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BULLETIN MATTERS

Although DB19 was our largest issue to date, we lacked room for two articles, one by Sam Brandon commenting on Don Fitz's article in DB18 and on the Discussion Bulletin and the other a response by Robin Cox to the review in DB18 of the pamphlet FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM. Readers are referred to these respective issues to refresh their memories of the matters under discussion in the articles.

With DB20 we conclude John Banks' three-part history of the "Third Camp Movement," an attempt to organize an international
political opposition to Eastern and Western ruling classes by American and European leftwing groups and third world left nationalist groups. On behalf of DB readers, I want to thank Comrade Banks for his contribution.

The news in DB19 that we were rolling in copy for this issue seems to have shut off the flow of articles and letters to Box 1564. We want to emphasize that there is plenty of space available for your articles and letters in DB21. Please get them to us by mid-December at the latest. Once more, please use a dark ribbon and, to save space, set narrow margins (a seven-inch typed line is ideal) and single space.

The correct address of Comrade Harry Morrison ("Harmo") is 109 Tremont St., Apt. 417, Brighton, MA 02135. Frank Girard for the DB Committee

RECEIVED

Because lack of space is this issue forbids a longer review of the following publications, we must limit ourselves to the following brief mentions. We hope to run reviews of each in later issues:

LIBERTARIAN LABOR REVIEW 1: A Journal of Anarchosyndicalist Ideas and Discussion; semiannual; sample copy $2.00 from PO Box 2824 Station A, Champaign, IL 61820.


BEYOND OIL: The Treat to Food and Fuel in the Coming Decades; by John Gever et al., 304 pages, paperback, no price; from Carrying Capacity, 1325 G Street, N.W., Suite 10013, Washington, DC 20005.

A REVIEW REVIEWED

DB18 carried a generally favorable review of the Socialist Party of Great Britain's new pamphlet, FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM: HOW WE LIVE AND HOW WE COULD LIVE. However, it did raise the question of exactly how the SPGB intended to use the state's administrative machinery "within the system," along with other questions of the kind that arise whenever a group tries to detail its vision of socialism. In a recent letter, Robin Cox, of the SPGB's Publicity Department responded to the questions:

"Regarding your point about what are the 'SPGB's intentions regarding the State's administrative facilities,' this will be discussed in a new pamphlet coming out shortly on "Socialism as a Practical Alternative"--one of a spate of new pamphlets we shall be

(Cont'd on back)
"FIRST LICK THE CAPITALISTS!"

Don Fitz ends his article "Neo-Utopianism as a Flight From Responsibility" (D.P. #16) with "Sadly, abstentionists of today lean back in the air-conditioned luxury of America, observe with disinterest that other people's blood is being spilt, and flee from responsibility for dealing with real problems." He fails to list the "imperfect struggles" he supports and which he evidently believes socialists should support. What are they?

I was born into a working class family of eight children. My father was a cigar maker, a member of the S.T. & L.A. He was a supporter of the S.I.P. The Daily and Weekly People were always in our home and as a child I listened to many socialist discussions. My brother Joe joined the S.I.P. at the time of DeLeon's death. He was active in the party and when the U.S. entered World War I he was drafted by the army. However he refused to take the oath to enter the army. He claimed conscientious objectors on political grounds stating that he would not kill his fellow workers in other countries. He was offered non-combatant duty on farms but refused stating that would relieve another man to enter the army. He was court martialed for refusing to obey an officer's command to shovel a pile of manure from here to there. He was sentenced to death. The sentence was later commuted to 20 years. In jail he and others like him were beaten and tortured. There was a congressional investigation as a result. After the end of the war his sentence was commuted and he was released. While he was in jail I joined the S.I.P. at the age of 16. I attended study classes and became a soap box speaker. Joe resumed his activities as a speaker, debater, writer, candidate for Mayor and U.S. Senator as well as a member of the N.E.C. Sub-Committee. Our Section Bronx had 63 members. During my activities I became State Secretary. I spoke on street corners 5 nights a week for many years. Then the original I.U.P. was formed, my activities continued as speaker, debater, Secretary etc. I was active in the New York Shipyard Workers long strike in Camden, N.J., in the Jemestown Furniture Workers strike as well as other strikes. I helped our comrades in Jemestown when they formed the UNITED WORKERS OF AMERICA. My activities for Socialism never ceased. I am now 83 and am still active. I recite all this to indicate to Don that not all those who disagree with him are arm chair air conditioned abstentionists.

This article is not directed at Don Fitz. It is directed at the D.B. which has encouraged many of its contributors to indulge in splitting hairs or making wild statements unsupported by facts while others twist DeLeonist principles in order to manufacture a difference between them and the S.I.P.

The Capitalist System world wide is heading for collapse or the annihilation of the human race. Meanwhile we are frittering away our time debating whether under Socialism we will have labor vouchers or give from each according to
his ability to each according to his needs. DeLeon once said 
"...Take Washington. When he was fighting the battles of indepen-
dence there were Tory pamphleteers who pestered him and 
other Revolutionary Fathers with questions upon the kind of 
government they contemplated...Washington's answer was "First 
lick the British." I say to those who are wasting valuable 
time "FIRST LICK THE CAPITALISTS!"

What path to Socialism has Don Fitz discovered to replace 
the organization of labor's economic power into S.I.U.'s as 
DeLeon outlined? What world events made this program obsolete?

What Socialists depict Socialist Society where "absolute 
good" will be reached instantaneously?

Is Don stating that Socialists must organize militias before 
or after the establishment of Socialism?

In D.B. #18 Frank Girard states that the S.I.U.P. shares 
the election fetish with the American S.L.P. "That DeLeon's 
rationale for this election fixation seems to have been legalis- 
tic's-the desire to give the revolution constitutional legit-
immacy." This is a distortion of DeLeon's position. Throughout 
the debate in "As to Politics" DeLeon repeatedly stated that 
not once had he used the word legal in his discussions. He had 
emphasized that the ballot was the civilized method of settling 
disputes. However he emphasized that Right without might is a 
th ing of air but that the revolutionist organizes the requisite 
physical force in case its defeated adversary should resort to 
the barbarian way of enforcing his will. DeLeon repeated this 
many times in his speeches and writings. The physical force would 
be the organized industrial might of the workers, the S.I.U.'s.

