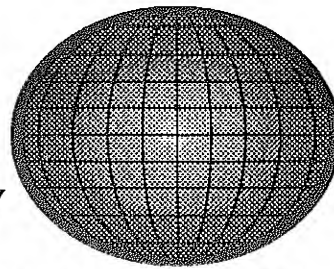
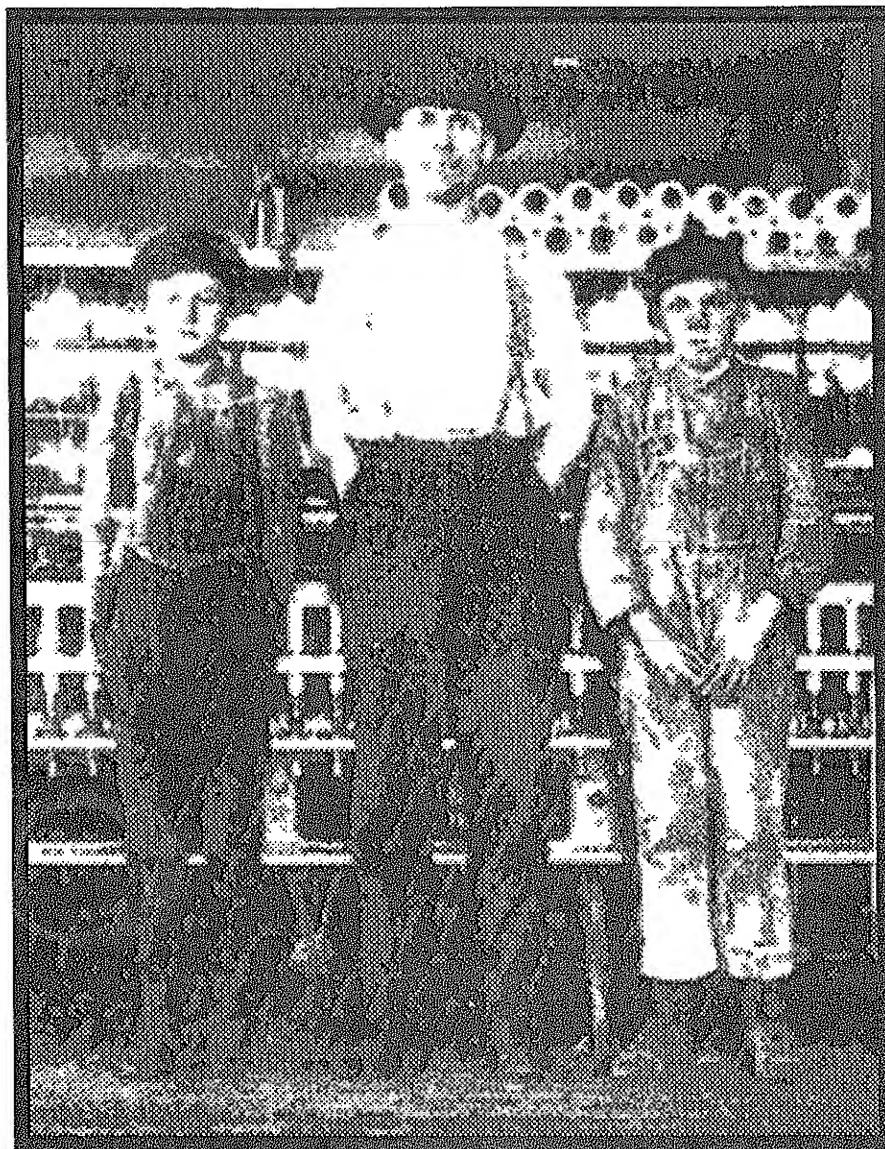


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"I do not believe anyone in this room would say that capitalism was evil. We believe that the society based upon the making of profits is stupid."

—Statement made following a debate on the subject: "Can the Profit System Ever Benefit the Interests of the Majority?" (1989)

Myths and fallacies

Asking the right questions

"I agree with everything you said, but I still think ..."

This is a relatively common end to a discussion of the socialist case, or parts thereof. The non-socialist has listened to the arguments from the socialist and finds no error in them. They all make sense, but the final results of the socialist case, somehow, just don't make sense to the non-socialist. We can define these "final results" as follows:

1) Capitalism has not existed through all of human history; 2) socialism, defined as the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution on a world scale, has never been tried; 3) the capitalist class, as a class, contributes almost nothing to the functioning of society; 4) capitalism is a system which inherently exploits the working class; 5) reformism doesn't work; 6) socialism is a desirable, practical society; 7) humans (at least the vast majority of them) are not lazy, vicious creatures; 8) the working class should work to establish socialism.

Points one through seven are also parts of the arguments and facts leading to point number eight but still deserve position as "final results" of the socialist case, for the purposes of this article.

The test of time

Considerable time and effort, and a reasonably large body of literature, suggest that the arguments are sound and do in fact logically lead to the results claimed. The World Socialist Movement has been using a basically unchanged line of reasoning and argument for more than 90 years, and it has stood the

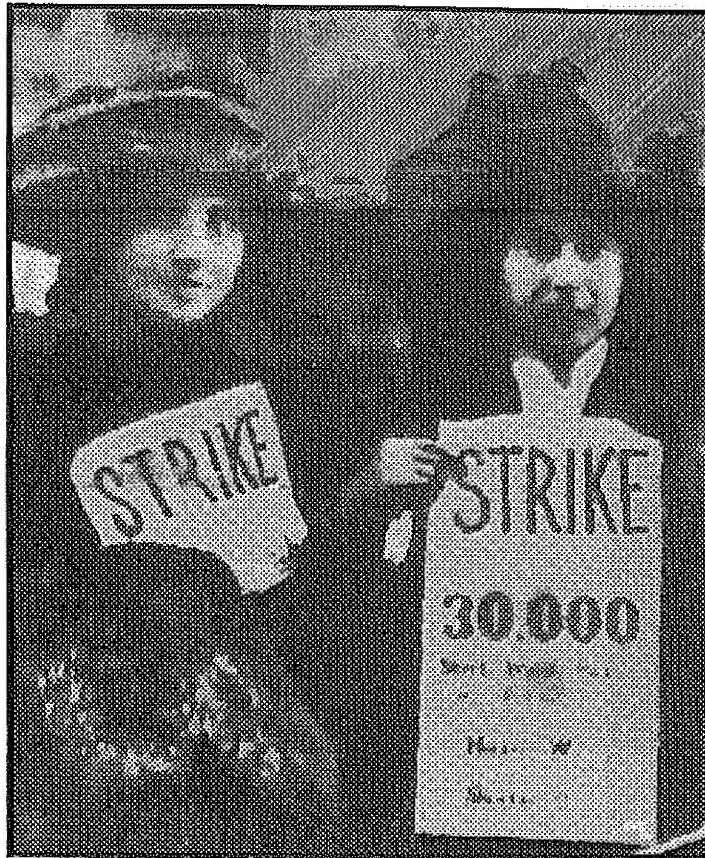
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1/spring 1997

TERMINATING the Class Struggle

G.A. Cohen, writing in *The Listener* (9/4/86, reprinted in *World Socialist Review* No. 3), said of Al Capp's lovable blobs, the shmooos, that "the capitalists weren't ready" for them, meaning that they represented a notion of universally accessible abundance flatly contradicting the capitalists' own crabbed, scroogey doctrine of "natural" scarcity. Capp himself, however, came to be quite a reactionary and even resented attempts to draw "revolutionary" lessons from his humor. So probably the shmoo signified for Capp the vision held by the capitalist of other human beings: infinitely disposable, always there when you want them for whatever purpose, ready and able to do, or be, exactly (and no more than) what you want, obligingly rolling over and turning into a meal at your wish. There is even a plethora of the cute little bastards!



Praise the boss!

For the capitalist, authentic "humanity" is conferred psychologically only on those who have crossed the threshold of capital ownership (presumably by "natural" selection!), on those whose labor power has ceased to be quantifiably measurable, rendering them assessable in only qualitative ways. Capitalists never have to worry about some time-study expert passing on the merits of their investment strategies. Everyone else "out there" is just a humanoid, reducible to a producer of a marketable surplus (owned by the capitalist human), to an owner of nothing but an ability to do work — on terms dictated by capital. Owning capital grants true humanity only to the few who can hoist themselves up to the magical realm of command inhabited by the investors of capital. Capitalists, as promoters of the employment system of

labor, do not see the cheapening and debasing effect their capital has on the people it reduces to a dependency on wages and salaries: for business purposes, they are constitutionally incapable of conceiving of wage-slaves in human terms, because that would imply accepting the socially contingent nature of profit-making.

