BULLETIN MATTERS

"Bulletin Matters" are usually just that: brief commentaries on the articles and letters in this forum together with a pitch for our and information on how to participate. In this issue, however, we wish to begin by noting the death of Louis Lazarus, a very early supporter of the Discussion Bulletin and a frequent participant in its discussions. Louis died on February 29 at the age of 78. He had been an active...
member of the Industrial Union Party for many years. His interest to De Leonism was kindled when he was eighteen and chanced to hear an IUF speaker on a Brooklyn street corner one evening. He himself served as a lecturer, debater, study class teacher, and writer for the IUF. Louis was a self-taught scholar, who had been researching the life of Carlo De Leon for decades. He was easily the foremost authority on De Leon and was enormously helpful to this writer and others working on related topics. A most recent evidence of this help is a letter received here from Steve Coleman telling of the help Louis gave him on a short biography of De Leon soon to be published by the Manchester [England] University Press. Our sympathy goes out to Louis family and his comrades in the IUF along with our hope that his research will find its way into a definitive biography of De Leon. What must have been one of his last articles appears in this issue.

DB33 begins with one of the results of John Crump's years in Japan, a discussion of the anarcho-communist views of a figure totally unknown to western socialists, Hatta Shuzo. One wonders how many similar thinkers, isolated from western readers by language and distance, are even now being produced by the industrialization of third world countries. John's article "A Contribution to A Critique of Marx," which appeared in DB33 produced four responses at last count. They appear in this issue. Along with these is the usual mix of letters on various topics of interest to non-market socialists.

Once again we urge readers to participate in this forum. Because we paste up your typewritten manuscripts without editing them, please single space them and use narrow margins—a seven-inch typed line. Letters and articles for DB36 should reach us by mid-June.

Frank Girard for the Discussion Bulletin Committee

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Joseph Dietzgen: His Contributions to the Anarchist and Libertarian Socialist Movements by L. Gambone; Red Lion Press Pamphlet #2. Four pages, no price [try $1] from Red Lion Press, c/o Librarie Alternative, 2033 Boul. St. Laurent, Montreal, Quebec, H2X 2T3 Canada. This pamphlet by a DB subscriber offers a lucid summary of Dietzgen's philosophical thought along with a short biography of the man Marx acclaimed as 'our proletarian philosopher.' The Tanner, as he was called, emigrated to the U.S. in the early Eighties where he joined the Socialist Labor Party, became editor of the party's Der Sozialist, and befriended the Haymarket anarchists during their imprisonment. His philosophical works were published by Kerr in the early 1900s and were discussed by Pannekoek in Lenin as Philosopher. A reprint of his major work, Nature of Human Brainwork is also available from Red Lion Press.

Fact Sheet Fyvz: Once again, the only good source of information on alternative publications of all kinds, especially periodicals. Although many DE readers will not be interested in the punk rock, SF, poetry and other periodicals that make up many of the hundreds of publications mentioned in this Guide—a DB subscriber and participant—reviews, they are certain to find many anarchist and libertarian

(Cont'd on p.9)
In his chapter on 'Anarcho-Communism' in *Non-Market Socialism* in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Alix Pengas wrote: "After Kropotkin's death, the theory of anarcho-communism survived, but was consigned to isolation by the unfolding counter-revolution from the 1920s onwards." (1) He also added that, after the appearance of Alexander Berkman's *What Is Communist Anarchism* in 1929, "the critical force that anarcho-communism had represented left the anarchist movement". (2) These comments probably require some amendment if we move the focus of our attention away from Europe to Japan. Hatta Shūzō was an anarcho-communist (3) theoretician who was at his most productive during the very period when Pengas claims that anarcho-communism was extinguished. Likewise, even if Pengas is right to assert that in Europe by the 1920s the anarcho-communists' "contributions amounted to little more than a formal defence of principles, without any critical depth," (4) it would be difficult to say the same about Hatta. On the contrary, in assessing Hatta's importance as a theoretician of anarcho-communism, Ōta Ryū has stressed that perhaps it was Hatta alone who pushed the frontiers of anarcho-communist theory beyond the points at which Kropotkin had left them. In an essay 'On Anarchism', Ōta wrote:

Hatta Shūzō... was an important anarchist after the murder of Ōsugi Sakae (in 1923). Posing himself on Kropotkinism, he developed the theory of anarcho-communism one step further. After Kropotkin's death, world anarchism rapidly regressed from the level that Kropotkin had brought it to. It seems to me that, as far as I know, in the midst of these degenerate circumstances (the era of Marxism-Leninism's complete domination) there was nobody other than Hatta (not only in Japan but in the entire world) who took a step forward in this way. (5)

Not only is it important to recognize Hatta's significance as a major theoretician of anarcho-communism, but it is perhaps even more vital to see the 'pure anarchism' movement which emerged in Japan in the 1920s, and of which he was a prominent spokesman, as an authentic variety of non-market socialism. The key principles of non-market socialism (production for use and not for sale; distribution according to need and not by buying and selling; voluntary labour instead of the wages system; a human community without social divisions based on class, nationality, sex or race) were all articulated by the Japanese 'pure anarchists' in a form which reflected both the influence which Kropotkin's theories exerted on them as well as their experience of capitalist exploitation and state oppression in Japan. In addition to adhering to these core principles of non-market socialism, the Japanese 'pure anarchists' also rejected the idea of a 'transitional society' between capitalism and communism and refused to recognize Bolshevik Russia as representing any sort of improvement on Western capitalism. The fact that a movement committed to these principles should have been formed in Japan is confirmation not merely of the argument put forward in *Non-Market Socialism* in the 19th and 20th Centuries that 'as long as capitalism exists, the non-market socialist response to it will con-
tinually emerge," (6) but also that "we can be quite confident that throughout the world there are still non-market socialist groups that we have never heard of, and that have never heard of us". (7) At the time that the book Non-Market Socialism in the 19th and 20th Centuries was being written, the ideas of the Japanese 'pure anarchists' were unknown to any of those involved in the project, so it gives considerable satisfaction to me to see our predictions borne out in the shape of Hatta Shūzō and his comrades.

Hatta Shūzō was born in 1886 and died in 1934. His early intellectual development was not promising, in that he was converted to Christianity and became a clergymen after graduating from college in 1912. A developing interest in anarchism coupled with disillusionment with Christianity led to his expulsion from his church and, after moving to Tokyo in 1924, for the next 10 years he devoted himself to anarchist activity and became a prominent speaker and writer in the anarchist movement. A heavy drinker and passionate revolutionary, Hatta created a larger than life impression wherever he was active. Many years after Hatta's death, his comrade Daidōji Saburō remembered two meetings held in Daidōji's home village before an audience of poor peasants. On consecutive nights from early evening until midnight, for 5 or 6 hours without pause, Hatta spoke in a room decorated with pictures of Kropotkin and Nestor Makhno. The audience was riveted. Nobody dose off and many of the women present were moved to tears. The atmosphere within the room, recalled Daidōji, was "like the eve of the revolution". (8) Burning himself up in a whirl of such activity and sliding into alcoholism, Hatta drank himself to an early death at the age of 48.

