

# World Socialist Review

\$1.00  
No. 7  
Winter 1991



journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

## back to utopia

### *in this issue:*

They're *All* Utopians  
Now  
Unscientific Socialism  
Goodbye, Leninism  
The Sneer that Can Kill  
Ticket to Freedom  
Choice & Free Access  
Socialism & Equality  
Who Causes Pollution?  
Remodelling Capitalism  
The Low Road  
Making Socialists  
Was Marx a Socialist?



# They're all utopians now

The "failure of communism" has come to be peddled as the latest version of the usual ideological hamburger on the mass media's instant menu. What has happened, however, is not that communism has failed but only that Leninism has collapsed. Right from the very beginning, in *What is to be Done?* Lenin had expressed the view that the working class was "exclusively by its own effort...able to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc."<sup>1</sup> This was the view adopted by the Bolshevik majority within the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party ("the theoretical doctrine of Social Democracy"). Butressing that, Lenin's thesis on the origins of the theory of socialism was accepted as a good replacement for the Gospel: it "grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals."<sup>2</sup>

For a very long time, this belief that revolutionary theory could arise "altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement" jammed the only channel by which workers could in fact formulate their protests against the ravages of capitalism. It made Bolshevism, as a chrysalis stage of Social Democracy, reinforced by the authority of the Soviet state, the dominant vehicle of working-class aspirations around the world. Any attempts at directly conceptualizing an alternative to capitalism out of the experience of the class struggle were thereby sentenced to exile. A smothering blanket of pseudo-communist legitimacy helped to choke off a burgeoning trend toward "raising hell" in the workplace.

## Capitalist butterfly

With the opening movement of a Solidarity government in Poland, followed by a chain reaction of similar upsets throughout the Leninist countries, the Bolshevik chrysalis has at long last given way to a dazzling (capitalist) butterfly. The market system has made an ideological comeback in the state-capitalist countries in a big way—although, as socialists have been pointing out assiduously ever since the

November Revolution, there never ceased to be a market system operating in those countries; it had simply transformed itself into a "central plan". Thanks to the *nom-enklatura* system (a system of patronage which assured the respective "Communist" parties a vise grip on the strategic economic and political positions), the well-protected capitalists who spent decades consolidating their vulnerable position behind the "iron curtain" now feel confident enough to "rise to full stature in all their giant strength," to use Lenin's phrase.

And now that the *spectre* of communism has finally melted away, some space has again opened up for the *real* thing to resume its interrupted trajectory. But it can always be interrupted again if we let our thoughts remain centered on the main institutions of class division—profits and wages—rather than on its replacement. For purely business reasons alone, a capitalist will always tend to be incapable of understanding socialism as a concept (as a system of society based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production); doing so would require stepping outside the market frame of reference and looking at the world from the vantage point of a human being. This is not impossible; but it can obviously happen only rarely. Then there are, of course, the numerous supporting ideological arguments generated by the world of business as a secondary form of self-defense.

## Alternatives to the system

Less obvious is the case of the worker/professional who fails to grasp even the basics of socialism. What we fill our minds with forms a pattern of energy use which precludes the development of other patterns of thought, and filling our minds with thoughts of struggling to get by in the market leaves little room for choosing alternatives to the market system. Without being steeped in any direct form of pro-capitalist ideology—even being against capitalism in general but not specifically against the market system—millions of people can go on, year in and year out, remaining indifferent to the real possibilities life could hold for them in a system of wealth production which didn't require *them* to be poor so *it* could function.

The "spark" of consciousness is always present, because the poverty enforced by capital is endlessly generating new discontents (and leaving old ones to fester). Capitalists have a built-in incentive to deny the very possibility of eliminating capital; wage-earners (including salaried professional workers), on the other hand, have a devil by the tail and are constantly compelled to find new ways to rationalize their exploitation. The mass media are there to

help them in this—but even these are only a band-aid solution, and other machineries of repression either have already been deployed or are being researched. (The idea that wealth is something to be enjoyed simply as the outcome of human labor and that a whole system of society could operate worldwide without the use of money is in any case airily dismissed by the information commandos.)

## Utopia now

Capitalists see no need for any system beyond capitalism because *their* utopia is already an historical fact. The abundance promised (eventually) by capitalism is everywhere; its delivery is nowhere in sight. Life in this utopia is so beautiful and so perfect that the happy workers could not rationally entertain thoughts of doing wealth production differently than on a profit basis—and now, even that paragon of communism, the international group of Leninist parties, has "failed" in its historic mission to take over the world and impoverish everyone. Yet people are starving on a scale as never before in world history while food surpluses are stockpiled or destroyed because their existence threatens profits; poverty is the lot of more human beings now than in any previous period; and even the environmental basis for conducting exploitation is in the process of breaking down under the pressure of continuing systematic abuse.

The time has never been better for junking a system that only works in the eyes of its advocates. Now that it has been shown that Leninism could be scrapped with impunity, why not take a much more productive step and move on to replacing capitalism itself?  $\emptyset$

<sup>1</sup> *What is to be Done?*, "The Beginning of the Spontaneous Upsurge".

<sup>2</sup> *What is to be Done?*, "Primitiveness and Economism".

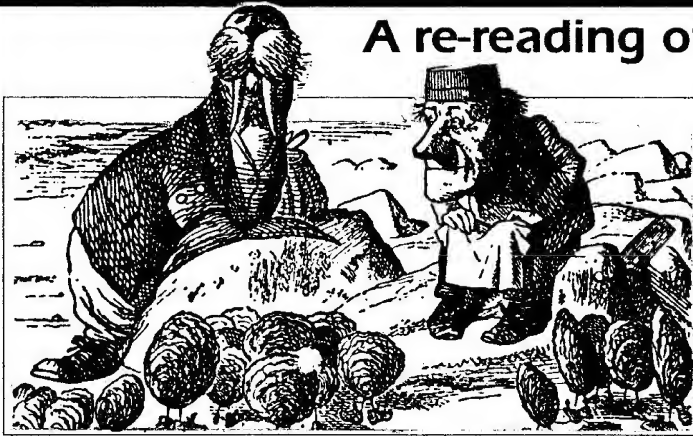
## THE WORLD SOCIALIST REVIEW

journal of the world socialist  
movement in the united states

The World Socialist Review is published by the World Socialist Party of the United States four times a year. Subscriptions, manuscripts, correspondence and donations should be addressed to the World Socialist Party (US), PO Box 405, Boston, MA 02272.

# Unscientific socialism

## A re-reading of a failed ideology



The demise of the "vanguard of the proletariat" as practised in the group of Leninist states is certain to have far-reaching effects on how reform movements express their opposition to capitalism, no matter how radically they may do so. This three-part article will examine Lenin's conception of class struggle in some detail, as he explains it in *What is to be Done?* (International Publishers, New York, 1978)—given the importance of the working class's avoiding the repetition of such ill-considered detours in the future. In this pamphlet Lenin ranges over topics like class consciousness, inner-party democracy, party propaganda and agitation, trade-unionism and political activity in general. A close reading of this "revered classic" will show, however, that his reputation as a technician of Marxist revolution is ludicrously in error.

### Part I

#### Russia's Labor Party

Let us begin with Lenin's notion of class consciousness.

"Social Democracy", he says (in the section on "Trade Unionist Politics and Social Democratic Politics") (TUPSDP), "leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich" (p 57). At the turn of the century, this was an accepted truism among Social Democrats all across Europe. (Its reformist implications we shall consider in the second part of this article.)

You would think, on the face of it, that as a student of Marx, Lenin agreed with the notion that the history of class struggle since ancient times has been one of ongoing clarification; that capitalism has boiled it down to a final showdown between only

two social classes: owners of the means of production (capitalists) and wage-earners (workers). This, unfortunately, is not what he means at all. For in the very next sentence he writes, "Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force". [Emphasis added.]

Had he written, instead of "all classes of modern society", "the capitalist class as a whole", he would have made a good summary of what a socialist party ought to do. But he was mesmerized, as a disciple of the liberal revolutionaries of Russia in the 1870s (the *Narodnaya Volya*, or "People's Will"), by the silent spectre of the peasantry. In 1902 only a small proportion of the Russian population worked for a wage; and though it was a rapidly increasing proportion, the working class was still a small minority, and the class of peasants was in the vast majority.

#### The field of struggle

This is a point which bears emphasizing. Only when the working class faces the capitalist class alone on the field of struggle can it proceed to abolish the slavery of capital accumulation—which can hardly be undertaken if the capitalist class itself has not yet made wage-labor the rule of life for the bulk of the population. We can thus say that Lenin's theory, like that of his contemporaries, the Marx-quoting populists of Russia (that it is somehow possible to "skip" the stage of capitalism), owes itself to a thoroughly defective grasp of historical materialism:

(i) After asserting (p 32) that the working class can develop its views no further than "trade-union consciousness"—an appropriate theory for a country with a minuscule working class!—he tells us that "the consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical and political life; unless

they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life of all classes, strata and groups of the population" (TUPSDP, p 69). And, further, workers must be "trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter what class is affected"—and specifically, trained "to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other". Consciousness, in other words, equals ideology and coincides with the Party line.

(ii) He likewise divorces the understanding of economic relationships (which he relegates to "trade-union consciousness", a conviction held by the workers) from political action (which he purifies by placing it exclusively under the care of "Social-Democratic consciousness", also a matter of "conviction"). It is obvious from his doctrinaire treatment of it that the subject of consciousness causes him no end of confusion; but essentially he thinks of it as equating with membership in any organization—i.e. the purpose of the organization is its "consciousness".

But consciousness is really rooted in the technique by which people communicate with each other, and class-consciousness is that by which they talk to each other about their shared relationship to the system of wealth production. It follows that it is not organizational in nature, but merely a point around which to organize. *Socialist consciousness* is the politically organized phase of all this. A scientific understanding of capitalism's political economy, consequently, is unlikely for the capitalist and is hidden even from the worker unless they see it from the vantage point of their own material interests (namely, from a purely human standpoint)—unless, in short, they understand these as being in conflict with the needs of accumulation. This understanding is not the less scientific for its occurring subjectively; after all, an important function of social science in general is to identify superstition and abolish it. Lenin, to reiterate, shows no inkling of this in any part of the book but proposes to us, on the contrary, a most un-Marxist figure in place of the socialist: the "professional revolutionary", an opposition prototype of the modern-day organization man. (This will be dealt with in Part II.)

(iii) He assumes that socialist class consciousness is possible in a multi-class, precapitalist society—even as he splits that



consciousness into trade-union and Social-Democratic segments. But if, as we have just mentioned, consciousness depends so heavily on the development of the means of communication, and on its use in particular to establish links and bonds among separate groups (no matter which social class they belong to), it is fairly obvious that, prior to capitalism, consciousness of *any* kind was limited and parochial, kaleidoscopically fragmented and chaotically distributed among a conglomeration of mutually indifferent social strata.

With the abolition of serfdom in 1861, Russia was moving out of this condition and into the age of capitalism. For all that, it would nevertheless have been an exercise in futility, prior to the 19th century, to have spoken of even enunciating a socialist point of view there; the assumption made by Marx and Engels of a disintegrating peasantry was an assumption of a voraciously successful capitalism. For consciousness even to *begin* to reach to the limits of society as a whole first requires the physical destruction of all social classes; and merely for this process to get started requires similarly the wholesale liquidation of all previous social classes, down to the stark, demythologized collision of only two of them—each vying for uncontested ownership of the means of production.

Tsarist Russia did not yet qualify for this day of reckoning—in fact, it was only through the Bolshevik reorganization of its ramshackle liberal economy that an opposed, socialist consciousness really became possible for the first time. It accomplished this by making every Russian a wage-slave; unless the latter managed to self-deal their way into a capitalistic status through Party membership. (The irony of our opening quote is surely apparent.)

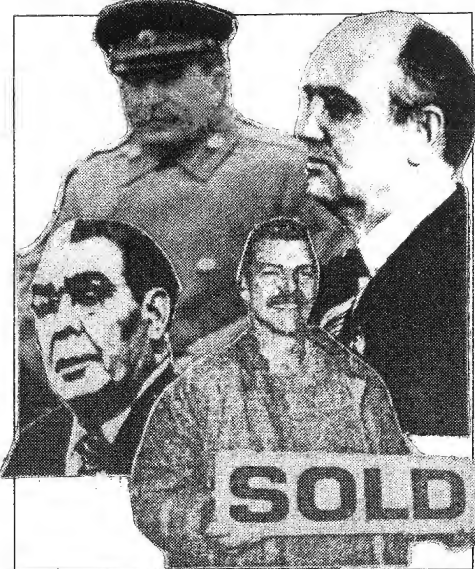
### Materialistic worldview

Scientific materialism, based on the premise that modern technology can potentially satisfy all human needs, can only arise historically from the working class's experience of wage labor; scientific socialism means both the materialistic understanding of capitalist production and its immediate replacement with a system of common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production. A materialist analysis of "all other" classes is therefore possible only when there is (in principle) a single other class: the capitalist class, the social stratum distinguished by the fact that its members live off the surplus labor of an exploited class—off the accumulation of capital.