In the November 8, 1995 *Thistle* (No. 13, produced by the Alternative News Collective at MIT), we read:

last Tuesday at noon about a thousand college students from UMass [University of Massachusetts]-Amherst, Framingham State College, Harvard, Wellesley, Roxbury Community College, Lesley, MIT, UMass-Boston, Northeastern [University], Bunker Hill Community College and other schools gathered in a raucous demonstration to protest the \$5-\$10B[illion] cuts from the annual \$31B federal financial aid budget for students ["1,000 Students Protest College Aid Cuts in Downtown Boston"].

Capital needs to make education about technology, technical innovations and

technology-related information generally available to society at large. But it only needs to open access to those developments to paying customers. It subsidizes education for a larger number of technically skilled operators and knowledgeable specialists than it actually requires, as well

as for a larger, more diffuse student body (inherited from the pre-capitalist past) of uncertain funding status in the liberal arts and social sciences. When the capitalists make a political project out of increasing one occupational category or another (as they did with teachers in the 60s and 70s during their catch-up-with-the-Soviets anxiety), it matters very little to them whether the number of people trained satisfy either their own needs or those for whose sake they were supposedly educated: we all remember how there came to be "too many Ph.D.'s" in the 70s— and what capital did about *them*.

If the number educated comes to be larger than required (or is already larger), then capital takes a jaundiced view of "excess" funding. If the spiral of funding cuts gets eventually to the point where capital can reproduce itself "adequately" with a relatively smaller core of technicians, specialists and managers, it will not worry itself about things like the needs of people who cannot obtain enough money: the unfortunates just stop existing as far as the economists can tell.

Down with workers!

The tendency of the capitalist class, as noted above, to see the working class as a collection of so many shmooos forms part of a larger ideological need to justify wage labor as part of nature's plan — a need that blinds the "master class" to the repercussions of radically reducing the number of people it employs. As Jeremy Rifkin writes: "For the first time in human history, human labor is being systematically eliminated from the economic process. In

the coming century employment, as we have come to know it, is likely to be phased out in most of the industrialized nations of the world" ("After Work," *Utne Reader*, May-June 1995).

The "social economy"

A subtle and persistent anemia pervades Rifkin's otherwise very provocative analysis, and that is his subscription to the conventional notion that an "economy" consists solely of transactions between owners of goods and services. An economy is a phase of social interaction that deals with the production and distribution of wealth; wealth is anything people find useful and derive some benefit from the use of. The market is not a separate sphere of activities from "community-building," as the distinction Rifkin makes between a market economy and a "social economy" implies. An economy requires no specific form of creating wealth, no specific form of owning wealth, no specific way in which work is done or production organized. A "social economy" is not therefore conceptually viable if it means simply all those activities people carry out that are not market-related. "Economy" is inherently part of social experience. No need exists to define the latter as a separate category from wealth production and distribution.

The hard reality

Rifkin says things that would might make even the typical businessman feel in over his head:

The hard reality that economists and politicians are reluctant to acknowledge is that manufacturing and much of the service sector are undergoing a transformation as profound as the one experienced by the agricultural sector at the beginning of the century, when machines boosted production, displacing millions of farmers. We are in the early stages of a long-term shift from "mass labor" to highly skilled "elite labor," accompanied by increasing automation in the production of goods and the delivery of services. Workerless factories and virtual companies loom on the horizon.

What gives his argument its punch is the radical economic and social implications the capitalists are courting in tinkering with their own numbers game:

William Winpisinger, past president of the International Association of Machinists, a union whose membership has shrunk nearly by half as a result of advances in automation, cites a study by the International Metalworkers Federation in Geneva forecast-

ing that within 30 years, as little as 2 percent of the world's current labor force "will be needed to produce all the goods necessary for total demand."

The pursuit of profit via the pressure of competition forces this on capitalists, of course. But at this point Rifkin pulls back from assessing the impact of his own statements in broader social terms. To speak of "reducing the number of human employees" as he does is a bureaucratic-sounding phrase for "eliminating jobs" (which is the point he is making), since "non-human employees" are necessarily machines, which means they are not employees at all. Since new surplus value can only be produced by "human employees" working in productive occupations, and since these are the very positions that will be getting auto-

The coming century promises to be a period of long and intense hand-wringing, as all the old clichés on which capitalist hegemony anchored itself dissolve by the very action of capital itself.

mated, this is just another way of saying that capital is approaching (asymptotically perhaps) an axis of "virtual surplus value" or "virtual profit." Increases in productivity will flatten out dramatically, but without the reason being admissible, because bad old Marxist economics will be "obsolete" (unless the "new Marxists" come to the rescue). "Non-human employees" constitute fixed capital, and so increases in productivity based exclusively on them are of relatively insignificant importance in the recycling of surplus value; a rate of profit that sinks to the replacement level, sufficing only to maintain the existing stocks of capital, does not exactly bode a glittering, exciting, dynamic future for the investors of capital.

Over the same three decades ahead of us, "green capitalism" will also begin to feel its oats. The timing for this will be most unfortunate for the profit makers, since it means they will have to squeeze the same profits out of means of production that have increased in their cost. Beyond a certain pressure to economize technologically,

capitalists will not be able to lower prices over a very long period of time without endangering their ability to stay in business. The alternative is either to pass the increased costs on to consumers or lose market share.

Ecological havoc

Peripherally Rifkin mentions capital's indifference toward the ecological havoc it has wrought. Even now, in the throes of triumph, outcries are going up over making the "new world order" pay its way in terms of ecological sustainability. Businessmen are doing their level best to evade (or at least defuse) the issue; but sooner or later it is obvious they will have to pay the costs of converting to sustainable production. It probably will require some new short-term (capitalist) paradigm: business schools should find it no problem to shift. Shrinking consumer bases do not bode well for this, however. Shrinking governments are reverting to their 19th-century shoulder-shrugging act toward workers ("you didn't pay for us, after all"). A "social economy" that takes up the cause in a spirit of volunteerism tapping on the "values of community" needs money to undertake its heroic assignment. If, however, the capitalists can't pay for it without threatening their profits, oops....

Recent articles in *Business Week* and the *New Yorker* (not to mention an entire series in the *New York Times*) ponder forebodingly a future of low-wage earning, increasingly insecure employment, reduced spending power and a general erosion of working-class security; they hint at the ghastly possibility that capital's hitherto unchallenged legitimacy could go into spontaneous political tailspin — an outcome the Left has only been able to dream of accomplishing. The coming century promises to be a period of long and intense hand-wringing, as all the old clichés on which capitalist hegemony anchored itself dissolve by the very action of capital itself. Can we expect to see, once Eastern Europe and China have yielded up their limited treasures to the machinery of profit, the onset of an era of defeatist gloom among the entrepreneurs of tomorrow?

Crisis of acceptance

Rifkin displays immense self-discipline in refraining from contemplating the crisis of acceptance implicit in projecting a very large majority of ex-workers, on the one hand, confronted by a yet leaner and meaner class of filthy-rich parasites, on the other. Yet that political face-off is socially the most significant datum of all. It is the material of which social revolutions are made.

In the 1950s, 33 percent of all U.S. workers were employed in manufacturing. Today less than 17 percent of the workforce is engaged in blue-collar work. Management consultant Peter Drucker estimates that employment in manufacturing is going to continue dropping to less than 12 percent of the U.S. workforce in the next decade. ... Drucker says quite bluntly that "the disappearance of labor as a key factor of production" is going to emerge as the critical "unfinished business of capitalist society." ... We are being swept up into a powerful new technological revolution that will set off a great social transformation unlike any other in history ... For the first time in modern history, large numbers of human beings could be liberated from long hours of labor to pursue leisure and community activities.

Rifkin displays in this article his characteristic talent for combining visionary prediction with short-sighted prescription. He defines the problem at the level of the world economy as a whole and then tailors his views to reflect conditions in the U.S. — leaving us to assume he means the same goes for the rest of the world. Business, however, is global only by accident. The globe is not the businessman's natural habitat: the market is. That the market system now covers the globe was never really the design of capital; it was certainly not a capitalist cabal. Markets, under capitalism, have to keep expanding over the long run. Is it not trying just a bit too hard, then, to include businessmen in the outcome of a revolution they have provoked ("we are being swept up"), when the logic of capitalist production throws up a global majority unable to buy its products because it has thoughtlessly gone and fired them all? And not only that, but it has done so in the pursuit of profit, which requires an adequately developed workforce deployed system-wide to produce value in excess of its subsistence requirements. Would it not be more logical to recognize that, with the globalization of capital-driven markets, the whole system of pro-

duction for profit has become anachronistic?