Hatta’s intensive propaganda and theoretical work took place against the background of a major controversy within the anarchist movement in Japan over the attitude that anarchists should adopt towards day-to-day struggles within capitalism. On one side were those who favoured a syndicalist approach and who argued that anarchists should pursue immediate demands since, in their way of thinking, anarchist revolution would grow out of the class struggle within capitalism. On the other side were those 'pure anarchists' who regarded day-to-day issues as a diversion and who wished to focus all efforts on a revolutionary struggle against capitalism. This controversy led to a split in the anarchist-inclined Zenkoku Jiren (All-Japan Libertarian Federation of Labour Unions) which had been organised on 24 May 1926 when delegates representing 8,100 workers had gathered in Tokyo for its founding conference. In 1928 the minority of anarcho-syndicalists withdrew from Zenkoku Jiren in protest over its 'pure anarchist' orientation and launched their own union federation - the Nihon Jikyō (the Japanese Libertarian United Conference of Labour Unions) - the following year. By 1931 Zenkoku Jiren's membership had grown to 16,300, while Nihon Jikyō was a smaller organisation with 2,700 members. In 1931 the 'Manchurian Incident' occurred and by the following year Japan was perceptibly sliding into military rule at home and towards full-scale war abroad. All organisations opposed to these trends were under intense pressure and, not surprisingly, both Zenkoku Jiren and Nihon Jikyō saw their membership contract from then on. In a desperate attempt to withstand state oppression, both union federations suppressed their differences sufficiently to reunite in 1934 behind the
Zenkoku Jiren banner, but by 1935 total membership was down to 2,300.
As Komatsu Ryūsū has put it, "from November 1935, the nationwide arrests of anarchists began" and as "the roundup of the remaining anarchists went. By 1936, Zenkoku Jiren was disbanded." (9) By this time, of course, Hatta Shūzō was already dead.

Many of Hatta's writings were published as Zenkoku Jiren pamphlets or else appeared in the organisation's journal, The Libertarian Federation Newspaper. His articles also appeared in other anarchist journals of the period, such as Black Youth (the organ of the Black Youth League). Everything he wrote was written under difficult circumstances and for immediate, propagandistic purposes. Yet his development of anarchist-communist theory is of interest even at this distance in time and his scattered writings represent the most coherent and intellectually sophisticated explanation of what the Japanese 'pure anarchists' were struggling for.

Communism

In his writings, Hatta Shūzō tried to give an accurate description of what would be the characteristics of an anarchist-communist society. It went without saying that there would be no state power and that production would be undertaken communally, but Hatta argued forcefully that such a society would also need to embrace other principles if it were to be genuinely anarchist and genuinely communist. For Hatta, perhaps the most fundamental of these principles was that the division of labour had to be eliminated. By 'division of labour' he did not mean a mere division of work, since even in the course of communist production he expected that, at any one time, different people would be engaged in different jobs for which they had a particular liking or aptitude. Rather, by 'division of labour' he meant geographical or sectional specialisation. Any society which, let us say, concentrated industry in certain zones and agriculture elsewhere would not be communist, he asserted. Similarly, any society which (again to take random examples) left the production of steel in the hands of one section of society ('steel workers') and the production of timber in the hands of another ('timber workers') would be fatally flawed.

This kind of 'division of labour' was, of course, a feature of capitalism, but Hatta believed it would be equally characteristic of a society organised along syndicalist or soviet (workers' council) lines. Such methods of political organisation are based on the division of labour that capitalism imposes on the working class and they seek to carry such divisions into the new society rather than transcend them. Hatta's contention was that any society that tolerated the division of labour would contain within it incipient power relations. Even if all members of such a society were formally equal, those engaged in vital lines of production would inevitably have more influence on decision-making than those whose activity was less indispensable. In fact, even formal equality would not survive for long in a society where there was economic specialisation. This was because, in order to ensure coordination between different branches of the economy, a "superior co-ordinating machinery" would be bound to arise. In Hatta's view, "it is beyond doubt that power will arise within such a group," with the result that the state will reappear. (10) Hand in hand with the resurrection of
the state, there would be the re-establishment of exchange relations, leading to the need for money or, alternatively, labour vouchers:

Where the division of labour occurs, exchange takes place. Where exchange takes place, a medium of exchange - in other words, money (or labour vouchers) - comes into existence. And money stands in need of a basis of centralised power (government). (11)

To avoid the division of labour and its consequences, Hatta maintained that an anarchist-communist society would need to implement decentralised production, with each commune being in large measure self-supporting and self-sufficient. Within each locality, production would be communal and people would relate to one another in a spirit of mutual aid. Hatta often made the point that in a large-scale, centralised society based on the division of labour, people who are engaged in one branch of production tend to have "neither understanding of, responsibility for, nor interest in" other branches of production. (12) By way of contrast, it was smallness of scale and the intimacy of social relations that would prevent such attitudes from arising in a society of localised, autonomous communes. The limited scale of each commune would ensure that people would not be alienated from one another even while engaging in different productive activities. Similarly, the need for a "superior coordinating machinery" would be eliminated since detailed knowledge of local resources and needs would be a common possession, ensuring that all had the necessary know-how to participate in decision-making and coordination at the same time that they took part in production.

Hatta wrote that within the "locally decentralised communist system" that the 'pure anarchists' advocated, consumption would have primacy and would be the motive behind production. (13) This was his way of expressing the familiar communist idea that levels of production would be decided in response to people's self-determined needs, rather than production taking on a momentum of its own, as it does within capitalism due to the compulsion to accumulate capital. Familiar though Hatta's ideas were at this level of generalisation, he ventured into less well-trodden territory when he tried to think through some of the implications of a system based on production for need. In order to explore the concrete forms that production for need might take, Hatta found it useful to consider "essential production" separately from "cultural production". As far as "essential production" is concerned, he argued that the entire commune would engage in that production which all its members regarded as essential. An example more or less appropriate in the Japanese context would be the production of the rice crop. Since producing rice is a multi-faceted activity involving tending the land, maintaining the irrigation system, servicing machinery and so forth, it could well involve a division of work. However, for Hatta this would be something different from a 'division of labour' because, since everyone would eat rice, everyone would feel a sense of personal involvement in the outcome of the rice crop. Since everyone would regard the rice crop as essential production, everyone would take an interest in it, have a sense of responsibility for it and make it their business to acquaint themselves with the overall production process. Hence no stratum could emerge with a controlling influence over the supply of rice.
On the other hand, articles that an individual alone regarded as essential, only that individual would take steps to produce. Similarly, goods that a section of the commune alone regarded as necessary would be produced by that section alone. Hatta expected much "cultural production" to be of this latter type, with like-minded individuals spontaneously grouping themselves into publishing associations, scientific associations and so on. (14)

So far I have confined myself to summarising Hatta's 'pure anarchist' views on the nature of communist society. If I were to evaluate his ideas briefly from my own perspective, I would say that his attack on the division of labour is powerful and effective, not merely with reference to conventional forms of capitalism but equally with regards to plans for reorganising society in such a way that production-based unions or workers' councils would serve as the machinery for administration. To transfer the division of labour that capitalism imposes on the working class into the 'new' society would result in the 'old' relationships of alienation, exchange and power rapidly reasserting themselves. As with most of us, however, Hatta is rather better at criticising others' ideas than in devising an entirely satisfactory solution to the problem that he poses. In his eagerness to attack social divisions that are rooted in production, Hatta largely closed his eyes to the dangers inherent in localism. On the positive side, to the extent that we consider each local commune in isolation, it seems to me that his proposed solution is satisfactory. It is true that there are problems connected with the notion that each commune should be largely self-sufficient (not every commune could have its own copper mine, for example!), but to the extent that each commune was self-supporting, it seems to me that solidarity could be encouraged and an intra-communal division of labour avoided by the methods that Hatta suggests. Yet even if we grant a higher degree of self-sufficiency than could probably be achieved in reality, the fundamental problem associated with expecting each locality to produce largely for itself is that different areas are very differently endowed with natural resources. Not only would this give rise to disparities in standards of living and to different rates of economic and social development, but it is not at all clear that any safeguards would exist to prevent localities with rare resources from developing exploitative relations with other less well-endowed localities. If such a train of events were set in motion, it would no doubt be accompanied by the emergence of an ideology of localism that would be every bit as poisonous as existing forms of nationalism.