In #50 of Internationalism, publication of the I.C.C. in 
the U.S. Comrade Girard ends his rebuttal to their series of 
articles critical of the I.W.W. with this statement. "Perhaps 
the lesson gained from the I.W.W. is that at least part of the 
theory behind the S.I. unionism of DeLeon, Debs and Haywood-- 
that we can build the new society in the shell of the old-- must 
be discarded. Capitalism has coopted unionism so that any long 
term S.I.U. that functions as a union must become part of the 
machine. Revolutionary S.I.U.'s cannot function as schools for 
Socialism. Our class will organize its revolutionary S.I.U.'s 
or councils or whatever they are as a spontaneous reaction to 
a revolutionary situation, not at the behest of a group of 
revolutionaries." He wants us to "keep the faith", maintain con-
tact with revolutionaries holding different views, to discuss 
with them issues that divide us in an effort to see and under-
stand other viewpoints, to reconcile differences and perhaps find 
areas of agreement and bases for cooperation in the new mass 
movement that is bound to come and he recommends the D.B. for 
this purpose.

When Girard was first approached with the suggestion of 
unity among the various groups claiming to be DeLeonist he re-
plied that we should each cultivate our own garden. Now he is
cultivating the gardens of the so-called revolutionaries holding
different views, to discuss with them the issues that divide us
in an effort to understand other viewpoints and reconcile dif-
ferences and perhaps find areas of agreement and basis for coo-
peration in the new mass movement that is bound to some.

Since the Russian revolution we DeLeonists have debated
and fought these so-called revolutionary groups and parties as
anti-Socialists and enemies of the workers. We KNOW their pro-
grams, slogans, leaders, actions, history and betrayals! Must
we start all over trying to understand them? We have understood
them for many years as poison to the working class movement.
Girard says we should "Keep the Faith". It is he who seems to
be giving up on it. I believe that DeLeon once said "We should
never stand so straight that we fall backward". But neither
should we bend so far forward that we fall on our face.

Comrade Girard should reread DeLeon's writings. If he does
he will see that DeLeon did not believe the socialist revolution
would be given an opportunity to bring about a change at the
ballot box. In "As to Politics" he says, "Maybe the S.L.P. will
triumph at the hustings.........we admit it is highly improbable." "Most likely the necessities of capitalism will not be afforded
the time for triumph at the polls. Most likely the necessities
of capitalism will, by then, drive it to some lawless act that
will call forth resistance. A strike will break out; capitalist
brutality will cause the strike to spread; physical, besides moral
support will pour in from other and not immediately concerned
branches of the working class. A condition of things-economic,
political, social-atmospheric will set in, akin to the condition
of things in 1902 at the time of the great coal miners strike,
or in 1894, at the time of the Pullman-A.R.U. strike. What then?
The issue will depend upon the degree, in point of quality and
in point of quantity that the organization of the I.N.W. will
have reached. If it has reached the requisite minimum, then that
instinct of the proletarian that Marx teaches the Socialist
to rely upon, and the chord of which the Capitalist Class instinct-
ively seeks, through its labor fakers, to keep the Socialist from
touching, will readily crystallize around the requisite I.N.W.
minimum of organization. The Working Class would then be organ-
ically consolidated. Further efforts for a peaceful measuring
of strength would then have been rendered superfluous by capit-
alist barbarism. Capitalism would be swept aside forthwith. For
this consummation, however, in the eventuality under consideration
be it remembered, the I.N.W. must have reached the quantitative
and qualitative minimum of perfection and that in turn will
depend upon the readiness of the revolutionaries a sectional task, a
freedom that it "ever could enjoy except it flings itself up
on the principle that recognizes the civilized method of peaceful
trial of strength: the political ballot."

We see from this that DeLeon did not have any election fixa-
tion requiring that the revolution be legal and constitutional.
Perhaps Girard will interpret this quotation from DeLeon as a
spontaneous reaction to a revolutionary situation. If he does
it knocks out his argument that DeLeon had an election fixation
that the revolution must have legal and constitutional legiti-

macy. He can't have it both ways!

Girard also argues that capitalism has coopted unionism
so therefore S.I.U.ism must be discarded. But Girard forgets
that it was DeLeon who 60 years ago proved that the capitalists
can coopt unions through their labor federations, the labor lieut-

enants. So what else is new? But S.I.U.'s are different from
the old craft unions. If they are revolutionary they can't
be coopted! If they can then the capitalists can also coopt
the revolution! If Girard's reply is "mass action" let him
explain what mass action means. That is the program of the
C.P. in the 20's which they could never explain. Can he?

In "Fifteen Questions" 70 years ago DeLeon answered the ques-
tions of labor checks, vouchers, from each according to his abil-

ity etc. who does the dirty work under Socialism?, hours of
work, those who shirk work etc. In fact he discussed practically
every question that is being discussed in the D.E. DeLeon isn't
out dated but many of the D.E. contributors are. Don't we have
confidence that our fellow workers can decide these questions
under socialism.

Comrade Fite brings up the question of leadership. DeLeon
also dealt with this question in "Reform or Revolution?". The
Socialist, in the brilliant simile of Karl Marx, sees that a
lone fiddler in his room needs no director; he can rap himself
to order, with his fiddle to his shoulder, and start his dancing
tune, and stop whenever he likes. But just as soon as you have
an orchestra, you must have an orchestra director — a central direct-
ing authority. If you don't you may have a Salvation pow-
wow, you may have a Louisianian negro breakdown; you may have an
orthodox Jewish synangogue, where every man sings in whatever
key he likes, but you won't have harmony — impossible. It needs
this central directing authority of the orchestra master, to
point out when they shall begin; when to have these play louder;
when to have these play softer; when to put in the instrument,
when to silence that; to regulate the time of all and preserve
the accord. The orchestra director is not an oppressor, nor is
his is an insinqua of tyranny; he is not there to bully any-
body; he is as necessary or important as any or all of the members
of the orchestra." While DeLeon dealt with this at greater length
we see that both Marx and DeLeon discussed this question as long
as 100 years ago. Are their arguments antiquated because of age?
No! Socialism is a science!

It appears that many readers of the D.E. have never read
DeLeon's works or if they did they have forgotten them and should
reread them. Otherwise there is no way that I can understand why
his ideas and writings are twisted, distorted or forgotten... I
suggest they be reread again so that they are clearly understood.

The time is past for debating how many angels can dance on
the point of a needle. A tremendous task lies ahead for all
DeLeonists to propagate, educate and organize the working class
politically and industrially to end the decaying capitalist system and establish a sane Socialist society. Let those who agree that this is our duty join the INDUSTRIAL UNION PARTY and resist in this great task. Subscribe to The Socialist Republic that for ten years has broadcast the S.I.U. program.

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FIRST DO SOME PLANNING

Seventy-five years ago revolutionaries could say with DeLeon, "First lick the capitalists." But events of the intervening three quarters of a century should cause us to have second thoughts about what to do first. The Russian Revolution and its aftermath showed us that oppression and exploitation don't have to carry a Western capitalist label.