It is capital—the capitalist commanding his or her investments—that determines what the needs of each employable individual shall be, and who shall be employable. For capital to cast most of humanity into the outer, unemployable darkness (thereby placing a subsistence value of zero on them), and to concentrate on valuing the unpaid labor of an increasingly small

But the "death" of a class-divided society would be a good thing, and socialists enthusiastically endorse it. We demand an end to the employment system.

and unrepresentative sample of the human species, demonstrates a perversion of logic of terminal proportions. Rifkin, however, is up to the task of following this logic to its bitter end:

An income voucher would allow millions of unemployed Americans, working through thousands of neighborhood organizations, the opportunity to help themselves. Providing "a social wage" in return for community-service work would also benefit both business and government. Reduced unemployment would mean that more people could afford to buy goods and services [sic], which would spur more businesses to open up in poor neighborhoods [sic], creating additional jobs [sic].

All of the statements in Rifkin's article are adapted from his book, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era* (Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam). In a less pragmatic vein he writes in a "Special to *Utne Reader*":

The year is 2045 ... less than 20 percent of the adult population works full-time ... The values of the market economy that so dominated the industrial era have steadily given way to a new ethos based on personal transformation, community participation and global responsibility ... As more and more human beings were freed up from formal work in the market economy and began doing community service in the social economy [sic], the values of community began to gain dominance across America and around the world. ["Choosing Our Future," *Utne Reader*, May/June 1995].

One melodramatic pull-quote poses the issue somewhat hyperbolically: "The end of work could mean the death of civilization or the beginning of a great social transformation." But the "death" of a class-divided society, i.e., civilization with its multitude of sophisticated barbarities, would be a good thing, and socialists enthusiastically endorse it. We demand an end to the employment system. Jeremy Rifkin, on the other hand, likes to think capital could be persuaded to usher in the new era, continuing a tradition initiated by Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward* in 1888.

Wittingly or otherwise, Rifkin implies, when he projects a future in which "less than 20 percent of the adult population works full time," that the possibilities for market expansion can come to be insignificant and to cease being the marching anthem of a system he never gets around to naming (capitalism). Forecasting the "end of work" (the reduction of paid labor in the "first sector" of production for profit), unfortunately, spells the end of economic growth to any meaningful extent. It portends the end of business, too.

Historic terminus

The authorities Rifkin cites are in effect postulating that capital's era of economic growth has reached its limits and will soon come to rest at an historic terminus. Small wonder he thinks "powerful vested interests are likely to resist the idea of providing a social wage in return for community service"! Growth is the sine qua non of a market system. For capital, no-growth equals no-profits. No profits, no production. Capitalists have publicized very loudly their aversion to the idea of attaching non-market burdens to the vehicle of their self-advancement. The whole logic of automation in fact expresses this aversion: business has always pushed automation precisely because it does not reckon in terms of social costs.

Rifkin asks us to picture a "post-market age" in which businessmen still hang around employing people and are still the linchpins of the social organization yet retain very few claims any longer on the

loyalty, sympathy or opportunism of the unemployable majority. Capital would have to pay for Rifkin's social economy, complete with income vouchers. Like Bellamy, he begs the whole question: why keep money at all? Rifkin would undoubtedly cringe at the thought of saying so openly, but the implicit cutoff of capital's historic growth curve leads directly to the sobering question, why do we need capital around anyhow?

Can civilization "die"?

The "death of civilization" would not be a real death, but would only concern capital's obvious mishandling of what the society it had shaped took to be capital's responsibilities. It would launch a great social transformation. The only thing that "expires" is the use of capital to produce wealth: the legitimacy of production for profit. More positively, if we are really thinking about the future now (about our own comfort as a society, a "global village"), we should be turning to the consideration of how to organize the basis of human activity *without* capital. The main question after that is how to keep the world capital has commanded us to make from keeling over until we can work out of society all the residual poisons that the pursuit of profit has infused.

Rifkin's projection, "The good life in the post-market age," speaks of "values of community [gaining] dominance across America and around the world." A world market that supplies all of the world's wealth yet requires only a fifth (or, realistically, some larger fraction) of the world's labor has become an entity of questionable legitimacy. His scenario is not for all that a preposterous one, but he does miss the point that producing wealth is what society is economically all about to begin with. A "social economy" that has gained "dominance" over a "market economy" has, in effect, ousted the entrepreneurs and investors from their control over governments — which, he says in the body of the article, capitalists have caused to "wither away" by superseding governmental functions with their own (corporate) economics.

But if at the same time they have been

busy economizing their way out of a consumer base adequate to the recycling of the surplus-value they need for reinvestment and commercial expansion, have been making themselves socially ugly and politically unpopular, and have painted themselves into a corner that virtually spells the end of economic growth (and thus of significant capital accumulation), society can only judge that capital has ceased to be of crucial importance as a way of organizing the supply of human needs.

A society in which capital occupies merely "consulting" status is no longer under the thumb of the market system. If the marketplace has come to occupy a role significant only to a minority within society (all capitalists and some workers), then the time has arrived when society must decide whether it wants to continue sanctioning the interests of that minority (or more precisely, of those minorities). Deciding in the negative signifies deciding for the abolition of social classes altogether — accomplished through the abolition of wages and capital. Since jobs are the core commodity in the buying and selling that goes on in the marketplace (the buying and selling of people's working abilities), the decline of employment means the decline of the market system and therefore implies an urgent need to emancipate work in

The people who produce the wealth have to own the economy — which is possible only if "enterprises" use no capital and "working people" do not have to work (or do anything else) to get what they need.

general from employment slavery.

"Some of the wealth from the high-tech revolution," Rifkin imagines in 2045, "is also being shared with people in the developing nations." There are, then, "developing nations" in the "post-market" world. This implies: (a) they are accumulating capital and (b) their supply of capital is smaller than in the "developed" nations.

(c) "Sharing some of the wealth" also suggests they are poorer than we are. If, however, development has reached its historic terminus, if the poorer populations of the no-longer-very-developing countries had already come to be impoverished as a result of having gotten on capital's payroll, and if the capitalist marketplace is now sinking into a minority status (albeit a still critical one) in the developed countries — can a "social economy" actually exist in the "developing nations"? Do we detect in the gap separating the "post-market" economies from the still-developing ones the latter's permanent inferiority? Rifkin concentrates on how the developed economies could handle the transition without considering the need of all people everywhere to benefit from it simultaneously.

Unemployment nightmare

Already in the closing years of the 20th century (scarcely 50 years before Jeremy Rifkin's dream date), an unemployment nightmare of world-historic dimensions has grown out of capital's happy experiment with people's lives. Again, it is not so off-the-wall to speak of "sharing the wealth": but the wealth has to be produced for the *purpose* of being shared. A separate but equal "social economy" functioning alongside the profit-economy will not do the trick. It has no mechanisms, no process flows, no cyclic reproduction, for carrying the whole thing off. It depends strictly on capital's sense of noblesse oblige. The people who produce the wealth have to own the economy — which is possible only if "enterprises" use no capital and "working people" do not have to work (or do anything else) to get what they need. If Rifkin means that the present owners of the means of production are the ones who will suffer this to be thrust on them by the

compelling verdict of history, he is forgetting why capitalists go into business (to make a profit) and how they do business (suck surplus-value out of the working abilities of their employees).

It is ordinary people alone who can undertake to realign the wealth production

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billionaire hardball

The summer of 1994 saw "America's pastime" jettisoned at mid-season. This marked a most bizarre, and even to this day, unpredictable turn of events. Compounding the confusion and bitter bewilderment of baseball fans all across America was the startling fact that both sides in the conflict — the team owners and the players — were making more money, prior to the strike, than any of their predecessors.

Karl Marx would have been most amused at the spectacle of millionaires who "labor" at playing a kids' game six months out of the year striking against billionaires who could spend \$5,000 a day for over a thousand years and still have money to spend for a couple of thousand more years; squabbling over who should get what future increased percentage of future revenues. In the post-atomic age of the microchip technological revolution, supply-side economic theorems, etc., the class struggle lives on.