At best, Hatta supplied us with only half a solution to the problem posed by the division of labour. His "society without the distinction between town and country, without the division of labour; a quiet and peaceful society, an idyllic agricultural society full of poetry and song" might be highly attractive, not least because of the bonds of comradeship and affection that would link one with the people in the same locality with whom one lived and worked. (15) Yet accompanying this in a genuinely communist society there would need to be both an ethical system and a set of social relationships that linked one as firmly with the entire human race and the world as a whole as they did with one's neighbours and one's immediate locality. One would need to be as conscious of one's membership of the global village as
of the local village. Similarly, the global network of productive relationships and interdependency would need to be as transparently obvious and open to scrutiny as local arrangements.

In previous eras and perhaps even in Hatta's day, to have talked in terms of such global levels of consciousness might well have struck most people as dealing in abstractions and succumbing to illusions. But with modern communication and information systems, there is no reason why consciousness of one's position within global society should be regarded as utopian. One can even imagine concrete arrangements for bringing this about. It could, for example, be general policy to have each local commune of the type that Hatta described permanently and directly linked by modern communications with a variety of other local communes purposely chosen so that their geographical, climatic and cultural locations all contrasted with one another. This is only one of a number of institutional arrangements that could be adopted, but whatever the precise details, the aim would be to break down feelings of localism and provide each individual in each commune with a sense of global interdependency that was, at one and the same time, both worldwide and yet highly personal and concrete.

Whatever criticisms one might make of the limitations of some areas of Hatta's thought, I hope sufficient has been said to show clearly that he and the other 'pure anarchists' make a positive contribution to communist theory. Lack of space prevents me from giving an account here of other aspects of their theory, even though these are far from being without interest. Other ideas that Hatta Shūsō developed in his writings range from the analysis of the social system in Bolshevist Russia as capitalism:

The Soviet government is the Communist Party Co. Ltd., and the directors and great stockholders are Lenin, Kamenev and Stalin. Bukharin is the auditor. (16)

to the argument that class struggle and revolution are "two entirely different things," the former being fought within capitalism and the latter against capitalism, so that there is no linking mechanism between them:

The class struggle and the revolution are two opposing movements: one does not give birth to the other. (17)

I hope to be able to explore elsewhere some of these other important ideas, but this introductory article will have achieved its purpose if it has demonstrated the genuinely communist/non-market socialist credentials of Japanese 'pure anarchism'.

John Crump

Notes

2. Ibid.
3. Hatta preferred the term anarchist-communism to anarcho-communism, since for him 'anarcho-communist' denoted someone who attempted to
synthesise 'anarchism' and Bolshevik-style 'communism'. I shall therefore follow Hatta and employ the term anarchist-communism from here on.

7. Ibid., p. 172.
12. See, for example, Sanjikarizumu no Kontō, p. 14.
13. 'Warera no Keisiaigaku o Juritsu Seyo', p. 127.

(Cont'd from p.2)

socialist items of interest. I might add that Factsheet Five is an important source of inquiries about the DB. If you have a publication, send him a copy to review. Number 28 has 82 pages; $2 per issue, five issues in 1983, bimonthly beginning in 1990. From Mike Gunderley, 6 Arizona Ave., Freska, NY 12144.

Small is an anarchist-situationalist publication, this issue of which has the graphics of the species along with a couple of interesting articles. One of these is on the conspiracy theory of the origin of AIDS: 'Designer Diseases: AIDS as Biological and Psychological Warfare.' Others include 'The World of the Commodity' and 'Anarchist Strategy, Military and Civil.' This issue, at least, is well worth the price: $5 for four issues— from P.O. Box 3502, Madison, WI 53704.

The Seditionist is a monthly publication produced by persons advocating an Anarchist Federation of North America. The issues I have seen (numbers 7 and 8) reflect a concern about skinheads and other fascist manifestations and contain news about U.S. anarchist groups as

(Cont'd on p.16)
Stop the Political Campaign Against the CNT

Fellow Workers,

The Spanish government is out to crush the CNT-AIT, which needs our solidarity. The following is extracted from Solidaridad Obrera, CNT organ in Barcelona:

"Since the end of 1977, when the CNT refused to accept the class-collaborationist Moncloa Pact, a relentless campaign has been waged to destroy the CNT by all the entrenched parasitic, exploiting institutions ruling the oppressed people of Spain: the capitalists, the bankers, the military, the legislature, the clergy, the all-embracing network of bureaucratic officials, etc.

"When the CNT refused to collaborate, its enemies created a phony, fictitious 'split' to wreck the CNT with the cooperation of the courts. Two ominous rulings by the courts illustrate the attitude of the judges. In the first decision, the judge ruled that the 5th Congress of the CNT was illegal and 'anti-democratic.' The fact is that 35 out of 500 delegates walked out of the Congress of their own free will. They were not expelled, and were given ample time to express their ideas. The judge then ruled that the fake Valencia Congress called by the few delegates who walked out of the Fifth Congress was a true and legal congress of the CNT.

"In the second decision, the judge ruled that the Fifth Congress acted in accordance with its by-laws and disqualified the fake Valencia 'Congress.' But in a surprising turn around, he ruled that the so-called 'unity congress' called by the CNT fakers who usurped the name and insignia of the CNT was legal and valid. If, according to the second judge, there is no split who is being united?

"As a result, anarcho-syndicalism is in danger of being outlawed. The CNT will not be passive in this situation. It appeals to the conscience of all who want justice and will work for it. The whole world should know that if this social crime is consummated, making the CNT and anarcho-syndicalism illegal, the CNT will not be the only victim. It means that freedom will be mortally wounded. Those who planned and carried out this scheme, those who collaborated in this dirty plan, will be responsible for its negative, destructive consequences whether they participated actively or made this historic crime possible by their silence and cowardice."

The Spanish government is threatening to bar the majority CNT from using its name and to turn over to the fakers the CNT assets seized by Franco, the return of which has long been promised (all other unions had their assets returned many years ago). The CNT-AIT needs our help and solidarity in this critical period. Please bring this persecution to the attention of your readers, organize protests at Spanish consulates and offices, and/or send letters of protest to the Spanish Embassy (2700 15th Street NW, Washington DC 20009). An Injury to One is An Injury to All!