And there is another factor; DeLeon's exhortation was given at a time when divisions in the socialist movement, at least in America, reflected differences in tactics, not in the ultimate objective. Today our class would "lick the capitalists first" at its peril. We are no longer the only movement calling on workers to destroy capitalism. Literally dozens of social democratic and Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist-Maoist-Castroist groups and parties are willing to provide the leadership for the "socialist" revolution and shape the nature of a new authoritarian society ever bit as authoritarian and exploitative as this. Under these circumstances it is important that anti-statist, non-market socialists carry to our class a clear alternative to capitalism, one that represents the kind of consensus that can come only from discussion.

Unfortunately we "third force" socialists can't really claim to be a movement. Past events split us into anarcho-syndicalist and Marxist wings, which retain a mutual hostility that has no rational basis in 1986. And these two "wings" are splintered into a multitude of often hostile little parties, groups, leagues, and individuals, none with the critical mass and energy needed to publish even a weekly paper. Accordingly Comrade Brandon's talk of unifying a few tiny dissident DeLeonist splinter groups into a somewhat larger splinter group hardly constitutes any real "unity."

A preparatory step toward the unity of third force socialists or any significant element among them—perhaps a substitute for unity—might be to do what the first issue of this Discussion Bulletin suggested: to use this forum [the DB] "for exchanging ideas, challenging assumptions, presenting theories, and perhaps for resolving differences and beginning the first stages of limited cooperation." When the unity of third force socialists comes, it will be created by our class itself during a revolutionary struggle, not by a few of us waiting for the capitalism to collapse. In fact, I can think of some good reasons for avoiding unity at the present time, not
the least being the rise of bureaucracy in any organization, revolutionary or not, that reaches a size large enough to provide for a paid staff. The evidence that rank and file control begins to go out the door at that point is overwhelming. [See Comrade Fitz's articles on the subject, both in the DB and in Workers Democracy.]

Now to a couple of Comrade Brandon's other criticisms. I have concluded that my choice of the term "election fetish" was both offensive and inaccurate. As to Com. Brandon's defense of DeLeon against the charge that his advocacy of electoral activity was motivated by legal concerns, I would refer him to DeLeon's recipe for the political revolution: after the workers in their SIUs had taken possession of the means of production, Congress, with its majority of socialists would be convened and would abolish the political system and then adjourn sine die. He also emphasized the fact that the amendment clause in the Constitution made revolution legal in the U.S. On the other hand, Com. Brandon's quotation from AS TO POLITICS suggests a change in DeLeon's thinking, at least in 1907. And one can interpret the quotation to mean our class should continue to play lip service to the capitalist state's electoral charade to avoid the repression that would be visited on a revolutionary movement that failed to adopt a "legal" pose.

But the real question isn't whether DeLeonists and the SPGB have an election fetish but whether taking part in capitalism's election process is a legitimate tactic now. In this connection I'd like to raise these questions: Does the capitalist class use elections to create the illusion of democracy and popular control of their political system and thus give the system legitimacy and credibility? Do we help capitalism to foster these illusions by participating? Does our participation in these phoney electoral circuses help our cause with a working class that is beginning to recognize the futility of elections and to vote against them by staying away from the polls? In their eyes do we become just another set of politicians hunting for votes? Wouldn't we do far better by using election time to point out how and why elections are a fraud? I think our election leaflets should begin "DON'T VOTE".

I stand by the ideas about socialist industrial unionism I expressed in the article in INTERNATIONALISM. I don't believe such unions can be set up, as DeLeon, Haywood, and others believed, well before the revolution to serve as a school for transforming workers into revolutionaries and to create the framework for the new society in the shell of the old. But certainly this view is not new. It has been current in the SLP for decades, perhaps since the demise of the WIIU.

And the reason is not just that the capitalists can coopt a union movement. That has always been true, as Comrade Brandon pointed out. Rather it is the extent of state involvement in labor relations. Beginning with the New Deal in the 1930s capitalism's political state has set the rules and procedures for unionization. By protecting workers' rights to organize in a union movement acceptable to the capitalist class, it has placed insurmountable barriers against revolutionary unions. Now unions must win shop elections monitored by
the National Labor Relations Board. Each step in the grievance procedure is prescribed and watched by the state. A union that doesn’t produce a legally binding contract is almost unthinkable. And once a contract is in place the revolutionary union is legally obligated to enforce it and discipline its members who transgress it. What would happen to an SIU after five or ten years of this kind of cooperation with the masters?

As to that “central directing authority,” I don’t like any of the words in the term, although I’m sure Don Fitz does. I’m also sure that the board of education would tell me that the superintendent of schools “is not an oppressor” nor the high school principal and that they are just a central directing authority to ensure that everything goes smoothly. Somehow I think that we teachers could run things even smoother without a central directing authority.

I think we should read Marx, DeLeon, Bakunin, Engels, Lenin, and all the rest to understand the past. But they never pretended to chart the future for us, nor should we try to chart our course by the maps they made.

—Frank Girard

The Editor,
Discussion Bulletin,
Dear Sir.

May I point out that “Harmo” (Bulletin, Sept 1986) has clearly distorted the final paragraph of my letter in your July, 1986 issue, in regard to the Socialist Industrial Union administration advocated by the Socialist Labor Party, which gives it an entirely different meaning.

I posed the question; “How are the workers to exercise democratic control of the means and instruments for producing wealth, except through administrative bodies elected from the industries and services by and responsible to themselves?” In response Harmo stated: “representatives to administrative bodies in a Socialist world will not be responsible to themselves; as Minal so quaintly puts it. They will responsible to the entire population.” Where I pointed out that administrative officials in the Socialist Industrial Union administration will be responsible to the workers who elect them Harmo distorts it to mean that the administrative bodies will be responsible to themselves—the administrative bodies. The Socialist industrial democracy taught by the S.L.U. is thus twisted to mean industrial dictatorship. If Harmo has not yet learned at this late date the kind of
Socialist democracy the Socialist Labor Party is proposing, there is little hope that he ever will. Or maybe it is just more of his sloppy work.

And this comes from a party—the World Socialist Party—that doesn’t give the workers the faintest idea of the instrumentality whereby they are to assume democratic administration of the industries and services essential for Socialist economic democracy.

James Xinai
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Canada. V5J 1G6

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Dear Comrade,

My experience as an active DeLeonist for about 40 years revealed to me that one of my biggest tasks has been to explain what system exists in the Soviet Union and that I seldom gave a clear and decisive explanation. The S.L.P. taught me to call the system state despotism, but do we not have state despotism in capitalist America where government upholds laws that favor the rich and powerful? The state in all modern countries is ready to use force to make people conform to an unjust system. However, all I did reveal when I called the Soviet Union state despotism was that I did not favor it and that I was against capitalism also.