Cold shower

It ground to a halt, in this sacred bastion of the American culture, the voyeuristic enthusiasm of millions of Mike and Mary Middleclass's (much to their dismay), who would daily cram into stadiums and sports bars, spending over a billion dollars annually on things related to this "game." A bit

of excitement and fantasy in their limited lives. For a couple of hours you could escape, be totally caught up in cheering "your" team on to victory. You could actually leave the arena or television set with a good feeling inside that like "your" team, you too were a "winner" in this culture of losers. But not anymore! The very grind that you sought relief from has smothered even this fleeting personal satisfaction.

Heroes for hire

The rude awakening is likewise for the players as well. They were riding the ride of every schoolboy's dream: to keep on playing the game and get a comparatively lavish lifestyle for their efforts. Now ignore just for a minute the illogic of an economic system that rewards these men so richly for doing something that in and of itself is useless. All the while in the real world people are "rewarded" with poverty for doing socially indispensable tasks such as ... well, you can name almost any occupation that impacts your life directly, and it is performed by wage-slaves who can only dream about what some of these guys make. These apostles of hype have transcended the everyday grind of the class struggle that we must endure: ironically, only to be put down by the very class struggle they

thought they had escaped (Twilight Zone-style, admittedly, but class struggle nonetheless).

The owners and players clashed so hard that their interest was knocked clean out of the ballparks and crashed in on the National Hockey League (NHL) arenas. The hockey-team owners locked the players out until they would agree to the same demands that the baseball players were striking against. Many IHL [International Hockey League] players were drafted up into the NHL big leagues, thinking that their schoolboy fantasy had come true, only to find out that there would be no NHL games or even a season to play in. They had mastered a profession that evaporated like a mirage just as they stepped into its highest level.

Unraveling of the "games"

An enigmatic plot twist that seems as though it came from the combined subconscious ethos of Karl Marx and Rod Serling. But this isn't one man's nightmare run amok. This is life in the 90s. The unraveling of these "games" just goes to show that no matter how new the world order, how big the pie, how solid the supply, how great the tax break, life under capitalism is just not enough for human satisfaction.

If these hype-driven heroes making so much doing so little feel they don't have it made and their billionaire bosses making even more for doing absolutely nothing socially useful or entertaining can't get "enough," what makes you think you are ever going to work or entrepreneur yourself into making it in this system? Well, the simple answer is to lower your sights and Praise the Lord for the culture of limitations. By accepting second-best and a life of servitude as your highest ambition, you will succeed in grasping/stooping to it.

Unlike Rod Serling, on the other hand, socialists argue that we should all go beyond aspiring to a fool's satisfaction. We should all team up to win this social game of class struggle once and for all. For we have only our frustrations and limitations to lose — and the ultimate human satisfaction of winning not just the game but the world.

—W.J. Lawrimore

GET TO WORK, SLAVES!

Few types of literature put capitalist views on class struggle with such explicit and appalling candor as that dealing with "disciplinary problems" in the workplace. With economic development has come a certain mellowing in the shrill tone of the anti-employee diatribes of the 19th-century class-warhawks; but it has lost none of its virulence or its domineering aspiration, for it self-consciously promotes the atmosphere of coercion that justifies unpaid labor as the source of capitalist profit.

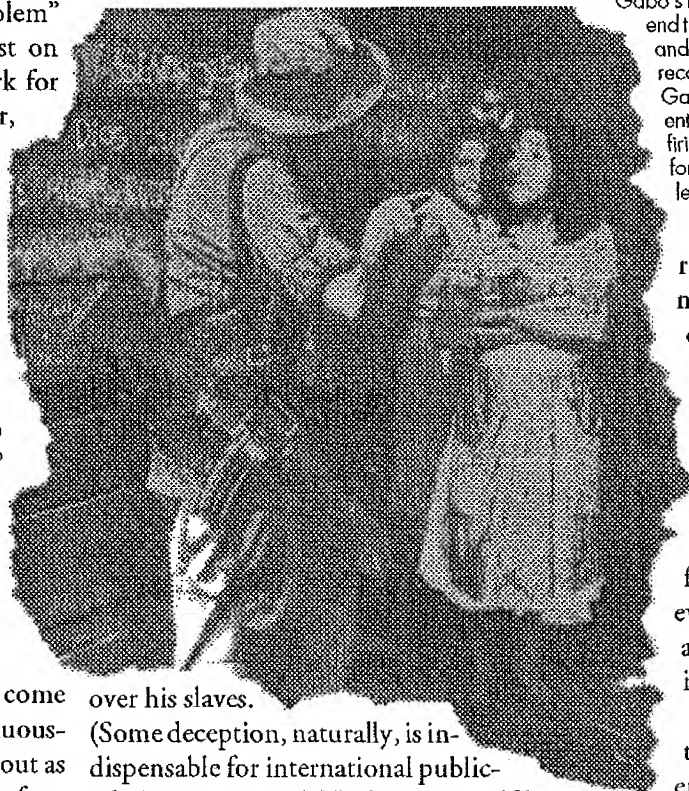
The American Management Association (AMA), "the nation's #1 business trainer!" according to its brochure titled "How to legally fire employees with attitude problems," is selling a one-day seminar teaching businessmen how to make bad workers go away. In a union-busting age the brochure has no trouble placing a color of soap-operatic individualism on the "problem" of shutting employees up who insist on being unhappy about having to work for their living. You do have to wonder, however, how an audience of unionized workers would receive AMA's "powerful public speakers ... unmatched in their ability to deliver clear, concise presentations" or whether these speakers would have much luck training them "quickly and thoroughly."

When you put these two qualities together, you can bet you'll get training professionals who are on-target and inspirational, and who will provide you with a wealth of valuable information that you can begin using immediately to boost your professional success.

Yes, as a managerial employee yourself, YOU can succeed by mastering the techniques for badgering troublemakers, and those techniques come neatly packaged with all the disingenuousness of a do-it-yourself manual — about as friendly as a cannibal's cookbook. In fact, the AMA brochure has all the antiseptic odor of a nice, clean prime time sitcom. In telling you how to "protect yourself," "take the stress out of firing" and "build a 'litigation-smart' termination case" when you "stop trying to deal with employees who drive you crazy," the brochure tidily sidesteps the messy problem of why employers have employees to confront in the first place.



In El Salvador, where capitalism made its Liberal-authoritarian debut in the last century, employers take a somewhat more forthright approach to repressing the employee within, reverting to a barely concealed assertion of the rights of a slaveholder



over his slaves. (Some deception, naturally, is indispensable for international public-relations purposes.) No do-it-yourself kits or soap operas for these gentlemen:

Gabo El Salvador forces its workers to work up to 100 hours a week, cheats them of overtime pay, and then pockets their legally required health payments. At 7 am on March 1, Julia Esperanza Quintinnia was refused permission to go home when she fell ill. At 11 pm that night, still working on the production line, she died of gastroenteritis. Co-workers who attended her funeral the next day were fired — and then the workers went out on strike, shutting down the plant and the entire free trade zone. [Human Rights Alert Bulletin, National Labor Committee, 7/1/95]

You might well ask why a woman should be so attached to working for employers like that, that she should feel compelled to work even though working endangered her life. But unless we are to understand that guards physically prevented workers from leaving the premises, the report seems to imply that refusing workers permission to go home sick meant only they would be fired, not massacred, if they left. But you need next to no reflection to remind you that this sort of subjection is normal for capitalism everywhere. It may not be as bad in one place as it is in another, but it is having to endure it *at all* that marks the wage-earning slave.

On the other hand, as the NLC bulletin makes clear, coordinated action by organized workers has something to do with forcing employers to contend with troublemakers in the work force.

Gabo's management had to sign an agreement to end the abuses and allow workers to organize, and in early April [1995], a union was recognized by the Salvadoran government. Gabo's response was to illegally lock out the entire union leadership on April 27, then start firing union members. Management is now forcing workers to sign union resignation letters or resign.

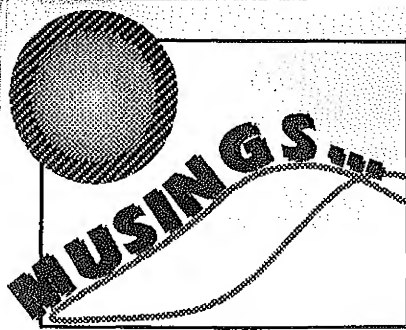
At another factory ("Mandarin"), management deployed its not inconsiderable powers of coercion and intimidation to combat the first union organized within the country's free trade zone (in January 1995), locking them out, firing them and darkly conveying that "blood will flow" if the union stayed; as at the Gabo factory, management was using every trick in the book to make it appear as if workers were distancing themselves from the union.

How a union could do worse by them than their loving, attentive employers requires a pretty wild imagination:

Pay adds up to less than 25 percent of the cost of living for a family of four. Women working there report that they cannot afford enough food for their children.