It is possible only when, in other words, wage labor is the universal form of "oppression" and commodity production, sur-

plus labor and profit (as opposed, for example, to peasant agriculture) are the universal medium of social intercourse. The existence of a peasant class (to the extent that peasants even *formed* a social class) acts as a retarding influence on the spread of socialist consciousness. A "materialist analysis" of "every other social class" remains generally incomprehensible to most people until they have at length been forced into the position of having to sell their abilities in order to make a living. Hence, Lenin's seemingly sensible argument in favor of educating the workers is out of joint with his own assumptions.

(iv) It goes without saying, lastly, that a



Trade unionist and bosses (I)

party which reaches out to all other classes (excepting businessmen and landlords) cannot be a party of the working class. In it, the workers will find their own material interests only one among many. Their native class-consciousness, originating in the poverty generated by the wages system, will be overtaken and dominated by the policy of an organization that does not express but claims to *create*, to instill, its consciousness (which is Social-Democratic, of course). The fact that, in Marx's view, this trade-union mentality of the workers' is precisely what is supposed to gel into the party-spawning realization that wages are the source of all evil—this fact was absolutely lost on Lenin, just as it passed over his head that it was unlikely an insurrectionary majority dominated by peasants would be much concerned with the needs of wage-earners.

But this raises a second question: Who *were* the Russian Social Democrats, and why did they become divided into Bolsheviks in the majority and Mensheviks in the minority?

The Russian Social-Democratic Party (first organized in small, isolated study circles in 1894, and not officially consti-

tuted until 1901 as a national party) suffered, broadly speaking, from an acute case of Office-Holder's Syndrome. As Lenin put it: "Those who make nationwide political agitation the cornerstone of their programme, their tactics and their organisational work, as *Iskra* does, stand the least risk of missing the revolution" (p 170, "The 'Plan' for an All-Russian Political Newspaper"; emphasis omitted). [Founded and published by Lenin between 1901 and the end of 1903, *Iskra* migrated from Leipzig to Munich, London and Geneva. After its 52nd issue it came under the editorial control of his opponents, notably Plekhanov.]

(i) At the very moment when European (especially German) Social Democracy was mellowing into a reform movement, the Russian intelligentsia were struggling just to create their own. It is simply Lenin's distinction that he considered it indispensable to accomplish this by violent means. His rivals for influence in the new organization, whom he labelled "Economists" and "Opportunists" by turns, took their cue generally from Eduard Bernstein et al. in the German party and advocated turning the Social Democrats into a kind of umbrella organization voicing immediate demands in behalf of Russian workers—a sort of Russian Labor Party in the present-day sense.

### Bolshevik autocracy

If one argues, from a Marxian standpoint, that in the decade of the 90s the Social Democratic movement began to wither and die as a force for socialist revolution, then one can only conclude Russian Social Democracy was already born dead. The Bolshevik faction was the work of the same crowd of pragmatists who initiated the Labour Representation Committee in Britain, and in fact its autocratic policies (strenuously urged by Lenin) perfectly suited such a Committee to function under the tsarist autocracy. In Germany there was no room for this idea to grow, as the Social Democrats had already begun their own representation drive—but the takeover of the Party by the Opportunist wing signified, in effect, the same result. So it is most ironic that Lenin was perpetually denouncing his own peers in other countries—which only goes to show how deep his own "materialist analysis" went.

(ii) His admiration for the professionalism of the Germans betrays a disturbingly unproletarian proclivity—the exaltation of the corporate-style professional expert, the ideal type forming the backbone of his "organization of revolutionaries". Scarcely a decade after the lapsing of Bismarck's

Anti-Socialist Law, Lenin can unflinchingly assert that democracy founded on the principle of publicity is fine for the Germans, who can afford it, but the Russians cannot:

No one would call an organization democratic that is hidden from every one but its members by a veil of secrecy. What is the use, then, of advancing "the broad democratic principle" when the fundamental condition for this principle *cannot be fulfilled* by a secret organisation? "The broad principle" proves itself simply to be a resounding but hollow phrase. Moreover, it reveals a total lack of understanding of the urgent tasks of the moment in regard to organisation (p 135, "The Primitivism of the Economists and the Organisation of the Revolutionaries").

While these remarks apply to party *democracy*, the reader will readily appreciate their impact on party *policy*; on page 136, Lenin underscores his meaning when he describes party democracy under the threat from the tsar's police as a "useless and harmful toy". A party which calls itself "social-democratic" and proposes to take over the state, saying all the while it cannot afford to be ruled by its own members, hardly inspires any confidence that it will tolerate society's members ruling themselves in turn!

### Menshevism vs. Bolshevism

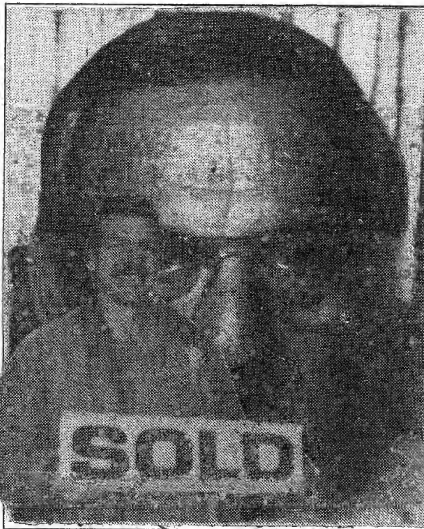
Moreover, since both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks agreed, on general principle, that abolishing the wages system was not an immediate item on the working-class agenda, their disagreement can only have been over means. But over means to what? Lenin argued that a bourgeois-democratic republic would have to be created first; but this implied that a socialist revolution could only come after the capitalists, workers and peasantry had first overthrown the tsar's régime. How much farther ahead would this really have put the working class than if they had followed the Mensheviks' views? All the more problematic, when one considers the immense difficulty of abolishing the peasant character of farm labor in a country with as large a peasant population as Russia's was then...

It was, in fact, against this same kind of intolerant chicanery that some members of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain walked out, in 1904, in protest against H.M. Hyndman's arbitrary policies, to found the Socialist Party of Great Britain. But they also rejected the Federation's reformism and insisted that socialism meant taking control of the state so as to introduce *immediate* common ownership and democratic control of the means of producing and distributing wealth. They have stood virtually alone in their insistence for many

years, although a number of companion parties have since appeared in other (mostly English-speaking) countries.

This revolt (a seemingly obscure event by comparison with, say, the Russian Revolution of 1905) marks a turning-point in the evolution of socialist consciousness. The "offshoot" was in reality an advance in the design, the concept, of the party itself. Such a party could not possibly have made its appearance *as a political party* in Russia of Lenin's day. Indeed, if the European working class was so weakly conscious of its own material interests that it went in overwhelmingly for policies of reform (even when these were capped by a glittering crown of "ultimate revolutionary demands"), workers in Russia were surely altogether unconscious by comparison (considering their ties to their peasant origins).

(iii) One further point also needs to be made. In an evolved socialist party, one which has solved the riddle of the "minimum program", there is no longer any question of the movement being split up into right and left wings—a distinction which is solely concerned with the reform of the system. From a reformist angle, the



Trade unionist and boss (II)

perplexing question has always been which changes to advocate (whether on a basis of general principle or on any basis at all); the bulk of every political party has always wound up in the undecided, ambiguous middle and depended on leaders from the left and right to give it direction—the same as with political struggles in general. For the same reason, an authentically socialist party cannot be considered a party of the left—it advocates, not a reform of the capitalist system, not even a radical and sweeping one, let alone many piecemeal changes, but a direct, once-only abolition of the whole system of capital accumula-

tion (also called the wages system). It advocates, as we said, immediate common ownership.

The reason, therefore, the Bolsheviks could never measure up to the tasks of a socialist party was, quite simply, the quasi-socialist character of their ideas. While we might call them pre-Marxian or even pre-scientific socialists, we should be wary of calling them *revolutionary* socialists. As with all other Social-Democratic parties, the question of reforms caused a split in the ranks over *which* minimum program to adopt. It was this conflict which led Lenin—understandably, if naively—to think of socialism as an ideology and a matter of moral conviction; whereas it is really *itself* an immediate program for achieving a definite, technical end.

### What's the real thing?

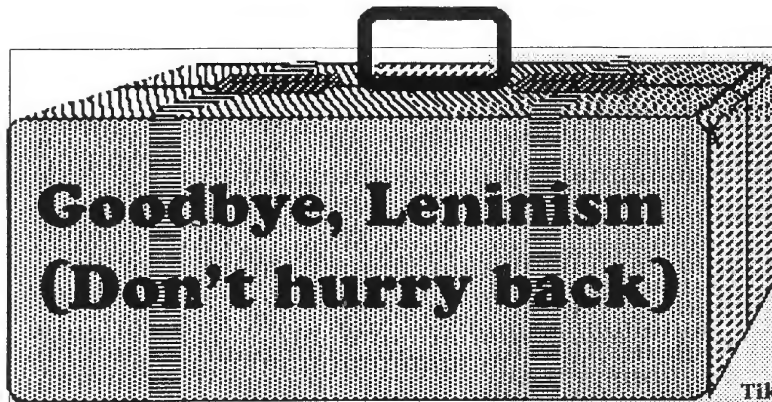
A real socialist revolution is one in which the working class understands that the ownership question is the big issue and sees *common* ownership of the means of production as its resolution. So far, that has remained in the future. That this might be done at the polls is a point which underdeveloped Russian Social Democracy can be forgiven for misunderstanding, caught as it was in a crossfire between a huge, land-hungry peasant class and a collapsing, outdated autocracy. But out of the ashes of reformist controversy it rose again as Russia's Laborite movement—Communism, Inc., you might call it.

Russia's Labor Party was born, then, of a vanished Social Democracy in the hands of an opportunistic, undemocratic pack of reformists who publicly advocated a policy of secrecy and violence; at least, this was the policy of the majority. Only sheer desperation could have driven the workers to rally around a standard of this sort; either that, or their class-consciousness was, after all, so poorly developed they could not tell the difference anyway. Two further quotes will suffice to illustrate: "Class political consciousness", states Lenin, "can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle" (p 78, TUPSDP); and yet, this same ill-equipped flock of chuckleheads has been previously described by him in *this* manner:

History has confronted us with an immediate task which is the *most revolutionary* of all the *immediate* tasks confronting the revolutionary proletariat of any country. The fulfillment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction [sic], would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. (p 29, "The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social Democrats")

—Ron Elbert





In 1917 Isaac Rabinowitch (Rab) and 18 comrades left what was then the Socialist Party of America to join forces with the nascent world socialist movement—begun in 1904 by the Socialist Party of Great Britain—forming the nucleus of what eventually became the World Socialist Party (US). Rab *lived* the revolution, and his charisma made it easy for others to *feel* socialism (or communism) immediately, as a system of society\*. It wasn't necessary to stop at the limits of intellect and simply imagine how such a system might work. The World Socialist Party was the organizational outgrowth which reflected his own excitement over and enthusiasm for socialism.

Gorbachev...realises that it is now no longer possible for the nomenklatura to rule in the old way and that some sort of flexibility is called for, if only to be able to push through perestroika without provoking a workers' revolt. He probably isn't consciously working towards ushering in a Russia where the nomenklatura has disappeared as such and has succeeded in converting itself into a class of Western-type privately-owning capitalists, but it is in this direction that his reforms can now be seen to be leading. ["Russia and Private Property", ALB, Socialist Standard, April 1990]

The personal magnetism of one individual, of course, only serves to illustrate that charisma is not the driving force in changing the basis of society. It is far too easy to let the idea of common ownership slip into the background while concentrating on activities which—intellectually speaking—seem to produce immediate results. From a world socialist perspective, capitalism (the market system resting on profits and wages) needs to be eliminated *now*, not at some indefinite point in the future. Yet most other (nominally revolutionary) movements and organizations have simply thrown in their lot with the prevailing, systemic opposition to capital; promising themselves that ultimately they would get back to The Revolution. But "ultimately" never comes.

A good share of the transformations planned by perestroika are in part a

reproposals of the methods of the NEP [New Economic Program] for our own times... Academician V. Tikhonov has proved that the increase in the number of rich farmers at the beginning of the century, and against which Lenin hurled himself so harshly (and not always justifiably), had already been halted in the years of the Civil War. Many of those rich farmers were frightened by the emergency confiscation of wheat, and had already abandoned the fields in 1927-28. In fact, many hardworking average farmers who had achieved relative comfort through their labors in the NEP years were defined as kulaks between 1929 and 1932. On the foundations of the NEP the country could have grown and developed much more efficiently not only in agriculture but in industry. ["In a Time of Change", Roy Medvedev and Giulio Chiesa in Dissent, Summer 1990]

One of the sadder cases of these—from a working-class perspective—was the Leninist movement that grew out of the majority (or Bolshevik) faction in the turn-of-the-century Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party. Lenin, contrary to the myth, did *not* live the socialist revolution, nor did the organization that adopted his views operate on a living sense of how socialism/communism was supposed to work as a worldwide system of production.