Now that I am no longer a member of the SLP I feel free to choose the best description of the Soviet Union based on my knowledge and experience. The term industrial feudalism that De Leon used to describe the system that will succeed capitalism if the working class forfeits its historic mission suits me fine for the Soviet Union. That country has planned production and cannot have depressions or recessions. They do not have to worry about runaway inflation either. Because of its planned production the Soviet Union does not have to secure foreign markets or build military force to keep the economy running. When the capitalist world repeats the business crises of the 1930s with its bank failures, trade wars, business failures, mortgage foreclosures, unemployment, racism, etc., the Soviet Union can be as unaffected as Stalin’s Russia was. If this country does not establish planned production like De Leon said we could, the present ruling class will have to reorganize the economy so it can function, and De Leon forecasted that industrial feudalism will describe that system here.

Unfortunately industrial feudalism will not likely be a peaceful system, and equality and fraternity will not prevail. The feudal system in Europe before the Crusades was stable but not peaceful, and it may yet be the solution to capitalism’s problems. Surely the Roman Catholic Church will be a big booster for such a system when the time is ripe. However, the Star Wars defense that is being built indicates that the capitalist class prefers to continue capitalism by preparing to take over Russia to expand its economy. The working
class will win this time if it has better leadership than it has had since De Leon died.

Fraternally yours,

Morton Prussuck

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THE THIRD CAMP MOVEMENT OF THE 1950's (also known as THIRD WAY) - 3

The last act of the London conference had been to elect officers and an E.C. from among those present. Of the 14 elected half were resident in London, and able to form a working quorum. They were: Allen Skinner (Vice-chairman), John Banks (Secretary), Hussein Hallak (Syria), Clovis Maksoud (Lebanon), Joseph Murumbi (Kenya), Jayasandra Ratnaike (Ceylon), and Shirley Lerner (USA). The other seven were: A. J. Muste (Chairman) and Bayard Rustin (both from USA), Tom Wardle (England), Guynfor Evans (Wales), J. W. E. Riemann (Netherlands), Helmut Hartling (Germany) and G. Walusinski (France). All were to be kept informed and to attend meetings when they could, with the vice-chairman and secretary keeping things moving between meetings.

The spread of names and countries, together with addresses in New York, London and Amsterdam provided impressive notepaper headings in support of Muste's claim that here was the framework of an international organisation.

In practice things were to work out rather differently.

No word was ever heard of again from Hartling, Maksoud, Rustin (except indirectly) or Walusinski despite the regular dispatch to them of agendas, minutes and the like. Hallak, Murumbi, Lerner and Wardle kept in touch, but neither broke their promise to attend E.C. meetings (only three were held: London Jan. '56, Cardiff Aug. '56 and Reading Feb. '58) or apologised for absence. Muste and Riemann wrote before each meeting, but in every case their letters arrived after the members had dispersed. J. Sevensma of De Oerle Weg had refused the treasurership, so that consistent E.C. support for the secretariat came only from Ratnaike and Evans, to whom was added in mid-1956 Gene Sharp, Muste's one-time personal secretary and now a reporter in Peace News. Fortunately practical help was given on a task by task basis by members of the British Contact Council.

The first work undertaken was the printing of a four-page conference Report, including the 2,000 word Declaration. Excluding addresses in U.K., U.S.A. and the Netherlands, some 393 organisations and individuals had been invited to London, with only a disappointing 29 replying (Europe 260:10, Asia 56:9, Africa 57:8, Latin America 10:10, South Pacific 10:2), but a much bigger publicity splash was now decided on, and by early November 4,500 copies of the Report had been distributed world-wide, with French and German translations in the pipeline.

Meanwhile full reports in English had appeared in PN (9 & 16.9.55), Labour Action and Peacemaker (26.9.55), the Socialist Leader (ILP), and a broadsheet issued by the Australian League for Freedom and World Friendship, with shorter accounts in Socialist Review - includ-
ing an article on the Third Camp by Max Schachtman (Oct. '55), in the Welsh Nation, CW Commentary, and One World (U.K. National Peace Council). Full reports appeared in Dutch in De Derde Weg (1.10.55), in Italian in L'Impulso, organ of Gruppi Anarchici D'Azione Prolattaria (30.11.55), and in Hebrew in Haillon Hademocratia, organ of The Third Force, Tel Aviv. An account of the conference by Gwyn Griffiths of the UWP appeared in two Welsh newspapers, but no record remains of any other coverage.

The response: (1) Africa. The first came from Freeman B. Asare of Kumasi, Gold Coast (now Ghana) who by 15th November had recruited the National Association of Socialist Student Associations and the Federation of Rural Youth to form the nucleus of a West African Contact Council, had acquired office space and requested copies of the Declaration in English and French for distribution throughout the region. These were supplied, and Douglas Rogers, Secretary of the MCF, agreed to visit Asare during a visit to Ghana early in 1956. This Kumasi-based Council continued in being until June '58, when Asare was informed that the International Movement as such had ceased to exist.

At one point it had looked as though a break-through at government level was possible in Ghana. Kwasi Nkrumah had been a guest-speaker at a CW conference (1946), and a supporter, C. V. M. Ford, had been an overseas member until in the summer of 1955 he became General Secretary of the Cape Convention Party, which was to take the Gold Coast into independence. Ford in fact brought the Third Way to the attention of his committee, but nothing materialized. By 1956 the CCP was planning to build State socialism on loans from the capitalist West, and while proclaiming its neutrality was unreactive to the decentralist message contained in the Declaration, which in Accra suggested separatism on tribal lines, an attitude that may well have hampered Asare's efforts in Kumasi, the capital of a potentially dissident Ashanti.

Until September '57 contact was kept up with the Dockworkers Union of Nigeria and the Camerons, again without leading to affiliation, even to the West African Contact Council.

The formation of an East African Contact Council was suggested to the Young Readers' League of the Progressive Youth Federation of Tanganyika (now Tanzania). They replied that they would do what they could within the limitations imposed on political activity by the British colonial administration (17.11.55). Later they wrote: "We have given careful consideration to the question of the formation of a Third Way here. Our African members very frankly told us that the only big-scale movement they respected would be any African national movement strictly confined to the attainment of self-rule, and not beyond that." (14.12.55). They went on: "We have seen that the Asian population is the only answer to the formation of a Third Camp here, but to arouse keen interest in them it would be necessary . . . to let them know of the interest of the Indian Government in it." In fact the Indian Government had instructed its London High Commission to obtain a copy of the Declaration, which was duly supplied (29.11.55), but there was no follow-up. In a later letter the YRL said that they
would go on supporting the Third Way as a study group and source centre, asking to be kept informed and pointing out that the smallest affiliation fee was beyond them.