Which brings us back to being "stuck with problem employees like" Susan, Tom and Lisa in the metropolis. These problem employees come from a working-class

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RIGHTS & RULES

In response to the 1995 Oklahoma bombing and the threat of more terrorist activity, the lawmakers are giving the law-enforcers more power and the courts swifter and more severe punishment for those found guilty. There are those who fear this will infringe on the "rights" of the average citizen; rights guaranteed by the constitution.

We have all heard the expression, "fight for your rights." The question I have is fairly obvious: if we are guaranteed our rights, why must we fight for them? ... This deserves a derisive chuckle, don't you think?

How many laws have been enacted in the past 200 years? For whatever reason, a law compels you to refrain from some activity or at times compels you to do something against your wishes, such as paying your taxes each year or perhaps serving time in the military. If you are bent on breaking the law about killing people, military service may be your cup of tea: the more people you kill, the more medals you get. Extraordinary, but true.

In the world today there are millions of folks who rely on profits, interest and rents for their livelihood; these people are called capitalists. Most of them are akin to "Mom and Pop" establishments, but there are others who are multi-billionaires. (You can guess who

are the real lawmakers in their respective countries.) In their quest for profits they are twisting arms all over the world, bolstering their bankrupt neighboring nations so that the capitalist system is not jeopardized — a great system that leaves little concern for the average citizen's "rights."

The average citizen, however, has at his disposal a very powerful lever called the ballot box. If the majority of the eligible voters agreed on one course of action and expressed themselves at the polls, they could mold the world into a fit place to live, devoid of war's machinery, poverty and exploitation.

Someone once said, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to gain." He said this about 150 years ago, but you were not listening then. Your time to take action may be running out. There are those who wonder if the human species could survive a nuclear conflict; in the cosmic scheme of things our demise would matter little. The planet would continue its orbit around the sun for many more millions of years, unaffected by the antics of puny earthlings.

JOB COMPETITION

Some thoughts occurred to me in regard to the inability of workers, young and old alike, to find jobs providing an adequate livelihood, and one that does not degenerate into something less than adequate. Their quest is destined to be an insurmountable task, firstly, because the capitalist system has been noted for relentlessly grinding jobs down to monotonous, degrading and ever more distasteful work of the most mun-

dane nature. The dawn of the computer age has accelerated the process immensely.

The laws of economics can not be ignored. The value of a commodity is reduced in direct proportion to the amount of socially necessary labor time used up in its production. The capitalist must sell more at reduced prices. Production is ultimately curtailed by the inability of the market to purchase. No sale, no production ... no jobs. Around the globe, capitalism (capital and wage labor, for one cannot exist without the other) continually produces a large army of unemployed workers who must survive on welfare. Those who are not on

cheaply as possible — in spite of which the markets become saturated; sales are limited by people's ability to buy, while warehouses threaten to burst at the seams. Such are the effects of production for profit. The writing is on the wall: large corporations are merging; others are declaring bankruptcy; cities, counties and states are crying poverty. Little by little, the topmost ranks of the capitalists are being depleted through consolidation — "the expropriators become expropriated."

Sadly, the young folks today are faced with a "tougher row to hoe." Conditions must worsen: more and more jobs will require less and less skill, and wages (or



welfare must starve; millions die each year of capital-induced poverty. In this country, since the Kennedy era, many people, mostly black, have been forced off the welfare rolls and "mainstreamed" into even worse poverty and insecurity. Another factor to consider is the fact that since 1960 the number of women entering the workforce has increased by 50 percent.

Competition among the world's capitalists requires that commodities be produced as

salaries) will respond to these changes. I recall an author who forecast this problem some 150 years ago, who said, "The forest of outstretched arms entreating for work grows ever thicker, and the arms themselves grow ever leaner." He also had a solution: "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have a world to win. Sadly, you were not listening."

...Perhaps it is not too late?

A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE

All work done in this society called capitalism can be classified as necessary, because no employer would pay for unnecessary work. We must assume that all the work we do is "useful" — in the defense industry, the prison system, advertising, banking, brokerages, the judicial system and many more activities that do not produce "wealth." I regard wealth as something tangible, like a jumbo jet or silk stockings.

Socialists advocate the establishment of a system of production for *use* rather than the present system of production for *profit*. It would result in all the above work becoming unnecessary. These workers could then spend their time building jumbo jets or perhaps making silk stockings ... or whatever.

I dare say that there are millions of folks engaged in professional sports, music, movie making and many other fields of what we call entertainment. The boss obviously thinks that this is a useful part of his system. I would think that it makes the worker's life more tolerable, and this is the main reason for its existence, though I'm sure the

boss likes to be entertained also. The socialist has no objection to being entertained. Since there would be no money involved in a socialist society, the entertainers would be truly dedicated to what they do.

In a socialist society, as in any other society, mankind must, as the first requirement, produce necessities such as food, clothing and shelter; after that, anything goes — perhaps a trip to the moon? It all depends on your priorities.

I urge you to give some thought to the establishment of socialism ... where fabulous salaries, dividends, landlords and bosses will no longer exist: no wars, no countries, no national boundaries. Instead, a worldwide community of people who for the first time will be able to control their destiny (within the limits of time and space).

With the aid of nature, the workers of the world produce everything you see around you, everything, I mean everything. Why must we buy what we produce? Socialists want free access to all goods produced, owning everything in common with all five and a half billion of our neighbors: true democracy, an administration of things, not a

You said it (continued from page 7)

population that can no longer afford for only one of the spouses in most households to be working. Workers go on producing continually more over the years, yet they run from the threat of a poverty that seems only to go on spreading.

It makes no difference whether the employees management sees as causing trouble live in the antiseptic U.S. or in gangrenous El Salvador. Capitalism sees trouble wherever workers cost too much, because maximizing profit ultimately depends on minimizing costs. And as the inevitable falling out between employees and employers proves only too brilliantly, splitting people into two classes with divergent interests leads to only one future: the wrong future.

While Left and Right may sharpen their analytical tools and expand their organizing skills pitting themselves against each other in relentless struggle, workers themselves really com-

governing of beings.

Raise your sights, folks. Make it happen....

—W.H.

mand only one skill in their struggle against capital: their ability to see themselves as human beings who deserve more than capital can afford to let them have.

Aimed by a sufficient majority of the world's people at eliminating the use of capital in the production of wealth, this knowledge would be a force before which all the world's armies would stand useless. The force of human intelligence needed to meet the survival requirements of the human community globally, by comparison, would make the centralized, top-down power of the capitalist class look quaint and parochial, not to mention hopelessly inadequate to the task. The rule of capital presents us with a history of gradually weakening human intelligence globally in the making of decisions affecting the life of the whole society. The time has arrived for the vast majority to shed their Stupid-Training and put on their political thinking caps and end the practice of letting minorities persuade them that they need to be ruled.

—Ron Elbert

Terminating the class struggle (continued from page 5)

process so that its basic purpose is to share out the wealth produced among the peoples who make up the world community. This includes workers in all branches of production, their "underclass" colleagues and those who merely work without producing wealth; taken altogether, these are in effect the "new parliament" speaking for the world's actual producers, and it is at this level that all sharing (on a world scale) will have to be done. But mere "employees" could never undertake to impose that criterion on their employers. Workers can only decide to share the wealth if they

themselves control the process of generating and distributing it: if, in other words, acting as or on behalf of the real producers, they eliminate their employers. Labor will first have to abolish capital for any social transformation to take place. But then there will be no question of "economic growth" at all anymore: only of satisfying people's needs, in the context of whatever challenges face the global human community.

For capital, the class struggle is a game not to be won or lost, or even played well. What counts for the capitalist class is to *keep everyone playing the game*: capitalists

usually win, even when they fold. The interest of the working class — of all the world's working people — is to *stop* playing the game, because that is the interest of society as a whole, of the world's human community. (If capitalists could recognize their own social nature, which, as the case Robert Owen shows, is not impossible, they could also appreciate this, even if that insight alone would not make them cease to be exploiters.) It is really up to the working class to make the end-move. Let history record that we were *not* a bunch of shmooos.

—A.D.

Letters on Socialism

The following two letters, written by socialists to their local newspapers, found their way into our mailbox not too long ago. We reprint them here to show that, even with a tightening corporate lock on the free expression of opinion in the media, it really is possible to put the case for socialism before thousands of readers who have never before heard of it. Any other comrades who write letters to editors (whether or not they get them printed) can send copies on to the World Socialist Review, and we will print them, too.