Quite a few members of the old elite, the nomenklatura of apparatchiks and managers, are busy feathering their own nests, setting up companies and acquiring business assets....Soon, when a scheme has been worked out for privatising industry, who do you think will have money to spare to buy shares and become legal capitalists? Not the working class, obviously. Effectively the "vanguard" will re-establish its control of the means of production in a different form, no longer mediated through state ownership. ["Solidarity governs in Poland", CS, Socialist Standard, Feb. 1990]

Bolshevism, as Lenin expounded it, was tied intimately to every sort of movement opposed to the policies of the existing capitalist class—including a social stratum that had not yet ceased to be important in Russia, the newly-emancipated peasantry. The resulting concept of a worker-

peasant "alliance", which came to be identified as a cornerstone of "Marxism-Leninism" (with the worker portion being overwhelmed at the outset by the peasant portion), demonstrably lacked the immediacy, the feel, of socialism/communism as a system of living and working together in community. Leninism carried off its proponents into a prehistoric brain-world of reformist illusion.

The Soviet Communist Party remains enormously rich and extremely well organized. It has its own network of newspapers, printing presses and publishing houses, producing millions of rubles a year in profits. It also has its own network in the armed forces, the security organs and factories. ["Communist Leadership votes to end grip on USSR", Boston Globe 2/8/90]

How far from the original conception of a moneyless, classless society they at length got can be gathered from the astounding cascade of events that has occurred since Mikhail Gorbachev came into office and initiated a policy of *glasnost* (political openness) and *perestroika* (economic restructuring).

Having seen these vile and despotic structures continue intact decade after decade, we might have been excused for thinking that they were so firmly in place that they would last forever. In fact, they were so fundamentally weak that they collapsed overnight.

Having seen world capitalism stagger on decade after decade, similarly we could get the impression that it is so firmly entrenched that it will remain forever. In fact, confronted by a socialist majority, the lesson is that it will prove so fundamentally weak that its abolition will be a mere formality causing it to dissolve into history. ["The Lessons of East Europe", Socialist Standard, Feb. 1990]

Those workers who are really in touch with their feelings are the ones who go beyond merely rolling with capitalism's punches and who kick the system's traces; however, what they mostly wind up doing is setting up experiments in sharing and cooperation, in defiance of the marketplace, that are usually short-lived. The marketplace will continue to win all such face-offs until the world's exploited majority comes to realize that the class struggle is a poison; that it will only end when the division of society into social classes through wages and profits is ended by the surgical removal from the system of its wages part.

—ROEL

\* Both terms mean the common ownership and democratic control by the world's population of the means of wealth production and distribution.

# The sneer that can kill

When most Americans hear the word socialism, they become scared. The fear is not of their own making; it was constructed for them by grey-minded men in dull suits whose job is to see that the wage slaves are thinking the right way. It is a fear constructed of memories of World War One when "Reds" were thrown into prison for the unpatriotic crime of refusing to murder their fellow workers of other lands—memories of the state persecution of those who were said to be un-American because they did not wave the fool's flag of capitalism with enough enthusiasm. In school you are taught about Communism—not what it means, but why you must fear it.

Socialists have from the very outset of the Bolshevik experiment shown that it led to state-capitalist dictatorship. We were exposing Lenin and Leninism when U.S. corporations were happily trading with Russia. We exposed the grotesque crimes against the workers committed by Stalin while Roosevelt was sitting at Yalta carving up Europe with his "democratic ally". We exposed Mao and Castro, and we show today that the Gorbachevs and other cleaned-up Leninists are simply state exploiters of the workers. They are not socialists. But most Americans are taught to fear socialism because socialists, whose record is there to be examined by those who will look, are supposed

## Ticket to freedom

"Freedom has its cost" is a popular American sentiment. Particularly in light of some tough transitions going on in Eastern Europe from its monopoly state capitalist form to a more pluralistic capitalism. Let us consider some of these costly freedoms that we of the "free world" hold oh so dearly.

Movement. That's a good one to start with. To travel the world aboard a ship is a dream of this writer. Far from free (as in free-dom), the cost of a world cruise is too high for my flat wallet.

Ah, but freedom has its cost, you see. To meet that cost, one must accumulate enough money. For the overwhelming majority of people, that means selling one's mental and physical energies to an employer for an amount of money less than the value you produce. So to exercise even this elementary freedom of movement, one must sufficiently enslave oneself in a market of wage labor, where the longer chain is represented by a bigger paycheck. Once that chain (paycheck) is stretched to its fullest extent, then you've reached the limit of your freedom.

This is true not only of world cruises; but also of plane, train, bus and taxi rides. Whether they are owned by private companies or the state (so-called representative of the people), it is the same story. No money—no ticket—no access to freedom of movement. Cars, motorcycles, bicycles have their cost as well.

Apart from walking barefoot, to exercise any freedom of movement will definitely cost you. A top-notch pair of sneakers can exceed a

to support dictatorship.

There is another fear about looking at what socialists have to say. We present a pretty harsh message to the workers of America—as we do in all countries. We tell you that you are living under a capitalist system. Now, "free" Americans do not like to think that they are living "under" anything. We say that you are not free because you do not have free access to the goods and services which you yourselves produce. You are as free as your wage or salary money allows you to be. For most Americans that is not very free. You are free to be blown up in a war when your bosses fall out with a rival trade gang, to be fired when there is no more profit to be milked out of you, to live in circumstances which frustrate you but which you cannot afford to escape from. Some freedom! Now, most American workers are frightened to admit the poverty and insecurity of their own lives. It is so much easier to sneer at the socialist who says it like it is.

## Free, comfortable, secure

Sneer again, deluded worker, when the socialist tells you that you could be living in a free and comfortable and secure society. Tell us that it is impossible; convince yourself that it is utopian. Say that your human nature—what you naturally are—determines that you need the tyranny of the money system. How often have socialists been told that we do not understand human nature? Remember to say it with a sneer, as you condemn your own species to the pitiable condition of beasts in the capitalist jungle, with no way out. Sneer as much as you like, the fact

week's wages nowadays. How free can such a person be? How many of you reading this can just take off on a world cruise when you feel like it? You do want to see the rest of the world firsthand, don't you?

This is a free society, isn't it? The cost. That's the catch of our illusionary freedoms. This freedom of movement is in capitalism nothing more than an experience converted into a commodity to be bought and sold on an international market. This insidious social mechanism of buying and selling permeates everything every aspect of our lives. Tainting, distorting every height of free we aspire to reach.

A pure, lofty freedom can only be reached in a world of no buying and selling. Where production is under democratic control for direct use, with all goods and services being freely distributed to suit everyone's self-defined needs. In a word, socialism.

While nothing else in this society is free, you still have a will to make choices. You can either content yourself to struggle for a little more loose change. Or you can struggle to break your chains. In the words of Karl Marx, "Workers of the world, unite! You have only your chains to lose and a world to win!"

To that end, we socialists suggest a daring social travel arrangement. Reserve yourself a seat in the World Socialist Movement today. It can be your passage to a world of unprecedented freedom.

—WJ Lawrimore

is that humans have only developed as much as we have because we are capable of intelligent cooperation and adaptation to our environment.

Workers have spent a long time sneering at themselves in the hope that cynicism will extinguish the threat of freedom. As Erich Fromm pointed out, we have been conditioned to have a "fear of freedom". It is the fear, upheld by the sigh which is a sneer, which stands between the misery of the profit system and the hope of how we could live as friends in a world of common ownership and democratic control of all resources.

So, next time a socialist talks to you about the misery of capitalism, feel free to tell us that you are as free as can be or that a moneyless, wageless, stateless world is a utopian dream. (It is true that you can't any longer tell us to "go back to Russia".) Feel free to sneer. But remember, the sneer is the sign of acquiescence to oppression. It is the signal to your bosses to keep on doing to you what makes you feel frustrated and deprived. It is a collective cry of insecure revulsion at the thought that the freedom of a decent and rational society is within your grasp. It is the sneer that kills, because it gives to the class which puts profit before life the assent that it needs. Yes, feel free to ignore these socialist fools; but better still, feel confident enough to consider what we are proposing.

—Steve Coleman

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Socialist Principles ..... \$ .30
- Questions of the Day ..... .90
- From Capitalism to Socialism: How We Live and How We Could Live ..... .70
- A World of Abundance ..... .30
- Women and Socialism ..... .70
- Socialism and Trade Unions ..... .55
- The Strike Weapon ..... .60
- Historical Materialism ..... .40
- Socialist Party and War ..... .40
- Is a Third World War Inevitable? ..... .40
- Ireland: Past, Present and Future ..... .55
- Ecology and Socialism ..... 1.00
- Racism ..... 1.25
- How We Live and How We Might Live (William Morris reprint) ..... 1.00

### Include 10% for postage

WSP (US)  
PO Box 405  
Boston, MA 02272

I enclose \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the above items. (Check off as appropriate.)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



## NEWS FROM THE NEW WORLD

Imagine no possessions...

### "DE-ENTERPRISING" SOCIETY Enterprises Abolished; Greens Predict Economic Chaos

(UPI) Green President Daniela ("The Red") Rifkin vowed today she will do everything in her power to veto legislation passed by Socialists in both the House and the Senate last week declaring employment illegal.

"The result is certain to bring economic chaos", she stated at an emergency press conference held late this morning. "We cannot afford to hobble an economy already overburdened with unemployables whom we are unable to feed or shelter by measures like this".

She added: "The market is indispensable, and tinkering with its stability can only end in disaster. I will not stand by idly and simply look on as workers flout their employers by coming to work whenever and wherever they damned well please". She also charged the policies of the Workers' Agitation to Reorganize the Total System, which claims membership in every major workplace, with being instigated by "dangerously confused hooligans".

She had especially harsh words for the law's provision stripping enterprises of their right to refuse goods and services to non-paying customers. "The potential for de-capitalizing markets and losing our share of the international competition at such a critical time is nothing short of hair-raising", she stated.

.....

Of course, none of this has actually happened yet. Some of it may sound familiar; some of it decidedly does not. Now that the Red flag seems likely to be supplanted by a Green(ish) one, the burden of defending employers' interests will probably be shifted onto more acceptable shoulders. Meanwhile, the question continues not to be asked, "Is employment of any kind compatible with ecological balance?" For it is ultimately the pursuit of profit that lays the environment waste, and capitalism cannot function without the institutions of wages and profits.

What would be the environmental impact of de-enterprising society? Since "employment" means surrendering your time and energy to someone else to get money from them, an enterprise is—from the standpoint of free social time—a place

of captivity. Historically, it came into existence as capital evolved into the basis for all production.

"Capitalizing production" means taking the power to dispose of resources needed for producing wealth out of the hands of non-capitalists; the terms Marx used for this were "monopolizing social production" and "primitive accumulation". The non-capitalists are absorbed into the ranks of employees (or become unemployed), while the capitalists become the owners of the enterprises which employ many of them.

The ability of the employers to deny their employees (and the unemployed in general) access to life-sustaining resources points to an obvious imbalance in human social life, which has been given the name of "domination". Murray Bookchin points out in his essay, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" that "the notion that man must dominate nature emerges directly from the domination of man by man" (*Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Ramparts Press, 1971; p 63). "The plundering of the human spirit by the marketplace", he continues, "is paralleled by the plundering of the earth by capital".

Because capitalist production rests on value accumulated out of the unpaid labor of the workers (surplus to their living requirements, as determined by their employers), enterprises must grow or lose out to their competitors. Is there infinite room on the planet Earth for enterprises to "grow"? The quick answer is no:

A tendency to unlimited economic growth is built-in to capitalism because what is being produced is precisely not physical wealth as such but abstract exchange-value. The accumulation of exchange-value entails an accumulation of physical means of production and therefore also an extraction and transformation of materials from nature on an increasing scale. (*Ecology and Socialism*, p 21)

### EMPLOYMENT IS THE ENEMY

Thus, employment (work for pay), the underpinning of the whole world economy based on the operations of enterprises, is by its nature the enemy of all things human and non-human. The largest enterprises are the most disruptive, and enterprises have to grow. The only solution, ultimately, is to de-enterprise society:

If human society is to be able to organize its production in an ecologically acceptable way, then it must abolish the capitalist economic mechanism of profit accumulation and gear production instead to the direct satisfaction of needs. (*Ecology and Socialism*, p 27)

What does this entail socially and economically? Capital is no longer used to measure or determine any part of the production process. This includes the capital needed to pay wages and salaries. Wage

and salary earners thus work for nothing. Had they gotten paid a money wage (or even paid in kind), they would have had the money to go out and buy the things they needed, once they got "paid". But if they don't get paid to support themselves, neither do the places where they would otherwise have spent the money. Consequently, these places of business cannot charge for goods and services anymore.