Libertarian Labor Review Collective
Box 2824, Champaign IL 61825

(Thanks to Abe Bluestein for translating the article quoted above)
"Critique of Critical Critique"

By Louis Lazarus

For the past 125 years there have been many traducements of the works of Karl Marx. Some were philosophical criticisms, some were economic, but now we have, what we may best term historical criticism. In the Discussion Bulletin No. 33 John Crump has written an article, "A Contribution to the Critique of Marx." All the past detructions proved futile; we shall demonstrate that it will apply to the present one as well.

"I would, of course agree" writes Crump, "that there is an entire area of Marx's writings which amounts to an often brilliant and penetrating exposition of communism." As the poet would say, he condemns with faint praise -- as we shall soon see.

Thus Mr. Crump asserts: "I'll say frankly that Marx...starts to look like bourgeois revolutionary himself. More specifically, he and Engels can then be identified as theoretical leaders of the bourgeois revolutionary movement (social democracy) which culminated in the German revolution of 1918." Shaking off Lenin's doctrines, we question how were Marx and Engels "theoretical leaders of the bourgeois revolutionary movement"? Mr. Crump offers no substantiation. He distorts historical facts.

Marx and Engels wrote in the Communist Manifesto: "In Germany they [the communists] fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie.

"But they never cease, for a single instant, to instil into the working class the closest possible recognition of hostile antagonisms between bourgeoisie and proletariat in order that the German workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie..." (1)

When Engels wrote in 1884 in Der Sozialdemokrat, "Marx and the Neue Rheinische Zeitung (1848-1849)," he described the specific features of the proletarian revolutionary tactics during the bourgeois-democratic revolution. He emphasized that Marx instructed the German Social Democratic movement to uphold the class interests of the proletariat, not to permit themselves to be swayed by bourgeois illusions. (2) Mr. Crump's designating Marx and Engels as "theoretical leaders of the bourgeois revolutionary movement" is to malign them. Their historical analysis that bourgeois revolution must precede the workers' revolution did not make them the theoretical leaders of the bourgeois revolution.

Our critic ventures to cast aspersions on Marx and Engels. He quotes from their writings as though they were contradicting themselves. In one instance he maintains that one "Marxism" declares that the "complete domination of the alienated thing over man is fully manifested in money," and another "Marxism" wanted "centralization of credit in the hands of the state by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly. (3)

In the matter of money, Marx is describing the conditions under capitalism: "The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my properties and essential power --
the properties and powers of its possessor." (3) The other lines
are from Section II of the "Communist Manifesto". It treats of a
transitional period prior to the establishment of a Socialist Society.
"The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees,
all capital from the bourgeoisie..." (4)

In the preface to the German edition of the Manifesto of 1872,
Marx and Engels declared that in some respects the Manifesto was
out of date. As Frederick Engels wrote, "No special stress is laid
on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II.
That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded
today.... But then the manifesto has become a historical document
which we have no right to alter." (5)

By establishing false premises, John Crump sets up straw men:
"Cold and unemotional though Marx and Engels might have been on
some occasions, there was a slice of romanticism in their characters
too. Since they were men and not angels, there is nothing surprising
in the fact that they should have sought some escape from the tension
that was set up between their theoretical commitment to communism
and their actually engaging in bourgeois revolution. This escape was
nothing less than kidding themselves... that the bourgeois revolution
in which they engaged was itself communist..." There topple the
straw men! "Whatever the personal relief that this escape from reality
gave to Marx and Engels, it did incalculable damage to the development
of a correct theory of communism. He is out-glittering Marx and Engels!

The detractor discusses The Critique of the Gotha Programme. He
covers several pages wherein he grapples with numerous matters. We shall
confine our contravention to a few. He writes: "In order to live by [the
worker] has to supply in exchange for the certificate which enable him
to eat. He is nothing but a wage laborer (a certificate wage laborer
if you like)..."

By attempting to surpass Karl Marx, he offers preposterous reason-
ing. According to Marx, in a capitalist society the value of the
of commodities produced by workers are far beyond the value of labor
power (wages). In a communist society the capitalists have been
eliminated; hence the workers are no longer exploited, and labor cert-
ficates cannot be money but indicate labor time. The workers' status
is entirely different from under capitalism; the citizens of a communist
social order are no longer wage laborers, inasmuch as they obtain
virtually all they produce.

The Marx callumniator proceeds: "No matter how insistently Marx
might have applied the label 'first phase of communist society' to
this society which he described in the Critique of the Gotha Programme
as soon as we examine it in any sort of depth we can see that it is a
form of capitalism." It is exceedingly absurd to term a nonexploitative
social system of free individuals a form of capitalism.

We shall conclude with Marx's words: "In a future society, where
the antagonisms of classes will have ceased ... there will no longer
be classes."

Notes

DISCUSSION BULLETIN
P.O. Box 1584, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

REPORT #35

April 23, 1989

Members of the DB Committee

Dear Comrades:

I can’t think of a better argument for abolishing the market system than that doing so will end bookkeeping forever. Some of you noticed that in Report #34 I again got tangled up in numbers and screwed up the report. Actually I hardly ever come out right on these things. The figures in the checkbook, the bank statement, and the ledger in which I enter receipts never agree exactly. But the this was a monumental mess in which I failed to enter a donation of $24 and an expenditure for P.O. box rent of $28 and postage due of $6.10. In addition I got the wrong figures for receipts. Donations were supposed to have been $215.17 and subs $73.07 for a total of $288.24. The balance for April 24 is based on the bank statement.

Once again we come up with a deficit. But DB36 is approaching and with it the expiration of over half of our subscriptions. If your label carries an “R36”, I hope that you will send in your renewal now. Perhaps we can get over the hump and finish our sixth year of publication in the black.

CONTRIBUTIONS

From February 25 through April 23 we received the following

$74; Valentine Moth- $4; Berry L.; Valentine Moth-$7; Willis Franklin and Herb Edwards $7; Harry Wade $10; Anonymous $14; Charles C. Collins $10.77; Michael Preston $10; John Crump $13.70; Tom Hanig $4; Anonymous $15; E.H. Royer $2. Total $112.77.

Thank you, comrades.

FINANCES

Balance February 24, 1989 $19.96

Receipts

Contributions $112.77
Subs and sales $63.70
Total $176.47
I would like to start off by saying that John's critique of Marx is certainly more thought out and more maturely expressed than the vast majority of similar efforts. There are also a number of areas in which I am in accordance with his evaluation of the old gent — in particular the criticism of Marx's youthful utopianism. But, on the other hand, there are certain statements and assumptions raised in the course of his essay which I find myself in sharp disagreement with.