Nothing more was heard from Kenneth Kaunda of the N. Rhodesian ANC, although of all the emergent African leaders his political position was to be the closest to that of the Third Way.

The response (2) Asia. In her report to Labour Action (26.9.55) Shirley Newcombe (alias Lerner) had referred to "the absence of the large Asian Socialist Parties which took a 3rd Camp position at the Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon" as a serious shortcoming. This sentiment was echoed by Bayird Hastin in his report to the US Contact Committee in Philadelphia early in October (Labour Action 24.10.55). But both were optimistic that the situation could be remedied, and this was a task the international secretariat had already set its hand to.

Laurens Otter recalls our elation in the autumn of 1954 on hearing of a link between De Deor Dwe and the Indonesian Socialist Party. The British Contact Committee, through Dharampal, was also in touch with the Praja Socialist Party of India. But when Allen Skinner wrote to them (25.1.55) about the forthcoming London conference, they replied that while they were "happy to know that you propose . . . to bring Third Camp groups together this year" they were unable to take part. Their letter disclosed that A. J. Muste had already written to Asoka Mehta about a Third Camp conference to be held in India, but that they had declined the responsibility for organising one. A double brush-off.

Later in the year the situation in India was complicated by a split between Asoka Mehta and Rammanohar Lohia, who accused the former of seeking accommodation with the ruling Congress, and abandoning socialism in the process. Lohia incidentally compared what was happening to the Praja Socialists with events in Indonesia, where the socialists had been wiped out in recent elections despite their attempt to co-operate with centrist parties. "Asian socialism," he said, "must finally stop trying to be clever, for middle parties like the Indonesian Nationalists . . . and the Indian Congress can talk socialism and act conservatively far better than it can." (Challenge, YSL 2.1.56). In these circumstances it is not surprising that neither faction of the Indian Socialists nor the Indonesian Socialists replied to the final call to the London Third Way conference, which must have arrived in the midst of their disarray.

However, a new opportunity arose when the Asian Socialist Conference announced Dependent Peoples' Freedom Day, to be celebrated on 30th October by a rally at Margate, some 70 miles from London. The London conference had passed a resolution of support, and Skinner, Riemens and Murumbi from the new E.C. duly attended. Unfortunately their presence at Margate produced no recruits for the Third Way from among the African and Asian organisations taking part, although they were able to get from the Arab Al-Ba'ath Party confirmation of their continued support, and of Hallak's membership of the E.C.

The response: (3) Israel and the Middle East. This came, as we have seen, from the Ba'ath-
ists, the Socialist Parties of Syria and Lebanon and Egypt (this last sharply to be suppressed by Nasser) and the Third Force of Tel Aviv. The Third Force was an anti-Zionist group formed in 1951 to work for the return of Arab refugees to their homes in Palestine, and for the political equality of Arab and Jew in a bi-national State. Their leader was M. Stern, born in Russia in 1894 and brought to Palestine in 1912 when it was still a Turkish province in which Arab and Jew lived in harmony. The group had become known outside Israel when its secretary, Amon Zichroni, went on successful hunger strike against conscription (Labour Action 9.8.54). The Third Force was therefore known in both socialist and pacifist circles before the Chicago conference.

Within Israel the group were denied publicity in both Hebrew and Arabic newspapers, and consequently after formal affiliation to the international Third Way movement they looked for access to the world press by way of their membership. An 'Open Letter to Abdul Nasser' (16.11.55) was followed by one to the Secretary-General of the U.N. (21.3.56), one to the Socialist International (28.2.56), to Nehru - using Murumbi as bearer (1.7.56), and on the growing Suez crisis, in which the group supported the Egyptian right to nationalise the Canal (24.8.56). A protest against the French colonial war in Algeria (18.10.56) was followed by detailed accounts of the massacres in the Arab villages of Tira, Talbeh and Kassem on the eve of the Israeli attack on the Suez Canal (events of 29.10.56), and finally a further protest to the UN regarding the plight of Palestinian refugees.

Of all these, except the last, which arrived after the international movement had disbanded, were circulated to Reuters, the Arab News Agency, the African and Colonial Press Agency, and in one case, some 100 newspapers direct. Coverage was of course given in Peace News, Labour Action, the Socialist Leader and the Welsh Nation. An attempt to interest James Cameron, who at the end of 1955 had published articles in the News Chronicle favouring a neutralist solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, was not successful.

The Third Force survived the Third Way, but its ultimate fate is not known.

The response: (4) 'Le Seule bonne voix'. It is an odd fact that out of 144 names on the U.S. Contact list, 64 being in France alone, not one was located in Vietnam, the only Third Way contact being through M.C.F.

'The Only Good Way' was a pamphlet by Ho Huu-Tuong, leader of the Socialist Party of Vietnam, and dealt with the re-unification of his country on the basis of neutralisation. Copies in English and French were on sale at the London conference, but then no more was heard from the author until PN reported that he had been sentenced to death by the Diem regime as "an enemy of the people" (8.11.57).

An immediate protest was made to the Vietnamese Ambassador in London, (17.11.57), with copies to Ho Huu-Tuong's wife and daughter in Paris, to P. Viellard and Nguyen Ngoc, his contacts in Toulouse and Saigon, and to the governments of India, Ceylon and Malaysia and the London embassies of 4 European and 8 Asian countries professing neutrality in the cold war. Only the Syrians showed any interest among governments.
As fresh news arrived from Viennax and Ho Huu-Tuang's daughter, the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, the Indian Socialist Party, various Catholic journals and the Vatican were added to the original distribution (Diem was R.C.), while Riemans and Muite were also informed.

The Manchester Guardian used the press handout, and the Indian Socialist Party (Lohia branch) issued their own press statement that drew an angry response from the Vietnamese authorities in Delhi. Diem was written to directly by the Chu Lieu Society, and received a protest from the Apostolic Delegate in Saigon in person. The whole exercise took from November '57 to July '58, and resulted in Ho Huu-Tuang's imprisonment but continued incarceration under severe prison conditions. By now the Third Way files were closed, and his ultimate fate is not known.

The response: (5) Europe. Virtually nil. European socialists and pacifists simply did not respond to the Third Way. Brief exceptions were the Swedish Peace Party, which declared its intention to affiliate and then drew back, and the Italian Libertarian Anarchists (GAAP) who put the proposal to their branches, but shortly afterwards joined the Nanni Socialists. But the saddest case of all was De Derde Weg itself, which failed to affiliate internationally or to produce a single news bulletin as undertaken at London, any more than they had acted as a 'documentation centre' as agreed a year earlier in Paris. Even their Dutch language journal, while featuring news items from the Third World never reported on the Third Way contacts made by the international secretariat.