### CAPITAL MUST GO

The fact that no one is obliged to work for pay has, therefore, the following implications:

- Society produces only as much wealth, in principle, as its members indicate they need. In a setting of relatively high mechanization of the production (and even the consumption) process, relatively few people are needed to produce wealth and oversee its distribution. At any given time, there will only be a certain percentage of the eligible population working ("doing business").
  - The percentage of people who are not busy under these conditions is relatively higher than in capitalist society. This means, on the one hand, that the non-busy people can choose to work at a theoretically unlimited variety of occupations, subject largely to skill requirements and production schedules. (They can also just "work" at having fun.) It also means, on the other hand, that work sites tend to have an increased workforce turnover each day and a higher turnover rate in general. Time spent by individuals doing business declines to a minimum, on the average, for each place of business.
  - Since each member of the "workforce" (the "busy" population) can be more selective in choosing where to work, negotiating work schedules becomes a mutual arrangement for finding or making time for socially necessary activities. Conversely, work sites—as distinct places of business—tend to become both restricted to the locations which people find acceptable and diffused more randomly across wide regions (based also on considerations of distributing the product, access to raw materials and so on).
- It is precisely this sort of economy that would be required to fulfil Bookchin's vision of an interlinked network of decentralized local, "eco-friendly" communities spanning the world's continents. By purging the demon of class exploitation from its collective psyche, society can again become powerless to destroy its own surroundings; since employment (as the base condition of enterprise) is incompatible with a system of production catering to the enjoyment of life, and "life" is simply the part of nature which corresponds to human existence.

—AR



# Abortion, choice and free access

Abortion is probably the most controversial issue in the United States today. The battle lines are sharply drawn between those who feel it is always wrong to kill a "pre-born" fetus, and those who feel that under certain circumstances abortion is justified. Although a clear majority of Americans think abortion should remain legal, the right of women—especially poor women—to terminate an unplanned pregnancy is in jeopardy.

How much of the abortion controversy is a result of capitalism? Will it still remain an issue in a socialist world?

Under capitalism, rich women have always been able safely to terminate an inconvenient pregnancy. It has been the poor who were driven to endanger their fertility and often their lives as well. But historically, there have always been some women, rich and poor, who wanted abortion to be available: not all pregnant women want to be mothers. Christian churches have from time to time stated that a fetus is only "ensouled" when the mother accepts the pregnancy in her heart.

Half of Americans polled in 1985 believed that abortion is not a question of right and wrong. A majority rejected the idea that abortion is immoral.<sup>1</sup>

## What is morality?

What, after all, is morality? Socialists reject the idea of absolute moral values that exist in a vacuum. Morals vary from culture to culture, reflecting the material needs of society at a given time.

Human sacrifice feels "wrong" to most of us today, but there have been cultures where it was "right".

Infanticide too has been moral. In various Eskimo tribes, infanticide of girl babies was routinely practised in times of want, along with the voluntary deaths of the old, who would walk out onto the ice when they realized their continued lives would place too great a burden on the rest of the community. The survival of the entire tribe, in this situation, depended on its numbers being no greater than the available food supply could support.

Probably most of us would agree that in such a situation, abortion would be preferable to infanticide (if such a choice had to be made for survival).

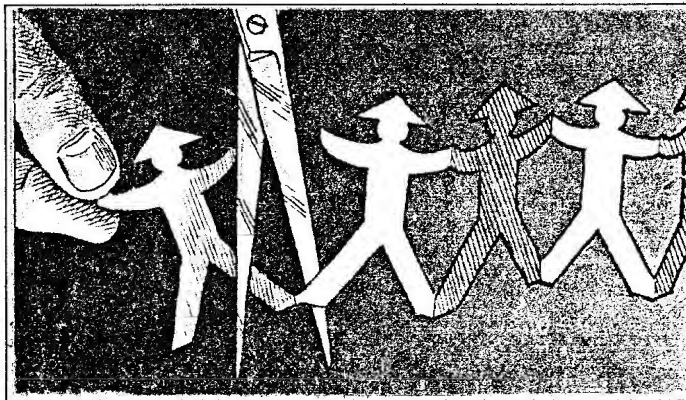
Of course, fortunately, we are not living in such a situation: on a planet-wide basis, there is no real danger that our numbers are too great for the food supply. In spite of Malthus' warning, the reason people are hungry today is not for lack of food. The

United States government actually pays farmers not to produce food; there are surpluses that can't be sold as it is. The problem is that food (like everything else in a capitalist society) is a commodity that you need money to get.

## Permanent underclass

No, unlike the Eskimos, our society *could* feed everyone all the time. It is the capitalist system that has created a permanent underclass who are only marginally able to get enough to eat, who must rely on the WIC program and food stamps to get their food, and so be routinely humiliated in a country whose farms could, in a sane society, produce enough to feed a population even larger than the one we have now.

Aside from the question of food supply, however, it's hard to avoid the conclusion



that our planet (under capitalism) is overcrowded—from the standpoint of having enough resources to guarantee everyone an optimally comfortable and enjoyable existence. But capitalism cannot afford the cost that allowing people to decide their own numbers would represent. And so, as the human population approaches six billions, our waste pollutes the whole world, largely because its ecologically appropriate disposal would cut into profits.<sup>2</sup>

In the same fashion, our numbers, under the happy-go-lucky leadership of the capitalist class, have directly or indirectly given rise to the greenhouse effect, holes in the ozone layer and the disappearance of habitats needed by many species who used to share the planet with us. And the United States, although its population represents only 5% of the world's people, uses up about 33% of the world's flow of nonrenewable resources. The one thing the world definitely does not need more of is people—not if they are to be divided into capitalists and wage-slaves. One might be tempted to argue that while infanticide is "bad" and abortion somewhat "less bad", neither of them is as bad for the planet as increasing and multiplying under the irra-

tional stimulus of the marketplace! Capital will not allow us to control ourselves.

\* \* \*

Our feelings about "right" and "wrong", however, are based on a long tradition. For most of human history, the more there were of us, the better off we all would be. That is why fertility is such a high value in all human cultures.

Fertility rites are a part of many religions. The first commandment in the Bible is to "be fruitful and multiply", which expresses an idea so deeply ingrained in us that even though we know the world doesn't need more people, we still feel we can only live up to society's expectations if we marry and have children. Infertile couples go through hell because society's expectations are so strong on this subject. "The only way a woman can be truly fulfilled is to be a mother".

We have to get over this way of looking at things. We have to let our attitudes and values—our "morality"—catch up with the way the world really is. We don't need more babies. We do need a better quality of life for everyone. "We", unfortunately, are not allowed to make those decisions under capitalism; the ways we can look at things remain dominated by conditions generated out of the profit syndrome.

## Birth control

One of the major differences between human beings and the rest of the animal kingdom is the human ability to separate sex from reproduction. Almost all other animals are moved to mate only when the female is in heat, when it is desirable that offspring result from the mating.

Human beings are different in that we mate for many reasons: to affirm or reaffirm a love relationship, to build self-esteem, to make babies, or simply for sensual pleasure. (No other animal seems to mate for pleasure alone, a fact which makes the Christian labelling of carnal pleasures as "animal" rather ironic.)

We are at our most human when we give ourselves permission to enjoy physical intimacy without the possibility of pregnancy resulting. Dogs and cats, cattle and birds have no use for contraception. (When we spay or neuter our pets, they have no sex drive left after the possibility of reproduction is gone.) To enjoy intimacy, and to express intimacy through sexual intercourse, is uniquely human. There is no reason to think that in a society of free choice such as socialism, people will be less sexual than they have been in the past. But it is imperative that we separate sexual freedom from the necessity of contributing to the population explosion!

Presently, the Right to Life movement, which opposes abortion on demand, op-

poses contraception just as vehemently. But it should be obvious that the need for abortion is lessened by the use of birth control. Only one American company, Ortho Pharmaceuticals, is currently engaged in any new research in contraceptive technology. In a socialist world, where money is no object (literally), we can expect that more research effort will result in better birth control.

## Planning pregnancies

Even in the absence of major advances in contraceptive technology, one would expect that in a socialist society better access to information about sexuality would lead to fewer unplanned pregnancies and therefore less need for abortion than exists in society today.

Probably the most common reason for a woman to want an abortion in capitalist society is—either directly or indirectly—financial: a baby would interfere with her education and so limit her career choices, or it would make it impossible for her to work; or she doesn't want to be dragged into the Welfare system—or she realizes there is only enough money to care for and educate the children she already has.

We have no crystal ball that can show us the shape of the new society. But clearly, a woman who really wants a baby but feels such tremendous financial pressure that she can't see her way clear to bring it to birth, will feel no such pressure in a moneyless, classless society, where she would have free access to everything she wanted for both herself and her children.

Perhaps a natural outgrowth of communal decision-making about production will be a sense that children belong to the whole community,<sup>3</sup> so that even a woman (or young girl) who felt unready to take on the responsibilities of motherhood would be assured of her child's well-being if she found herself pregnant.

But inevitably, in any society, there are bound to be some circumstances, for some women, where pregnancy itself represents too much of a burden: an unplanned pregnancy fraught with nausea and fatigue at a time when the woman needs to be at her best for some other project. In this situation, in a sane society, she would certainly be free to seek the assistance of a midwife or a doctor to terminate the unwanted pregnancy, without the shame, guilt, or overwhelming expense that such a decision can lead to today.

In a socialist society, there will be true freedom of choice, not the hollow freedom of capitalist society, where all our choices are bound by economic necessity. The legal framework of capitalism will be irrelevant in the new society. Abortion will no longer be a matter to be regulated by

# Socialism and equality

The audit by the U.S. accounting firm Price Waterhouse said officials in India's Roman Catholic Church, which receives about \$25 million in American food each year, drew up bogus lists of food recipients and used donations to run businesses.

Clergy also purposely exaggerated the amount of aid they distributed and filed false reports to hide the abuses, the audit said. [Associated Press 5/25/90]

How about that!? You notice, incidentally, that the audit does not accuse the Roman Catholic clergy of *theft*. You see, misusing vital resources for personal profit while millions starve, falsifying one's effectiveness in dealing with life and death problems, then trying to cover up the whole can of worms—even as they gnaw their way through human corpses—is a common practice under capitalism. Not an official crime.

There are self-styled "radical" progressives who would say that this shows you can't trust philanthropic individuals or institutions to alleviate world poverty. What must be done is to divide all the money equally, and everybody will be equal...socialism at last!

## "Sensible" conservatives

At the other extreme from this monetary view of equality are your self-styled "sensible" conservatives. They would have you believe that the AP clip proves equality is impossible. No matter how you try to divide up money, human nature and greed will prevail. There will always be individuals who are more clever and cunning than the rest. That in fact, too much effort is being spent on "equalizing" everyone, holding back the "dynamic" ones—thus leading to an overall greater poverty! What must be done is to reduce the equality burdens on the wealthy so they can create a wealthier world for us all! Most people gravitate towards one or the other ends of these two monetary extremes.

Both positions have a superficial degree of truth in them, but that's it. They both lack a fundamental understanding of what wealth and human nature are and, certainly, even of what equality is. Genuine socialists view these two extremes as duelling banjoes of ignorance, misleading the working class of the world into being slaves to the cruel reign of King Kapital.

law, but rather by the good moral judgment of the woman involved.

—K Ellenbogen

1. "Questions and Answers about Abortion" (1986), Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts; p 19.
2. Two billion in mid-1987 and currently growing at a rate of 1.73% per year. *Contraceptive Technology 1988-1989*, 14th Rev. Ed., R.A. Hatcher, M.D. et al.; New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc; p 125.
3. See the SPGB pamphlet "Women and Socialism", p. 5.

Listen, if you will, to a third tune. One of true freedom and equality.

There is an inevitable polarization of wealth in capitalism. It is an objective fact that presently in our world, there exist those who own the systems of production but do not labor in them. And there are those who labor in these same systems of production but do not own them, with the former dependent on the mental and physical energies of the latter for the source of their "good life". Therefore everyone could not possibly belong to the owning/ruling class...under capitalism. Someone has to work to make another rich. Equality is a futile, economically impossible dream—under capitalism.

To play into and strengthen these trends is only to compound human misery and poverty and raise them to new plateaux of horror. In what era but the present capitalist era have we witnessed over 10,000 people dying daily of malnutrition and related diseases while farmers are paid not to grow food—or destroy food they have grown? Exacerbating present problems is no solution to those problems but will only create greater ones.

What we are talking about is not capitalism equalized but real socialism. This myth that an equalized capitalism = socialism is a Leninist one. Equal pay for everyone, with full employment, is a misconception of socialism that has thwarted working-class efforts for nearly a century now. Before Lenin, none other than George Bernard Shaw, along with the British Labor Party, held this backward view that it was possible to equalize capitalism. A hopeless contradiction in terms.

## You get what you want

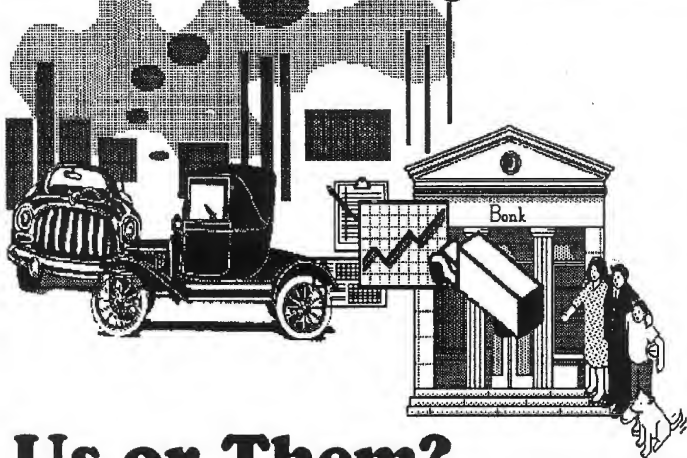
Genuine socialism will be a world in which production is not limited by markets of capital accumulation. Production will be under the control of a democratic process and will be geared to meet human needs. (And we view a balanced, ecologically sound environment as part of meeting human needs, by the way.) Furthermore access to this wealth will be free and unrestricted! To put it simply, you get what you want when you want it. Unfettered production guided by a democratic process will make this feasible.