John states "there are many contradictions in Marx" — one of those old first-year sociology cliches — but unlike the academic mystifiers, he actually gives an example — the divergence between theory and practice in Marx. Couldn't agree more, but so what? It goes without saying there is a great deal of difficulty involved in putting socialist theory into practice, and if it is hard now, you can imagine how problematic it was during Marx's day. Sure 'nuff one can be a pure unsullied socialist like those in the Socialist Party of Great Britain ... and never do anything but publish tracts. But actually getting involved in the day-to-day struggle means putting your hands in it, GETTING YOURSELF DIRTY — COM-PROMISING (tek tek) — all those things we don't like doing. We are forced to do this not because of some abstract "material conditions", but for the reason that people are highly complex and as a result there are many different opinions, ideologies and world views to take into account — even in organizing a small group. Furthermore, we anarchists or socialists or whatever are not sanctified possessors of the absolute truth. Consequently, a revolutionary has to constantly take part in a high wire act, trying carefully not to fall into purist isolation on one side or sell-out opportunism on the other. Damn few walk the length of that wire, Marx, Bakunin or DeLeon included. I don't know why some people have this deep-rooted desire to link the names of important theorists or philosophers with the despots who claim to be enacting those world views. Demagogues seizing upon liberatory ideas and using them to rationalize brutal behaviour is at least as old as Christianity. No despot has ever come to power as a result of a social theory, the man on a white horse is the result of a conjuncture of economic, political, social and historical events coupled with the perverted will to power of the dictator. I would qualify this by saying that if despots have a theoretician it is Machiavelli. Attempting to prove Marx the father of Lenin/Stalin or Nietzsche the godfather of Hitler grossly overestimates the importance of ideas as a factor in determining historical development. This overemphasis is typical of people whose lives are wrapped up in the creation and marketing of ideologies — political and professorial hacks — but should find no place among those of us attempting to develop liberatory theory. At best, ideas can set a general condition, a limiting or constraining of the space within
which people may create new conceptions. Such has been the case with Western dualism, and in particular the split between science and ethics which this world-view engenders. In a remote way this dichotomy helped to pave the way for atrocities like Auschwitz or the Vietnam War, but never in a million years would I lay the blame for these crimes at the feet of Descartes or Kant, any more than I would hold Christ responsible for the Inquisition.

In the case of Lenin, we have one of the most astute politicians, an opportunist par excellence, who never let a theory get in the way of his next move. His link with Marx is extremely tenuous. Lenin's "Marxism" is rooted in the writings of Kautsky, of whom it is well known, stripped away the essential elements of Marx's theory such as the concept of reification, the anti-statist nature of socialism, the necessity of the self-liberation of the proletariat, etc. Kautsky was actually more of a Lasallean than a true follower of Marx and yet he was the great expositor of "Marxism" at the turn of the century.

John rejects the view that socialism in its earliest manifestations will bear the birth scars of its capitalist origins. But who ever heard of anything born in its full maturity -- especially something as complex as a social system. The idea that only fully-developed socialism is socialism is like saying that only adults are truly human. To scoff at Marx's realism on this issue is akin to shooting the bearer of unpleasant news. True, red flag-waving dictators have used this reference as a rationalization for their crimes, but there are essential aspects of socialism, "primitive" or "mature", which are completely antithetical to state-capitalist tyranny. According to Marx, socialism in any form must involve the direct control of society by the working people. This entails the "Paris Commune principles" of direct democracy and recallable delegates. This is the "first stage of socialism" -- i.e., the abolition of the formal state and its replacement by councils or assemblies which would then begin the restructuring of the economy. This latter aspect, involving the abolition of exchange and the wage system, Marx obviously saw as a gradual process, hence he saw the necessity for labour time vouchers.

John feels that the workers might exchange their vouchers thereby re-establishing capitalism or making dictatorship necessary to put a stop to this sin of sins. Once more he gives us the old all or nothing viewpoint. Does a modicum of exchange in a society mean that capitalism still exists? I turn to the "New Economics" of the Green Movement for a helpful insight. They divide the economy into the Formal Economy of corporations and state enterprises and the Informal Economy consisting of loose barter arrangements among friends and neighbours. This aspect of economy has been totally overlooked by political economists, Marx included. The existence of this informal economy during the Middle Ages did not make this period any less feudal any more than Russian workers trading home-made vodka for garden-plot veggies ceases to make the USSR state-capitalist. In a socialist society there will exist, in a certain sense, a formal economy of worker-managed industries and people, as ever, will continue to work out informal relations among themselves at the micro-economic level. This sort of division will remain until such time as all divisions in society are overcome, i.e., until the possible utopia becomes a reality as a result of changes in consciousness.

How can time vouchers be considered as capitalistic? Where and how is surplus value accrued? How is it a form of wage-labour? Wages are related to the average amount of labour-time necessary for production and as a consequence the labourer is reduced to an abstraction. Another
aspect of this is that productivity becomes the gauge by which labour is rewarded. Thus labour is no longer social, but takes on a private aspect. In the time voucher system the worker is not regarded as an abstraction, but as a worker -- i.e., one hour of labour equals one hour of goods. I would add that I find the whole discussion of labour vouchers irrelevant and anachronistic. With the level of production that we have now, there is no reason we could not go directly into a society based upon a system in which the worker is rewarded directly for the time devoted to the task. This does not mean we could leap into a full-blown utopia, however. The birthmark might be a little less obvious but there nonetheless. This has nothing to do with "objective conditions" but rather the complexity of consciousness. Consider a situation where the working people are opposed to corporate and state capital but lack unanimity of opinion on the nature of the new economy. The differing proposals might include communism, labour vouchers, co-ops exchanging goods, individualist concepts and anti-technology. Socialism as it first appears may be a kind of mixed economy (non-exploitative, of course) based upon a compromise or consensus of opinion.

If anything less than full communism is nothing more than another form of capitalism where then does this leave the other founders of socialism? Owen's co-ops, Proudhon's Mutualism (still allowing for exchange, no less), Bakunin's Collectivism (no taking from the common pile without working, but!) are we to write them off too? Might it not be better to regard them, in reference to their historical period, as articulating a program which encompasses the "first stage" of socialism? This seems particularly true of the anarchists, whose central demand was the abolition of the state.

The author makes the insinuation that lying behind Marx's labour voucher and other "rationalizations" is the motive force of state capitalism. He offers no proof of this, in terms of any statements or actions on Marx's part, but only insinuations. This is rank speculation and has no place in a serious analysis. Furthermore, it is a bit anachronistic to speak of state capitalist "phony socialism" at the time of the writing of the Critique of the Gotha Program. What was then considered socialism had four major tendencies based upon the writings of Owen, Proudhon, Bakunin and Lasalle. All but the last named were anti-statist and even Lasalle only proposed that the state give financial aid to workers' co-ops. For this he was denounced by Marx as a "state socialist" and a "future workers' dictator". Marx was quite aware of the danger and I think it unlikely he would make state capitalist proposals. Socialism as state ownership of industry became the popular viewpoint towards the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth. This false conception was promoted by Kautsky, Bellamy and the Fabians. All those who followed in Marx's footsteps, such as the Socialist Labour Party, Socialist Party of Canada, INW, CNU and such individuals as Pannekoeck and Gorter denounced this perversion of socialism. It should also be mentioned that Marx had the utmost regard for the Paris Commune, characterizing this revolt as the example of that unfortunate phrase, the "dictatorship of the proletariat", i.e., the beginning stage of socialism. And Marx had only two supporters in the Commune -- the largest party were the Proudhonists.

There are certainly many areas of Marx's theory and practice which need reconsidering, but there is no need to drag out the "Marx as precursor of Leninist state capitalism" myth. All it does is lend credence to those dogmatists and sectarians who wish to write Marx off completely. Disregard Marx (and the libertarian Marxists) and you cripple the development of the libertarian movement. It is evident from publications such as this one and Workers' Democracy, Ideas and Action, Industrial Worker.
etc., and the various meetings and discussions going on, that the sectarian split between anarchists and libertarian marxists is beginning to be overcome. This development may result in a new, more sophisticated libertarian practice and theory. Let's move forward and not continue our ancestors' quarrels.

