making processes affecting them, for everyone, irrespective of race, gender or age.

Name of organisation: **International Communes Desk**

Contact Name: Anton Marks

E-mail address: anton@kvutsatyovel.com

Website address: www.communa.org.il

Postal address: Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal, Israel, 52960

Tel: 972 - 3 - 5344458, extension 4

Fax: 972 - 3 - 5346376

Year of formation: 1976

Publications: C.A.L.L. (Communes At Large Letter) - The bi-annual journal of the International Communes Desk features articles, stories, jokes and updates from communities all over the world.

Aims/Objectives:

- To spread the communal idea, in its many forms, out of the belief that the communal way of life is not only possible, but essential for the benefit of mankind.
- To maintain contact with as many as possible communes and intentional communities, in order to learn about their life styles and exchange information, opinions and ideas for mutual benefit.
- To provide an address for people from all over the world, who are seeking advice and information about the kibbutz in its different aspects and about communities the world over (including help in making contact for those wishing to visit a community or join one).

Name of organisation: **CLASS WAR, Auckland**

E-mail address: classwar@rome.com

Website address: <http://go.to/ClassWar>

Postal address: : P.O. Box 78-104, Grey Lynn, New Zealand 1032.

An anarchist group in Auckland city, New Zealand. For details on our present campaigns, please visit the website or contact us.

Name of organisation: **Industrial Workers of the World (US)**

E-mail address: ghq@iww.org

Website address: www.iww.org

Postal address: P.O.Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101, USA

Tel: (215)222-1905

Year of formation: 1905

Publications: Industrial Worker (10 issues per annum - US\$15)

Aims/Objectives:

The IWW is a member-run union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities. IWW members are organizing to win better conditions today and build a world with economic democracy tomorrow. We want our workplaces run for the benefit of workers and communities rather than for a handful of bosses.

Name of organisation: **Industrial Workers of the World (UK)**

E-mail address: info@iww.org.uk

Website address: www.iww.org.uk

Postal address: IWW, PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ, UK

The Industrial Workers of the World is a union run directly by its members, promoting global solidarity and direct action for the abolition of capitalist wage slavery.

Name of organisation: **Redline Publications**

Contact Name: Jim Plant

E-mail address: socliterature@btopenworld.com

Postal address: PO Box 6700, Sawbridgeworth, CM 21 0BS, UK

Fax: 01279 726970

Year of formation: 2001

Publications: The People, paper of the Socialist Labor Party of America, 6 issues surface mail £3.00, airmail £9.00, 12 issues surface £5.00, airmail &17.00. Free sample copy upon request.

Aims/Objectives:

Publication & distribution of socialist literature, particularly publications of the Socialist Party of America, but also a wide selection of other titles in the non-reformist, non-stateist, non-Leninist, non-Trotskyist tradition. Free illustrated catalogue available upon request.

Name of organisation: **New Union Party**

E-mail address: nup@minn.net

Website address: www.newunionparty.org

Postal address: 1821 University Avenue, W. #S-116, Saint Paul, MN 55104, USA

Tel: 651-646-5546

Year of formation: 1980

Publications: New Unionist (monthly[?]) US\$7 for 12 issues)

Aims/Objectives:

The New Union Party is an organization of men and women who are committed to building a rank-and-file working-class movement for fundamental social change. Our goal is to replace the present competitive, class-divided system of capitalism with the cooperative industrial community we call economic democracy, a society where the people will be in direct democratic control of their work, their workplaces and the product of their work.

Name of organisation: **Socialist Labor Party**

E-mail address: socialists@slp.org

Website address: www.slp.org

Postal address: P.O.Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218, USA

Tel: (408)280-7266 *Fax:* (408)280-6964

Year of formation: 1890

Publications: The People (bimonthly - \$5 per year)

Aims/Objectives:

The SLP's goal is a classless society based on collective ownership and control of the industries and social services, these to be administered in the interests of all society through a Socialist Industrial Union government composed of democratically elected representatives from all the industries and services of the land. Production would be carried on for use instead of profit. The SLP program for achieving revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism is based on the Marxist tenet that socialism can be achieved only through the class-conscious action "of the working class itself".

Name of organisation: **Workers Solidarity Alliance**

E-mail address: WSANY@hotmail.com

Website address: www.workersolidarity.org

Postal address: 339 Lafayette St., Room 202, New York, NY 10012, USA

Tel: 212-979-8353

Fax: 973-773-9337

Year of formation: 1984

Publications: Ideas and Action (suspended)

Aims/Objectives:

WSA is an anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian organization of activists who believe that working people can build a new society and a better world based on the principles of solidarity and self-management. Our view is that such a society will be brought about only by working people building their own self-managed mass organizations from the ground up. Independent working class organization exists to some extent today in the form of rank-and-file committees, tenants unions, workers centers and other formations that might represent the forerunner of such a movement.

Name of organisation: **World Socialist Movement (WSM)**

E-mail address: enquiries@worldsocialism.org

Website address: www.worldsocialism.org/

Postal address: c/o Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN, England

Tel: 020 7622 3811 *Fax:* 020 7720 3665

Year of formation: 1904

Publications: Socialist Standard (Monthly journal of the Socialist Party - 1 year sub £12)

Aims/Objectives:

The World Socialist Movement is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organizing democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society we advocate. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

Name of organisation: **The Socialist Party of Great Britain (Ashbourne Court Group)**

E-mail address: enquiries@spgb.org.uk

Website address: www.spgb.org.uk/

Postal address: 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB, UK

Year of formation: 1991

Publications: Socialist Studies (50p per issue)

Aims/Objectives:

Object: the establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Name of organisation: **Bureau of Public Secrets**

E-mail address: knabb@slip.net

Website address: www.bopsecrets.org

Postal address: P.O. Box 1044, Berkeley CA 94701, USA

Year of formation: 1973

Publications: Situationist International Anthology (texts by the group that triggered the May 1968 revolt in France); Public Secrets (collected skirmishes of Ken Knabb); occasional leaflets, pamphlets, etc.