We can even now imagine that everyone will not have symmetric tastes. There will be room for all existing tastes, plus some we now can't imagine in our present, limited capitalist society. Though everyone's possessions will not be symmetric, everyone will nonetheless be equal in terms of their *access* to the wealth produced. A difference in possessions will be the result of individual preferences and not of opportunity to obtain those possessions. Naturally, such a setup will entail the abolition of the basis for all monetary systems—not dividing money up.

With no more buying and selling, a con man really would not know where to start. The confidence trick is a struggle against a limited society—capitalism. In an infinite society, socialism, terms like "getting ahead", "leading the pack" and "beating the system" will be echoes of a forgotten prehistory.

—WJ Lawrimore

# Who causes pollution—



## Us or Them?

Some Greens—this could even be described as the mainstream view—argue that pollution and environmental stress are caused by “us” consuming “too much”, either because we are too greedy and materialistic or because there are too many of us. This analysis suggests its own solution: we must learn to live with less, as David Suzuki put it in a Canadian radio broadcast last year. This analysis—and the solution it implies—are both wrong, as they are based on the fundamental fallacy that the present economic system is geared to meeting needs, whereas in fact it is geared to profit-making.

- There is of course a market for consumer goods, and a section of industry is geared to catering for this market, but this is not to say that is the driving force of the capitalist economy—whose driving force (from which in fact its name is derived) is the accumulation of capital, i.e. the accumulation of more and more value invested in capital equipment. The source of funds for this capital investment is profits, or the value added in the course of production over and above what has to be paid out as wages and salaries.

- Since the capital is accumulated out of reinvested profits, and since profits are a surplus over and above wages and salaries, it is easy to see why the satisfaction of the market for consumer goods is not, and cannot be, the main driving force of the economy. Despite the fact that the market for consumer goods is made up overwhelmingly of wage and salary workers spending their earnings (though not exclusively, since a portion of profits are also spent on consumption), it is the aim of capitalist production to limit wages and salaries to the level needed to maintain the workforce in a state of productive efficiency. In a capitalist economy priority always has to be given to investment over consumption. The aim of capitalist production is to maximize investment, not consumption.

### Too much consumption?

This is why it is quite wrong—indeed, quite impertinent—to attribute environmental stress

to us consuming too much. Some of the figures quoted in this connection border on the dishonest. One which is frequently quoted is how much energy and raw materials each person in a developed capitalist country like Canada, America or Britain consumes (usually compared with someone in an undeveloped capitalist country). This figure is reached by simply dividing the total amount of energy and raw

materials consumed in that country by its population. This figure may have some statistical uses, but as evidence for concluding that we, as individuals, are consuming too much, it is quite invalid, as it is attributing to us as individuals what in fact is used not by us, but by capitalist industry (as well as by the military and by the rich).

Some of these industries will be producing goods that we consume as individuals, but most will be producing materials and equipment for other industries. A fair figure of what we consumed on average per capita could be worked out, and those who wanted to might draw the conclusion that it was too much (though as Socialists we would expect it to show the opposite: that many people are suffering from material poverty, i.e. are not consuming enough). In any event, the figures would be well below those that are frequently bandied about today.

### Rearranging the problem

If personal overconsumption is not responsible for environmental stress today, it is clear that cutting back on our personal consumption is not going to make much difference in this respect. Even if we did all the things here that we are told to do by some Greens, all this would amount to would be a change in the pattern of market demand for consumer goods—which capitalist firms would be able to adapt to, as they already have to a certain extent, with the supermarket chains jumping on the Green bandwagon in a big way with organic fruit and vegetable sections, ozone-friendly aerosols, recycled toilet paper, etc. It is not even too farfetched to imagine McDonalds switching to veggie-burgers, leaving Greens to complain about the tropical rainforests being cut down to grow soybeans instead of to raise cattle for hamburgers!

In any event, as we have seen, the market for consumer goods is only a subordinate one within capitalism, so the rest of the economy would go on as before, accumulating more and more capital and consuming more and more energy and resources to do so. Insofar as we actually cut back on overall consumption levels, capitalist industry would be very pleased, as this would be to achieve what they (and the governments which run things in their interests) are seeking to achieve all the time: to reduce the share of consumption in the gross national

product (GNP) so as to make more funds available for investment. So the energy and materials we saved could well end up being consumed instead by capitalist industry.

Certainly, this is not at all the intention of Greens like David Suzuki, who say we must learn to live with less. Nevertheless, in saying things like this, they are aiding capitalist industry to restrict consumption in the interests of investment. The Greens most definitely do have a case about the real threat that exists to the environment and indeed to the whole ecosystem, but they are ruining their case by adding their voices to those of politicians, employers and churchpeople who have long preached austerity and belt-tightening to wage and salary earners. It is not we who are responsible for the crisis of the environment but the capitalist system, in which priority must always be given to profits and profit-making over all other considerations, including protecting the environment and respecting the laws of ecology.

### A more far-reaching change

To be quite fair, a lot of Greens do recognize the limitations of “Green consumerism” and do see that a more far-reaching change is required than merely changing our consumption habits. In his broadcast, Suzuki spoke of the need for a “fundamental change in our value system” and a “radical change in the way we think”. And in an article in the *Vancouver Sun* (September 9, 1989) he wrote:

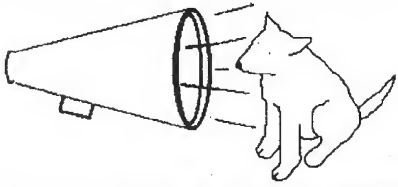
Economic growth has become an end in itself, a mindless goal that is sought by every country in the world and the very measure of progress... If we genuinely mean it when we say we want to leave something for our children and future generations, we have to abandon this insane notion of the critical necessity of growth.

This approach, though more radical, is still hopelessly idealist. As materialists, Socialists know that the value system, ethics, morality, etc., prevailing at any one time is essentially a reflection of underlying economic reality—which, at present is one geared precisely to economic growth in the form of capital accumulation. Growth is not an aberration of the existing economic system; it is its essence. Capitalism is growth, capital accumulation. “Growth” is the dominant ethic today because this is a reflection, on the plane of morality, of the economic system. To stop “blind economic growth”, more is required than mere preaching, mere appeals for a new ethic, a new value-system and so on. What is required is a change of economic system away from one geared to accumulating capital out of profits.

The market economy must be completely abolished. Instead, there must be production purely and simply to meet human needs. Production for use must replace production for profit. With production geared to meeting needs, we are obviously going to ensure that the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat are good for us. So we are only going to employ those materials and those methods of production that are compatible with nature and its cycles. Socialism is the only framework within which the ecological crisis can be solved once and for all.

—ALB (SPGB)





## YOU SAID IT

### Our Masters' Voice

## PRETORIA'S BIG STICK

There is a good reason why politics (as well as patriotism) is the last refuge of a scoundrel: the class struggle is a nasty game that's played for keeps. The class struggle in South Africa has begun to take another typically nasty turn since the beginning of this year. Not so long before she left office, Ms. Thatcher—the scoundrel who 12 years ago arranged the Lancaster House negotiations that turned “Rhodesia/Zimbabwe” into “Zimbabwe” without singeing the hair of a single white settler—issued yet another gooeey pronouncement:

**We believe in carrots as well as sticks, and they've had plenty of the latter. They should now have some of the former.** [Atlanta Journal & Constitution 2/3/90]

“They” are the Afrikaner scoundrels who engineered the superstructure of apartheid. Ms. Thatcher's shipment of “carrots” (the lifting of sanctions) will not arrive late for such an important date; they are intended to rescue capitalism's Apartheid Division before the African National Congress (ANC), acting as the vanguard of the marketplace, manages to shut it down. Nelson Mandela's recent palm-strewn ride into the heartlands of industrial capitalism was enough to make you think nobody any longer has any interest in maintaining apartheid. But it is merely another case of the military solution having proven counter-productive... According to Dennis Brutus, exiled from South Africa since 1966,

**Both the Bush government and the Thatcher government are interested in relaxing sanctions. ... That is the strategy—that externally the support that was taken away will be given back to apartheid. But you have to couple that with an internal strategy: de Klerk knew he could not get the external action unless he had some internal action. And internal action was to say, “Hey, folks, from [now] on I believe in democracy”. And once he did that he gave Bush and Thatcher the excuse to say, “Hey, look how that guy has changed”. [Z Magazine, June 1990]**

In strong contrast to his bandwagon reception in the United States—which reached cult-of-personality proportions—Mandela is actually being used (according to Brutus) to maneuver the ANC into a blind alley. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, head of Inkatha, the Zulu organization which considers itself the ANC's rival and which pursues (with the connivance of Pretoria) a “black nationalist” rapprochement with the apartheid state, is getting a media build-up, even as the legalized, “Marxist” ANC is touted as out of step with the times.

South Africa's Finance Minister Barend Du Plessis pulled off the velvet gloves at a February news briefing where

**he and other ministers... said the collapse of Communist governments in Eastern Europe has given the South African government a window of opportunity to legalize the ANC, then seek to discredit its Marxist ideology with the public.** [Atlanta Journal & Constitution 2/9/90]

And what made this “window of opportunity” so attractive? Brutus argues:

**One of the curious things happening in the United States and West Germany, probably Japan and England, is a notion that they are going to find so much cheap labor, skilled, cheap labor in Eastern Europe, that the smart thing is to invest in industrial expansion in Eastern Europe or even get cheap Eastern European labor to come to the West. But that investment in the third world, whether in Asia, Africa or Latin America, may dry up significantly, while capital is transferred to Eastern Europe.** [Z Magazine, June 1990]

However, this transfer of capital will probably help to keep South African capital in its present relatively depressed condition—the market will end up accomplishing what sanctions could not. This does not mean the ANC will be able to benefit from the misfortunes of its competitor (the governing coalition of Anglo-Saxon and Afrikaner capitalists). The the Eastern “window of opportunity”

reason why European of opportunity opened

up to the multinationals in the first place is the same reason why aid to the ANC from those countries has dried up; i.e., their Leninist governments have crumbled into dust. Capital always flows to where the wages are lower, the workers less organized and the markets more open.

Apartheid meanwhile remains an ultimate straightjacket on economic expansion. Buthelezi's Inkatha represents a puppet opposition which can be used to Balkanize the nonwhite majority. The ANC, which fancies itself an anticapitalist organization, is an authentic opposition force—it really could replace the apartheid régime with a more homogeneous form of exploitation; whereas Inkatha is a creature of the apartheid system.

A post-apartheid régime will still be confronted with the same pressures to keep wages down and profits up. Because it cultivates a mystique of radicalism and acts as a political umbrella for the black trade unions, the ANC could actually deliver the profits once in power. Of course it has to pursue nationalization of the major industries; announcing it intended to parcel out pieces of the economy to individuals would generate divisions that would tear it apart before it ever took over.

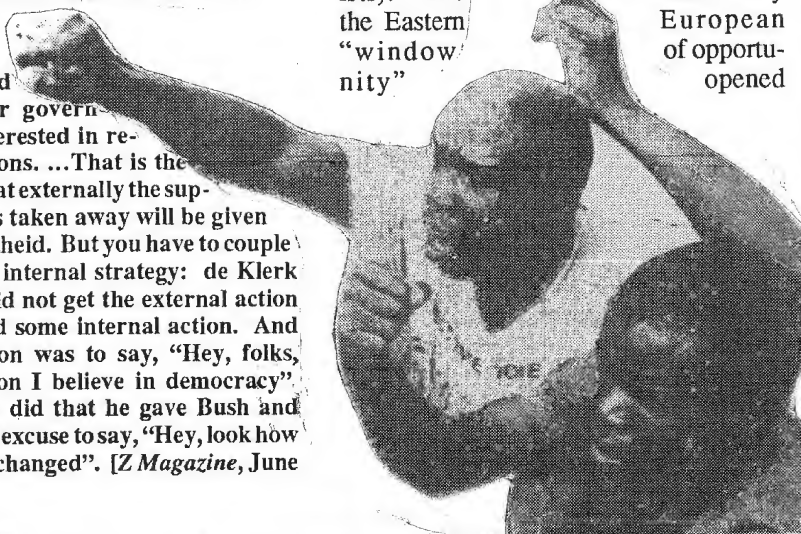
In a Cape Town speech made shortly after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela had to contend with bloodily repressed street rioting even as he was reassuring whites that the ANC would not pursue a policy of revenge in office.

**“I hope you will disperse with dignity”, he said at the end of an evening marred by clashes between looters and police. “Not a single one of you should do anything that will make other people say we can't control our own people”. [Atlanta Journal & Constitution, 2/12/90]**

That control, needless to say, will continue to be imposed in a nonracial economy. The ANC message to wage slaves of all skin colors now is “one person, one vote”; but that message will inevitably be transformed into “Don't ask for too much too soon, especially not now”. For that, simply put, is the only way anyone can administer an economy. The black majority doesn't actually have a stake in trickle-down economics; though a bigger pie with a more even slicing of the available job-portions is arguably an improvement over the irrational partitions set up by apartheid.