The first letter is addressed to the editor of the Santa Maria Times (California), and the second, to the Arizona Daily Star of Tucson, Arizona.

MARX MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT*

I'm going to garner a few passages from a book written 150 years ago ... I write in response to the article, "Working with nothing to show."

The "division of labor" has been going on for more than 150 years ... One author explained what was happening and what would continue to happen, and I quote, "the special skill of the laborer becomes worthless. It is changed into a monotonous force which gives play to neither bodily nor to intellectual elasticity, his labor becomes accessible to all." He goes on, "In the same measure, therefore, in which labor becomes more unsatisfactory and more repulsive, in that same proportion, competition increases and wages decline." And again, "the capitalists vie with one another as to who can discharge the greatest number of employees."

He adds a little humor: "If the whole

class of wage-workers were annihilated by machinery, how terrible that would be for 'capital,' which without wage-labor ceases to be 'capital'."

"Thus the forest of outstretched hands entreating for work becomes ever thicker, and the arms themselves become ever leaner ... Crises increase and become more violent."

The author whom I have been quoting was Karl Marx, and of course we all know that the owners of the communication networks would never give any supportive information about him ... I simply write to let you know that the present conditions were forecast many years ago and they will certainly get worse.

No one can fix Capitalism.

—William Hewitson

* Heading added by the editor.

THE CLASSLESS SOCIETY

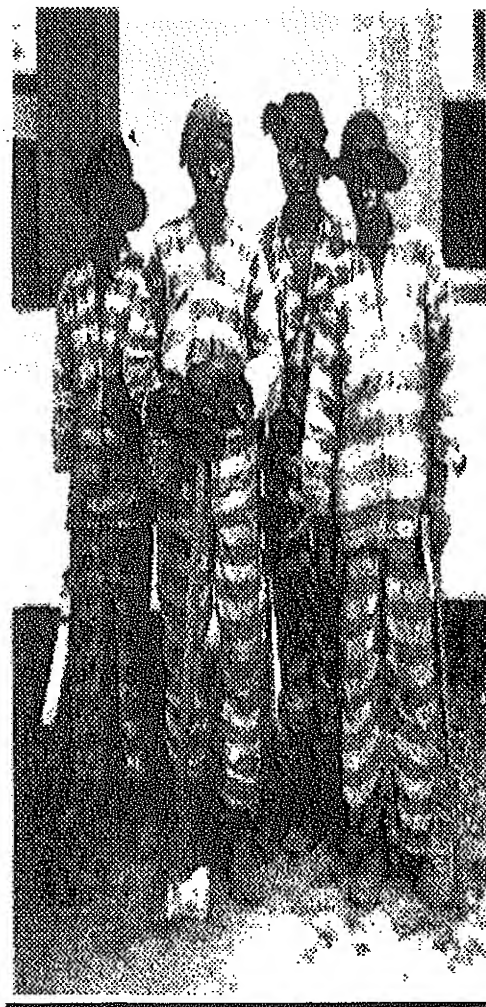
I can still recall my first encounter with racism. It occurred many decades ago at an English elementary school when I was called "Jew-boy."

But I also recall that throughout my life there has not been one day without either a major or minor war. Poverty (which is the economic status of the working class compared to that of the capitalist class) has been continuous and pervasive worldwide —

together with unemployment, insecurity and, of course, racism.

All these social evils have been, and always will be, impervious to reformism for their eradication.

I ask the rhetorical question. What is there so sacrosanct about capitalism that the accusing finger is never pointed at it as the culprit and cause of all these prevailing miseries — except by only a handful of the



population?

As long as the vast majority does not understand how capitalism functions, scapegoats and racism will flourish as red herrings, diverting the working class from its historic mission — the peaceful and democratic elimination of capitalism.

Technologically, wealth can be produced with comparative ease to satisfy the needs of all. Buying, selling and profit are therefore no longer required. They should be replaced with production and distribution solely for use with free access to all goods and services, eliminating money and the wages system.

This will never happen until the world working class realizes, amongst a multitude of other concepts, that the society's fundamental problem is its division into classes — not races. We all belong to only one race — the human race, and we merit a new system of society worthy of our potential and intelligence.

—Samuel Leight

Socialism—a classless, wageless, moneyless society with free access to all goods and services—is necessary and possible. The only obstacle to it in our time is the lack of a class-conscious political majority. Are YOU a socialist? You might recognize some of your own ideas in the following statements.

Capitalism, even with reforms, can not function in the interests of the working class. Capitalism, by its very nature, requires continual “reforms”; yet reforms cannot alter the basic relationship of wage-labor and capital and would not be considered, to begin with, if their legislation would lead to disturbing this relationship. Reforms, in other words, are designed to make capitalism more palatable to the working class by holding out the false hope of an improvement in their condition. To whatever extent they afford improvement, reforms benefit the capitalist class, not the working class.

To establish socialism the working class must first gain control of the powers of government through their political organization. It is by virtue of its control of state power that the capitalist class is able to perpetuate its system. State power gives control of the main avenues of education and propaganda—either directly or indirectly—and of the armed forces that frequently and efficiently crush ill-conceived working class attempts at violent opposition. The one way it is possible in a highly developed capitalism to oust the capitalist class from its ownership and control over the means of production and distribution is to first strip it of its control over the state.

Once this is accomplished the state will be converted from a government over people to an administration of community affairs (both locally and on a world scale). The World Socialist Party of the United States advocates the ballot, and no other method, as a means of abolishing capitalism.

Members of the World Socialist Party do not support — either directly or indirectly — members of any other political party. It is always possible, even if difficult in some instances, to vote for world socialism by writing in the name of the Party and a member for a particular legislative office. Our main task, however, is to make socialists and not to advocate use of the ballot for anything short of socialism.

The World Socialist Party rejects the theory of leadership. Neither individual “great” personalities nor “revolutionary vanguards” can bring the world one day closer to socialism. The emancipation of the working class “must be the work of the working class itself.” Educators to explain socialism, yes! Administrators to carry out the will of the majority of the membership, yes! But leaders or “vanguards,” never!

There is an irreconcilable conflict between scientific socialism and religion. Socialists reject religion for two main reasons:

- Religion divides the universe into spiritual and physical realms, and all religions offer their adherents relief from their earthly problems through some form of appeal to the spiritual. Socialists see the cause of the problems that wrack human society as material and political. We see the solution as one involving material and political, not spiritual, means.

- Religions ally themselves with the institutions of class society. Particular religious organizations and leaders may, and frequently do, rebel against what they deem injustice, even suffering imprisonment and worse for their efforts. But they seek their solutions within the framework of the system socialists aim to abolish. One cannot understand the development of social evolution by resorting to religious ideas.

The system of society formerly in effect in Russia, and still in effect in China and other so-called socialist or communist countries, is state capitalism. Goods and services, in those countries, as in avowedly capitalist lands,

were always produced for sale on a market with a view to profit and not, primarily, for use. The placing of industry under the control of the state in no way alters the basic relationships of wage labor and capital. The working class remains a class of wage slaves. The class that controls the state remains a parasitical, surplus-value eating class.

Trade unionism is the means by which wage workers organize to “bargain collectively” so that they might sell their labor power at the best possible price and try to improve working conditions. The unorganized have no economic weapon with which to resist the attempts of capital to beat down their standards. But unions must work within the framework of capitalism. They are useful, then, to but a limited extent. They can do nothing toward lessening unemployment, for example.

In fact, they encourage employers to introduce more efficient methods in order to overcome added costs of higher wages and thereby hasten and increase unemployment. More and more the tendency of industry is toward a greater mass of production with fewer employees. Unions must, by their very nature, encourage such development although they are also known, occasionally, to resist this natural trend through what employers like to call “featherbedding.” As Marx put it: instead of the conservative motto, “a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work,” the workers ought to inscribe upon their banner “abolition of the wages system.” Ø

Membership in the World Socialist Party of the United States requires an understanding of and agreement with what we consider to be the basics of scientific socialism. We have always been convinced that a worldwide system based upon production for use, rather than for sale on a market, requires that a majority of the population be socialist in attitude. Events since the establishment of the World Socialist Movement have, we maintain, proven the validity of this judgment. If you are in general agreement with these statements, we invite you to join our organization.