In the U.K. it was different. After London Third Way supporters established a Group for individual membership, and a Contact Council for organisations. The latter comprised the Third Way Members' Group, C.W., the I.L.P., S.R.C., the Fellowship Party, with the P.P.U. and W.S.P. as observers, and was an active propaganda body until April '57 when it wound up after failing to widen its membership and in view of fading international prospects. However, several of its members continued active in the Members Group which carried on even after the international E.C. disbanded in Feb. '58, but later that year faded out as active members transferred their energies to the growing CND (e.g. David Wickes) and the Committee of 100 (e.g. Allen Skinner).

The response: (6) The Americas. After a show of enthusiasm which lasted six months, and included a project for a Latin American regional conference, which received one positive response, from the Socialist Party of Uruguay, the U.S. Contact Committee itself effectively withdrew from participation in the movement it had initiated in the first place. No record exists of a single word of encouragement to the West African Contact Committee, the Young Readers' League, the Third Force in Tel Aviv or the Vietnam Socialist Party, let alone the British Contact Council, the British Members' Group, Common Wealth or the Welsh National Party, the only organisations to pay affiliation fees (for two years running in each case), and who between them financed the costly correspondence undertaken by the international secretariat, and all printing costs bar a single payment of £31 received for copies of the Conference Report delivered to New York. Indeed when the E.C. proposed to approach the separate organisations supporting the Third Way in America for international affilia-
tion, Muste, backed by Austin, protested that this "might result in identifying the Third Camp with one or two pretty small groups here" and could do "serious harm" to their own efforts to interest more significant organisations (31.8.58). What this meant London was not told. Indeed, Labour Action was to report a May Day Rally in Philadelphia which "was initiated by the Third Camp and was the first such event held in Philadelphia in many years" (20.5.57), which hardly suggested intensive activity.

There is other evidence that Muste and some of his pacifist friends, discouraged by the lack of support for the Third Way internationally, were looking for new alignments which they saw arising from the relaxation of Soviet tyranny following the 20th Congress of the CPSU (PN 23, 11.56 & 15.3.57). A Committee for Socialist Unity was formed, and Labour Action recorded (20.5.57) a joint meeting in New York between the Gate No. wing of the CP and a number of "non-Stalinist and pacifist" groups at which Muste spoke, but with no mention of the 3rd Camp.

The Third Way: a retrospective and personal assessment.

(1) It presented an ideologically accurate assessment of the global situation after World War II that remains substantially valid.

(2) It was strategically sound in seeking to bring together worldwide a variety of movements each having its own social and political priorities in the fight against human injustice.

(3) It was naive in its expectation that narrower loyalties could be easily harnessed to the service of a wider vision.

(4) Re-reading the files, one is left with a sense of faulty tactics, opportunities foregone, almost betrayal. A little more comradely persistence in pursuit of long-term goals, and the world might have been a better place thirty years on.

J. C. Banks

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Most of the groups that share the general viewpoint of the Discussion Bulletin are not particularly successful at day-to-day organizing. This is to let you know about one that is.

The Vancouver, British Columbia Branch of the IWW does a better job of organizing than any leftist group (of any political persuasion) that I know of. It is an outstanding example of how a small group can combine revolutionary goals with interesting activities, informative education, and effective outreach. I think that the rest of us can learn a lot from them.

They have a publication which, as you might expect, is lively and interesting, and full of examples of well-organized activities. For anyone who wants to do practical things to help build a better society, this is very worthwhile reading. You can get it for $10 a year (they will accept US dollars) from:

Vancouver General Membership Branch, Industrial Workers of the World
P.O. Box 34334, Station D
Vancouver, B.C. V6P3 Canada

Ed Jahn
Newport News, VA

****************************************************************************************************
Dear Comrades,

Good for Adam Buick! Good to know that "Food First" and I are not the only surviving anti-Malthusians!

All who are concerned with what is called the population problem should first go back and review Marx's and Engels' explanations for the seeming surplus population. The next step should be to read one of the 20th century's finest socio-economic documentaries, namely Lappe's and Collin's "Food first."

For a starter on "Food First" let us recall that in the direst poverty the U.S. has ever seen, namely, the depression of the 1930s, the population of the U.S. was far smaller than it is today, and that today with a far greater population, the poverty is not nearly so great. For a second step, let us note that in the Sahelian (sub-Saharan African) drought and famine of the 1970s, food exports from drought and famine areas reached their peak. And the food all went to well-fed, well-watered Europe and the U.S.! Contact Food First, 1835 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94103.

In comradeship,
George L. LaForest

Dear Frank

Having got the May issue late may I comment on Ray Rawlings's contribution as (apart from his misconception that the DB is an SLP paper) it admirably illustrates my point as to how many of our differences are largely semantic.

Thus I can applaud his "SLP terminology leaves a lot to be desired, particularly the term government. One must assume... if you don't mean that, then don't say it." (Though there is what I assume to be a typing error in the omitted bit. Glad to see someone else makes such errors.) But must part company from him immediately thereafter.

If Ode Rawlings rereads Marx's Capital, Vol. 1, Part II, Ch. VI, he will see that for Marx capitalism was impossible without a free labour force; one need neither elevate Marx to the position of infallibility, nor make this text a dogma, to see this as one small reason to want a distinct term to describe Soviet society.

Similarly the distinction in Russia between shareholders (de jure controllers of capital), & party officials (de facto controllers,) which led the SPGB, in my youth & up until about the 1960s) to say Russia was capitalist because of the existence of shareholders, whereas it would now say that there is a ruling class which collect-
ively owns capital and stands in relation to society as capitalists, but does not necessarily hold power through individual capital ownership; again surely explains why some of us feel that the term state capitalist is as apt to confuse as to enlighten.

That doesn't make "bureaucratic state despotism" or "bureaucratic collectivism" or "collectivist capitalism" or... necessarily better terms than state capitalism; it is fair to say that all such terms have some strengths & some weaknesses, & it is not because one is pusylouging that one rejects any particular term. (Though I think it curious that the JLP has never used the term De Leon predicted "Industrial Feudalism", let alone "Industrial Peonage" which seems to be what Marx would have called it.)

Having so rightly attacked the use of the word government (in De Leonist writings) because the term normally presupposes a governing and a governed class/caste; Rawlings then sees no contradiction is saying: "Socialism cannot be established until a Socialist majority captures political power," & then "Having captured power, the elected Socialist deputes will then take whatever steps are deemed necessary ..."