In the meantime, the jury is still out on the really big question—Would anyone like to try their hand at abolishing the wages system in South Africa now, rather than just apartheid?

—Ron Elbert



# Are you a socialist?

**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, proved the validity of this judgment. In our opinion, if you agree, generally, with the following statements, you are a socialist and belong with us.**

**1. Capitalism, even with reforms, cannot 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.

**2. 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.

**3. 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.

**4. 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!

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

(a) 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.

(b) 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.

**6. The system of society formerly in effect in Russia, China and all of the other so-called socialist or communist countries was 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.

**7. Trade unionism is the means by which wage workers organize to "bargain collectively" in order that they might sell their labor power at the best possible price and to 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." ∅

**If you agree, generally, with the above sentiments, you belong with us. Can we hear from you?**

**Contact us either in writing at Box 405, Boston, MA 02272 or call us at (617) 628-9096.**

**All party events are open to the public**

**IN BOSTON CALL 628-9096**

## THE AUTOMOBILE WALL

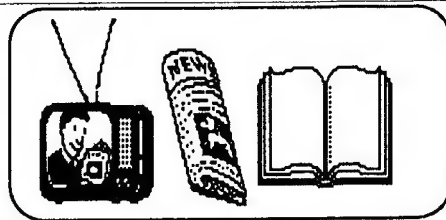
Capitalism has built a new Great Wall, dwarfing in its ambition anything the imperial Chinese could ever have dreamt of: the Automobile Wall. One of the major factors in disrupting the use of urban spaces for casual assemblies and spontaneous communication has been the rise in motor vehicle traffic since the second world war. There are more roads, more cars, trucks and buses, and more noise. Outdoor meetings have become a rarity. The street has been rendered a difficult milieu in which to communicate ideas in public.

Automobiles in and of themselves also deprive their users of the opportunity to communicate: the more driving people do singly or in pairs, the less time they can devote to communicating with others. Not much better can be said of mass transportation, where communication becomes reduced to (at best) immediate personal contact.

Paralleling this shrinkage of urban communicating space is the growth of the mass media: first the press (now become "print media"), then radio and television (the "broadcast media"). On top of that has come a proliferation of other, more "personal" media: tapes, records and compact discs, videotape, etc. Media intrusion into time not spent in employment or sleep has grown by leaps and bounds. As the mass media have diversified technologically, they have also become more concentrated sociologically, as investor-owned enterprises integrated into the world of business, with business interests to defend.\* The capital requirements for owning and operating mass media, needless to say, place them well beyond the reach of most individuals and groups.

The combined effect of these trends has been to undermine working-class and organizations and the political left psychologically and socially by reducing their access both to urban public spaces and a randomly circulating public audience. At the same time, individual isolation is increased synergistically by patterns of auto usage, traffic volume and engineering, noise levels and the pervasive presence of all the different forms of media taken together.

Within the media propaganda system,



## THE WAY IT IS

### Media and consciousness

organizations of resistance are either co-opted and fall into place as official participants, defined according to criteria based on capital accumulation; or they become marginalized and exotic and can therefore be ignored with impunity as sources. Either way, they are ranked as lightweights whose action is abnormal and of only temporary interest, against a backdrop of "business as usual" which is portrayed as society's normal, stable condition. Resistance to the system thus becomes heretical behavior, and even heretics are co-opted into the propaganda system's repertoire in a subordinate role (that of villain). Simply using the media to get attention for a cause is thus reduced to a conservative function.\*\*

### THE RESTRUCTURED "GLOBAL VILLAGE"

However, since the decade of the 80s, consumption and production of automobiles and mass transportation have begun to separate from each other. As the manufacture of vehicles has become sufficiently routine, their production has become internationalized. Basic manufacturing industry has moved out of the country or has stayed here only because pay scales could be kept low. Workers have found themselves suddenly cashiered en masse as a result of capital flight. Some manage to locate new jobs in low-paying service industries (which generate relatively little secondary employment); but many are simply forced into joblessness. Where the departing industry is a city's principal employer (as in Youngstown), the sudden increase in poverty can be catastrophic.\*\*\*

Since both the auto industry and the mass media aim at expanding sales to paying customers—especially the affluent ones—the collapse of local economies in cities

from which basic industry has been transferred abroad would therefore seem to withdraw large numbers of consumers from the reach of the propaganda system as they become squeezed out of the labor market and their access to consumer goods dwindles. Even so, the occupation of available urban space by a transportation system that precludes communication continues; on the other hand, developments in computer technology have brought communication using media once again within the reach of working-class organizations.

### BREACHING THE WALL

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the point is reached at which workers by the millions are forced to salvage their position by taking over the role of collective capitalists (where capital abandons them for a better deal elsewhere); then the ability to create urban spaces which feature ease of communication, in the form of casual public assemblies, returns. The mass media, dependent on a market base of elitist, affluent customers separated from a patchwork economy of worker-owned enterprises, continue to sell pro-system propaganda to this important thought-control stratum of the population; but other, resistance-oriented media now have room to grow up in a parallel culture and symbiotically nurture an emerging anti-market consensus within the working class.

This represents just a hypothetical scenario, valid of course only within the framework of present-day capitalism. But it serves to demonstrate how socialism as a system of production will require a conscious understanding of the problem on the part of the majority—and the explicit intention of replacing capitalism's dysfunctional market system with a real, community-based society. If a revolutionary culture of embryonic capitalists could grow up on the fringes of the decrepit feudal system, today's browned-out urban working class can in its turn generate the working model of a new, undivided society, of an economy which uses no money because all production is designed to meet human social needs. But this model must arise out of successful attempts by today's wage-slaves to communicate their ideas to each other as a result of deliberately attempting to eliminate the market system.

—AR

\* Cf. Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly*.

\*\* Two other useful books dealing with the mass media's thought-control function are *Manufacturing Consent* (Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman) and *The Mind Managers* (Herbert Schiller).

\*\*\* *Corporate Flight* by Barry Bluestone et al. provides some insight into this process.

**THINK IT  
OVER!!  
...AND  
SUBSCRIBE**

**4 issues...\$4.00**

**The World Socialist Review**  
journal of the world socialist movement in the united states

**WSP (US)**  
**PO Box 405**  
**Boston, MA 02272**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_  
**CITY, STATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_



# Remodelling capitalism

## Replacing

There is absolutely no way in which capitalism can be reformed to operate in the interests of the working class. We are therefore not concerned with reforming the present system, but with its abolition.

The working class experience a completely different standard of life from that enjoyed by the small section of society that own and control the means of life—the capitalist class. How can you reform away poverty, which is, from a comparative standpoint, the economic and material position of the working class as compared to that of the capitalist class? Irrespective of whatever the wage level might be at any particular time, the working class live in poverty contrasted to the wealth of the capitalist class. Can anyone suggest a reform that can change this? There is none.

Has there ever been any time in your life without major or minor wars, or the perpetual threat of one breaking out? What reform can you possibly imagine that could eliminate the rivalries of different national sections of the capitalist class over private property issues? These are the antagonisms, integral to this system, that constitute the basic cause of war.

Can you conceive of a reform that would give economic security to the working class, who, in order to live, have to find purchasers for their labor power? The threat of unemployment exists for every single member of the working class. Workers cannot properly control their own economic destinies because, as non-owners of the means of production and distribution,

whether they work or not depends upon the wishes and interests of their employers.

Poverty, unemployment, insecurity, wars and racial intolerance are all social evils caused by

**Once upon a time, the Communist Party faced an overwhelming bipartisan anti-communist consensus. The Democratic and Republican parties agreed that communism was evil. Congressional committees kept a close eye on communist activities, and men like Gus Hall and his friend George Crockett went to jail.**

**Times have changed. Today George Crockett is a member of the Democratic Party—and a member of Congress, with his own subcommittee chairmanship. His voting record is indistinguishable from those of many other Democrats.**

**That's why Gus isn't running [for president this year]. When a man like George fits so snugly into the Democratic Party, the Communist Party is well on the way to being a redundancy.**

**Communist Party literature doesn't talk about revolution and smashing capitalism. It talks about cooperating with the "liberal-to-progressive" forces of the Democratic Party in an "all-people's front"—the '80s version of the Popular Front of the '30s. The communists give top priority to causes like blocking the nomination of Robert Bork, promoting disarmament, cutting off aid to anti-communist forces in Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan, and supporting the candidacy of Jesse Jackson.**

**—From the Arkansas Democrat (1/24/88)**

## the low road

What can they do to you? Whatever they want. They can set you up, they can bust you, they can break your fingers, they can burn your brain with electricity, blur you with drugs till you can't walk, can't remember, they can take your child, wall up your lover. They can do anything you can't stop them from doing. How can you stop them? Alone, you can fight, you can refuse, you can take what revenge you can but they roll over you.

But two people fighting back to back can cut through a mob, a snake-dancing file can break a cordon, an army can meet an army.

Two people can keep each other sane, can give support, conviction, love, massage, hope, sex.

Three people are a delegation, a committee, a wedge. With four you can play bridge and start an organization. With six you can rent a whole house, eat pie for dinner with no seconds, and hold a fund raising party.

A dozen makes a demonstration.

A hundred fill a hall.

A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter;

ten thousand, power and your own paper;

a hundred thousand, your own media; ten million, your own country.

It goes on one at a time, it starts when you care to act, it starts when you do it again after they said no, it starts when you say We and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more.

**—Marge Piercy**

*(Reprinted with permission of the author)*

the system under which we live, and they cannot be reformed away.

Our political platform puts forward a case for socialism. In so doing, we hope to make socialists. Because here we have a fundamental position. Without socialists there can be no socialism. If we advocated reforms, regardless of their merits, we would attract to our ranks reformists, and this would not be in accordance with our objective.

Many people react very unfavorably when they hear the word "revolution". They envisage violence and disruption. We are opposed to all forms of violence. We maintain that socialism can be established peacefully and democratically by the process of education and political conversion. When the majority of the working class become socialists, you will have socialism, and this even will represent a social revolution. For a complete change in the basis of society will have occurred—the ownership of the means of production and distribution will have been transferred from a minority to the whole of society.

The working class can accomplish this historic mission by using their Socialist Parties throughout the world to send delegates to the seats of government, be they Congresses, Parliaments or National Assemblies, with a mandate for socialism. A new and human era will emerge. Let us hasten the day!

**—S Leight**

**Editor's Note: The above comment appeared originally as a paid advertisement in a local Tucson, Arizona newspaper.**

## ON SECOND THOUGHT

### From the Western Socialist

In this Manifesto of the Bolshevik Party ["The State and Revolution"], Lenin neither had in mind a revolution made by the majority nor did he intend that the "dictatorship" carelessly thrown out by Marx should be of a democratic nature. He had indicated earlier in this same pamphlet that the Party was to be the vanguard that would lead the proletariat, that the latter was not actually the vast majority itself but only the vanguard of the "whole people" and that the action of the working class in bringing down the bourgeois state was to be "guided" by the Party. What else could result but an iron dictatorship of the Secretariat? When one thinks about it, Lenin is proposing a most bizarre situation: The working class (the class which produces but does not possess) is to remain economically dependent on the capitalist class (which possesses but does not produce); the workers will continue to make a gift of surplus-labor to the capitalists—and yet the latter not only will be refused the privilege of running the state but will even be denied the right of having their interests represented in it! And this situation may last for a "long time"! This is the shabbiest piece of flimflam since The Philosophy of Poverty.

Now, if the working class controls the state and owns the means of production through it, how is it that it is nonetheless still oppressed by the rule of capital? If the answer is that the productive forces have not yet been developed tremendously enough—on Lenin's interpretation of the phrase, "all the springs of social wealth flow more abundantly"—then the state is not controlled by the workers, nor do they own the means of production. Either that, or for some strange reason Lenin keeps the capitalists in his picture even though they do not really exist anymore.

**—ROEL**

*"Lenin's Theory of Development...Revisited"*  
Spring/Summer 1980

# British visits to Canada and U.S. pump motion into the movement

## **BUICK: SOCIALISM NEVER TRIED**

In late November-early December 1989, Comrade Adam Buick (SPGB) visited British Columbia to give the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) and the world socialist movement a boost. The two main subjects he talked about while there were the Green movement and the "disappearance of socialism" in Europe. He found himself constantly obliged to point out that "what people are rejecting in Europe is not socialism but rather 'totalitarian state capitalism'", as a local newspaper article stated. The upshot of the tour was a successful media campaign that provided a fair amount of exposure for socialist views (although more in the newspapers than on radio).

[Excerpts from the Minutes of the Third 1989 Meeting, December 21st, GEC, Socialist Party of Canada/Good of the movement report on Comrade Adam Buick's visit:]

**Publications**—An assistant in the Camosun (occupational) College political science dept. arranged a noon hour propaganda meeting on the subject of disappearing "socialism" in Europe. The Victoria daily paper, *Times-Colonist*, now has kindly, understanding city editor, hence the right kind of reporter covered the proceedings with a two column wide write-up, circulation possibly in the area of 70,000. A good interview was held with the *Saanich News*, a weekly, and a good article resulted. A poor interview with *Goldstream Gazette*, another weekly, with no results yet.