DIRECTORY of CONTACTS

NATIONAL

MIDDLE ATLANTIC: Thomas Jackson, 521 Greystone Road, Merion Station, PA 19066 • **MIDWEST:** Mardon Cooper, 377 Cherry Road, Troy, MI 48083 • **NEW ENGLAND:** Rena Orner, 18 McGee Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230 • Karla Ellenbogen & Ron Elbert, 23 Pleasant Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143 • Frank Gunning, PO Box 1373, North Conway, NH 03860 (tel. 603-356-3007) • **SOUTH:** Wesley Lawrimore, 3270 Inez Drive, Snellville, GA 30278-4128

INTERNET

EMAIL: Ron Elbert — iW1@igc.apc.org; Daniel R. Husman — husm0003@gold.tc.umn.edu; Tom Jackson — tjackson@brynmawr.edu; Socialist Party of Canada — 72607.2404@compuserve.com; Socialist Party of Great Britain — 106555.2702@compuserve.com; World Socialist Party (NZ) — hioag@i-max.co.nz • **WORLD WIDE WEB:** Socialist Party of Canada — <http://www.tcel.com/~sp>; Socialist Party of Great Britain — <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/worldsm>.

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OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

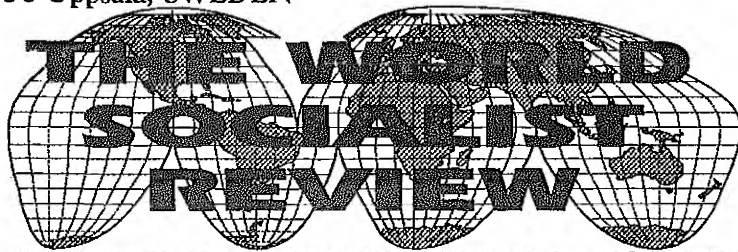
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The following companion parties also adhere to the same Object and Declaration of Principles:

WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA, c/o Rod Miller, 8 Graelee Court, Kingston 7050, Tasmania • BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN, Gusriegelstrasse 50, A-1100 Vienna, AUSTRIA. JOURNAL: *Internationales Freies Wort* (\$1) • SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA, PO Box 4280 Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8 • SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. JOURNAL: *Socialist Standard* (75¢) • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (INDIA), GPO Box 2594, Calcutta 700 001 • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND), Corres. 151 Cavehill Road, Belfast BT15 1BL • WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (NZ), PO Box 1929, Auckland, NI, NEW ZEALAND

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DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that—

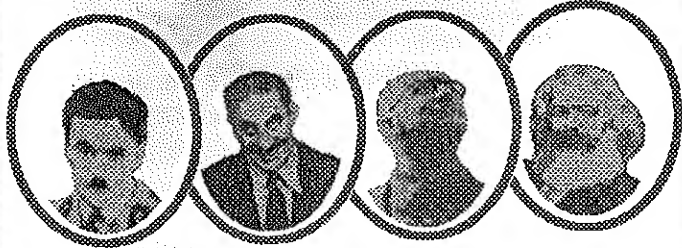
- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
- This antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
- As in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
- This emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
- As the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
- As political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

The companion parties of Socialism, therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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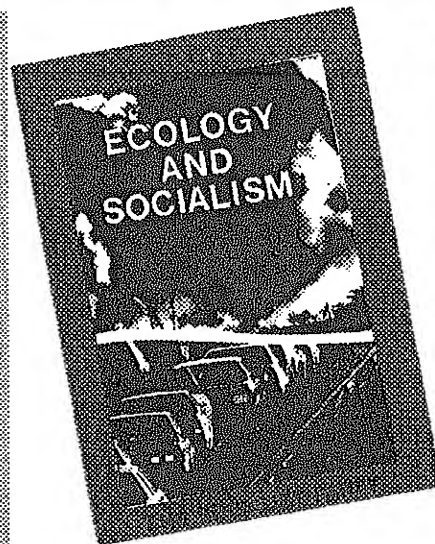
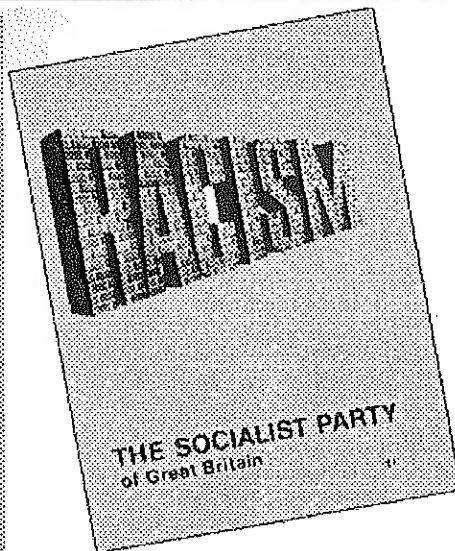
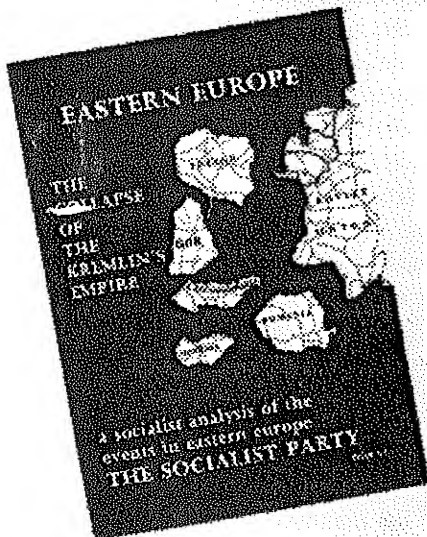
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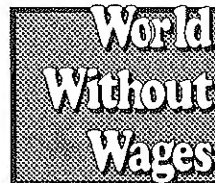
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by Samuel Leight

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test of time, in that it has not been refuted. This strongly suggests that the arguments put by socialists are indeed sound. Non-socialists who find no fault with the arguments or facts as presented still believe that the results aren't "right." How can we explain this?

Society today, in many subtle and not so subtle ways, discourages reason if it starts to delve into the social affairs of society. It is good to use reason and logic at work, to solve problems of production and generate profits, but apply reason and logic to how society works and somehow it doesn't make sense.

Society, as it exists today, benefits from this situation.

Most people agree that those with power and wealth would like to maintain it. Is it at all unreasonable to expect that they, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, use their power and wealth to convince the rest of us that they deserve it? If the rest of us thought that those with power

and wealth didn't deserve it, and that the rest of us did, would we support them? Would we keep making them powerful and rich? Maybe we would if we thought there was no alternative, but what if we knew of an alternative?

One can understand, or one can believe. The two are quite different. Belief does not require understanding, one need only believe that something is, or something works in a certain way, and belief is complete. Understanding is on the opposite end of the spectrum. To understand, one must question all of one's beliefs. Each belief must be shown to be true, not just believed. Understanding requires a scientific approach, using logic, experimentation,

Continued on next page



1 Capitalism has not existed through all of human history.

BELIEF: Things have "always been like this." The basic structure of society has never changed and there is no reason to expect that it could.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If things can't change, then those at the top will stay there and the rest of us can do nothing to affect that.

FACT: Capitalism is only a few hundred years old, and isn't the same as feudalism, or chattel slavery, or primitive agriculture. Things have changed. Class division (a minority at the top, and the majority on the bottom) has been around for longer than capitalism, but not forever. Today the class division is between the capitalist class and the working class.

2 Socialism has never been tried.

BELIEF: Russia, Cuba, China, Albania, Sweden, Canada, England are, or were, socialist.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

Showing that "socialism in all its forms" hasn't worked steers people away from socialism. It also confuses the issue of what socialism means.

FACT: Socialism has never been tried in any country. Most so-called socialists don't have a clue as to what socialism means, and instead promote reforms to capitalism ("alternative" ways of administering capitalism). None of the countries they have governed were wageless, moneyless, leaderless, and democratic — hence they were not socialist.



5 Reformism doesn't work.

BELIEF: Things are getting better.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

As long as people believe that society is continually improving, they are not likely to see a need to change the structure of society.

FACT: Wars continue. To the best of our knowledge, there has not been a day this century in which there was not a war going on. Poverty continues. Even the Left has stopped talking about ending poverty. Now they are content to work to try to make poverty less awful. Several hundred years of reforms, supposedly to solve the problems, haven't even come close.



How some common beliefs benefit the rich and powerful capitalist class

4 Capitalism is a system which inherently exploits the working class.

BELIEF: People get out of society what they put into it.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

Society appears to be "just," nobody is exploited, those who work hard benefit, and those who are lazy do not. Capitalism does not take advantage of the working class. Capitalism is not the problem: the problems, whatever they are, lie elsewhere.

FACT: Profit is derived solely from labor. The working class produces the wealth, but does not own it. Nor does the working class get paid the full value of what it produces. The surplus goes to the capitalist class.



