

Common Ownership



Greetings, welcome to the first issue of Common Ownership. Why the title, and what's it all about? Quite simply, common ownership of the world's resources and productive capacity is the basis for a reorganization of society that would ensure plenty of the necessities of life for everyone on the planet – no more starving, malnourished people, no wandering homeless, no senseless deaths for the want of easily affordable medical care and medicine, no more poverty, unemployment, or inequality. How can this be so? Surely, if it were possible to eliminate these scourges we would have done it long ago. Aren't we working on these problems anyway?

At present we live in a world where the resources of the earth and the products made from them, the processes needed to make them, and the transportation systems to get them to you, are all owned by private individuals. A company proposes to extract resources or manufacture commodities. It needs money in order to do this. Wealthy people loan the company the necessary capital, but they don't do it for nothing. They will expect a healthy return on their money every year of say, 10%, or \$100 000 on every million dollars loaned. If this return is below expectations, then the lender will withdraw his funds and look somewhere else to invest. This puts every enterprise in a competition for capital to fund their operations and for expansion. Thus all companies must compete and strive to do whatever is necessary to create profit to pay dividends to lenders. If a company fails in this, capital will dry up and production will stop, rendering its physical assets as junk or sold at a fraction of its value, and its employees will be out of work. In other words, commodities are only produced for the purpose of profit or they are not produced at all.

As we have seen, profits go to a tiny minority of big investors of capital to enhance their already vast fortunes that allow them to live in luxury while contributing no work whatsoever. We believe that the earth's resources are the common heritage of all mankind and should be managed for the benefit of all. Those resources are easily abundant enough to feed, clothe, and house everyone on earth and provide medical care, education and everything else necessary to ensure a full and happy life for every one.

The establishment of common ownership would eliminate the competition for resources and for capital. It would

eliminate production for profit only. It would eliminate the need for states and their central governments that exist to serve today's competitive system. It would even eliminate the need for money and trading as goods and services would be produced solely to meet the needs of humans who would have free access to those goods and services, taking them as needed. Competition would be replaced by cooperation, eliminating conflict and war and because everybody and therefore no one person or group would own the means of producing wealth, everyone would stand equal to the powers of production – no owners and non-owners, no exploiters and exploited, no employers and employed, and therefore, no classes.

Today, this is quite obviously not the case. We have constant conflict and war, vast inequality, poverty, malnutrition, starvation and deprivation amid wealth and plenty. Workers produce all the wealth in the world and perform all the work, yet are only allowed to take home a small share of that wealth to enable them to exist so they can show up at work the next day to produce more profit that goes to the already wealthy. And they are only allowed to do so at the whim of that tiny minority of owners. Today, nobody starves or goes hungry because we lack food. Nobody is homeless because we lack building materials or builders, nobody lives in poverty because we lack wealth. People suffer these scourges because they are unable to pay and thus realize a profit for some enterprise or other.

In one fell swoop, in one simple action, production for profit could be replaced with production to satisfy the needs of all. That action is the establishment of COMMON OWNERSHIP!

We welcome correspondence with our readers. Send email to spc@iname.com or write us at BOX 4280, Victoria BC, V8X 3X8, Canada

How can a system of common ownership be established?

Is Common Ownership a utopian dream? Is it practical? At least we know our present system works, don't we?

Firstly, Common Ownership is a practical alternative to capitalism because it would rely on all necessary goods and services being produced by exactly those people who are doing the job now. It is only the capitalist class, the owners of capital, who presently do nothing in return for their financial rewards. The rest of us, the vast majority, go to work every day and earn our living by producing those necessary items. We are capable of doing that with or without the capitalist. The capitalist class, along with all those who now perform jobs that would be unnecessary in a system based on Common Ownership (soldiers, military industrial workers, financial and insurance industries, salespersons, advertising, accounting, law and court workers, and so on) would become producers, too, reducing greatly the current workload of the rest of us.

Common Ownership would mean voluntary labour, no wages or employment, and free access for all to all the goods and services produced. Some say that in such a system many would choose not to work or take too much from the common store – that's human nature, isn't it? Actually that's human behavior learned and acquired under capitalist economic relationships, not human nature. If anything is free today that we normally pay for, we have to grab it because we know it won't be free for long. But if it were free and available forever, we would soon learn to take only what we needed – like the air we freely breathe but take for granted. And if you had voted for such a system, why would you want to abuse it? Of course, a social revolution such as a change to Common Ownership would have to be the desire and democratic choice of the vast majority in order for it to work, but once that majority has been attained and the change completed, we would all want to make it work.

Secondly, how well does capitalism work today? Very well, if you are a capitalist and receive the wealth to live a luxurious life style for no contribution to the common good. We acknowledge that capitalism is a system that has advanced human knowledge and the production of goods remarkably. Unfortunately, although capitalism is quite capable of producing enough for everybody, it is not capable of delivering. The kicker is that commodities can only be produced if there is a reasonable chance of profit so the supply is limited to match those who can pay, not all those who need. No money? Go without! No profit? No production! This means that the system doesn't work for that half of humanity that must exist on \$2 a day; or the almost 1 billion that go to bed hungry every day; or the

tens of thousands of children who die every day from malnutrition; or the millions who live in poverty in the midst of incredible wealth and plenty; or the millions of unemployed, underemployed, underpaid, or food bank users even in our rich country.

Capitalism doesn't work at all well for a lot of people. Since power is invested in the state, and since capitalism is legitimized through the laws of private property, created and passed in state legislatures and upheld by the state police and army, then it becomes clear that control of the law-making bodies is a key element to effect change. A majority of representatives in the legislature in favour of social revolution could institute laws establishing Common Ownership safely and legally. A political party with a platform of Common Ownership of the means of producing and distributing wealth democratically, in the interests of all humankind, would be the one to bring this change about.

This is precisely what The Socialist Party of Canada proposes, and all it proposes. No promises of a higher minimum wage, tax the rich, carbon taxes etc., just the establishment of Common Ownership which will address all the major ills afflicting society under capitalism such as war, poverty, and deprivation of food, housing, and medical care. The Socialist Party of Canada is a companion party in The World Socialist Movement, a federation of parties promoting Common Ownership. All we need to succeed is for you and your family, friends, and neighbours to read our literature to understand the incredible possibilities that establishing Common Ownership would have on all humanity. It would lift us to a higher form of social organization that would benefit mankind. Why wait any longer? Check us out!

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