If that does not suggest a transitional government, I don't know what does; even if one accepts that the writer only conceives of such a government lasting days rather than months, the action of dismantling capitalism is not to be done by the working class itself, but by its elected "Socialist deputies". That means that, for however short a period, the socialist revolution consists of the working class voting in a directing elite. If the writer doesn't mean that, "then don't say it." If he does, then has he considered that those deputies may like the power they have been given and may not dismantle the state?

No doubt blue-printing is dangerous; though it is arguable that a "Socialist majority capturing political power" is as much a blueprint as industrial unionism; but Cde. Rawlings's picture lacks three things which for all the arguable faults of syndicalism & De Leonism they possess & the World Socialist Movement (at least in his portrayal) lacks:

because there is no suggested manner - other than the vote - as to how the working class will intervene, there is no guarantee that capitalists will ever allow a vote when it might produce a socialist majority;

that same lack also suggests that the voting procedure at elections and the procedures of parliament/presidency/congress are entirely sufficient for dismantling & replacing capitalism; this demands unscientific trust, indeed faith, in the
leading members of the socialist party (however much it may renounce leadership;)
the working class are to be converted to socialism
on the basis that this means voting for someone
not acting for themselves.

Syndicalism may well in turn lack some things the SPGB has
to offer, but the basic accusation of blue-printing is
misplaced. The desire for unity at the point of produce-
tion, which caused the members of six small French "Marxist"
parties' industrial sections, to break the connections with
the parent parties, and combine in the early syndicates,
to be joined then by workers previously organized by purely
Utopian reformers; led these workers to found militant
unions, with exceptionally vital internal democracy, & a
commitment to direct action as the road to social change,
was a purely spontaneous movement of the working class
militants; it conformed to none's blueprint.

The rationalization came later, some arguing in Marxist-
terms, some in anarchist, some creating a new synthesis
of the two: syndicalism was seen as springing from the
natural and spontaneous self-organization of the class,
taking this at its most combative form, seeing it as
fighting at the point of economic power - the most central
point of capitalism - & changing society from there.

Each subsequent generation of syndicalists, while keeping
the insistence on basing organization on the spontaneous
actions of the class, while keeping the vision of workers'
unity at the point of production and federated on indus-
trial lines, while keeping the insistence on federalist
election of deputies rather than centralist election of
representatives, and keeping the stress on direct action,
has nevertheless changed the pattern in material respects.

Thus, outside Barcelona, Spanish syndicalism was in fact
closer to the German Council Communist model than to the
pre-war French syndicalist one. In America syndicalism
(for the most part) took the IWU form in its early days,
in Britain it was manifest in the upsurge that created
the Shop Stewards' Movement. Certainly the several
manifestations of syndicalism did not survive when the
upsurges of working class militancy disappeared.

But the syndicalist does not say to the workers "you must
accept my blueprint". (S)he, on the contrary, says "if
you want socialism, you have to create it for yourself in
struggle, we cannot predict now how you will do this in
any detail, but we can tell you how the most successful
past struggles of the working class were waged, & how
such workers organized themselves; & while we do not
think that any future struggle will follow exactly the
same lines, we do think that workers today have much to
learn from these past struggles, & this past form of
organization".

When Ode. Rawlings dismisses industrial unionism as having failed to work, he lays himself open to the query "when has electoralism ever worked?" If the answer is, as I suspect, never but our sort of electoralism hasn't been tried except by our miniscule parties; then I suggest he is in no position to tell anyone else that their method hasn't worked.

Let me stress I am not arguing that syndicalism has always been right; I am not arguing that the SPGB & its companion parties have nothing to teach syndicalists; I am not rejecting the critique (made by De Leonists as well as SPGB) that some means is necessary to ensure that a social general strike is only launched when the overwhelming mass of workers are ready; (though I do reject the thesis that electoralism provides the only possible means of doing this;) but I am saying workers should not be deceived into thinking electoralism is all-sufficient & should not be offered a "pig-in-a-poke", the terms socialism & social-change without any idea of what or how these may be.

fraternally, Laurenus Otter

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LABOR VOUCHERS NEITHER DESIRABLE NOR VIABLE

The questions which can be asked about the coming and operation of communist production are not purely technical questions: "How to do things without money?"

Communism is above all the movement by which enslaved human activity emancipates itself and seeks new social forms. It is the negation/going beyond of labor. in this it overturns the concepts of efficiency, cost, etc as posed by capitalism.

We will only deal briefly with this question here. Our immediate aim is to criticize the "solutions" put forward by the communists of this and the last century to show how far they misunderstood communism, even if they did put on the agenda the disappearance of commodity production, exchange and the State.

Labor Vouchers

Money having been abolished, they sought a unit of measure to replace it. This search led to results at two levels:

At the fundamental level, to finding a "natural" standard which would allow the direct measurement of the "value" of products, accounting and comparisons. The problem of the unit of account.

More accessibly and tangibly, to the "labor voucher" which establishes a relation between effort supplied, the contribution of the individual to society, and what he receives for his consumption. The labor voucher, a survival of a limited form of exchange, was to be a transitional measure; in the higher stage of communism consumer goods would be made freely available to everybody.

The Inauguration of Labor Wages

But, for the time being, it is not the government which would charge stage of a measure of what's of communists money according to the Inauguration of Labor Wages.

The labor

The first, even if in Marx, he was obviously
There is clearly a close link between these two aspects of the question. For a voucher system to be able to function it has to be possible to calculate the "value" of products in labor time. Note that this need to find a standard and to use labor time is generally brought about by the need to establish a labor voucher system.

This approach to the problem was accepted by the Ricardian socialists who, by means of labor-money, wanted the worker to recover in the form of use-values the whole value of his labor and, in a different form, by Marx and Engels. Then by Social Democrats of the Kautsky and Hilferding type. Kautsky was to discover in 1923 that, in the end, money was more practical than having to record all productive efforts, all economic operations, all differences in productivity, etc. He did not think that an economic center would be able to record all this accurately. The first Bolshevik economists had hoped to apply labor-time accounting. Following in the footsteps of the Social Democrat Leichter, the GIK (Dutch Council Communists of the 1930s) published in 1931 a detailed work on the subject. They replied to Kautsky that measurement by labor-time was possible in a society based on the management of the economy by the producers organized in councils. It would not be the State nor even an economic center that would be charged with the work of recording, but workers themselves at each stage of production in which they were involved. It would be a matter of a strict accounting to obtain an exact idea of the social wealth and of its division and transfer. Bordiga also took up this position: communism was planning calculated in physical quantities and hours of labor. Despite very different and even antagonistic orientations and visions of communism, the different theoreticians all fell back onto measurement by labor-time (...).

The Inadequacies of Labor Vouchers
The labor-voucher is presented as a solution for getting away from the wages system while taking into account scarcity and old attitudes.