3 The capitalist class, as a class, contributes almost nothing to the functioning of society.

BELIEF: Entrepreneurs and capitalists create wealth.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

The capitalist is seen as a necessary part of production, and without capitalists, society could not function.

FACT: Capitalists don't create wealth, they simply appropriate the wealth created by their employees. Production took place long before there was a single capitalist, and will continue after the working class eliminates capitalism.

6 Socialism is a desirable, practical society.

BELIEF: It sounds OK, but it is impractical, or it will be like Russia.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If the only possible alternative to capitalism is seen as impossible, or a lie (like Russia), who would work for it? Nobody. The new society is killed in the womb.

FACT: Socialism is completely practical. An end to poverty and war, and real democracy in production is clearly desirable. Socialism cannot be imposed from above (as allegedly the Bolsheviks intended), but when the vast majority of the world's population chooses to cooperate, it cannot fail.



7 Humans (at least the vast majority of them) are not lazy, vicious creatures.

BELIEF: People are lazy or vicious — anti-social.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If most people were naturally anti-social, socialism would obviously be impossible. Further, if most people were anti-social, it would support and excuse the use of daily repression against people.

FACT: Human beings are by nature social creatures. Long before class division began, they built societies based on cooperation. A society of more than 5 billion people, living in close quarters, could hardly have come to be because its members wanted to hurt each other and had no desire to work.



8 The working class should work to establish socialism.

BELIEF: Socialism just isn't possible.

WHY BENEFICIAL TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS:

If socialism isn't possible, people won't work to make it happen, and the

capitalist class will remain at the top of capitalist society.

FACT: The only thing standing in the way of creating a socialist world is the lack of socialists. It is possible, according to non-socialists who should know, to produce

enough goods and services, without destroying the environment, to satisfy everyone's needs.

The working class has a choice. It can live under capitalism, or it can create and live in a desirable society: socialism. \emptyset

The Failure of Capital (continued from back cover)

no computations about *that*: it sacrificed the handloom weavers to the power looms in the early 19th century, and it had no trepidations about axing Youngstown in the 1970s. If no one produces in these sectors, then as far as capital is concerned, an economic black hole has replaced the knowable universe there. So what if the cookie crumbles!

Supplanting the role of capital in these sectors with non-capital will in this scenario occur as a choice necessitated by finding a way to eat, or getting eaten. An infrastructure on which a conscious, political majority can build requires setting human energies in motion to meet human needs. That infrastructure's definitive expression will be the revolutionary replacement of production for profit by production for use.

From the vantage point of an expansionist capital, this could produce no impressive results: once production again afforded viable opportunities for profit, capital could always move back in. Economic history is full of the rises and falls of entire industries. But from the vantage point of a capital afflicted with the need to conserve profitability structurally (by denying access to unprofitable categories of investment), it would look much more like a humanity stronger than capital sur-

viving where capital had deliberately chosen not to set foot. In this context, where the alternative was falling into the abyss, the threat of serious discontinuities in production might seem rather moot. (Capital is in retrenchment when the dictates of profit chronically impress on it the advisability of moving out of sectors it formerly created or reorganized when it found it profitable to do so, and a re-migration of capital back to the "bad" sectors fails to follow its exodus from them.)

The rule of capital could go on forever if it enjoyed majority support. To keep that support politically flexible in a period of faltering prestige, capital needs only to shift itself about strategically as the exigency requires. An abolitionist majority will get its best footing proceeding from those areas that fall "outside the box" of the profit paradigm. Capital's very success at shifting about, on the other hand, itself carries with it some risk that an anti-capitalist political majority could emerge around the world, disposed to put the head of capital on the chopping-block, eliminating it historically from the process of production. The only successful revolution will be one that explicitly assumes the failure of capital to meet human needs.

—Ron Elbert

Continued from previous page

observation, history, and reason. Not all of these scientific mechanisms will always apply to everything we want to understand. A scientific approach doesn't mean that one must be able to set up controlled experiments to prove everything, and in the realm of social affairs that is very often impossible. Understanding is simple: once we, individually, start to recognize the myths and lies of capitalism as the myths and lies they are.

It is not the socialist case which doesn't make sense. Brainwashed by capitalism, from birth, people find it difficult to understand when reason confronts their beliefs.

As Marx and Engels wrote, "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." The working class can believe that it should be ruled, or the working class can understand that it can eliminate rulers forever.

—Steve Szalai
(Socialist Party of Canada)

The Failure of Capital

Utopian socialists have always as a rule blithely ignored one unavoidable reality. A revolution against *capital* can only happen on the basis of a fully functioning alternative to the capitalist system of production. Setting up a real economy that uses no capital and whose unique *raison d'être* is meeting everyone's needs extends beyond successfully establishing an experiment at the margins of capitalism resting on the latter's implicit prevalence. The record of history shows, however, that wherever capital in its expansionist wanderings has encountered isolated societies fitting the above description, it has without hesitation moved in and assimilated them.

The problem we need to solve, it seems, is how to launch a systemically distinct form of production from within a capitalist setting. The solution can only work if its occurrence affects capitalist production as a whole; yet we can hardly say it is working if it remains isolated from the rest of society. We have no examples of revolution on this scale.

Capital's unparalleled success at revolutionizing production around the world has effectively ended the possibility of any further minority-led revolutions leading only to changes in the ways minorities exploit people. A revolution by the majority, on the other hand, requires two things: first, that majority's economic preponderance at large and second, its conscious interest

in reorganizing production without limits. Being exploited by capital — wage slavery — has already become a way of life for the vast majority of people around the world; so now we have such a unified majority on a global scale (in principle, at any rate, if not yet entirely in practice).

"Reorganizing production without limits" does not mean finding ways to reinvent or circumvent the marketplace: these, after all, have their limits already set by capital. "Without limits" signifies without rules recognized by capital. A revolution for people and against capital will therefore need to show it can actually supplant capitalist production, without serious discontinuities, with forms of organization that implement the principle of "from each according to ability, to each according to need." These initiatives will necessarily ignore basic organizing concepts of capitalism like "effective demand" (since "customers" are individuals defined in terms of how much money they have) and hierarchy of command (i.e., separation between authoritarian owners and managers of resources and facilities on the one hand and powerless employees on the other).

For this reorganization to work, capital itself will have to abandon unilaterally those areas of economic activity it regards as hopelessly unprofitable but that people recognize as essential. Up till now, the closest we have come to this is workers buying out

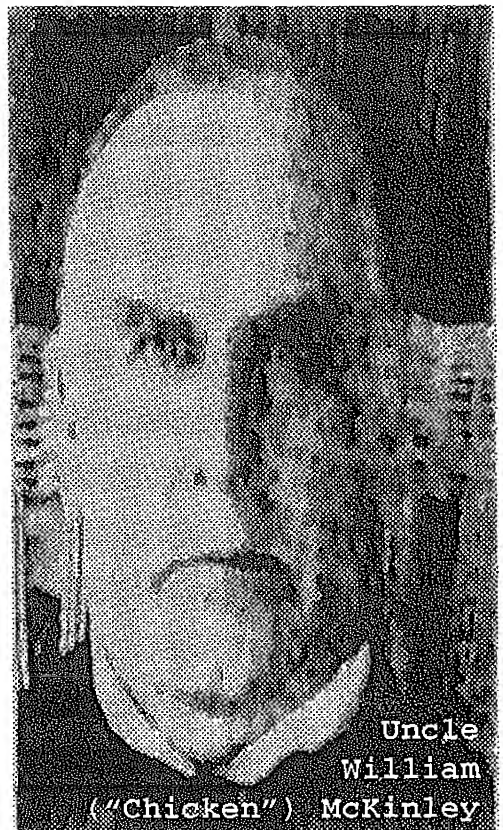


Uncle
Winston

businesses that capitalists have abandoned as unprofitable. For supplanting the role of capital to be feasible, capital will have to retrench massively in the future from whole sectors as they become unprofitable, effectively abandoning them to all takers (to pick a few instances out of a hat, local transportation, small-scale housing, food processing or even education).

In an expansionist setting, this "supplanting" activity would ordinarily only reinforce the workings of the capitalist marketplace, effectively turning the flank of the supplanters and forcing them to reintegrate their "escape" into the system. Where capital is historically retrenching, however, it is abandoning sectors of production it has come to regard as a millstone about its neck — sectors whose decapitalizing implies arbitrarily throwing the fortunes of entire communities or social strata at risk. (We already know it has

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Uncle
William
("Chicken") McKinley