A debate arranged between Com. Buick and the Green Party candidate in the provincial by-election was postponed twice because of the candidate's preoccupation with the campaign. It was a taped discussion to be presented in two segments by UVIC's 24 hour FM radio station, CFUV. Finally the Greens' Sarah David made herself available. Tried to record the first installment, but too distorted. The moderator said he would copy the original and send to us after Xmas. Got the second segment OK.

The Greens debate caught the attention of a Tuesday noon moderator on Magazine Show, interested in NDP, British Lab. Party, Russia, ecology, etc. That interview used up two segments of his show, a week apart. We recorded these. In the process, a third interviewer who hosts the Monday noon production, was a 16 year old non-student. We failed to home record his, but Com. Lambie has it non-edited from the interview. He related by phone that his airing resulted in favorable phone calls, prompting him to say he would run it again following week, but sickness intervened. Hopefully copies of these tapes will become available. ☐

## **COLEMAN: MEETINGS AND MEDIA**

In April two other socialists, also from Brit-

ain—Comrades Steve Coleman and Dick Donnelly—visited the U.S. for ten days. While these were not "ten days that shook the world", they did produce some ripples—two well-attended meetings in Grand Rapids, Michigan and a taped radio interview over a Boston-area radio station (WMFO at Tufts University). The interviewer conducted a running discussion of socialist ideas, often challenging Cde. Coleman to explain or substantiate his views; a tape of this broadcast is available as of this writing. (A local Trotskyist group very nearly pre-empted us, but at the last minute we got the interview.) Another radio interview (on Boston's WBZ) had to be cancelled because of schedule conflicts; and a potential debate on the subject of the "death of socialism" with a Liberal group on the Harvard campus (publishers of a periodical called *Perspective*) fizzled mysteriously for reasons known only to them. At Cde. Coleman's suggestion, we went ahead and taped a short "introduction to Socialism" and have subsequently advertised it in five national periodicals, with further ads planned. This tape offer has been enjoying a surprisingly vigorous reception, and our next step will be to concentrate our advertising efforts on the local media.

The Grand Rapids meetings were arranged by the ex-Socialist Labor Party members who publish the *Discussion Bulletin* (notably Frank Girard) and were a success by all accounts. We got a fair number of responses out of both meetings, particularly from individuals who hadn't previously been exposed to socialist ideas. [Note. In September yet another British comrade, Cyril May, paid a visit to the Boston area and was interviewed on WBZ's Peter Meade show, with a listener call-in segment; unfortunately, the show's format didn't allow a clear exposition of socialist views at the very beginning, which limited the impact of the actual discussion. We did get a good tape out of this, however, and will be adding this and the WMFO tape to our catalogue. The catalogue has proven quite successful in its own right.]

Other options for media exposure during the Coleman-Donnelly visit were suggested by a Georgia comrade (who also wrote us the letter below). He was, however, unable to follow up on them owing to problems of time and distance. Lack of experienced people was in general a major constraining factor hampering our efforts at organizing for the tour. ☐

## **LETTER FROM GEORGIA**

June 18, 1990

Dear Comrades,

I was at a demonstration in downtown Atlanta today. See Creative Loafing ad clipped to homemade flyer I took to it. For the past three years or so this demo has annually attracted 100 or more people. And what with Nelson Mandela coming to town next week, this one was

sure to be the biggest yet! Wrong!

Less than 15 showed up today. Workers' World Party (a spin-off of the SWP), who's behind these demos, saw just how far they are disintegrating today. This is the same party that packed in over 100 people for an anti-Klan rally just this January. Also, I noticed not a single representative of the SWP was there. And I have always seen one of them at a WWP front group demo. Either they couldn't get anyone motivated enough to go to it, or they knew the WWP can't pack in crap no more.

Three members of the Revolutionary Communist Party (Maoist and gang of four groupies) were there. See newspaper clipping of the Refuse and Resist abortion rights protest. R&R is a front group of the RCP. They put posters all over town and passed out thousands of leaflets for that action. In the past, such an effort would and did on more than a couple of occasions draw over 100 people. As you can see from the article, nine protesters shows the bottom has dropped out of that movement as well.

For my part, I passed out 59 copies of the enclosed [homemade] flyer. I ran off 100, expecting over 100 people at the demo. So I was slightly disappointed. But looking back, I realize that I spread [our] ideas, single-handed, to more people than the WWP and RCP combined!

Neither the WWP nor the RCP even tried to leaflet bystanders. The WWP just had some mindless chants to offer pedestrians. As in "we don't care what you think, just follow us". The RCP only approached a handful of people with their *Revolutionary Worker* newspaper. Myself and the wife of Tyrone Brooks (he a member of the state legislature and civil rights vet) were the only ones to buy. And I think Tyrone and his wife were on an intelligence gathering operation to boot. I am sure they got a mindful from the flyer I gave them.

So you see, the only party that could have had a lasting impact on anyone's thinking from that demo was us. And I seriously doubt anyone was turned on by any of my flyers, but I gave some folks a chance to understand. This demo, along with the newspaper account of the R&R flop, confirms a theory that I had formulated from observations at the January anti-Klan rally in Atlanta. I knew then that these type-parties (at least in Atlanta) were heading downhill fast. And look what's happened. The bottom has apparently dropped out of the "left" in Atlanta. OK, comrades, the road ahead of us is less cluttered now...let's haul ass!

Yours for socialism,

Wesley

## **PLANNING FOR PARTY GROWTH**

### **Suggestions for thinking ahead**

[Excerpts from the Central Organiser's memo to the Executive Committee, The Socialist Party of Great Britain, dated August 13, 1989:]

...is a single series of meetings on the Labour Party the best way to pick up those who will be abandoning the Labour Party? I think not. We need to run an advertising campaign—and to

organise a campaign of letters to the press—and to run regular articles in the *[Socialist Standard]*, not only exposing Labour's more naked than ever reformism, but also ensuring that ex-Labourites do not drift into our political rivals, such as the SWP or Greens.

On the Green issue there is a lot that the Party needs to do. Are we able to compete with the green reformists who have access to more ecological data than we are likely to be able to find, or should we concentrate on challenging the Green political analysis? We need to detect their weakest spots, discover the policies which they will most likely be forced to split upon, and appear in their literature as a constant reminder that there is an alternative to the Greens once they show their true capitalist colours.

On community radio, we need to know where the new stations are to be, who is obtaining the franchises, how easily we can fit ourselves into their new schedules. Despite the indifference of a number of Party members to using the media, we now have a pretty credible record as media fillers. We need to impress our record on to the new stations. This needs to be done now, while the stations are being set up, not in five years time when we are wondering why they have not found us. [N.B. This refers to the government's plans to transform British radio by legislating to make the airwaves far more open to so-called community stations.]

[We should seek to increase] media impact, especially in London. Thanks to the considerable exposure which the Party is currently having on BBC local radio in London, Kent and Bedfordshire (four two-hour broadcasts to date), as well as the persistent work carried out by a few comrades on the London phone-ins, the Party is now in a position to gain real media recognition, at least in the London area. In advertising terms, we are building "product recognition". This media effort now needs to be intensified. We need to train speakers to appear on the radio. (I contacted the Propaganda Ctee a few weeks ago offering to help set up a Media Training Workshop.) We need to back up radio broadcasts with newspaper and magazine ads—preferably, on the theme of the discussions in which we participate.

I am of the view that each year (or even every couple of years) the Party should select a number of cities or towns, chosen on a regional basis,

and try to build support in them. This would involve several branches going into the area and distributing literature over a period of time, leading eventually to holding meetings. This has been done by some of the northern branches and has been effective: Merseyside branch is the product of such expeditionary work, as was Manchester branch. It is also necessary to revive areas where the branch was active, but is no more.

[Excerpt from "Plans for Party Growth", a summary of strategy reports by Executive Committee Sub-Committees:] The committee urges that a sum not less than one-third of

*Most people do not accept or reject an entire prevailing social order on philosophical, ethical or moral grounds; they do so because it can or cannot afford them concrete enjoyments. The pursuit of these has only one requirement—that they be at least minimal. People see their own potential in terms of those satisfactions or enjoyments.*

*This native human empiricism carries with it, unfortunately, a tendency to get complacent once minimal enjoyment or satisfaction has reached a certain stability and to maximize it where possible. Only where a developed social order has reached such a degree of social and economic malfunction (owing to the intrusion of elements representing a more advanced social order) that it cannot provide even this minimal satisfaction do the victims of class warfare demonstrate a readiness to abandon it on anything like a large scale. This was especially true in the cases of the decadent slave-empires of antiquity and of the manorial serfdom of late feudal Europe.*

*Why does today's working class seem politically so complacent? Socialists might explain this as the ability of the capitalist system (thus far) to expand sufficiently, on a world scale, to keep human desperation "subclinical", that is, too low to trigger workers' native tendency to reject it as a system for long enough on a large enough scale. People*

production costs be set aside annually to promote our journal and that the SSPC [Production Committee] co-opt a fourth member exclusively for this purpose (as recommended in the *Socialist Standard* Investigating Committee's Report of 1959!). The fact that we have an unique case to make does not preclude us from adopting conventional selling techniques.

It seems to us that the success or otherwise of a Party strategy depends on whether members are prepared to make difficult decisions. In our present financial position it does not make sense to spend the major proportion of our income on producing a journal if we fail to promote it. Ø

*often can eventually find something short-term to hang onto and will reserve their energies for reaching those islands of enjoyment or satisfaction.*

*This is one of the pernicious aspects of proposing solutions that envisage living with the market (i.e., reforms). It also implies that, once the majority have decided to break with the system, reformers will cease to be able to interest them in mere palliatives. We just don't know yet when the threshold will be crossed. But in order to be there to articulate the majority's desire to abandon capitalism when it does happen, socialists must apply themselves for the indefinite present to reach out to workers with an ongoing educational effort.*

*In the meantime, disgust with the system is quite real and widespread and continues to boil over, at sporadic intervals, on an expanding scale. Socialists should use these outbreaks to educate themselves on the quickest and best ways to translate them into the rational form of an actually revolutionary consciousness. This must satisfy the minimum criterion of replacing capitalism immediately (however dynamic it may remain, it has become reactionary and conservative) with a system of common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production based on the satisfaction of needs and the ability to enjoy life.*

## Obituaries

### Charles (Charlie) Rothstein

To the (too long) list of World Socialist Party comrades who have "left this terrestrial sphere" we are now saddened to add the name of Charlie Rothstein—one of the earliest members of Boston local—having been notified, recently, of his death last August.

Charlie had been in poor health for a number of years and had taken up permanent residence in Miami, Florida, to escape the rigors of New England winters and to be near family members. He did manage to carry on a more or less regular correspondence with this writer for quite some time

and always kept up his interest in Companion Party matters via the mailings from Boston.

Charlie had been, during the "Hungry Thirties", the Forties and later, a tireless worker at Local Headquarters in office matters and an able aide at street and Boston Common meetings. He was especially well-informed in socialist theory. Those of us who knew him well miss him.

—Harmo

### Walter Kobus

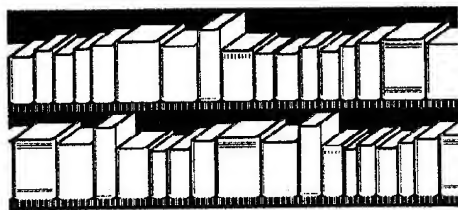
We also announce with regret the death of Walter Kobus, an early member of the Party

and a good friend of comrade Bill Pritchard (now deceased), whose numerous tracts he and William Z. Miller distributed in Michigan and California to any who were interested. Cde. Kobus left each of the Companion Parties varying but in every case generous bequests to carry on the work of making socialists. In his last years he lived by himself in a trailer in Harrison, Michigan. Ø

### Ruth Seifert

We are sorry to note the passing of Ruth Seifert, long-time member of the Boston group and widow of Ed Seifert. During the early 80s Ruth served as office manager for the WSP. Ø





## REVIEWED

### Books of interest to socialists

#### SHAW vs. SHAW

*The Socialism of Bernard Shaw*, Harry Morrison (1989). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640.

Throughout modern history there has been no lack of intellectuals who have wheedled and cajoled us about how workers can be relied on not to generalize from their exploited condition in a revolutionary manner—as if being thrust into the category of wage-earner were sufficient to deprive people of their native ability to think for themselves. G.B. Shaw and V.I. Lenin were two such intellectuals.

In *The Socialism of Bernard Shaw*, Harry Morrison, co-editor of the old *Western Socialist* (Harmo), has written a trenchant exposé of Shaw's massive talent for self-contradiction. Shaw, a leading exponent of Fabianism, was in fact such a famous, preposterous and prolific writer that knowing where to begin demythologizing him is a truly daunting task. His reputation as an authority on Marxism has long been an oil-slick frustrating the best efforts of socialists to present their arguments in a clear and unambiguous way. This is a much-needed book.

Morrison covers all the major aspects of Shaw's thinking, but three emerge from his analysis as especially interesting: the rough parallelism between the views of Shaw and Lenin; Shaw's handling of the concept of surplus value; and his rejection of the materialist conception of history.