Larry Gambone

Dear Readers,

In DB32 John Crump gave us a lazy man's way to evaluate Marxian science. Instead of trying to disprove that Marx organized human knowledge to determine that humanity is justified to establish a truly egalitarian society at the time of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, he avoided issues. While it is true that Lenin used Marx's writings to strengthen and justify his new system, can we afford to ignore Marx's ideas in a capitalist society that those ideas were meant for. Before the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, they were a minor party that had no conception of socialism in Russia but were aware that Russia was open to disruption under the Czar as well as under the provisional government. Their October Revolution was not the true revolution to socialism but a revolution back from capitalism just established with the overthrow of the Czar to a new form of feudalism. This new serfdom was due to the loss of political democracy that made the masses serfs for the benefit of the new class elite of bureaucrats and Communist Party leaders. To make their new order acceptable, they disguised it as Marxian socialism.

It is a shame that John Crump is not aware of the contribution of Daniel De Leon to Marxian science. It was noted by a great twentieth century leader, Lenin, that without De Leon's ideas Marxian would not be complete. The expression "Industrial Union Democratic Government" inspired hope in many thousand people in leading capitalist countries, and De Leon showed how this could be achieved peacefully and democratically. Credit for this great revolutionary program was shared by De Leon and Marx and Engels, who got him interested in scientific socialism. Sometime in the future when John Crump has studied the ideas of De Leon, it may be interesting to learn his opinions because he is critical.

(Cont'd from p.9)

well as libertarian groups abroad. In a recent note the publishers said that they "...hope to provide a bi-weekly or at least monthly source of communication for the whole anarchist community." $4 for a half year (at least six issues) from Incendiary Publications, Box 2100035, San Francisco, CA 94121.

New Members Handbook of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Having been bounced from one of the more exclusive groups in our political sector, I found it interesting to see how the SPGB maintains its organizational integrity without doing heavy disciplinary things. In this booklet the SPGB describes its organization and how it works. It sounds good: "All Branches and members have the right to distribute in writing their ideas in circulars which are sent to all other Branches. (Cont'd on p.17)
A COMMENT ON JOHN CRUMP'S
"A CONTRIBUTION TO THE
CRITIQUE OF MARX"

JOHN CRUMP states that "for Europe and other truly industrialised parts of the world the era of bourgeois revolutions is well and truly finished". Indeed I would go further and say that today capitalism is the dominant world system, least and west and the working class a truly international class. The state capitalist reforms of Marx's 'Communist Manifesto' that provided the link with Lenin's bolshevist policies are all but complete, with the traditional left arguing over the remaining details. And yet John maintains that socialists today face the same dilemma as they did in Marx's day! — that of choosing between sectarian socialist politics and involvement in bourgeois reform politics. This just doesn't square.

Socialists pursue their own individual and class interests (in a slightly more conscious manner than most workers). To the extent that socialism was not immediately realisable in Marx's day, socialists had to pursue those interests as best they could within the framework of the emerging capitalist society. This meant helping in the organisation of their fellow workers as an independent class and pursuing reforms aimed at strengthening the class. It inevitably also meant fighting alongside the bourgeois against feudal and aristocratic institutions.

Is the situation the same today? Yes, in so far as socialists are still pursuing the same interests. But today the pursuit of those interests leads much more closely to socialism. The old institutions of the working class (social-democratic parties, trade unions and co-operatives) most useful in the struggle for basic reforms, are now integrated into capitalist administration. Workers are obliged to go beyond, and even outside and against these institutions. The basic reforms of the past are now taken for granted. Workers aspirations increasingly become more difficult for capitalism to satisfy. In addition the technical capacity of the world and the potential for abundance and elimination of toil become more clearly contrasted to capitalisms restrictions and waste.

There is no automatic link between the everyday class struggle, which is marked by numerous periods of reaction, and the socialist objective, but a link can be made with the most advanced elements of struggle, something which Marx despite the advanced level of his theory could not do. Creating this 'link' is undoubtedly a problem, but we are not forced into making the pessimistic choices offered us by John Crump.

Socialists who are 'guided' by some 'historical mission' rather than their own individual and class interests in the present situation, have fallen prey to the very mystification they have been aiming to overcome, they have turned socialism into a religion (although they may have exercised Marx!).

Mike Ballard

(cont'd from p.16)

and to CB members (national members at large). Such circulars come out quite frequently, sometimes on matters of theory, sometimes proposing new propaganda ideas, and sometimes criticizing the approach to activity of some members. Such free and open discussion is vitally necessary to a democratic party...." 8 pp., no price (try $1) from SPGB, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN, England.
In DB#33, M. Prussack writes: "It is disappointing that Marin Dekovich rejects a few of my opinions. In fact, rather than have people develop their own ideas in the DB, he would prefer that we all distribute SLP leaflets that do educate. Within the last ten years I would have agreed with him, but I have since become convinced that the SLP is not doing its job right."

Prussack has a right to his "opinions," but when he bases them on his rather-flawed understanding of Marx and DeLeon, he should not be disappointed when his conclusions are rejected; rather, he should thank those who take the time to point out his erroneous thinking.

If the following explanation for Prussack's benefit appears repetitive, it is done with a purpose; that is, to reinforce certain historical truths.

The SLP never accepted Lenin's teachings, formally or otherwise, as a model for the American labor movement! Lenin was a product of Russia's industrially-backward and primarily-agricultural condition, while DeLeon was the product of a highly-industrialized American condition. DeLeon and Lenin could not advocate the same goal and tactic because their respective conditions were different, yet they could both be Marxists.

When Lenin said the DeLeon was the only man who contributed something new to Marxian science, he was stating a simple fact, and the SLP appreciated it, that is true, but Prussack resorts to pure fiction when he claims that the SLP believed that if Lenin had lived he would have led the Russian Revolution to an industrial democracy. In fact, the SLP warned the Russians, and workers in general, that the Russians were building their house on sand, which meant that while the Russians wanted the right thing, their backward conditions made it impossible. The Russian Revolutionaries had to work to build up industries in a framework of class divisions in order to complete the work of bourgeois industrial development: a condition that must precede any realistic steps toward industrial democracy. Prussack should stick to the facts.

I still suggest that rather engage in debating theories that have already been covered in DeLeon's writings, we should spend more time distributing DeLeonist publications to workers - plant the seeds. Debates like these are for "retired" DeLeonists. Marin Dekovich
THE CALL FOR AN AMERICAN FEDERATION

There seems to be a growing call from various voices within the North American anti-authoritarian movement for the creation of an all-inclusive organization. This was of course met with resistance. Anarchism, as it has developed on this continent, has always possessed a strong flavor of individualism. Max Stirner’s ideas co-mingled freely with the rugged individualism espoused by our founding fathers. Tucker, Warren, and Thoreau questioned (or denied) the authority of the state, but never questioned the authority or autonomy of the individual. If they had been literate, the early pioneers, busily hacking away at the forests and eradicating the Native American, would have found much encouragement in many of the above mentioned author’s writings.