Aims/Objectives:

“Making petrified conditions dance by singing them their own tune.”

Name of organisation: **Aufheben**

Website address: www.geocities.com/aufheben2

Postal address: Aufheben, Brighton & Hove Unemployed Workers Centre, PO Box 2536 Rottingdean, BRIGHTON BN2 6LX, UK

Publications: Aufheben

Aims/Objectives:

The magazine is an attempt to develop revolutionary theory/practice, based on but we hope superseding the traditions of the left communists, autonomia and situationists.

Name of organisation: **Processed World Magazine**

Contact Name: Chris Carlsson

E-mail address: processedworld@yahoo.com

Website address: www.processedworld.com

Telephone/Fax number: 415-626-2060 (tel) 415-626-2685 (fax, call first)

Postal address: 1095 Market Street, Suite 210, San Francisco, CA 94103

Year of formation: 1980

Publications: Processed World published 3x/yr. between 1981 and 1994, then once in 2001 and we plan a new issue this year (2004), currently planned on the theme of “USSA: Living in a Dying Empire” but subject to later revision.

Aims/Objectives:

We currently plan to publish occasionally as we see fit, depending on energy, ideas and money. The circle of friends around Processed World, which goes back nearly a quarter of a century, has been known to engage in various activities, including art attacks, street theater, flyering, attending Big Summits of the Powers that Be to engage in opposition, public discussions, postering projects, billboard alteration, subversive advertising campaigns, digital lost history projects... and so on and so forth...

Name of organisation: **Freedom Press***E-mail address:* info(at)freedompress.org.uk*Website address:* www.freedompress.org.uk*Telephonenumber/Fax number:* 020 7247 9249*Postal address:* 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX*Year of formation:* 1886*Publications:* Freedom newspaper, out every 2 weeks, subs £10 claimants, £14 standard, write to us for a free copy*Aims/Objectives:*

Freedom is an independent anarchist publisher. We produce a newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, and we publish books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice. We run Britain's largest anarchist bookshop in East London, house the Autonomy Club meeting host an open-access computer suite. As anarchists we work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished.

Name of organisation: **enrager.net***E-mail address:* admin(at)enrager.net*Website address:* www.enrager.net*Postal address:* enrager, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX*Year of formation:* 2003*Aims/Objectives:*

enrager.net is an online resource about all aspects of anti-capitalism and anti-authoritarianism. It contains clear information about basic ideas and history, as well as pretty comprehensive listings of groups in Britain, a newswire with both up-to-the-minute syndicated news and more detailed analysis, organising tips about how to start a local group, produce a newsletter or resist in the workplace, lively discussion forums to link up with people in your area, help plan events, and chat about anything from politics to music to monkeys, and much more besides. Check it out!

Name of organisation: **Autonomedia***Contact Name:* **Jim Fleming***E-mail address:* info@autonomedia.org*Website address:* www.autonomedia.org

Telephone/Fax number: 718-963-2603

Postal address: POB 568, Brooklyn, NY 11211-0568

Year of formation: 1984

Publications: 300 books

Aims/Objectives:

Not-for-profit small press specialized in radical media, politics and culture

Name of organisation: **International Communist Current**

E-mail address: international@internationalism.org

Website address: <http://www.internationalism.org>

Postal address: BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX

Year of formation : 1975

Publications: World Revolution (10 issues/year), International Review (Quarterly)

Aims/objectives:

The ICC is an international organisation of the communist left, with sections in 13 countries. Our political positions include the rejection of support for 'national liberation' struggles, participation in elections and support for the trade unions. In the face of imperialist war we call for internationalism: the rejection of support for any fraction of the bourgeoisie - whether 'aggressor' or 'defender'; for the rejection of pacifism; and for the solidarity of the international proletariat and its class war against capitalism and for communism.

Our activity

- 1) Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.
- 2) Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.
- 3) The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

Our origins

The ICC traces its origins to the successive contributions of the Communist League of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the International Workingmen's Association, 1864-72, the Socialist International, 1884-1914, the Communist International, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Lefts.

About World in Common

WE IN WORLD IN COMMON . . . Realize that only through mutual respect and solidarity among the groups that make up our political sector can we realize our common goals.

TOGETHER WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE . . . A global network of individuals and groups united by our opposition to capitalism and the state and by our search for practical alternatives.

WE HOLD THAT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES . . . represent the common criteria for eligibility to participate in the World in Common project:

- Opposition to all forms of Capitalism (past, present, local, global, state or 'free market')
- Its replacement by a classless, moneyless world community without borders or states and based upon:
 - common ownership and direct democratic control of the means of production;
 - a free access 'use' economy with production geared towards the satisfaction of human needs;
 - voluntary association, cooperation and the maximization of human creativity, dignity and freedom.
- A recognition that such an alternative society can only be established democratically from the 'bottom up' by the vast majority of people, without the intervention of leaders, politicians or 'vanguards.'
- A commitment to continue the process of contact and cooperation with other groups in our political sector. This does not mean ignoring that which makes us unique, rather that we should devote time and energy to building on what we have in common.

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