#### Shaw and Lenin

Shaw was a marvellous illustration of the principle that "forward" is wherever one chooses to go. In one of his plays (*On the Rocks*), for example, we find him taking up the Leninist notion that the working class must be guided to the upper phase of communism by a dictatorship of the proletariat (ruling by proxy over a proletarian state). He merges this with the fascist doctrine that dictatorship was the only effective way to liquidate the older Liberal basis of the bourgeois state so as to widen the market for the benefit of the new corporate elite based on the concept of limited liability.

In Lenin's proletarian state, the misuse of capital is finally corrected, and a "new management" is brought in to do things right; whereas in the fascist state, on the contrary, the misuse of capital is finally corrected (as conveniently

as possible), and a "new management" is brought in to do things right.... The sole difference lies in the respective doctrinal justifications, which Shaw evidently sees right through as unimportant.

What Shaw was calling a "population of supermen" was a rather deformed version of the pseudo-Marxist paradise of the Leninists: these advocated transforming "trade-union" consciousness into communist consciousness (via the "proletarian state"), thus producing a population of well-educated, well-informed socialist democrats who would be able to dispense with the machinery of government in favor of the mechanisms of wealth administration. Shaw, from his own cramped (literary) perspective, saw these qualities as inhering in the personalities of history's "great men", i.e., as laboratory models on which to base the educational effort needed to enlighten the proletarians and so raise them up to the politically correct level envisaged by the wise Fabian rulers of the future. (This would follow a period of "superman-democracy" employing force just like its predecessor.)

In bowdlerizing the term "middle class" to indicate what he believed to be the capitalists' natural and necessary function of hiring, organizing and directing labor [p 22], Shaw approached Lenin, who saw these functions as equally natural and necessary in the "lower stage of socialism", if exercised by the Party. Shaw, like Lenin, considered naïvely that those who employed wage-earners "should be satisfied with their earnings for their legitimate functions" [p 22] and viewed living off profit (which he called charging a "rent of ability") as merely an abusive practice. The fact that this "middle class" arrogates to itself the right to decide how much employees will earn, based on how much they need to stay alive, sat all right with Shaw.

#### Joint-stock communism

On the subject of surplus value and its expropriation, Shaw favored using wealth distribution as the key element, and he defined communism as a matter of legal title in the means of production by any group—of investors. He saw joint-stock ownership as evidence of "communism", i.e. only specific individuals could "own" something. Morrison has no difficulty pointing out that ownership of the means of production is a question of masters and slaves, and that in fact the slaves only get back a small portion of the wealth which they are commanded to produce—just enough to keep them going.

...the main problem that bothered Shaw was his failure—despite his avowed socialism—to recognize the fact that society is organized for the purpose of producing commodities and surplus value and that, given such a fact and such a foundation, the system operates and functions normally. It takes but a glance at the economies of the Communist and Socialist nations, based also on production for sale on the market with a view to profit, to discover that something other than nationalization and a change of vocabulary to describe the institutions is needed to end poverty, inequality, and exploitation [p 30].

This is no by no means an exaggeration, if we look at the unseemly alacrity with which the

high priests of state capitalism—the Leninists of the Soviet Union—have proclaimed the dissolution of their own régime. The "wellsprings of production" were supposed to have transformed society throughout the "lower phase of communism" until abundance and socio-economic re-education had also transformed the narrow "trade-union mentality" into a communist outlook and thus made the working class fit to take over the administration of wealth—dispensing with the trappings of the market.

#### Five-year plans & new deals

Instead, the market never went away (despite being imprisoned within a series of five-year plans), nor did the accumulation of capital or the division of society into wage-earners and profit-makers. (Their names were changed.) Value is still the power behind the throne, and—typical of capitalist development—more people are poorer than ever before, even though wealth production (measured in terms of capital and profit) has never been greater.

Nevertheless, although Shaw "had spent the bulk of his adult life in debunking the Marxian theory and insisting that what makes professional labor power more valuable is its utility to the consumer" Morrison writes, "it took but two hours and ten minutes for Stalin to convince [Shaw in 1931] that he, not Marx, was wrong on that score [p 68]. What both Shaw and Stalin missed, of course, was that the concept of "income" is superfluous in a society of free access, as the author reminds us:

"The only 'remuneration' possible in a Socialist world—and socialism can only exist on a world basis—the Soviet Communist Party and the Fabian Socialist experts to the contrary notwithstanding—would be: 'From Each According to Ability, To Each According to Need'. And this could never mean equality of income; it can only mean absence of income" [p 69].

Morrison attributes this oversight to the Fabians' basically conservative outlook:

Shaw and the Fabians were attuned more as buyers of consumer commodities and services than as sellers of commodity labor power. And they were in constant fear of impoverishment by the development of large scale capitalism. Furthermore, the working class, to them, was conservative. The middle class—or at least the highly cultured section of it who were squeezed out of actual ownership of industry—were the hope of the future, as Shaw and his fellow Fabians believed. These knowledgeable ones came, themselves, largely from Shaw's "capitalist class" (the financiers) but were not first-born sons and had gotten little of the family loot. What they had gotten, though, was a university education and degrees (Oxford and Cambridge) after prep schooling at Eton and Harrow, and had acquired cultured minds along with their talents. And it was, basically, people of that sort who made up the ranks of the Fabian society [p 15].

This of course reproduces Lenin's diagnosis of the origins of Marxist theory (*What is to be Done?*). No surprise, therefore, that Shaw should have had kind words for the Stalinist dictatorship. Yet this same G.B. Shaw had not only kind, but sympathetic, even enthusiastic words for Hitler and Mussolini. He fit them all into his general Fabian schema without batting an eyelash. Ø

# THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

## 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.**

## DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

### The Companion Parties of Socialism hold that:

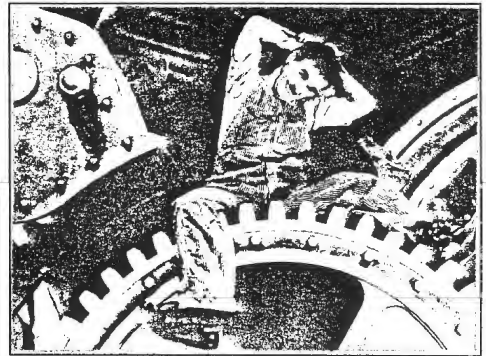
- Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
- In society, therefore, there is an antagonism of 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.**

## THE WORLD SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

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

<b>WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>PO Box 1440M, Melbourne, Victoria 3001</b>
<b>AUSTRIA: BUND DEMOKRATISCHER SOZIALISTEN</b>	<b>Gussriegelstrasse 50, A-110 Vienna</b>
<b>SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA</b>	<b>PO Box 4280 Station A, Victoria, BC V8X 3X8</b>
<b>WORLD SOCIALIST PARTY (IRELAND)</b>	<b>41 Donegall Street, Belfast</b>
<b>SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND</b>	<b>PO Box 1929, Auckland, NI</b>
<b>SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN</b>	<b>52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN</b>



## LIFE UNDER CAPITALISM

### 50 Ways to Leave the System

### WAITING FOR YOUR LUCK TO CHANGE?

How many times have you found yourself waiting in line at a grocery or department store or an auto repair shop, just to ask yourself, "Why is it that when I want something, so does everybody else and their brother? Just my luck?". What is needed is not a change in luck but in social systems.

Consider this. For a store to remain open in our profit-oriented society, it must obtain a certain level of positive cash flow. In capitalist logic, the fewer workers it takes to move those commodities/services and take in the money, the better. This is a carryover of the trend in factory production that Marx and Engels noted in their day. Fewer and fewer workers doing more and more. So you're stuck waiting for this artificially imposed inconvenience to play itself out...in a line. In the field of health services this same pressure for profits puts human lives at stake, often taking them through playing this game of market demand.

From this perspective, one can easily see why the now-defunct East European state-capitalist régimes utilized long lines to maximize their profits. A shortage of products created a market for them almost no matter how shoddy they were; thus the long lines. Plus shoddy products are cheaper to produce than quality ones, with the low quality factor being marketable via the skimpy availability of those products. McDonald's will blend right in with a population conditioned like that.

In a socialist society market saturation will play no part in determining which areas get what they need. Your vote in the democratic control of productive means and instruments will decide what goes where. Certainly, people won't be so sadistic as to vote themselves just enough distribution centers so that they will have a long wait in line to get life's needs—as is the case in the present capitalist order of goods/services distribution. Long, painful, sometimes fatal waits in hospital emergency rooms will be a thing of the capitalist past. What you want will be abundantly there whenever you need it.

But here's the best thing about shopping in a socialist society...everything is free!

—WJ Lawrimore

# Think, McFly. Think!\*

## Who the hell was Karl Marx?

In 1814 Johann Fichte died. Apart from a few scholars of philosophy in a few institutions of ill repute called universities, it is doubtful if anyone cares that Fichte (the writer on theories of reason) died in 1814. In 1831 Georg Hegel died. More people have heard of Boy George (or that other mixed-up performer, George Bush) than will have heard of Georg Hegel. In 1951 Ludwig Wittgenstein died. His influence upon linguistic philosophers has been enormous. But who the hell cares what influences linguistic philosophers? On 14 March 1883 Karl Marx died. Everyone has heard of Marx. True, a few of them think that his best movie was *Duck Soup*, but most people know that Marx was one of the most important thinkers who has ever lived.

So who was this Karl Marx? Why should we in the late 20th century bother to remember someone who lived and wrote in the 19th century? The reason is that Marx devoted his life to an analysis of the capitalist system of society. He explained where it came from, how it works and why it must go. That analysis is as vital today as it was a century ago. If we want to change this messed-up world of global capitalism, where profits daily trample on human needs, then we must have a way of understanding the society we are in.

### Historical process

Marx began by explaining the historical process. Capitalism has not always existed. History has passed through stages. From propertyless primitive communism, where all the goods of the community were held in common, through slavery and feudalism, we are now in a system dominated by wage slavery. In short, we live in a society where the means of producing wealth takes the form of capital (wealth devoted to producing profit) and the majority of the people are workers who must sell ourselves to the owners and controllers of capital for a wage or salary. This two-class exploitation system has not always existed; it will not always exist.

Marx then proceeded to make an economic analysis of the capitalist system. How is wealth produced? By the application of human labor to natural resources. The labor power of the workers is only bought to produce wealth on one condition: that it will make a profit for the employing capitalist. From where does the profit come? It comes from the payment of wages and salaries to workers, which are less than the value of what we produce.



\* From the film *Back to the Future* (Biff's refrain).

The remaining amount (surplus value) is legally robbed from the workers by the capitalists, and that is the source their profits. So, workers must work as wage slaves to make profits for a parasite class who live off our backs. Capitalist freedom means the right of these idle millionaires to exploit the majority.

Marx did not just analyze the profit system. He pointed out that capitalism engenders a class war between those who possess but have no need to produce and those who produce but do not possess. The class struggle between the capitalist class and the majority of us who do not own and control the earth takes many forms, from strikes to complaining that the bosses are grasping swine. The class war is as natural to the profit system as spots are to a child with measles. Smooth-tongued politicians may talk about the harmony of one common people, but we all know that when it comes to the crunch, it is Us and Them.

### Not an advocate of class war

Marx was not an advocate of continuing the class war. He was out to put an end to it. This end could only come by the victory of one class over the other. The workers have to dispossess the capitalist minority of their economic stranglehold and take the means of wealth production and distribution into our own hands. To quote Marx,

**The expropriators must be expropriated.**

The task of Marxists is to complete that struggle of bringing the wealth of the world into the common possession and democratic control of the entire community, without distinction of race or gender.

Marx and Lenin were far from being one and the same thing. Lenin came along after Marx died, and he argued that the workers

I am no Marxist...

were too stupid to be able to understand the need to win the class war. They needed to be led by intellectuals—like himself. The entire history of Leninism is a story of arrogant leaders telling workers that they will liberate us. In Eastern Europe these Leninist gangsters are currently being given their marching orders. They have done more to distort the meaning of Marx's ideas than anyone else.

Marx held the opposite view from Lenin, stating in 1864 that

**The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class themselves.**

In short, victory in the war between class and class will not happen until workers want and understand the need for a new and more decent social system than capitalism is able to provide.

### Capitalism is still here

Marx wrote over a hundred years ago, but the capitalist class is still here, still the same, still robbing the workers, still running their production system for profits before needs. Workers are still in need of a revolutionary change from the obsolete relationships of class society; we still need a worldwide community based upon production solely for use. All of the philosophers who have come and gone, with their tedious ramblings and their books which never so much as questioned the system into which they were born, are of little importance to those of us who seek to change the world.

Marx was no infallible genius or god to be idolized. He made some mistakes, and socialists who have come after Marx have come up with some answers of our own, but Marx still remains the most important thinker for workers to read and think about. Marx looked at the world and saw that interpreting it was not enough; changing it was what had to be done.

That is the purpose of the World Socialist Party. For decades our task has been made more difficult by the phony Marxists of the Leninist Left who served to confuse the struggle. Now that they are ideologically dead—or, at least, dying—the path is clear and, with the support of those who think like us, the growth of the World Socialist Movement in the United States can resume its course, no longer caught between the rock of Leninism and the hard place of the "cold war".

—Steve Coleman (SPGB)