It is somehow not surprising that in the decade of the 1980’s, with the long reign of surely our most ignoble of presidents, and the rampant greed and egotism engendered by that reign, that individualistic anarchism, via France and the Situationists, should find a renaissance. Anarchist theory, from the earliest writings of Proudhon to the works of Goldman, Berkman, and most recently Bookchin and Guerin, has always taken the needs of the individual into consideration, placing the individual’s rights and needs above all matters of policy and administration. An anarchist society would be one composed of autonomous individuals working together for the collective good. And, as always, any collective organizations leading up to that goal should naturally mirror the end result. This would include any federations, collectives, leagues, or groups, created regionally, nationally, or internationally, for the purpose of creating an anti-authoritarian society. Each sub-group within the overall collective (down to and including the individuals within each sub-group) should possess COMPLETE AUTONOMY of action, thought, and process. This is the only way in which the overall organization can nurture and accept the many varying tendencies within the anti-authoritarian movement, delivering the much needed benefits of coordinated action, timely communication, and easy access for any interested individuals.

The main point of contention, as voiced in the individualist journal ‘Fifth Estate’, is a steadfast refusal to accept the need for ANY organization of ANY kind. This is Stirnerism in its purest form. Not only should the individual avoid authoritarian organizations and structures, the individual should avoid organization and structure OF ANY KIND. For what reason? Organization itself is evil in that it subjugates the individual ego to the collective will of the group. It suppresses the minority in favor of the majority.” Would this subjugation occur in an organization similar to the one I’ve outlined? Possibly, if the individual was not guaranteed COMPLETE AUTONOMY of thought, action, etc. Naturally, no one person or group of persons would be allowed to speak for all members or sections. This would have to be clearly stated from the start. Any publications issued by the organization would have to carry all viewpoints on any given issue or subject. No tendency would be allowed to dominate. We could not tolerate a situation such as that which now exists at the ‘Fifth Estate’, a publication founded on principles drastically different from those which now control it, where one tendency has domination over a publication with a circulation in excess of 4000 copies, that doesn’t even pretend to offer any assistance in the
building of the anti-authoritarian movement, that continues to poise a situationist struggle as the starting point for all discussion of anarchist theory. Their position has up to now been on an incredibly divisive nature, offering reductionism where unity is needed, insults and derision where wisdom and explanation are required. I once believed that "their existence is ample justification for their existence." I now question even that. One of their favorite cliches is "The worst enemies of anarchy are anarchists" or something to that effect. I would change that to: "some anarchists", and some anarchists who shrink from calling themselves anarchists. What, indeed, is in a name?
It is to be hoped that this summer in San Francisco we will see the formation of a all-inclusive North American organization. To continue in our present condition is, after all, completely elitist. Where does an individual go who is interested in anarchism and anarchy? To the public library in

Omaha to read lies about the Spanish Civil War? Do they hope to find a directory of anarchist groups in the B. Dalton bookstore down at the mall? Is there any sort of national organization they can contact to obtain information on the subject? No, of course not. If they are lucky enough to live in a fairly large city they MIGHT discover some tiny group of anarchists putting out a small circulation newspaper or magazine. Chances are the newspaper or magazine will carry information relevant only to the particular tendency of the group which publishes it. Chances are also likely that this 'affinity group' will be very reluctant to accept any new members (who might, after all, be police officers).

An all-inclusive organization would be open to new members, new INDIVIDUALS willing to join the struggle for anarchy. The days of closed rooms, closed minds, and paranoia are over. It's time to step out into the sun and, at the very least, influence the debate.

Mike Kolhoff

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Dear Discussion Bulletin comrades:

Greetings! Attached please find a piece from our sister organization, the Direct Action Movement, which we thought your readers would be interested in.

This piece comes from their Internal Discussion Bulletin and follows a series of pieces on a debate concerning anarcho-syndicalism, rank-and-fileism and the formation of an explicitly anarcho-syndicalist union in Great Britain. Although internal in nature Paul's piece, we think, hits upon some interesting points. Some of the items hit upon seem to mirror some of the discussions which have, from time to time, appeared in the pages of the Discussion Bulletin.

I have not attempted to clarify the various terminology and names which appear in Paul's piece since the readers of the DB are probably already familiar with them.

This piece is being submitted to the Discussion Bulletin by the New York Area Group of the W.S.A. This piece or the views expressed do not represent the views of the W.S.A.
or all members of the New York Area Group. They are the views of one individual only, although a couple of members of the New York W.S.A. are supportive of these ideas.

With best wishes and MAY DAY greetings to all. We remain,

Yours in solidarity,

Steve and Mitch
members of N.Y. Area WSA

ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM & COUNCILISM

by Paul--Sheffield Direct Action Movement/IWA

"The Direct Action Movement reaffirms its commitment to the building of an anarcho-syndicalist union in Britain.

"However we reject the idea - one part of the syndicalist/industrial unionist heritage - of the "one big union" as the unitary organ of the working class, and, therefore, of the idea of the "union" as the administrative organisation of the new society.

"Rather, we believe that these roles will be played by workplace committees, workers' councils and community councils, open to all workers regardless of their political/social conceptions.

"The role of an anarcho-syndicalist union is to promote such unitary bodies, to promote anarcho-syndicalist tactics and aims, and to act as a living alternative to the bureaucratic and corporatist Trade Union structures and the politics of State Socialism (reformist or "revolutionary").

"We believe that this clarification of our conception of revolutionary unionism is in line with developments within the class struggle and within our International Workers Association. During the Puerto Real struggle in Spain, during the 1986/7 French rail strike and during the current struggle in Italy of the COBAS (Rank and File Committees) our fellow-anarch-syndicalists, affiliated to the I.W.A., have developed revolutionary unionism precisely by being at the forefront of organising or supporting working-class self-organisation through mass-assemblies, co-ordinations and committees."

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This motion, it must be said, despite being passed, was a source of confusion for some comrades. This was partly due to the motion being quickly written as a response to the other "union" motions, perceiving a gap that needed filling, and also because it wasn't clear that it was to be taken together with the other "pro-union" motions (one of it's aims being, as far as I was personally concerned, to demolish the ex-SW London group's contradictory call for working in the Trade Unions forever more, but supporting workers' councils). This was why the actual activity of the revolutionary union was hardly referred to (being condensed into "to act as a living alternative..."), not because we envisaged the Union handing over all activity to workers' councils etc., since it is stating the obvious to say that such "unitary bodies" do not exist most of the time.

When putting forward the motion I foresaw some comrades seeing the evil hand of Councilism at work, and I wasn't wrong. So what is "Councilism", other than a term of abuse?
The origin of the Workers' Council, as self-organisation of all workers in a workplace or workplaces, based upon general assemblies and recallable coordinating committees, is usually linked to the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and, in mythology, to Bolshevism. In fact, the libertarian wing of the First International (1864-76) had already conceived of workers' and community councils as the means by which the socialist society would be administered, and was put into practice by the Spanish internationalists in a limited and temporary way. So it wasn't surprising that when Lenin repeated "All power to the Soviets" many, Bolshevists included, thought he had gone over to Anarchism.