But, for the Ricardian socialists and also for the GIK, it was an answer in itself, allowing an escape from exploitation and the establishment of justice and equity. The worker is no longer to be remunerated according to the cost of reproducing his labor power but according to what he has contributed in labor. The GIK explains:

Communism aims to make labor the condition for consumption. Each worker determines by his labor the share of social production that will come to him. Not that this will be a system which will achieve a perfect equality and justice. These are things which will perhaps never exist. But this is the only way to abolish the wages system and to end all subjection of the worker.

However the GIK considered that the rate of payment, the proportion of labor which comes back to the worker, should decrease as the quantity of goods that could be distributed freely grew.

The labor voucher is opposed to the movement for communism in two ways:

The first, more or less accepted by its adepts, is that it perpetuates, even if in a limited way, exchange and inequality. The most lucid was Marx. He wrote in the Critique of the Gotha Programme that "here obviously the same principle prevails as that which regulates the
exchange of commodities...a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labor in another form. He noted that "this equal right is an unequal right for unequal labor". Communism is not at all fair returns, the respecting of the balance between what the worker contributes and what he receives back in return. It goes beyond this simple negation of exploitation. In communism what is important is the satisfaction of needs which in any event will be different and unequal.

The second, less perceived opposition, is that the labor voucher aims to establish a mechanism, a rule which will fix and congeal social relations and which will even guarantee that things will work smoothly. But communism is the reappropriation by the proletarians of their life and their relationships. We need not be afraid to bring directly into play human feelings, interests and drives, with the clashes, agreements, enthusiasms and constraints which will appear. We are stronger at this game than our enemies, their rules, their institutions, their mummies, their manias and their moneys.

The Labor Voucher isn't Desirable but is it at least Viable?

Is it possible to carry out the necessary accounting, and to get the rules it implies respected, not just in the phase of insurrection and economic disorganization, but even in a period of calm? For it will be necessary to work out the labor-value of products, to calculate what is to be added at the stage of production, to average out productivities, but above all to ensure a general balance so that products corresponding to the value of the vouchers are to be found in the stores. Otherwise either some vouchers will become unusable and depreciated or surpluses will pile up in the stores. Beware of the panic movement which the uncertainty could precipitate (if the vouchers are not to be hoarded they will have to be dated and cancel themselves quickly, as proposed by Bordiga, but then they could only be used to acquire less "costly" goods, precisely those which are the easiest to distribute freely even as rations). Since the equivalence between vouchers and products is only a labor-value equivalence, this would not guarantee at all that the producer coming to a store will find what he wants. Suppose there is a shortage of sugar and that in the mad rush those who got there before him grabbed all there was, will he be satisfied if he is offered salt in return for his vouchers?

Faced with such a rigid system, many will rapidly call for a return to money, with its market, its value and its fluctuating prices, which at least allows supply and demand to adjust to each other, for saving to be possible, and for the amount of money to correspond to the value of the commodities in circulation. And people won't just call for this, they will re-invent money. Not necessarily the dollar and the credit card. At the start our kilos of sugar could serve as the general equivalent, could be saved and exchanged. These unofficial moneys would undermine communism.

Trotzky, cited by Bordiga, wrote of "war communism":

Goods of first necessity were distributed independently of labor productivity. It could not have been otherwise. In order to obtain any correspondence between labor and wages, there would needed to have been an incomparably more complete
administration of the economy and much greater resources in
means of subsistence. In the first years of the Soviet regime
it was necessary above everything else to feed the population
of the towns, to ensure life. This was obtained on an equal
basis by the leveling of the pažok (rations).

Bordiga adds that such economic-military rationing measures can be
taken in cases of emergency, in a situation of shortage and war, by a
non-revolutionary military power. Experience has shown that, in such
cases too, the establishment of direct rationing of consumption, on the
basis of cards specifying age and needs, and not on labor contributed,
is preferred. And when workers are wanted, they are conscripted.

In a period of calm and relative abundance the labor voucher system
becomes more applicable but its application loses all justification. In
view of the possibilities of reconverting the productive apparatus and
of the transformation of distribution, the application of this bastard
solution must give way from the beginning to real communist measures. A
large proportion of products and services can become freely available
without charge: transport, electricity, telephones, basic food products,
restaurant meals, pipes and sweets. All this can be complemented by
consumption vouchers which would be a sort of prescription which would
not claim to represent anything other than the products to which they
give entitlement without establishing any equivalence. Goods are
directed and distributed according to the needs and numbers of the
population. Possible compensation or incentives for doing unpleasant
tasks would be marginal.

The labor voucher can favor cheating and double-dealing. The controls
needed to counteract this — since it couldn’t just be a question of
mere accounting — would lead to bureaucracy. People would tend to try
to increase the value of the vouchers, to create fictitious labor.
Such-and-such would not get a proper "return" or only a bad one because
his efforts were not verified and certified at their fair value as labor.

It would be better to have clear-cut solutions, even authoritarian but
not administrative ones. The associated producers, without specialists
in repression reappearing, could define the minimum required
contribution to production and could get those who might want to play
at being parasites to comply either by persuasion or force. Communism
is not, especially in its beginnings, an idyllic state without rules or
obligations, or constraints, even if the burden of production will
diminish and from the start become more attractive.

—Extracts from "Communism and Measurement by Labor Time", La Guerre
Sur Sociale, No 1, 1977.
Publishing in the coming months. Also, if I might respond to your references to the 'election fetish' of the SPGB. I don't think this is quite accurate. We don't make a 'fetish' of parliamentary methods. We advocate them on pragmatic grounds. (1) Parliament is where power is legitimized and the socialist revolution insofar as it strips the capitalists of their power is a process of legitimation. (2) Parliamentary methods are easily the most useful and accurate indicators of the extent of socialist consciousness. Since socialism needs to be established by the great majority, we need to show explicitly that such a majority exists, not least to minimize the risk of a recalcitrant minority who might otherwise accept the imposition of the will of the majority if they cannot be persuaded that a majority exists. Further, if they accept the parliamentary method of legitimizing power—and there is good reason to believe that those opponents of socialism in the last days of capitalism will tend toward a liberal bourgeois-democratic posture rather than as the Trotskyists claim, a totalitarian one—then this will smooth the process of social transformation by minimizing disruptive opposition.

"Finally advocacy of the parliamentary method does not exclude workers' attempting to improve their lives within capitalism as much as possible along lines that might facilitate the socialist transformation, i.e. organization of structures that could be used in socialism in advance of the establishment of socialism."

Along with his letter Comrade Cox sent the attractive new "1986 Socialist Catalogue" listing pamphlets, periodicals, and cassettes available from the SPGB. Readers wishing a copy can obtain it from the SPGB, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England.