The outstanding feature of the Soviets was their spontaneity. Preceding workers' organisation was almost non-existent (which can't be said for party organisation). As syndicalists we can clearly see that this lack of previous organisation and political experience on the part of the Russian workers led them to cede power to the Leninists (who had become the loudest supporters of the Soviets) which quickly led to the enfeeblement of the Soviets. Other workers' councils that appeared at that time, in Germany 1918, Italy 1919-20 etc., clearly mark them as phenomena of a revolutionary period.

Councilism has come to mean more than supporting workers' councils, though. From the concrete historical experiences of Russia, Germany, Italy, an ideology of "councilism" has arisen: In general this refers to a whole array of revolutionary Marxists who defined themselves in opposition to Lenin's Communist Party and its Third International, which came to be seen as, more or less, counter-revolutionary. We can define some of the characteristics of and differences between people we can label councilist (though, for example, the International Communist Current would really hate to be called that!), without going into the history of the most important groups and individuals, like the various German groups, the KAPD, AAUD, AAUD-E, and their theorists, Pannekoek, Ruhle, Gorler, Inter Mattick etc., and the other dissident Marxists like the Italian Bordigists (Bordiga was the first leader of the Communist Party of Italy, and was more of a "pure" Bolshevik than a councilist), or into the various groups existing today (or recently existing), like Wildcat, the ICC, the Communist Workers Organisation, London Workers Group, etc.

The analysis that all Capitalism can offer the working class (since it is a historically decadent form) is a succession of economic crises, wars, rebuilding and more crises is generally accepted. This means that they accept the dictum of Rosa Luxemburg that the historical path human society is going down is one of "War or Revolution". Consequently, reformist organisations like Trade Unions and most, or all, political parties are enemies of the working class since they draw workers into class collaboration and fighting for a programme of reforms of capitalism, when what is needed is its destruction. This is usually extended to all unions (anarch-syndicalist included) since, they believe, a permanent union organisation is bound to make day-to-day compromises, a bureaucracy tends to form and the organisation becomes more and more a part of the system. As with a lot of things, there is some truth in this, a truth we should not be afraid to confront (look at the development of the Swedish SAC, for example, excluded from the IWA in the late 90's for its reformism), but councilists tend, in this way, to throw the baby out with the bath water.

The big difference between Councilists (or rather, between Councilists and Left Communists a la the ICC) is on the question of "the Party". Council Communism, as a form of Marxism, has its origins in Social Democracy, where the Party was everything. Over the years, one wing (the AAUD-E, Ruhle, Pannekoek, Mattick) came
to reject the idea of the Party as an inherently bourgeois form of organisation, placing full faith in the spontaneous self-activity of the working class. An example of this progression away from Partyism in practice is the French councilist group, ICO, which originated as a split from the (ex-Trotskyist) libertarian socialist, but partyist, group Socialisme ou Barbarie, rejected the Party concept, but eventually folded the anti-Party ICO because it was still an organisation, to form the present Echange et Mouvement, a "non-organisation" which makes no attempt to take part as a group in the class struggle. They just comment on it.

The original anti-party councilists, like Ruhle's AARDE, were close to Anarchist-syndicalists; but many modern-day councilists (who throw in a bit of Situationism, with a bit of Italian Autonomism with a pinch of Baudrillardian Semiotics (no, I don't understand it either!) tend to be middle class intellectuals who like to sound as extreme as possible and to slag off anyone not as extreme as they, although this current seems to have died down in the 80s as post-1968 student-inspired politics has withered in the face of Thatcherism. As Alain Meltzer says, this sort of councilism has more to do with egocentrism than communism! Since the workers are going to do it all spontaneously, why bother doing anything (particularly if you're not a worker)?

Between the pure councilists and the partyists there are some who don't want to make their minds up. The old Wildcat group decided that "The Vanguard" weren't just the members of one organisation, and even allowed some Anarchists into the "vanguard", which is a fairly reasonable position compared to the likes of Bordigists who envisage the dictatorship of The Party. For the partyists, their hostility to unionism means, in effect, that they, the marxist political elite, are allowed to organise on a permanent basis, but the workers aren't. What they are doing is keeping the old Social Democratic/Menshevik separation of the economic and political movements. They don't believe in building mass parties, just correct ones, whose purpose is less to be useful to the working class in an immediate sense than to tell them the (Marxist) truth. If you want, they are the Jehovah's Witnesses rather than the Sally Army. Revolutionary ideas are thus kept the preserve of sects (or the "proletarian political milieu" as they grandly see themselves!). I personally find some of the ideas and debates coming from these sects of interest and some relevance (eg., is capitalism moving towards another World War? How does class consciousness develop? What is the relation between economic crisis and class struggle?).

(An aside: Council Communism need not necessarily be Marxist but it is no surprise that it is almost always has been. One reason for this is that Councilist spontaneism sits in nicely with the Marxist "inevitability of Socialism". In practice, revolutionary situations have given rise to new power elites, new bosses, because spontaneous class action is not enough. Preparation is needed, and we believe that the revolutionary union and the culture around it is crucial for that preparation. It has to be said that the "revolutionary syndicalist" or IWW conception of the organs of struggle in capitalist society becoming the administrative organs of the new society, seems to owe something to this same Marxist "inevitability". If all proletarians are bound to recognise their class interests, then, yes, we can expect them all to flock to the banner of the revolutionary One Big Union of the working class. However, reality has never been quite as easy as that. The CNT in Spain had to deal with the UCT (many of whose rank and file members took an active part in the Revolution), and any future (or present) revolutionary unions, will, similarly, have to deal with workers outside their ranks.)
Finally, I think we can say that Anarchosyndicalism shares particular affinity with a specific period of Councilism, an affinity that was felt at the time. When Otto Ruhle and his comrades broke with the KAPD/AAUD, rejecting its separation of economic and political organizations and the role of the economic organisation, the AAUD (German General Workers Union), as transmission belt for the politics of the KAPD (German Communist Workers Party), it is worth noting that the new AAUD-E (the 'E' stood for Unity, i.e. of the economic and political) worked with the revolutionary syndicalist FAUD, and was present, in an observer capacity, at the 1922 founding Congress of the IWA. However, it remained, in terms of philosophical outlook, Marxist.

What the AAUD-E believed and what Anarchosyndicalists believe is that the emancipation of the working class really is the task of the working class itself, not that of a trained political elite; that political ideas come not from reading books and discussion papers alone but, more importantly, from direct experience; and that what is needed is a workers' organisation which can make a synthesis of day-to-day class struggle with the fight for a free society, in order to develop more fully both theory and practice, to build the new world in the shell of the old.

The divorce between politics and economics has been only too obvious in the DAM and the wider anarchist movement, and is a major reason we haven't got very far. For too long we have combined a utopian anarchist theory with a practice that has been often akin to the Salvation Army, often no different to reformism and Trade Unionism. The move towards a revolutionary union is precisely a move away from this situation. Anarchosyndicalism isn't just a nice idea to be propagated for in the way the Socialist Party of Great Britain has been propagandising Socialism for the last 40 years. The current situation demands we put Anarchosyndicalism into practice. As the CNT-F National Secretary recently put it, Anarchosyndicalism is like the right to free speech - not much use if you don't use it. If we don't do it the working class may rediscover Syndicalism anyway (as our Brazilian comrades seem to have done), but we could make the process easier by putting the great theories we've had for so long into practice, so justifying the Direct Action Movement's 10 years of existence.